

ANGELA CARTER AND THE POLITICS OF AUTHORSHIP

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Abstract

This thesis offers the first full-length investigation of British writer Angela Carter's conceptualisation of her artistic career and elaboration of her writerly persona as she develops them in her published and unpublished writing. Carter's understanding of her position as a professional writer is heavily indebted to her well-documented feminist and materialist convictions. I draw on an extensive corpus taken from Carter's published writing – her fiction, but also her journalism – and unpublished manuscripts and personal writing to contextualise her self-positioning in the cultural field against the backdrop of the rise of media theory and late twentieth-century theories of labour and creativity. I posit that Carter's deconstruction of the material underpinnings of authorship give texture and depth to her oft-cited credo of 'absolute and *committed materialism*'. I connect familiar debates about Carter's so-called 'double allegiance' to feminist ideas and to a male-dominated tradition to the less well-trodden issue of artistic autonomy, and of the problem of art's ethical and economic value in the context of its incorporation in the marketplace. In Carter's writings, art was a way of living as well as a means of *making* a living. Understanding this, I argue, provides insights into her and later women writers' career construction, and informs current debates about the commodification of art and the links between literature, feminism, and the market.

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Introduction: Writing for a Living: Angela Carter and the Authorial Profession

In a characteristically acerbic note taken from one of her late journals, Angela Carter jots down a review of fellow writer Ursula Holden's trilogy *Tin Toys*, released by Carter's own publisher Virago Press. Her assessment is as brief as it is unforgiving:

Private Novel very characteristic of a certain kind of women's writing – the private income kinky. 'Private income' not actually denoting the existence of a private income, but writing obviously not done out of a desire to make a living by it.¹

In Carter's eyes, the novel's capital sin – and, by extension, its author's – is to be the work of a dilettante. Carter's implicit distinction between 'private income kinky' and those writers working under the imperative 'to make a living' hints at a hierarchy of values and a conception of authorship which evolved from her first published novel, *Shadow Dance* (1966), until her last, *Wise Children* (1991). Carter's materialist conception of the labour of writing underpins her major novels as well as her minor essays. This thesis provides the first full-length examination of Carter's conception of her artistic career and elaboration of her writerly persona, and the ramifications thereof as they transpire in her published and unpublished writing. Carter's understanding of her position as a professional writer is heavily indebted to her well-documented feminist and materialist convictions. I read Carter's published writing – her fiction, but also her journalism – and a wealth of archival evidence to contextualise her self-positioning in the cultural field against the backdrop of the rise of media theory and late twentieth-century theories of labour and creativity to give substance to her oft-cited credo of 'absolute and *committed materialism*'.²

¹ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/98, Angela Carter Papers, Journal (1983 – 1988).

² Angela Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 36–43 (p. 38).

Carter's awareness of her status as writer – one not devoid of irony, impatience, and self-criticism – bleeds into her journals, novels, short stories, and nonfiction. My intention is not to read those texts autobiographically in search of references to the writer's life – a task already well tended to by her increasing number of biographers – but rather to consider how those texts come to construct an image of the writer as worker, and writing as a career. An awareness of the changing conditions of labour in the late twentieth century animates Carter's texts, which deal variously with artistic bohemia, intellectual labour authorised through academic structures, bureaucracy, and figures of artists as entrepreneurs. Further, I chart Carter's construction and conceptualisation of her creative career in her novels, which gradually became centred around figures of female performers. In doing so, I show how Carter increasingly fashioned a distinctive writing style, but also complexified the terms of her own relationship to her writing career by staging and rejecting various models of authorship. I thus suggest that the notion of value, both ethical and commercial, of her work, underpins Carter's texts to an extent hitherto unexamined by critics. Through this process, I also re-evaluate the import of her legacy for contemporary literature and feminism, aiming not just to situate her historically, but also to consider the ways in which her writing and persona carry on influencing our understanding of the figure of the woman writer in the present.

Resituating her output in the context of contemporary discussions of the role of the work of art and media in society, I consider the ways in which Carter's portrayals of subjects at work can inform us about her own position as a writer in the literary market. I posit that those representations are embedded in her awareness of discussions held within the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies but also indebted to major media theorists including Marshall McLuhan and Guy Debord. I chart her reflection on the way some key artistic figures – French poet Charles Baudelaire being the foremost example – have informed artistic career construction. This reflection ties in with current debates over the links between literature and

the economy, and the ways in which the market destabilises definitions of literariness and value.³

As Dan Sinykin puts it, successful authors (he cites Ben Lerner) are now ‘learning how to negotiate symbolic capital by capitalizing on the many ways it brings publishers not merely prestige but also financial capital, through grants, prizes, recognition, and sales’.⁴ Contemporary criticism shows renewed concerns with literariness which, while not central to this thesis, are useful to its claims about the status of the literary author in the mass market. Merve Emre’s *Paraliterary: The Making of Bad Readers in Postwar America* (2017) portrays the conscious construction of what she calls ‘bad readers’ whose engagement with texts is informed by a pragmatic attitude to the uses of literature in everyday life.⁵ Those readers bring an ethical framework borrowed from paraliterary texts – such as memoirs, nonfiction, marketing flyers, how-to manuals – to literary texts in a process Emre describes as one of ‘genre confusion’, which weakens the boundaries of the literary proper in favour of an attitudinal disposition to skills such as communication and political participation: ‘paraliterary reading coalesced as a form of reading capable of producing a self-governing and communicatively adept international subject’.⁶ Nicholas Brown’s reflection on the ontology of the work of art queries the status of autonomous works in a capitalist market, and argues that works of art can temporarily oppose market logic by opposing an obdurate surface to the demand to cater to

³ On the question of the friction between literariness and the contemporary market, see Dan N. Sinykin, ‘The Conglomerate Era: Publishing, Authorship, and Literary Form, 1965–2007’, *Contemporary Literature*, 58.4 (2017), 462–91 <<https://doi.org/10.3368/cl.58.4.462>>. For an investigation of the economic role of the work of art and the artist, see: Nicholas Brown, *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art under Capitalism* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2019); Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014). On the conditions of production of art in the neoliberal era see, for example, *Post45*’s cluster *The 7 Neoliberal Arts*, prefaced by Lee Konstantinou, ‘The 7 Neoliberal Arts, or: Art in the Age of Mass High Culture « Post45’ <<http://post45.org/2020/08/the-7-neoliberal-arts-or-art-in-the-age-of-mass-high-culture/>> [accessed 1 September 2020].

⁴ Sinykin, p. 488.

⁵ Merve Emre, *Paraliterary: The Making of Bad Readers in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁶ Emre, p. 10.

audiences at the expense of any other authorial or artistic motive.⁷ Adam Theron-Lee Rensch aptly summarises Brown thesis by stating that ‘the customer is wrong’:

Capitalism has already offered us a class of objects we are free to ‘play with,’ as it were, and which are produced to offer us meanings that are intensely personal: commodities. To treat the work of art the same way is to functionally reassert the logic of the market and its claim ‘the customer is always right.’⁸

This is not, however, to make the claim that the literary is separate from the marketplace, or even that its function is entirely positive. Sarah Brouillette’s *Unesco and the Fate of the Literary* (2019) charts the history of the institution and its construction of literariness in dialogue with notions of liberal humanism.⁹ She suggests that we should not blindly allocate ethical value to textual productions identified as literature and acts of reading but instead remain cognizant of their historical construction in time and of the overt and implicit aims of institutions that purport to transmit literacy as a universal good. Carter’s career occurred at a strategic moment for rethinking the links between literature and the economy, unfolding as it did during a time of change for writers’ careers (through the development of writers’ courses and prestigious literary prizes, but also through the growth of the culture of information and mass media) and the publishing market.

In the current market, women writers currently appear to be enjoying new levels of commercial success: in May 2021, a *Guardian* journalist thus reported that ‘[t]he energy, as anyone in the publishing world will tell you, is with women’ and ‘[s]o is the media coverage’.¹⁰ The same article reports that, for the past five years at least, women have also made up the

⁷ Nicholas Brown.

⁸ Adam Theron-Lee Rensch, ‘The Customer Is Wrong: The Commodity and the Work of Art’, *Los Angeles Review of Books* <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-customer-is-wrong-the-commodity-and-the-work-of-art/>> [accessed 3 December 2020].

⁹ Sarah Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

¹⁰ Johanna Thomas-Corr, ‘How Women Conquered the World of Fiction’, *The Guardian*, 16 May 2021 <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/may/16/how-women-conquered-the-world-of-fiction>> [accessed 28 May 2021].

majority of literary prize shortlists, a change which is seen as ‘overdue’ and ‘necessary’ (other adjectives often affixed to the writings of women include: ‘urgent’, ‘groundbreaking’, or ‘timely’), but also connected to publishing industry demographics, with women, white in their majority, making up 64% of the workforce.¹¹ As the journalist notices, this discourse has become linked with anxieties about men’s expulsion from the world of fiction and the death of the novel. It also contributes to occluding persistent patterns of inequity and precariousness in the creative and publishing industry.¹² The commercial success of some women whose work has brought feminist discourse to the centre of contemporary debates has also led to questions about the marketing of feminism and the commodification of its ideals, suggesting a tension between changing labour conditions for writers and feminist thinking. This evolution of the feminist literary market complicates the received notion that, as Charlotte Crofts puts it, ‘feminism cannot engage with the mainstream without somehow being violated’.¹³ My reading of Carter situates her at the crossroads of aesthetic, feminist, and commercial concerns, and as a forerunner to those debates.

The Construction of a Woman Writer: Femininity, Feminism, Authorship, and Capitalism

The beginning of Carter’s career runs parallel to the struggles of Second Wave feminism and the Women’s Liberation Movement, which, Patricia Waugh argues, was a time of ‘anxious dialogue on the nature of feminine identity and female authorship’ which ‘coincided with the

¹¹ Thomas-Corr.

¹² Bridget Conor, Rosalind Gill, and Stephanie Taylor, ‘Gender and Creative Labour’, *The Sociological Review*, 63.1_suppl (2015), 1–22 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12237>>; Marie-Alix Thouaille, ‘Feminist Media Studies Post-Feminism at an Impasse? The Woman Author Heroine in Postrecessionary American Film’, *Feminist Media Studies*, 19.4 (2018), 495–509 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1546203>>.

¹³ Charlotte Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter’s Writing for Radio, Film, and Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 13.

impact of postmodern critiques of authorship as such'.¹⁴ Texts written by White Anglo-American writers such as Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating* (1974), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) all attempted in various ways to raise the issue of female subjectivity in the literary canon.¹⁵ By contrast, Carter's references to such figures as Georges Bataille, Charles Baudelaire, or the Marquis de Sade put her at odds with a generation of women writers and critics preoccupied with the conditions and means of women's creativity. Rebecca Munford summarises this tension thus: 'the trouble with Carter is that she often writes against the *feminist grain*', a grain often understood as a naturalised aesthetics of femininity as well as an ethics preoccupied with authenticity in the representation of women.¹⁶

Carter's writing demonstrates the historical constructedness of the authorial position, be it feminine or masculine. By contrast, feminist critiques of subjectivity had to contend with an inheritance that made it necessary to find a way forward: as Sally Robinson argues, 'the fact remains that any political discourse which attempts to speak for a class of subjects, such as women, must be rooted, at least provisionally, in some notion of rights', borrowed from decried liberal humanist ideals.¹⁷ In Robinson's view, the double edge of feminist criticism, between a poststructuralist approach that deconstructs solidified notions of subjecthood and the need to

¹⁴ Patricia Waugh, 'The Woman Writer and the Continuities of Feminism', in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2008), pp. 188–208 (pp. 197–98) <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470757673.ch9>>.

¹⁵ Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: HarperCollins UK, 2020); Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (Boston, MA: Dutton, 1974); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 2020).

¹⁶ Rebecca Munford, 'The Politics of Intertextuality', in *Re-Visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 2006), pp. 1–20 (p. 4).

¹⁷ Sally Robinson, *Engendering the Subject: Gender and Self-Representation in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), pp. 2–3.

reach some form of consensus over the categories of women, femininity, and gender, raises an even thornier issue in the case of writing and authorship where, as she puts it,

The danger in adhering to the notion of a specificity of women's writing is that, first, such adherence threatens to erase differences between and within writing produced by women from different cultural locations; and, second, homogenization of such a diverse field of cultural production can lead to recuperation.¹⁸

This project charts Carter's grappling with the deconstruction of inherited ideas of authorship established within male-dominated institutions. One consequence of this, then, is the difficulty of establishing a path forward for the woman artist, and whether the label of 'woman artist' itself can in fact constitute a productive critical category.

Resituating Carter's literary itinerary within the context of Roland Barthes' foundational essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968), Munford argues that 'Carter's 'intertextual strategies refuse the "impersonality" proposed by Barthes in a move to consider the specific historical and socio-cultural contexts for the construction of *gendered* subjectivities'.¹⁹ Sarah Bannock further implies that Carter complicates the idea of the 'Death of the Author' and argues that she 'is interested in the use of the self in fiction, but in the sense of that deconstruction of selfhood that the artistic process makes possible'.²⁰ As Lorna Sage put it, Carter indeed 'went in for the proliferation, rather than the death, of the author'.²¹ Carter, Munford continues, repeatedly refuses a model of feminine authoriality confined to 'marginality or exclusion' and questions the role of such discourse in fetishizing an understanding of femininity as victimhood and erasing women's role in perpetuating

¹⁸ Robinson, p. 10.

¹⁹ Munford, 'The Politics of Intertextuality', p. 8.

²⁰ Sarah Bannock, 'Auto/Biographical Souvenirs in *Nights at the Circus*', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton, Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature (New York ; London: Longman, 1997), pp. 198–215 (p. 213).

²¹ Lorna Sage, *Angela Carter, Writers and Their Work*, 2nd ed (Tavistock: Northcote House in association with The British Council, 2007), p. 58.

oppressive gendered scripts of behaviour.²² This reading puts her at odds, for example, with contemporaries such as Andrea Dworkin, for whom the acknowledgment of women's oppression was a prime political tool which excluded other considerations.

Comparing Dworkin's reading of fairy tales such as 'Snow White' and sexually explicit texts like Pauline Réage's *Histoire d'O* (*The Story of O*), Leah Claire Allen notes that the kind of critical interpretation offered by *Woman Hating* (1974) does away altogether with the heroines' agency, subsumed under the category of false consciousness. In Dworkin's analysis, Allen argues, '[j]ust as it is unnecessary to consider whether or not Snow White might have consented to her purchase by the prince while she lay unconscious under glass, it is unnecessary to consider whether O's claims to full participation in her life are real or meaningful'.²³ By contrast, Carter's enthusiastic admiration for figures such as actress Louise Brooks' life and stance – 'no victim, she' – allows for a more complex picture in which women can make conscious spectacles of themselves without falling for their own performance.²⁴

Critics have also previously pointed to Carter's self-aware construction of her own persona. Sage, for example, notes that

[i]n fact you cannot, in the end, separate the woman and the writer. One of Angela Carter's most impressive and humorous achievements was that she evolved this part to play. How to Be the Woman Writer. Not that she was wearing a mask, exactly; it was more a matter of refusing to observe any decorous distinction between art and life, so that she was inventive in reality as well as in creating plots and characters for the books.²⁵

²² Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: HarperCollins UK, 1977), pp. 142–48; Munford, 'The Politics of Intertextuality', p. 11.

²³ Leah Claire Allen, 'The Pleasures of Dangerous Criticism: Interpreting Andrea Dworkin as a Literary Critic', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 42.1 (2016), 49–70 (p. 62) <<https://doi.org/10.1086/686977>>.

²⁴ Angela Carter, 'Barry Paris: Louise Brooks', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 387–92 (p. 389).

²⁵ Sage, *Flesh and the Mirror*, p. 1.

Aware of Carter's mastery of her image, Sarah Gamble highlights 'the extreme control Carter exercised over the areas of her life she chose to make available for public consideration', and points to Carter's self-avowed tendency to reuse the same anecdotes in interviews.²⁶ In similar fashion, Carter's biographer Edmund Gordon remarks that '[h]er personality displayed splashes of fancy dress', thus alluding to Carter's highly intentional way of performing herself.²⁷ Christina Britzolakis furthers this insight by noting Carter's effortful construction of her part and the gendered implications of her position, particularly her construction of a masquerading self against an audience who, Britzolakis surmises, 'is gendered as male'.²⁸ In a parallel analysis of Carter's style and career, she continues,

Although I agree that Carter's style answers to a pattern of social and intellectual mobility, her strategy is surely not so much proletarian as petit-bourgeois, the mode of the newly enfranchised, postwar intellectual, whom Carter links, in her essay on the 1960s, with the post-war expansion of educational opportunities within the welfare state. Theatricalism is the language of the female 'parvenue' whose critique of the establishment must always be conducted in the mode of a greedy and more or less fetishistic taking possession of its cultural properties, and which remains partly mortgaged to the heritage it travesties.²⁹

In Britzolakis's critique, a style becomes linked with a social trajectory, that of the 'parvenue' which makes performance an implicitly bourgeois act, making the enunciating subject of writing recede behind the subject of authorial performance.

By contrast with Britzolakis's dismissal of Carter as 'parvenue', Elaine Jordan is one of the few critics to have recast Carter's preoccupation with forging herself a writerly persona

²⁶ Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (2006), cited in Watz, *Angela Carter and Surrealism*, p.12.

²⁷ Edmund Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p. xiii.

²⁸ Christina Britzolakis, 'Angela Carter's Fetishism', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton, *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York ; London: Longman, 1997), pp. 43–59 (p. 53).

²⁹ Britzolakis, pp. 53–54.

in the context of material preoccupations which underpinned Carter's career throughout her life. Jordan considers the marketing strategies that determined book sales during Carter's career, particularly her publishers' efforts at finding the right categories in which to advertise her novels through the use of covers. While current criticism of Carter's work operates after the emergence of the 'Angela Carter syndrome' which saw her rise to academic popularity after her death, Jordan usefully reminds us that, during her lifetime, Carter 'was very much in the literary marketplace, needing to sell her work'.³⁰ Jordan's reading nuances the straightforward assimilation of Carter's authorial performance as an act in a way that allows a more nuanced understanding of her investment in the literary market. Jordan contends that Carter's extraordinary stylistic repertoire and experimentation with genre and gender made it difficult to pin down a commercially satisfying label. Jordan explicitly compares Carter to the most commercially aware of her heroines, aerialist Sophie Fevvers: '[I]ike her circus star, Fevvers, in *Nights at the Circus*, she turned her head and hand to what the market offered, and could take of her gifts'.³¹ This portrayal of Carter as having to contend with sale imperatives raises the question of the construction of her career as a professional writer in terms that go beyond the sometimes reductive use of performance. Further, it troubles the distinction between high and low culture to raise that of Carter's awareness of her position as a writer in a capitalist marketplace.

This thesis consequently argues that Carter's understanding of the problem of authorship is coextensive with the question of work. This line of argument is not a novel one outside the realm of Carter studies. The cultural field has received attention from sociologists who have identified its specificity compared with other areas of the market. Jim McGuigan

³⁰ Judy Simons and Kate Fullbrook, 'Introduction', in *Writing: A Woman's Business ; Women, Writing and the Marketplace*, ed. by Judy Simons and Kate Fullbrook (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 1–13 (p. 4); Elaine Jordan, "'Her Brilliant Career': The Marketing of Angela Carter", in *Writing: A Woman's Business ; Women, Writing and the Marketplace*, ed. by Judy Simons and Kate Fullbrook (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 81–94 (p. 81).

³¹ Jordan, p. 81.

articulates the distinctness of cultural work as follows: ‘Cultural work [...] is indeed a special kind of creative labour in that it is first and foremost about communicating meaning and very often also about identification and pleasure.’³² As a subcategory of cultural work, we can infer that writing creates its own rules for ‘communicating meaning’. Pierre Bourdieu’s *Les Règles de l’art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (1992) charts the organisation of the so-called literary field and identifies its different agents.³³ In this landmark study of the construction of the institutions of literary authorship, Bourdieu identifies the process of autonomisation as one in which artists have gradually come to assign currency to the opposition between art and mercantilism, using the nineteenth-century French literary scene and avant-garde figures such as Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire as examples. Yet, as Hywel Dix observes, the language of creative authorship has since proven transferrable to the world of career counselling, although authorial careers prove hard to analyse in terms of an easy divide between success (and its definition, be it critical or commercial) and failure.³⁴

As a result, critical attention has increasingly turned not to the uniqueness of literary or artistic activity, but to the ways in which it connects, overlaps, or indeed influences and is influenced by other areas of economic activity. In Jim McGuigan’s words: ‘No longer are creativity, culture and artistry thought to be at odds with commerce and business; they are instead one and the same in this world of smoke and mirrors.’³⁵ Interestingly, the metaphor of the archive appears just as pliable to uses in economically-oriented settings: ‘Career construction theory treats individuals as archives or repositories of memory and feeling.

³² Jim McGuigan, ‘Creative Labour, Cultural Work and Individualisation’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 16.3 (2010), 323–35 (p. 326) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630903029658>>.

³³ Translated as Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996).

³⁴ Hywel Dix, ‘From Vocational Calling to Career Construction: Late-Career Authors and Critical Self-Reflection’, in *Researching and Writing on Contemporary Art and Artists: Challenges, Practices, and Complexities*, ed. by Christopher Wiley and Ian Pace (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), pp. 39–63 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39233-8_3>.

³⁵ McGuigan, p. 334.

Excavating those archives is then the principal purpose of this form of vocational guidance'.³⁶ In the first chapter of this thesis, I use the trope of the ephemera as another example where mercantile logic and archival conservation overlap. Brouillette goes further in dealing with the porousness of the literary and commercial fields, observing that 'authors often find material fit for transformation into literary property in the very experience of working as writers', and 'their fate at the hands of the processes of circulation and valorization' constitutes an important part of this narrative.³⁷ Brouillette further highlights that artists, and writers in particular, have also played a part in contemporary configurations of work: 'writers' traditions of self-regulation and self-monitoring, appropriate to their irregular and quasi-professional labor, anticipate and now serve formulations of policy and theory that explain the ostensible desires of the new creative class'.³⁸ In this context, she contends, we should ask ourselves: 'is the romantic author figure one potent prototype for a new division of labor?'.³⁹ This, she suggests, also goes some way towards explaining the interpenetration of literary and business lexicons. The newly labile boundary between literary work and the work sphere thus proves to be a historically contested terrain.

The post-war era is shaped by crucial changes in the labour sphere that also inflected women writers' careers. The period from the late 1960s to the 1970s is marked by milestones that articulate the thorny question of women in the workplace. On June 7th 1968, 850 women sewing machinists walked out of the Ford Motor Company factory of Dagenham, England, setting the scene for an era in which women increasingly questioned the role of technology in furthering or cementing rather than resorbing inequalities.⁴⁰ The Equal Pay Act of 1970 made

³⁶ Dix, p. 43.

³⁷ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 151.

³⁸ Sarah Brouillette, 'Contemporary Literature, Post-Industrial Capital, and the UK Creative Industries', *Literature Compass*, 5.1 (2008), 122–33 (p. 125) <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2007.00506.x>>.

³⁹ Brouillette, 'Contemporary Literature, Post-Industrial Capital, and the UK Creative Industries', p. 125.

⁴⁰ Trade relations historian Sheila Cohen argues that while gender-based discrimination was a factor that led to the walkout, the workers' arguments were not driven by feminist concerns but by class and pay grading injustice. As a result, the outcome of the strike (equal pay) turned out to be less advantageous to the women than their initial claim for a higher pay grade and recognition of their status as skilled workers would have been –

‘equal treatment for men and women in same employment’ mandatory in the United Kingdom, at a time when Britain’s Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity was a woman, Labour MP Barbara Castle.⁴¹ The act resulted in increasing women’s pay from 59 to 67% of their male colleagues.⁴² Yet, radical feminist writing published during that era reveals persistent attempts at detangling the problematic interconnections between sex, gender, and capitalism, and anxieties surrounding the persistence of patterns of gendered domination despite women’s accession to the workforce.

As early as 1970, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* issued the warning that Sex class is so deep as to be invisible. Or it may appear as a superficial inequality, one that can be solved by merely a few reforms, or perhaps by the full integration of women into the labor force.⁴³

Firestone puts forward sex as the basis of a superstructure of patriarchal domination that should supplement, and potentially overthrow historical materialism as instantiated in the writings of Marx and Engels: ‘the natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labor as the origins of class, as well as furnishing the paradigm of caste’.⁴⁴ She turns to Simone de Beauvoir’s analysis of historical materialism to claim that ‘the “natural” is not necessarily a “human” value’.⁴⁵ In other words, in Firestone’s analysis, while women’s oppression has a biological basis, it is necessary to look beyond those distinctions towards a post-gender horizon that would be the foundation of a new society.

further complicating any interpretation that would attempt to incorporate women’s struggles in the workplace into the feminist struggle in a straightforward manner. See Sheila Cohen, ‘Equal Pay - or What? Economics, Politics and the 1968 Ford Sewing Machinists’ Strike’, *Labor History*, 53.1 (2012), 51–68 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2012.650431>>.

⁴¹ ‘Equal Pay Act 1970’ (Queen’s Printer of Acts of Parliament) <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/41/enacted>> [accessed 6 July 2020].

⁴² Cohen, p. 63.

⁴³ Shulamith Firestone, ‘The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution (Excerpt)’, in *Burn It Down!: Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution*, ed. by Breanne Fahs (New York: Verso Books, 2020), pp. 246–55 (p. 246).

⁴⁴ Firestone, p. 251.

⁴⁵ Firestone, p. 252.

In 1974, Silvia Federici's anticapitalist manifesto 'Wages against Housework' pointed to women's 'physical, emotional, and sexual services', all issues unsolved by their entry into the workforce and theoretical entitlement to equal rights in law.⁴⁶ According to Federici, '[b]y denying housework a wage and transforming it into an act of love, capital has killed many birds with one stone', successfully entrapping women and men alike into servitude by making the former the latter's dependents.⁴⁷ Federici's proposition is first and foremost to recast women's domestic tasks as skilled work deserving of financial compensation and to reveal the importance of reproductive work, a revolutionary call echoed by the Wages for Housework campaign. As Federici remarks, this is a very different aim 'than trying to prove that [women] can work as well as [men], that [they] can do the same jobs'.⁴⁸ As a result, she draws a stark line between the campaigning to call patriarchal values surrounding work that earns the right to a wage into question, and the individualistic trajectories of career women who thrive in patriarchal career structures at the expense of others:

We leave this worthwhile effort to the 'career woman,' the woman who escapes from her oppression not through the power of unity and struggle, but through the power of the master, the power to oppress – usually other women.⁴⁹

Federici's manifesto thus uncovers tensions between those women who were eager to access the workplace, and those concerned by the conditions rendering such access possible, thus complicating associations between labour, sex, and gendered domination.

The creative and cultural sphere was not exempt from discussions about the future of women in the labour market. The need for women writers to secure an outlet and establish their readership by creating their own publishing presses, sometimes in a separatist spirit, is central

⁴⁶ Silvia Federici, 'Wages against Housework (1974)', in *Burn It Down!: Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution*, ed. by Breanne Fahs (New York: Verso Books, 2020), pp. 127–36 (p. 130).

⁴⁷ Federici, p. 130.

⁴⁸ Federici, p. 135.

⁴⁹ Federici, p. 135.

to the professionalisation of feminist discourse and practices of the 1970s. As Waugh comments, ‘the seventies and eighties saw a “woman-centered” publishing boom of unprecedented scale’.⁵⁰ This publishing boom coexisted with an epistemological one: in the academy, the professionalisation of feminist discourse resulted in the increasing ‘theorisation of [women’s] writerly practice in the 1970s and 1980s’, though the first conference exclusively dedicated to women’s writing in the UK was only organized in 1984.⁵¹ Women established outlets as varied as publishing houses, independent bookshops, and created their own media – zines, newspapers, magazines – in a generalised move to address a growing need for a more diversified market. Laurel Forster observes that ‘control over the printed word, and its production, was seized upon as a potential portal to power’.⁵² In the process, those women involved in the creation of profit-earning feminist businesses found themselves having to negotiate the difficult relationship between gender, activism, capitalism, and the workplace.

Critics have highlighted the complexity of coupling a feminist approach with the demands of business. Forster articulates the centrality of print culture to the feminist movement, labelling it as a form of activism. Yet, she writes,

Groups were neither always wholly separatist, nor always entirely in sisterly accord, and they variously reacted against, and yet also relied upon, the mainstream press. Feminist print cultures have always had relationships with other kinds of publishing organisations, and interventions into the male-dominated professions of printing and publishing were neither straightforward nor unproblematic for women. The point of similarity was to bring all manner of women’s expression to print, and the feminist activism may be discerned in intention and experimentation, in the giving of time,

⁵⁰ Waugh, p. 199.

⁵¹ Simons and Fullbrook, p. 1.

⁵² Laurel Forster, ‘Spreading the Word: Feminist Print Cultures and the Women’s Liberation Movement’, *Women’s History Review*, 25.5 (2016), 812–31 (p. 812) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1132878>>.

energy and commitment to a practical claiming of the means of production of women's words.⁵³

Those presses became spaces for consciousness-raising, but they also afforded forms of learning and skill-share and supplied women with training opportunities. The stories of those women who took part in the publishing and journalistic enterprises of the seventies and eighties evidence that such experiments were not, however, always safe from the constraints and demands of any other commercial venture. As Zoe Strimpel writes, employees of the feminist magazine *Spare Rib* were paid 'around £30 per week in the early 1980s (about £105 today)'.⁵⁴ She notes, however, that 'negligible pay was only possible in the particular setting of the 1970s and first part of the 1980s, thanks to squatting culture, the dole, and – in London – substantial aid from the Greater London Council', but such arrangements were not those chosen by all activists at the time.⁵⁵

In an interview recorded for the BBC programme *The Reunion*, Alexandra Pringle makes it clear that Carmen Callil, the founder of Virago, one of the most visible feminist publishing enterprises of the era, 'always had a firm capitalist eye on the world: profit was always very important to her and the way that the company was run mattered. [...] There was a hierarchy.'⁵⁶ Virago's former publicist Lennie Goodings jokingly relates her mistaken impression that 'Virago was a cooperative', and remembers being quickly corrected. The nature of those spaces in which members negotiated the demands of a quick-paced industry alongside their political beliefs could also lead to tensions in the workplace. In particular, Goodings admits,

⁵³ Forster, p. 814.

⁵⁴ Zoe Strimpel, 'The Commerce of Romance: From Edwardian to Second Wave Feminism', *The Business of Women's Words*, 2019 <<https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/businessofwomenswords/2019/06/12/the-commerce-of-romance-from-edwardian-to-second-wave-feminism/>> [accessed 21 May 2021].

⁵⁵ Strimpel.

⁵⁶ 'Virago Press', *The Reunion* (BBC 4, 2020) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000m19z>> [accessed 14 September 2020].

I think what we were not good about is boundaries, you know, because we believed very strongly – and I watch how companies behave now and I realise we didn't have an idea of cutting off your private life versus your professional life.⁵⁷

Goodings's comment hints at the problematic interrelationship between feminist discussions of the public and the private sphere and workplace politics and policies. It points to the pressures resulting from an environment in which one's subjectivity became deeply enmeshed with one's work in the process of becoming aware of the complexities of gender politics.⁵⁸

The transformation of the literary marketplace also impacted writers and readers. With *The Program Era*, Mark McGurl makes a case for the importance of the creative writing programmes created across the United States in the post-war period in literary history and the writerly profession.⁵⁹ Today, earning a Masters of Fine Arts, or MFA, may not be the sole step to a literary career, but its extent and cultural resonance certainly makes it a force to be reckoned with in the landscape of modern letters, to the extent that McGurl proposes to use it as an explanatory framework for the development of literature in postwar America.⁶⁰ According to McGurl, 'creative writing programs [did not] preclude all other forms of literary patronage or venues for a career, but [...] are the most original production of the postwar period, its most interesting and emblematic – and, yes, increasingly hegemonic – literary historical transformation'.⁶¹ Not all share McGurl's enthusiasm: the multiplication of creative writing programmes in the USA and the UK have awoken anxieties about the kind of writers and writing produced by those institutions. Writer Elif Batuman is scathing about the limitations of MFA writing, which she contends is blinkered by ahistorical formalism and

⁵⁷ 'Virago Press'.

⁵⁸ The enmeshment of feminism with business has gradually attracted more attention, indicated by projects such as the Levehulme-funded Business of Women's Words. See: 'The Business of Women's Words | Purpose and Profit in Feminist Publishing' <<https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/businessofwomenswords/>> [accessed 21 May 2021].

⁵⁹ Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁶⁰ McGurl.

⁶¹ McGurl, p. 31.

produced in ‘a knowledge vacuum’ that flattens out power dynamics in favour of performances of authenticity.⁶² Carter herself became a tutor on the UK’s first creative writing programme, at the University of East Anglia, and taught on the prestigious Iowa Writers’ Workshop course.⁶³ While her own writing is therefore not a product of such programmes, her career paralleled the rise of these institutions, and she acted as a tutelar figure in the career development of writers now acknowledged as towering figures in British and world literature, including Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, and Kazuo Ishiguro. In other words, Carter’s career development coincides with an era in which models of career construction available to writers were in deep transformation, even as the Women’s Liberation Movement pointed a searching light on women’s participation in the workplace and their contribution to structures of inequality.

Angela Carter, Literary Avant-Gardes, and the Problem of Autonomy

In the late 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s, Carter was not one of the career women decried by Federici, nor was she involved in the activist circles that fostered the growth of feminist publishing. Instead, as a young married woman in the 60s, she had followed her first husband Paul Carter to Bristol where she had failed to secure employment and decided to read English at Bristol University, having had to leave behind her position as a reporter for the *Croydon Advertiser* in London. After her separation from her husband in 1969, she embarked on a two-year stay in Japan, living off various writing and hostess jobs. Carter scholarship often acknowledges that this period of financial precariousness played a formative part in her understanding of her career. Recent scholarly criticism has particularly highlighted the importance of her early years in creating her identity as a writer and what is often described as

⁶² Elif Batuman, ‘Get a Real Degree’, *London Review of Books*, 23 September 2010 <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v32/n18/elif-batuman/get-a-real-degree>> [accessed 28 May 2021].

⁶³ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 365.

a feminist awakening following her time in Japan. Yet, the journals that document Carter's early twenties testify to her attempt at self-positioning as an intellectual through a male lineage. Scott A. Dimovitz points to Carter's journals in which she admonishes herself to '[w]ork hard. Be rational. Think.' and develop 'the iron, academic-style discipline of a Freud or a Marx; & I'd be the first (I suspect) woman to achieve it.'⁶⁴ Dimovitz contends that those early private texts show that '[t]o be the intellectual and extraordinary woman she wanted to be, [Carter] had to identify with maleness and its attendant aggressiveness'.⁶⁵ This paradox does not recede with the unfolding of Carter's career, which is marked by her engagement with a male cultural and literary heritage. The phenomenon is summarised by Susan Rubin Suleiman as a 'double allegiance – on the one hand, to the formal experiments and some of the cultural aspirations of the historical male avant-gardes; on the other hand, to the feminist critique of dominant sexual ideologies, including some of the very same avant-gardes'.⁶⁶ Suleiman distinguishes between 'substantive (ideological and existential)' and 'formal allegiance'.⁶⁷ I suggest Carter's reflections on authorship and the value of art further complicate her identification with her male role models by showing her understanding of the institutions of cultural and writerly life and of the power dynamics embedded therein.

Using Suleiman's framework of double allegiance, critics such as Rebecca Munford, Anna Watz, and Heidi Yeandle identify a similar tension throughout Carter's referencing of the Gothic, Surrealism, and Western philosophy.⁶⁸ Munford provocatively suggests Carter's dramatization of this tension in the two figures of Justine and Juliette, the heroines of her essay

⁶⁴ Angela Carter Papers, Add MS88899/1/100, cited in Scott A. Dimovitz, *Angela Carter: Surrealist, Psychologist, Moral Pornographer* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2016), p. 27.

⁶⁵ Dimovitz, p. 27.

⁶⁶ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 162–63.

⁶⁷ Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*, p. 162.

⁶⁸ Rebecca Munford, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Anna Watz, *Angela Carter and Surrealism: 'A Feminist Libertarian Aesthetic'* (Routledge, 2016); Heidi Yeandle, *Angela Carter and Western Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

The Sadeian Woman (1979), can be construed as ‘[a]nticipating 1990s-post-feminist notions of “power feminism” as a corrective to (second wave) “victim feminism”’.⁶⁹ Carter’s portrayal of ‘the suffering Justine and the sexually aggressive Juliette’ dramatizes ‘the ostensibly dichotomous positions of the female victim and the female aggressor within a history of Gothic representation and discourse’.⁷⁰ In *The Sadeian Woman*, Juliette is portrayed as ‘a Nietzschean superwoman, which is to say, a woman who has transcended her gender but not the contradictions inherent in it’.⁷¹ Juliette’s individualistic strategies and her assumption of violent behaviours ultimately do little for other women. In Carter’s analysis, Juliette’s liberation can only come to fruition if she follows a code of conduct traditionally gendered as male although it is, as Carter shows, ultimately disjoined from gender identity. The tension between individual freedom and collective liberation is central to many of Carter’s fictional texts, in which this divide is often set against the question of creative work, mediated through references to male avant-garde figures such as Charles Baudelaire, André Breton, and Georges Bataille. Carter’s deft use of literary references ranging from the gothic to Surrealism thus bespeaks her attraction to marginal literary genres and currents while serving as a reflection on the conditions of creativity. This thesis attends not only to Carter’s aesthetic affiliations to various artistic vanguards, but also to what her vision of herself as writer, passed on to us through published and unpublished materials, owes to the artistic avant-Garde as an institution with specific practices and agents.

There is one crucial material difference between Carter and her male avant-garde models, bitterly observed by the author herself. In an early journal, as she is reading American poet Jack Kerouac, Carter stops to write: ‘I’m upset because I’m not a beat, actually, & never

⁶⁹ Rebecca Munford, “‘The Desecration of the Temple’; or, “Sexuality as Terrorism”?: Angela Carter’s (Post-)Feminist Gothic Heroines’, *Gothic Studies*, 9.2 (2007), 58–70 (p. 63) <<https://doi.org/10.7227/GS.9.2.7>>.

⁷⁰ Munford, “‘The Desecration of the Temple’; or, “Sexuality as Terrorism”?”, p. 63.

⁷¹ Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 1979), p. 98.

had the chance, was earning my living at the time, in fact'.⁷² In her self-assessment, we can begin to sketch out an image of Carter's understanding of her work: committed to her craft, but at odds with a bohemian male avant-garde whose image was grounded in a form of social and professional opposition to the norm and, at least notionally, to the association of art with economic value. Critics who have examined Carter's relationship with a variety of literary avant-garde models have tended to shirk the question of her writing as a source of income and her portrayal of the role of the writer as a figure enmeshed in specific social dynamics. Gender alone does not suffice to give an account of Carter's position in the literary market, and an understanding of oppression predicated solely on gender is bound to provide a limited analysis of living and working conditions, as demonstrated by bell hooks in her critique of the feminist movement's emphasis on gender in the 1960s and 1970s: '[f]eminist analyses of woman's lot tend to focus exclusively on gender and do not provide a solid foundation on which to construct feminist theory'.⁷³ The figure of the woman writer only provides a limited lens, if one fails to consider the other factors – race, class, religion, sexuality – likely to impact and shape a life. This thesis touches on the limits of such a figure.

On a commercial level, it bears noting that Carter's aesthetic investment in experimental literary models did not automatically result in placing her outside the so-called mainstream. In fact, Merja Makinen contends that

[i]n Britain, Angela Carter – like Morrison and Hulme – has been published by mainstream publishers from the beginning. The publishing history for her hardback fiction runs: Heinemann 1966-70, Hart Davis 1971-2, Gollancz 1977-84, Chatto &

⁷² London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/88, Angela Carter Papers, Journal (1962 – 1963)'.

⁷³ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 15.

Windus 1984-92. As far as marketing and distribution are concerned, Carter has always been presented directly to mainstream audiences.⁷⁴

In Makinen's opinion, Carter's commitment to radical literary and political experimentations in her work have therefore not necessarily confined her to confidential distribution channels. Conversely, however, such frequent changes of publishers would arguably have created a less stable environment for growing an audience, but this position alone would not have necessarily been a guarantee of resistance. In a contemporary context, Brouillette suggests, '[t]he artist has to appear as that person who is not quite amenable to her own participation in "the process of valorization", while her resistance to it is precisely what makes her work valuable'.⁷⁵ Carter's agile straddling of the mainstream and countercultural thought may well be at the core of the 'political correctness' which some critics held against her.⁷⁶ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to tease out the full extent of the consequences of this situation for the contemporary literary landscape or to explore the extent of Carter's legacy, I suggest that her negotiation of this uneasy position may well have provided one model for writers now interested in forging themselves a writerly career and in combining feminist politics with the imperative for an income.

Carter's assumption or rejection of certain traits associated with avant-garde authorship has a long history. Bourdieu charts the elaboration of practices, institutions, agents, and norms that constitute a 'literary field' with distinct social characteristics.⁷⁷ He portrays a process whereby cultural production becomes associated with disinterestedness and separated from bourgeois values of productivity and accumulation of wealth, in an act of deliberate opposition

⁷⁴ Merja Makinen, 'Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" and the Decolonization of Feminine Sexuality', *Feminist Review*, 42, 1992, 2-15 (p. 7) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1395125>>.

⁷⁵ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 51.

⁷⁶ Hermione Lee, "'A Room of One's Own, or A Bloody Chamber?': Angela Carter and Political Correctness", in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Rev. and updated ed (London: Virago, 2007), pp. 315-28.

⁷⁷ Bourdieu.

to the values of the second French Empire, resulting in ‘an inverted economic world: those who enter it have an interest in disinterestedness’.⁷⁸ In Bourdieu’s account, figures such as French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821 – 1867) and novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821 – 1880) hold a crucial position in Bohemia’s self-articulation as a defined group whose aesthetic, ethical, and political position leaves them at odds both with authors interested in art for profit-making and with those engaged in literature as a political tool. Bourdieu’s study exemplifies the necessity to contend with

the space of the artistic *position-takings*, both actual and potential, which was the context for the formulation of the artistic project, and which we may assume, as a hypothesis, is homologous with the space of positions in the field of production itself [...].⁷⁹

This artistic space includes ‘[t]he hierarchy of genres, and within them the relative legitimacy of styles and authors’.⁸⁰ Bourdieu demonstrates this hierarchy and writers’ practices to be the result of intense negotiations and conflicts, starting with the opposition to bourgeois norms. Art for art’s sake stands out as a social and ethical construction in the same right as socially engaged art. Bourdieu suggests that it stands in a position of dual opposition, which he characterises as a ‘double rupture’: to politically committed works on the one hand, and to bourgeois art and values on the other.⁸¹

This model held fast beyond the nineteenth century and went through several iterations. Brouillette notes that the period following the Second World War, for example, was marked by novels characterised by what she labels ‘apolitical lyricism’.⁸² As Brouillette argues, by that

⁷⁸ Bourdieu, p. 216.

⁷⁹ Bourdieu, pp. 87–88.

⁸⁰ Bourdieu, p. 89.

⁸¹ Bourdieu, p. 77.

⁸² Brouillette, p. 39.

time, art that alleged social and economic independence had paradoxically become endowed with political currency by the context of the Cold War:

many mainstream US literary writers and critics stressed the value of the literary as an expression of personal experience in resistance to totalitarianism, communism, and ‘group think’. [...] [T]hey maintained that literature at its best could only be evidence of the superior value of the individual’s inner life, understood as automatically autonomous and impervious and never determined by any outside forces of ideology or state.⁸³

Carter, I contend, positions herself against proponents of interiority as the ultimate end of art. The third and fourth chapter of this thesis focus on Carter’s critique of models that centre the individual artist’s mental life at the expense of an investment in the social world. I analyse her depiction of Desiderio’s *ennui*-like apathy and Evelyn’s inept reliance on the model of the male artist to unpack Carter’s critique of the social and political underpinnings of such a position, which she repeatedly shows to be reliant on the labour of usually female and racialised subjects.⁸⁴

By the late twentieth century, however, the incorporation of the avant-garde model of literary authorship into capitalist discourses of productivity erodes the autonomy of the bohemia. Brouillette contends that the Bohemian figure’s individualistic proclivities accelerated its incorporation and elevation to the rank of a desirable lifestyle in capitalist society:

⁸³ Sarah Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 39. Eric Bennett further identifies the convergence between a literary style of writing, institutions such as the Iowa Writers’ Workshop and the *Paris Review*, and a political agenda driven by the Cold War context. Eric Bennett, *Workshops of Empire: Stegner, Engle, and American Creative Writing During the Cold War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015).

⁸⁴ Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (London: Penguin Books, 2011); Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (London: Virago Press, 1982).

In a sense, autonomous bohemia disappeared with its generalization. A romanticized image of the artist's oppositional work has become an attractive model for general self-fashioning.⁸⁵

Brouillette historicises the dissolution of the figure of the artist into managerial productivity models as a process which, as Carter was beginning to write, had just started to speed up. Instead of the nineteenth-century '*poète maudit*', whose isolation deprived him of the material comforts of bourgeois life while guaranteeing the authenticity of his artistic output, Brouillette continues,

influential psychologists and management theorists have tended to present study of artists as straightforward evidence that the social is a form of constraint to be transcended by the effective working self [...].⁸⁶

Paradoxically, then, Brouillette argues, the artist's working pattern was turned into a model. His or her ability to work alone and produce creative works were seen as guarantees of profit and contributed to redefine the conditions of career success, understood as an individualistic process of emancipation from external obligations and social constraints. This model pits artistic creativity against standardized work:

[t]he artist-author, herself subject to market control and rational planning, has been for some time now a profitable, pervasive, regulated symbol of autonomy from routine, standardized, mechanized production hostile to individuals [...].⁸⁷

However, in so doing, those studies that pitted the artist against standardized working models also contributed to legitimizing pathological models of work whose consequences weigh heavily on current conceptions of the role of culture in cementing a neoliberal political consensus. An example of this phenomenon, Brouillette suggests, is '[t]he rise of the writer-

⁸⁵ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 53.

⁸⁶ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 56.

⁸⁷ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 54.

consultant', which 'clearly signals the use of culture as an aid to gentrification'.⁸⁸ Brouillette's focus is on the consequences of this productivity model for the contemporary era, particularly its impact on policy makers. The conclusion of this thesis delineates some consequences of the transformation of the figure of the (woman) artist and to the impact of Carter as a canonical figure of reference to some contemporary British writers and artists. However, the majority of this work will be focused on Carter's negotiation of the transformations of the avant-garde and writerly labour during her career, and particularly the key decade of the 1970s, which occupies the greater part of this thesis.

Carter's fictional texts – novels and short fiction – repeatedly portray characters negotiating their position in the workforce. This is also true of her earlier works. The main protagonists of *Shadow Dance* (1966), Honeybuzzard and Morris, manage an antiques shop.⁸⁹ The protagonist of *Several Perceptions* (1968), Joseph, is presented as unable to fit in socially while his parents have submitted to society's demands that they engage in repetitive labour:

His father was a newsagent and tobacconist who worked hard all his life. His mother was just an ordinary housewife who worked hard all her life. [...] His bewildered father surveyed a son who was hardly there at all and said from time to time: 'But we've always done the best for you, I can't understand it' [...].⁹⁰

Joseph's inability to choose a professional path leaves him in a situation of mental and economic instability. Gamble notes that the portrayal of Joseph's mental states is influenced by Ronald D. Laing's *The Divided Self* (1960) and its study of schizophrenia.⁹¹ If considered from a sociological perspective, Joseph's social maladaptation recasts the drama of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* hero in a post-war context. Bourdieu describes this process as that of *illusio*. Adhesion to any social role, Bourdieu claims, requires an attitude akin to the

⁸⁸ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 11.

⁸⁹ Angela Carter, *Shadow Dance* (London: Virago Press, 2004).

⁹⁰ Angela Carter, *Several Perceptions* (London: Virago Press, 2011), p. 7.

⁹¹ Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 71.

suspension of disbelief which allows a reader to accept the contents of a story: '[a]t the basis of the functioning of all social fields, whether the literary field or that of power, there is the *illusion*, the investment in the game'.⁹² Discussing the aimlessness of Gustave Flaubert's hero Frédéric in *L'Education Sentimentale*, Bourdieu notes that this position might well be 'grounded in the powerlessness to take the real – that is, the stakes of games called serious – seriously'.⁹³

Ultimately, Joseph and a number of Carter's protagonists are similarly at pains to make sense of their social trajectory, an exploration which tends to follow along gender lines. Strikingly, while the male protagonists of Carter's early novels are shown revelling in melancholy and *ennui*, her later women performers are characterised by an enterprising, creative spirit. The following chapters will concern themselves with the study of such examples of creative work, which can be both successful and thwarted. In particular, in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972), Desiderio is a civil servant embroiled in a bureaucratic maze who falls prey to the seductions of Doctor Hoffman's reality-distorting invention, a parodic implement which exposes the pitfalls of genius gone wrong. *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) stages Evelyn's social ineptitude as a parody of a male intellectual unable to see beyond socially repressive categories, while Leilah, the guerrillera moonlighting as a sex worker, is presented as a figure of autonomous, but perilous labour. Finally, Carter's last two novels, *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991), addressed in my concluding chapter, consistently centre the figure of the female performer, exploring the career of a world-renowned aerialist and the unstable fortunes of two freelance music-hall dancers.⁹⁴

⁹² Bourdieu, p. 33.

⁹³ Bourdieu, p. 33.

⁹⁴ Angela Carter, *Nights At The Circus* (London: Random House, 2012); Angela Carter, *Wise Children* (London: Vintage Books, 2006).

Angela Carter's Archive

Carter's archive documents her intellectual progress and informs my investigation of her professional trajectory. The availability of Carter's private and unpublished writings collected at the British Library has spawned a number of studies generally focused on her journals and drafts. They have added themselves to a pre-existing tradition of works focused on Carter's life and authored by her own friends and, in one case, a former lover: Lorna Sage's *Angela Carter* (1994), Susannah Clapp's *A Card from Angela Carter* (2012), and, most recently, Sozo Araki's *Seduced by Japan: A Memoir of the Days Spent with Angela Carter* (2018). Sage's and Clapp's books reflect their friendship with Carter: Sage was Carter's critic and colleague at the University of East Anglia, while Clapp became Carter's literary executor, resulting in more personal accounts. The availability of archives has enabled scholars outside the writer's circle to take a biographical angle, with Edmund Gordon's *The Invention of Angela Carter* (2016) forming the most prominent example.⁹⁵ Another category of scholarship has sought to illuminate connections between Carter's writings and life: Gamble's *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (2006), published prior to the opening of the archives, Scott A. Dimovitz's *Angela Carter: Surrealist, Psychologist, Moral Pornographer* (2016), and Yukuta Okuhata's *Angela Carter's Critique of Her Contemporary World: Politics, History, and Mortality* (2021). Dimovitz's *Angela Carter: Surrealist, Psychologist, Moral Pornographer* is less of a biographical study in scope, but draws heavily on Carter's private writings to detect evidence of her intellectual and political progress.

In this thesis, I draw on Carter's private writing to elaborate an image of the writer at work, but also consider other archival objects: flyers, and debris, whose purpose is not

⁹⁵ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*; Lorna Sage, *Angela Carter, Writers and Their Work*, 2nd ed (Tavistock: Northcote House in association with The British Council, 2007); Sozo Araki, *Seduced by Japan: A Memoir of the Days Spent with Angela Carter with 'Her Side of the Story' Written by Natsumi Ikoma*, trans. by Natsumi Ikoma (Tokyo: Eihosha, 2018); Yutaka Okuhata, *Angela Carter's Critique of Her Contemporary World: Politics, History, and Mortality* (Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Warszawa, Wien: Peter Lang, 2021) <<https://doi.org/10.3726/b17500>>.

immediately apparent, but gives an account of the contingencies that go into the composition of a text. Paul J. Voss and Marta L. Werner argue that

the archive's dream of perfect order is disturbed by the nightmare of its random, heterogeneous, and often unruly contents. The dream of those secret or disconcerting elements ('errors', 'garbage') located at its outermost edges or in its deepest recesses defies codification and unsettled memory and context.⁹⁶

The idea of 'errors' or 'garbage' echoes Carolyn Steedman's warning about the assumed legibility and rationality of the archive, 'made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there'.⁹⁷ These 'mad fragmentations', the 'random, heterogenous, and often unruly' elements that form the archive disrupt its conceptualization as a controlled space, but give us a clue as to Carter's interest in marginal and transient documents.⁹⁸ I suggest that her recuperation of advertising and other ephemera form part of her interest in counterculture, and reflect a paradoxical process of incorporation within, and resistance to, commodification processes, as Carter turns to media criticism to inform her writing.

First acquired by the British Library in 2006, the Angela Carter Papers collection has since been fully catalogued and made available to researchers. It remains what Ian Hamilton describes as a "'live" estate' and is not in the public domain.⁹⁹ As such, it is not only subject to copyright, but also to various agencies and agendas. While some of Carter's closest friends

⁹⁶ Paul J. Voss and Marta L. Werner, 'Toward a Poetics of the Archive: Introduction', *Studies in the Literary Imagination; Atlanta, Ga.*, 32.1 (1999), i–viii (p. ii).

⁹⁷ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 68.

⁹⁸ Steedman, p. 68.

⁹⁹ Unpublished writings are currently ruled by separate copyright laws until 2039. Copyright for published writing, defined by a European Union directive on Term of Copyright (1996), applies for 70 years after an author's death. Under this legislation, Angela Carter's work will remain in copyright until 2062. Ian Hamilton, *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), p. 293; Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, pp. 419–20; David C. Sutton, 'The WATCH File: Writers, Artists and Their Copyright Holders', *Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin* <<http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/watch/uk.cfm>> [accessed 12 April 2018].

are now dead (her friend, Lorna Sage, but also her brother Hugh Stalker and her former agent Deborah Rogers), many more potential witnesses, friends, family members or former acquaintances are still alive and continue to come forward, enabling the production of new testimonies and the accumulation of additional documents. The collection contains manuscripts, typewritten copies of her novels, journals, but also other items more tenuously connected to her writing career, including family memorabilia. Indeed, in addition to several unfinished writing projects, the collection includes a scrapbook presumably created by Carter's father,¹⁰⁰ a Peace Souvenir,¹⁰¹ and several 'Objects'.¹⁰² The 'Objects' comprise a military insignia of the Scots Guards, apparently cut out from a uniform, as well as a King's Medal from 1914-1915, awarded by the London County Council. Gamble has elucidated the importance and complexity of Carter's narration of her own family history; yet, the current organisation of those objects does not clearly distinguish between eras and possessors and poses several challenges in recontextualisation.¹⁰³ For example, a key ring with a picture of Carter's son, Alexander, features among the objects alongside the framed portrait of an anonymous 'Victorian child'. Collections of carefully organised cigarette card albums, that seem to date from the early twentieth century, are marked as 'Research Material' despite their less than apparent connection to Carter's writing;¹⁰⁴ the collection also includes miscellaneous collections of catalogues and articles¹⁰⁵ and printed ephemera.¹⁰⁶ It is also worth noting that many of the objects kept at the British Library seem to be of little economic, or even interpretative value, sometimes including scraps, such as an orange wrapping paper.¹⁰⁷ These

¹⁰⁰ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/6/11, Angela Carter Papers, 'Scrapbook'.

¹⁰¹ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/6/10, Angela Carter Papers, 'Peace Souvenir'.

¹⁰² London, British Library, Add MS 88899/6/13, Angela Carter Papers, 'Objects'.

¹⁰³ Gamble, *Angela Carter*.

¹⁰⁴ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/17, Angela Carter Papers, 'Cigarette Card Albums (nd)'.

¹⁰⁵ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/15, Angela Carter Papers, 'Catalogues and Articles (1951, 1981 – 1990, nd)'.

¹⁰⁶ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/16, Angela Carter Papers, 'Printed Ephemera (1985 – 1991, nd)'.

¹⁰⁷ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/16, Angela Carter Papers, 'Printed Ephemera (1985 – 1991, nd)'.

fragments suggest the randomness of ‘the range of things that get collected and the things that disappear’ over the course of a life and through the process of archival selection.¹⁰⁸

Carter’s construction of an authorial voice and persona coincides with reflections on the self and its authenticity that feeds into the 1960s subcultures and bohemian milieu alongside which she reached her maturity as a writer. Performance has often been read as a key component of this process. As a result, Carter’s personal papers pose a challenge in authenticity, and challenge readers’ assumptions about their transparency. Anna Watz states that ‘some of the papers in the archive, most notably Carter’s journals, are uncharacteristically exposing and frank’.¹⁰⁹ Dimovitz similarly appears to assume honesty on Carter’s part in reading Carter’s archives to chart the progression of her writing and her intimate relationships. Yet some of his own readings about gender and sexual difference reveal a blurring of authorial voices and intentions, as in his account of Carter’s doubts about whether her ‘radicalization had gone too far, excluding the possibility of mutual connection between self and other; after all, her serial sadomasochistic relationships in her personal life seemed to preclude any possibility of mutual affection, as we have seen’.¹¹⁰ Dimovitz’s use of free indirect speech is telling of an ambivalence in approaching papers authored by Carter as a faithful account of her internal life rather than as fleeting documents of a life in flux, and a persona flexible to the demands of her career. This reading contrasts radically with Heidi Yeandle’s, who casts severe doubts over the sincerity of Carter’s most personal writing, citing their use of ‘metacommentary’ as evidence that

¹⁰⁸ Daisy Hay, ‘Hair in the Disraeli Papers: A Victorian Harvest’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19.3 (2014), 332–45 (p. 333) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2014.947180>>.

¹⁰⁹ Watz, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Dimovitz, p. 138.

Carter's journals become more self-conscious, less personal and more self-aware of the possibility that they will be consulted by future scholars as time progresses, in line with her growing critical acclaim.¹¹¹

Clapp's characterisation of the author as 'careful' similarly draws attention to Carter's public persona as a key component of her writing.¹¹² Carter's personal writings, it seems, eschew simple assumptions about the equation between unpublished, intimate material, and authentic access to the writer's inner life.

Indeed, James A. Knapp argues that we should be wary of replacing the 'idealized notions of both text and author' with a blind trust in archives 'to provide a stable starting point from which to launch a more accurate account of the processes of cultural production'.¹¹³ The idealised purity of the 'Archive' contrasts with the variety of voices that make up the Carter archive. Gordon's biography, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, published by Chatto & Windus, is the first full-length biography of Carter to benefit from unrestricted access to the Carter archives, in addition to multiple interviews with the author's friends and relatives. In integrating multiple voices to his account of Carter's life and career, Gordon makes room for the gap between Carter's depictions of herself and those offered by the very many witnesses of her life. His portrayal sketches out an image of Carter as multiple, her legacy at times hotly disputed and unstable: 'her closest friends [...] have told me things that can't be true', he surmises, while Carter herself 'wasn't always a reliable witness to her own life'.¹¹⁴ Such a critical distance is particularly essential as the Carter archives continue to expand and transform, and as differing accounts of the writer's life point to the risks involved in dealing with personal material. Sozo Araki's memoir *Seduced by Japan* is a case in point of the

¹¹¹ Watz, *Angela Carter and Surrealism*, p.13, and Heidi Yeandle, *Angela Carter and Western Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.7 – 8.

¹¹² Susannah Clapp, *A Card From Angela Carter*, (London: Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2016), p. 5.

¹¹³ James A. Knapp, "'Ocular Proof': Archival Revelations and Aesthetic Response", *Poetics Today*, 4, 2003, p. 722 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/03335372-24-4-695>>.

¹¹⁴ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. xvi.

complex sedimentation of materials that have come to constitute the Carter archives. Owing to his status as Carter's past lover, Araki's testimony proves alternatively flawed and informative. Its author's constant attempts at self-legitimation through reminders of his relationship with Carter and his insights on her perception of Japanese culture are interspersed with passages that lend more space to Araki's own prejudices and agenda than to Carter's life, creating the impression of a narrator invested in establishing his own writerly persona through his testimony of another's life. His memoir does have the benefit of shedding light on unexplored racial dynamics at work in Carter's stay in Japan. Araki's memoir portrays Carter in pathologizing terms as 'a girl disproportionately mature in her head but unable to socialize with others'; but it simultaneously adds a critical angle to Carter's status as a white woman bringing her own racialised stereotypes to Japan, looking down on 'the way Japanese women tried to make themselves look cute and childish, and how they also pretended to be excessively conservative and domestic'.¹¹⁵

Carter's published personal writing was characterised by a tendency to insert counterfactual elements in openly autobiographical texts. It may therefore be difficult to know whether her unpublished texts offer an entirely faithful account, or whether we should be making room for the inaccuracies and omissions of intimate writings. Maria Tamboukou helpfully forges the notion of narrative *persona* as a figure that avoids both the pitfalls of dematerialising selfhood and the risks of reifying textual evidence. Drawing on her extensive research into the archives of nineteenth-century French seamstress and feminist activist Désirée Véret-Gay, Tamboukou recounts her effort to identify a way of speaking to 'Désirée''s involvement in history without underestimating the distance separating the researcher and her subject: this persona, she writes,

¹¹⁵ Araki, pp. 29 and 65.

becomes 'a third person': she cannot be conflated with 'the real Désirée', since she is always, already impossible to pin down, but still she becomes an interlocutor with me as a feminist researcher who reads and inserts Désirée's narratives in the archives of feminist history.¹¹⁶

Acknowledging a distance between the subject of the letters and our narrative reconstruction, according to Tamboukou, we also elaborate a more ethical position vis-à-vis the subjects of our research. Using Hannah Arendt's analysis of the persona and its transition from stage creation to legal entity, Tamboukou continues:

[W]hat I take from Arendt is the figure of 'the persona' as acting/performing in the public sphere, while at the same time bearing rights that I, as a feminist narrative researcher, recognise and honour.¹¹⁷

This ethical reconstruction of a narrative persona that is neither the elusive construct of performance nor pretends to replace the real writing subject proves useful to think about the professional writer, whose writing inevitably involves their subjectivity at the same time as it mediates it for their readership.

In this thesis, I contextualise this investigation of Carter's persona through discussions on the role of the media launched by McLuhan but also such thinkers as Guy Debord and debates engendered by the advent of countercultural movements such as punk in the 1970s and the Greenham protest in the 1980s, all of which offer different perspectives on the effect of technology and modernity on the subject.¹¹⁸ I contend that Carter's use of media theory was an

¹¹⁶ Maria Tamboukou, 'Rethinking the Subject in Feminist Research: Narrative Personae and Stories of "the Real"', *Textual Practice*, 32.6 (2018), 939–55 (p. 945) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2018.1486541>>.

¹¹⁷ Tamboukou, p. 945.

¹¹⁸ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001); Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Message*, ed. by Jerome Agel (London; New York; Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008); Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 2010); Sasha Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham* (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1995); Elaine Titcombe, 'Women Activists: Rewriting Greenham's History', *Women's History Review*, 22.2 (2013), 310–29 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2012.726118>>; Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1997).

intellectual touchstone in her assessment of the future of literature that proved particularly useful in her writing about popular culture, circulated through her journalism. Ultimately, Carter's interest in popular culture appears to further rather than disrupt a hierarchy between legitimate forms of culture and other productions. Yet, her journalistic writing reveals an intent to train her readers in deciphering culture which draws her close to the field of Cultural Studies.

The 1970s, Subculture, and the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies

In one of the most recent efforts to date to connect Carter to the Avant-garde of her time, Stephen E. Hunt paints a portrait of the Bohemian Bristol in which Carter spent her formative years.¹¹⁹ Hunt's narrative is rather focused on Bristol's countercultural circles than on Carter herself, but his depiction at least suggests that Carter was steeped in an ebullient intellectual and artistic atmosphere in which her social circles and her own inclusion in the Bristol Folk Revival, alongside her then-husband Paul Carter, would have afforded her access. Hunt aptly summarises Carter's ambiguous position vis-à-vis the 1960s artistic movements:

Carter was aware of the enduring tension between the necessary, creative impulse for individual expression, and aspirations for collective liberation; potentially divergent energies that the 1960s counterculture struggled to integrate and reconcile.¹²⁰

Catherine Spooner's discussion of Carter's interest in subcultural style similarly points to Carter's awareness of the limits of any movement purporting to achieve liberation through the deconstruction afforded by the *bricolage* of identity signifiers.¹²¹ Alan Sinfield summarises the paradox facing 1990s subcultures by commenting that '[b]ecause the prime strategy of ideology is to naturalize itself, it has been tempting to suppose that virtually any disruption of

¹¹⁹ Stephen E. Hunt, *Angela Carter's 'Provincial Bohemia': The Counterculture in 1960s and 1970s Bristol and Bath*, Bristol Radical Pamphleteer (Bristol: Bristol Radical History Group, 2020).

¹²⁰ Hunt, p. 43.

¹²¹ Catherine Spooner, "'Clothes Are Our Weapons': Dandyism, Fashion, and Subcultural Style in Angela Carter's Fiction of the 1960s", in *The Arts of Angela Carter: A Cabinet of Curiosities*, ed. by Marie Mulvey-Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 166–82.

symbolic categories or levels is dissident'.¹²² Several of Carter's characters, particularly her bohemian young men, concomitantly adopt the signs of subculture and benefit from the underpinnings of bourgeois society: patriarchal violence, idleness enabled by their class. This recurring phenomenon suggests affinities between Carter's critique and the Cultural Studies' approach to popular culture.

Carter's work as a writer simultaneously appears to point to the possibilities and the limits of disruption. In so doing, it comes close to some of the tenets of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. Spooner underscores this similarity, noting that

[a]lthough critics more frequently note Carter's debt to Barthes, her approach to popular culture bears many similarities to the work done [...] by Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Angela McRobbie and others in the late 1960s and 1970s [at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies].¹²³

Spooner highlights striking resemblances between Stuart Hall's work on the Hippie movement and Carter's own criticism that the movement's emphasis on authentic individuality forecloses its political potential.

Against the elitist stance embodied by figures such as F.R. Leavis, sometimes labelled as 'Cambridge English', the critics traditionally associated with Cultural Studies, including Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Dick Hebdige, and Stuart Hall, apply the methods of criticism to texts and objects traditionally associated with low-brow culture.¹²⁴ Williams argues that this also implied a new approach to texts and their readers:

¹²² Alan Sinfield, 'Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model', *Textual Practice*, 10.2 (1996), 271–93 (p. 282).

¹²³ Spooner, pp. 167–68.

¹²⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Raymond Williams, 'Cambridge English and Beyond', *London Review of Books*, 5.12 (1983) <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v05/n12/raymond-williams/cambridge-english-and-beyond>> [accessed 20 May 2021]; Hebdige; Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London ; New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

[...] the kind of reading in which the conditions of production, in the fullest sense, can be understood in relation to both writer and reader, writing and reading. A newly active social sense of writing and reading, through the social and material historical realities of language, in a world in which it is closely and precisely known, in every act of writing and reading, that these practices connect with, are inseparable from, the whole set of social practices and relationships which defines writers and readers as active human beings, as distinct from the idealised and projected ‘authors’ and ‘trained readers’ who are assumed to float, guarded and privileged, above the rough, divisive and diverse world of which, by some alchemy, they nevertheless hold the essential secret.¹²⁵

This reading anchored in the material practice of writing informs my own analysis of Carter. Williams’s stance assumed a reconsideration of works generally held to be outside the scope of literary criticism. It also implied ‘attention to the “non-reading public”’ and a reconsideration of what cultures of literacy were valued.¹²⁶ Carter’s work repeatedly avails itself of this openness to new objects of cultural study, such as the romance, the marketing flyer, the postcard, or comic books, although, as I will argue, not to an extent that completely absolves them from implicit judgements and hierarchy. In this way, despite her reservations vis-à-vis beliefs in the autonomy of the work of art, Carter appears to embrace implicit hierarchies between the literary and the non-literary that influence her work.

Deconstructing the Politics of Autonomy

The first chapter of this thesis constructs a *persona* for Carter, using archival evidence and published writing to consider her reflection on women’s role in the business of writing. Using the ‘Xmas Wire from Greenham’ held at the British Library as my entry point, I consider the material underpinnings of Carter’s career and what they can teach the attentive reader about

¹²⁵ Williams, ‘Cambridge English and Beyond’.

¹²⁶ Williams, ‘Cambridge English and Beyond’.

her interest in the labour of writing. In particular, I analyse Carter's skilful construction of a persona invested in the aesthetic and ethics associated with the bohemia while acknowledging its rising incorporation into the mass market. I read *Wise Children*, her last published novel, as a self-reflective enterprise in which Carter considers the consequences of the end of artistic autonomy for creation.

The second chapter of this thesis considers Carter's understudied journalism to sketch out a longitudinal view of her writing career outside her literary fiction. It delves into Carter's unpublished drafts to consider the role of these journalistic essays in enriching her literary fiction and sees her body of journalism as a site from which Carter negotiated her position as a writer in the literary market while engaging in a reflection on the role of media. It discusses the way Carter's essays repeatedly deconstruct the romance as a particularly potent narrative form prevalent in mass-produced cultural items of all kinds and suggests that Carter thus solidifies her position in the market itself as a critic who both stands apart and profits from the state of the market, while also attempting to bring light on the conditions of cultural production.

The third chapter examines Carter's speculative fiction of the 1970s. It argues that her novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) articulates Carter's reflection on new media with her prolonged engagement with the question of artistic autonomy. In this chapter, I analyse Carter's exploration of *ennui* as a set of attitudes associated with the artistic Avant-garde. In an era characterised by media proliferation, embodied in the machines of Doctor Hoffman and the spectacularised order of Desiderio's state, Carter suggests, *ennui* embodies a form of obdurate resistance to passive spectatorship and involvement. However, Desiderio's final incorporation in state structures illustrates the fact that the *poète maudit's* contempt for mass culture does not offer politically potent means of resisting hegemony.

The fourth chapter of this thesis considers Carter's writing on fashion as a less overt continuation of her critique of media environments and reflection on the work of cultural

producers. It argues that Carter's 1970s fashion criticism reveals her growing ambivalence towards notions of dressing the self up and her disillusionment with 1970s countercultures as increasingly ill-equipped to resist conservative state structures and technologies. In the same gesture, however, it signals her final departure from the politics of autonomy as politically impotent. Instead, I suggest, Carter suggests a way forward for creative producers in the shape of a series of figures of female performers – from Leilah in *The Passion of New Eve* to the towering figures of Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* and Dora and Nora Chance in *Wise Children*.

I conclude this thesis with a case study that presents a reading of Carter's legacy. I examine a recent adaptation of Carter's last novel, *Wise Children*, brought to the stage by director Emma Rice as part of her latest project, a theatre company also called *Wise Children*. This adaptation, which elevates Carter's work to the status of brand, also reveals Rice's identification with Carter as part of her creative process, and her embrace of a reading of Carter as a figure of entrepreneurial feminism. This conclusion thus points to the ambivalence of Carter's legacy for contemporary configurations of the woman writer, in view of Carter's own deconstruction of the figure of woman as cultural producer.

Chapter 1: Taking Her at Her Word: Angela Carter's Authorial Self

Scene: The house of Angela Carter, somewhere in South London. A back room with purple walls and scarlet architraves. In the fireplace stands a wild eye champing fairground horse. There are posters of pictures by Paul Klee, Tinguely and Joan Miró. Shelves support: a green papier mâché parrot eating a lemon; an acrobat doll scattered with glitter; flat ceramic tigers; an enormous wireless, the sort which still gets the home service; a balsa wood armadillo; a large collection of hand-thrown pots. Three mobiles are suspended from the ceiling, dangling sequinned donkeys, felt ostriches and woven angel fish.¹

This *Vogue* interview, which took place in 1985, stages Angela Carter at the height of her career alongside her friend Salman Rushdie. The conversation tackles culture, literature, and politics, with nostalgic nods to the Sixties, which Carter deems '[m]orally very good. [...] You *didn't lay up riches*' [emphasis in original].² The interviewer, Helen Simpson, describes Carter's colourful home in the introduction to her feature with a relish perceptible in her attention to the eccentric details and objects that populate the writer's house. The passage is reminiscent of a famous photograph in which Carter is presented sitting, or rather, slouching at her desk, in her office at 107, The Chase, in Clapham.³ At her feet, a basket full of paper; behind her, a colourful tapestry, a patterned piece of fabric, piles of vinyl records, and boxes. Yuriko Saito remarks that 'clutter' can become part of a 'visual biography', as well as a materialization of our memories in the shape of our possessions, but the image of a disorderly Angela Carter should

¹ Helen Simpson, 'Hackle Raisers: A Conversation Between Salman Rushdie and Angela Carter', *Vogue UK*, August 1985, pp. 133, 169.

² Simpson, p. 169.

³ The picture, which was taken by Mike Laye around 1985, features in Edmund Gordon's 2016 biography, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, in the second plate, p.335.

not deceive us.⁴ As Ali Smith notes, the picture is a *mise-en-scène* orchestrated by the photographer, the messiness of the room carefully calibrated to suggest a life of the mind.⁵ Marc O'Day jokingly comments on 'the aestheticised, subcultural, domestic geopolitics' that define Carter's characters in her early novels, and her own depiction of herself in her letters to friends.⁶ In this portrait, the photographer appears to fall prey to this staging, just as Helen Simpson appears to be in the spell of Carter's enchanted house, which bears no small resemblance to Uncle Philip's abode in *The Magic Toyshop* (1967).⁷ In fact, just like Uncle Philip, Carter kept her affairs very much in order. When narrating her first visit to the author's office after her death, her literary executor Susannah Clapp momentarily plays with the idea that she might 'find in that filing cabinet a fragment from an abandoned novel or a clutch of unhatched short stories' but expects, in fact, no such discovery, despite some 'surprises', including screenplays, poems, and drawings.⁸ A close friend of Carter's, Clapp would have been well aware of the mastery Carter exerted over her image and legacy.

In the *Vogue* interview, Carter is evidently at ease with the process of presenting her house – and herself – to the press, at one point picking out one of the objects in the room to make her point:

But the kind of *consumerism* which there is now... This present-day attitude towards money would have been inconceivable (*Picks up a jointed toy model from a shelf:*) Take this Mexican armadillo which I bought recently for twopence. Beautiful. An incredible

⁴ Russell Lynes, "Kudos for Clutter", *Architectural Digest*, 41.3 (1985), cited in Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford ; New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 158.

⁵ Ali Smith, 'Introduction', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Rev. and updated ed (London: Virago, 2007), pp. 1-41 (p. 2).

⁶ Marc O'Day, "'Mutability Is Having a Field Day': The Sixties Aura of Angela Carter's Bristol Trilogy", in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Rev. and updated ed (London: Virago, 2007), pp. 43-77 (p. 51).

⁷ O'Day, p. 51; Angela Carter, *The Magic Toyshop* (London: Virago Press, 1994).

⁸ Clapp, p. 5.

amount of care and attention has been lavished on something which is made out of tea-chest wood, junk. It was made in order to be broken. A lot of the Sixties was like that.⁹

The jump from a tourist trinket to the sixties allows Carter to suggest her own antagonism towards the current era while assimilating herself within the 1960s bohemian ethos. Referencing that era, during which she came of age, becomes a rhetorical device to oppose 1980s liberalism and its ‘*consumerism*’. Carter’s ability to manipulate her image clearly transpires here, as does the importance of the sixties in shaping her self-positioning. Her rhetorical and visual alignment with the sixties has become part of her public image. In the process, however, it has also become pliable to the demands of the literary and mediatic market. Carter’s lushly ornate house is deemed an appropriate signifier of its owner’s status, whose fame affords her an interview in no less a consumerist outlet than *Vogue*.

Starting with this anecdote risks reifying a passing comment. A journalist herself, Carter might well have scoffed at an attempt to discern and form a theory of authorial self-fashioning out of a press interview. The conflict attendant upon the nature and value of evidence and the pitfalls of authorial biography are clearly indicated by Janet Malcolm in her meta-biography *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath & Ted Hughes* (1994):

At no time, perhaps, is the power of the press so evident – and so troubling – as when some part of its steady dripping freezes into the stalactite known as ‘archival material’. Newspaper stories that were originally written to satisfy our daily hunger for idle and impersonal Schadenfreude – to excite and divert and be forgotten the next week – now take their place among serious sources of information and fact [...].¹⁰

Carter’s ability as a narrator of herself and her aptitude at handling press interviews does not automatically belie the content of her presentation in *Vogue*. It does, however, qualify my

⁹ Simpson.

¹⁰ Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath & Ted Hughes* (London: Granta Books, 2020), p. 136.

approach to ephemeral evidence as always incurring a risk of outliving its purpose when, like the armadillo, what material evidence we amass of our lives may well be better off broken to avoid commodification. Carter herself was particularly aware of the tendency of the ephemeral to survive, and of the uses of such lingering for self-presentation. In this chapter, I argue that ephemera critically register Carter's deconstruction of autonomy as a horizon for the work of art. I contend that her elaboration of her professional persona was reliant on a self-aware usage and critique of subcultural aesthetics. First, I read Carter's last published novel, her fictional memoir *Wise Children* (1991), as a model for deciphering her ethics of self-conservation and presentation. Second, I consider the practical application of such ethics in an archival object, the Xmas Wire from Greenham, which exemplifies Carter's complex relationship to subculture throughout her career.

The Archaeology of her Desk: *Wise Children*, Authorship, and the Politics of Self-Archiving

In September 2019, *The Guardian* reports that 'Angela Carter's "carnival" London home' was given its own English Heritage blue plaque in recognition of her career.¹¹ The award reflects the organisation's effort to restore parity, which is signalled by their 'Plaques for Women' campaign.¹² The scheme relies on a system of public nominations, which has been proven to result in a majority of male nominees. A candidate for nomination must have been dead for at least 20 years and adhere to certain criteria of cultural relevance. English Heritage documentation states that Blue Plaque examinees must be 'of significant public standing in a London-wide, national or international context', 'have made some important positive

¹¹ Alison Flood, 'Angela Carter's "carnival" London Home Receives Blue Plaque', *The Guardian*, 11 September 2019, Books section <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/11/angela-carters-carnival-london-home-receives-blue-plaque>> [accessed 12 September 2019].

¹² 'Blue Plaques', *English Heritage* <<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/>> [accessed 8 June 2020].

contribution to human welfare or happiness', and reached 'public recognition' or be 'regarded as eminent' by their peers.¹³ That year, Carter shared this honour with distinguished philanthropist Sir Arthur Pearson, War correspondent Martha Gelhorn, and no other than singer Bob Marley. The award of a blue plaque marks a turn in Carter's legacy. Formerly private, Carter's home has now become classified as part of the official category 'Heritage' and associated with ideas of commemoration and national memory. Her accession to this award, posthumous by definition, confirms her canonization and becomes associated with the transformation of the contemporary urban space of London into a space of national memory.

Carter's own early personal writing reveals a tendency to frame herself and others as objects for conservation. In another, unpublished interview, she referred to her life in Bristol as 'seedy and picturesque'.¹⁴ The aesthetics of old Bristol feature heavily in her early journals, in which Carter praises a day like 'a hunting print' (Add MS 88899/1/86), and imagines describing her neighbours' actions into a provincial landscape painting which she jokingly titles 'Episodes in Village Life' (Add MS 88899/1/86). Dickens features prominently: 'Old Market, the old part, is very Dickensy & "Xmas Carolly" at this time of year' and characterised by its 'rollicking, Dickensian, super abundance'; the 'chemists, inside, is superbly & genuinely Dickensy', and associated with a trope of accumulation, with its 'shiny wooden cannisters painted with impressive Latin, rows & rows of tiny wooden drawers [...], glass jars filled with indigestion tablets'.¹⁵ If it is true that, as Robert Duggan argues, '[t]he apparently permeable border between character and caricature in Dickens anticipates the marvellous personages that emerge from the fairgrounds and forests of Carter's fiction', then Carter's portrayal of countercultural Bristol as 'very Dickensian' reveals her attention to the caricatural aspects of

¹³ 'Blue Plaques'.

¹⁴ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/28, Angela Carter Papers, 'Interviews (1973 – 1992, nd).

¹⁵ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/87, Angela Carter Papers, Journal (1961 – 1962)'.

her era, but it also paves the way for her later attention to the aesthetics, ethics, and material conditions of her own self-presentation.¹⁶

According to Edmund Gordon, Carter had secured ‘a robust, somewhat cultish reputation by the end of the 1980s’.¹⁷ Yet, some commentators have suggested that Carter’s newly culturally safe position concealed the initial precariousness of her situation. Strikingly, observers appear to link Carter’s marginality with her work’s ability to shock or subvert. In 2007, for example, her friend Lorna Sage argues that

If she’d stay around, her canonization would almost certainly have been postponed. Now that her voice has been silenced, we’re left with the orphaned words on the page, which line up and behave.¹⁸

Comments such as Sage’s exude a certain anxiety towards the conditions of Carter’s entry into a slippery, implicitly mainstream canon. After her death, academics observed an ‘Angela Carter effect’ in British universities, including a proliferation of theses written on her work. Not quite contemporary anymore, Carter’s career might well have continued today, had she not died at the age of 51. A strong sense of nostalgia inhabits Jordan’s account of

a difference [...] between those of us who were able to look forward to what Angela Carter might unpredictably say in her journalism and reviews (and on the phone, a medium in which, unrecorded, she gave of her extraordinary best), and do in her fiction, and those who are producing a scholarly paper about an author irremediably distanced by her too early death.¹⁹

Jordan’s reading entails a surprising amount of faith in the words of an author so well versed in the art of presenting herself. Further, her account would suggest that Carter scholars can only

¹⁶ Robert Duggan, “‘Circles of Stage Fire’: Angela Carter, Charles Dickens and Heteroglossia in the English Comic Novel”, in *Re-Visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 158–77 (p. 158).

¹⁷ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 289.

¹⁸ Sage, *Angela Carter*, p. 59.

¹⁹ Jordan, p. 89.

access a partial version of her oeuvre. Carter's archive itself speaks to this sense of unfinished business. Just before her death, Carter had begun a new writing project: *Adela*, intended as a sequel of *Jane Eyre* which would follow the adventures of Rochester's ward. The presence of this incomplete text in the archive permanently opens up Carter's career for interrogations about what might have been, and was not. It also testifies to Carter's own growing interest in the question of canonicity and the genealogy of British literary heritage, which looms large in the last of her completed novels, *Wise Children*.

Value, Legitimacy, and Filiation in *Wise Children*

In the opening of *Wise Children*, Dora Chance, the novel's narrator, welcomes us on 'the wrong side of the tracks' – namely, the South Bank of London, where she and her sister reside.²⁰ The metaphor acts as a geographical and social shorthand: the South Bank stands for theatre but even more so for the cultural illegitimacy that Dora and her sister champion, as they look back on their career as music hall dancers. Carter's last novel was published less than a year before her death. Woven through with references to Shakespeare and the British literary canon, the novel charts the lives of Nora and Dora Chance, the bastard twin daughters of famous theatre actor Melchior Hazard. While the twins earn their living through performing in pantomimes, their father and his family display all the privileges of legitimate cultural capital: at the beginning of the novel, set in contemporary days, Melchior Hazard has become a nationally acknowledged theatre performer. His (officially) legitimate daughters, Saskia and Imogen, have forged a successful career in television after graduating from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). As for Dora and Nora, now aged seventy-five, they live in the house they inherited from Grandma Chance, the woman who raised them after the death of their biological mother. The narrative is driven by Dora's decision to write her memoirs, a process

²⁰ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 1.

which lends itself to an enterprise of self-chronicling and archiving. Even as she collects evidence of hers and her family's life, Dora raises the question of their value – sentimental, historical, but also financial. Her awareness of the commodity potential of archives and her conscious forging of a persona that 'sells' reflects Carter's own conscious play with her position as a commercially successful writer in the 1980s.

Wise Children self-consciously dissects the career of performers, artists, and other creative workers – not only Dora and Nora's, but also those of friends, lovers, and relatives who orbit around them. The novel's comprehensive portrayal of the theatrical world has enabled discussions around its implicit assumptions around legitimate and illegitimate culture, reflected both in the protagonists' family relations and in their careers: the characters' trajectories overtly equate biological kinship with legitimate cultural capital. According to Roger Apfelbaum, 'the novel often exposes the artificial division between high and low, and the contradictions involved in enlisting Shakespeare to establish cultural legitimacy'.²¹

Indeed, by the end of the novel, Saskia and Imogen are revealed to be the children of Peregrine, Melchior's brother, making Dora and Nora his only biological progeny. As for Melchior himself, it is implied he might well be the adulterine son of Cassius Booth, who played Horatio to his mother's Hamlet. By foregrounding the problematic parentage of the British cultural landscape, Carter simultaneously questions its social pretensions though, it must be noted, not without a certain cultural elitism, which might explain Clare Hanson's claim that '[i]t is a novel in which the principles of legitimacy and legitimation may be questioned, but in which the structure of both remains intact'.²² While Carter's novel highlights her love of

²¹ Roger Apfelbaum, "'Welcome to Dreamland': Performance Theory, Postcolonial Discourse, and the Filming of A Midsummer Night's Dream in Angela Carter's *Wise Children*", in *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), p. 185.

²² Clare Hanson, "'The Red Dawn Breaking over Clapham': Carter and the Limits of Artifice", in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton, *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York ; London: Longman, 1997), pp. 59–72 (p. 70).

so-called low forms of culture, these forms are consistently recast in a hierarchy of styles of artistic and intellectual consumption, even if in parentheses. In a quick aside, the reader is informed that Dora and Nora's own first teacher, an acrobatic dancer, 'upped and married a peer, in the end' (30), suggesting that an upward social trajectory is impossible within the dancer's own cultural habitus and remains aspirational even to those who identify themselves with popular culture (she 'upped').

Carter's portrayal ultimately seems to imply that high culture remains low culture's privileged means of validation, and that high culture suffers in this process. When Tristram, Melchior's son from his third marriage, becomes a successful TV presenter, his career choice is presented as a downward slope in no ambiguous terms. Early in the novel, Dora has no qualms about revealing her contempt for her half-brother's 'rotten show'.²³ The programme itself is presented through a parodic lens that emphasises its absurdity: the show is ridiculously titled 'Lashings of Lolly'.²⁴ The phrase is a simulacrum that occasionally disrupts the presenter's own sentences: 'And I'd like to give you a very special "Lashings of Lolly" hi, there! to a truly grand old gentleman' (41). Ironically, however, this lowly form of entertainment (says Dora: 'Everytime I catch a glimpse, I think I've gone mad' (42)) still relies on theatre, embodied in the presence of Melchior Hazard as a featured guest, to validate itself. The scene ironically reinforces the status of theatre as a legitimate form of culture whose formal presence supersedes even the conditions of its intervention: Melchior barely utters a word when invited to take part in 'Lotsa Birthday Lolly' (42). Notably, Tristram addresses him as 'Dad' on air: this is, of course, justified by the characters' filiation, but also effectively makes television the low-brow child of theatre, in what Dora perceives as a degradation of her theatrical ancestry in the hands of yet another upstart crow. We are not so much encouraged to

²³ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 41.

²⁴ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 41.

consider the hierarchy between high and low brow. Rather, through Dora's critical gaze, it seems that we may be incited to consider the consequences of appropriations of legitimate culture to deviant ends. Notably, the scene leaves very little room for the cultural and creative possibilities of a medium like television.

Wise Children dramatizes the changing conditions of artistic labour from the word go. As she goes back through her ancestry, Dora opens the novel with the founding figures of the Hazard and Chance clan: Ranulph and Estella, both famous Victorian actors, whose careers came to a tragic end after a tour of the American continent. As highlighted by Apfelbaum, Ranulph and Estella's tour of America is itself conceived of as a 'missionary' action:

The religious mission of spreading Shakespeare's word is accomplished with a reinvented authenticity, inverting Elizabethan cross-dressing (with Estella as Hamlet), and re-creating the south-bank popular theatre across a different water from the British authority.²⁵

Very early on, however, there is a sense that recreating an authentic Shakespearean experience is ultimately a career dead-end. Estella and Ranulph must tour in highly precarious conditions. Meanwhile, as an obverse to their nomadic lifestyle, Ranulph's rival Cassius is shown to make the financially preferable choice:

While the Hazards roamed themselves to rags for the greater glory of Shakespeare, Cassius Booth, Estella's old Horatio, stayed in one place and prospered. Now he was an actor-manager himself, with his very own theatre on the Great White Way.²⁶

A similar transition occurs later on, with Melchior's third wife 'My Lady Margarine'.²⁷ Unlike her nostalgic husband, she is shown to be 'a forward-looking woman', who cannily 'planned for the twentieth century' by '[putting] the entire family on camera' with long-term material

²⁵ Apfelbaum, p. 185.

²⁶ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 20.

²⁷ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 38.

results: ‘They prospered’.²⁸ The novel thus appears populated with figures who choose a mercantile approach to art. At the end of the novel, even Dora has started to look for means to make her career more amenable to the new demands of the cultural market. Apfelbaum rightly contends that ‘[t]he value of claiming legitimacy is also questioned by Dora viewing her illegitimacy as a positive quality that will provide the intrigue to help sell her memoirs’.²⁹ Dora is therefore gradually shown to abandon a romantic view of the theatrical world, whether low or high-brow, to prioritise questions of image and profitability. In the world of *Wise Children*, Carter never appears to posit an autonomous value for the work of art, which has become embedded in the law of exchange value.

Ephemera and the Ethics of Conservation

By making Dora the narrator of the novel, Carter seems to emphasise the continuity between different forms of artistic and cultural labour, and to transfer the problem of visibility, fame, and persona from the stage to the page. This contributes to an interpretation of the novel as a form of reflection on Carter’s own literary fortunes at a high point in her career. From the outset Dora portrays herself as an archivist, whose task has been to collect evidence of her family’s history and hers: ‘I am at present working on my memoirs and researching family history – see the word processor, the filing cabinet, the card indexes, right hand, left hand, right side, left side, all the dirt on everybody’.³⁰ Dora’s writing project is both a self-authenticating one, grounded in a personal narrative supported by empirical, documentary evidence, and an enterprise presented as gossip via a semantic network that associates it with dirt and soil. This dirty text is paradoxically associated with traces of the twins’ past glamorous life, evidenced by the memorabilia present in their house:

²⁸ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 37.

²⁹ Apfelbaum, pp. 186–87.

³⁰ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 3.

Everything slightly soiled, I'm sorry to say. Can't be doing with wash, wash, wash, polish, polish, polish, these days, when time is so precious, but take a good look at the signed photos stuck in the dressing-table mirror – Ivor; Noel; Fred and Adèle; Jack; Ginger; Fred and Ginger; Anna, Jessie, Sonnie, Binnie.³¹

The (implied) names of celebrities – Ivor Novello, Fred and Ginger Astaire, Noel Coward, Sonnie and Billie Hale, Ginger Rogers, to name a few – not only contribute to establishing the twins' connections as shadowy figures of popular culture, but also to conceptualising the narrative as one of digging through the dirt of the archive: 'let me plunge into the archaeology of my desk', as Dora puts it.³²

Further to this devaluation of the narrative as gossip, the twins' story is strikingly associated with archival evidence of the transient variety. The twins characterise themselves as 'the lovely ephemera of the theatre': cheap, collectible and infinitely reproducible, but also disposable.³³ The evidence accumulated by Dora includes: 'a fraying envelope stuffed with antique picture postcards' (12), an 'obituary in the *New York Times*' (12). Memorabilia has invaded the twins' house to the point of becoming indivisible from it: 'The rest [of the house] is old clothes, dust, newspapers stacked in piles tied up with strings, cuttings, old photographs' (36), a 'Museum of dust' (188). The twins state that they have 'inherited' (7) their father's first wife, Lady Atalanta, who they nicknamed Wheelchair. The television itself is characterised as a medium of conservation by Wheelchair who mocks Melchior Hazard's appearance on television: 'Well, well, well! He's awfully well preserved, I must say! He looks quite *pickled*!' (41). Ephemera also materialises in unexpected places: Nora, Dora notes, has a habit of falling in love regularly, '[throwing] her heart away as if it were a used bus ticket' (80). Dora's first lover uses a condom she refers to as a 'a French letter' (85). The novel elicits a sense that Dora

³¹ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 2.

³² Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 11.

³³ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 58.

and Nora's painstaking act of self-conservation goes against the grain of their own transience. Their status as twins further embodies the sense of their reproducibility. James Mussell connects the ephemera's impermanence to a sense of the uncanny, arguing: '[t]he uncanniness of the return of ephemera is not related to the fact that it was once known, but rather that it has persisted despite itself'.³⁴ Dora and Nora, as embodied ephemera, have similarly outlasted their intended cultural lifespan.

Dora's act of archival conservation is preceded by Grandma Chance's loving cutting and pasting of her adoptive granddaughters' performance programmes in the form of scrapbooks:

Piles of scrapbooks, the cuttings turned by time to the colour of the freckles on the back of an old lady's hand. Her hand. My hand, as it is now. When you touch the old newspaper, it turns into brown dust, like the dust of bones.³⁵

To Dora and Nora, their grandmother's scrapbook becomes a complicated assemblage that stands for their grandmother's absent body—Grandma Chance's enterprise of documenting her proteges' career is interrupted by her death during the Second World War. The textual porousness of paper, skin, and bones suggests another uncanny encounter with the hereafter: a reminder that, as Mussell puts it, 'ephemera belongs to the dead'.³⁶ The poignancy of the scrapbook is doubled by the implication that, before acting as a reminder of Grandma Chance, it had served as a stand-in for the absent twins and an attempt at repairing emotional distance:

We felt bad when we saw those scrapbooks, we remembered how we'd teased her, we'd brought home sausage rolls and crocodile handbags, but she'd kept on snipping out the cuttings, pasting them in.³⁷

³⁴ James Mussell, 'The Passing of Print: Digitising Ephemera and the Ephemerality of the Digital', *Media History*, 18.1 (2012), 77–92 (p. 81) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2011.637666>>.

³⁵ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 78.

³⁶ Mussell, p. 79.

³⁷ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 78.

The ephemera acts as a substitute, a go-between that oscillates between absence and presence, serialising and uniqueness, commodification and intimacy. The legibility of the scrapbook is conditioned on the understanding of the collector and the subject of the collection. In this instance, Grandma Chance's collecting act dramatizes a structure of address that blends the terms of private and public by recasting theatre programmes as intimate documents. '[L]ike an open but illegible letter', the ephemera has become a souvenir standing for a moment of exchange between Grandma and the twins.³⁸

Notably, the motif of the scrapbook is echoed in Carter's sacrilegious television programme *The Holy Family Album* (1991), thus becoming associated with Carter's reflection on filiation and legitimacy.³⁹ The programme proposes a profane interpretation of Christian paintings as pictures in a family album. The film, narrated by Carter herself, concludes on the infanticidal impulses Carter deciphers in God's relationship to his son. According to Charlotte Crofts,

[b]y situating classical paintings of Christ in the family photo album alongside traditional art forms, Carter causes us to look anew at the ways in which Christ has been represented in art throughout history.⁴⁰

Strikingly, the album also collapses the separation between religious art intended for worship and public enjoyment, and a family album reserved for private commemoration, inserting a private meaning within a highly visible and widespread iconography. It also conflates the form of the scrapbook with religious and official art, collapsing the formal separation of the two in a form of collage.

Carter would have been sensitive to the cultural resonance of the scrapbook portrayed in her novel. Her archive contains multiple ephemera, including several cigarette card albums

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 12.

³⁹ Angela Carter, 'The Holy Family Album', 1991.

⁴⁰ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*, p. 180.

and a scrapbook, both likely assembled by Carter's own family members.⁴¹ The presence of such documents in her collected papers, often compiled under the generic category of research materials, suggests a bibliophilic impulse, although one eventually denied by Dora and Nora: 'Memory Lane is a dead end', Dora concludes.⁴² Carter's narrative, in other terms, both centres and questions the nostalgic desire at the heart of the act of self-archivisation and its relationship to cultural production. The twins' biological father, Melchior, appears ever vulnerable to this impulse: upon his arrival in America, his desire for 'a photo-opportunity of the first water' is ridiculed.⁴³ In old age, Melchior's private and public selves appear to have become entirely inseparable: 'Smile in public, cry in public, live in public, die in public'.⁴⁴

By warning against the dangers of reifying fame and fetishizing one's own archived persona, Carter artfully points to the pitfalls of the life of the cultural producer in late twentieth-century Britain. The result is a paradoxical one, simultaneously distancing itself from attempts at recuperating past cultural moments to self-validating ends while also creating a textual tombeau for early twentieth-century popular culture. This ambivalence transpires in Dora and Nora's experience of going to watch the movie they starred in at the cinema:

It took me donkey's till I saw the point but saw the point I did, eventually, though not until the other day, when we were watching *The Dream* again in Notting Hill, that time, couple of batty old tarts with their eyes glued on their own ghosts. *Then* I understood the thing I'd never grasped back in those days, when I was young, before I lived in history. When I was young, I wanted to be ephemeral, I'd wanted the moment, to live just the glorious moment, the rush of blood, the applause. Pluck the day. Eat the peach.

Tomorrow never comes. But, oh yes, tomorrow *does* come all right, and when it comes

⁴¹ See London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/17, 'Angela Carter Papers: Cigarette Card Albums' and London, British Library, Add MS 88899/6/11, Angela Carter Papers, 'Scrapbook'.

⁴² Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 190.

⁴³ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 129.

⁴⁴ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 205.

it lasts a bloody long time, I can tell you. But if you've put your past on celluloid, it keeps. You've stored it away, like jam, for winter. That kid came up and asked for our autographs. It made our day. I could have wished we'd done more pictures.⁴⁵

Both Nora and Dora are initially confused by the afterlife of *The Dream* as 'a masterpiece of kitsch' in the late twentieth century.⁴⁶ Their experience thematises a certain ambivalence towards (especially) academic interpretations of an artist's work that crops up in other texts written by Carter: the short story 'The Merchant of Shadows', published in Carter's posthumous collection *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1997), can similarly be read as a cautionary fable to academics too eager to pierce the secrets of the artists they study.⁴⁷ The cinema scene exposes the obverse of life as an ephemera, which the twins' physical bodies have long outlived. Their cinematic bodies, preserved on reel 'like jam, for winter', exude the sense of the uncanny I have previously commented on, by giving way to a scene of preservation but also suggesting the twins' death.

The film is not the twins' only experience of being turned into living embodiments of cultural memory. Dora's lover, Irish, authors a bitter portrait of their relationship in a memoir titled *Hollywood Elegies* which takes on a cult status after his death in a wink to the trope of the *poète maudit*: 'Such turned out to be the eternity the poet promised me, the bastard' (120). Yet, Dora is quick to understand the commercial benefits of such memorabilia, initially gifted to her as a spiteful parting shot:

Then Irish came in on a bender, white of face and red of eye and upright only with the greatest difficulty, to press into my hands his poisoned gift, the page proofs of *Hollywood Elegies*, inscribed to his 'gilded fly', and signed with his full name, thank

⁴⁵ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 125.

⁴⁶ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 111.

⁴⁷ Angela Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', in *American Ghosts & Old World Wonders* (London: Random House, 2012), pp. 66–85.

God. I sold it at Sotheby's last winter when we were a touch pressed as to how to pay the electricity bill.⁴⁸

No sentimentality hinders Dora, who realises that her status as muse, as both 'product *and* process' of the labour of cultural production, comes with commercial advantages once time has endowed the seedy, unromantic aspects of her career with the patina of kitsch.⁴⁹ Here it would be apposite to paraphrase Susan Sontag's 'Notes on "Camp"' to suggest that kitsch, similarly, 'sees everything in quotation marks' (paragraph 10).⁵⁰ Dora's liaison with Irish has stopped being an intimate affair to become part of a commodifiable narrative: the muse can now profit off her own status, instead of bestowing glory on the poet. Maggie Tonkin charts an evolution in the history of the muse, from 'muse-as-deity', in which 'the muse spoke through the poet who functioned as her passive mouthpiece' to 'the muse-as-beloved' in which 'the poet speaks the muse'.⁵¹ In this case, Irish's attempt to speak his muse Dora – in the most unflattering terms – backfires, as the muse takes hold of his manuscript and becomes in charge of the narrative and of the conditions of its distribution. Another consequence of this radical change of power dynamics is that autonomy, which celebrates the cult of disinterestedness, is dead. At no point in the novel does Dora make any pretence at hiding her need for an income: the basic necessities of life outweigh the demands of artistic purity.

Through the conceit of telling the lives of two declining actresses in the late twentieth century, *Wise Children* analyses the push and pull of fame and self-memorialisation. Its homage to popular culture and to Nora and Dora as reproducible theatrical ephemera, whose spectral presence has outlived their cultural currency, stages the difficulty of thinking about the afterlives of any cultural movement, and the career of the artist, who appears always in danger

⁴⁸ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 152.

⁴⁹ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 142.

⁵⁰ Susan Sontag, 'Notes On "Camp"' <<https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Sontag-NotesOnCamp-1964.html>> [accessed 4 April 2018].

⁵¹ Maggie Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence: Critical Fictions/Fictional Critiques* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 62.

of obsolescence in the face of constant technological changes. In dramatizing the complexities of paying homage to disappearing forms of culture, Carter also raises the issue of legitimate and illegitimate forms of cultural and artistic expressions, and their fate in an age of new media. The novel also acts as an ironic *tombeau* to the cult of autonomy, which is shown to be subject to the laws of exchange value in a way that cancels out its pretensions to independence from the market. In the following section, I will suggest that Carter's position towards illegitimate, countercultural, and even insurrectional forms of culture is as ambivalent as her politics of self-curation.

The Xmas Wire from Greenham

In a short essay written for the *Times Literary Supplement* about his experience as a biographer, Gordon situates Carter's archival legacy at a watershed moment for the history of writing, and for the tradition of the literary biography: that of the transition from the material archive, with its paper documents and material objects, to the unreliability of the digital archive.⁵² He observes that '[l]ater biographical subjects will leave an easier-to-follow but less substantial trail' and pits 'the hushed self-reflection of the journal' against 'the noisy self-promotion of public utterance'.⁵³ Yet, reifying the divide between paper and digitised archive, and mapping it along a distinction between the private and public teaches us very little about how to read an object such as the 'Xmas wire' from Greenham, or other such ephemera and miscellanies contained in the Angela Carter papers, which form the core of this section.⁵⁴ In the introduction, I have alluded to the diversity of the objects present in the collection, and to its possible links to Carter's Scottish father. Gamble suggests Carter's family history is crucial to her later writing, speculating that 'the origins of her literary techniques lay in the earliest years of her

⁵² Edmund Gordon, 'Biography in the Twitter Age', *The TLS*, 2016 <<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/biography-twitter-age/>> [accessed 10 December 2016].

⁵³ Gordon, 'Biography in the Twitter Age'.

⁵⁴ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/6/13, Angela Carter Papers, 'Objects'.

life, in which she was introduced to the idea that time is mutable, that history isn't a strict chronological progression, and that appearances can be deceptive'.⁵⁵ In this respect, the archive appears as a sentimental treasure trove but also raises contextualisation challenges. For example, as I have previously noted, a keyring with a picture of Carter's son, Alexander, features among the objects alongside the framed portrait of an anonymous 'Victorian child' and, most curiously, a piece of wire, identified as the 'Xmas Wire from Greenham'. The website of the British Library describes it briefly, indicating its provenance (the Greenham Common Airbase Peace Camp) and connecting it to Angela Carter's overtly pacific 1983 essay, 'Anger in a Black Landscape'.⁵⁶ From the outset, the reader's attention is therefore directed to Carter's connections with 1980s protest cultures and grassroots politics. In the following, the cable appears as a sign of Carter's ambivalent relationship with activism and countercultures in the last decade of her life.

The Women's Peace Camp that took over RAF Greenham Common began in 1981 and was finally shut down in 2000. The events surrounding the establishment of the Greenham Common Airbase Women's Peace Camp are extensively documented, with both first-hand accounts from participants and multiple scholarly publications.⁵⁷ The Camp was set up in protest against the presence of 'ninety-six [American] nuclear Cruise missiles' in the military base of Greenham Common, located in England, near Newbury.⁵⁸ It originated with a march leaving from the Cardiff City Halls in 1981, and ended officially in 2000, although the contentious missiles had been evacuated by 1991. The group that left Cardiff included both men and women but, in February 1982, the camp became 'a women-only campaign and male

⁵⁵ Gamble, *Angela Carter*, p. 19.

⁵⁶ Angela Carter, 'Anger in a Black Landscape', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 43–52; 'Wire from Anti-Nuclear Protests at Greenham Common Airbase, Sent to Angela Carter', *The British Library* <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/wire-from-anti-nuclear-protests-at-greenham-common-airbase-sent-to-angela-carter>> [accessed 17 April 2018].

⁵⁷ See, for example: Titcombe; Catherine Eschle, 'Beyond Greenham Woman?: Gender Identities and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Peace Camps', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 19.4 (2017), 471–90 (pp. 472–74) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1354716>>; Roseneil.

⁵⁸ Titcombe, p. 311.

residents were asked to leave the site'.⁵⁹ At its busiest the protest allegedly had 'between 30,000 and 50,000' participants, either residing on-site or only visiting the camp for shorter periods of time.⁶⁰ Early on the protesters displayed diverse, and sometimes conflicting political views. Elaine Titcombe remarks that '[f]rom the outset the protest was led by women, but ideologically it was not necessarily feminist', which led to 'conflicting narratives', but also accommodated a great variety of retrospective interpretations.⁶¹ Catherine Eschle, for example, proposes a typology of the activists that emerge from academic analyses of the camp: 'the Mother', 'the Radical Feminist', 'the Lesbian', and 'the Earth Mother'.⁶² Those types can both intersect and be at odds with each other. Analysing first-person narratives about the camp, Titcombe cites one of the long-term residents of Greenham, Sarah Hipperson, lamenting the fact that 'so much ... [sic] has been centred on social issues and hype, ignoring the political content of the protest', particularly its antinuclear message.⁶³ The emphasis on the women's idiosyncratic appearance was indeed an important aspect of the reports on Greenham according to Eschle, giving the Greenham protest an identifiable look that might have partly accounted for the hype that Hipperson bemoans.⁶⁴ Over the course of its existence, the camp became the longest standing protest of its kind in the United Kingdom, acquiring iconic status in the history of protest movements.

Despite the contested status of this iconicity, Sasha Roseneil still asserts that Greenham was 'the most visible form of women's activism in Britain in the 1980s'.⁶⁵ Yet the protest, and other forms of public activism, occupy a marginal place in Carter's work up to this period. The 1970s show her gradual distancing from grassroots politics. Carter's affiliation with the

⁵⁹ Titcombe, pp. 311 & 327.

⁶⁰ Titcombe, p. 311.

⁶¹ Titcombe, pp. 311 & 315.

⁶² Eschle.

⁶³ Titcombe, p. 319.

⁶⁴ Eschle, p. 318.

⁶⁵ Roseneil, p. 3.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in her youth is a well-documented fact, but the texts written after the end of her involvement reveal a critical gaze towards this and any new countercultural movements. The Women of *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), for example, are portrayed as wreaking havoc and sowing the seeds of civil war under the dominion of the parodic figure of Mother.⁶⁶ The story 'Elegy for a Freelance', included in *Fireworks* (1974), demonstrates an equally ambivalent view of direct political action: its protagonists eventually execute one of their own and subsequently deliberate on whether or not to hand themselves over to the police.⁶⁷ Fevvers's adoptive mother, Lizzie, is perhaps Carter's most positive representation of activist connections, although her clandestine actions are obscure to most other characters.⁶⁸ While there is a notable dearth of textual evidence connecting Carter to Greenham, her change of attitude in the early 1980s is at least notable.

Her lack of grassroots involvement did not mean Carter was isolated. The Angela Carter Papers contain many letters and postcards, a correspondence ranging from the 1960s to Carter's death in 1992.⁶⁹ The variety of correspondents (not one of whom can be identified with certainty as the sender of the wire) is a testimony to the extent of Carter's circle of friends, and admirers. Their warmth and tone (particularly that of the letters sent by Carter's friend Lorna Sage) reveal the variety and depth of the relationships Carter sustained throughout her life. On occasions, those letters also allude to the author's political affiliations. In one letter dating from the 1st of October, an unnamed correspondent promises Carter a copy of *Red Rag*, the publication of the Women's Liberation Movement. In another dating from the 1st of March 1983, activist and performer Diane Torr thanks Carter for the impact of *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) on her own career as a go-go dancer, and the support it brought her in upholding her

⁶⁶ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*.

⁶⁷ Angela Carter, 'Elegy for a Freelance', in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Random House, 1996), pp. 96–107.

⁶⁸ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*.

⁶⁹ See London, British Library, Add MS 88899/3, Angela Carter Papers, 'Correspondence (20th Century)'.

identity as a sex worker against the critiques of a section of the Women's Liberation Movement.⁷⁰ The letter is a particularly moving document, written in a feverish tone, over 6 pages. Midway through it, the ink changes colour from black to red. There might be a number of reasons for this: was Torr in too much of a hurry, or in too constrained circumstances to find a matching pen? Was she interrupted and had to finish her letter in another sitting? Its conservation alone gives the formal features of the letter added significance: acts as seemingly trivial as a change of pen become suggestive of the life behind the handwriting.

The number of letters in the collection shows that Carter was careful to keep them. This is consistent with her vision of herself as a professional writer and a subject of academic interest, but also as a (self) collector. When re-placed in the context of this long correspondence, the wire suddenly takes on another, less opaque meaning, becoming part of Carter's network of relationships while also becoming a memorabilia of Carter's ambivalent relationship to the 80s counterculture. By the 1980s, Carter's career was becoming more stable, her fame as a writer more secure. She had established a solid connection with Virago Press, which was to publish her work until the end of her life.⁷¹ Reading the wire as part of Carter's public and private life in the 1980s enables both a better understanding of her evolving relationship with feminist politics and a more textured understanding of her career, by offering an analysis of the politics and poetics of collecting at play in her correspondence.

The only article in which Carter explicitly deals with the Greenham Common Airbase is her 1983 essay, 'The Recession Style', which opens on a description of a fashion ad displayed in the Tube, portraying 'a girl wearing an assemblage of what are evidently supposed to be very high-style garments, so high-style as to represent an extreme of dandyism'.⁷² She continues her description of the advertisement, noting that

⁷⁰ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/3/1-3, Angela Carter Paper Collections: Letters.

⁷¹ Gordon, 'Biography in the Twitter Age', p. 220.

⁷² Angela Carter, 'The Recession Style', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 130–32 (p. 130).

In Green Park station, this poster has acquired the graffiti: ‘Most girls couldn’t afford it.’ But to look like this need not necessarily cost much. You could put the look together for pennies. It has some of the qualities of late Sixties thrift-shop chic, and many women of my generation have been going around looking like that for years, and looking like hell, in fact. Only the model’s exquisitely painted face indicates that *her* get-up is intentional, and not some haphazard makeshift arrangement; that she has been paid to dress up like this, and hasn’t been snapped at random at the Greenham Common peace camp. (As if to emphasise this resemblance, the poster has elsewhere been inscribed: Embrace the Base.’)⁷³

Carter’s attention to manifestations of popular culture – the scribble, the advert – becomes part of a satire of the 1980s. Here, the graffiti also references a spectacular event that had taken place at the camp in December 1982, shortly before the publication of the article. During the ‘Embrace the Base’ protest, 30,000 women held hands to form a chain.⁷⁴ That both Carter and the graffiti writer instantly identified the camp’s distinctive ‘look’ in the advertisement serves the critique of the commodification of the Greenham style suggested by the article.

In this example as in others, later subcultures suffer from a comparison with earlier subcultural aesthetics embodied by the 1960s.⁷⁵ In ‘Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style’, Carter presented 1960s fashion as a playful reshuffling of sartorial items and cultural references, through the use of vintage items.⁷⁶ In the 1980s, the mix and match effect of the 1960s has been transformed into ‘an aesthetic of poverty that [...] may well prove (and is it any wonder) to be the dominant mood of the eighties’.⁷⁷ Dick Hebdige highlights the role of commodification in

⁷³ Carter, ‘Recession’, p. 131.

⁷⁴ ‘BBC News | GREENHAM COMMON | Timeline: Key Points’
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1999/11/99/greenham_common/503602.stm> [accessed 23 July 2018].

⁷⁵ I will tease out the implications of Carter’s contrasting of different subcultures and eras in the final chapter of this thesis.

⁷⁶ Angela Carter, ‘Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 105–9.

⁷⁷ Carter, ‘Recession’, p. 131.

enabling the recuperation of subcultural aesthetics by the dominant order in the process of incorporation even though, as he comments,

[t]he relationship between the spectacular subculture and the various industries which service and exploit it is notoriously ambiguous. After all, such a subculture is concerned first and foremost with consumption.⁷⁸

Carter's reference to Greenham is permeated with irony, casting the 'Greenham style' as immediately recognizable, replicable, but also commodifiable as a result.

Further, Carter mocks the postapocalyptic aesthetics of the Greenham look for its embodiment of 'a way of dressing that makes you look like the victim of a catastrophe'.⁷⁹ Inserted in a piece about fashion, the comment speaks volumes about how pervasive the sense of being on the verge of a crisis would have been among Carter and her contemporaries at that time of war for Britain and increased tension occasioned by the resurgence of the Cold War. Gordon mentions Carter's desire to learn Italian in 1980 'if Europe isn't blasted off the face of the Earth within the next five years'.⁸⁰ The comment seems hyperbolic, but also shows the importance of this fraught geopolitical context in which Carter is writing to understand her state of mind during the decade. As Andrew Hammond contends, 'Carter's imagination was grounded in the Cold War'.⁸¹ In the same year 1983, Carter also wrote her essay 'Anger in a Black Landscape'. Although it does not explicitly tackle Greenham, the essay was part of a collection whose purpose was attuned to the ethos of the camp. Entitled *Over our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb* (1983), the anthology was published by Virago Press, Carter's publisher from 1978. In an essay written about her time working at Virago, Lorna Stevens recalls how

⁷⁸ Hebdige, pp. 94–95.

⁷⁹ Carter, 'Recession', p. 131.

⁸⁰ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 302.

⁸¹ Andrew Hammond, *British Fiction and the Cold War* (Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 96.

London in the 1980s was a wonderful place and time to be a feminist activist in. [...] A sense of panic and urgency hung in the air, and we were caught up in the mood. Virago made its presence felt at CND protest marches in London. [...] We took ourselves off in a convoy of buses to Greenham Common, along with many other women, to protest about Nuclear deterrence, observing our sex, from young children to grey-haired old women, camping out to try to turn back the nuclear tide that threatened to engulf all of us. The highlight of these halcyon days was undoubtedly the huge event organised by Virago Press in April 1983 at Central Hall, Westminster. Two thousand people attended the event, which coincided with the launch of the book *Over Our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb*, by Dorothy Thompson, and all proceeds went to the peace movement.⁸²

Stevens's depiction shows the links that united feminist activism, grassroots organising, and publishing in the early 1980s. No evidence suggests that Carter herself visited Greenham Common. Nonetheless, her involvement in the collection *Over Our Dead Bodies* demonstrates her closeness to the peace movement at the time.

The particular flavour of activism to be found at Greenham could have been another factor explaining Carter's critical attitude towards the base. Maggie Tonkin rightly identifies Carter's reluctance towards essentialist forms of 'cultural feminism' advocating a critique or, even, a rejection of 'male values' such as 'reason, technology, science'.⁸³ By 1983, Greenham had become an exclusively female space, and some of the actions and reflections of its protesters would have been at odds with Carter's scepticism towards all forms of feminism that idealised femininity. Strikingly, however, her last two novels *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991) both seem to mark Carter's progressive interest in all-female spaces: the

⁸² Stephen Brown and Lorna Stevens, 'Telling Tales of Virago Press', in *Consuming Books: The Marketing and Consumption of Literature*, ed. by Stephen Brown (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2006), pp. 160–66 (p. 162).

⁸³ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 164.

brothel and the women's commune in *Nights at the Children*, and Dora and Nora's relationship with their grandmother and with their biological father's abandoned wife, Wheelchair.⁸⁴ While such communities are frequently offset by dictatorial structures spearheaded by women (the women's prison, Madame Shrek's Museum of Monster Women in *Nights at the Circus* and, in *Wise Children*, the toxic sisterhood of Saskia and Imogen), Carter's portrayal of sisterly, motherly and lesbian love between women marks a turn from her critique of all-female structures in *The Passion of New Eve*.⁸⁵ Notably, in 1983, Carter also wrote one of her most quoted essays, 'Notes from the Front Line', in which she delineated her feminist ethics and political itinerary, and analysed the role of women in the arts. Gordon somewhat reductively attributes Carter's productivity around that time to her pregnancy and awareness that motherhood would slow down her projects.⁸⁶ By contrast, resituating her writing in the context of London's feminist activism gives a sense of Carter's alertness to the intense political and activist life surrounding her around that time. Her interest in the anti-nuclear movement, her allusions to Greenham, and her involvement in adjacent feminist circles such as Virago Press all give the Greenham cable potential resonance within the Carter archive.

As a souvenir taken from a political event to be turned into a private gift, the wire echoes the logic of transposition of the public, collectible, and reproducible into the private I observed in *Wise Children*. Its presence in the archive alongside private writings and ephemera is a further testament to the heterogeneous ensemble that constitutes processes of self-curation. I have previously referred to Heidi Yeandle's accusations of 'metacommentary' in the Carter archive.⁸⁷ While apparently pure of authorial intervention, we should be wary of taking the wire at face value. On the face of it, an object allows for less retrospective meta-commentary than a journal. However, James A. Knapp, for example, casts doubt over the 'myth' of the

⁸⁴ Carter, *Wise Children*; Carter, *Nights At The Circus*.

⁸⁵ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*.

⁸⁶ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 334.

⁸⁷ Yeandle, *Angela Carter and Western Philosophy*, p. 8.

reliability of ‘the material record’ to authenticate any investigation of ‘cultural production’.⁸⁸ According to this, and other theorizations of the ‘return to the things contained in the archive’ among scholars, the relationship to the authentic document, to the archive, can only fail to provide a reunion with a ‘lost object’, despite its sensual and epistemological ‘allure’.⁸⁹ Secondly, any approach to archival evidence always runs the risk of producing interpretations based on the reader’s desire for unmediated experience: Michael Shanks calls this interaction ‘a pornography’ whereby ‘[a]rtefacts are [...] prostituted for possession and consumption’.⁹⁰ In the case of the wire, such unmediated access is foreclosed by the lack of information about Carter’s response.

Upon first glance, the ‘wire’ presents itself as a very unusual Christmas postcard, consisting of a cable of green-cladded metal piercing a piece of paper in two places. On the piece of paper is a telegraphic message that reads

XMAS WIRE FROM GREENHAM STOP

TONY YVONNE & HESTER LOVE

⁸⁸ Knapp, p. 722.

⁸⁹ Helen Freshwater, ‘The Allure of the Archive’, *Poetics Today*, 4, 2003 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/03335372-24-4-729>>; Knapp, p. 700.

⁹⁰ Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, *Reconstructing Archaeology* (1992), cited in Freshwater, p. 735.

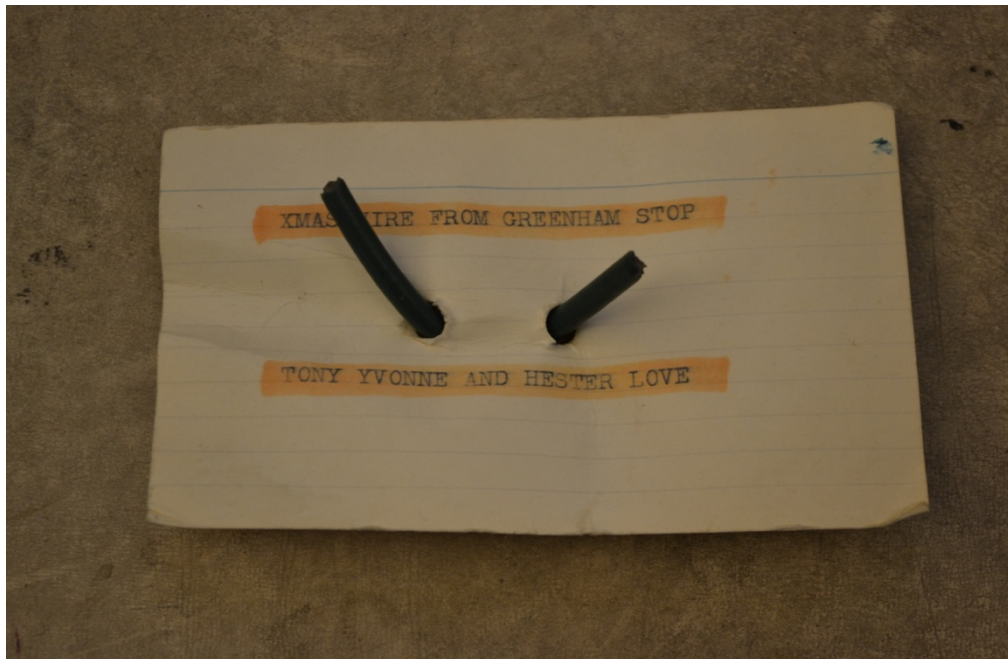


Figure 1 XMas Wire from Greenham, Sent to Angela Carter, British Library, London, Angela Carter Papers, Add MS 88899/6/13 <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/wire-from-anti-nuclear-protests-at-greenham-common-airbase-sent-to-angela-carter>> [accessed 1 November 2021]

In many ways, the wire can be likened to an example of archival ‘flotsam’ that eludes deciphering, reminiscent of Jacques Derrida’s characterisation of the post/card as ‘an open but illegible letter’.⁹¹ Akin to the correspondence transcribed in the ‘Envois’, this wire is the ‘self-evidently secret’ sign of a personal relationship that is both open to the reader by the archive and disconnected from its immediate context, and thus rendered opaque.⁹²

The wire’s opacity is multi-layered. Firstly, an effort to trace back the wire’s origins reveals its lack of distinctiveness: like several other items in the Angela Carter Papers, the wire is not, by any means, a unique piece, or even a unique archival item. For example, the Women’s Library, hosted by the London School of Economics, holds a large collection of records and objects pertaining to the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp. Among them, the ‘Papers of Ginette Leach’, for example, contain ‘bolt cutters’ and ‘a piece of Greenham Common fence

⁹¹ Daisy Hay, ‘Flotsam and Jetsam’, Keynote Speech Given to the Friends of the National Library Lecture, Burlington House, Oxford, 2014; Derrida, *The Post Card*, p. 12.

⁹² Derrida, *The Post Card*, p. 11.

wire'.⁹³ The collection also contains multiple photographs or representations of wires and fences, and a postcard describes the women's 'trophy of wire mesh clipped from the perimeter fence'.⁹⁴ The ubiquity of the wire as memorabilia in relation to the Greenham Peace Camp complicates a reading that would attempt to make sense of its presence in Carter's archive. Bill Brown suggests that 'things' spring from 'the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems', thus bypassing any approach that would reduce objects to their use-value.⁹⁵ In its serial, mass-produced nature, the wire is both a signifier endowed with multiple meanings, and a 'thing' that resists them, taken out of the highly fraught context of the Greenham Women's Camp, a place where multiple versions of femininity and feminism met and, sometimes, came into friction.⁹⁶ Thus, taken individually, as the product of a hijack – a piece of military equipment turned into a personal message – the wire forestalls attempts to determine its use. It must nevertheless have constituted an instantly recognisable symbol to Carter's correspondents.

This leads us to a second difficulty, that the unique piece of textual evidence – the message inscribed on the paper that accompanies wire – yields no additional information about its senders, or their intentions. The playful use of the homonym 'wire' in the message, evoking both the metal fence and communication technology, points to the ambivalence of the object to which it is attached. The lack of punctuation due to its telegraph-like format also raises the question of how to interpret its message – was the cable sent by 'Tony Yvonne' and 'Hester Love'? Or is the reader to infer that 'Tony, Yvonne, and Hester' send Carter their 'love'? Both

⁹³ London, The Women's Library (London School of Economics), Papers of Ginette Leach, 7LEA. For a description of contents, see: <https://twl-calm.library.lse.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=7LEA>.

⁹⁴ Cited from: London, The Women's Library (London School of Economics), Women's Peace Campaigning: Greenham Common: Hair Plaiting, Green Gate, TWL.2003.423. The examples of visual representations of wire are: London, The Women's Library (London School of Economics), Women's Peace Campaigning: Greenham Common - lots of wire, TWL.2011.08.07; London, The Women's Library (London School of Economics), Women's Peace Campaigning: Greenham Common – Razor Wire (Photograph), TWL.2011.08.13.

⁹⁵ Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 28.1 (2001), 1–22 (p. 5).

⁹⁶ Bill Brown.

messages imply different levels of intimacy between sender and addressee and suggest different ways in which the serially produced wire is recast for the purposes of a unique message.

The wire was an important feature among representations of the camp, making it a compelling souvenir. Standing for the fence built between the women and the base, it gained currency as symbol of participation (as women would regularly cut through the fence, a scene that features in testimonies and even in songs about the camp) but also as tool to be reshaped and reused.⁹⁷ Anna Feigenbaum suggests that we should regard the Greenham women's adaptation to their surroundings as a kind of cyborg feminism, commenting on their active engagement with metal as a militarist material that the women repurposed to creative ends.⁹⁸ She lists multiple examples of such encounters with the material components of the camp and emphasises the women's capacity to reappropriate them in order to invent symbols rich in poetic implications, such as the snake and the web, an act she calls 'an embodied rhetoric, an ironic gesture and a cyborgian technological engagement'.⁹⁹ Among those practices, the wire holds special value, as [m]any women quite literally 'liberated' metal from the fence as well as from shopping carts and scrap piles, in order to transform and build household technologies', which included 'grills and sandwich toasters'.¹⁰⁰ A rich signifier embodying the fence itself, but also the camp as a whole, as noted by Feigenbaum, the Xmas Wire thus stands as an archival synecdoche of the camp in the context of the Carter papers.¹⁰¹ In cabling Carter a wire from Greenham, the senders not only added an object of historical and political relevance to her collection, but also accomplished a playful act of symbol production through craftivism. Unlike

⁹⁷ Anna Feigenbaum, "'Now I'm a Happy Dyke!': Creating Collective Identity and Queer Community in Greenham Women's Songs", *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 22.4 (2010), 367–88 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-1598.2010.01251.x>>.

⁹⁸ Anna Feigenbaum, 'From Cyborg Feminism to Drone Feminism: Remembering Women's Anti-Nuclear Activisms', *Feminist Theory*, 16.3 (2015), 265–88 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700115604132>>.

⁹⁹ Feigenbaum, 'From Cyborg Feminism to Drone Feminism', p. 275.

¹⁰⁰ Feigenbaum, 'From Cyborg Feminism to Drone Feminism', p. 275.

¹⁰¹ Feigenbaum, 'From Cyborg Feminism to Drone Feminism', p. 286.

the cheap commodification of the Greenham look and hype, the cable speaks to the ties of solidarity that bound the women inhabiting the camp, and to Carter's own connections with the activist crowd of 80s London. Its repurposing as a card also testifies to the malleability and ductility of those links.

We have no clues as to Carter's reaction to the wire, and her archive does not offer any clues as to the identity of the women who sent it to her. Nevertheless, I would suggest that its arrangement among the 'Objects' of the Carter archive rather than, for example, alongside the other sections of her correspondence, both reveals and erases its composite nature as a text-object, and its insertion in a network of friendships and intimate relationships Carter developed throughout her life. Part-letter, part-thing, the wire is a playful message whose intentions risk becoming obscured by the passing of time, in a way not dissimilar to the postcards gathered by Carter's literary executor Susannah Clapp. Clapp's short biographical essay *A Card from Angela Carter*, revolves around her Carter memorabilia. Clapp describes the postcards she received from Carter one by one, tracing 'a paper trail, a zigzag path through the eighties', part of what she calls her 'small collection of Angela material'.¹⁰² Clapp's narrative articulates a tension between legibility and opacity: there is an antiquatedness to the postcard – 'the email of the twentieth century', and yet, they are still close enough that they can be interpreted.¹⁰³ The biographer, however, is standing on the edge, as the stories enmeshed in the cards are at a risk of becoming impossible to read: '[i]n a few years' time it will be harder to know which is random, which is allusive'.¹⁰⁴

The conservation of the wire invites a pondering upon its value to Carter, who kept it, and suggests the inquisitive gaze of an archivist, who chose how to catalogue it. As noted by Kate Eichhorn, 'to place a personal collection in an established archive remains a powerful

¹⁰² Clapp, pp. 9–10.

¹⁰³ Clapp, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Clapp, p. 10.

authorizing act'.¹⁰⁵ In stabilising, both in a spatial and institutional sense, a given set of documents in the form of a repository, organising it under the sections of a catalogue, the archive both preserves the wire and risks flattening its affective weight.¹⁰⁶ Freshwater opines that 'the archive's very existence indicates an a priori value judgment concerning the worth of the documents or artefacts it contains'.¹⁰⁷ The wire is the embodiment of a souvenir, crossing the personal and the historical registers in a way that, in the words of Gillian L. Whitlock, appears potentially 'alive, vibrant, and volatile'.¹⁰⁸ Whitlock weaves the 'object biography' of a piece of embroidery given as a present to the activist Elaine Smith by an asylum seeker presented under the fictional name Daoud.¹⁰⁹ She contends that the piece of fabric 'is [...] a gift, part of an exchange between unlikely correspondents, and testimony to an embodied intimacy'.¹¹⁰ In the case of the wire, one part of the exchange triangle is missing, calling for a different form of 'material' or, perhaps, contextual 'literacy'.¹¹¹ By setting the wire back in the context of Carter's correspondence and of her longstanding, albeit complex, connections with various forms of counterculture over the course of her career, the wire becomes legible as memorabilia speaking to the author's ambivalent use and repurposing of forms of protest culture in her own work.

Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I made the claim that Carter was particularly apt at setting her own scene – a scene in which she showed her competence as a writer but also her alignment with a specific set of attitudes with regards to bohemia and consumption, in ways that paradoxically

¹⁰⁵ Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Eichhorn, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ Freshwater, p. 740.

¹⁰⁸ Gillian L. Whitlock, 'Embridry', *Profession*, 2011, p. 96 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1632/prof.2011.2011.1.85>>.

¹⁰⁹ Whitlock, p. 95.

¹¹⁰ Whitlock, p. 91.

¹¹¹ Maryanne Dever, 'Greta Garbo's Foot, or, Sex, Socks and Letters', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 25.64 (2010), 163–73 (p. 166) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08164641003762461>>.

facilitated the commodification of her private, domestic space for the benefit of an ever-broadening audience. I moved on to an analysis of her last novel, *Wise Children*, to show Carter's fascination with the transient, the ephemera, but also her paradoxical relationship with items which, like the armadillo with which I opened this chapter, can easily be turned into status items if preserved, whether in the pages of a scrapbook or in the potentially stultifying atmosphere of the archive. Yet, as I demonstrated in my last section, Carter herself collected memorabilia which, in the image of the Xmas Wire from Greenham, embody the ambivalence of counterculture and its ability to become incorporated, whether by fashion brands or for the purposes of selling books. In so doing, I suggested that Carter's career shows her distancing herself gradually from avant-garde ideas of the purity of the work of art: like Dora, the business-savvy narrator of her last novel, Carter knew the price of things, such as a manuscript written by a forlorn lover. In making Dora, formerly idealised muse, the narrator of her own story and exposing her business acumen, Carter treads a fine line between aesthetic and political concerns and economic necessity. This line directly impacted her way of presenting herself to her public, and is a decisive factor in contemporary readings of her work and legacy. As I will aim to show in the concluding chapter of this thesis, Carter's rejection of autonomy and embrace of the law of the market presents a challenge for feminist writers anxious to build a career.

The recent exhibition 'Strange Worlds: The Vision of Angela Carter', which took place in Bristol in 2017, made much of Carter's links with the art world, exhibiting works that had inspired her as well as others inspired by her writing, but also of her own qualities as a visual artist. In the preface to the exhibition catalogue, Carmen Callil describes Carter as a polyvalent artist: '[s]he drew, she illustrated, she water-coloured – god knows why she had this talent as

well as so many others'.¹¹² The catalogue features examples of Carter's own artworks, lent by another friend, Christopher Frayling: one is a collage, dated from 1977, of a woman's face hovering against a black background, in a gothic atmosphere ruptured by a vivid red mouth, an image reminiscent of Carter's obsessive portrayal of disembodied, fragmented female bodies.¹¹³ The second one, also a collage from 1977, features abstract circular shapes in primary colours – red, blue, yellow – against a white background.¹¹⁴ Unlike Carter's texts, those images were not made to be seen by a wide audience. Now transformed by her posthumous fame into precious memorabilia of an author now acknowledged as a classic, these drawings, whose existence began as ephemera in their own right, have suddenly crossed the border to make it into Carter's oeuvre and canon. In my next chapter, on Carter's journalism, I tease out the conditions of this crossing of the throwaway text into the canon and its connections with Carter's commercial acumen as writer.

¹¹² Marie Mulvey Roberts and Fiona Robinson, *Strange Worlds: The Vision of Angela Carter* (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2016).

¹¹³ Roberts and Robinson, p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Roberts and Robinson, p. 16.

Chapter 2: Media Training for the Masses: Angela Carter's Journalism and the Deconstruction of the Romance

Reviews made up a large part of Carter's contributions to the press and give a good sense of her journalistic voice. While we are accustomed to looking for Angela Carter's literary predecessors amongst the likes of Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, and the Marquis de Sade, one advantage of her journalistic portfolio is to reveal her knowledge and appreciation of other, less oft cited women writers. A review of a biography of Colette (1980) invites a number of parallels between Carter and the French Belle Époque figure. Of Colette's concomitant literary and journalistic career, Carter observes that '[h]er marriage also sealed her fate as a journalist, which in turn sealed her fate as a novelist, because the professions are mutually exclusive, even if simultaneously conducted'.¹ Carter pits Colette's journalism against her fiction according to a hierarchy of truth in which the latter has the upper hand:

Colette's novels are of a different order of reality than autobiographical pieces, because her novels are fiction and hence the truth; the rest is journalism and so may bear only the most peripheral relation to truth, even if a journalist tells you every single thing that actually happened.²

Carter's critique of Colette's biographical pieces thus dismisses journalism's pretention to truth-telling in the same gesture as she distances herself from straightforwardly biographical writing. Carter was very upfront about her belief in the political efficacy of literary form in her own work. As she concludes in her essay 'Notes from the Front Line': 'What I *really* like doing is writing fiction and trying to work things out *that way*'.³ As a result, it may seem natural to

¹ Angela Carter, 'Colette', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 519–28 (p. 521).

² Carter, 'Colette', p. 523.

³ Angela Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 36–43 (p. 43).

assume a hierarchy between Carter's fiction and her journalism, in which the former would be her literary output proper.

In my previous chapter, I charted Carter's creation of an authorial persona answering to a set of demands of the literary marketplace while firmly engaging with the consequences of such an environment on the conditions of cultural labour. In this chapter, I read Carter's journalistic production as a genre of writing in which many readers would have encountered her work, but also as a corpus that serves to establish a longitudinal view of her writing career. Carter's stated contempt for the ability of journalism to tell the truth did not preclude her from publishing articles in a variety of outlets until the end of her career. Her body of work reveals a constant preoccupation with the material conditions of literary production. It is also a site where Carter would reflect upon the position of women writers – indeed, her journalism reveals the extent to which Carter read, reviewed, and considered the work of women intellectuals and artists, against a critical grain that generally places her in a male literary lineage. The question of making a living out of one's writing is one with which Carter repeatedly wrestles. Her own stance towards her writing is summed up in her claim to be 'making her living as a writer and [to] have done so most of [her] adult life'.⁴ Writing is, therefore, not only conceived in the abstract but as a material practice with financial implications, and is embedded in Carter's private and professional conception of herself as a writer and a public intellectual. A wealth of essays, reviews, and opinion columns, her journalism is the locus where Carter's ambition as a writer and the (potentially competing) need for a source of income meet.

Unsurprisingly, the critics who have examined Carter's journalistic essays have largely adopted her stance on dividing journalistic writing from literary works. When they read her

⁴ Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', p. 39.

journalistic essays, scholars have turned to them as explanatory evidence to read her novels and short stories.⁵ Dimovitz, for example, suggests that

[r]eading the entirety of her published journalism and essays, it becomes increasingly clear that Carter often used her nonfiction in one of two ways: first, as a method of exploring ideas, themes, and symbols that figured into her recent or upcoming fiction; and second, as an apologia and map for reading her fiction.⁶

The role attributed to Carter's journalism here is an auxiliary one only. Dimovitz's method implies that we read Carter's journalism spectrally: as a text in which lingers, insistently, the possibility of another, more valuable one, which would also be more deserving of the work of literary interpretation. Such a position might be one explanation for the current critical neglect surrounding Carter's journalistic writing. Yet, as my previous chapter demonstrated, Carter's archive shows her interest in ephemeral texts and cultural products. Her insistence on linking her writing to an income, her interest in the material conditions of writing, and her constant journalistic output similarly belie readings that would dismiss Carter's journalistic activity as always second to her fiction.

I have previously shown Carter's fluent use of media and ephemeral documents as a means to create, develop, and embody her own literary labour in the private and public realms. Through her journalism, we see Carter developing a critical method of reading such media and showing her reader the art of deciphering popular culture and contemporary cultural production. In doing so, Carter implicitly embraces the position of a critic, whose role is to address, interpellate, and educate a public confronted with rapid changes in the surrounding cultural economy. The role of the critic is directly connected to the construction of a qualified

⁵ Dimovitz; Maria José Pires, 'The Moral Right of Food: Angela Carter's "Food Fetishes"', in *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings*, ed. by Lawrence Phillips and Sonya Andermahr (New York: Continuum, 2012), pp. 56–66; Gamble, *Angela Carter*.

⁶ Dimovitz, p. 16.

readership. In ‘The Salon of 1846’, Baudelaire characterises the changing conditions of artistic and cultural reception:

You are the majority – in number and intelligence; therefore you are the force –
which is justice.

Some are scholars, other are owners; a glorious day will come when the scholars
shall be owners and the owners scholars. Then your power will be complete, and no
man will protest against it.⁷

Witnessing the emergence of bourgeois cultural supremacy, Baudelaire implicitly tasks the critic with ensuring that this rising class of cultural consumers will receive adequate aesthetic and artistic education. At the end of the twentieth century, Baudelaire’s prediction of the rise of an educated middle-class has come true, and Carter’s readership is, in its majority, a literate and cultivated public. Michael Warner later defined ‘*a* public, as distinct from both *the* public and any bounded audience’ as ‘a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. [...] It exists *by virtue of being addressed*.’⁸ As he notes, however, ‘publics are increasingly organized around visual or audio texts’ and ‘the texts themselves are not even recognized as texts’.⁹ Carter’s journalism similarly contributes to educating a public trained in encountering and deciphering an increasingly diverse range of media.

Her methods in doing so appear directly borrowed from the assumptions of Marxist cultural theory ‘that social being determines consciousness’.¹⁰ Such consciousness is directly at odds with the demands that rule the literary and journalistic market, and with Carter’s own stake in the profession as a source of income throughout her life. Her journalistic corpus offers a vivid reflection of this tension that a reading of her articles as accessory to her literary output

⁷ Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Salon of 1846’, in *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies by Charles Baudelaire*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1955), pp. 39–132 (p. 41).

⁸ Michael Warner, ‘Publics and Counterpublics’, *Public Culture*, 14.1 (2002), 49–90 (p. 50).

⁹ Warner, p. 51.

¹⁰ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 75.

risks erasing. Carter's reading of media yields a disenchanted vision of the contemporary mass market, often enthralled to certain romances – around the role of literature, femininity and its social function, consumption, or the foundation of the United States. Her deconstruction of such romances is central to this chapter.

While the meaning I assign to the term romance will vary in accordance with the narratives Carter sets out to unpack, it is useful to locate the genre historically. In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson articulates a definition of form and genre as embedded in social life: 'form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right'.¹¹ His contention that 'the analysis of the ideology of form' must 'reveal the formal persistence of [...] archaic structures of alienation' endows the literary critic with a socially potent role: that of unveiling the relationships at the heart of cultural and social production.¹² Literary genres create and regulate a set of expectations between writer and readers: '[g]enres are essential literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a cultural artifact'.¹³ The iterative nature of form plays a part in articulating ways of thinking about the mutual enmeshment of narrative and life. Romance plays an ambivalent part in the history of genre. As Jameson observes, it serves an emancipatory or escapist function in post-industrial societies:

[i]t is in the context of the gradual reification of realism in late capitalism that romance once again comes to be felt as the place of narrative heterogeneity and of freedom from that reality principle to which a now oppressive realistic representation is the hostage.¹⁴

Jameson observes, following Northrop Frye, that the narrative arc of the romance traces the contours of a 'salvational or redemptive perspective of some secure future'.¹⁵ In late capitalist

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Oxon: Routledge Classics, 2002), p. 127.

¹² Jameson, p. 85.

¹³ Jameson, p. 92.

¹⁴ Jameson, p. 91.

¹⁵ Jameson, p. 91.

societies, however, it is ‘confined to the subliterate genres of mass culture’.¹⁶ Carter’s reviews reflect her interest in such subliterate genres as means to capture the ‘structure of feeling’ of the late twentieth century.

Raymond Williams coins the concept of ‘structures of feelings’ to describe a collective experience, which he suggests is akin to a form of ‘style’, ‘a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from any other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or a period’.¹⁷ Carter’s reviews capture a complex historical evolution, between the Post World War II consensus and the rise of neoliberalism. Williams argues that narrative arcs of the kind described by structures of feeling ‘are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations’.¹⁸ Only retrospectively can we account for the accumulated cultural economic and political shocks of the decade ranging from the 1970s to the 80s. Carter’s study of ephemeral productions – photo-romances, manga, mass-market novels – and of the prevalence of the romance charts the evolution of her contemporaries’ ways of thinking and living. Her analysis of the proliferating textual and visual productions also indirectly solidifies her own position as a critic immersed in the literary market, reminiscent of Bourdieu’s assertion that ‘one loses the essence of what makes for the individuality and even the greatness of the survivors when one ignores the universe of contemporaries with whom and against whom they construct themselves’.¹⁹ Carter’s journalism places her at odds with the literary products she analyses. Yet her outsider position is also precisely what affords her greater commercial success.

In this chapter, I contend that Carter’s journalism can be read as a self-reflexive enterprise on authorship in which Carter critically incorporates a method for reading mass

¹⁶ Jameson, p. 93.

¹⁷ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 131.

¹⁸ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132.

¹⁹ Bourdieu, p. 70.

media. Even as Carter negotiates her own position as a creator engaged in the literary market, her journalism invites her readers to reflect on the kind of readers they could aspire to be, by inviting them to take even the most trivial forms of media seriously. In the process, she also centres such media as forming the core of her work as a writer. In my first section, I read a selection of Carter's reviews in which she engages in a reflection on the role of journalism and the proper use of media. I show that Carter's journalism is an important site for thinking about her construction of a female reader and creator, which leads me to analyse one of her contributions to the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*. Finally, I consider a collection of documents gathered in the archive as evidence of Carter's critical methodology for reading media.

On Becoming a Good Reader of Media

Carter's journalism reveals a sustained enterprise of making her audience better readers and consumers of media that belies previous accounts of her journalistic corpus as accessory. I have previously referred to Jordan's distinction between Carter's contemporary readers and the cold producers of post-mortem 'scholarly paper[s]'.²⁰ Jordan's comment here reminds us that Carter's contemporaries could access her writing in various forms: not only in cleanly bound novels and anthologies, but in the more ephemeral format of newspapers and magazines, in which her journalism and, occasionally, fiction, would be published. When Carter was alive, her journalism was a platform through which some readers might have been more if not exclusively familiar with her and her work. With Carter's death, a certain sense of spontaneity exemplified in Jordan's and Carter's friends' privileged access to her (via intimate discussions, unrecorded phone calls, or interviews) has indeed disappeared. In her journalism we, contemporary readers, see Carter responding to and engaging with current events whose significance is partly lost on us, spitting vitriolic venom at other journals and authors, and even,

²⁰ Jordan, p. 89.

as she would occasionally do in her fiction, repeating herself. All these publications cannot be subsumed under an act of fictional premeditation and some, as I will imply, may be likened to self-aware ‘*position-takings*’.²¹

Carter’s journalistic career follows a trajectory parallel to her career as a literary writer. In purely chronological terms, Carter’s first professional occupation was as a journalist although, if accounts are to be believed, not one strictly bound by ethics of fact-checking: Edmund Gordon remarks that Carter herself confessed to her ‘demonic inaccuracy’.²² She entered the profession at nineteen, with no formal qualifications and, Gordon implies, thanks to her father’s support.²³ She began working with *New Society* in 1966, writing regular pieces for the journal until its transformation into the *New Statesman* in 1983.²⁴ Her contributions span regional, national, and international outlets such as the *Guardian*, the *London Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Observer*, and *Vogue*, and the published anthology of Carter’s journalism, *Shaking a Leg* (1997) ranges from 1964 to 1992.²⁵ While extensive, the current edition of Carter’s published journalism excludes her contributions to *Spare Rib*, which include three full-length features and at least one review. As for Carter’s many press interviews, they remain uncollected. Carter’s journalism achieved anthologisable status as a result of her rising fame as an author of literary works, rather than the other way around.

Yet, based on the author’s own account, her journalism was a contributing factor in Carter’s path towards independence. In ‘Fat is Ugly’, a piece published in the journal *New Society* in 1974, Carter briefly reminisces about her early journalistic career, which coincided with her self-diagnosed period of anorexia: ‘I fell in with a group of picturesque eccentrics; I

²¹ Bourdieu, pp. 87–88.

²² Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 41.

²³ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 37.

²⁴ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 99; Angela Carter, *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny S. Uglow (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), p. 620.

²⁵ For a full list of Carter’s contributions to the *New Statesman*, see Angela Carter, *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny S. Uglow (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), pp. 609–24.

was working on a local newspaper which, at that time, functioned as a kind of benign day-clinic, where my patent insanity was taken in good part.’²⁶ Carter’s initiation as a journalist is assimilated to a quasi-therapeutic experience, as well as one through which she claims to have achieved a sense of personal autonomy, since it is around that time that she ‘ceased to be docile at home and became obnoxious’.²⁷ Carter’s journalistic career is therefore foundational in more ways than one. Not only does it bring her a source of income (although one that would need supplementing), it also corresponds to a relative state of improved health, connecting professional and bodily autonomy. Gordon notes that Carter was initially reluctant at the idea of working as a journalist, and only did so at her father’s insistence that she should not be dependent on her husband, becoming the only woman employee in an ‘ultraconservative’ and ‘self-consciously masculine environment’.²⁸ From the outset, Carter therefore seems to stand out: this extends to her outfits, self-consciously chosen to be eccentric according to an eyewitness who likens her to ‘a cross between Quentin Crisp and the Wicked Witch of the West’.²⁹ While intended to be benevolent, such comments suggest unspoken standards for appearance in the workplace of which Carter, the ‘Witch’, seemingly falls short. One might speculate that her early experience of being the only young woman in her office would contribute to Carter’s later interest in culture cast as feminine and in its representation in the journalistic world. The question of women’s access to the newsroom has implications that extend beyond Carter’s example.

Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming contend that ‘[w]omen journalists find that they are not only deliverers but also objects of news’.³⁰ Their account

²⁶ Angela Carter, ‘Fat Is Ugly’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 56–61 (p. 58).

²⁷ Carter, ‘Fat Is Ugly’, p. 58.

²⁸ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, pp. 37 and 40.

²⁹ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 40.

³⁰ Deborah Chambers, *Women and Journalism* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 3
<<https://www.dawsonera.com/guard/protected/dawson.jsp?name=https://idp.cardiff.ac.uk/shibboleth&dest=http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9780203500668>> [accessed 28 October 2019].

reveals the tensions surrounding women's access to the journalistic profession in the post-war era, eventually leading to the separatist impulses governing women-only media productions such as *Spare Rib*, for example. While the Second World War initially enabled women to become part of the industry outwith the narrow bounds of the women's pages, their positions were often contingent on the lack of men to fill them, and the return to peace quickly resulted in their expulsion from the newsroom.³¹ Yet, in the 1950s and 1960s women journalists fulfilled a truly transformative function: women 'broadened topics deemed newsworthy' through 'evoking a response from the audience by showing how events affected them'.³² Nevertheless, by the 1960s, women journalists had yet to secure their position in the industry. Anecdotal evidence of the precariousness of this access to the public sphere is visible, for example, in a reader's response to Carter's opinion piece on a series of cookery books published in the *London Review of Books*. In 1985, Christopher Driver, former editor of the Good Food Guide from 1970 to 1982, penned an acrimonious letter addressed to the editor.³³ The letter begins thus:

It is better to think while holding a tomato or a leg of lamb than not to think at all, and Angela Carter (*LRB*, 24 January) might have been wise to heed Alice Waters's advice. I thought I had been unlucky when motherhood got in the way of her perpetually forthcoming *LRB* notice of my *The British at Table 1940-1980* a year or so ago, but now I am not so sure. A woman capable of splashing blame for the Ethiopian famine on Elizabeth David is scarcely to be trusted with a baby's pusher, let alone a stabbing knife.³⁴

³¹ Chambers, *Women and Journalism*, p. 36.

³² Chambers, *Women and Journalism*, p. 36.

³³ Tom Jaine, 'Obituary: Christopher Driver', *The Independent*, 1997 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-christopher-driver-1279946.html>> [accessed 10 December 2020].

³⁴ Christopher Driver, 'Letters · LRB', *London Review of Books*, 21 February 1985 <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v07/n03/letters>> [accessed 10 December 2020].

From the outset, Driver's attack is framed as an *ad feminam* which targets Carter's review through her (supposedly lacking) mothering abilities and cooking faculties, at the same time as it portrays her as an incompetent journalist. This condescending put-down is aggravated by the reminder that 'her own debut as a contributor to [*The Guardian's* food and drink page, which Driver himself edited] arose from an experience of waiting at table, circa 1967'.³⁵ Driver's response, here, is quick to take the form of a disciplining scolding and a public humiliation reminding a less senior colleague of her waitressing days by way of asserting his own legitimacy. To put it succinctly, it is Carter's very place as a woman in the public mediatic sphere that becomes weaponised and a subject of dispute. It is telling that such acrimony should arise in response to her cultural criticism – a piece on food writer Elizabeth David, whose status as a national monument of British cooking had long been established, a fact was acknowledged by Carter herself ('*Après Elizabeth David le deluge*', as she once declared).³⁶ Driver ends his rebuke by comparing Carter and David's claims to eliciting 'pleasure' and 'public concern' through their writing – a comparison which he clearly deems unflattering to Carter.³⁷ His reaction would suggest that Carter's reading of cultural items as outwardly innocuous as a cookery book did not go unnoticed, and contributed to her public reputation. The anecdote also gives an insight into the kinds of attacks a woman journalist risked being subjected to by signing her name at the bottom of a column, or even a review.

Makinen's contends that 'it is always the dangerously problematic that are mythologised in order to make them less dangerous' to explain the retrospective canonisation of Carter as the benevolent mother figure of feminist storytelling.³⁸ Likewise, Jo Ann Kaplan, who directed Carter's iconoclastic documentary *The Holy Family Album*, concurred that

³⁵ Driver.

³⁶ Angela Carter, 'Saucer's Apprentice', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 83–86 (p. 86).

³⁷ Driver.

³⁸ Makinen, p. 2.

‘Carter became a less problematic figure for the media establishment after her death’, even admitting that the author had an ‘uncomfortable screen presence’.³⁹ I read the reactions to Carter’s media presence as part and parcel of a conscious enterprise of engaging her readers with the media to which they found themselves exposed in everyday life. Carter’s journalistic strategy to highlight her readers’ media consumption is embedded in a media ecology in full transformation. The concept of media ecology is developed by Marshall McLuhan in his essay *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) to describe and explain the changes brought about by the spread of new technologies. His contention that ‘the “message” of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs’ carries weight in the context of Carter’s analysis of new media productions.⁴⁰ Carter’s critiques of various media publications but also her uncomfortable screen and mediatic presence suggest a conscious play with the format afforded her by journalistic publishing. Close reading those productions in which Carter self-consciously makes media of all shapes and forms the subject of her writing reveals an author well-read and trained in the art of media studies.

‘Semiology in a vacuum’: Carter Against New Journalism

We can find a case study of Carter’s critical attitude towards journalism in the media in her survey of the so-called New Journalism movement. Associated with writers such as Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, and Truman Capote, the tenets of New Journalism revolved around a different approach to news reporting, chiefly characterised by the use of literary techniques derived from fiction. In her critical reading of Tom Wolfe’s *Anthology of New Journalism*, published in *New Society* in 1975, Carter addresses Wolfe’s pretensions to establishing journalism as the new leading literary force of the United States *contra* the novel, which he

³⁹ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*, pp. 190 and 189.

⁴⁰ McLuhan, p. 8.

presents as ‘literature’s main event’.⁴¹ Carter’s review refers at length to Wolfe’s essay on ‘The New Journalism’, originally published in *New York Magazine* under the less than concise title ‘The Birth of “The New Journalism”’; Eyewitness Report by Tom Wolfe. Participant Reveals Main Factors Leading to Demise of the Novel, Rise of New Style Covering Events’.⁴²

In the piece, Wolfe argues that the advent of a new generation of journalists trained in the art of using artful stylistic tropes and techniques signals the end of the supremacy of the novel as the only road to literary glory, which he describes in emphatic terms: ‘The Novel seemed like one of the last of those super-strokes, like finding gold or striking oil, through which an American could, overnight, in a flash, utterly transform his destiny.’⁴³ Wolfe is bent on articulating his own literary techniques, such as narrative voice. The ‘Hectoring narrator’ consists of a process whereby Wolfe would be

starting off a story by letting the reader, via the narrator, talk to the characters, hector them, insult them, prod them with irony or condescension, or whatever. Why should the reader be expected to just lie flat and let these people come tromping through as if his mind were a subway turnstile?⁴⁴

Wolfe’s hectoring narrator is intending to empower the reader, whose views become part of the production of the text. A paradoxical effect of this aspirationally democratic conception of the text is its transformation of journalistic articles into (supposedly) transparent products that will reflect the desires and aspirations of the readership. In the process, the fusion of art with commodity becomes complete: Wolfe’s assumption of a hectoring narrator persona enables him to be at once everywhere and nowhere, presupposing an equivalence between each and every voice he purports to ventriloquise.

⁴¹ Tom Wolfe, cited in Angela Carter, ‘Tom Wolfe’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 271–75 (p. 271).

⁴² Tom Wolfe, ‘The Birth of “The New Journalism”’; Eyewitness Report by Tom Wolfe., *New York Magazine* (New York, 14 February 1972) <<https://nymag.com/news/media/47353/>> [accessed 16 December 2020].

⁴³ Wolfe.

⁴⁴ Wolfe.

Close-reading his own portrayal of actress and model ‘Baby’ Jane Holzer, for example, Wolfe flaunts his ability to adopt ‘the coloration of whomever he was writing about’.⁴⁵ Yet Wolfe’s portrayal of Baby Jane is parasited by his assumption of a male reader’s perspective, implied by the characterisation of the actress’s stream of consciousness as a vapid list of clothing items, hairdos, and make-up:

Bangs manes bouffant beehives Beatle caps butter faces brush-on lashes decal eyes
puffy sweaters French thrust bras flailing leather blue jeans stretch pants stretch jeans
honeydew bottoms éclair shanks elf boots ballerinas Knight slippers, hundreds of them,
these flaming little buds, bobbing and screaming, rocketing around inside the Academy
of Music Theater underneath that vast old moldering cherub dome up there – aren’t
they super-marvelous!⁴⁶

The portrayal of ‘young girls [...] running around the Theater’ as ‘flaming little buds’ further suggests a sexualised gaze that similarly points to the limits of Wolfe’s impersonation and to its reliance on aged tropes of femininity.

Carter’s reading takes issue with Wolfe’s stylistic rhetoric by pointing out its political limitations:

Wolfe has the percipience of the born semiologist, but it is semiology in a vacuum.
Some innate dandyism in him insists on the appearance of a negligent brilliance. He
wants no intellectual structure (which is to say, a moral structure) to obtrude upon the
recreation of effortlessness.⁴⁷

A reading of Wolfe, Carter suggests, can only yield paradoxical results, showing a reliance on literary devices he ostensibly opposes: ‘such a jamboree, filigree way of writing – so oddly at

⁴⁵ Wolfe.

⁴⁶ Wolfe.

⁴⁷ Carter, ‘Tom Wolfe’, p. 273.

variance with this passionate, indeed, polemical stance for social realism'.⁴⁸ This leads her to contend that

Wolfe's notion of social realism is narrowly connected with the idea of literature as a market commodity. Not a whisper of social realism and proletarian humanism. Never a suggestion of the ambivalence of realism as an artistic genre, now an instrument of oppression for keeping people in their place, now a methodology of liberation, revealing the world as it is, yet capable of change. Nothing of that.⁴⁹

In pretending to replace the novel as literary horizon, New Journalism appears to result in a form of naïve realism built on the tropes of the novel without reflecting on their purpose and substance but being written instead with an aim to cater to the desires of its audience. In the process, New Journalism also relinquishes its claim to reaching any greater truth, which becomes subsumed under the telling of the event. It becomes what Nicholas Brown would call an 'art commodity': 'If works of art were commodities like any other, desires represented by the market would be subject to analysis and elucidation, but interpretation of the work itself would be a pointless endeavor'.⁵⁰ Art-as-commodity replaces stylistic devices with 'saleable ideologemes that together make no sense', even where they reoccur in recognisable patterns, as is the case in commercial genres:

Some audiences will pay for ideological or narrative or aesthetic consistency, so we have politically engaged documentaries, middlebrow cinema, and independent film. But this consistency does not add up to a meaning, since what looks like meaning is only an appeal to a market niche.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Carter, 'Tom Wolfe', p. 273.

⁴⁹ Carter, 'Tom Wolfe', p. 274.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Brown, p. 20.

⁵¹ Nicholas Brown, p. 20.

In a similar fashion, New Journalism, Carter's critique suggests, is in thrall to an economy of the text that forecloses any ability for political liberation, by replacing style with tropes and truth with documentary under the pretence of empowering the reader.

As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, Carter's fiction is a testament to her own concerns about the connection between art and the market. In her reading of Wolfe and of other journalistic texts, therefore, semiology enables her to break apart the commodification of the text through a critique of the media that support it. Carter's analysis clashes with Wolfe's own claims to a 'democratic' imagination which he argues enables him to inhabit the perspective of his characters in equal measure and to reach his readers.⁵² As Brown contends,

The work of art is not like a commodity; it is one. [...] The question is whether the work of art is a commodity like any other or whether it can, within itself, suspend the logic of the commodity, legibly assert a moment of autonomy from the market.⁵³

As an obverse to Wolfe's 'semiology in a vacuum', whose appropriative style ends up flattening power dynamics and structures rather than to remedy them, Carter's journalism affords her reader a critical guide that has the potential to suspend the logic of commodification by helping her audience become an engaged public and critic of media.

A number of Carter's reviews propose readings of publications targeted at a primarily female audience: erotica, magazines dedicated to 'real-life' love stories or 'male pin-ups'.⁵⁴ Carter uses her understanding of media rhetoric to read those publications against their own grain, deciphering an image of femininity across the pages of titles such as *Playgirl* or *True Romances*. Carter's readings reveal the underlying tension between women as objects and subjects of media in an industry intent on creating outlets for a new readership by taking advantage of a climate of relative sexual and social liberation. Written over the course of the

⁵² Carter, 'Tom Wolfe'.

⁵³ Nicholas Brown, p. 45.

⁵⁴ Angela Carter, 'A Well-Hung Hang-Up', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 60–64 (p. 64).

seventies and eighties, her analyses of ephemera complement and engage with major insights in media theories, including Laura Mulvey's foundational essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' published in 1975.⁵⁵

Central to Mulvey's claims is the idea that the psychoanalytical construction of woman as a permanent other to man can provide a useful theoretical bedrock from which to launch a feminist analysis and revolution of cinema. Mulvey particularly bases her article on the discourse of sexual difference which forces woman into the role of 'bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning'.⁵⁶ Borrowing from her theory, which she stresses is 'specific to film', I contend that Carter enriches and deepens this critique by engaging with mass culture with women as its target.⁵⁷ Further, I show Carter's reflection on the romance as a genre that orients its readers towards certain narratives of domestic felicity, and the aporias of such stories for her readers. In analysing the structure of these stories, Carter may well offer an early vision of what Lauren Berlant analyses as neoliberalism's production of narratives of 'cruel optimism', in which 'something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing'.⁵⁸ Romance is a particularly apt genre for producing such stories, in offering a vision of 'the good life': '[w]hy do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies – say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work – when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds?'⁵⁹ Carter's analysis short-circuits such fantasies, by redirecting her readers' attention to the producers of said fantasies and pointing to the vested interests that rule them.

Erotic publications supply Carter with a prime site of observation to consider the tensions between women as objects and subjects of media. In an essay titled 'A Well-Hung

⁵⁵ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6–18
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>>.

⁵⁶ Mulvey, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Mulvey, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 1.

⁵⁹ Berlant, p. 2.

Hang-Up' (1975), she reviews a number of magazines (*Playgirl* and *Viva*) intended for female consumption. Her essay contends with the complexities of male eroticism. By analysing the complexity of creating sexually titillating imagery directed at women, Carter develops the implications of Mulvey's contention that

[a]ccording to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychological structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like.⁶⁰

Carter analyses the symptoms and sources of this unease in the pages of magazines displaying examples of male nudity. Additionally, she furthers Mulvey's insights by examining examples of a constructed female desiring gaze to query and demonstrate its limits and the conditions of its apparent (im)possibility.

Founded in 1973, *Playgirl* purported to offer a response to publications specialising in erotic shots of women by publishing pictures of nude men for a female audience, with mixed success. As its current editor-in-chief Skye Parrott puts it, in an article issued on the occasion of the relaunch of the magazine,

They're really fabulous in so many ways, but they do look like a man's idea of what a feminist publication would be [...]. Everything they did in *Playboy*, they did in *Playgirl*. It was interesting for a couple of years, then it was sold and resold, and it became what I thought of as a gay porn magazine.⁶¹

In her own reading of the (then recently born) outlet, Carter pinpoints the magazine's stumbling attempt at constructing an erotic aesthetic appropriate to a female readership, presumed to be heterosexual, through centre-folds portraying men in various states of undress. As she notes, the magazine's project itself is not driven by ambitions of collective feminist politics but by a

⁶⁰ Mulvey, p. 12.

⁶¹ 'The Body Politic: Playgirl Is Back... with a Return to Its Feminist Roots', *The Guardian*, 2020 <<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/nov/01/the-body-politic-playgirl-is-back-with-a-return-to-its-feminist-roots>> [accessed 8 January 2021].

liberal ideology the editor describes as ‘individual liberation [...] the quintessence of our survival’, which seems predicated on a consumerist femininity.⁶² The result is a ‘poverty-stricken aesthetic’ Carter attributes to a lacklustre iconography of the male nude.⁶³ The editors resort to ‘a top-dressing of sentiment’ designed to attract a female readership assumed to be ‘looking for love’ rather than ‘flesh’.⁶⁴ The men’s construction as objects of desire is hindered by this intervention, which Carter argues results in ‘butch’ men: ‘The aesthetic of the prick-and-bum mags is butch is beautiful’.⁶⁵ Paradoxically, this butch aesthetic is reminiscent of the ‘Hitler Youth’, with its implied references to ‘the pin-ups of the locker-rooms of Athens and Sparta so dear to the classical tradition’.⁶⁶ As Carter reveals, however, women are in fact excluded from this exchange of gazes: these men, whose features appear predicated on the ephebes of Greek antiquity, reveal the ‘male body as an object of desire, as an instrument of pleasure – but not of women’s pleasure’.⁶⁷

Structured by men’s desires while oriented towards female consumption, the women’s magazines reduce their assumed readers to third-party status. In so doing, they replicate the effects of the ‘phallogentric order’ identified by Mulvey in the form of an exchange from which women find themselves excluded.⁶⁸ While women are the hypothetical consumers of the male body in *Playgirl* and in the other publications analysed by Carter, they are ultimately denied the opportunity to define the parameters that make this body signify as a desirable object. In the economy of erotic magazine publication, their economic participation does not grant them access to sexual empowerment: rather, it enables the circulation of images conceived for and by men while encouraging the purchase of ‘vaginal deodorants, vibrators, slenderising devices,

⁶² Cited in Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, p. 61.

⁶³ Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, p. 61.

⁶⁴ Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, p. 61.

⁶⁵ Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, pp. 61–62.

⁶⁶ Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, p. 62.

⁶⁷ Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, p. 62.

⁶⁸ Mulvey, p. 7.

bust developing creams, and exotic underwear' whose enumeration mimics the trope of the fragmented female body.⁶⁹ These products, advertised in the pages of *Playgirl*, are intended to keep the publication afloat while advancing an image of femininity reliant on cosmetic prostheses, which paradoxically reintroduces a male gaze amid a publication intended for women.

Mulvey suggests that the presence of women in traditional cinema constitutes 'a contradiction', 'a castration threat [that] constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis'.⁷⁰ As Mulvey notices, women are not given license to drive the cinematic plot but must serve as support for the male characters' emotions. By eliminating the lack represented by women to replace it with the '[c]ock modestly detumescent' of a male nude, *Playgirl*, and other similar publications, perform an even cleverer trick that eliminates women from the terms of the visual exchange, replacing them by objects that denote their anatomy by association only, and supplement its lack with technological expedients.⁷¹ Women readers, however, did not take the bait. As noted by Parrott, the magazine became increasingly perceived as a gay outlet rather than as one oriented towards a middle-class female readership, and thus was gradually rejected outside mainstream culture. The economic errancy of the outlet, revealed by its subsequent sales, further testifies to the alienating effect produced by the structure of desire that the publication underwrites. It is worth noting that the magazine's conflicting economic and visual models also prevent straight women and potential queer audiences from longing after the same object, a possibility Carter's own analysis ultimately misses. In characterising the men of the publication as 'butch', her critique indeed risks foreclosing the politics of gendered liberation she claims to embrace, by devaluing other kinds of desire (her audience, it would seem, can only be made up of heterosexual women).⁷²

⁶⁹ Carter, 'A Well-Hung Hang-Up', p. 61.

⁷⁰ Mulvey, p. 18.

⁷¹ Carter, 'A Well-Hung Hang-Up', p. 60.

⁷² Carter, 'A Well-Hung Hang-Up', pp. 61–62.

To make this lop-sided exchange acceptable to the readership, the magazine editors resort to a tried and tested narrative form: the romance, which supplies their readership with ‘a top-dressing of sentiment’.⁷³ Carter presents this as an editorial intervention, aimed at the assumed female gaze. Discussions of romance acknowledge its importance as a type of literature primarily consumed by women readers but point to its political ambivalence. Janice Radway’s landmark ethnographic study, *Reading the Romance* (1984) identifies the genre as ‘*compensatory literature*’, in which women seek out an emotional outlet to their role as caregivers and an escape from domestic isolation.⁷⁴ This does not mean that the women’s condition is fundamentally changed by the act of reading in any material sense. Radway ultimately observes that ‘the romance’s narrative structure embodies a simple recapitulation and recommendation of patriarchy and its constituent social practices and ideologies’, even as its consumers may well experience it as an emancipating medium and reading as an activity rebellious in itself.⁷⁵ Indeed, in the world constructed by the romance, Radway argues, the ‘story [...] is as much *about* the transformation of an inadequate suitor into the perfect lover-protector as it is about the concomitant triumph of a woman’.⁷⁶ The set of expectations and desires authorised by the romance keep its readers in thrall to a fantasy of the perfect relationship, the perfect life. As Berlant observes, ‘older realist genres [...] whose conventions of relating fantasy to ordinary life and whose depictions of the good life now appear to mark archaic expectations about having and building a life’.⁷⁷ The romance buttresses such expectations, leading its readers towards a happy ending that will confirm their fantasies about coupledness as a horizon for happiness. Further, reading romance ‘may very well obviate the need or desire to demand satisfaction in the real world because it can be so successfully met in

⁷³ Carter, ‘A Well-Hung Hang-Up’, p. 61.

⁷⁴ Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 95.

⁷⁵ Radway, pp. 210–11.

⁷⁶ Radway, p. 214.

⁷⁷ Berlant, p. 6.

fantasy', via 'the fundamentally private, isolating experience of reading', rather than through collective means of action.⁷⁸ As critics have noted, Radway's argument posits romance readers as sentenced to a perpetual position of false consciousness, even as she leaves the question of the romance's ultimate conservative or liberatory potential open. Reharnessing Radway's argument in the service of a critique of the contemporary romance market, Brouillette remarks on the argument's 'pathologizing' tendencies but argues that romance carries on being 'a fantastical and false antidote to unfulfilment' which contributes to sustaining the existence of the couple form.⁷⁹ Brouillette's argument is that this effect is a function of romance that derives from the form of literature itself: [a]s a site of identification, style of cultural activity, and form of education, the literary tends precisely to mask the whole character of social relations that are necessary to its own flourishing'.⁸⁰ In the case of the male pin-up narratives, romance becomes yet another narrative form to conceal women's inability to access autonomous sexual pleasure.

Carter's reading of mass media, however, does not stop at visual contents. Her reviews demonstrate the potent effects of the narrative structure of romance on mainstream women's media. Mulvey's article on narrative cinema evidences visual culture's unease with the presence of women on the screen. Yet, visual culture abounds with narratives intended for female consumption. In 'An I for Truth', published in 1977, Carter considers another corpus of journalistic publications. Named '*True Story*', '*True Romances*', '*True*', '*Hers: True Life Stories*', the magazines are ostensibly about real-life love stories illustrated with photographs of their subjects.⁸¹ Like *Playgirl* and *Viva*, their intended readership is in majority female. The publications examined by Carter, she contends, aim to elicit 'absolute audience identification'.⁸² She notes that they have remained quite stable: '[t]he whole format of what

⁷⁸ Radway, p. 212.

⁷⁹ Sarah Brouillette, 'Romance Work', *Theory & Event*, 22.2 (2019), 451–64 (pp. 458–62).

⁸⁰ Brouillette, 'Romance Work', p. 452.

⁸¹ Angela Carter, 'An I for Truth', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 455–59 (p. 455).

⁸² Carter, 'An I for Truth', p. 455.

used to be called “confession magazines”, is, she says, ‘only a bit slicker than I remember when my mother wouldn’t let me read them’.⁸³ The magazines, she suggests, ‘adopt a sympathetically hortatory tone’.⁸⁴ All are imbued with a conservative ideology, ‘derive[d] from Sunday school literature’.⁸⁵ Much like *Viva* and *Playgirl*, these conservative publications rely on their readers’ consumption practices, advertising brands of beauty products through sample gifts: ‘a free packet of Silvikrin ‘Nature’s Riches’ strawberry shine conditioner, a sachet of Endocil clear moisturising lotion, a handy kitchen spatula’.⁸⁶ Ultimately, however, the magazines appear intended to dull any aspiration for a different future in its readers:

The invisible friends constantly reassure the reader (who may have private doubts about it) that happiness is more important than money. They would, presumably, block any demands for a return to free collective bargaining on the part of their husbands’ unions on these grounds alone.⁸⁷

Those magazines feature a fantasy world in which fantasies of heterosexual bliss are intended to placate political desires, and are maintained through a relation of cruel optimism. The private romance becomes an alternative to collective social liberation.

Further, as Carter observes, the magazines address a public that closely resembles the society they appear to aspire to: ‘The I’s are a homogeneous, upper-working, lower-middle, socially cohesive mass. There are no blacks, no trade union members, no dossers, freaks, unemployed manual workers, or socially discordant elements’.⁸⁸ In other terms, romance here addresses and sustains an aspirationally homogenous society, which it contributes to keeping in line. This process is aggravated in Carter’s later review of Judith Krantz’s novels, ‘The Sweet Sell of Romance’, published in 1981, in which the romance bridges the gap between narrative

⁸³ Carter, ‘An I for Truth’, p. 455.

⁸⁴ Carter, ‘An I for Truth’, p. 455.

⁸⁵ Carter, ‘An I for Truth’, p. 456.

⁸⁶ Carter, ‘An I for Truth’, p. 456.

⁸⁷ Carter, ‘An I for Truth’, p. 458.

⁸⁸ Carter, ‘An I for Truth’, p. 458.

and consumption: ‘both *Scruples* and *Princess Daisy* are romances of high consumerism’.⁸⁹ In Krantz’s novels, Carter argues, romance enables the merging of capitalism and the literary. Rather than to rely on the readers’ enjoyment of romance to drive them to consumption, the romance novel as written by Krantz nurtures and renews its readers’ consumerist impulses, in a way that is ‘prescriptive rather than descriptive’.⁹⁰ This fantasy is embodied in an object, a fictional perfume created after the name of one of Krantz’s heroines, which draws on femininity as a marketing tool: ‘the time has come to return to a romantic sell in fragrance, a classy, feminine sell’.⁹¹ Carter’s readings of media addressed at women over time unveil romance as an ideologically fraught structure, adept at shapeshifting to serve the goals of the market.

Carter’s critical tools for her readers supply them with means to engage with the flurry of mass-produced media that surrounds them in the late twentieth century. Her reviews address and train her audience not to become the dupes of the complex sets of texts and images that have become part of their everyday environment. In the process, Carter is also shown to contend with literature and narrative as a commodity form made increasingly compelling by economy and technology. Having examined Carter’s critical textual method, I turn now to a unique example in her corpus that exemplifies her own ability to use text and image alongside each other to demand a form of critical engagement in her reader.

‘Woman in the strips’: Japan and Angela Carter’s Visual Rhetoric

Out of all of Carter’s journalistic publications, ‘Japan, Where Masochism is a Way of Life’, published in the feminist magazine *Spare Rib* in May 1973, is the only one to have been published alongside her own illustrations. In the piece, which appeared after her time in Japan, Carter deploys visual strategies that question the format and tools of the feminist magazine. In

⁸⁹ Angela Carter, ‘The Sweet Sell of Romance’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 468–72 (p. 469).

⁹⁰ Carter, ‘The Sweet Sell of Romance’, p. 469.

⁹¹ Judith Krantz, cited in Carter, ‘The Sweet Sell of Romance’, pp. 470–71.

the process of unpacking Carter's visual rhetoric, I also examine her own singular position in the feminist publishing landscape. While the piece shows Carter as a journalist aware of the possibilities of her medium and of the readership and spheres that she would be tapping into through her article, it also displays an ethnological gaze reflective of the publication's (and Carter's) difficulty with representing race well into the 1970s.

In contrast with the examples of so-called feminine culture studied above, *Spare Rib* was one of an array of magazines that attempted to address and remedy a dearth of publications conceived by and for women apart from the preoccupations foisted upon them by patriarchal society and culture. Melanie Waters argues that feminist periodicals such as *Spare Rib* testify to a 'serial and emotive engagement with women's rights', visible through the magazine's constant effort to redefine its position in the feminist movement and vis-à-vis its readers.⁹² She states that '*Spare Rib* makes a consistent effort to provide spaces in which the feelings associated with women's liberation can be articulated and explored'.⁹³ In this context, she contends, '[a]ffect [...] is the current that animates and electrifies the complex web of personal, social and political identifications that spark between women in, through and beyond the pages of the magazine'.⁹⁴ Yet, as Waters herself notes, the fact that these emotional exchanges occurred 'between women' was no guarantee that they would be free of friction and conflicts, or 'bad feelings' expressed in readers' mail.⁹⁵ Carter's article fits into the trend noted by Waters for *Spare Rib* to voice some of 'the "bad feelings" that circulate within heterosexual relationships', and is coterminous with her analysis of the romance in women's media.⁹⁶ At the same time, her use of a distinct format and visual style inherited from her time spent in Japan

⁹² Melanie Waters, 'Risky Ms.-Ness? Affecting Change in Women's Liberation Periodicals of the 1970s' (unpublished Seminar Paper presented at the Modern and Contemporary Studies Seminar Series, Cardiff University, 2019).

⁹³ Melanie Waters, "'Yours in Struggle': Bad Feelings and Revolutionary Politics in *Spare Rib*", *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27.4 (2016), 446–65 (p. 447) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2017.1301131>>.

⁹⁴ Waters, "'Yours in Struggle'", p. 448.

⁹⁵ Waters, "'Yours in Struggle'".

⁹⁶ Waters, "'Yours in Struggle'", p. 452.

contributes to individualizing her piece, but risks alienating her readers from the Japanese women the article claims to depict.

According to Angela Smith and Sheila Quaid, *Spare Rib* was born ‘from the counter-culture underground movement in London in the late 1960s’.⁹⁷ It still achieved a national reach, ‘with print runs of 20,000, perhaps 100,000 readers at its peak’.⁹⁸ Smith and Quaid nuance these numbers, remarking that the newspaper *Votes for Women* published by Emmeline Pankhurst was printed in 30,000 copies a week. They observe, however, that *Spare Rib* was also at the heart of a collective reading practice, as women would lend copies to each other, resulting in a much wider readership than implied by these figures.⁹⁹

Laurel Forster argues that, as a form of activism, writing and publishing played a foundational role in cementing the identity of the Second Wave:

If 1970s feminism is deemed to be ‘the real thing: an age of activism’, then not only was print and publishing a crucial form of activism with manifold points of intersection and contributions to the women’s liberation cause, but production of a feminist magazine, one of the movement’s most popular forms of print media, was an achievable way of bringing different political identities and hinterlands, as well as women’s diverse skills, to political effect.¹⁰⁰

Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, feminist magazines and publishing houses flourished in the UK and the USA and became significant spaces for feminist activism. Carter’s career follows a trajectory parallel to, but not fully intertwined with this evolution. While her work as a journalist and a writer led her to meet some key figures of the publishing milieu, and although her work was published by Virago Press from *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) onwards, Carter did not, for example, take part in the foundation of a press or a journal. Gordon describes her

⁹⁷ *Re-Reading Spare Rib*, ed. by Angela Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁹⁸ Forster, p. 822.

⁹⁹ Angela Smith, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Forster, p. 813.

decision to submit work to *Spare Rib* as an effect of her enthusiasm for the project: ‘Angela [Carter] saw the magazine and liked what it was doing’.¹⁰¹ He also alludes to her pitch meeting with the magazine’s founders, Rosie Boycott and Marsha Rowe, but only mentions two of Carter’s publications.¹⁰² I have identified three feature-length pieces authored by Carter so far: the first is an interview with wax artist Evelyn Williams published in March 1973, the second a piece on Japan in May 1973, and the third a feature on fashion in August 1977, none of which have been anthologized as of yet.

Carter’s association with the magazine was short and may therefore seem to play a peripheral role in her journalistic corpus when compared with her long-term collaboration with outlets such as *New Society*, but her piece reveals her strategic use of *Spare Rib* as a publication with a strong visual, tactile, and affective dimension, with its strong DIY look and collaborative conception. ‘Japan, Where Masochism is a Way of Life’ (hereafter ‘Japan’) offers a description of the consumption strategies employed by Japanese women to turn themselves into desirable sex objects and reflects on the condition of women in Japan. Carter’s use of visual references belonging to the Japanese publishing mass-market contribute to making her article stand out amid other contributions. The written portion of ‘Japan’ is concerned with the problem of the cost of ‘maintenance and upkeep’ of a Japanese woman wishing to comply with social expectations towards women.¹⁰³ As a result, her depiction of Japanese women’s lives is particularly consumption-oriented, as she argues that ‘Japan is a nation of economic animals’.¹⁰⁴

The essay outlines Japanese women’s budgets, noting that ‘[m]ost office girls will earn perhaps forty or fifty pounds a month’ and that, ‘[i]f she does not live at home, she [the Japanese

¹⁰¹ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 216.

¹⁰² Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 216.

¹⁰³ Angela Carter, ‘Japan: Where Masochism Is a Way of Life’, *Spare Rib: The New Women’s Magazine*, May 1973, pp. 13–15 (p. 13), Glasgow Women’s Library.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, ‘Japan’, p. 14.

woman] will pay perhaps ten or twelve pounds a month for a small room with a matted floor'.¹⁰⁵ The article also informs the reader of Japanese women's eating habits: '[m]ostly, she will eat out. You can buy a bowl of noodles for ten pence.'; '[a] cup of coffee or tea will cost twenty or twenty five pence'.¹⁰⁶ Much like the white readership addressed by mass-produced romances I analysed in the previous section, Japanese women appear to be living in the pursuit of a fantasy of the good life according to a logic of cruel optimism: in dedicating their time and financial means to securing marriage, Japanese women maintain themselves in a state of economic precarity and social subjection. Yet, the article does not appear to suggest that this might give Japanese women and Western readers a common ground: in its attempt to offer a depiction of a Japanese lifestyle, the article revolves on an opposition between the implied I of the writer and her subjects, turned into a single she.

Through her portrayal of Japanese women's everyday life and means to achieve marriage, Carter seems to suggest that Japanese women's relationship to consumption is one that is conducive to their submission to patriarchal order, with few alternatives. Having examined the fate of the girls, reduced to turn themselves into objects, Carter portrays their transformation into bitter wives and mothers, and their rivalry with their daughters in law. If she leaves her husband, the woman can only turn into 'an unpaid drudge', with no hope of sisterhood or solidarity.¹⁰⁷ The end of the article offers two ways out for women. First, Carter talks about her friend 'Michimi'.¹⁰⁸ Portrayed as a lesbian woman, Michimi is also presented as the ideal woman: 'She is graceful, proud, economically independent and free. [...] But she is not attempting to play any kind of male game. So men cannot oppress her'.¹⁰⁹ Carter then turns to the fates of heterosexual women, and contrasts Japanese feminists, university-educated

¹⁰⁵ Carter, 'Japan', p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, 'Japan', p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ Carter, 'Japan', p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ Carter, 'Japan', p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ Carter, 'Japan', p. 15.

women who have often lived abroad, with the prostitutes, bar hostesses, and hotel keepers that ‘still provide the main careers available to girls of working-class origins. These women make a sufficient living out of the status quo; they profit from unsatisfactory marriages. They will never be the storm troops of social change’.¹¹⁰ The article ends on the utopian image of the ‘girl terrorists’, which she would later come back to in her 1977 novel *The Passion of New Eve*, in less than flattering terms.¹¹¹ Ultimately, however, she concludes that the revolution needed in Japan is not a violent, radical one, but an intimate one, in the relationship between men and women: ‘by realising themselves, women may well bring about a greater radical change than could be effected by the overthrow of the present system by force or violence’.¹¹² In other terms, this intimate revolution is cast within a heterosexual imaginative structure. Carter also gives little sense of what such realisation might be, although her use of the term without further qualifications implies that she and her reader should share an understanding of the means for Japanese women to achieve liberation.

Scholars including Lorna Sage, Sarah Gamble and Charlotte Crofts have commented on Carter’s ability to take on the role of the outsider, and the usefulness of this status in establishing her legitimacy as a critical observer.¹¹³ Crofts, however, warns against the ethical dangers of Carter’s ethnographical gaze, which risks turning the country she describes into ‘an intellectual playground’.¹¹⁴ Carter’s interest in breaking down the constraints and expenses to which Japanese women must consent in Japanese society, while intended as a critique of their living conditions, echoes other ethnographical pieces published in the magazine around the same time. Donna Chambers and Rob Worrall analyse the representation of black women and

¹¹⁰ Carter, ‘Japan’, p. 15.

¹¹¹ Carter, ‘Japan’, p. 15.

¹¹² Carter, ‘Japan’, p. 15.

¹¹³ Sage, *Angela Carter*, p. 24; Charlotte Crofts, “‘The Other of the Other’: Angela Carter’s “New-Fangled” Orientalism”, in *Re-Visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 87–109; Gamble, *Angela Carter*.

¹¹⁴ Crofts, “‘The Other of the Other’: Angela Carter’s “New-Fangled” Orientalism”, p. 87.

black feminism in *Spare Rib* from 1972 to 1979. They note that *Spare Rib* tended to portray ‘women as a homogeneous group’, with similar issues and concerns’, with ‘limited coverage of black women’, but that, over the years, several features were published on women in other countries (the authors mention Cuba, Dahomey, and India).¹¹⁵ While Chambers and Worrall do not mention East Asian women specifically, their study is still relevant for purposes of comparison. The contributions are often written by white women from an authoritative perspective. In this respect, Carter’s article follows a similar pattern: from the subtitle onwards, the editors are quick to establish her expertise by introducing her as ‘Angela Carter, novelist, who lived there for two years’, in a way suggestive of an anthropological account that frames the reader’s expectations about the nature of the informational contents of the article.

The othering of Japanese women in Carter’s piece fits the magazine’s readership’s implicit contempt for consumption. Joanne Hollows remarks that *Spare Rib* frequently echoes the discomfort of Second Wave feminism vis-à-vis the problem of consumption.¹¹⁶ Hollows’ corpus spans issues from 1972 to 1974: Carter wrote her contributions in 1973, at a time when the magazine was defining its political line. Hollows argues that ‘*Spare Rib* reproduced the rejection of consumer culture as a “properly” feminist position while acknowledging the political potential of certain kinds of consumption practices’.¹¹⁷ In the pages of the magazine, consumerism is mostly equated with subordination and domesticity, hence an implicit ‘disidentification’ of the magazine’s assumed readership with ‘domestic practices’, which comes to duplicate Carter’s audience’s implicit disidentification from Japanese women.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Donna Chambers and Rob Worrall, ‘The Limits of Sisterhood: Representations of Black Feminism in *Spare Rib* (1972 - 1979)’, in *Re-Reading Spare Rib*, ed. by Angela Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 159–78 (p. 165).

¹¹⁶ Joanne Hollows, ‘*Spare Rib*, Second-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Consumption’, *Feminist Media Studies*, 13.2 (2013), 268–87 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.708508>>.

¹¹⁷ Hollows, p. 271.

¹¹⁸ Hollows, pp. 268–69.

Carter's outsider perspective derives from her own relative imperviousness to Japanese culture. Despite living in Japan from September 1969 until April 1972, she never succeeded in learning Japanese.¹¹⁹ As noted by Charlotte Crofts, this meant that her exploration of Japan was a partial one: 'Carter [found] that the inaccessibility of the language [forced] her to look at things at face value'.¹²⁰ In particular, Carter turned to visual art forms (the irezumi, but also manga) as means to understand Japanese society. Crofts underlines 'the dangers of straightforwardly situating Japan as an intellectual playground for the development of Carter's Western aesthetic'.¹²¹ Carter's relationship with Japanese visual culture, in particular, while it proved aesthetically fruitful, entails risks similar to those presented by her textual response to the country in silencing certain aspects of Japanese life. With this in mind, I propose to look at Carter's article 'at face value', by decoding its explicit and implicit rhetoric, and particularly her use of visual codes reminiscent of manga.

¹¹⁹ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, pp. 136–203.

¹²⁰ Crofts, "'The Other of the Other': Angela Carter's 'New-Fangled' Orientalism", p. 92.

¹²¹ Crofts, "'The Other of the Other': Angela Carter's 'New-Fangled' Orientalism", p. 87.

Gordon's biography contains the sole published reference to Carter's piece, which he calls a portrayal of 'the misogyny implicit in the exaggerated Japanese versions of femininity'.¹²² He then contrasts it with another article, written 'two months later' and full of 'prurient detail', published in *Men Only*.¹²³ In his description of the article, however, Gordon overlooks the importance of Carter's accompanying illustrations and implied comment on Japanese femininity and visual culture. He places the piece in the context of Carter's idiosyncratic position on pornography amid intense debate in feminist circles, while ignoring its striking aesthetic qualities. The article is spread across three pages. The background (in light blue and pale orange) is decorated with black and grey clouds, partly obscuring the text. Two women decorate the piece: one, her eyes closed, has her back turned to the reader, and wears underwear that shows off her buttocks. The second woman is standing. Her breasts are partly revealed. Unlike the first woman, her eyes are open. Carter scholars have unearthed multiple pictorial influences in her work, including Surrealist and Pre-Raphaelite art.¹²⁴ Most recently, Gamble elucidated Carter's interest in medieval marginalia as relevant to Carter's portrayal of 'marginal' characters.¹²⁵ Examining Carter's essay on Japan offers a different perspective on marginalia as well as further insight into Carter's rhetorical strategies *via* the mass-produced form of the manga, which Carter interpolates in the margins of her article.

In a text about women's working and living conditions, Carter's use of handmade illustrations highlights her own labour and control over her creative process. It also strongly contributes to individuating her piece, while engaging in a provocative visual dialogue with the reader which speaks to Carter's awareness of various mediatic forms. To the flyers previously

¹²² Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 216.

¹²³ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 216.

¹²⁴ Katie Garner, "'Blending the Pre-Raphaelite with the Surreal in Angela Carter's *Shadow Dance* (1966) and *Love* (1971)'" in *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings*, ed. by Sonya Andermahr and Lawrence Phillips (New York: Continuum, 2012), pp. 147–61; Dimovitz; Watz.

¹²⁵ Sarah Gamble, 'From the Margins to the Text: Monsters and Laughter in Angela Carter's Writing', in *Ludics and Laughter as Feminist Aesthetic: Angela Carter at Play*, ed. by Sarah Gamble, Jennifer Gustar, and Caleb Sivyier (Brighton, Chicago, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2021), pp. 56–75.

mentioned, we can therefore add another transient and popular form, that of the popular manga, quickly read and consumed by men on their daily commute in 1970s Japan. According to Toni Johnson-Woods,

Manga is a visual narrative with a recognizable ‘sensitivity’. The term *sensitivity* is intentionally vague in order to cover a multitude of options and embraces the stereotypical big-eyed, pointy chinned characters that many people consider the epitome of manga, the Disneyesque style of Osamu Tezuka, and the realistic style of corporate manga.¹²⁶

As Johnson-Woods’s definition implies, the term manga covers a wide variety of visual characteristics and does not fit one single definition. Carter’s drawings do not form a narrative, but reveal her exposure to this particular set of popular aesthetics. In viewing Carter’s pictures, readers are exposed to a similar process of consuming Japanese women’s bodies as they read a story that turns those same women into archetypes.

Its rarity is part of what makes Carter’s essay so compelling: ‘Japan’ is the sole example of a published journalistic article by Carter where her drawings were explicitly devised to accompany her writing, although the theme of Japan was one Carter had previously written on. She wrote seven feature pieces on her experience of living in the country from 1970 to 1973, after which the number of articles gradually shrank. ‘Japan’ was therefore published at the peak of Carter’s journalistic preoccupation with the culture. Of all of her essays, it is the one that most explicitly tackles Japanese women’s condition. However, when read alongside other articles written on connected topics, the text reveals a surprising amount of repetition. Gamble remarks on Carter’s tendency to ‘repetitiousness’ in interviews about her personal life, and Dimovitz also highlights Carter’s recurring use of expressions across her corpus.¹²⁷ There may

¹²⁶ Toni Johnson-Woods, *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* (New York ; London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 1–2.

¹²⁷ Gamble, *Angela Carter*, p. 7; Dimovitz, pp. 91–92, p. 158.

be multiple ways to understand this, but one way to read the rehashing of previously published material in the piece could be that Carter was less interested in its contents than in the outlet and framing of the article, particularly on the illustrations themselves, which form a unique case in her corpus.

Several familiar motifs appear in Carter's piece on Japan. First and foremost is Japanese men's contempt for women: 'I once asked a young lawyer, an educated and intelligent man, the quality he would most cherish in a wife; he answered, in all seriousness, "slavery". The wife/slave will rarely see her husband'.¹²⁸ In 'Poor Butterfly' (March 1972), this narrative plays out slightly differently: 'A friend of mine, who is an English teacher of English, asked one of his Japanese students: "What is the quality that you would require in a wife?" The student, a young lawyer who had graduated from one of Japan's best universities, replied in all seriousness: "Slavery. I can get everything else I need from bar hostesses."' ¹²⁹ Carter's argument is that misogyny goes hand in hand with a destructive impact on men: in *Spare Rib*, Carter makes this explicit, noting that '[a] society that oppresses its women is singularly hard on its menfolk; an oppressed woman has her own revenges'.¹³⁰ In her April 1971 piece 'Once More Into the Mangle', Carter similarly reflected that '[a] culture that prefers to keep its women at home is extremely hard on the men.'¹³¹ Another recurring motif is Carter's orientalist portrayal of Japanese women as unnatural, cyborg-like creatures. In the *Spare Rib* piece, Carter contends that Japanese women 'have become their own dolls'.¹³² She goes on to say that

[t]he modern Japanese girl is one of the great achievements of Japanese technology, second only to the transistor radio; she is the programmed product of a refined and

¹²⁸ Carter, 'Japan', p. 14.

¹²⁹ Carter, *Shaking a Leg*, p. 249.

¹³⁰ Carter, 'Japan', p. 15.

¹³¹ Carter, *Shaking a Leg*, p. 247.

¹³² Carter, 'Japan', p. 13.

attenuated capitalist society that is essentially, in many ways, still a fully urbanised feudal society.¹³³

Carter makes a similar point in 'Poor Butterfly' where she imagines 'a blueprint for an ideal hostess. Indeed, if the Japanese economy ever needs a boost, Sony might contemplate putting them into mass production.'¹³⁴ In both of those instances, Carter's use of technological allusions reduces Japanese women to their surface, and contributes to their enhanced sexualisation, in a way comparable to the process of 'pornotroping' described by Hortense Spillers.¹³⁵ Japanese women thus become a fetish, whose reduction to a signifier is accentuated by the repetition of Carter's stereotyped description across several journalistic articles.

In addition to echoing various sections of her Japanese journalism, the introduction of the article also prefigures Carter's later argument, in *The Sadeian Woman*, about pornography's reduction of women to their 'fringed hole':

The first thing you feel is that they must hate women very much if they subject them to such a rigorous depersonalisation process that ninety per cent of the young girls in Tokyo look as if assembled from a single blueprint of charm around the essential but utterly anonymous hole.¹³⁶

Carter's later restaging of this motif connects her reflection on pornographic manga with her reading of Sade, linking eighteenth-century French literature and contemporary manga aesthetics. Carter's article 'Once More into the Mangle' describes Japanese pornographic comics at length. Her depiction initially lingers on the comics and on the conditions of their consumption: 'respectably suited Mr Average [...] buys them to flick through on his way home

¹³³ Carter, 'Japan', p. 14.

¹³⁴ Carter, *Shaking a Leg*, p. 250.

¹³⁵ Hortense J. Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *Diacritics*, 17.2 (1987), 65–81 (p. 67) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/464747>>.

¹³⁶ Carter, 'Japan', p. 13.

to peaceful tea, evening television and continuous, undisrupted, absolute propriety'.¹³⁷ Carter's article thus presents manga comics as a fleeting escapism, quickly consumed during daily commutes. The essay also describes their serialised nature, content, and aspect:

Each book is an anthology of several stories, plus pin-ups, a doctor's column, and humorous cartoons. [...] On the whole, the adult comics deal either with sex and violence against a background of perspectives of skyscrapers, iconographic representations of present-day Tokyo, or they deal with sex and violence among the pine forests, castles and geisha houses of the glorious but imaginary past. They are printed in black and white, with an occasional use of red, on the usual absorbant paper.¹³⁸

Carter's piece seems to conform with such aesthetics, with the exception that it is published on silky paper. For the reader unaccustomed with Japanese comics, this is a rather accurate depiction of the publishing format of the manga in Japan.

According to Johnson-Woods, manga comics are published 'in two print formats, the manga magazine and the *tankobon*'.¹³⁹ She goes on to note that '[t]he magazines [...] have inherited characteristics from their publication forebears: serialized novels and superhero pulps. They contain multiple instalments of serialized stories [...]. Each magazine has a targeted readership.¹⁴⁰ Johnson-Woods dates the rise in popularity of the genre outside Japan to the 1990s. Carter's piece far precedes the exportation of Japanese culture to Western readers, and her use of the word 'Japanese comics' rather than the manga implied in the title of her article reveals the foreignness of this Japanese cultural item to the European reader.¹⁴¹ Carter's illustrations, therefore, reinforce rather than reverse the alienating effect created by her

¹³⁷ Angela Carter, 'Once More into the Mangle', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 243–48 (p. 244).

¹³⁸ Carter, 'Mangle', pp. 244–45.

¹³⁹ Johnson-Woods, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Johnson-Woods, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Carter, 'Mangle', p. 244.

depiction of Japanese women. Mute, undressed, the Japanese women she depicts are a foil rather than an ally to Western women readers, and remain condemned to an apparently inescapable alternative between cruel submission and brutality.

In view of Carter's familiarity with the genre, I am using the term manga loosely to describe the kind of 'sensibility' evinced by her drawings, as well as the kind of readership the genre appeals to. Their poses and denuded bodies identify Carter's illustrations with the passive figures of erotic manga – or *hentai* – a term that could literally be translated as 'sexual perversion', according to Johnson-Woods.¹⁴² Carter's choice to insert pornography-inspired illustrations in a feminist magazine does more than create an aesthetic clash. The women drawn in the article, but also the article's background, covered in clouds, and the Japanese ideogram present in the feature all engage the reader in distinct ways.

The dreamy atmosphere and soft contours of the women's bodies initially appear to belie the down-to-earth sensibility exhibited in the text. The first drawing portrays a submissive Japanese woman in revealing underwear. Her pose and outfit seem to refer to the first sentence of the text commenting on the reduction of women to their (butt)hole. The second one, however, is more ambiguous: her silhouette frames and closes the text, recalling the fact that, as Gamble notes '[i]mages in the margins [...] operate as a site of tension' between 'status quo' and 'transgression'.¹⁴³ The image is accompanied by the phrase 'and have become their own dolls'; however, in her verticality and lack of delicate features, the second woman seems to mark a break from the first.¹⁴⁴ The two women embody the two 'scenarios' that Japanese women seem condemned to: on the one hand, a submissive, self-fashioned doll. On the other hand, a prostitute, or perhaps one of the 'terrorist girls'. The latter ends the text on a menacing note. In 'Once More into the Mangle', Carter argues that

¹⁴² Johnson-Woods, p. 9.

¹⁴³ Gamble, 'From the Margins to the Text: Monsters and Laughter in Angela Carter's Writing', p. 59.

¹⁴⁴ Carter, 'Japan', p. 15.

Essentially, the comic books are plainly devoted to the uncensored, raw subject-matter of dream. [...] Few societies lay such stress on public decency and private decorum. Few offer such structured escape valves. (248)

The silhouette of the prostitute ultimately seems to foreclose the revolutionary possibilities offered by the article, denying the illustrations their power as escape valves. Carter would have been sensitive to such visual messages. A piece such as 'The Art of Horrorzines' (1975) shows her interest in horror comics and their narrative qualities.¹⁴⁵ Framing her portrait of the Japanese woman between the bodies of two manga heroines seems to condemn the real Japanese woman to remain a dream, an erotic outlet. Carter also subverts the position of her reader who becomes, temporarily, mixed with the 'Mr Average' portrayed by Carter as the typical manga reader: the *Spare Rib* reader is pulled into a different way of viewing the (racialised) woman's body, objectified into an act of quick consumption. Rather than proposing an alternative to the male gaze, Carter provokingly places her reader in his position. However, the use of such iconography in *Spare Rib* not only complicates the explicit message of the essay but also implies questions about the kind of gaze deployed by Carter herself, and by the magazine's editorial collective as a whole.

The use of clouds as a traditional pictorial element makes the Japanese setting of the text apparent while also obscuring its content. Furthermore, the presence of an ideogram on the top left of the second page reduces Japanese writing to the status of an illustration, and unwittingly inscribes a text onto another: the Western text and aesthetics imposed, through typesetting, onto the Japanese woman's body once more. To whom is this sign addressed? It cannot be the reader of *Spare Rib*, who presumably does not speak Japanese, like Carter herself. Observing the evolution of the theories of the gaze implied in the art of self-portraiture, Amelia

¹⁴⁵ Angela Carter, 'The Art of Horrorzines', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 447–51.

Jones deconstructs the idea of the painting as perfectly framed and separated from its artist (who stands, god-like, in a position of mastery over their work) and the viewer (who can freely objectify the picture and interpret it).¹⁴⁶ The positioning of this ideogram in the middle of Carter's Western text acts as a reminder of the magazine's difficult and ever-changing dealings with the topic of race and intersectionality. It creates a complicated structure of address, glancing over the reader's shoulder to underscore their cultural limitations and highlight the lack of a reader capable of deciphering it. Readers would occasionally contact *Spare Rib* to air out their frustration at the magazine's political missteps. In their investigation of *Spare Rib*'s journalistic treatment of Black women over the first eight years of the magazine, Donna Chambers and Rob Worrall point us to a reader's response to a piece written by contributor Anne Doggett on her experience in India. The letter was sent by Amrit Wilson, a woman of Indian heritage, angrily asking if Doggett had made any effort to address the women she was describing in their native tongue, and condemning the objectifying gaze deployed by Doggett.¹⁴⁷ Wilson's response was not an isolated case: in issues 12 and 13, that followed the one in which Carter's article on Japan was published, several letters expressed the readers' frustration at seeing elements of their identity misrepresented by the writers. No such letter was sent in response to Carter's piece, and the implied reader of the sign seems to have remained absent.

Japan is a particularly apt topic for Carter's explorations of the power of media, which encapsulates the locus of Carter's mediatic and feminist interrogations. In 'My Maugham Award', a piece published in 1970, Carter reflects on the travels enabled by the grant. Reminiscing about Japan, she states that 'Tokyo blazes at night like a neon version of the collected works of Mashall McLuhan', alluding to the author's theorization of the power of

¹⁴⁶ Amelia Jones, 'The Body and/in Representation', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff, 3rd ed. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 363–68.

¹⁴⁷ Chambers and Worrall, p. 171.

media and technologies, such as the alphabet or the lightbulb, to revise cognitive paradigms.¹⁴⁸ The piece on Japan is a standalone example in Carter's career, but it also constitutes a testament to Carter's reflections on media in the context of a journal so visually and affectively complex as *Spare Rib*. While it is hard to estimate the exact extent of Carter's agency in what was first and foremost a collective publishing labour, her use of foreign visual codes, added to her awareness of the potential of comics to develop new modes of reading and readers, points to the article as a site for considering Carter's thinking about new media, and the ways in which we could be brought to (re)think the materiality of her corpus.

The New England Project: Spectral Journalism in the Angela Carter Archive

In September 1980, Carter moved to America to take up a position at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, until July 1981.¹⁴⁹ During her time in the United States, she kept a journal, and gathered flyers, press cuttings, and unbound drafts, both handwritten and typed. The file containing those items is kept at the British Library under the title 'Old New England Project', a label which seems based on the inscription 'New England Project 2' written over the cover of Carter's notebook. These collected documents contain the traces of her later short stories, published in *Black Venus* (1985) and *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993). They also led to two essays published in the magazine *New Society*: a book review, and an essay on Providence entitled 'Snow-Belt America', published in 1981. The 'Project' documents Carter's idiosyncratic journalistic method, at times personal, at times investigative, and her process of deconstruction of another romance: the foundation of the United States, which Carter presents as a failed project by parodying it through gothic tropes. Her collection

¹⁴⁸ Angela Carter, 'My Maugham Award', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 203–4 (p. 203).

¹⁴⁹ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, pp. 302–19.

of flyers gives shape to a deliberate process of cultural criticism that draws out the strange, the spectral, and the uncanny in the town of Providence and deconstructs the romance of America.

By collecting transient documents situated at the cultural and commercial margins of America such as flyers, restaurant menus, and other such transient prints, Carter creates a collage in the gothic mode, anchored in specifically American stories and myths: chiefly, the foundation of the United States and Providence itself. Seemingly whimsical, her flyer collection coalesces into a picture of a spectral, haunted America. This picture has an obverse: the romance of the construction of the American state. The 'New England Project' includes a set of miscellaneous ephemera: a card with a picture of 'Seamen's Bethel': The Whaleman's Chapel of Melville's *Moby Dick* in New Bedford; a flyer for Rocky Yard Ice Cream; another flyer, 'That's the Way the Cookie Crumbles', with different ice cream flavours; a flyer for the Provincetown Heritage Museum; a small Mediterranean Brand Squash Cook Book; a page from a *New York Times* issue dating from Thursday April 2nd 1981, which reports on President Reagan's recovery after being shot by John Hinckley; notes about 'rev. Roger Williams'; handwritten notes on topics ranging from the foundation of America to the Sunday papers; several restaurant menus; more pages from the *New York Times* of the 31st of April 1981 and the 1st of April 1981 about Reagan's shooting and about the attacker's profile. The accompanying notes left by Carter show that the folder was initially intended to become a book project, which never came to light.

Carter's notebook in the Old New England Project folder reveals her initial ambition to work on a book that would include five sections, all apparently dedicated to the marginalia of American culture:

'Organisation of book

- 1) Providence & Lovecraft / Poe
- 2) Fall River – horrid murders in N.E.
- 3) Witches
- 4) Whalesmen & Melville
- 5) Cuisine – N.E. boiled dinner'

Out of these 5, only one and a half projects were eventually completed. The first item in Carter's list led to research which formed the basis of the story 'The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe', published in her collection *Black Venus*, where there is, however, no explicit mention of H. P. Lovecraft. The second item reflects Carter's more prolonged exploration of the figure of American murderer Lizzie Borden in 'The Fall River Axe Murders' (also published in *Black Venus*) and 'Lizzie's Tiger', which was released in Carter's posthumous collection *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*.

The project was intended to feed off mythical American sites. The notebook contains evidence of research planning: Carter wrote down a list of places she intended to visit, including 'Fall River' (the setting of 'The Fall River Axe Murders'), Lowell (due to its status as a 'model mill town', the type of setting featured in 'Fall River'), Salem (next to which is written the note 'Witches (project 3)'), Mystic ('because of the name') and New Bedford ('Melville').¹⁵⁰ Part of Carter's road-trip is documented in her notes, particularly her visit to New Bedford, the town featuring in *Moby Dick* as the beginning of the hero's journey. Those two lists are revealing of Carter's preoccupation with the ghostly histories of America. Allan Lloyd Smith identifies four 'indigenous features' in American culture that enable the birth of an 'American variation of the Gothic: the frontier, the Puritan legacy, race, and political utopianism', all of which Carter's collected flyers reflect.¹⁵¹ The marginalised feminine figure of the witch haunts Carter's project as it haunted New England, never actualising itself into writing.¹⁵² Carter's fiction reveals her

¹⁵⁰ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, 'Old New England Project (1980 – 1981, nd)'.

¹⁵¹ Allan Lloyd Smith, 'Nineteenth Century American Gothic' (2012), cited in Jason Haslam and Joel Faflak, 'Introduction', in *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*, Edinburgh Companions to the Gothic (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 1–22 (p. 10).

¹⁵² Carter's passing interest in and abandonment of her project on the witches of Salem may echo a long-term tension in her writing between an interest in the figures of women artists and performers and her dismissal of cultural feminism. See: Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, pp. 161–69.

affinities with the gothic model described here and suggests American influences beyond the European origins of the genre, including Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville.

Carter's collection of flyers plays with the gothic mode at the level of the everyday, in occasionally unexpected ways: In her notes, she comments: 'In this country, I smoke Salem, as a tribute'.¹⁵³ In America, the supernatural becomes intimately linked to the language of advertising, in which myths become reappropriated at the level of that most transient of objects, the cigarette. This ghostly mode is, to Carter, particularly appropriate to Providence, the hometown of H.P. Lovecraft, whose grave she visited. The image, while whimsical, carries weight beyond this reference to branding. McLuhan insists on the ability of objects such as the cigarette to convey information:

commodities themselves assumed more and more the character of information, although this trend appears mainly in the increasing advertising budget. Significantly, it is those commodities that are most used in social communication, cigarettes, cosmetics, and soap (cosmetic removers) that bear much of the burden of the upkeep of the media in general.¹⁵⁴

The cigarette as signifier has a history that predates the age of information. Susan Zieger charts the circulation of tobacco in popular culture as a token of masculine intellectuality embodied in the figure of Sherlock Holmes, who, she suggests,

updates the nineteenth-century figure of the masculine, smoking reader, for whom tobacco smoke mediates a contemplative, daydream-like engagement with printed material, especially ephemera.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, 'Old New England Project (1980 – 1981, nd)'.

¹⁵⁴ McLuhan, p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ Susan Zieger, *The Mediated Mind: Affect, Ephemera, and Consumerism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), p. 55.

Tobacco becomes the widespread symbol of a ‘mediated mind’, ‘his dreams and reveries populated by mass media materials’, even as the acquisition and consumption of information ‘took on the appearance and rhythms of addiction’ further embodied by collectible cigarette cards mass-produced and sold to smokers.¹⁵⁶ In the twentieth century the image is echoed in popular culture, where smoking male intellectuals proliferate. It also, however, becomes the province of the Hollywood femme fatale, as suggested by the many portraits of American actresses holding a cigarette to the viewers’ attention. Carter’s self-conscious choice of cigarettes referring to the witches of Salem can therefore be situated in a long history that links cigarettes with creative, readerly, and writerly activity, even as it hints at the image of a haunted America.

The motif of haunting and hauntedness reoccurs at various points in the ‘New England Project’, both through Carter’s writing and the items that she collected. Carter’s deconstruction of the romance of America pivots on her unveiling of the shadowy side of the American dream, which superposes one era over another and one space over another, in a fashion similar to the process described through the concept of hauntology. Derrida coins the term ‘hauntology’ (a blend of haunting and ontology) to describe the haunting presence of Marxist ideals in Europe.¹⁵⁷ Mark Fisher defines hauntology as

that which is (in actuality is) *no longer*, but which is still effective as a virtuality (the traumatic ‘compulsion to repeat’, a structure that repeats, a fatal pattern). The second refers to that which (in actuality) has *not yet* happened, but which is *already* effective in the virtual (an attraction, an anticipation shaping current behavior).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Zieger, pp. 55 and 56.

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2012), p. 202.

¹⁵⁸ Mark Fisher, ‘What Is Hauntology?’, *Film Quarterly*, 66.1 (2012), 16–24 (p. 19) <<https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2012.66.1.16>>.

Carter's flyers and drafts collect various versions of America that similarly reflect a lingering of the past in the present, manifest in the most day-to-day acts. I contend that this spectrality extends to the spaces that Carter visits, where traces of a darker past remain and signal tears in the fabric of the American narrative of unity and uniqueness. Heidi Yeandle suggests that Carter's critique of the United States lies partly on her superposing of two versions of the country: one mythical, built on the ideology of American exceptionalism, and a second, 'Amerika', a hellish vision of the country inspired by Carter's reading of Franz Kafka's novel *Amerika: The Man Who Disappeared* (1927) and which stands for the collapse of the American dream.¹⁵⁹ The gap between those two visions of the nation parallels the spectral virtuality depicted by Fisher, by superposing two virtual narratives of the country over its reality. The narrative closure associated with the romance can only happen at the cost of erasing traces of an American past that predates the arrival of the settlers. Further, I would suggest that Carter's folder and her resulting journalistic production reverse and parody another kind of romance: the foundation of the United States as a utopian land. Carter's choice to focus on marginal subjects allows her to look at the marginalia of American history and at the exclusions and violence that haunt the birth of the state.

The romance form provides a particularly appropriate framework to understand the narrative surrounding the foundation of the United States, and the resulting lingering of violence underneath the appearance of democratic consensus and sociogeographical cohesion. Jameson proposes to describe romance as 'a mode' which has persisted beyond its feudal origins through 'substitutions, adaptations, and appropriations'.¹⁶⁰ In its first iteration, Jameson suggests, romance formalises anxieties about the Other, to which it gives a utopian resolution. As such, its emergence seems to reflect a moment of crisis

¹⁵⁹ Heidi Yeandle, "'This Is a New Country, Full of Hope . . .': Angela Carter and 'Amerikan' Exceptionalism', *Contemporary Women's Writing*, 8.3 (2014), 391–408 (pp. 393–95) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/cww/vpu018>>.

¹⁶⁰ Jameson, p. 117.

in which two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development, coexist. Their antagonism is not yet articulated in terms of the struggle of social classes, so that its resolution can be projected in the form of a nostalgic (or less often, a Utopian) harmony.¹⁶¹

Importantly, Jameson underlines three key factors that characterise the romance mode: the importance of space, which in the context of romance is used to signify the world at large; ‘the ideology of good and evil felt as magical forces’, which may take the form of religion in industrial societies; and ‘a salvational historicity’ characterised by wish-fulfilment and ideological closure.¹⁶² The romance mode gives shape to dreams of unity and homogeneity which Carter suggests is an essential aspect of the unfulfilled American dream.

Maggie Tonkin contends Carter engages critically with what she calls ‘the Utopian impulse’ in her portrayal of the United States, and that cinema is particularly central to this process:

Carter herself sometimes conflated America with Hollywood, and, perhaps partly as a result, there has been a tendency to collapse cinematic dream factory into nation in the critical reception of her work. However, America is a signifier with many ‘signifieds’, and if it is the HQ of the dream machine, it is also itself a dream.¹⁶³

The American space, as Tonkin suggests, was constructed as utopian prior to its discovery. The trope of the American continent as blank page occurs frequently in Carter’s texts as it did in the texts of the explorers and settlers who first ‘discovered’ it. Kathryn Yusoff points out the transference of this image from the land to the body of the colonised, citing Richard Eden’s *Decades of the New World* (1555) and its depiction of indigenous populations as ‘a smoothe and bare table unpainted, or a white paper unwritten upon, upon the which yow may at the first

¹⁶¹ Jameson, p. 135.

¹⁶² Jameson, p. 135.

¹⁶³ Maggie Tonkin, ‘Traveling Hopefully: The Utopian Impulse in the Fiction of Angela Carter’, *Contemporary Women’s Writing*, 9.2 (2015), 219–37 (p. 225) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/cww/vpu026>>.

paynte and wryte what yow lystye'.¹⁶⁴ Yusoff remarks: '[a]s land is made into tabula rasa for European inscription of its militant maps, so too do Indigenes and Africans become rendered as a writ or ledger of flesh scribed in colonial grammars'.¹⁶⁵ Carter was receptive to this logic of inscription: 'The Ghost Ships', a tale about the New England settlers, presents the Founding Father's project to 'write more largely' on 'the blank page of the continent' and 'inscribe thereon the name of God'.¹⁶⁶ The 'blank page' of the continent is reminiscent of the process by which, in Jameson's analysis, the space of the romance, 'its inner-wordly objects such as as landscape or village, forest or mansion [...] are somehow transformed into folds in space, into discontinuous pockets of homogeneous time and of heightened symbolic closure'.¹⁶⁷ The settlers dream up the American space in the romance mode. However, as Jameson points out, '[w]hat is misleading is the implication that this "nature" is in any sense itself a "natural" rather than a very peculiar and specialized social and historical phenomenon'.¹⁶⁸ The founding romance of an American space available for the settlers' dreams of a new nation occludes the violence that ensues from the confrontation of the white colonisers with Native Americans.

Carter's collection of flyers and notes points to the violence concealed by the American romance in everyday life. Restaurant menus become indirect conduits for the tropes of the ghost and doubling that offset fantasies of American unity. Carter's notes include names of food and brand names, in keeping with her initial project to dedicate a section of her book to comestibles. Her folders also includes a collection of disposable paper menus from various restaurants, such as 'Rudolphs Bar.B.Que'. Now defunct, the chain was known for its themed menu based on Hollywood and Broadway culture. The menu flyer Carter kept includes such

¹⁶⁴ Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), p. 33.

¹⁶⁵ Yusoff, p. 33.

¹⁶⁶ Angela Carter, 'The Ghost Ships', in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Random House, 1996), pp. 376–81 (p. 89).

¹⁶⁷ Jameson, p. 98.

¹⁶⁸ Jameson, p. 98.

dishes as ‘the John Wayne’, ‘The Clark Gable’, ‘Groucho’, that allude to the Hollywood Golden Age. However, in Carter’s notes, cinema quickly becomes enmeshed with a paranoid sense of surveillance:

That light: as though you are being watched all the time. The saints must have felt that God was watching them all the time. (The Indians had a different relation to the environment. I feel it is the Indians watching me.) Certainly it is a theatrical light; one feels exposed, & the sense of being on a vast stage, or even on a vast movie lot, is very strong. No wonder the movies, which is the art of manipulating light, became the great form of this continent. But the light makes you understand the innocence – no place to hide, no opportunities for concealment – & the paranoia.¹⁶⁹

The supernatural light of America is haunted, encompassing as it does the violent past of the country and its technological future even as it purports to create enticing stories, in the form of Broadway and Hollywood. A technology of modernity, cinema comes to embody the lingering of the old into the new, echoing the history of the foundation of the United States.

An unfinished work, the ‘Project’ highlights the limits of the formation of the United States, which it paints as another unfinished entity, possibly condemned to failure from its inception. Matthew Harle argues that ‘unfinished works [...] present open-ended ideas without material restraint, which by their very nature spill across cultural categories and notions of genre’.¹⁷⁰ In contrast with the romance’s fantasy of closure and incorporation of the Other, the ‘Project’ forms a fragmented whole, full of gaps, false starts, and arrested drafts aggravated by Carter’s own idiosyncratic gaze as a temporary visitor in the United States. Carter’s geographical mobility certainly impacted the fragmentation of the New England Project. After her return from Japan in 1972, Carter’s writing career would require her to move several times

¹⁶⁹ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, ‘Old New England Project (1980 – 1981, nd)’.

¹⁷⁰ Matthew Harle, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work: Creative Debris in the Archive* (New York; London; Oxford; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 10.

– to Bath and London, but also to the United States and Australia – thus enabling her positioning as an ‘outsider’, to which the previous section referred. In Providence, this position both strengthens and crumbles, as the sense of paranoia evinced by Carter’s notes simultaneously serves and undermines her satire of Providence. Carter was employed by Brown University on a visiting position. Her situation is all too understandable to the twenty-first-century researcher: from the outset, Carter was aware that her stay in Providence would be a temporary, not a permanent one.¹⁷¹ It is possible to surmise that the realities of Carter’s employment and living situation would have put some level of constraint on the kind of things she could afford to keep or not. Given her geographical mobility in the years that follow her return from Providence, the conservation and, furthermore, curation of flying ephemera is a clue to their importance. Collecting flyers that follow her trail through America, Carter thus constructs a voluntarily transient and eccentric point of view that works against the unidirectional narrative imposed by the romance of the foundation of the United States. Gathering fragmented documentations and testimonies from her itinerary around New England, Carter elaborates a partial archive of her year in the USA in which she strikingly includes serially produced ephemera. The flyers that she recuperates both physically and in her writing contribute to a reshuffling of the United States, a country where the dead and the living cohabit uneasily.

The first of two published journalistic essays on America that draw on Carter’s time in Providence, ‘Snow-Belt America’ fittingly opens with a wry analysis of the local Sunday journal, in which Carter continues her deconstruction of the American romance in the gothic mode. She portrays herself examining the *Providence Sunday Journal*, or ‘Pro-Jo’. Despite its importance in the published essay, the *Providence Sunday Journal* is in fact missing from the

¹⁷¹ Edmund Gordon suggests that Carter accepted to take up this position in a time of relative financial precariousness. See Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 302.

‘Project’— perhaps due to its weight, ‘as much as a six months child’.¹⁷² The essay tackles the advertisement section, which becomes the centrepiece of Carter’s examination of the *Pro-Jo* and its readership, engaged in a weekly practice of going through the advertisement section in order to plan out their weekly shopping:

But the standards of its journalism are not the reason why we few remaining paupers left in Providence, RI, make a weekly dive for the *Pro-Jo*. Tucked between the leaves, like the apfel in a strudel, are the advertising supplements. Why pay more?

It’s dollar dynamite. Every week, some firm in Providence or its surrounding urban sprawl is slashing prices. [...]

On Sunday mornings, therefore, with the aid of the sheaf of advertisement, you plot your forthcoming seven days’ consumer strategy.

Even 10 cents here and 50 cents there add up. I’ve seen people in the supermarket pay for a cart-load of groceries with a combination of federal food-stamps and discount coupons from the *Pro-Jo*.¹⁷³

The readers of the *Pro-Jo* are presented from the outset as an isolated community defined by class – ‘we few remaining paupers’ – in a city that has gradually pushed its poorest members to other locations. As becomes clear, however, the public of the *Pro-Jo* is not only organised around reading the publication but also around the way in which the advertisement included in the magazine structure and organise their weekly shopping. Carter compares the readers’ painstaking consumption of the *Pro-Jo*, in which she includes herself, to an ‘IQ test for the poor’, made of endless calculations, bargains, and negotiating with the cost of things at the expense of any consideration of value. The image of customers purchasing ‘a cart-load of groceries’ highlights a process whereby ‘coupons’ and ‘food-stamps’ cancel out the nature of

¹⁷² Angela Carter, ‘Snow-Belt America’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 279–83 (p. 279).

¹⁷³ Carter, ‘Snow-Belt America’, p. 280.

the objects they afford. This is a time-consuming tactic, all to obtain advantageous prices on trite items (Carter's notes show her scandalised reaction at an ad for croutons). It requires 'time and energy and the discipline of a quarter-master sergeant', and an investment in resources (the car), to which the poorest in American society find themselves constrained.¹⁷⁴ In this debased form of journalism, readers come to the *Pro-Jo* only to find items, rather than information.

Carter's article seems to carry some of the echoes of the 'anti-urban impulse' later identified by Mike Davis.¹⁷⁵ Davis posits that 'the American Downtown Renaissance, and its futuristically built environments, are keys to deciphering a larger cultural and experiential pattern'.¹⁷⁶ The Renaissance movement saw the deployment of new downtown towers and complexes and the ghettoization of whole swathes of American cities as 'a sympathetic correlate to Reaganism and the end of urban reform'.¹⁷⁷ This, he argues, does not mark out a new modernity but rather 'a return to a sort of primitive accumulation with the valorization of capitals occurring, in part, through the production of absolute surplus value by means of the super-exploitation of the urban proletariat'.¹⁷⁸ This phase, he argues, occurs after the end of a form of utopian architectural modernism which demonstrated 'the impossibility of planning the American city on any large or comprehensive scale'.¹⁷⁹ In Carter's analysis, there is no room for shared public spaces, and urban relations are mapped against the chain of demand and supply ruled by disjointed businesses. The resemblance between the two pieces is all the more striking as Carter's article very closely follows Ronald Reagan's election, and precedes the July 1981 Recession that would overcast the 1980s.

¹⁷⁴ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America'.

¹⁷⁵ Mike Davis, 'Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 151, 1985, 106–13 (p. 113).

¹⁷⁶ Davis, p. 108.

¹⁷⁷ Davis, p. 113.

¹⁷⁸ Davis, p. 110.

¹⁷⁹ Davis, p. 111.

The leaflets have a tangible socio-geographical impact: they reorganise and polarise the consumers' mobility towards 'some firm in Providence or its surrounding sprawl'.¹⁸⁰ In doing so, they also break apart the homogeneity of the city and its harmony, as consumers' trajectories mimic lines of power and wealth across Providence. The harmony of political communion, for example, has become replaced by advertisements that further break apart the romantic space of the city as macrocosm for the nation:

Providence is a nice place, a pretty, sleepy, seedy place, a relaxed and, on the whole, not-ungenerous place. But the city falls apart in my hands, the way the Sunday paper does; it slips open in five, six, seven sections and none of them fit back together again. I can't get a grip on it.

You cannot say the centre does not hold, because I don't think it has a real centre; it is a plurality of worlds. If I take the rigorous way of life posited by the advertising supplements as the core of the whole, shifting mass, it is because of the fringe-of-town bargain store are, in some sense, the new cathedrals of the community, the only places where the multitude of people and conditions in this one tiny city ever actually gather together, holding those supplements as if they were prayer books.¹⁸¹

The homogeneous fold in space of the romance falls apart in a way that mimics the scattered leaflets of the project: unfinished and fragmented, the community of Providence does not hold. The reference to William Butler Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming' (1920) contrasts the poem's military metaphor, which suggests a precarious organisation, with the lack of such order in Providence, where the city's social fabric collapses to be replaced by the flux of consumption.

¹⁸⁰ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', p. 280.

¹⁸¹ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', p. 282.

Carter's Marxist-inflected analysis of the city's decomposition culminates in her depiction of the city's Capitol, crowned with the patriotic figure of the "independent man":¹⁸²

[...] at first, Providence appears to present an apt and homogeneous face. That bony, uncomfortable, New England face, with the blue, fanatic's gaze. [...] On closer inspection, this New England face, in appropriately Lovecraftian fashion, disintegrates.¹⁸³

Carter mockingly turns the town's symbol into 'the most characteristically demented of all New Englanders', Providence-born H. P. Lovecraft, whose tomb Carter informs us bears the legend 'I AM PROVIDENCE'.¹⁸⁴ The allusion to the author of the Cthulhu Mythos surfaces in other parts of Carter's private writings (she curiously mentions drinking a 'Lovecraft-coloured' sherbet at an office party), where it contributes to her constant gothicisation of her life in America. Similarly, Carter's use of ephemera composes a socially and geographically fragmented image of America that feeds into her fiction of the 1980s and 1990s, and gives a fantastic connotation to her analysis of the social collapse of the city, in some parts of which 'poverty is its own reward' while others bask in 'old money'.¹⁸⁵

Crucial to Carter's deconstruction of the romance of America is her exploration of the foundation of the state. Her initial plan also included a section dedicated to cuisine, which never saw the light. Reading her notes alongside another flyer collected in the 'New England Project', I analyse Carter's writing process to convey the foundation of America. Analysing her drafts offers insights into her attempt at portraying the erasure of Native American history from the everyday lives of Providence inhabitants and America as a whole, and the doubling of this erasure in her own publication and writing choices. The flyer that drew my attention is a small booklet, distributed by P&K Farm, that contains several squash recipes. The 'Mediterranean

¹⁸² Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', p. 281.

¹⁸³ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', p. 281.

¹⁸⁴ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', p. 281.

¹⁸⁵ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', pp. 280–82.

Brand Squash Cookbook’ appears to be a marketing material intended to promote P&K’s products:

The origin of this unique vegetable is from the sunny Mediterranean area. After years of careful breeding in the Imperial Valley of California, we introduced a new and outstanding squash to America.

Our Mediterranean Brand Squash has an excellent mild flavor and great baking qualities which places this squash ahead of any others on todays market.¹⁸⁶

The introduction follows the convention of romance through commercial storytelling. The squash, we are told, has been ‘introduced’ to the continent for its gustative qualities, and is now ‘ahead’ of its competitors, replicating the structure of capitalist competitiveness in the vegetable realm. The squash has had to go through an acclimation process to turn it into a fully American product. Once baked or steamed, the squash has the capacity to turn into a variety of dishes, including the ‘Squash Pecan Pie’, the ‘Pecan Ring’, the ‘Squash Cake’, and other such delicacies. The squash is portrayed as a foreign element (Mediterranean here could refer to Europe or to the American Mediterranean Sea) whose ability to adapt and transform mimics that of the European settlers.

¹⁸⁶ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, ‘Old New England Project (1980-1981, nd)’.

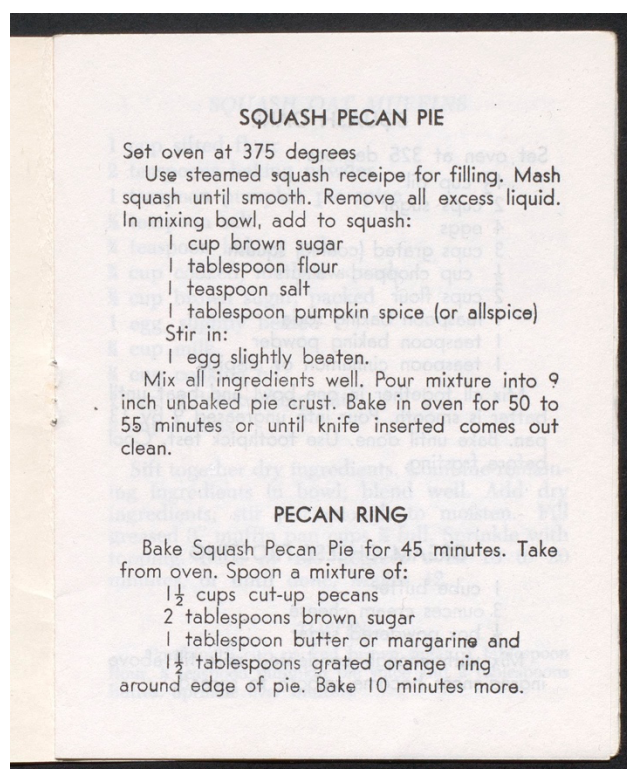
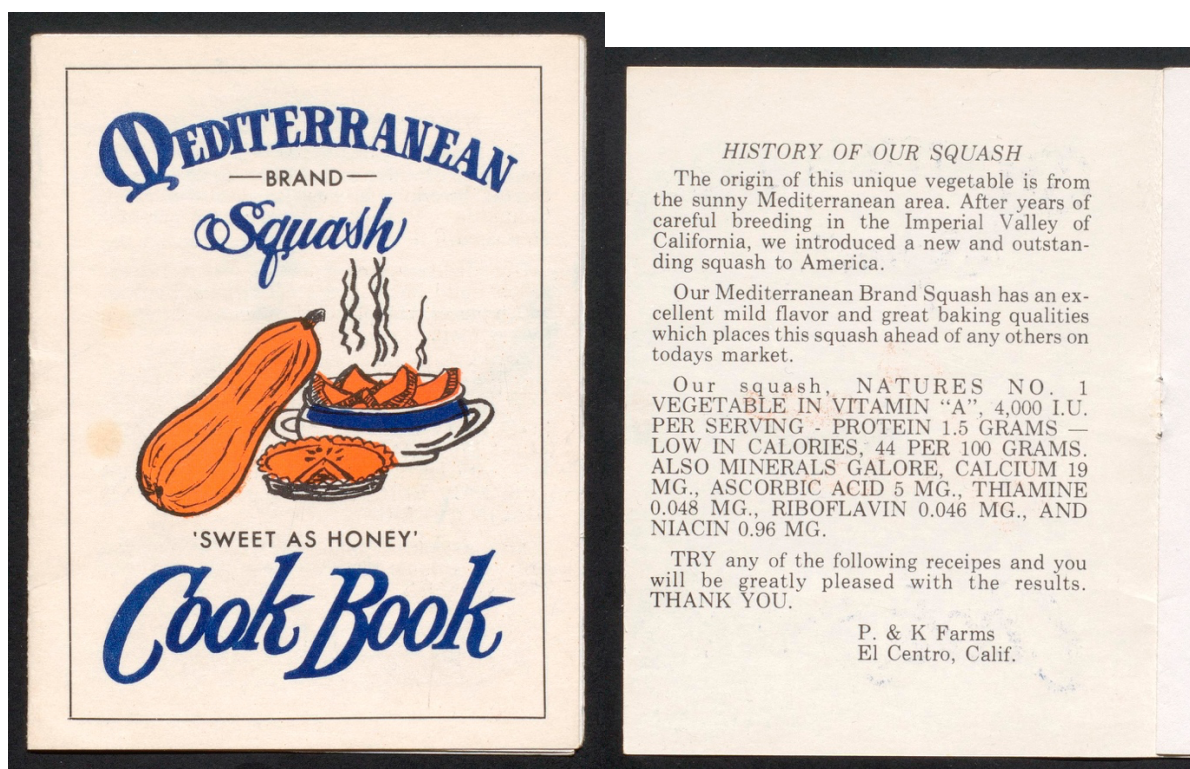


Figure 3 The Mediterranean Brand Squash Cookbook, British Library, London, ADD MS 88899/1/78, Reproduction courtesy of the British Library (Under copyright)

In Carter's published fiction, squash makes little more than an anecdotal appearance. It is part of the diet of the Algonkian tribe portrayed in the violent tale 'Our Lady of the Massacre' published in her collection *Black Venus* (1985). The tale's heroine is an English maid turned runaway convict in the colony of Virginia in the seventeenth century. After escaping the plantation where she has been sentenced to forced labour, the unnamed protagonist takes to the woods, where she meets an Algonquian woman, and takes refuge with her tribe until their violent slaughter at the hands of English colonists. The heroine contrasts the tribe's good health with what she observed during her time in Old England, a difference she attributes to their healthy food habits:

As for me, all I ever eat among the Indians was fish, game or fowl, boiled or broiled, besides corn cooked in various ways, beans, squash in season and etc. and this is such a healthy diet that it is very rare to see a sick body amongst them [...].¹⁸⁷

The history of the brutal encounter between the Native tribes of America and the colonists forms the foundation of this story, and occurs in various forms in Carter's writings while in New England.

Carter's notes for the 'New England Project' pairs up the squash with the history of the suppression of Native American people and culture. The draft of her essay 'Snow-Belt America' shows Carter at pains to articulate the spectral presence of Native Americans in the United States, starting with the story of the foundation of Providence by Roger Williams (1603-1683). Williams is chiefly remembered for his early defence of Native Americans' rights, and advocacy of liberty of conscience. He authored *A Key into the Language of America: or, An help to the language of the Natives in that part of America, called New-England* (1643), 'a pragmatic phrasebook' based on his observations on the Narragansett population and

¹⁸⁷ Angela Carter, 'Our Lady of the Massacre', in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Random House, 1996), pp. 248-61 (p. 253).

language.¹⁸⁸ After his forced exile from Salem, Williams sought shelter amongst the Wampanoag, a tribe settled in the current states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The scene of Williams's encounter with a Native American man after his flight from Salem features in the published version of Carter's essay, where it is depicted semi-humorously: 'The first Indian that he met, here, he is supposed to have greeted with a breezy 'What cheer?' Wot'cher. Wot'cher, me old cock.'¹⁸⁹ In Carter's drafts, however, this story is developed further:

He is supposed to have greeted the first Indian he met in the place that demonstrated God's merciful providence unto me" with a breezy 'What cheer?' Wot' cher.

Wot'cher, me old cock sparrow; what can I do you for? Plenty, as it turned out.

Plenty.¹⁹⁰

Carter's narratorial intervention in her draft gives the encounter a sinister resonance, hinting at the harmful consequences of this encounter between a white settler and a Native American man for the latter. This ominous conclusion could also be read as a more specific historical comment. Carter might be alluding to the subsequent 'King Philip's War' (1675-1676) which opposed several Algonquian tribes led by Wampanoag sachem (tribe leader) 'King Philip' (originally named Metacom).¹⁹¹ Among King Philip's allies were the Narragansetts studied by Roger Williams who, during this time, sided with the colonial authorities. Roger Williams's presumption that his interlocutor should be able to understand him is also satirised in Carter's

¹⁸⁸ Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America, or, An Help to the Language of the Natives in That Part of America Called New-England Together with Briefe Observations of the Customes, Manners and Worships, &c. of the Aforesaid Natives, in Peace and Warre, in Life and Death: On All Which Are Added Spirituall Observations, Generall and Particular, by the Authour ...* (London: Printed by Gregory Dexter, 1643); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ Carter, 'Snow-Belt America', p. 281.

¹⁹⁰ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, 'Old New England Project (1980 – 1981, nd)'.

¹⁹¹ As onomastics play a central part here, it is worth noting that Philip's name itself has caused some historical debate. In her discussion of the war, historian Jill Lepore observes that '[m]ost historians [...] have begun with the assumption that no Algonquian would have called the conflict "King Philip's War".' She suggests that King Philip 'simply abandoned the name Metacom after 1660'. Lepore, pp. xix–xx.

account of this foundational encounter. However, Carter's threatening 'plenty' disappears from her published article, as does another paragraph on Indian onomastics which appears at different stages of rewriting. The Native American presence around Providence is, again, encountered as ghostly and semi-erased, in names of places around New England.

In her draft, Carter turns to a rite of hanging 'ears of corn' on doors, leading her to speculate that

the corn is put out to propitiate the spirits of those gloomy, introspective but not uncivil Red Men who taught the newcomers how to plant it,* & too late, realised that they had made a dreadful mistake.

*nursed their incompetence through the first, almost mortal winters.¹⁹²

Carter transforms a scene of everyday life in Providence into an opportunity for a spectral exploration of the past of the city. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren remark that 'the ghost also questions the formation of knowledge itself and specifically invokes what is placed outside it'.¹⁹³ Here, Carter's portrayal of Native American ghosts draws attention to the city's unstable identity and history. Vegetables act as signifiers of America's foundation, a symbol of the unequal exchange between the colonists and the first inhabitants of the continent whose ghosts haunt the country. From this image, Carter moves on to the image of other vegetables, including the squash, to which she dedicates a long paragraph, which I reproduce in the following:

Certain native American produce – ~~not only~~ the corn; but
~~The gross~~ its less obese
Pumpkin & ~~its oddly shaped & coloured~~ relations, acorn
Indian names
squash, butternut squash, pattypan squash, ~~looks Indian~~
colours of straw & pine
knobby, unaccommodating shapes, ~~pale yellow~~, ochre, ~~dark~~

¹⁹² London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, 'Old New England Project (1980 – 1981, nd)'.

¹⁹³ María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities', in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by Esther Peeren and María del Pilar Blanco (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 1–27 (p. 9).

~~things~~ as if
~~wood green, vegetables~~ that look carved from wood & then
~~coloured~~ stained with pigments from the earth; ~~you-wou~~ they look
 might be obscure but numinous
~~more like~~ archaic musical instruments or ~~utensils~~ cult objects
~~of obscure but numinous function than things to eat~~ & they taste
 sweetish, mealy, sad, ~~once you've worked out how to cook them~~
~~baking, masking~~ They are a puzzle to cook, they need baking, stuffing, washing, careful
 *
 * seasoning, &, at last,

In the margins: 'vine grown fruits

* that you rattle or ~~bang on the ground~~ hit with sticks, like pears that have gone sleepy¹⁹⁴

The reproduction of Carter's erasures and rephrasings in the above passage is a testament to the difficulty of the composition process. The vegetables turn from appealing products of marketing to ominous, or numinous, signifiers of Native American presence. The 'Indian names' that Carter mentions are, in the same way as the evocative names of places around Providence (Carter's notes mentions 'Pawtucket, Woonsocket'), half-erased from consciousness.

The word 'squash' originates from the Narragansett word 'asquutasquash', and signifies 'raw, uncooked' (the *-ash* suffix stands for the plural). The OED mentions Roger Williams's *Key into the Language of America* as the first reference for the term, with Williams describing: 'Askutasquash, their Vine aples, which the English from them call Squashes, about the bignesse of Apples, of severall colours, sweet, light, wholesome, refreshing' (sic).¹⁹⁵ The squash of Carter's draft becomes endowed with multiple layers of meaning, attached to the conquest of America and to the brutal elision of a language and a population. The vegetables themselves have to be transformed, and Carter's language implies a level of violence: they are 'a puzzle to cook', and must be '[rattled]' or hit 'with a stick'. Her enumeration is curiously in

¹⁹⁴ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, 'Old New England Project (1980-1981, nd)'.

¹⁹⁵ 'Squash, n.2', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/188231>> [accessed 25 June 2019].

line with the many forms of preparation mentioned in the Mediterranean Squash Cookbook, which becomes a mercantile symbol of this transformation. Carter's depiction seems impeded, however, by an implicit blurring of the line between the squash and the Native Americans themselves, through their 'ochre' colour and resemblance to 'cult objects'. This portion of the draft eventually disappears from the publication. The rejection of Native Americans at the edges of Carter's draft and final text performs a double erasure which might be suggestive of her own unease in tackling the topic.

In the same draft, Carter observes that 'Providence is indeed typical of the U.S. in the amount of free-floating paranoia in the air'.¹⁹⁶ Carter's draft, as well as her personal notes around that time, evince a similar feeling. In Carter's draft, vegetables turn into strange, potentially menacing figures that haunt New England. The flyer's list of recipes – all starring heavily processed squash – becomes a sign of American artificiality. This food, cooked, processed, transformed, conceals the brutality of American origins. The flyers of the 'New England Project' shed a different light on Carter's stay in the United States, which become a haunted space announcing Carter's speculations in *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993). They also provide suggestive insights into Carter's writing, both as a journalist and as a novelist. In constructing an America out of flyers, Carter generates a small, selective and ghostly archive of her own life in the country. The accumulation, collection, and conservation of flyers suggest a practice that is both intentional and contingent, emerging from marketing debris that forms a ghostly trail leading the attentive reader back to hidden American stories.

Conclusion

Reading through Carter's journalistic corpus, I have traced a line leading from Colette's strongly individualistic writerly trajectory to attempts to make space for collective feminist

¹⁹⁶ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/78, Angela Carter Papers, 'Old New England Project (1980 – 1981, nd)'.

endeavours such as *Spare Rib*. Using standalone examples in her corpus such as an unfinished writing project, including evidence of Carter's research sources, and the sole instance of Carter's illustrated journalism, demonstrates the way in which her articles served to explore the material conditions of her own creative practice and the realities of women's work and as marginal subjects. The romance form proves a particularly apt framework to understand the contemporary narratives about femininity, domesticity, and national identity that Carter's journalism aims to deconstruct. This reflection undermines the argument that makes Carter's journalism a functional tool or a resource to be plundered in the service of understanding her fiction alone. Approaching the question of media in Carter's work, we see her preoccupation with harnessing a wide array of materials at the service of her writing, playing with different forms – travel narrative, illustration – to question the role of journalistic work, and to reflect on her and other women's role in the industry. The same work also points to the limits of her own critique: queer subjects, women of colour, and Native American people all carry on existing at the margins of Carter's assumed readership well into the 1980s. Her portrayal of Japanese women, in particular, pivots on pornotropic imagery and racialized othering that make it difficult to see how Carter's critique of the romance of the good life she sketches out in her *Spare Rib* article could resonate with the subjects of her piece. Japanese women and other marginalized subjects are therefore rejected from the implied community of her readers, becoming a foil for white women's liberation.

This chapter also paves the way for an understanding of Carter's interest in media theory and the import of her awareness of new communication technologies on her work and public persona. Not only a literary critic, Carter's reviews of ephemeral publications and television shows and her consumption of such items in the service of her writing translate her project to train her readers to become better consumers of media. If culture is sentenced to become a commodity, Carter seems to opine, then it is essential to constitute a cultural and

critical bedrock to prepare for its reception by an informed public. In assuming this task, Carter becomes a critic, in the sense once defined by Baudelaire. This position vis-à-vis the literary market, however, seems to assume a form of separation between the Author and the market itself, which Carter's later fiction shows she had to revise over time. This may explain the tensions identified between journalistic work as a source of revenue, and Carter's attempts at using it to train her reader in media deciphering. In my next chapter, I consider Carter's speculative fiction as a terrain of further experimentation with such mechanisms, through her portrayal of media ecologies and the concept of spectacle in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.

Chapter 3: ‘The interpretation of the world’: Mass Culture, Bureaucracy, and Media Theory in Angela Carter’s Speculative Fiction of the 1970s

In my previous chapter, I suggested that Carter successfully devised an authorial persona: invested *in* the cultural market, but not *of* it, through her position as nomadic, distant observer. This ability to situate herself as a critic places her in the lineage of the so-called Bohemia embodied by the likes of poet and critic Charles Baudelaire. In this respect, Carter seems to be conforming herself to what Brouillette calls the ‘romanticized image of the artist’s oppositional work’.¹ This implies, at the very least, that Carter’s career was in part constructed according to the model of the Avant-garde male authors critics such as Britzolakis have accused her of ventriloquising.² In the following two chapters, I examine Carter’s deconstruction of the figure of the male artist as a model of creative labour, which inserts itself into her response to new media environments of the 1970s. I argue that the 1970s represent a crucial time to pin down Carter’s critical separation from the model of the autonomous artist.

Carter’s journalism consciously analyses mass-produced media to critique it and in doing so maintain an elitist position vis-à-vis those materials, while acknowledging their power. Her literary projects resist absorption into mass-media through an appeal to Avant-garde aesthetics and to theorisations of the autonomous role of the artist. Yet, Carter’s work shows her growing awareness of the weakening of the boundary between the literary and the literary-adjacent or non-literary.³ Her reflection on the topic is partly informed by the nascent discipline of media theory which sought to explain the rise of such new cultural products and the changing environment brought about by the age of information. In her 1979 essay ‘The Box

¹ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 53.

² According to Britzolakis, Carter’s representation of Jeanne Duval, for examples, ‘cannot help but reinscribe her, at least partially, within the iconic framework of the *Fleurs du Mal*’. See Britzolakis, p. 52.

³ For an investigation of the literary as a category of cultural production and policy, see Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary*; see Emre for a discussion of the term ‘paraliterary’.

Does Furnish a Room', she semi-ironically contends that the 'exponents' of 'mass media and communications theory' have tasked themselves with a totalising task: 'the interpretation of the world', no less.⁴ She also, however, reiterates her alignment with an elite cultural position by criticising the television for its reliance on 'vicarious participation', 'the sense of uninvolved participation, of being there and doing nothing' and '[p]rivatisation of experience', which she mockingly accepts: 'I resent having to pay attention to it'.⁵

Carter's concern with the technological mediation of individualism reflects a contemporary preoccupation with the effects of new media, expressed in publications such as Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Guy Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* (1967), Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964) and Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *The Consciousness Industry* (1974).⁶ These reflections on media were also contemporary with new reflections on the self, such as Marshall Berman's *The Politics of Authenticity* (1970) or Emil Oestereicher's essay 'The Privatization of the Self in Modern Society' (1979).⁷ Berman charts the process whereby the self became a topic of political relevance and concern, a romantic impulse he argues re-emerged in the countercultural movements of the 1960s after being associated with bourgeois politics. Oestereicher similarly argues for a longer view of the development of individualism against a reductive view of self-identity as modern expressions of 'narcissism'.⁸

Carter's speculative fiction shows her critical engagement with neo-romantic concepts of subjectivity channelled in creative and artistic work. Her speculative novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* stages and questions the role of mass media in

⁴ Angela Carter, 'The Box Does Furnish a Room', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 409–12 (p. 412).

⁵ Carter, 'The Box Does Furnish a Room', pp. 409 and 410.

⁶ Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Michael Roloff, *The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Debord; McLuhan; Hoggart.

⁷ Emil Oestereicher, 'The Privatization of the Self in Modern Society', *Social Research*, 46.3 (1979), 600–615.

⁸ Oestereicher, p. 603.

constructing a new self. I argue that Carter invokes Avant-garde idealisations of artistic subjectivity as countermodels to the absorption of the self in mass media, but ultimately rejects this model by the late 1970s. I therefore suggest that Carter's writing of the 1970s joins her reflections on individuality with critiques of the regime of spectatorship through references to the model of artistic autonomy. Here, I examine *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* as a salient example of her criticism of Avant-garde individualism and passive spectatorship, but contend that her position also transcends the pessimism of 1970s media theorists in favour of a more hopeful vision of the possibilities afforded by new media. I suggest that this critical position explains her turn to entrepreneurial female figures in her later work.

Carter's comment on subjectivity and privacy is better understood in relation to contemporary discussions of media and spectatorship that were unfolding between the 1960s and the 1970s. Speculative fiction of the 1970s often reflects a critical engagement with cultural forms outside literature. In a 1971 essay entitled 'Fictions of Every Kind', J.G. Ballard names science fiction as 'the only form of literature' likely to escape disappearance in an age of new visual media and defines it as a 'response to science and technology as perceived by the inhabitants of the consumer goods society'.⁹ The disappearance of media forms and the role of literature and science fiction in negotiating this transition were an object of interest for Carter. Maggie Tonkin observes that her feminism led her to adhere to the values of 'reason, technology, science', against a form of cultural feminism that dismissed technological rationality as patriarchal and phallogentric.¹⁰ Despite this, the role of technology often remains at the periphery of Carter studies, and Carter herself was careful to set her work apart from a tradition of science fiction more concerned with futuristic implements than she was:

⁹ J.G. Ballard, 'Fictions of Every Kind', *Books and Bookmen*, February 1971, 11.

¹⁰ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*.

The technological aspects of science fiction have always passed me by. [...] And theoretical physics has always seemed to be pure poetry, partly because I don't understand it. Fantasy is only what people think of when their mind is at play.¹¹

As a result, her writing has more frequently been assimilated with a speculative tradition. For example, Tonkin claims that 'the utopian impulses in Carter's fiction [...] interpellate the reader's utopian longings', and that 'her writing praxis is itself utopian in calling forth a questing reader', and Geraldine Meaney also reads *Heroes and Villains* (1969) as an example of speculative fiction.¹² Margaret E. Toye calls Carter a 'cyborg storyteller' who is 'employing the concept of narrative as technology, of narrative as an embodiment of theory, of narrative as an intellectual mode'.¹³ Roz Kaveney qualifies Carter's liminal position in the field of science-fiction by opining that 'Angela Carter had very little interest in the hardware of science-fiction and genre fantasy; it is not clear how much of the older material she ever bothered to read'.¹⁴ Most recently, Mark P. Williams regroups Carter's novels under the category of 'progressive fantasy'.¹⁵ Noting the difficulty in distinguishing fantasy from science-fiction, and the dichotomy between definitions of fantasy that assimilate it to a strict adherence to tropes and more open definitions that make fantasy a general propensity to describe imaginary worlds, he concludes that fantasy lies in 'a core acknowledgement that its

¹¹ Angela Carter, 'Fools Are My Theme', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 31–36 (p. 36).

¹² Tonkin, p. 235; Geraldine Meaney, 'History and Women's Time: *Heroes and Villains*', in *Angela Carter*, ed. by Alison Easton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 84–106 (p. 164).

¹³ Margaret Toye, 'Cyborg Revolutions: Towards a Postfeminist Ethics with Angela Carter, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray and Donna Haraway' (unpublished Ph.D., The University of Western Ontario (Canada), 2003), pp. 53–54 <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/305237593/abstract/AE604AF9A4B04EBAPQ/19>> [accessed 4 October 2018].

¹⁴ Roz Kaveney, 'New New World Dreams: Angela Carter and Science Fiction', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Rev. and updated ed (London: Virago, 2007), p. 185.

¹⁵ Mark P. Williams, 'Radical Fantasy: A Study of Left Radical Politics in the Fantasy Writing of Michael Moorcock, Angela Carter, Alan Moore, Grant Morrison and China Miéville' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2011), p. 4 <https://www.academia.edu/3075153/Radical_Fantasy_A_Study_of_Left_Radical_Politics_in_the_Fantasy_Writing_of_Michael_Moorcock_Angela_Carter_Alán_Moore_Grant_Morrison_and_China_Mi%C3%A9ville_Introduction_PhD_thesis_> [accessed 31 January 2018].

structures and logic are predicated on reading the impossible as if it were the real'.¹⁶ Carter's speculative fiction reads as a self-reflective attempt to devise a future for literature and the author against a background of anxieties about the future of old textual cultures.

More broadly, her writing is reflective of contemporary concerns about the effects of mass media on subjectivity. Her position on new media reads as an ironic rejoinder to fears about their ability to foster political passivity. To date, Charlotte Crofts offers the foremost account of Carter's relationship with mass media and technology. She cites Carter's enthusiastic appraisal of the radio in the 1980s to argue that '[f]or Carter, radio's technological resources amplify and extend the power of the written word, blurring the "linearity" of traditional story-telling'.¹⁷ Regarding cinema, she states that

While radio's 'aural hallucinations' enabled her to challenge the dominance of the visual economy from the margins, she was drawn to the cinema because it allowed her to explore and demythologise these structures of looking within the mainstream (Carter, 1985: 7).¹⁸

Tellingly, however, Crofts struggles to make a convincing case for Carter's relationship to television, acknowledging that '[s]he came late to the medium', to conclude that

Carter's perspective on television in these articles is, of course, prescribed by the context and period in which she writes. Published in *New Society*, between 1978 and 1982, they were aimed at the very intelligentsia she pokes fun at in 'The Box Does Furnish a Room'. Her initial recalcitrance at having to confront the medium reflects and engages with the bourgeois left's prevalent fear and loathing of modern media. But these pieces also demonstrate a shift towards a critical engagement with the social and

¹⁶ Mark P. Williams, 'Radical Fantasy', p. 12.

¹⁷ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*, p. 22.

¹⁸ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*, p. 91.

cultural impact of the medium, reflecting a growing awareness of mass media and communications theory.¹⁹

I concur with Crofts's alignment of Carter's position with the bourgeois left, but suggest her writing shows her at work to find an idiom against mass media that is borrowed from the reflections on autonomy led by the nineteenth-century bohemians.

Crofts correctly highlights Carter's ambivalent turn to media theory, which needs contextualising. In the same essay on television, Carter notes that 'the disjunction between the kinds of life shown on the screen and the one which the viewer knows to be real' might well mean that 'the television may be implicitly radical all the time, in spite of itself'.²⁰ Further, she adds that television may play a role in family politics in a way that exonerates women of some of the labour of care and domesticity: 'In its function of electronic companion and nanny – a function we systematically undervalue – television makes family life possible in a high-rise on a wet day'.²¹ She goes on to describe a family of her acquaintance in whose home the television has become a means to a form of domestic harmony, which gives the members of the household access to temporary privacy:

I know a household that pays the television rental before it pays the rent, and they're not idiots, they certainly don't sit in front of the box in a glazed trance. Nevertheless, their life is conducted against a continuous stream of electronic babble because one or more members of the household are likely to be seriously watching any given programme at any given time. The set, obviously, is sited in the (only) living room. A kind of fictive privacy may be obtained among the domestic group by focusing on the television screen. This privacy is respected – 'He's watching his programme.'²²

¹⁹ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*, pp. 156–57.

²⁰ Carter, 'The Box Does Furnish a Room', p. 410.

²¹ Carter, 'The Box Does Furnish a Room', p. 412.

²² Carter, 'The Box Does Furnish a Room', p. 412.

Attention to the television restores viewers' access to privacy in difficult living conditions – the high-rise, with its implications of forced cohabitation and cramped spaces. It is telling, however, that the subject of private spectatorship is gendered male, despite Carter's initial claim that the television alleviated women's domestic labour. The delegation of maternal care (and by extension, affective bonding) does not cancel other domestic chores. Past this first caveat, while acknowledging its practical advantages, Carter falls back on a critical view of the television's weakness as a tool for political awakening:

It's a piss-poor household with several teenage children, very badly housed and they all need a little privacy from time to time. Their method of creating it is to retreat into the television, not into the action on the screen so much as into the act of viewing. I don't know how what they see on the screen affects them, and yes, it would be a far better thing if they were reading Tolstoy or raising their consciousnesses, not having them shaped.²³

While acknowledging that television affords privacy to its (male) owners, Carter thus also implies that this privacy becomes its own end. The image of the viewer absorbed in an intransitive act of viewing excludes accession to forms of political consciousness-raising and replicates as well as challenges anxieties expressed in contemporary theories of media and culture, showing Carter's engagement with those theories over the course of the 1970s. Her speculative fiction offers her a springboard from which to initiate her reflection on the role of art and literature as a historically situated artistic production amid the technological changes of the late twentieth century.

²³ Carter, 'The Box Does Furnish a Room', p. 412.

Media Theories and New Literacies in the 1970s

Carter's critique of television echoes contemporary discourses dealing with the changing media environment and their concerns around the development of new literacies that sidestep the traditional primacy of literary culture. I have been using the umbrella term 'media theory' to designate a broad range of texts and thinkers responding to structural changes in the form, production, and consumption of culture brought about by new technologies. This group, however, is by no means homogenous. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's severe appraisal of mass culture initially structured much of the left intelligentsia's response to new media:

Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system.²⁴

Horkheimer and Adorno's categorisation of elitist culture above mass media and their assumption about the latter's obedience to 'the iron system' primed the intelligentsia's suspicion towards popular culture.

Against such aversion towards popular culture, Richard Hoggart offers a nostalgia-tinged reappraisal of working-class cultural productions and sensibility in *The Uses of Literacy*. What Hoggart, Adorno, and Horkheimer, however, have in common, is a distrust of mass culture: 'of the mass Press as it is known today, of the wireless and television, of the ubiquitous cheap cinemas, and so on'.²⁵ Hoggart's thesis is that transformations in the conditions of popular culture have led to its debasement through massification. This evolution, he contends, happens at the expense of older forms of popular culture 'and that the new mass culture is in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing'.²⁶ Hoggart's

²⁴ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London ; New York: Verso Books, 2016), p. 120.

²⁵ Hoggart, p. 13.

²⁶ Hoggart, p. 13.

critique of mass culture relies on the continued assumption of an essential difference between commodified mass cultural productions and literary culture proper, exhibited in his discussion of romance fictions:

Presumably most writers of fantasy for people of any class share the fantasy worlds of their readers. They become the writers rather than the readers because they can body those fantasies into stories and characters, and because they have a fluency in language. Not the attitude to language of the creative writer, trying to mould words into a shape which will bear the peculiar quality of his experience; but a fluency, a 'gift of the gab', and a facility with thousands of stock phrases which will set the figures moving on the highly conventionalized stage of their readers' imagination. They put into words and intensify the daydreams of their readers, often with considerable technical skill.²⁷

The vacuous 'fluency of language' of contemporary writers for the masses can only produce sub-par literature intended to produce a specific effect on its readers. While he acknowledges those writers' 'technical skill', his understanding of their craft is also underpinned by an identification between the writers and the imaginary worlds of their readers which naturalises their literary production into an effect of their social condition rather than an artistic achievement. Whereas in Hoggart's mind earlier popular culture expressed 'what may have been the beginning of a genuine intellectual curiosity, however clumsily it expressed itself', the new mass culture is intended to produce sensational effects and affects in its readers.²⁸ Hoggart's account seems underpinned by an essentialist belief in inherent working-class qualities and virtues that do not, ultimately, rescue his critique from the charge of elitism. Works such as his show concerns with the means of reception and consumption of culture, which technological modernity is assumed to degrade.

²⁷ Hoggart, p. 186.

²⁸ Hoggart, p. 192.

The ethics of attention and their transformation under conditions of mass cultural production are one of the key issues tackled by Debord's 1967 essay *La Société du Spectacle* (tr: *Society of the Spectacle*).²⁹ The text's status as a staple of media theory tends to overshadow its Marxist underpinnings. In Debord's critique, the spectacular order is first and foremost the result of a process of separation and atomisation: the separation of workers from the means of production and the specialisation of tasks in a capitalist society allow for the emergence of the spectacle as a self-sustaining and apparently inescapable reality. The spectacle fosters and maintains political passivity by encouraging a contemplative attitude at odds with participation in collective activism:

The alienation of the spectator to the profit of the contemplated object (which is the result of his own unconscious activity) is expressed in the following way: the more he contemplates the less he lives; the more he accepts recognizing himself in the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own existence and his own desire. The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active man appears in the fact that his own gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him. This is why the spectator feels at home nowhere, because the spectacle is everywhere.³⁰

The spectacle, Debord argues, is 'a concrete manufacture of alienation', which estranges subjects from the world, the Other, and themselves.³¹

This pessimist view of the regime of the image inflects the work of other media theorists, including Marshall McLuhan, who forewarns against the effects generated by the rule of the medium in the age of information. While he is occasionally name-checked as one of a number of avant-garde thinkers whose work might have influenced Angela Carter, Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911 – 1980) seldom features in scholarship as a point of

²⁹ Debord.

³⁰ Debord, p. §30.

³¹ Debord, p. §32.

reference. In his landmark essay *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), McLuhan argues that the technology through which a message is communicated informs its contents:

it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. [...] Indeed, it is only too typical that the ‘content’ of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium.³²

In other words, we become so used to certain forms of consuming information and knowledge that we stop noticing them, a danger that McLuhan aims at revealing. As he demonstrates through examples that include money, the electric light, or the alphabet, changes in medium have demonstrable effects on societies: ‘With print many earlier forms were excluded from life and art, and many were given strange new intensity’.³³ McLuhan’s work suggestively affirms that the contemporary rise of ‘[e]lectric technology’ fosters and encourages unification and involvement’, as opposed to the ‘process of specialism and detachment’ of ‘the alphabet and print technology’.³⁴ His essays anticipate a number of technological developments: the internet and its ever-expanding archive, the issue of digital and technological anonymity, and the risks of surveillance. These issues, in turn, bleed into the pages of Carter’s writing and feed into her reflection on cinema, the radio, and television. Carter’s writing testifies to an ongoing interest in the rise of media theory, which transpires through her speculative fiction of the 1970s, starting with *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.

Doctor Hoffman’s Media Ecologies and the State’s Spectacular Order

Written over the course of Carter’s stay in Japan and published in 1972, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* alludes transparently to the effects of technological mediation on

³² McLuhan, p. 9.

³³ McLuhan, p. 25.

³⁴ McLuhan and Fiore, p. 8.

the self. Its protagonist, Desiderio, becomes embroiled in the war raging between an unnamed country located in a phantasmagorical version of South America and Doctor Hoffman, a mysterious inventor whose machines turn the nation's denizens' dreams into reality. Critical attention has focused largely on other aspects of the novel, chiefly its play with Surrealist aesthetics and its importance in Carter's budding reflection on the gendering of visibility and spectatorship.³⁵ The text's postcolonial politics and use of tropes taken from magic realism has provided another avenue of investigation.³⁶ However, little has been said about what the context of media theory can bring to our understanding of the novel. In the most explicit discussion of the novel's investment in contemporary media theories, Susan Rubin Suleiman identifies Carter's affinity with Debord's critique in the character of Doctor Hoffman, whose machines stand for the power of leisure society to rein in the revolutionary potentialities of the Surrealist project.³⁷ In what follows, I suggest Carter's exploration of the model of the avant-garde artist through the character of Desiderio is key to her critique of the spectacular order, which transcends Hoffman's inventions to pervade the novel.

Hoffman's phantasmatic machines signal a new media ecology and a new regime of spectatorship which alludes transparently to current debates about the role of technology. In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan fantasises about a world in which '[w]hole cultures could now be programmed to keep their emotional climate stable in the same way that we have begun to know something about maintaining equilibrium in the commercial economies of the

³⁵ Mandy Koolen, 'Undesirable Desires: Sexuality as Subjectivity in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*', *Women's Studies*, 36.6 (2007), 399–416 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870701493351>>; Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Rev. and updated ed (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 98–116; Watz; Dimovitz; Caleb Sivyler, 'The Politics of Gender and the Visual in Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter' (unpublished PhD Thesis, School of English, Communication and Philosophy, Cardiff University, 2015).

³⁶ Eliza Claudia Filimon, 'Desired Others in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*', *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, 7 (2010), 170–82; Joanna Neilly, 'The Dangers of Harmony: German Romantic Thought in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 53.2 (2017), 200–219 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/cqw106>>.

³⁷ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle', p. 127.

world'.³⁸ Hoffman's desire machines reshape and distort the emotional climate of Desiderio's nation. However, while they purport to do so for a revolutionary purpose, critics have highlighted the authoritarian potential of these implements. Suleiman, for example, suggests that Hoffman's use of Surrealist aesthetics ultimately only gives way to a very 'drab [kind of pleasure]' and reflects Carter's sense that 'questions about technology cannot be divorced from questions about ideology and values'.³⁹ Madeleine Monson-Rosen opines that the novel foregrounds the sexist power dynamics at the heart of the age of cybernetics during which it was written, and their connections with exploitative labour structures, stating that

Doctor Hoffman demands an investment that is literally libidinal, and his desire machines are, in fact, capitalist mechanisms of exploitation that disguise labor as enjoyment.⁴⁰

In this earlier stage of her own reflection on the role of new technologies, Carter thus seemingly embraces a number of media theorists' anxieties about the effects of new technologies. Key to her critique is the new regime of attention and spectatorship encouraged by Hoffman.

In contrast with Desiderio, the city's denizens quickly find themselves immersed in Hoffman's world. One essential component of Hoffman's technology is that it appears to enable a form of privatising experience, separating those who are subjected to it from one another. The machine-generated illusions curiously appear to be simultaneously shared by all the inhabitants of the city while also remaining personal to them, including elements from their past and private lives. In this new world, community becomes gradually impossible, and the machines render traditional government structures useless and interrupt political decision-making in drastic ways:

³⁸ McLuhan, p. 30.

³⁹ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle', pp. 124 and 128.

⁴⁰ Madeleine Monson-Rosen, 'Reading Women's Labor in the Cybernetic Seventies: Vital Work', in *Humans at Work in the Digital Age*, ed. by Shawna Ross and Andrew Pilsch (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 157–71 (p. 168) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429244599-9>>.

A special meeting of the cabinet took place in a small boat upon so stormy a sea that most of the ministers vomited throughout the proceedings and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was washed overboard.⁴¹

The impossibility of reaching any sense of shared reality is pervasive, and includes frameworks as apparently universal as time, as noted by Desiderio: ‘Tricks with watches and clocks were pet devices of his, for so he rubbed home to us how we no longer held a structure of time in common.’⁴² Despite his adversarial relationship to the state, it is notable that Hoffman’s machines ultimately enable the rise to power of the Minister of Determination and the creation of an authoritarian regime:

My minister dared walk on the water and retrieved his senior dryshod since there was, in fact, not one drop of water there; after that, the cabinet gave him full authority to cope with the situation and soon he virtually ruled the city single-handed.⁴³

Strikingly, the Minister of Determination and Hoffman’s empire of delirium are often pitted against each other as opposite: Suleiman, for example, contends that the ending of the novel, in which Desiderio assassinates both Hoffman and his daughter Albertina, signifies Desiderio’s decision to choose ‘the calm’ of the Minister of Determination’s regime.⁴⁴ Yet, careful attention to the notion of spectacle as described by Debord reveals similitudes between the two.

Technologies in *Hoffman* mediate and cancel a number of binaries – between inside and outside, public and private, personal and collective, living and inorganic, in a way similar to that imagined in McLuhan’s tactile account of the revolutionary impact of technologies and his claim that ‘[a]ll media work us over completely’, ‘as environments’.⁴⁵ The technological implements scattered across the novel create a new space of sensory possibilities fraught with

⁴¹ Carter, *Hoffman*, pp. 11–12.

⁴² Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 16.

⁴³ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Suleiman, ‘The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle’, p. 123.

⁴⁵ McLuhan and Fiore, p. 26.

political consequences. The novel opens with a reference to Pataphysics, the branch of pseudo-knowledge invented by Alfred Jarry: 'Imagine the perplexity of a man outside time and space, who has lost his watch, his measuring rod and his tuning fork.'⁴⁶ The novel abounds with examples of pseudo-scientific discourses and objects. For example, the 'Determining Radar Apparatus' founded on the idea of the 'unreality atom':

The model of the unreality atom in the Minister's office consisted of a tetra-hydron improvised out of a number of hairbrushes. The radar beams were supposed to bruise themselves on this bed of thorns and certainly let out an inaudible shriek instantly visible on the screens at H.Q. This shriek automatically triggered the laser and at once annihilated the offending non-substance.⁴⁷

The atom model used by the Minister here is closer to the result of a *bricolage* than to modern scientific equipment. The parody of technology in this scene is one of numerous instances of quasi- or fringe scientific objects borrowed in various contexts by Carter through the novel, where they often function as a way into Doctor Hoffman's synaesthetic illusions. These bear the mark of Carter's reading of Sartre's investigation into mental images in *Psychology of the Imagination*, gathered in her research notebook on the novel. For example, here, the 'unreality atom' is not without correspondence with Sartre's claim that consciousness implies 'direction' and 'expectation' towards its object.⁴⁸ Sartre's phenomenology does not distinguish between imagination and consciousness: rather, as Carter notes, '[t]he object of which I am conscious is the affective equivalent of the object observed'.⁴⁹ The blurring of the boundaries between things observed and empirically verifiable and things imagined is at the core of Dr Hoffman's and the Minister of Determination's project.

⁴⁶ Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll Pataphysician*, cited in Carter, *Hoffman*, p. xv.

⁴⁷ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 63.

⁴⁹ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/110, Angela Carter Papers, 'Notebook (N.D.)'.

During the war, the city falls prey to the repressive policies of the ‘Determination police’ who can deliver or deny ‘exit permits’.⁵⁰ This is a hint at the spectacular nature of the state constructed by the minister of Determination. Debord links the spectacle and its fetishization of commodities to the bureaucratic state, of which the police is one emanation: ‘Wherever the concentrated spectacle rules, so does the police’.⁵¹ A state built on the imperialist exploitation of the indigenous community, Desiderio’s nation, which ultimately frames and closes the narrative, shows itself to be the true site of the Spectacle. The enquiry into Hoffman parodies what Suzanne Keen names a ‘romance of the archive’, transported to the format of a spy novel.⁵² This is particularly true in the second chapter, where Desiderio embarks on a journey to ‘the sea-side resort of S’.⁵³ The narrative is pieced together through a series of evidential documents: ‘a cutting in the files’ allows him to retrace the story of ‘Hoffman’s old professor’, and results in the identification of the peep show owner. His investigation of S’s mayor’s death leads him to search through through his offices where he discovers

evidence that a certain peep-show [sic] proprietor had filed an official request to open a booth on the pier in the preceding month of April; this form, signed with a tentative cross, still waited for the official stamp.⁵⁴

Mary Ann herself, the evanescent daughter of the mayor, is present in ‘the records’.⁵⁵ More reference to state structures and to the documents evidencing them occur throughout this chapter: ‘through the Mayor’s files’, ‘contraband’.⁵⁶ When accused of Mary Ann’s murder, Desiderio finds that ‘[t]he papers in [his] briefcase had, of course, all been altered so they

⁵⁰ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 5.

⁵¹ Debord, p. §64.

⁵² Suzanne Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* (Toronto ; London: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁵³ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 53.

⁵⁵ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 59.

⁵⁶ Carter, *Hoffman*, pp. 63 and 66.

presented masterpieces of the dubious', showing that the state has fully embraced Hoffman's ability to deceive and transform.⁵⁷

According to Keen, romances of the archive reveal an anxiety about the recuperation of history in official narratives.⁵⁸ In the case of *Hoffman*, this history is particularly fraught. The novel makes several references to the nation's colonial foundation. Throughout the novel the Indians who originally inhabited the lands make ghostly appearances. As Joanna Neilly suggests, the narrative portrays 'the complex social structure of a nation recovering from its colonial past'.⁵⁹ The Amerindians' crafts are conserved 'in the unfrequented Museum of Folk Art', where they are nothing but 'tattered ruins' and the surviving descendants are confined to waste management ('night-soil disposal').⁶⁰ The dehumanising rhetoric of colonialism ('then the Jesuits decided that the Indians did not have a single soul among them all') echoes Bartolomé de las Casas's account of the forced colonialization of America, and in particular his *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*, and its depiction of the death and destruction caused by the settlers.⁶¹ The account paved the way for the Valladolid debate, which sought to settle the question of the indigenous populations' right to a humane treatment and rights. Strikingly, the initial plan of the novel planned for Desiderio to be taken to the 'coast of the Indies' by the 'erotic travellers' and to witness the 'Destruction of the Indies'.⁶² Throughout the novel, the spectral presence of the Indians is both outside the structure of the state and, seemingly, beyond the reach of Hoffman himself. They are 'immune to the manifestations'.⁶³ Their cemetery is the stage of Desiderio's aborted attempt at carnal consumption of Albertina.

⁵⁷ Carter, *Hoffman*, pp. 68–69.

⁵⁸ Keen, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Neilly, p. 204.

⁶⁰ Carter, *Hoffman*, pp. 77–78.

⁶¹ Carter, *Hoffman*.

⁶² London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/110, Angela Carter Papers, 'Notebook (N.D.)'.

⁶³ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 79.

Though he is himself a spy, Desiderio cannot escape the dynamics of surveillance deployed in the novel, and acknowledges ‘a degree of ambivalence towards the Minister’s architectonic vision of the perfect state’.⁶⁴ Desiderio, Neilly argues, ‘is all too aware that the Minister’s mania for categorization could potentially extend to a dangerous racial profiling from which he would suffer’.⁶⁵ Yet another cause of Desiderio’s problems lies in the disintegration and decentralisation of governmental structures resulting from the war, as they remove his protection as an agent of the state. Upon being arrested, Desiderio is ‘terrified to realize how much the autonomous power of the police had grown’, aggravating the precariousness of his position.⁶⁶ Desiderio’s uncertain identity is equally enmeshed in postcolonial state structures and texts. This aspect of his characterisation is even further emphasised in the earliest drafts of the novel: ‘I am a man who, due to Latin American parentage is inauthentic (look it up in the records, doubting Thomas!)’.⁶⁷ Inauthentic documents find their way everywhere in the novel: when found with the body of Mary Ann, Desiderio is ‘charged on four counts’ listed in the course of the text.⁶⁸ In this instance, the list becomes a parody of official document, testifying to the decentralisation of the state, as local police services are now in capacity to falsify its language and use it against Desiderio. The protagonist himself is accused of being a fraud:

(4) posing as an Inspector of Veracity Class Three when I was really the fatherless son of a known prostitute of Indian extraction, an offence against the Determination Regulations Page Four, paragraph I c, viz.: ‘Any thing or person seen to diverge

⁶⁴ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 66.

⁶⁵ Neilly, p. 206.

⁶⁶ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 68.

⁶⁷ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/3, Angela Carter Papers, ‘The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman / The War of Dreams’ 1’.

⁶⁸ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 68.

significantly from it or his own known identity is committing an offence and may be apprehended and tested.’⁶⁹

The pastiche of legal discourse also reveals the oddity and crudeness of a system that does not distinguish between objects and citizens, as Desiderio is deemed as apt to be tested as the Ambassador’s letter he is sent out to check on at the beginning of the chapter.⁷⁰ This scene enforces the brutality of a state that has formalised all of its citizens’ relationships with it to the extreme, embodying Michael Warner’s contention that ‘[s]uch is the image of totalitarianism nonkin society organized by bureaucracy and law’.⁷¹ Desiderio’s reduction to an administrative agent and then to a testable object in a society where his racial provenance jeopardises his political and human status highlights the bureaucratisation of relationships in the fictional state of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.

The obsession with paper trails is juxtaposed with the Minister of Determination’s attempt to create a computer that would exhaustively record and define the world’s components, a move Yeandle claims to be inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein’s exploration of systems of knowledge.⁷² I would suggest that this effort at referencing and naming, is not only a product of Carter’s reading of Wittgenstein, but also takes its cue from technologies of visualisation that purported to bring the world’s diverse facets to the spectator without the mediation of labour or travel.

Archival evidence is instrumental to my argument here. Carter’s research notebooks for *Hoffman* are strikingly developed and organised, revealing a structured approach to research that generally distinguishes them from most of Carter’s other drafts, with the exception of *The Passion of New Eve*. They are structured according to paginated thematic entries, and include a series of lists, and seem written as if this particular textual structure had also been built into

⁶⁹ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 68.

⁷⁰ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 40.

⁷¹ Warner, p. 52.

⁷² Yeandle, *Angela Carter and Western Philosophy*, p. 125.

the fabric of Carter's way of conceiving of her narrative. The claim that '[t]he system of knowledge is more important than the thing known' occurs very early on in the notebook, which opens on a citation taken from Jorge Luis Borges's 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', a tale preoccupied with the systematic detailing of the constituent parts of a fictitious world in encyclopaedic form.⁷³ Much like Borges's, however, the Minister's attempt at world-building is bound to result in aporias, and cannot get at any authentic image of the world. Hoffman's peep show offers a parodic vision of the Minister's effort at producing a totalising vision of the world. Ultimately, Carter suggests, both visions turn out to be frauds, that only result in furthering the spectacular order.

Critics have tended to read Carter's critique of visibility in the peep show scene through the lens of her feminist politics. Anna Watz analyses it as a hyperbolic mimesis of 'the dynamics of male voyeurism and female objectification' that employs a Surrealist mode of representation to criticise it.⁷⁴ Scott A. Dimovitz similarly views the scene in allegorical terms and draws on its Surrealist iconography.⁷⁵ Critics have also seized upon the text's concerns with technologies of visibility. Caleb Sivyver suggests that 'Desiderio's metaphors of the daguerreotype, the cinema, and the photograph [...] capture the distance he attempts to create between himself and the objects of his gaze', while the peep show implies a physical involvement and participation on behalf of the spectator, whose desiring and appropriating gaze activates the technology to create a partial and narrow vision.⁷⁶ Yet, Carter's research notebooks go further in suggesting a more pointed critique of the kind of participation required from such technologies. In particular, Carter's notes include a paragraph copied verbatim from Hattori Bushō's *New Tales of Tokyo Prosperity* (*Tōkyō Shin Hanjōki* (1874)), a text included

⁷³ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/110, Angela Carter Papers, 'Notebook (N.D.)'.

⁷⁴ Watz, p. 91.

⁷⁵ Dimovitz, p. 65.

⁷⁶ Sivyver, pp. 215–16.

in Donald Keene's *Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology* (1956) which Carter seems to have consulted.

In Bushō's text, the city is described with ironic distance, as are the effects of Western modernity. The text offers a snapshot of the Meiji era (October 23 1868 – 30 July 1912) characterised by industrialisation and growing Western interventionism in Japanese affairs. Bushō voluntarily employs a Chinese writing style (*kanbun*) to describe the city's transformation under foreign influence, reinforcing the sense of distance evinced by the text itself.⁷⁷ Ai Maeda notes that '[t]he very idea of capturing the new customs of Enlightenment Tokyo in traditional *kanbun* was itself anachronistic', and further emphasises the oddity of the topics discussed by Bushō: 'the various *things* [*mono*] that served as symbols of the "enlightenment" produced a certain grating against the forms of the classical Chinese language itself', characterised by a fragmented style.⁷⁸ The peculiarity of Bushō's style serves to depict Tokyo at a time of radical transformation. The genre itself finds its sources in material processes: 'the visual mode corresponding to the "tales of prosperity" style must instead be found in the lineage of "lens pictures" [*megane-e*] that were created under the influence of Chinese woodblock prints and Dutch copperplate etchings'.⁷⁹ The text expresses a subtle criticism of Western technologies in the context of their growing influence during the Meiji era, and the type of visuality they enabled.

Bushō laments the occultation of labour performed by the peep show technology, which can only procure second-hand visions of the world it purports to represent: 'The peep show must have been an invention of those who eat without tilling the fields and who wear clothes which are not of their own weaving.'⁸⁰ The images created by the peep show distort reality to

⁷⁷ Ai Maeda, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 67.

⁷⁸ Maeda, pp. 67–68.

⁷⁹ Maeda, p. 73.

⁸⁰ Hattori Busho, 'The Western Peep Show', in *Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology*, ed. & trans. by Donald Keene (London: Thames & Hudson, 1956), pp. 34–36 (p. 34).

magnify Western inventions and landmarks: 'The steel bridge of London is longer than a rainbow; the palace of Paris is taller than the clouds.'⁸¹ The peep show can only procure second-hand experiences, 'second-hand articles from some old ragpicker's shop': 'You look at a picture of a museum and despise the pawnshop next door; you peep at a great hospital and lament the headaches of others.'⁸² As in Carter's own later peep show, the Western peep show relies on a gendered libidinal economy which draws on the viewer's desires at the same time as it frustrates them:

In the last show, the Goddess of Beauty lies naked in bed. Her skin is pure white, except for a small black mole under her navel. It is unfortunate that she has one leg lifted, and we cannot admire what lies within. In another scene we regret that only half the body is exposed and we cannot see the behind; in still another we lament that though face to face we cannot kiss the lips.⁸³

Bushō's critique resonates with Timothy Mitchell's conceptualisation of a nineteenth-century exhibitionary order, which constructs 'a world of "objects" that Europeans seemed to take as the experience of the real'.⁸⁴ It anticipates later texts that react to the introduction of new media as profound and disruptive changes to Japanese experience, such as Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* (1933), which Carter might have encountered and read during her time in Japan.⁸⁵ Strikingly, Hoffman's peep show offers similarly second-hand experiences. In its portrayal of women's bodies made for the viewer's enjoyment, it also conceals Hoffman's reliance on forced sexual labour. Like the Minister's computers, however, the world produced by the peep show proves fraudulent, rather than instructive, and only results in decentring the

⁸¹ Busho, p. 35.

⁸² Busho, pp. 36 and 35.

⁸³ Busho, p. 35.

⁸⁴ Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff, 3rd ed. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 501–9.

⁸⁵ Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (New York: Random House, 2019); Although he does not mention *In Praise of Shadows* explicitly, Sozo Araki mentions Carter's 'great admiration' for its author. See Araki, p. 39.

gendered labour (Albertina's, the sex slaves') that contribute to Hoffman's dominion. To the spectacular worlds designed by Hoffman and the Minister, Carter opposes Desiderio, whose dogged passivity curiously enables his survival through the war and his eventual ascension to power.

'Posterity's Prostitute': From Charles Baudelaire's Spleen to Desiderio's Boredom

Desiderio's characterisation as an affectless character marks an evolution from Carter's previous explorations of the figure of the Baudelairean trope of the *poète maudit*. For one, unlike Honeybuzzard and Morris in *Shadow Dance* (1966), Joseph, the protagonist of *Several Perceptions* (1968), and Lee and his brother Buzz in *Love* (1971), Carter chose to write Desiderio's narrative in the first person.⁸⁶ Tonkin links the move to a playful rewriting of Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*), but her reading focuses chiefly on Carter's use of the name 'Albertina' as a Proustian echo enabling a deconstruction of the muse. Yet, as she notes, Desiderio presents similarities with the male narrator of *La Recherche*: 'Carter's narrator, Desiderio [...] literalizes Proust's concept of the narrator's desire as the engine of narrative'.⁸⁷ It is, however, Desiderio's state of passivity and desirelessness that make him the hero of the story by making him impervious to Hoffman's machines: 'his heroism, which distinguishes him from his Proustian model, is the paradoxical result of his disaffection and ambivalence, rather than of any heroic impulse'.⁸⁸ David Punter concurs in highlighting Desiderio's paradoxical emotional ineptitude: 'boredom and disaffection' are the two main strands of Desiderio's personality, and give him 'the vacant strength to quash the Doctor's schemes', in a fictionalisation of 'the defeat of the political

⁸⁶ Angela Carter, *Love* (London: Vintage Books, 2006); Carter, *Several Perceptions*; Carter, *Shadow Dance*.

⁸⁷ Maggie Tonkin, 'Albertine/a the Ambiguous: Angela Carter's Reconfiguration of Marcel Proust's Modernist Muse', in *Re-Visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 64–86 (p. 67).

⁸⁸ Tonkin, 'Albertine/a the Ambiguous: Angela Carter's Reconfiguration of Marcel Proust's Modernist Muse', p. 68.

aspirations of the 1960s, and in particular of the father-figures of liberation, Reich and Marcuse'.⁸⁹ My argument here is that Desiderio's boredom is not only a psychological trait, but a culturally situated emotional state that refers to a codified set of affects associated with Decadent male authorship and, crucially, with the ethical position of one of the main proponents of art for art's sake: Baudelaire, who features as an inspiration and foil to Carter's poetics throughout the 1970s. I historicise Desiderio's oft-cited 'boredom' to suggest that his narratorial position is better understood in relation to the Baudelairian affect of *ennui*, or spleen, which holds a central part in Baudelaire's understanding of modernity, and makes Desiderio the main conduit of Carter's explorations of artistic autonomy. This position buttresses Carter's enquiry into the role of the artist in contemporary society, by using Desiderio as a countermodel to the passive spectatorship intended by Doctor Hoffman and the bureaucratic state exposed in the novel.

As concerns with new media and attention were becoming coupled with notions of creativity and productiveness in the post-war era, boredom took on a different value. Yet, *ennui* and tedium have a long cultural history, which I suggest Carter intentionally plunders. In *The Demon of Noontide* (1976), an appraisal of the role of boredom or *ennui* in Western literature, Reinhard Clifford Kuhn defines boredom as 'a state of high ambiguity'.⁹⁰ He highlights the term's etymological connections to the Latin *Odio* (I hate) and its emotional multivalence: Provençal 'enuegs' were Medieval 'poems that complain of the annoyance of life' in a mundane register, but the term can just as well describe irritation as 'profound sorrow' or 'deep spiritual distress'.⁹¹ Remarkably, Kuhn notes that one meaning of *ennui* is 'the type of boredom that accompanies the performance of routine and meaningless labour', but excludes this issue

⁸⁹ David Punter, 'Angela Carter: Supersessions of the Masculine', *Critique*, 25.4 (1984), 209–22 (p. 211).

⁹⁰ Reinhard Clifford Kuhn, *The Demon of Noontide: Ennui in Western Literature*, *The Demon of Noontide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 4

<<http://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9781400886340/html>> [accessed 28 June 2021].

⁹¹ Kuhn, p. 5.

from his own scrutiny, leaving it ‘to the sociologist, but especially to philosophers and to the Church’.⁹² In Kuhn’s opinion, successive solutions to this particular variant of ‘ennui’ – the automation enabled by the industrial revolution, and the rise of leisure – offer unsatisfactory solutions to the problem. Instead, Kuhn suggests, an answer to the problem caused by boredom could be found in an exploration of the possibilities of the self:

Perhaps it would be more sensible [of sociologists and what Kuhn calls ‘human relations engineers’] to search for means of making the members of this new ‘leisure class’ aware of their aspirations, rather than to offer them cheap and inadequate substitutes that cheat them of their true possibilities.⁹³

Kuhn’s assessment is remarkably of his time, and marked by new approaches to productivity in the workplace, understood to be linked to an idealised, self-generated creativity as means to express an authentic self. Brouillette traces the history of the notion of creativity and its spread in managerial environments. She notes that Abraham Maslow (1908 – 1970), the psychologist chiefly known for his creation of the hierarchy of needs, was a key figure in spreading the idea of creativity to business settings:

Maslow argues that ideal work is ‘psychotherapeutic, psychogogic (making well [sic] people grow towards self-actualization),’ and that self-actualizing or ‘highly evolved’ people ‘assimilate their work into the identity, into the self’, so that ‘work actually becomes part of the self’.⁹⁴

Notably, Maslow models his idea of the self-actualised self after the artist:

Maslow uses artists as models of the kind of wholeness of being that he recommends. Artists become for him particularly important figures because of what he construes as their thriving in insecure conditions and their motivation by internal directives.⁹⁵

⁹² Kuhn, p. 8.

⁹³ Kuhn, p. 8.

⁹⁴ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 66.

⁹⁵ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 67.

Kuhn's dismissal of boredom at work as distinct from the category of boredom which he opines constitutes the proper object of his literary study is thus strangely in keeping with assumptions about the nature of work that slowly pushed forward an image of the artist as a model of labour in the late twentieth century. On the cusp of the massification of leisure technologies, therefore, it appears that boredom and tedium were regaining a form of currency, as a societal issue to be solved. By contrast, against Kuhn's and other's assessments of the need for a solution to boredom to be found in creativity, Carter puts forward and explores the possibilities of *ennui* as an antidote to the machinations of the spectacle.

Kuhn acknowledges that the boredom of repetitive labour can 'coexist with *ennui*', but his interests lie elsewhere.⁹⁶ The bulk of his analysis is focused on literary representations and expressions of boredom, and generally portray it as a negative affect. In a vivid scene, Kuhn compares the enthusiasm felt by a music amateur who 'has unexpectedly been given tickets to a concert', and 'is in a state of grace and knows the fervor of the true believer', to the *ennui* of the same man who would, a week later, turn up to a concert for which he had booked a ticket:

Eager to listen to a certain favorite symphony, his ear is at first assailed by the cacophonous noises coming from the orchestra pit. [...] After what seems an interminable wait, a bald-headed man dressed in black and white and carrying a stick comes onto the stage. The audience claps frenetically, and the man bows several times. The music begins. The listener is in a lucid frame of mind and notices everything. [...] The din of the audience subsides quickly, and he can take note of the various modulations and the difficult transitions. Everything is executed impeccably. The concertgoer sees clearly for the first time the complex structure of the work and its hidden subtleties. But something is wrong, for he, himself, is completely outside the

⁹⁶ Kuhn, p. 9.

music. [...] The world of music is closed to the auditor. He is not in a state of grace as during the concert of the preceding week. He is experiencing *ennui*.⁹⁷

Ennui, in this scene, is the opposite of transcendence, or grace: the conductor has become ‘a bald-headed man’, his baton ‘a stick’. His lucidity prevents the victim of *ennui* from accessing true enjoyment, the ‘state of grace’ of other music-goers, and separates him from the crowd by turning his aesthetic experience into an analytical one. Kuhn defines its main components thus: ‘it is a state that affects both the soul and the body’; it is untethered from ‘external circumstances’ or ‘will’; and it ‘is usually characterized by the phenomenon of estrangement’, resulting in a world ‘emptied of its significance’ and in which ‘[e]verything is seen as if filtered through a screen’.⁹⁸ In short, Kuhn posits that ‘we can tentatively define *ennui* as the state of emptiness that the soul feels when it is deprived of interest in action, life, and the world’.⁹⁹ It is this negative affect which Carter aims to reclaim as an attitude likely to resist the state of passive attention required by contemporary media.

Baudelaire is key both to Kuhn’s and Carter’s understanding of literary *ennui*. Baudelaire’s poetry skillfully stages the poet’s separation from the world and existential woe in terms of an all-pervasive *ennui*, famously personified in his poem ‘Au Lecteur’ (‘To the Reader’):

Although he makes neither great gestures nor great cries,
He would willingly make of the earth a shambles
And, in a yawn, swallow the world;

He is *Ennui*! – His eye watery as though with tears,
He dreams of scaffolds as he smokes his hookah pipe.
You know him reader, that refined monster,
– Hypocritical reader, – my fellow, – my brother!¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Kuhn, pp. 9–10.

⁹⁸ Kuhn, pp. 11–12.

⁹⁹ Kuhn, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954, cited in ‘Au Lecteur (To the Reader) by Charles Baudelaire’ <<https://fleursdumal.org/poem/099>> [accessed 28 June 2021].

Baudelaire's definition of *ennui* contributes to his ambivalent construction of a subject position intended to antagonise his reader (by emphasising his flaws and mediocrity) at the same time as it makes him his accomplice (by suggesting their similitudes, but also through the reader's aesthetic enjoyment of the poem). *Ennui* is both one of many among 'the filthy menagerie of our vices' and what makes the poet unique by affording him the lucidity needed to depict his contemporaries' mores in well rhymed and rhythmical stanzas.¹⁰¹ As such, it also becomes a precondition for creativity. As Kuhn notes, the motif of *ennui* is not particularly unique to Baudelaire: boredom haunts the writings of Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Arthur Rimbaud, Stendhal, and most of Baudelaire's famous contemporaries. Strikingly, however, *ennui* is not normally the condition of the Bildungsroman's hero and their ability to flout it singles out Stendahl's most emblematic heroes, Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo.¹⁰² Yet *ennui* and creation are consubstantial in Kuhn's argument: 'Literature is the natural product of *ennui*, and only through artistic creation can one overcome it'.¹⁰³ Through his concept of spleen, Baudelaire elevates *ennui* to the rank of a fetish, which is recuperated in later references to his work.

Carter's exploration of Baudelairian *ennui* in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is her ironic response to the state of passive receptiveness fostered by contemporary technologies that prey on viewers' attention. I have argued elsewhere that Carter's nod to 'the massive contribution the immorally unhealthy [including "Alcoholics, depressives, cripples"] made to our culture' was part of a corrosive feminist strategy to counter hygienist discourses that aimed to regulate the social body through controlling the kind of products consumed by

¹⁰¹ William Aggeler, 'Au Lecteur (To the Reader) by Charles Baudelaire'.

¹⁰² Kuhn, p. 304.

¹⁰³ Kuhn, p. 309.

the bodies of the citizens. *Hoffman*, I suggest, is an exploration of the political possibilities of such a position.¹⁰⁴

The first indication of Carter's intentions for Desiderio's character and of his link with Baudelairean poetics comes from her early notes for the novel. Under an entry titled 'Desiderio', she cites the first line of Baudelaire's poem 'Le Mauvais Vitrier' ('The Bad Glazier'): 'Il y a des natures purement contemplatives'.¹⁰⁵ The full passage is translated as follows:

There are certain natures, purely contemplative and totally unfit for action, which nevertheless, moved by some mysterious and unaccountable impulse, act at times with a rapidity of which they would never have dreamed themselves capable.¹⁰⁶

At the end of the poem the speaker himself identifies with this model. The presence of a French citation in Carter's notebook is a salient example of what Martine Hennard Dutheil de La Rochère calls Carter's 'translational poetics'.¹⁰⁷ As Hennard contends, Baudelaire is one of a number of key translational intertexts: she notes that Marcel Raymond's essay *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme* (1933) 'notably influenced her perception of the role of Baudelaire as a precursor of surrealism' and that she 'even placed Japan, where she resided from 1969 to 1971, under the sign of Baudelaire'.¹⁰⁸

Carter's ongoing translational interest in Baudelaire culminates in her story 'Black Venus', in which Hennard argues Carter's translation of the poem 'L'Invitation au voyage'

¹⁰⁴ Angela Carter, 'Health on the Brain', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 64–68 (p. 66); Marine Furet, 'The Indigestible Poetics of Angela Carter', in *Ludics and Laughter as Feminist Aesthetic: Angela Carter at Play*, ed. by Sarah Gamble, Jennifer Gustar, and Caleb Sivyer (Brighton, Chicago, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2021), pp. 93–112.

¹⁰⁵ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/110, Angela Carter Papers, 'Notebook (N.D.)'.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*, trans. by Louise Varèze (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1970), p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *Reading, Translating, Rewriting: Angela Carter's Translational Poetics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, 'Angela Carter's Objets Trouvés in Translation: From Baudelaire to Black Venus', in *The Arts of Angela Carter: A Cabinet of Curiosities*, ed. by Marie Mulvey-Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 98–126 (p. 100).

‘sheds the ornaments’ of the original in favour of a ‘woman-friendly, unabashed and darkly comic perspective’ that remedies Jeanne Duval’s reduction to the status of muse at the hands of Baudelaire.¹⁰⁹ Hennard’s analysis briefly notes the ending of the story, in which the commodification of the poet’s assets, including his manuscript, allows Duval to generate a profit.¹¹⁰ This process places Duval among a lineage of other women entrepreneurs in Carter’s corpus: Duval’s ability to commodify her former lover’s work is echoed in Dora’s astute auctioning of her dead admirer Irish in *Wise Children*, as discussed in Chapter one.

In Carter’s tale, Duval’s mercantile interest in Baudelaire’s texts comically overlooks their literary value. The text is built on a dialogic structure that opposes Baudelaire’s lyrical suggestions to travel to a land unknown ‘there, among the lilting palm trees’ to Duval’s outcries at the thought of being sent back ‘to the bloody parrot forest! Don’t take me on the slavers’ route back to the West Indies, for godsake’.¹¹¹ Duval’s narrative persona serves a materialist purpose, exposing the dirty underbelly of Baudelaire’s imperial and gendered fantasies. As Munford argues,

Carter’s re-writing of Duval is contextualised in relation to the gendered construction of social and literary relations in mid-nineteenth century French discourse and, in particular, the male artist’s fascination with the prostitute as a key figure of the modern, urban landscape.¹¹²

Duval’s business acumen deconstructs the prostitute’s literary role as a fetish that stands for the union of lust and market commodity. Yet, the ability to sell off Baudelaire’s memorabilia also originates in the poet’s own self-conscious forging of an authorial persona.

¹⁰⁹ Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, ‘Angela Carter’s Objets Trouvés in Translation’, pp. 115–16.

¹¹⁰ Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, ‘Angela Carter’s Objets Trouvés in Translation’, pp. 115–16.

¹¹¹ Angela Carter, ‘Black Venus’, in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Random House, 1996), pp. 231–44 (pp. 232–33).

¹¹² Rebecca Munford, ‘Re-Presenting Charles Baudelaire/Re-Presencing Jeanne Duval: Transformations of the Muse in Angela Carter’s “Black Venus”’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 40.1 (2004), 1–13 (p. 2) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/40.1.1>>.

Carter's satirical construction of Baudelaire in later works such as 'Black Venus' springs from earlier explorations of the figure of the masculine poet, of which Desiderio is one example. Strikingly, despite her later exploration of, and granting of individuality to Duval as Baudelaire's muse, Carter never identifies with her. Conversely, her writing from the 1960s and 1970s often suggests her identification with male figures, which critics have recently underlined. The feminisation of Sozo Araki in her writing, for example, which Hennard Dutheil reads as evidence of her 'attraction to the surrealist movement as promising erotic liberation and female creativity', implicitly recasts Carter in a male subject position.¹¹³ Talking about *Love*, her last novel published before *Hoffman*, Carter would retrospectively identify its portrayal of the dealings of Annabel, the main female character, and of her descent into mental illness, as a 'sinister feat of male impersonation'.¹¹⁴ Dimovitz summarises Carter's position in the early 1970s as a series of 'ambiguous gender explorations and theorizations, each of which played out in the theatre of her growing awareness of her false consciousness', resulting in her temporary identification with 'male sadism', which Dimovitz sees reflected in her relationships at the time.¹¹⁵

Researchers at the Angela Carter and Japan Symposium (University of East Anglia, Norwich, 2018) have also read this identification through the lens of an imperial gaze which pervades Carter's own dealings with Japan and, as I argued in Chapter two, precludes her from identifying with Japanese women. The ambivalence of gendered subject-positions in Carter's writing during her time in Japan is also reflected in Tonkin's interpretation of Albertina as a gender-ambivalent Muse, whose ultimate death 'enables [Desiderio's] transformation into hero and narrator'.¹¹⁶ As Tonkin contends, her final death 'simultaneously eradicates the threat of

¹¹³ Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, 'Angela Carter's Objets Trouvés in Translation', pp. 115–16.

¹¹⁴ Carter, *Love*, p. 111.

¹¹⁵ Dimovitz, p. 48.

¹¹⁶ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 88.

domesticity and creates the distance necessary for writing'.¹¹⁷ Authorial dependency on the death of the woman who inspires the text is key to the gender politics of male artists whose writings have cemented the politics of autonomy, of which Baudelaire is a key representative. Resituating the novel in the context of Carter's own questions about authorship, it becomes possible to read *Desiderio* through the lens of her exploration of a traditionally male artistic position, and the potential shortcomings of such a position.

Baudelaire's understanding of the relation between art and profit is an ambivalent one. One could suggest it is contained in his aphoristic address to Paris in the appendix to *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*, 1847): 'tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or' ('You gave me your mud and I have turned it to gold'). The famous oxymoron alludes to the alchemical process of poetry, which turns the mud of a humiliating everyday experience into the gold of poetry. It is also an apt summary of Baudelaire's strategic dealings with literary institutions, which elevates artistic and social marginality to the status of a prestigious currency. This process emerges from events in the poet's own biography: from the censorship trial that struck *The Flowers of Evil* upon its publication, to his failed candidacy to the French Academy. Rather than a failure, Bourdieu suggests Baudelaire's spectacular relegation to the margins of institutionalised literary life signals him as a vanguard figure and constructs a Bohemian scene whose literary quality is predicated upon its oppositional relationship to prestige.¹¹⁸ In Bourdieu's analysis, Baudelaire's candidacy is 'both perfectly serious and parodic at the same time', 'a veritable symbolic attack'.¹¹⁹ His failure, Bourdieu argues, also carries symbolic weight in conferring aesthetic currency on the avant-garde while implicitly casting the Academy as an aesthetically conservative establishment. Bourdieu cites Baudelaire's letter to Flaubert: 'How could you have failed to guess that [the name] Baudelaire meant: Auguste

¹¹⁷ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 89.

¹¹⁸ Bourdieu.

¹¹⁹ Bourdieu, p. 62.

Barbier, Théophile Gautier, Banville, Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle, in short, *pure literature?*'¹²⁰

This literary event is part and parcel of an anti-utilitarian posture that outwardly holds bourgeois ethics of productive labour and family conventions in contempt and aligns literary value with a set of oppositional moral positions. Yet, as Bourdieu shows, it also hinges on the avant-garde artist's desire for social achievement, which results in a paradox:

It is probably not easy, even for the creator himself in the intimacy of his experience, to discern what it is that separates the failed artist, a bohemian who prolongs adolescent revolt beyond a socially assigned limit, from the 'accursed artist', provisional victim of the reaction aroused by the symbolic revolution that he effects.¹²¹

In other terms, the artist needs external recognition of his impoverished status as a 'new principle of legitimacy which permits a sign of future election to be perceived in present malediction', without which 'the artist-heretic is doomed to an extraordinary incertitude, the principle of a terrible tension'.¹²² The difficulty of achieving critical recognition and the subjective experience of social and artistic failure vie in the avant-garde artist's mind with the danger of incorporation in the market and in structures of power. This oppositional logic rules Carter's early protagonists, who identify with a neo-romantic opposition to the mainstream. *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, by contrast, signals a departure from Carter's tentative experimentation with the possibilities and limitations of subcultural aesthetics, embodied in Desiderio's evolution from middle-class servant to national monument.

Desiderio's characterisation seems to borrow from a number of tropes of nineteenth-century Decadence. His detachment identifies him with a kind of flâneur, a model that hovers over a number of male protagonists in Carter's novels (Joseph in *Several Perceptions*, Morris Grey in *Shadow Dance*). He calls himself 'a very disaffected young man', and his identity as

¹²⁰ Baudelaire, cited in Bourdieu, p. 63.

¹²¹ Bourdieu, p. 64.

¹²² Bourdieu, p. 64.

the son of a 'middle-European' prostitute furthers his links to the European iconography of the poète maudit.¹²³ Notably, Desiderio's icons are all male artists, who appear amongst Hoffman's illusions:

I did not believe it when Dr Hoffman's agents playfully substituted other names than Desiderio on the nameplate outside my door – names such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Andrew Marvell, for they always chose the names of my heroes, who were all men of pristine and exquisite genius. And I knew that they must be joking for anyone could see that I myself was a man like an unmade bed.¹²⁴

Desiderio's self-deprecation and marginality connect him to Carter's earlier male protagonists. However, while Morris, Joseph, Lee, and Buzz all live in various levels of poverty or squalor, Desiderio is a bureaucrat who achieves recognition by the end of his adventures. The novel's structure foregrounds this outcome from the onset of the novel, in a *mise-en-abyme* effect which turns the novel we are reading into a fictional piece of established literature. *Hoffman* reads as a (mock) national memoir, which uneasily reinscribes the hero's personal drama within the conventions of a national epic contributing to the re-foundation of the state in which Desiderio lives, and to Desiderio's own position as a cultural monument. Tonkin suggests that the novel 'articulates a notion of autobiography as the fossilization of the self, and as a process in which private history is transformed into public monument'.¹²⁵ One way in which this is achieved is through Carter's parodic repurposing of the detective and spy novel genres, which initially sends Desiderio participating in bureaucratic state structures and institutions, before becoming a rogue agent (much against his will).

Writing the novel is presented as the accomplishment of a patriotic duty due to Desiderio's heroic status: 'Because I am so old and famous, they have told me that I must write

¹²³ Carter, *Hoffman*, pp. 4 and 11.

¹²⁴ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 72.

down all my memories of the Great War, since, after all, I remember everything'.¹²⁶ The identity of Desiderio's putative readership, however, is left unknown, as is the exact status of those who commission his writing. Completing his memoir must turn Desiderio 'into posterity's prostitute', 'a commemorative statue of myself in a public place, serene, equestrian, upon a pediment'.¹²⁷ As Punter observes, this gives the novel a proleptic structure, as 'we are supposed already to know the outcome of the story through history books'.¹²⁸ Despite his reluctance, Desiderio plays a singular part in gathering the documents that make the narrative possible. As 'confidential secretary to the Minister of Determination', Desiderio is predestined to make note, to record.¹²⁹ He thinks of himself as a 'brisk young civil servant'.¹³⁰ His expertise serves him to decipher a 'contract' on behalf of the River People in their dealings with merchants.¹³¹ Ironically, what distinguishes and excludes Desiderio from the Indian tribe into which he wishes to assimilate is precisely his literacy. Later, after he becomes a rogue agent, Desiderio keeps following '[his] own orders' and refuses to side fully with Doctor Hoffman.¹³²

What enables Desiderio's resistance to Hoffman's machinations is an emotional disposition to what critics have called his 'boredom'. I suggest that Desiderio's identification with boredom, when read in the context of the term's Baudelairian hypotext, serves to embody Carter's reflection on the ethics of spectatorship and the role of the autonomous artist in a newly mediated society. Hoffman's association with a new spectacular order is made clear by his disruption of a performance of *The Magic Flute*, which suggests contempt for classical art at the same time as it paves the way for a new mode of attention. Desiderio, who happens to be in attendance, resists through the sheer force of his boredom. Desiderio's susceptibility to

¹²⁶ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Punter, p. 211.

¹²⁹ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 73.

¹³¹ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 89.

¹³² Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 109.

boredom and inability to enter the oblivious state of grace required by spectatorship is evident before Hoffman's intervention:

During a certain performance of *The Magic Flute* one evening in the month of May, as I sat in the gallery enduring the divine illusion of perfection which Mozart imposed on me and which I poisoned for myself since I could not forget it was false, a curious, greenish glitter in the stalls below me caught my eye.¹³³

Desiderio's disidentification from the performance signals him as the victim of the *ennui* as defined by Kuhn, and the scene Carter describes is strikingly similar to the one depicted in *The Demon of Noontide* as a canonical scene of *ennui* to be found in the works of Baudelaire, Valéry, Aldous Huxley, or André Gide.¹³⁴ Identification and immersion, by contrast, appear to characterise the rest of the audience who instantly fall for Hoffman's traps and grotesquely respond by turning themselves into peacocks:

Papageno struck his bells and, at that very moment, as if the bells caused it, I saw the auditorium was full of peacocks in full spread who very soon began to scream in intolerably raucous voices, utterly drowning the music so that I instantly became bored and irritated. Boredom was my first reaction to incipient delirium. Glancing round me, I saw that everyone in the gallery was wearing a peacock-green skull cap and behind each spectator stirred an incandescent, feathered fan.¹³⁵

¹³³ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 11.

¹³⁴ Kuhn, p. 10.

¹³⁵ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 11.



Figure 4 Ignaz Alberti, Emanuel Schikaneder as the first Papageno in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Front page of the original edition of the libretto of *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna: Alberti, 1791)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emanuel_Schikaneder#/media/File:Papageno.jpg [accessed 1 November 2021]

The transformation of the audience into birds signals their similitude and complete identification with Papageno, himself a bird catcher often represented as a grotesque half bird figure in *The Magic Flute*. Hoffman's machine pushes the logic of identification to the point

of turning spectators into the spectacle, definitely abolishing the distance between the viewer and the thing they see. Meanwhile Desiderio remains comically indifferent:

All around me were the beginnings of considerable panic; the peacocks shrieked and fluttered like distracted rainbows and soon they let down the safety curtain, as the performance could not continue under the circumstances. It was Dr Hoffman's first disruptive coup. So I went home, disgruntled, balked of my Mozart, and, the next morning, the barrage began in earnest.¹³⁶

By denying Hoffman his attention, Desiderio becomes impervious to his tricks. His *ennui* enables Desiderio to remain the same: this enables him to observe the effects of Hoffman's treachery, standing flâneur-like, amid a throng of fantastic animals.

If we are to read Desiderio's boredom as a form of *ennui* which simultaneously enables his resistance, survival, and narrative, then Desiderio's affectlessness may well make him a late Baudelairian hero imbued in classical art, lost in a new mediatic environment characterised by different demands on subjects' attention and a new productive logic. By staging Desiderio in this way, Carter appears to use her protagonist to explore questions about the role of the artist and specific type of attention needed in the new media ecology. Yet, as Albertina's final death at his hands and Desiderio's eventual incorporation into the spheres of power, *ennui* in itself cannot offer a stable position from which to resist dominant ideologies. In this way, *Hoffman* stages the failure of the Baudelairian fetishization of the artist's position as a unique standpoint from which to assess the world. Carter's following texts, I suggest, favour figures of women associated with an enterprising, and even entrepreneurial spirit which mirrors Carter's own reflections on her position as a writer invested in a competitive literary market, and able to appropriate aesthetic features of Bohemia without falling prey to its political limitations. This change from a more elitist position to a critical conception of the literary as a

¹³⁶ Carter, *Hoffman*, p. 11.

socially constructed and historically contingent category parallels Carter's re-evaluation of her position on mass media, and inspires her embrace of their possibilities for authors.

Towards the end of the book? Angela Carter's Challenge to Media Theory

Media theory appears as one of the cornerstones of Carter's reflection on the future of literature. Her private diaries show her conscious efforts at tracing her own intellectual progress as a writer. One way she documented her learning at the beginning of her career was through careful, handwritten lists of the books and films she had read and watched over the lifespan of each of her journals. Over time, perhaps as she grew more confident, the lists become less comprehensive before disappearing, but they give extensive information about the quantity and variety of books Carter read in her early years. Her 1966-1968 journal includes a mention of Marshall McLuhan's essay *Understanding Media*. Unlike some other books cited at length in the journal, *Understanding Media* only appears in the list and is accompanied by a note ('the medium is the message'), which might well indicate that she had only read its second chapter of the same title.¹³⁷ Carter's collected essays, *Shaking a Leg*, contain only two subsequent references to McLuhan. In 'My Maugham Award' (1970), Carter compares Tokyo to 'a neon version of the collected works of Marshall McLuhan'.¹³⁸ In 'The Art of Horrorzines' (1975), she refers to 'Marvels Comics Group' as 'the heralds of McLuhan's post-literate man'.¹³⁹ Both references are brief and it is not until 1978, and the publication of an essay titled 'The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-narrative' in the collection *Pulsar 1: An Original Anthology of Science Fiction and Science Futures*, that McLuhan implicitly resurfaces in Carter's writing in the form of a discussion of the short story 'Woe, Blight, and in Heaven,

¹³⁷ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/1/91, Angela Carter Papers, 'Journal (1966 – 1968)'.

¹³⁸ Carter, 'My Maugham Award', p. 203.

¹³⁹ Carter, 'The Art of Horrorzines', p. 448.

Laughs: A Grim Household Tale' by Josephine Saxton.¹⁴⁰ Saxton's story is included in the Carter archives where it features under the category of 'Catalogues and Articles' as a printed manuscript.¹⁴¹ In her own piece, titled 'The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative', Carter argues that linear narratives are fated to fade against 'a continuous stream of visual/aural images that by-pass the word, as such, altogether'.¹⁴² Remarkably, the text is not featured in any anthology of her work, partly, perhaps, due to its inclusion in a science-fiction collection. Despite its omission, the text points to Carter's sustained reflection on McLuhan, and the role of media theory in framing her preoccupations with the role of the writer and the craft of authorship.

Saxton's story follows the parallel trajectories of her protagonist, 'The Writer', who ruminates over the negative feedback she has received at a writer's convention on a story she recently wrote. Her bitter memories on the subject are interspersed with passages from said story, a postapocalyptic rewriting of *Snow White*. In this version, Snow White, called Lucille, is dying from Leukaemia and must find shelter in the 'Underground' where she cultivates melons. Instead of being rescued by her prince, she is raped by a 'Wicked Doctor' as she is hallucinating – a scene somewhat reminiscent of Giambattista Basile's version of *Sleeping Beauty* (*Sun, Moon and Talia*), in which the heroine is raped into consciousness.

Carter's essay responds to Saxton's play with metalepsis and expands it into a reflection on the text itself:

Saxton transforms the domestic, everyday world of Writer into the apocalyptic world of Lucille by a system of verbal transformations within a mythic (i.e. culturally familiar)

¹⁴⁰ Angela Carter, 'The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative', in *Pulsar 1: An Original Anthology of Science Fiction and Science Futures*, ed. by George Hay, Penguin Science Fiction (New York; Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978); *Pulsar 1: An Original Anthology of Science Fiction and Science Futures*, ed. by George Hay, Penguin Science Fiction (New York; Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978).

¹⁴¹ London, British Library, Add MS 88899/2/15, Angela Carter Papers, 'Catalogues and articles (1951, 1981-1990, nd)'.

¹⁴² Carter, 'The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative', p. 166.

framework. In this way, she also transforms the world itself into a text – material for examination by means of a specific critical methodology.¹⁴³

From this, Carter moves on to the question of realism, lampooning the act of writing and mainstream forms of narratives inherited from the realist novel as ‘a quaint, nineteenth century kind of hobby [...] a William Morris handicraft’.¹⁴⁴ Carter’s characterisation of writing as a passé technology is a quasi-literal citation of a similar insight found in the work of McLuhan who suggests that ‘[t]oday with microfilm and micro-cards, not to mention electronic memories, the printed word assumes again much of the handicraft character of a manuscript’.¹⁴⁵ Carter thus situates herself in a lineage of thinkers who respond to the changing status of texts, textuality, and print. Her statement that ‘a gesture, a sign or an image’ can express an idea in the same way as a word does’ bespeaks the changes in communication technologies that characterised her era and anticipate her later experiments with film, radio, and theatre.¹⁴⁶

One of McLuhan’s key concepts is the idea of *translation* and media as *translators*:

All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms.

[...] In this electric age we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness.¹⁴⁷

Media thus open up a future for a humanity increasingly connected through technology, and increasingly able to communicate information through this same technology. In Carter’s essay, writing is conceptualised as a historically situated mode of translation. She concludes that the role of the word and literary text as translator might be reaching its endpoint, brought about by the rise in new media:

¹⁴³ Carter, ‘The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative’, p. 165.

¹⁴⁴ Carter, ‘The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative’, p. 166.

¹⁴⁵ McLuhan, p. 43.

¹⁴⁶ Carter, ‘The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative’, p. 167; for a discussion of Carter’s engagement with the radio, cinema, and television, see: Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*.

¹⁴⁷ McLuhan, p. 63.

The writer, who thought himself so important, who thought he was able to make up new worlds through the manipulation of the old words, is left gasping, with his impotent vocabulary, by the advent of post-literate man and the evolution of a sensibility reared on the interpretation of a continuous stream of visual/aural images that by-pass the word, *as such*, altogether.¹⁴⁸

This reference to the 'post-literate man' furthers the connections between this essay and McLuhan's work, which Carter does not explicitly name, but which seems to underpin the implications of her critique of texts.

This was not the first time that Carter distanced herself from expressions of anxiety about mass-culture: in a 1970 journalistic essay, for example, she diagnosed the existence of a 'sad case of Hoggart nostalgia', in an essay about the Victorian city of Bradford and its industrial landscape.¹⁴⁹ Carter herself admits to not being immune to Hoggart's wistful considerations about working class culture. As she acknowledges, the only reason a contemporary viewer would find the city aesthetically pleasing is to be found in the historical sedimentation of taste:

the history of taste may well be that of the obscure and probably warped predilections the bourgeois romantic intellectual gradually filtering down through the mass media until everybody knows for certain what they ought to like. After all, only a handful of eccentrics enjoyed mountains until a mountain got up and followed Wordsworth across a lake.¹⁵⁰

If taste formation and its transmission through cultural items is a classed and historically contingent process, then it also follows that this process should continue rather than fossilise, as Carter suggests. In the age of information, N. Katherine Hayles contends, 'characteristics of

¹⁴⁸ Carter, 'The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative', p. 166.

¹⁴⁹ Angela Carter, 'Bradford: Industry as Artwork', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 150–53 (p. 152).

¹⁵⁰ Carter, 'Bradford: Industry as Artwork', p. 153.

print texts that used to be transparent (because they were so pervasive) are becoming visible again through their differences from digital textuality'.¹⁵¹ Carter's writing predates the dominance of the digital but responds to changes in the way in which communication and texts are conceptualised in a prescient manner. Her work does not replicate McLuhan's theories perfectly, but takes from them to contend with the epoch-defining issue of the influence of new media. One key difference between them, however, lies in Carter's radical embracing of those new technologies by the late 1970s.

At the end of his introduction to *Understanding Media*, McLuhan points to the anxiety resulting from the rise in new technologies, which he calls 'the never-explained numbness that each extension brings about in the individual and society'.¹⁵² By contrast, in her own essay, Carter extolls the end of the 'prison of the text'.¹⁵³ While such a statement, set in the context of an anthology dominated by references to new technologies, may well involve a degree of posturing, there is no doubt that Carter's own experimentations with other media also bespeak her sincere interest in technologies as conduits of artistic innovation. As her own fiction suggests, however, her enthusiasm was tempered by concerns with the political limitations of such implements.

Media theory thus proves to be a generative cultural and theoretical background to understand Carter's reflections on the role of the artist in late twentieth century society. Reading the works of thinkers such as McLuhan through Carter's lens, the anxieties of media theorists about the role of new technologies and their pervasive impact on subjectivity become the springboard for her own questions about the effects of said technology on artistic creation, and the new role of the subject amid an invasive media landscape. Carter's impulse, at the end of the 1970s, is to embrace a modernist enthusiasm for the possibilities of new media, which

¹⁵¹ N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 28.

¹⁵² McLuhan.

¹⁵³ Carter, 'The World as Text: The Post-Literate World as Meta-Narrative', p. 169.

Carter scholars such as Crofts have connected to her ability to create multisensory landscapes through her fiction, and to adapt to new forms such as radio, cinema, and, in the very last moments of her career, television.¹⁵⁴ This process comes at the term of a prolonged reflection on avant-garde reflections on the role of the artist as autonomous force, and her utter abandonment of the notion of art's for art's sake as a passé position, which she stages through her speculative fiction.

With *Hoffman*, Carter explores the possibilities of a posture, that of the autonomous artist, that would resist the economies of attention produced by the new mediatic environment of the late twentieth century. Much like Desiderio, however, this gaze, it appears, is fit for the museum, and the novel marks one step in Carter's increasing distancing from the model of artistic autonomy, in favour of one marked by a different investment in the literary and cultural market, embodied by her female characters. I argue that the reason for Carter's enthusiastic praise of new media ecologies may well lie in her prior acquaintance with medieval literature and textualities, which she explicitly signals as a major influence in her understanding of speculative fiction. During a speech given at a science fiction convention and later republished under the title 'Fools Are My Theme' in 1982, Carter acknowledges her debt to the science fiction and fantasy publication *New Worlds*. The speech enables her to reveal her affective relationship to printed journals and to serialised publications, which then turned her into a *New Worlds* reader. Here, it is worth noting the tactile terms in which Carter portrays her relationship to paper. In the following passage, Carter recalls her father's late arrival with 'the next day's papers':

This was very exciting. They'd smudge the sheets. He used to bring them to me where I lay on my sleepless bed and all the fresh print would smudge the sheets in a delicious

¹⁵⁴ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*.

way and get on my fingers. I liked that very much. If I had a cut some of this printer's ink must have got into my blood.¹⁵⁵

Reading, in this scene, is not simply a cognitive act: it is a tactile, sensuous, and messy activity, precipitating the mixing of fluids (blood and ink) and things (the sheets of the bed and the sheets of the journal), and emphasising the role of the medium. Carter's account holds something of Roland Barthes' analysis of his encounter with photographs. For a moment, the distance between page and reader recedes. Carter's father's gift of serialised publications has the power to touch, sting or, rather, cut, in a moment similar to Barthes' experience of the *punctum* – the *studium*, here, being concentrated in the stories of the magazines themselves.¹⁵⁶ The medium becomes a path to a form of involved, emotional reading which punctures the imagination as it does, in phantasmagorical fashion, the author's epidermis.

Reminiscing about her years as a medievalist in training and the influence of this education on her writing, Carter thus comments: 'In *Beowulf*, for example, it's not a question of do monsters exist or can a monster have a mother? It's: how does a monster's mother feel?'¹⁵⁷ This assertion leads Carter to redefine authorship as an act of tapping into a form of collective of feelings:

And I also got used to an idea which I think is very important in science fiction, which is that the reader is doing a lot of the work, that reading a book is in a sense a recreation of it. That writing is not necessarily a personal activity, not a personal experience of my feelings or personality, but an articulation of a whole lot of feelings and ideas that happen to be around at the time.¹⁵⁸

Considering feelings as a commonly held source into which a writer would tune decentres the writer as such to consider writing as a form of translation. Secondly, this passage reveals that

¹⁵⁵ Carter, 'Fools', p. 32.

¹⁵⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Flamingo, 1984).

¹⁵⁷ Carter, 'Fools', p. 32.

¹⁵⁸ Carter, 'Fools', p. 33.

Carter's medieval training also plays an essential part in her thinking about modes of production of the cultural work, leading to her reconsideration of readership and authorship. It is no coincidence that this speech was given only three years after the publication of *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), which had led Carter to reconsider the question of literary tradition and authorship through her translations of fairy tales authored by multiple storytellers.

As Carter notes, the very act of reading in Medieval times entailed a physical involvement on the part of authors and readers which centres the medium (manuscript, as opposed to print):

I won't bore you with a lot of stuff about medieval literature, which I still love very much, but I assure you that before the invention of printing reading was hard work. You really felt like you'd accomplished something when you'd read a manuscript in handwriting. Just as sometimes I feel that reading some of those books on very friable yellow paper that comes apart in your hands, and come unglued from the spine, and the print's all over the page, and it seems to have been written for people who have magnifying lenses in their glasses, that's hard work too.¹⁵⁹

Carter's enthusiasm for manuscripts here, palpable in the accumulative quality of her speech ('and, and, and') endow the page with a vibrant materiality. Her final reference to the transformative role of spelling ('Actually this remained true, about reading being hard work, right up to the eighteenth century with the regularisation of spelling') also brings up parallels with McLuhan in its allusion to the material effects of the medium of writing.¹⁶⁰ The description of the material labour of reading has significance for my discussion of Carter's turn away from visions of authorship focused on the singular genius of a (male) writer.

¹⁵⁹ Carter, 'Fools', p. 33.

¹⁶⁰ Carter, 'Fools', p. 33.

Notably, Carter's interest in the physicality and material conditions of artistic work is not unique to this piece. Her most oft-quoted essay, 'Notes from the Front Line', contains a homage to the history of women performers who, she argued, are often left out from feminist historiographies:

it certainly takes a good deal more physical energy to perform a piano concerto than it does to write one, and weak, feeble women have been strumming away, sometimes in the last stages of pregnancy, ever since they were let up on the podium.¹⁶¹

Here the bodies of women turn into media of sorts: they are erased in the very act of performing and transmitting informational content. Taking into consideration McLuhan's influence in Carter's work alongside her interest in medieval and early modern textual forms, in other terms, brings Carter's awareness of the historical specificity of our textual forms to the fore. It highlights her critical thinking about forms of narratives past, present, and future, and their potential to turn into new aural forms. Re-centring the medium also becomes an act of re-centring the female body. On the margin of the cultural history, and the margin of the page, loom the figures of Fevvers, Duval, Dora, and Nora – all figures of female cultural entrepreneurs that would come to take centre stage in Carter's fiction of the 1980s.

¹⁶¹ Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', p. 40.

Chapter 4: ‘sartorial terrorism’: Fashion, Labour, and Austerity in Angela Carter’s Late Seventies Writing

‘This season’s is not an extrovert face. Because there is not much to smile about this season? Surely. It is a bland, hard, bright face; it is also curiously familiar, though I have never seen it before.’¹

‘The face of the seventies matches the fashions in clothes that have dictated some of its features, and is directly related to the social environment that produces it. Like fashions in clothes, fashions in faces have been stuck in pastiche for the past four to five years.’²

My previous chapter charted Carter’s exploration of the figure of the *poète maudit* and his obdurate *ennui*, embodied by Desiderio, as a countermodel to the ethics of passive media absorption of the late twentieth century. In the process, Carter began to distance herself both from the politics of artistic autonomy as presenting only a political dead-end and from the alarmist discourse of media theorists to propose a third way, embracing the role of new media without sacrificing literary experimentation to the laws of the market altogether. In this chapter, I explore the way in which Carter’s use of fashion in her late 1970s work maps out her devising of a new position for her writerly career on the cusp of the Thatcher years. Through the medium of fashion, we see Carter embracing a new authorial position, indicated through her portrayal of women performers who embrace new forms of work under capitalism.

In the opening of *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), Evelyn, a young man about to depart from his native London for an academic fellowship in the United States, enjoys the image of his idol, actress Tristessa, performing her suffering on the screen. As he sees it, however, Tristessa’s ability to be an object of sexual longing requires that she remains ethereal and otherworldly, a state quite incompatible with ‘a shot of her in trousers and sweater, swinging,

¹ Angela Carter, ‘The Wound in the Face’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 109–13 (p. 109).

² Carter, ‘The Wound in the Face’, p. 109.

of all things, a golf club' received by Evelyn.³ Faced with the image of the everyday woman rather than with an inaccessible idol, Evelyn's attraction fizzles out, to be reanimated only by the mediation of cinema. Located at the text's threshold, this scene of interrupted desire articulates Evelyn's refusal to acknowledge the labour necessary to sustain his fantasy. A teacher, hired to work at an unspecified New York university, Evelyn is initially presented as an intellectual worker, but the narrative immediately renders him idle by closing his workplace upon his arrival.⁴ Evelyn thus becomes, in effect, a degraded version of Desiderio, the industrious civil servant of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. Following Sarah Brouillette's suggestion that '[w]riters have been contributing to a broader questioning of conceptions of culture that literary tradition has helped to constitute and legitimate', I argue here that Carter's use of clothing in her journalism and fiction of the late 70s shows her awareness of the transformations of the conditions of cultural labour.⁵

Madeleine Monson-Rosen argues that Carter is alert to the effects of 'the discourse of cybernetics' which, she states 'effaces the material conditions of labor' in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.⁶ I argue that, in *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter uses clothes to re-mediate this labour through the hyperbolic figures of the Women and Leilah.⁷ Drawing heavily on 1970s aesthetic trends – 'decadent' nostalgia, fetish, and Punk – Carter uses clothing as a medium to re-signify labour. Fashion, Elizabeth Wilson argues, 'can be a way of intellectualizing visually about individual desires and social aspirations'.⁸ Carter would have been familiar with this way of talking about fashion: she reviewed Wilson's book *Adorned in Dreams* in 1985.⁹ I argue that fashion is the medium privileged by Carter to explore the

³ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 7.

⁴ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 13.

⁵ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 15.

⁶ Monson-Rosen, p. 165.

⁷ Monson-Rosen, p. 165.

⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 9.

⁹ Angela Carter, 'Elizabeth Wilson: Adorned in Dreams', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 138–41.

changing conditions of labour in the transitional decade of the 1970s, and to symbolise the new status of writers in this environment.

Over the course of his/her wanderings through an apocalyptic American landscape, Evelyn runs into different embodiments of self-sustained labour – most emblematically Leilah, a go-go dancer whose attire echoes reactivated fantasies of femininity in the conservative, nostalgic Seventies. Conversely, the Women, a terrorist groupuscule gathered around the figure of Mother, are represented in a full leather get-up reminiscent of Carter's analyses of the leather and vinyl fetishism of the Seventies. Their violence comes to stand as a symbol of Carter's diagnosis of the political aporia of the decade of Punk and underpins her critique of the power of countercultural politics to effect social change against conservatism, as countercultural politics and aesthetics become gradually co-opted into mainstream aesthetics and discourses of self-sufficiency. If Evelyn's adoption of a form of Parnassian art for art's sake ethos maintains him in a condition of idleness ruptured only by his eventual transformation into a woman, the women around him take on activities that do not suffice to warrant political agency. Through Carter's lens, fashion mediates the impact of austerity on the livelihoods of Carter's contemporaries. In my first section, I capture Carter's analysis of fashion and textures to signify austerity. In my second section, I focus on *The Passion of New Eve*'s critique of autonomy and construction of a new model of the creative woman.

Rubber, Vinyl, Leather: Fashioning Austerity in the Seventies

In Carter's writing, I suggest, fashion takes the form of a work on the self not unlike that performed by the writer. The analogy between dress and literary activity is nothing new. Randi Koppen suggests that '[t]he connection with allegory, with topoi and allegories of transcendence, emerges from clothing's palpable yet ghostly character, of screen or veil, of mobile, three-dimensional surface, of translucence and semi-transparency, of envelope and

tabula, sites of inscriptions, traces and stains.’¹⁰ Dress, Wilson writes, ‘links the biological body to the social being, and public to private’.¹¹ In the process, it confirms its status as semiotic tool ‘a form of mass communications’ associated with modernity.¹² McLuhan similarly suggests reading clothes as media, as ‘an extension of the skin [which] can be seen both as a heat-control mechanism and as a means of defining the self socially’, thereby emphasising fashion’s communicative power.¹³ The affinity between sartorial fashion and meaning is also rich in gendered connotations. Christine Bayles Kortsch stresses that ‘dual literacy’ – the ability to decipher both text and textile – was essential to women’s livelihoods in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ She further suggests that ‘literacy in dress culture’, under which she regroups ‘not only the wearing, producing, purchasing, or embellishing of clothing and textiles, but also the regulating and interpreting of both women’s and men’s garments’ could afford ‘an alternative to mainstream, patriarchal discourse [...] a private language and culture, understood to be traditionally feminine’.¹⁵ The associations between fashion, femininity, and meaning make clothes a vehicle well suited to signify the implications of Carter’s move away from a masculine vision of authorship and cultural production. As the poet Anne Boyer puts it, ‘I sew and the historical of sewing becomes a feeling just as when I used to be a poet’.¹⁶ In other terms, fashion, to a woman artist, is connected to generations of women who have used clothes as a medium of creativity and expression, but is also associated with a labour thought of as inherently feminine.¹⁷

¹⁰ Randi Koppen, “‘Down to the Last Button... in the Fashion of the Hour’: Virginia Woolf and the Writer of Modern Fiction”, in *Fashion and Authorship: Literary Production and Cultural Style from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Cham, SWITZERLAND: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2020), pp. 231–54 (p. 248) <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cardiff/detail.action?docID=6109801>> [accessed 23 March 2020].

¹¹ Wilson, p. 2.

¹² Wilson, p. 27.

¹³ McLuhan, p. 129.

¹⁴ Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women’s Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism* (London: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009), p. 4.

¹⁵ Kortsch, pp. 4–5.

¹⁶ Anne Boyer, *Garments Against Women* (London: Penguin, 2019), p. 37.

¹⁷ Anne Boyer, *Garments Against Women* (London: Penguin, 2019), p. 37.

Further, fashion's entanglement with temporality deepens Carter's exploration of the evolution of Britain during the 1970s. Just as the United Kingdom entered a phase of conservatism characterised by a wave of nostalgia for Britain's past, Carter observed, fashion appeared to enter a backward-looking phase, defined by 'Decadent' dress while the 'No future' ethos of Punk questioned the possibility of the advent of a more favourable regime. In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin contends that 'the unique self-construction of the newest in the medium of what has been, makes for the true dialectical theater of fashion'.¹⁸ Benjamin's metaphor of the 'tiger's leap' performed by fashion makes it an ideal tool for contending with dress as a means to map out our appropriations of the past against our feelings about modernity, as Caroline Evans suggests: 'what designers take from particular periods in the past tells us about our anxieties and concerns in the present'.¹⁹ Likewise, Carter's critique of 1970s fashion trends turns dress into an allegory of the time, exposing a return of the repressed in the guise of the new. This may explain the increasing pessimism noticeable in Carter's fashion criticism and writing about clothing: through her writing, Carter reckons, it seems, with the fact that 'the surface of fashion [...] conceals a core of melancholy', as clothing alludes to the passage of time and mortality of the body while purporting to look forward to the now.²⁰ In this case, fashion confronts British society with the degradation of opportunities for workers, and women, after the expectations raised by the revolutionary mood of the 1960s.

In the late 1970s, the affinities between dress, melancholy, and labour take on further significance in an era characterised by austerity. The Seventies chart a transition 'between the revolutionary aspirations of the 1960s and the executive "power suits" of the 1980s'.²¹

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin and Rolf Tiedemann, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Belknap Press, 1999), p. 64.

¹⁹ Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 10.

²⁰ Evans, p. 6.

²¹ Valerie Steele, 'Anti-Fashion: The 1970s', *Fashion Theory*, 1.3 (1997), 279–95 (p. 285) <<https://doi.org/10.2752/136270497779640134>>.

According to Angela McRobbie, who references the essay, Carter's writings correspond to a period of flourishing of the 'ragmarket', during which countercultural groups had to demonstrate qualities of entrepreneurship in order to promote and sustain their lifestyle, including through the sale of second-hand clothing.²² As McRobbie argues, punk culture played a privileged part in modelling later commercial enterprises in the fashion industry: 'it took the collective spirit of punk to demonstrate the possibilities for a fruitful exchange between urban-based youth cultural activities and setting up a small business as a fashion designer shortly after graduating from college', leading to a burst of 'female self-generated economic activity [from the mid-1980s onwards]'.²³ I suggest Carter's representations of labour respond to this transformation of the world of entrepreneurship, while testifying to her sustained reflection on artistic creation and work. Brouillette argues that contemporary models of the creative worker owe much to 'longstanding conceptions of literary authorship', characterised by 'a desire for self-expression' coupled with 'traditions of self-regulation and self-monitoring, appropriate to their irregular and quasi-professional labor', making the author a figure paradoxically compatible with that of the self-made entrepreneur.²⁴

Carter's 1970s fashion journalism critiques the co-optation of Punk aesthetics by the mainstream as a symbol of the recuperation of counterculture and of the transformation of visual signs of rebellion into a socially acceptable labour on the self. She is particularly skeptical of the Punk movement, which was vying with the Hippie counterculture as the dominant subcultural trend of the seventies after her return from Japan. In the opening of the essay 'Year of the Punk', published in 1977, Carter contends that

Bad Taste is the key to the emerging seventies' style. I think. In a changing world, amidst a bewildering welter of variables, at least you know where you are when you

²² Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 143.

²³ Angela McRobbie, 'Fashion Culture: Creative Work, Female Individualization', *Feminist Review*, 71, 2002, 52–62 (p. 54).

²⁴ Brouillette, 'Contemporary Literature, Post-Industrial Capital, and the UK Creative Industries', pp. 124–25.

can evoke offence. It's been a funny old decade, the seventies, and, of course, it's not over yet. But, as its seventh segment shambles towards Christmas like some not altogether rough – indeed, in parts, vinyl sleek – yet certainly beastly beast, the mood of it all begins, with hindsight, to shape up.²⁵

In a language as textured by alliterations as the trends she sets out to explore in her essay, Carter suggests a reading map of the seventies' fashion trends to which texture is crucial.²⁶ The piece connects materials such as rubber, vinyl, leather, positioned as tactile and visual sensory signifiers, with a political and aesthetic mood. Sara Ahmed suggests that, as they move amongst various individuals and groupings, objects may 'become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension', in a process she describes as one of 'accumulation of affective value' which remains concealed to us as its usage cements and naturalises it.²⁷ In highlighting the role and circulation of fetishistic materials such as leather, vinyl, and rubber, all associated with countercultural groups and movements before their absorption into the mainstream, Carter draws her reader's attention to their stickiness – their growing affective value, which contributes to making groups coalesce into various publics – but also to their exchange value, as those objects acquire economic currency in the mainstream. In the Seventies, Carter suggests, the Punks, despite their claim to rebelliousness, have become externally indiscernible from the middle class they purport to despise. Carter's attention to such sticky cultural signifiers as vinyl and rubber calls attention to the medium of fashion in a critique of the political powerlessness of countercultural movements, in the guise of a light-hearted accusation of 'Bad Taste'.

²⁵ Angela Carter, 'Year of the Punk', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 117–22 (p. 117).

²⁶ For an elucidation of the critical uses of texture, see: Renu Bora, 'Outing Texture', in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Series Q (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 94–127; Anne Anlin Cheng, 'Shine: On Race, Glamour, and the Modern', *PMLA*, 126.4 (2011), 1022–41 <<https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.4.1022>>.

²⁷ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 11 and p.45.

As the emblematic sound of the era, it is no wonder that Punk should have attracted Carter's attention. 'Year of the Punk' ends with the observation that 'the year of the Jubilee was the year of the Punk, really', alluding to the release of the Sex Pistols' song 'God Save the Queen' at the time of the Jubilee celebration.²⁸ The conflation of the two symbols left a mark on public consciousness at a time when nostalgia set the mood in Britain:

Nostalgia and history explosively met head on during the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. The official jubilee celebrations met with unexpected success, with some 90% of the population giving themselves over to what Tom Nairn called 'the Glamour of Backwardness'.²⁹

Punk's explosive intervention on the cultural scene in a year of national celebration resulted in an uneasy alliance of counterculture and heritage, apparent in Punk's repurposing of elements of national culture:

Bits and pieces of both officially sanctioned and popular English culture, of politics and history were brought together in a chaotic, uneasy admixture to form a new culture – a culture that arguably spot lit the very institutions that it nominally sought to destroy.³⁰

Throughout the piece, Carter draws attention to the pervasive presence of Punk aesthetics in the public sphere. In her view, their new popularity belies the subversive ambitions of the movement, while also generating questions about the labour of fashion for 'those who cannot work because there is none to be had and so make their play, their dancing, their clothes, into a kind of work, for reasons of self-respect'.³¹ This has links to Barthes' contention that fashion and the world of work stand in a 'complementary relationship to each other: 'the world of

²⁸ Carter, 'Year of the Punk', p. 122.

²⁹ Jon Savage cited in Ruth Adams, 'The Englishness of English Punk: Sex Pistols, Subcultures, and Nostalgia', *Popular Music and Society*, 31.4 (2008), 469–88 (p. 474) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760802053104>>.

³⁰ Adams, p. 469.

³¹ Carter, 'Year of the Punk', p. 119.

Fashion is work in reverse'.³² Here, however, Carter draws attention to the labour involved in dressing oneself, understood as a compensatory act in times of work scarcity.

The transformation in sartorial tastes in the 1970s epitomises Valerie Steele's claim that '[t]o understand 1970s style, one must recognize that fashion was not in fashion'.³³ Carter's piece uncovers the cause of this turn to new, aggressive aesthetics. The argument of the piece hovers on the double edge of the punk and fetish subcultures as both underground and mainstream, rebellious and submissive to the new economic order of austerity, and anticipates Warner's suggestion that 'like dominant publics, [counterpublics] are ideological in that they provide a sense of active belonging that masks or compensates for the real powerlessness of human agents in capitalist society'.³⁴ The fetishistic fashion, she argues

is too knowing to be serious.

Irony is the self-defence of the down-and-out. The heavy irony of the punks blunts the style's offensive edge before it can even wound you.³⁵

In drawing attention not only to a trend but to its associated materials and textures, Carter renders the media of rubber and vinyl and the allusion to nudity and repressive gender politics they contain visible. She also disarms punk's pretensions to embody a culture of protest against the established order. Carter's essay therefore rescues the message in the medium, calling attention to its effects on its wearers.

Carter's depiction of the followers of the Punk fashion and music trend, alongside other countercultural styles of the late twentieth century, is explicitly compared to 'a dandyism of the abyss'.³⁶ The dandy is a significant figure in Carter's body of work: Spooner contends that Carter's portrayals of stylishly clothed men concentrate her first insights into the performativity

³² Angela Carter, 'Roland Barthes: The Fashion System', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 142–44 (p. 248).

³³ Steele, p. 280.

³⁴ Warner, p. 81.

³⁵ Carter, 'Year of the Punk', p. 119.

³⁶ Carter, 'Year of the Punk', p. 118.

of identity.³⁷ For the purpose of my argument, it is also worth noting that the dandy partly originated in the discourse of men invested in the process of autonomisation and has links to the bohemia, who ‘has no doubt made an important contribution (with fantasy, puns, jokes, songs, drink and love in all forms [...]). Making the art of living one of the fine arts means predisposing it to enter into literature.’³⁸ The trope of the dandy and the *poète maudit* that haunt the Baudelairean universe both contribute to constructing and legitimising an understanding of the artist as an essentially separate member of society coveting only symbolic rewards as opposed to economic and political potency. Baudelaire proposes to define the dandy as a set of attitudes: ‘the burning desire to create a personal form of originality, within the external limits of social conventions [...] the pleasure of causing surprise in others, and the proud satisfaction of never showing any oneself’.³⁹ In the 1970s, the ‘surprise’ of dandyism is converted into the ‘sartorial terrorism’ of the Punk Movement.⁴⁰ Koppen argues that ‘[c]lothes are modernity’s primary commodity, manifestations of capitalism’s fundamental logic, but also figures of alienation, spleen and shock, enabling the *Tigersprung* – the leap out of linear historicism that constitutes the allegorical mode of vision’⁴¹ Here, fetishistic clothing allows Carter to perform a conceptual leap from the late-nineteenth-century dandy to the Punk of the seventies.

Carter’s account echoes Steele’s characterisation of Punk as ‘deliberately aggressive, confrontational style, utilizing the visual accoutrements of sadomasochism’.⁴² In Carter’s analysis, by mixing together sexually provocative clothing with the Swastika, the Punks turn themselves into icons of offense, but their subordinated economic position and the extremity of their symbols pre-empts the efficacy of their revolt and turns it into an empty gesture. I

³⁷ Spooner.

³⁸ Bourdieu, p. 56.

³⁹ Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. by P.E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 420.

⁴⁰ Carter, ‘Year of the Punk’, p. 118.

⁴¹ Koppen, p. 239.

⁴² Steele, p. 288.

suggest that her disenchanted attitude to the movement's sartorial rebellion informs her portrayal of her characters' clothing in *The Passion of New Eve*, which was published shortly before her essays on Punk. Over time, Michelle Phillipov argues, cultural studies have tended to portray Punk as essentially oppositional and rebellious:

[P]unk's do-it-yourself approach to musical production was seen as a subversion of the capitalist control of music practice, while its musical sounds and lyrical themes appeared to express a kind of class-based political resistance to the economic decline of 1970s Britain. [...] The terrain of music, style and argot was theorized as the sphere where the political battleground between classes was played out symbolically. Such were the terms in which British punk was typically studied during the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁴³

The assumption of Punk's liberatory politics was a sustained one despite the reality of the movement's mixed political composition.⁴⁴ In this way, Carter's observations on the ambiguous reality of Punk's alleged leftwing credentials are at odds with contemporary assessments of the movement.

Sartorial signs were an important component of the punk movement. In general, garments tend to play an essential part in subculture, signaling belonging to a group characterized by its aesthetic practices as well as its music. Carter consciously uses a textured language to remedy the erasure of the ambiguous message(s) enfolded in items such as the spike heel, the vinyl mini-skirt, and the slit dress of the 1970s. In so doing, she performs work similar to McLuhan's call for bringing the medium back to the fore of our attention, and reveals the ambiguity of Punk's mediated subjects and the effects of austerity on individuals.⁴⁵

⁴³ Michelle Phillipov, 'Haunted by the Spirit of '77: Punk Studies and the Persistence of Politics', *Continuum*, 20.3 (2006), 383–93 (pp. 384–85) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310600814326>>.

⁴⁴ Phillipov, p. 387.

⁴⁵ Lance Strate, 'Understanding the Message of Understanding Media', *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 25.4 (2017), 244–54 (p. 246) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2017.1350682>>.

McLuhan contends that '[a]ny extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex'.⁴⁶ Here, the transformation of clothing suggests new continuities between individual and technology that remain undisclosed by its everyday uses.

Carter gives a privileged role to the sleek textures of the 1970s in her analysis of the era's fashion trends. Renu Bora draws attention to texture as a dimension of writing that carries visual and tactile meanings in its wake, a material obverse to fetishism mediated through dialectical oppositions between roughness and smoothness, or hardness and softness.⁴⁷ With their fetishistic connotations and highly textured look, rubber and vinyl are emblematic materials of the seventies punk movement, reminiscent of Vivienne Westwood's creations for her clothing 'punk/fetish shop', 'Sex'.⁴⁸ According to Steele, 'Westwood catered to a mixed clientele of about half "genuine" sexual fetishists and half young people who wanted to look "bad." She designed and wore rubber and leather bondage outfits, "cruel" shoes, and other extreme fashions.'⁴⁹ Vinyl, rubber, and their organic counterpart, leather, became a sign of belonging to a fringe community gathered around the call for a 'No future'. As Evans contends, if fashion is part of the 'civilising process', in the form of conventional and mainstream fashion design, it is also and equally, in its experimental and avant-garde manifestations, capable of providing a resistant and opposing voice to that process. On the edge of discourse, of 'civilisation', of speech itself, experimental fashion can act out what is hidden culturally. And, like a neurotic symptom, it can utter a kind of mute resistance to the socially productive process of constructing an identity.⁵⁰

Fashion, in this context, becomes the symbol of a society in a process of devouring its own offspring and condemning it to an age of austerity. In Carter's analysis, however, in the late

⁴⁶ McLuhan, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Bora.

⁴⁸ Steele, p. 289.

⁴⁹ Steele, p. 290.

⁵⁰ Evans, p. 6.

1970s, experimental trends such as punk fashion have in fact been absorbed into the production of a regressive consensus.

Before commenting on Carter's own intervention on the topic, we must recall the role of rubber and vinyl not only as fashion, but as media in the sense defined by McLuhan. Wilson argues that '[f]ashion [...] is essential to the world of modernity, the world of spectacle and mass communication. It is a kind of connective tissue of our cultural organism'.⁵¹ Rubber and vinyl's association with technological implements – the wheel, electricity, for the former, and wartime technology and music for the latter – make them particularly apt materials to mediate fashion's innate affinity with modernity. Their smoothness and shininess endow rubber, leather, and vinyl with sexual connotations associated with fetishistic communities and practices. The intimate practices associated with those materials – fetish, bondage, porn – contribute to their fraught aura, on which Carter's alliterative introduction revolves. However, these materials also resonate with an exuberant late modernity.

Vinyl is Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)'s elastic offspring. One of the 'overtly synthetic futuristic materials' to feature in the fashion magazines of the 1960s, its flexibility, resistance to electricity, and low making cost make it a ubiquitous material found in technology as well as clothing.⁵² From the 1960s onwards, vinyl became associated with the Mod look embodied by the creations of British fashion designer Mary Quant and André Courrèges and Pierre Cardin's Space Age designs.⁵³ The subject of the 1960s vinyl trend exudes excitement at the advent of late modernity afforded by new communication technologies and hopes of interplanetary conquest. It is also the subject of the post 1962 Missile Crisis panic, pre-

⁵¹ Wilson, p. 12.

⁵² Susan Ward, 'Textiles', in *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Modern Age*, ed. by Alexandra Palmer, The Cultural Histories Series. Bloomsbury Fashion Central. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 21–42 <<<http://dx.doi.org/abc.cardiff.ac.uk/10.5040/9781474206402.ch-001>>> [accessed 25 May 2020].

⁵³ According to Susan Ward, '[i]n 1968, Pierre Cardin introduced a special vacuum-formed high-relief fabric called "Cardine," probably developed in collaboration with the Union Carbide Corporation. British designer Mary Quant and American Rudi Gernreich both made extensive use of vinyl (PVC) and clear plastic for dresses and rainwear beginning in the early 1960s; PVC became a signature fabric for Quant following her "wet look" collection in 1964.' See Ward (2017).



Figure 5 Jill Kennington in white PVC rain tunic and hat by Mary Quant, Photograph by John Cowan for the Sunday Times, 1963, Ernestine Carter Archive, Fashion Museum Bath (under copyright)

emptively steeping the PVC wet look in muddy waters, between the ecstasy and anxiety of the technological age. By the 1970s, however, the initial enthusiasm brought about by technological progress and economic growth had receded. If, as Evans suggests, ‘clothing functions as a metaphor for the instability and contingency of modern life’, vinyl and rubber appear to bridge the gap between the Swinging Sixties and the disenchanted seventies that

followed them, a transition which Carter chronicled.⁵⁴ In this context, they and the clothes they serve to make can indeed be regarded as translators in McLuhan's sense of term, carrying the technological and political aspirations of the sixties with them: '[a]ll media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms'.⁵⁵ Carter's writing shows her alertness to the language of textures, and her use of materials and tactile metaphors serve to signify increasing concerns with the shape of the new era. In her essay 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', Carter contended that '[r]ubber, leather, fur, objects such as fish-net stockings and tall boots are fetishes which the purity of style has rendered innocent'.⁵⁶ By contrast, the 1970s come to stand for a loss of innocence brought about by a climate of political and economic tensions. As Carter puts it '[t]here is a hardening of outline; it is a hard-edge style' through which clothing has become a means to 'evoke offense' and perform what she calls 'sartorial terrorism'.⁵⁷ Steele similarly contends that

1970s fashion, in general, was heavily influenced by what one American scholar (Selzer 1979) described as 'Terrorist Chic.' Black leather became stylish, precisely because it evoked images of sado-masochistic sex, which was regarded as 'the last taboo'.⁵⁸

The hardening described by Carter gives body and shape to the mood of the Seventies. Ahmed contends that '[h]ardness is not the absence of emotions, but a different emotional reaction towards others'.⁵⁹ Carter's depiction of Punk culture's use of garments seems to stand for a wider transformation. The fetishistic hardening of contours performed by 1970s Punk clothing seems to allude to a society in which social bonds are in a process of rapid dissolution, and about to be replaced by a relentless, individualistic work on the self.

⁵⁴ Evans, p. 10.

⁵⁵ McLuhan, p. 63.

⁵⁶ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 108.

⁵⁷ Carter, 'Year of the Punk', p. 122.

⁵⁸ Steele, p. 289.

⁵⁹ Ahmed, p. 4.

Carter's piece highlights the fetishistic origins of rubber and vinyl and their incorporation, but they need not have such negative connotations. Both materials are also the visible signs of a community and the source of a discourse found in groups, publications, and practices that predate the Punk movement's exuberant aggressiveness. Around the time of Carter's writing, those communities were represented through outlets such as *SMOOTH: The Reader Participation Magazine*, which included pictures sent by the magazine's readers, and John Sutcliffe's publication *AtomAge*, which advertised the editor's own creations.⁶⁰ *AtomAge*'s title furthers the alliance of (war) technology and intimate practices. While *SMOOTH* had an explicitly sexual content from its inception, it is worth noting that *AtomAge* split into two outlets that spoke to the interests of readers invested in the rubber and leather community for both sexual and non-sexual motives. Materials renowned for their smoothness therefore cemented their own 'counterpublic' with an array of publications, iconography, and codes. Warner suggests the following distinction between a public and a counterpublic:

Dominant publics are by definition those that can take their discourse pragmatics and their lifeworlds for granted, misrecognizing the indefinite scope of their expansive address as universality or normalcy. Counterpublics are spaces of circulation in which it is hoped that the poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely.⁶¹

Carter's article captures a sign inherited from kink community at a point where its meaning has been recuperated and attenuated to mass-replicative ends by the more economically affluent. Simultaneously, it risks skipping over their ability to offer a shelter to marginalised subjects such as members of the queer community. Rather, Carter focuses on the logic of incorporation that seized upon the most economically amenable aspects of the look. While she mentions the

⁶⁰ Will Hodgkinson, 'King of Kinky', *The Guardian*, 10 September 2010, Global section <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/sep/11/john-sutcliffe-fetish-wear>> [accessed 20 February 2020].

⁶¹ Warner, p. 88.

publication *Deluxe*, the fetish look rippled upwards to reach brands as prestigious as Dior, and publications such as *Vogue*, inspiring the likes of photographer Helmut Newton, confirming its transformation from underground feature into mainstream trend, and from a medium associated with intimate practices to one used to glamorise brutality upon the female body.⁶²

Gathering together punk subcultures affiliated with bondage aesthetics and shops like Vivienne Westwood's landmark punk store Sex, Carter turns her comment from clothing to the role of the fetish trend in mediating the aspiration to an aesthetics associated with a rising creative class associated with commodified leisure.⁶³

Styles of conspicuous outrage may start off as an expression of pride *in extremis*. But those who cannot work because there is none to be had and so make their play, their dancing, their clothes, into a kind of work, for reasons of self-respect, have a lot in common with those who either do not need to work or whose work is a kind of play, like pop musicians and fashion models. The only difference is, the rich have more money.⁶⁴

In other words, fetish aesthetics demand forms of labour from those who adopt them – a labour which alludes to porn, bondage, and other forms of sexually fraught behaviours, while also being its own end, unlike sex work and other forms of performance. Carter satirises 'the rich' who unknowingly adopt styles alluding to livelihoods they would not consider legitimate forms of earning money. Carter's comment here is reminiscent of her snide remark on porn actress Linda Lovelace in her review of the performer's autobiography *Inside Linda Lovelace*, who she criticises for her uncritical assumption of patriarchal understandings of femininity and pleasure. As Carter notes,

⁶² Steele, pp. 290–91.

⁶³ I am here using the term loosely to depict those whose 'whose work is a kind of play' rather than strictly applying Richard Florida's definition of the 'creative class' as paradigmatic of the late twentieth and twenty-first century. See Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (Boston: Basic Books, 2002).

⁶⁴ Carter, 'Year of the Punk', p. 119.

in spite of the respect she has for her achievements as a unique phoenix of fuckery, Ms Lovelace does only what any accomplished whore is expected to do in a society where the profession of prostitution demands specific sexual virtuositities. Any Bangkok prostitute can blow smoke rings through her labia minor and be certain of applause and thanks. Her own fellatory technique is derived from that of a Japanese geisha (via, of course, Chuck. You wouldn't find Ms Lovelace in a Japanese whore house, learning her trade the hard way.)

[...] Ms Lovelace is no prostitute. Perish the thought.⁶⁵

Carter portrays Lovelace's performance of sexual bravado both as an unthinking submission to patriarchal diktats and an appropriation of the labour performed by sex workers in other countries (Japan, Thailand). This (mis)appropriation serves to mobilise an exotic sexual imaginary for the benefit of a Western male gaze, combining problematic gendered and racial implications.

Carter's critical stance on 'those who cannot work because there is none to be had and so make their play, their dancing, their clothes, into a kind of work' also makes broader claims about the labour involved in and concealed by dress. Even as 'fashion journalists [had] adopted a new language of "freedom" and "choice"' supposedly reflected in sartorial choices, as Valerie Steele notes, the ease with which such expressions of self and individuality can be co-opted into conservative conceptions of a hardened, isolated selfhood raises questions about their limitations.⁶⁶ Punk, in Carter's view, exposes the limits of the underground ethos, even as it pretends to expand them, preceding the rise of the entrepreneur subject of the 80s and the transformation of creativity into a commodified asset. This transformation of labour underpins Carter's portrayal of Evelyn's relationships with women and, later, with the political entity of

⁶⁵ Angela Carter, 'Lovely Linda', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 54–56 (p. 55).

⁶⁶ Steele, p. 280.

the Women in *The Passion of New Eve*. Through her 1970s fashion criticism, Carter uses dress as a means of revealing the limitations of a nation – the United Kingdom – increasingly prone to nostalgia, and the transformations of labour relations towards the Thatcherite dismantling of society. This is an admittedly pessimistic view of the allegorical power of dress to link past and present, in which fashion becomes the reflection of a country in which utopias have had their time, and of art's increasingly diminished powers. Self-fashioning becomes the tool of the down-and-outs, forced into aesthetic self-reliance by a lack of opportunities.

Leather-Clad Emissaries: Counterculture, Punk, and The Women in *The Passion of New Eve*

In what follows, I draw an arc linking fashion, Carter's portrayal of America in *The Passion of New Eve*, and the spectacle of British austerity after her return from Japan. The 1970s correspond to an era of transformations brought about by a climate of rising conservatism and austerity, foreshadowing the domination of conservative policies associated with the rise to power of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Completed in 1976, though published in 1977, *The Passion of New Eve* was written at the height of the Punk movement. Its angry tone, dizzying pace, and strident aesthetics are imbued with the revolutionary mood of the era, even as the novel stands at odds with several countercultural movements of its time, giving it an ambiguous position as a political text in its own right. Carter admitted that her novel was influenced by the Stonewall riots and the peace protests taking place against Vietnam in the USA at the time of her stay there in 1969.⁶⁷ However, while the novel describes the chaotic atmosphere of the United States, the violence faced by Evelyn echoes the descent of the United Kingdom into chaos. While speaking to his anxious parents, Evelyn argues that

⁶⁷ Angela Carter cited in Gamble, *Angela Carter*, p. 152.

the European press was exaggerating the Transatlantic situation to distract attention from affairs at home, where the first National Front members had just taken their seats in the House; there were riots in Birmingham and Wolverhampton: the power workers had been on strike for months.⁶⁸

The novel therefore appears to reflect Carter's own anxieties in view of her country's rising conservatism. It also reveals her lack of hope in any means of resisting it. Fashion, in this context, plays a key part in mediating and suggesting Carter's declining political hopes. Clothing, in *The Passion of New Eve*, becomes a charged signifier associated with Carter's reflection on the role of the artist in society, and in her critique of the role of autonomy in cementing outdated positions on the function of intellectual and artistic work.

As the text's sole instance of a group apparently oriented towards collective revolutionary action, the Women haunt the streets of New York at the start of the novel, striking terror in the hearts of men as 'the projections of masculine fears of actual women' and 'false projections of castration anxiety'.⁶⁹ Their presence in the novel has proven divisive: while some critics see in the Women a parody of what Carter perceived to be excessive aspects of feminist activism, others have been more critical of her hyperbolic treatment. Some scholars have also suggested that Carter would in fact be aiming at some specific targets in the American radical feminist scene of the late sixties and seventies, and attempted to identify who they might be. The variety of their responses show the ambiguity of Carter's own position vis-à-vis feminist activism: in Paulina Palmer's view, '[t]he portrayal of Mother and the radical feminist community she rules is an anti-feminist caricature, illustrating the misogyny and heterosexism to which Carter, in her wish to challenge the reader's preconceptions about gender and create

⁶⁸ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 33.

⁶⁹ Dimovitz, pp. 130 & 131.

sexually provocative images, sometimes descends'.⁷⁰ Other critics, by contrast, appear to side with Carter's vision of feminist activism. For example, Patricia Waugh posits that the novel 'is [...] an exuberant critique of the fascistic tendencies in some versions of radical feminism'.⁷¹ In some readings, this caricature is seen as historically specific. First, Scott A. Dimovitz sees the Women as the embodiment of various radical feminist groups gathered around essentialist notions of the divine feminine:

Mother [...] and her disciples with accents of 'an East Coast university' (53) parody the attempts of the branch of 1970s feminism that desired to make real-world applications of the work of scholars such as Marija Gimbutas, who described a world of pre-patriarchal cults of the Mother Goddess and matriarchal cultures of 'Old Europe'.⁷²

Dimovitz refers to an earlier draft of the novel in which the Women are depicted as 'aesthetic, hippies lesbians prob matriarchs'.⁷³ Second, Gamble and Mark P. Williams concur in identifying another possible target of Carter's parody in Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* (1967).⁷⁴ In those readings, Mother and her Women followers therefore appear to stand for various hyperbolic instances of radical feminism. The ambivalence of their portrayal in the novel is certainly at least partly to blame for the Women's complexity as an object of scholarly interest. Part scientists equipped with ultra-modern equipment, part tribal figures invoking the figures of 'Kali' and 'Jocasta' in their chanted rituals, the Women stand at an uneasy juncture between futurity and archaism.⁷⁵ I suggest their sartorial appearance situates Carter's depiction of the Women as part of Carter's deconstruction of 1970s fashion and aesthetics, making them 'leather-clad [emissaries]' of the Punk movement's inability to portend genuine political

⁷⁰ Paulina Palmer, 'Gender as Performance in the Fiction of Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton, Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature (New York ; London: Longman, 1997), pp. 24–42 (p. 29).

⁷¹ Waugh, p. 204.

⁷² Dimovitz, p. 130.

⁷³ Carter cited in Dimovitz, p. 131.

⁷⁴ Gamble, *Angela Carter*, pp. 148–53; Mark P. Williams, 'Radical Fantasy', p. 116.

⁷⁵ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 62.

transformations.⁷⁶ The Women thus embody Carter's dissociation from subculture as a space susceptible to enact change.

The Women are characterised by a tense relationship to futurity. The structure of *The Passion of New Eve* itself revolves around a series of reversals, which Dimovitz reads as an attempt by Carter to undo 'the Oedipal logic of the West': '[t]ime and "historicity" become a function of the patriarchy in this world, and Mother's goal is to destroy time'.⁷⁷ The Women are therefore fundamental to what Dimovitz identifies as the central crux of the novel. Their desire for suppression of men raises the spectre of a society deprived of a future, the question of which remains suspended at the end of the novel. The final act of the novel explicitly questions the role of beginnings and endings, which become connected with the issue of birth and reproduction, first raised through Leilah's abortion in the first part of the novel. The protagonist, Eve, is forced through a series of regressions, leading her to assert that '[t]he destination of all journeys is their beginning', as she is subjected to a process of reverse birth.⁷⁸ She then finds herself faced with Leilah, turned Lilith, once the victim of Evelyn's sexual violence, now a guerrillera figure who equips Eve with 'a pistol and ammunition, just in case', upon which Eve feels one last murderous pang towards her/his former victim: 'I don't know where it came from,' she reflects, 'except humiliation at being an object of charity, of pity', definitely foreclosing the possibility of a real sense of solidarity between the two women.⁷⁹ Their encounter symptomatically ends on a prolepsis, as Eve comments that '[t]hat was the last I saw of Lilith', in another narrative gesture suggesting an abortive end.⁸⁰ Mother is present at Eve's final departure from the American continent, but she has become a figure of death and degradation whose nails remind Eve of 'dead matter' while Mother herself '[exudes] a rich

⁷⁶ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 45.

⁷⁷ Dimovitz, pp. 88–89.

⁷⁸ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 186.

⁷⁹ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 186.

⁸⁰ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 188.

smell of decay; her flesh had the substance of grave-clothes'.⁸¹ Eve leaves Mother behind with the certainty that 'she would soon die', while the protagonist herself makes her way to an unknown destination on Mother's stolen boat, enjoining the Ocean to 'bear [her] to the place of birth', which will never be disclosed.⁸² I suggest that the novel's structure, ending on an absent birth, points to aporias encountered by radical feminists and countercultural movements of the Seventies, but also to Carter's difficulties envisaging and conceptualising a future for the woman writer.

The comparison between Mother's project and Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* proves revealing in this respect. While Dimovitz, Gamble, and Williams suggest different references that might clarify Carter's portrayal of the Women's actions, they all tend to identify it as straightforward satire. This reading reifies a radical feminist movement that Carter would unilaterally reject, and implicitly eliminates other ways of understanding her engagement with those texts she is claimed to be criticising. The figure of the radical feminist is an ambiguous one in Carter scholarship as well as in Carter's project. Gamble, for example, asserts that 'radical feminist groups such as SCUM were advocating guerrilla action against the oppressive patriarchy', implying a somewhat magnified image of Solanas's role in radical circles at the time.⁸³ Solanas's access to (relative) fame coincided with her attempted murder of Andy Warhol in 1968, but the actual extent of her influence up to this violent act is disputed by scholars. Sam McBean sums up these debates by remarking that '[w]hile many argue for her centrality to feminist history, there are just as many who insist she does not belong' and points to evidence suggesting that Solanas was unknown by feminists in New York until her trial.⁸⁴ SCUM was by no means a group, and Solanas's position was closer to that of an outlier. Despite

⁸¹ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 189.

⁸² Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 190.

⁸³ Gamble, *Angela Carter*, p. 153.

⁸⁴ Sam McBean, 'The Feminist Manifesto: Valerie Solanas and SCUM', in *Feminism's Queer Temporalities* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2015), pp. 97–120 (p. 101) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315761015>>.

Solanas's marginality, Carter might have encountered her either during or after her first trip to the USA, as '[t]he shooting imprinted her into pop culture history (her impact gaining iconic cultural status with Richard Avedon's portraits of Warhol's post-surgery body) and her *SCUM Manifesto* has similarly left lasting effects on popular culture and feminist history'.⁸⁵ If the *Women do* in fact refer to Solanas, they also, indirectly, refer to a history of activism whose political efficacy and resonance was already questionable and fragmented at the time of Carter's writing.

A ghostly figure in radical American politics, Solanas's figure and work raise issues of temporality not disconnected from the ones present in *The Passion of New Eve*: as McBean asks, 'In which time was Solanas right? Was she right in the past? Can she continue to be right? Is she wrong now?'⁸⁶ Whether in her manifesto, in which she advocates a radical suppression of men 'to produce only females', or in her different portrayals in cinema, for example, McBean contends, 'Solanas cannot seem to represent futurity'.⁸⁷ McBean notes the frequent, but mistaken identification of Solanas with lesbian feminism, a stance which she states is also 'overwhelmingly understood through concepts of anachronism'.⁸⁸ She instead suggests reading Solanas 'not just [as] a "failed" future, but instead perhaps [as troubling] a version of futurity that moves coherently "on"'.⁸⁹ Amongst the many ills attributed to the presence of men in society Solanas identifies 'disease and death' as two of the problems SCUM will eliminate: '[a]ll diseases are curable, and the aging process and death are due to disease; it is possible, therefore, never to age and to live forever'.⁹⁰ From this, it follows that reproduction would become obsolete: 'Why produce even females? Why should there be future generations?'⁹¹ The

⁸⁵ McBean, p. 99.

⁸⁶ McBean, p. 100.

⁸⁷ Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto. With an Introduction by Avital Ronell*. (London: Verso Books, 2004), p. 37.

⁸⁸ McBean, p. 106.

⁸⁹ McBean, p. 109.

⁹⁰ Solanas, p. 66.

⁹¹ Solanas, p. 69.

manifesto advocates a radical present unconcerned with utopias: 'But SCUM is impatient; SCUM is not consoled by the thought that future generations will thrive; SCUM wants to grab some thrilling living for itself.'⁹² As for men: 'If men were wise they would seek to become really female, would do intensive biological research that would lead to them, by means of operations on the brain and nervous system, being able to be transformed in psyche, as well as body, into women.'⁹³ The future, in the *Manifesto*, is therefore negated, echoing the Women's desire for an eternal present. Indeed, upon entering the Women's sanctuary of Beulah, Eve(lyn) overhears three 'maxims':

'Proposition one: time is a man, space is a woman.

Proposition two: time is a killer.

Proposition three: kill time and live forever.'⁹⁴

The eternal present advocated by SCUM is therefore amplified by Mother and her followers. As a result, by invoking the figure of Mother and the Women, Carter's writing partly responds to an anxiety present in radical feminist texts about the question of time, the future, and the role of women in securing this future, destabilising a reading that would position Carter's work as purely antagonistic or at odds with those texts, even as her own writing shows her at pains to articulate a satisfying future.

Further, the representation of the Women makes them complicit in Carter's deconstruction of a definition of artistry that can be traced back to the male artists of the literary Avant-garde. In contrast with their depiction as 'hippies', the sartorial choices of the Women pull them closer to a biker's gang or to punk – in line with their 'no futurity' ethos. In particular, the woman who captures Evelyn is dressed in an outfit mid-way between extreme modernity and fetishism. Her intervention is presented as an explicit interruption of Evelyn's musings,

⁹² Solanas, p. 70.

⁹³ Solanas, p. 69.

⁹⁴ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 53.

embodied by his contemplation of a bird whose freshly killed corpse decomposes before Evelyn's eyes. In its structure and tone, the passage constitutes a unit not unlike Baudelaire's *Petits Poèmes en Prose* (1869), in which the subject's rising horror in the face of urban squalor becomes a vehicle to access a lyrical state. However, Evelyn's accession to poetic grace is abruptly foiled by his kidnapping, in a comic moment that points to Evelyn's lack of useful skills. The bird's wounded body is explicitly aestheticized by Evelyn:

It was not quite dead, although a bloody tunnel was bored into its breast feathers, feathers as tightly packed as the petals of a chrysanthemum. In my light fever, I saw what it was at once – the Bird of Hermes, the bleeding bird of the iconography of the alchemists; now the great, white, beautiful bird turns to dead and putrefying matter...⁹⁵

The bird's sudden apparition in the middle of the desert is left unexplained, adding to the scene's general sense of absurdity and enabling Evelyn's musing to continue:

Where had it come from? It was not a desert bird, not an eagle or a buzzard. I did not know many names of birds. But perhaps it was an albatross – bane of the Ancient Mariner; ah, I knew my poetry, though. An albatross, numinous, ominous. But what gale would have blown it so far from the ocean to a death in the dry navel of the desert and who shot it down, here, where nobody was, to leave it dying on a roadside? How ugly and pathetic the bird is, now it has been forced to come to terms with the gravity that this glider, this high-diver, this acrobat upon the unstable trapeze of the heavens had spent its life defying. A devastating sorrow overcame me when I saw the thing that had been so beautiful so soon before now writhe in its dishevelled extremity, such an instantaneous metamorphosis! Its yellow eyes were filming over.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 44.

⁹⁶ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 44.

In the above, in addition to referencing Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1834), Evelyn himself puts us on the track of Carter's Baudelairean references, as the text freely quotes from two poems, 'L'Albatros' and 'Une Charogne', in which Baudelaire questions and constructs the role of the artist in society. In this light, Evelyn's pedantic exclamation ('ah, I knew my poetry though') takes on strong parodic connotations, exposing the irrelevance of his training. His inability to save the bird's corpse from being devoured by carrion ants also symbolises Evelyn's lack of practical skills that would save him or the bird from destruction:

I had some idea of digging a grave for it, I knelt on the road and took it in my arms. It feebly beat its wings, not yet quite gone, poor bird... but a torrent of red, scavenging ants cascaded from its eyes and wound, they'd been feasting on it, already, before it was quite dead.⁹⁷

The scene stages a process of degradation, from bird of Hermes to carrion, which mimics Evelyn's own from university teacher to idle parasite of the labour of Leilah. Evelyn is symbolically saved from financial need by his inherited wealth in the form of the 'legacy' of a 'a distant uncle', during which he plans out 'a luxurious itinerary' with no intention of giving Leilah the material support she would need in her predicament, let alone emotional solace.⁹⁸ His refusal to consider her needs adds to the construction of Evelyn's character as a stereotype of the 'Bohème' young man, gesturing towards the construction of the figure of the male artist as a Dandy undeterred by material preoccupations and labour.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 44.

⁹⁸ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 33.

⁹⁹ Maggie Tonkin's analysis of *The Passion of New Eve* similarly points to the Decadent intertext of Carter's novel and underlines Evelyn's material reliance on Leilah (see Tonkin, p. 186.) The male contempt for marital arrangements and the gendered impact of the false promises of free heterosexual love among Avant-Garde movements also haunt Whitney Chadwick's portrayal of the women of the Surrealist movement (see Whitney Chadwick, *The Militant Muse: Love, War and the Women of Surrealism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017).

In 'L'Albatros' Baudelaire turns the bird into a symbol of the Poet: the albatross, he argues, can only fly at ease in the sky, and become prey to men's mockery and brutality when forced on the ground. Unlike Baudelaire, however, Carter gives no explicit cause to the bird's presence on the ground. In 'L'Albatros', the mariners ('les hommes d'équipage') capture the bird and take it down on their boat to entertain themselves, immediately resulting in the bird's metamorphosis from 'rois de l'azur' ('kings of the sky') to clumsy and embarrassed creatures ('maladroits et honteux') that 'laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches / Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux' ('pitifully dragging their great white wings/ like oars by their side').¹⁰⁰ By contrast, Evelyn only hears 'the air split under a sharp crack', rendering the bird's presence incongruous rather than tragic.¹⁰¹

Baudelaire's poem can be read as a vivid allegory of the process of autonomisation, to which Carter offers a scathing retort. In the process, she also reactivates tropes that characterised the nineteenth-century conceptualisation of what an intellectual should look and act like. Susan Zieger, for example, mentions the role of Arthur Conan Doyle's portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in imaging 'intellectual work' as '[resembling] idleness, especially since sitting and smoking in solitude was the iconic performance of bourgeois, masculine leisure throughout the century'.¹⁰² Carter's Evelyn parodies the figure of the idle intellectual, who leeches off women's labour while refusing to acknowledge the material underpinnings necessary to support his own comfort.

The scene, which shows Evelyn attempting to bury the bird, could be read further to suggest Evelyn's failure to leave the Baudelairian model behind, and performs the allegorical work intended by Carter to allow readers a wide array of interpretational levels. It stages her

¹⁰⁰ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal: Texte définitif avec les variantes de la première édition (1857), les pièces ajoutées dans les éditions de 1861, 1866, 1868, suivies des poèmes publiés du vivant et après la mort de l'auteur* (Paris: J. Chevreton, 1917), p. 183 All translations my own.

¹⁰¹ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 43.

¹⁰² Zieger, p. 70.

critique of the inherited figure of the male cultural producer, who is symbolically transformed into carrion. By contrast, Brouillette observes,

It seems that literary writers now rarely feel that they have the kind of power to construct that social imaginary that Bourdieu attributed to figures like Balzac, Flaubert, and Baudelaire. They tend rather to consider the dissipation of literature's power and the attenuation of public faith in the notion that there is any merit to the idea of an autonomous aesthetic realm. They take up the autonomization process not as an easy and assumed inheritance but as a problem in search of a solution.¹⁰³

Carter's critique, embodied in the albatross's parodic funeral, anticipates 'the dissipation of literature's power', and allegorises a scathing adieu to the condition of autonomy. In a final blow to the figure of the poète maudit, Evelyn's musings are unceremoniously interrupted by the arrival of the Women's envoy, who brutally knocks him off unconscious.

Clothing, in this passage, furthers Carter's critique of radical feminist activism while disrupting Evelyn's useless attempt at a bird funeral. The woman responsible for his capture reads as an embodied fetish, reminiscent of the leather fashion of the 1970s. She is depicted as a 'thin, tall thing sheathed in supple garments of a leather-like substance with a jaunty, peaked cap on its head and, attached to this cap, a blank visor of black plastic that, I realized, must be a dust-shield designed for travelling in the desert'.¹⁰⁴ Earlier in the novel Evelyn also becomes 'nervous of the menacing gleam of their leather jackets'.¹⁰⁵ Evelyn's capture by the Women therefore plays on two levels, making the 'leather-clad emissary' a composite figure unifying 1970s fashion aesthetics with political radicalism and Carter's critique of an outdated model of creativity.¹⁰⁶ In this context, the figure of the dandy – who pretends to dress, think, and write,

¹⁰³ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 52.

for himself only – appears to be an increasingly dissatisfactory one in Carter’s analysis, while her work exposes the rise and pitfalls of a new figure of female entrepreneurship.

The Leilah N. Nightdress and the Spike Heel

The Passion of New Eve is Carter’s first novel to dedicate itself explicitly to the portrayal of women as artists and performers through the figures of drag actress/actor Tristessa and club dancer Leilah. While the former is the subject of Evelyn’s fantasies before his arrival in New York, we meet Leilah shortly after the closure of the university where he had come to take up his position has rendered Evelyn jobless and idle. I propose to consider Leilah’s clothing as key to Carter’s use of dress as a means of alerting us to the risks and limitations of self-fashioning in the austere Seventies. Tonkin compellingly enjoins us to regard Leilah ‘not only as the object of others’ fetishism, but also as the subject of her own fetishism’.¹⁰⁷ As I have argued, however, such self-fetishising, rather than pointing to a creative, expansive notion of selfhood, finds itself confined by a society about to enter an era of neoliberal politics. Leilah’s own process of self-creation, I propose, is reminiscent of Carter’s critique of 1970s fashion advertising.

Could Leilah, the sex worker and undercover guerrillera of her novel *The Passion of New Eve*, be named after a fancy nightdress? An intriguing onomastic coincidence provides this section with a speculative prompt to consider the links between women’s fashion and undergarment advertisement and the construction of Leilah’s character as fetish. Carter was adept at scathing commentaries of magazines, adverts, and other such publications she would select to dissect topics such as the aesthetics of male nudity and her contemporaries’ anxieties over their health. The essay ‘The Bridled Sweeties’, published the same year as ‘Year of the Punk’, contains an example of one such running commentary. In it Carter takes the Janet Reger

¹⁰⁷ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 190.

Catalogue to task for its transformation of women into ‘*objets de luxe*’.¹⁰⁸ Amongst other creations with human names, the publication boasts the presence of ‘[t]he Leilah N. Nightdress, colours: rose, beige, black, in French lace’.¹⁰⁹ The essay reveals a number of similarities with *The Passion of New Eve*, as the novel carries on Carter’s analysis of the consequences of fetishistic fashion in the 1970s while featuring one of her most explicit references to the experience of such labour. The confluence of woman and undergarment seems to confirm Maggie Tonkin’s observation that ‘[i]n her incarnation as a New York prostitute, Leilah is unquestionably one of the most fetishistic representations of femininity in Carter’s fiction, and it is not surprising that the dominant reading of this figure casts her as a fetish rather than as a subject’.¹¹⁰ Tonkin conversely analyses Leilah as Carter’s effort at deconstructing the trope of the *femme fatale* through hyperbole.¹¹¹ Yet, it is unclear that self-fetishism – operating through the *femme fatale* but also the dandy and the punk – provides an entirely satisfying solution when set in the context of Carter’s analysis of 1970s cultural politics.

Carter uses the Janet Reger catalogue as a symptom of a society in which labour relations are becoming reorganised. Through underwear, Carter argues, ‘[w]orking women regain the femininity they have lost behind the office desk by parading about like a *grande horizontale* from early Colette in the privacy of their flats, even if there is nobody there to see’.¹¹² The reference to Colette and to the decadent *demi monde* of prostitutes and courtesans highlights the decadent reference implied by the catalogue’s aesthetic. Underwear performs a regressive and repressive function, reinstating the aesthetic codes of sexual difference in the private realm; undergarments become the means by which retrograde views of women’s bodies

¹⁰⁸ Angela Carter, ‘The Bridled Sweeties’, in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 122–25 (p. 124).

¹⁰⁹ Carter, ‘The Bridled Sweeties’, p. 124.

¹¹⁰ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 172.

¹¹¹ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, pp. 170–96.

¹¹² Carter, ‘The Bridled Sweeties’.

can be reintroduced in the guise of fashion, a function previously served, for example, by corsets. As Jill Fields remarks, in the year following the Second World War,

fashionable corsetry manifested nostalgia for an imagined prewar past of more starkly defined gender differentiation when women were more clearly subordinated, while also providing a means for modern middle-class women to embody the twentieth-century ideal – already popular in the 1920s – of being both respectably nice and desirably naughty.¹¹³

Here, the decadent intertext implied by the ‘black-clad models [...] reclining on fur throws’ serves to suggest a crisis of femininity, confirming Evans’ insight that ‘what designers take from particular periods in the past tells us about our anxieties and concerns in the present’.¹¹⁴ Fields further suggests that advertisement played a central role in making underwear part of the middle class woman’s imagination: through mass-produced underwear sold through advertising catalogues, she contends ‘[t]he magical power of glamour thus had a material dimension that all women could access in the theoretically democratic marketplace’.¹¹⁵ Glamour, therefore, acts as yet another romance. By the 1970s, Carter contends, fetishistic underwear has become part of the panoply of desirable consumption she calls ‘the garb of the Good Life’, endowed with sticky implications in the same way as vinyl and rubber: that way, the advert suggests, lies happiness.¹¹⁶ The catalogue legitimizes the ‘sex appeal of the inorganic’ by including it in an assemblage that includes ‘the opera, eating in restaurants, parties, and, increasingly, sexual relations in which the gibbering old id, the Beast in Man, the manifestation of nature at its most intransigent, is scrupulously exiled’, a regime in which ‘human relations are an art form’.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Jill Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Evans, p. 10; Carter, ‘The Bridled Sweeties’, p. 123.

¹¹⁵ Fields, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Carter, ‘The Bridled Sweeties’, p. 124.

¹¹⁷ Benjamin and Tiedemann, p. 8.

Undergarment performs the paradoxical function of eroticizing the body while evacuating nakedness. Instead, as Carter argues, the undergarments suggest a form of commodified, ritualised nakedness. The magazine's 'cover depicts a handsome pair of legs in gold kid mules, caressed in an auto-erotic fashion by a hand whose red fingernails are of a length that prohibits the performance of useful labour'.¹¹⁸ These 'non-garments' serve to signify the models' nudity and idleness:

The models are dressed up in undress. Their flesh is partly concealed by exiguous garments in fabrics that mimic the texture of flesh itself – silk, satin-finish man-made fibres, fine lawn – plus a sublimated hint of the texture, though (heaven forbid!) never the actuality, of pubic hair.¹¹⁹

This 'non-garment' produces a female body apparently cut off from the necessity of labour.¹²⁰ In the process, it conceals both the wearer's own labour, necessary to acquire underwear and make her body wear it, and the labour necessary to produce the garment. As Fields contends, '[i]deological separation of production and consumption is [...] central to fashion promotion and to the degraded status and claims of garment workers'.¹²¹ Ironically, the gendered body produced by those non-garments relied heavily on female labour to come into existence. The Equal Pay Act of 1970, largely initiated through the efforts of women textile workers at Ford's Dagenham factory in 1968, had yet to provide an effective solution to enduring workplace and wage inequalities.¹²² Carter, by contrast, uses the underwear catalogue as a means of recentering the question of labour.

¹¹⁸ Carter, 'The Bridled Sweeties', p. 123.

¹¹⁹ Carter, 'The Bridled Sweeties', p. 124.

¹²⁰ Carter, 'The Bridled Sweeties', p. 123.

¹²¹ Fields, p. 13.

¹²² The Act would also prove unable to anticipate and prevent the outsourcing of mass-produced fashion labour to developing countries that resulted in intense wage inequity, poor treatment of workers, and heightened environmental damage in the fashion industry. Rachel Bick, Erika Halsey, and Christine C. Ekenga, 'The Global Environmental Injustice of Fast Fashion', *Environmental Health*, 17.1 (2018), 92 <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>>.

Carter's article highlights the importance of 'fabrics that mimic the texture of flesh itself' such as 'silk, satin-finish man-made fibres'.¹²³ The contiguity between flesh and fabric is reminiscent of Leilah's ritual of preparation in *The Passion of New Eve*. As she gets ready to leave for work, Leilah puts 'rouge' on 'her nether lips', 'purple or peony or scarlet grease to her mouth and nipples', 'glinting bronze powder' on her pubic mound'.¹²⁴ She first meets Evelyn in nothing but 'nylon' 'crotchless knickers [...] as healthily abrasive [...] as her pubic hair', a fur coat, and 'a dress that hardly covered her', all of which she gradually removes as the protagonist Evelyn follows her around the city.¹²⁵ In other words, while she is careful to conceal her skin, Leilah's clothing is nothing but a form of non-garment, all of which contribute to turn her into a fetish, 'an exotic and fetishized *objet d'art*'.¹²⁶ By depicting Leilah's transformation *as* labour, Carter undermines the process at work between the pages of the Janet Reger catalogue.

The self-fetishisation and performance of femininity expected of women in the late seventies is the topic of another article published by Carter in which we find more resemblances between Leilah and women in advertising. The opening lines of 'The Message in the Spike Heel' (1977), her third feature contribution to the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, sketch out a portrait of the artist, Carter herself, as a late twentieth-century flâneuse, 'sitting on top of a bus' and letting her gaze fall upon passers-by, who include other women (see figure 1).¹²⁷ The black and white photograph of a woman's figure is spread across the first page of her article, her uneasy, serpentine posture an echo of the one observed by Carter walking the street in impractical footwear – the titular spike heels. The woman is wearing a long, lacy dress, and is bending towards a car's rearview mirror to put on her lipstick. Her long skirt enacts the reversal

¹²³ Carter, 'The Bridled Sweeties', p. 124.

¹²⁴ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 29.

¹²⁵ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, pp. 19, 23.

¹²⁶ Britzolakis, p. 51.

¹²⁷ Angela Carter, 'The Message in the Spike Heel', *Spare Rib: The New Women's Magazine*, August 1977, pp. 15–17 (p. 15), Glasgow Women's Library.

of a tendency towards liberating the body, confirming Steele's comment that '[a]s the 1970s began [...], the most striking development was the sound of hemlines falling'.¹²⁸ Her frilly outfit, curiously tightened at ankle level by an intricate knot of ribbons, resembles an expensive nightdress made of a satin-like fabric which matches the woman's high-heeled shoes. The contours of the image, however, are made to look like torn off paper, giving the image the abrasive, handmade feel of a collage which contrasts with the smooth, sleek eroticism of the alloy of woman and car. The image could be straight out of J.G. Ballard's *Crash* (1973), which was published a few years prior to Carter's article, with its spectacles of bodies framed by destroyed machines. The article's lead statement ('Angela Carter uncovers what's hiding behind high street fashion') similarly promises a disrobing, albeit one of a revolutionary kind more appropriate to a feminist magazine.¹²⁹

In this scene of voyeurism, I suggest, Carter finds herself in a position suggestive of Evelyn's own as he pursues Leilah. Unlike the white woman of the *Spare Rib* article, Leilah is first presented to her through her race ('black as the source of shadow') and secondly through her animalised and sexualised legs, 'like the legs of racehorses in the stable', dressed up in 'black mesh stockings' and 'a pair of black, patent leather shoes with straps around the ankles, fetishistic heels six inches high'.¹³⁰ Her portrayal, moreover, follows the structure of a strip tease that follows Evelyn through the streets of New York as Leilah gradually divests herself

¹²⁸ Steele, p. 281.

¹²⁹ Carter, 'Spike Heel', p. 15.

¹³⁰ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, pp. 18–19.



Figure 6 Angela Carter, 'The Message in the Spike Heel', Spare Rib: The New Women's Magazine, vol. 61, August 1977, p.15

of her clothes. While Leilah's determined gait exerts a fascination on Evelyn, who cannot help but follow in her path, Carter expresses concern about the subject of her article in *Spare Rib*. Carter's piece unveils the new trend of the spike heel – or rather, it laments its return:

I saw a young woman lurching and tottering down the Strand in a manner which I have not seen for fifteen years and I realized with a sinking of the heart that she was wearing high heels. You can spot it a mile off, that juddering and ill-balanced walk, not just high heels produce it – it has to be high, *slender* heels. Spike heels. The shops are suddenly

jam-packed with them; spike heeled shoes are back in vogue for those with the bread to keep up with the times; high heels, part of the iconography of helplessness.¹³¹

A feat of fashion technology, the spike or stiletto heel first flooded the markets at the beginning of the 1950s, with emblematic creations such as Dior's 'Aiguille' shoe created by Roger Vivier.¹³² The re-emergence of the spike heel that affects women's mobility resembles a return from the hereafter. Carter was alert to the repetition of outmoded trends that formed an essential trait of fashion in the 1970s. Stephanie Bowry argues fashion displays a spectral, even vampire-like quality: 'it thirsts for and feeds directly on individual motifs from the past'.¹³³ Gamble similarly assigns a necrotic character to items of clothing in Carter's writing when she remarks that the wedding dress worn by a number of her protagonists tends to act 'as the carrier for an alternative set of suppressed and antonymic meanings suggestive of death and contamination'.¹³⁴ Here, Carter comments, the new fashion trends make women's bodies prey to 'an apotheosis of kitsch femininity that suggests a massive sartorial backlash to the entire Women's Movement', and Carter's unfortunate subject embodies the step down, or rather, back, from a revolutionary march to an unsteady stagger.¹³⁵

The recuperation of the spike heel acquires further significance when set in the context of the nostalgic mood that dominated the Seventies. This change in atmosphere culminated with the election of Margaret Thatcher to the role of Prime Minister in 1979, after two decades marked by increasing economic difficulties and the end of the so-called post-war consensus. The decade was characterised by a national urge to glorify the past, reflected in the rise of the

¹³¹ Carter, 'Spike Heel', p. 15.

¹³² 'The Aiguille Heel | Roger Vivier' <<https://www.rogervivier.com/us-en/history-single-sw6/>> [accessed 20 April 2020].

¹³³ Stephanie Bowry, "'Their Tattered Mortal Costumes Will Afford Them None of the Answers They Seek': Clothing Immortals in the Work of Anne Rice, Tanith Lee, and Angela Carter", in *Fashioning Horror: Dressing to Kill on Screen and in Literature*, ed. by Julia Petrov and Gudrun D. Whitehead (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), pp. 45–63 (p. 50).

¹³⁴ Sarah Gamble, "'Isn't It Every Girl's Dream to Be Married in White?": Angela Carter's Bridal Gothic', in *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings*, ed. by Sonya Andermahr and Lawrence Phillips (New York: Continuum, 2012), pp. 23–32 (p. 24).

¹³⁵ Carter, 'Spike Heel', p. 15.

heritage industry, which, historian Raphael Samuel argued, ‘anticipated and gave expression to the triumph of Thatcherism in the sphere of high politics’.¹³⁶ Seventies’ fashion trends symptomatically allude to the British past, with ‘[p]etticoats, and garments derived from Edwardian lingerie, all broderie anglaise and lace’ that reshape the silhouette according to a gendered erotic economy invested in women’s lower body halves.¹³⁷ The enumeration of those stylistic gimmicks leads Carter to assert that the spike heel and the concomitant return of the midi skirt herald ‘a steatopygous period’ which enhances the erotic function of the female body at the expense of its reproductive potential, replacing hard-earned access to reproductive autonomy through contraception with a sterilized, readily consumable textile shortcut: ‘The buttocks, the tits behind you that can never give suck, will be the prime erotic target in a zero-population growth society.’¹³⁸ The look of the Seventies turns the body back to front through the mediation of the gaze, which finds itself drawn to the observe of the body. This new late century woman, constrained in clothes resembling the ones of the models portrayed on torn-up looking pictures dispersed through the article, is implicitly rendered politically powerless: ‘*She* is by no means dressed in suitable attire to make revolution’.¹³⁹ Perched on debilitating heels, this new ‘New Woman’ finds herself figuratively and literally deprived of political agency by dress, the inverted reflection of her Edwardian counterpart.

Yet there is more to this disrobing than meets the eye. While the previous lines suggest a conscious assault on women’s liberties that would precipitate a form of ‘paranoid reading’ to uncover a hidden truth about the fashion industry, Carter is quick to complicate her own attack on the spike heel.¹⁴⁰ We should not look for

¹³⁶ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London; New York: Verso, 1996), p. 261.

¹³⁷ Carter, ‘Spike Heel’, p. 15.

¹³⁸ Carter, ‘Spike Heel’, pp. 15–16.

¹³⁹ Carter, ‘Spike Heel’, p. 17.

¹⁴⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 123.

a massive plot on the part of a male-dominated capitalist society to shackle women once again in frills and pencil skirts and prop us on stilts and make us come on like hookers and generally incapacitate us in sartorial chains from seizing the fruits of emancipation that might now seem teasingly within our grasp. I don't think the manifestation of unconscious tendencies, which the fashion industry represents, is anywhere near as aware of what it is up to as that.¹⁴¹

Carter's syntax in the above is as symptomatically tortuous as the outfit of the woman illustrating her article's first page, accumulating accusations only to revoke them. Clothes, she argues, reflect 'a recession, not simply in economic terms, but also in psychological terms', a 'conservatism that a genuine fear for the future brings'.¹⁴² Their meaning is both intricate, made complex by fashion's changing forms and trends, and focused on the surface. Carter's connection of the length of skirts with the recession echoes similar discourse around the transformation of women's clothing during the Great Depression era.¹⁴³ Wilson, whose book *Adorned in Dreams* was the topic of a review written by Carter in 1985, contends that '[f]ashion speaks capitalism', but warns against systematic equations of fashion trends with economic curves, which risk reducing it to a functionalist interpretation giving little room to 'pleasure'.¹⁴⁴ As Steele comments, '[t]he stock market did fall in 1970 and again in 1973-4 with the oil crisis, but the market's ups and downs were not mirrored by a corresponding rise and fall of hemlines'.¹⁴⁵ By contrast, in the 1970s, fashion speaks austerity in Carter's writing.

¹⁴¹ Carter, 'Spike Heel', p. 16.

¹⁴² Carter, 'Spike Heel', p. 17.

¹⁴³ See Steele, p. 282; The so-called 'Hemline Index' was coined in 1926 by George Taylor. As Gilbert argues, 'the Hemline Index has purchase on the wider imagination because, however simplistically, it highlights the sense that there ought to be some relationship between fashion and economic conditions'. The 'ought-to-beness' that characterises the connection between fashion and economics is not without connection to Carter's own discussion of the silhouette of austerity. David Gilbert, 'The Looks of Austerity: Fashions for Hard Times', *Fashion Theory: The Look of Austerity*, 21.4 (2017), 477–99 (pp. 478–79) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2017.1316057>>.

¹⁴⁴ Angela Carter, 'Elizabeth Wilson: Adorned in Dreams', in *Shaking a Leg: Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 138–41; Wilson, pp. 14 and 55.

¹⁴⁵ Steele, p. 282.

Carter's equation of politics with dress in the above is better understood when contrasted with her earlier analyses of 1960s fashion. The return of velvet to the front row of fashion in the year 1967 poetically opens and closes Angela Carter's essay 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style': 'Velvet is back, skin anti-skin, mimic nakedness'.¹⁴⁶ If fashion is indeed 'dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles', Carter's piece contrarily hints in form as in content to its cyclical nature.¹⁴⁷ Her depiction of the fabric's tactile implications serves a second object: to reveal a change in relations and gender dynamics brought about, among other things, by the generalisation of contraception and the liberation of sexual mores: 'Look at me and touch me if I want you'.¹⁴⁸ In the same stroke, it suggests a material's ability to communicate a feeling that partly bypasses its users as 'the women who buy little brown velvet dresses will probably do so in a state of unknowing'.¹⁴⁹ The tactility of dress in this passage echoes McLuhan's claim that clothes follow the global evolution towards a networked society of information characterized by 'stress on touch, on participation, involvement' afforded by new technologies.¹⁵⁰ Carter contends that 1960s fashion trends has liberated clothes of their symbolic contents: Pete Townshend's 'jacket carved out of the Union Jack' images an era in which 'nothing is sacred' and stylistic playfulness enables various acts of self-invention.¹⁵¹ As Catherine Spooner suggests, 'Carter's attitudes to dress [...] were forged in the heady atmosphere of the 1960s and that decade's riotous celebration of subcultural style as a form of resistance', and her later writing explicitly uses 'strategies rooted in the material practices of late 1960s style'.¹⁵² In her depiction of her characters' sartorial choices in her novels of the 60s, Spooner suggests that Carter 'engages with a similar

¹⁴⁶ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 109.

¹⁴⁷ Wilson, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 105.

¹⁴⁹ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 105.

¹⁵⁰ McLuhan, p. 130.

¹⁵¹ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 105.

¹⁵² Spooner, pp. 166–67.

conception to that of [Stuart] Hall: of counterculture as a kind of guerrilla movement dismantling the culture from within', while acknowledging its limitations to effect social change.¹⁵³ Spooner focuses her attention on Carter's references to countercultural fashion, which both champion clothing as a tool of resistance and 'critique the gendering of subculture itself as a predominantly masculine area'.¹⁵⁴ By contrast, Carter's depiction of the 1970s reveals a strikingly closed-off subject imbued with 'the glazed, self-contained look typical of austerity', and an era in which countercultural movements, such as Punk, have stopped offering an efficacious outlet to be absorbed into the mainstream.¹⁵⁵

This sense of a political return of the repressed may explain the sense of an unhinged temporality I have previously identified in *The Passion of New Eve*. The novel is also replete with models of femininity such as the one alluded to by Leilah, validating Tonkin's observation that '*New Eve* supplements the Benjaminian reading of the whore as historically framed subject'.¹⁵⁶ Further, I suggest, Carter highlights the ways in which the fetishized whore is not only a source of inspiration, but also of income to financially dependent men who leech on the women they despise. While Evelyn is reclining 'on her bed like a pasha, smoking', Leilah turns into her night time self through a process described as one of 'accession'.¹⁵⁷ The transformation demands 'a conscious effort' of 'some hours', and her work takes Leilah all night, although Evelyn never wishes to witness the process by which Leilah returns home with 'a great many dollars tucked in the top of her stocking'.¹⁵⁸ A textured creature covered in 'chiffon or [...] slimy, synthetic fabrics or harsh-textured, knitted, metallic stuff – gold and silver and copper', 'shiny leather dyed green, pink, purple or orange', Leilah is a mediated being, whose clothing

¹⁵³ Spooner, p. 176.

¹⁵⁴ Spooner, p. 167.

¹⁵⁵ Carter, 'The Wound in the Face', p. 110.

¹⁵⁶ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 186.

¹⁵⁷ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, pp. 28 and 30.

alludes to her nakedness as the source of her income.¹⁵⁹ By portraying her preparation and sordid lifestyle, Carter points to the dirty underbelly of this decadent fashion, and the labour it implies.

Through a textured language that brings materials and shapes into play, Carter's writing foregrounds fashion's ability to turn us into mediatised selves. Her protagonists' attire reflects the growing pessimism of 1970s recession, and the gradual transformation of selves into the atomised products of their own labour. *The Passion of New Eve* signals Carter's definite departure from the ethics and politics of artistic autonomy and her forging of a new path for artists, who are no longer the dignified source of poetic inspiration but can, in the case of Leilah and Tristessa, be performers and fetishized carriers of the fantasies of others. There is, Carter seems to suggest, little to no difference between the work of an artist and that of a sex worker. If anything, the former's dependence on the latter highlights that art's professed interest in disinterestedness is heavily indebted to the sweat and labour of other, marginalised subjects which the autonomous artist is loath to acknowledge.

Conclusion: Doomed to symbolic labour?

In *Nights at the Circus*, Carter's penultimate novel, we find an ironic echo of the Baudelairian albatross in the form of circus performer Sophie Fevvers, who has made her unique abilities as a winged woman the springboard of a successful career. At the beginning of the novel, Fevvers is presented under the sign of excess and as an excessive sign herself: "“Cockney Venus”", "“Helen of the High Wire”", she commands attention from her 'six feet two'.¹⁶⁰ On the face of it, Fevvers's excessive form signals her as inherently other: hatched from an egg, without a mother to bear the scars of her gestation, and winged, she embodies difference to a hyperbolic degree, in a way that drastically sets her apart from the male versions of creative agency I have

¹⁵⁹ Carter, *The Passion Of New Eve*, p. 29.

¹⁶⁰ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, pp. 3 and 9.

been analysing in the last two chapters. Yet, she also embodies a form of artistry, confirming Sally Robinson's insight that '[t]he woman writing within patriarchal culture is subject to the discursive and social practices that require her silence and repression, but also, and undeniably, subject *of* her own cultural productions'.¹⁶¹ In Robinson's reading, Fevvers's performance is ultimately subversive. Even as Carter sets out to deconstruct models of authorship, she is also elaborating an image of the performer, embodied in Fevvers, who is both subjected to patriarchal discourses marking her out as different, and invested in the construction of her own career and subjectivity.

Referring to Mary Anne Doane's concept of the masquerade, Robinson argues that her hyperbolic performance of femininity is what allows Fevvers to redress gendered readings:

in the masquerade, the woman is appropriating the masculine position by actively turning the gaze on herself in a reversal of gender positions that lead to the displacement of gender ontologies. [...] [Fevvers's] masquerade also turns an active gaze on the male spectator and, in the process, causes quite a bit of discomfort.¹⁶²

Fevvers's ability to display and commodify her distinctiveness at will, Robinson contends, position her as both subject and object of the gaze. The discomfort mentioned by Robinson is mostly Walser's: a journalist sent on Fevvers's tracks to ascertain her real nature, Jack Walser finds himself slowly falling for the aerialist but also subjected to treatments that implicitly put him in a vulnerable or, in Robinson's reading, feminised position: he is, she claims, 'emasculated by Fevvers' gaze'.¹⁶³

Yet, Fevvers's career is at one with a number of principles taken from liberal capitalism: her ferocious knack for merchandising herself and marketability resulting in 'Fevvermania', and her reliance on privacy to maintain her secrets from her audience all point to a mode of

¹⁶¹ Robinson, p. 12.

¹⁶² Robinson, p. 122.

¹⁶³ Robinson, p. 124.

career construction borrowed from capitalist logic.¹⁶⁴ Even Ma Nelson's socialist brothel, ultimately, is a community of 'poor girls earning a living', leading Fevvers to contend that 'No woman would turn her belly to the trade unless pricked by economic necessity, sir'.¹⁶⁵ Lizzie's political activity is conducted under strict secrecy, on the margins of the novel, suggesting that any departure from the norm must be covert.

Yet, in a way reminiscent of the dying albatross Evelyn weakly attempts to rescue, Fevvers ends up becoming a sorry shadow of her former self. Once lushly garbed and pampered, the former queen of the sky has turned into a piteous pigeon: '[s]he presented a squalid spectacle, a dark half-inch at the roots of her uncombed hair which tangled with the dishevelled plumage that had already assumed a dusty look'.¹⁶⁶ Much like Baudelaire's albatross, she finds herself figuratively and literally cut off from the sky by a broken wing, a fate that signals, once and for all, the end of any claim to artistic exceptionalism.¹⁶⁷ Of course, it is unclear that her creative labour had any claim to transcendence to begin with, being rather focused on the production of revenue, and her successors, Dora and Nora, take a similarly mercenary approach to their careers.¹⁶⁸ Near the end of *Nights at the Circus*, Lizzie openly queries the function of cultural labour, and doesn't mince her words on the topic to her adoptive daughter:

All you can do to earn your living is make a show of yourself. You're doomed to that. You must give pleasure of the eye, or else you're good for nothing. For you, it's always a symbolic exchange in the marketplace; you couldn't say you were engaged in productive labour, now, could you, girl? ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁶ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 235.

¹⁶⁷ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁸ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁹ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 217.

In *Nights at the Circus*, artists such as Fevvers are doomed to making an income out of their creative work, a condition which Carter does not represent as enviable, subjecting artists such as Fevvers to exploitation by others. As a result, the work on the self has become inseparable from the production of artistic work. Furthermore, Fevvers's persona has become increasingly indistinguishable from the real person. As Lizzie, who seemingly acts as Carter's critical mouthpiece in the novel, observes 'you grow more and more like your publicity'.¹⁷⁰ While exempt from the assumptions of aesthetic autonomy, Fevvers, Nora, and Dora must contend with a new form of commodification of the self which Carter seems to warn against.

By the end of the 1970s, Carter had apparently relinquished all faith in the exceptionality of countercultural forms and avant-garde experimentations in the face of the logic of the market. This is, on the surface level, a potentially pessimistic reading of her belief in the powers of writing and artistic creation at large, but it also reveals a more pragmatic approach to the questions of creation and creativity than previously authorised by accounts of the role of the artist in the market. Autonomy, in Carter's critique, confines its followers to a disinterestedness often contingent on others' labour and, much like Evelyn's attempts at rescuing the albatross from its fate, produce a sterile and dissatisfying fruit. In the same gesture, however, Carter also imaged forth a part for the woman artist which, however limited its assumptions about marginalised subjects such as queer people and women of colour, remains consequential for contemporary writers who carry on turning to her as a role model and reference her work whether openly or not. Unlike the dandy who purports to live through and for his art, Carter's women artists, from Leilah to Duval, and from Fevvers to Dora, find means to secure an income through their craft. And while they may well do so at the cost of perceived artistic purity, they also rid themselves of some of the more cumbersome inheritances of the male tradition: *ennui*, idleness, and political vacuity.

¹⁷⁰ Carter, *Nights At The Circus*, p. 232.

Brouillette proposes that the image of the artist as ‘asocial or antisocial flexible individualist’ carries on exerting its weight in contemporary notions of artistic creation despite its historical constructedness.¹⁷¹ It does so in forms that serve neoliberal forms of labour management, encouraging ever greater pliability to the demands of the market through zero-hour contracts, low-paid and insecure jobs, and competitive grants. Carter’s writing arguably situates itself in a tradition that attempts to debunk the myth of the artistic genius by showing its political, personal, and social cost on the individuals that attempt to embody forms of self-expression prescribed by a historically male-dominated tradition. If, as Brouillette claims, ‘literary writers now [...] take up the autonomization process not as an easy and assumed inheritance but as a problem in search of a solution’, Carter attempts to supply her readers with a way forward beyond the autonomy or incorporation binary, by embracing certain forms of technological modernity in the form of new media.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 5.

¹⁷² Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 18.

Conclusion: Wise Children, *Wise Children*, and the Future of the (Dead) Woman Writer

*Through some accident of time or temperament I always arrive rather late for Golden Ages.*¹

The subject of authorship and of what one can or should sacrifice in the pursuit of artistic and economic fulfilment remains a contested terrain. The process of charting Carter's deconstruction of autonomy opens up a reflection on her legacy for contemporary women writers' careers. By way of example, in Bernardine Evaristo's novel *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), the protagonist Amma becomes a successful playwright after beginning her life in a commune. She contemplates the ramifications of a career started in a state of economic precarity and countercultural lifestyle. In her fifties, Amma has achieved an enviable combination of critical appraisal for her play, *The Last Amazon of Dahomey*, due to premiere at the National Theatre at the opening of the novel, and financial security confirmed by her ownership of an apartment in London.² In Amma's admittedly idealised experience of the art world, therefore, politically cutting-edge work can become a means to secure both cultural legitimacy and economic success. Amma's experience anticipates her author's own: Evaristo's novel was winner of the 2019 Booker Prize – an award for which Carter was a judge but which she, ironically, never received herself.³ While Evaristo's intents and style do not owe much if anything to Carter's, her novel demonstrates some of the anxieties surrounding the urgency of the question of incorporation and the role of a feminist writer in the contemporary market, even as Evaristo finds herself questioned about her identity as a Black woman writer while Amma's

¹ Williams, 'Cambridge English and Beyond'.

² Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other* (London: Penguin UK, 2019).

³ Isobel Armstrong portrays the clash between Anita Brookner's novel *Hotel du Lac*, which won the prize in 1984, and *Nights at the Circus*, deemed a stronger contender by many. The former, Armstrong argues, is 'a high-bourgeois elegy', invested in 'the core of the self' and 'lyricised feminine mourning', while Carter, she claims, 'belongs to dissident feminist counterculture'. Isobel Armstrong, 'Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus: Carter and Tradition', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Rev. and updated ed (London: Virago, 2007), pp. 266–86 (pp. 266 and 268).

less affluent friends resent or question her success.⁴ Carter never had to contend with the level of scrutiny to which Evaristo's identity as a Black woman exposes her, even at the height of her career. It is for example inconceivable that Carter would ever have been faced with the kind of baffling questions Evaristo recounts receiving in interviews ('I was recently asked at a book event whether I was a woman first or a black person first'). Evaristo's experience points to the persisting ungendering of Black women identified by Spillers as an imperial inheritance of slavery.⁵ Remarkably, however, the anxiety depicted by her novel with regards to the transition from counterculture to mainstream legitimacy does present some parallels with the fears expressed on her behalf by Carter's friends in the wake of her accession to canonicity: as Lorna Sage eloquently puts it, '[n]ow that her voice has been silenced, we're left with the orphaned words on the page, which line up and behave'.⁶ The advent of feminist marketing and the rise to prominence of women in the cultural sphere mask enduring tensions in the position of the woman writer.⁷ In the light of current discussions surrounding the porousness of feminist discourse and commercial fiction, and of what Angela McRobbie denounces as an 'illusion of equality' for women, I have suggested that an investigation of Carter's career construction and representation of artistry in light of her awareness of Avant-garde texts and contexts may offer timely insights.⁸

This thesis has attempted to construct an image of Carter as a writer at work, determined to make a living through her craft, and depending on multiple streams of income, both

⁴ Bernardine Evaristo, 'Booker Prize-Winner Bernardine Evaristo: "I Persisted"', *Financial Times*, 5 December 2019 <<https://www.ft.com/content/156f5a42-155b-11ea-8d73-6303645ac406>> [accessed 7 September 2020].

⁵ Spillers, p. 68.

⁶ Sage, *Angela Carter*, p. 59.

⁷ In an article published in *Lifestyle Asia*, for example, we are eloquently invited to make Dior's book on the brand's alleged feminist credentials our 'next favourite coffee table book', suggesting that being and showing oneself to be a feminist are now a matter of good taste susceptible to convey cultural currency. See "'We Should All Be Feminists': Dior Takes on the Female Gaze in a New Book', *Lifestyle Asia Bangkok*, 2021 <<https://www.lifestyleasia.com/bk/style/fashion/dior-new-book/>> [accessed 8 July 2021].

⁸ Nigel Warburton and Angela McRobbie, 'Angela McRobbie on the Illusion of Equality for Women', *Social Science Bites* <<https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/06/angela-mcrobbe-on-the-illusion-of-equality-for-women/>> [accessed 3 July 2020].

journalistic and literary, to do so. I have shown that Carter had to develop a stance balanced between a skilful manipulation of the commercial possibilities offered by a literary career in the late twentieth century and the once aspirational model of literary vanguards, which she ultimately dismisses as politically impotent and economically parasitic on the labour of others. Rather, Carter's turn to figures of women as creative entrepreneurs reflects the uneasy alliance of feminism and profit-making, which cannot only be dismissed as solely nefarious, but now appears bound up with contemporary readings of the woman writer characterised by new forms of essentialism.

We run the risk of defanging her if we fail to consider the uses to which Carter's texts can be put. In this conclusion, I reflect on the conditions and implications of Angela Carter's posthumous fame by examining contemporary references to her work that tie it to considerations about value, economic and ethical, and the work of women artists in the contemporary literary market. I posit that examining Carter's legacy, as that of a writer eminently interested in the material conditions of production and her transformation into an object of 'legitimate culture' opens up further discussions of the uses of the figure of the woman author. To make this point, I study the case of theatre director Emma Rice's recent adaptation of *Wise Children* into a successful play and the repurposing of the novel's title into a brand, as a new theatre company. I argue that Rice situates herself consciously as coming after a golden age, for feminism and autonomy. Finally, I summarise the points raised by this thesis, and point to the ways in which they can aid our reading of other women authors in the contemporary market. I suggest looking back at Carter's texts and forward to the uses to which they may still be put can inform and complicate our understanding of contemporary authorship.

Are You my Mummy? Emma Rice's *Wise Children*

I opened this thesis with Carter's accession to canonicity, symbolised by her posthumous reception of a blue plaque. Just one year prior to this event, the stage adaptation of her novel *Wise Children* caused some commotion in the art world. The play premiered in 2018 at the Old Vic in London, the first production to be released by Emma Rice's brand new company, also called Wise Children. Denied recognition by their biological father, the Chance sisters have forged an alternative family of their own, replacing paternal inheritance with a non-biological female line, headed by their adoptive mother-figure, Grandma Chance. The production makes much of the sisters' illegitimate parentage and of their career in showbusiness, both of which are glamorised by Rice's signature aesthetics, characterised by vivid colours and makeshift materials.

In *Wise Children* as in her previous novel *Nights at the Circus*, Carter stages cultural production alongside issues of maternity and adoptive matrilineal, and polymatrilineal inheritance. As Rebecca Munford comments, 'Carter's narratives enact an unremitting assault on traditional images of the mother and maternal lineage'.⁹ In both of Carter's last novels, biological mothers are quickly dispatched: they are either non-existent (Sophie Fevvers is said to be hatched from an egg) or dead (Dora and Nora Chance's mother dies in childbirth). By contrast, adoptive mother figures play a tutelary role in the protagonists' careers. Grandma Chance takes Nora and Dora to see their first play. In *Nights at the Circus*, Sophie Fevvers goes on tour with her adoptive mother, Lizzie. While highly complex, Lizzie and Grandma Chance's relationships with their (almost) daughters enable their artistic career. This career often takes the shape of a non-legitimate, popular form of culture, such as the circus, or the music hall. In Rice's adaptation, non-legitimacy, expressed through the form of the makeshift, is used as a means to an end in securing prestigious public funding and critical accolades.

⁹ *Re-Visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 11.

Her fictional protagonists' recurrently absent mothers reveal unexpected echoes of Carter's own status as a spectral mother, or godmother figure in contemporary British letters. Paying attention to mothers in Rice's adaptation, I argue, parallels the move from a Second Wave-inflected vision of feminism to a postfeminist vision of the female entrepreneur, which Rice appears to embrace. In more than one way, the play recasts Carter's original novel within the context of twenty-first-century debates – including through a more explicit discussion of sexual violence. Despite this, Rice's reading remains relentlessly positive:

Wise Children follows several generations from the same family, and they come across all sorts of things that we all come across and some of those issues are serious and I don't shy away from them and she doesn't. But it's surrounded by this heady mix of theatricality so there's going to be showgirls, there's going to be show tunes, there's going to be long legs. There's sex coming out of your ears in this production but it's joyful and throughout the show there's this phrase which is "What a joy it is to dance and sing". I wish I'd written it because it's what I feel about my own life, and throughout all the trials that these women go for, that's what they hold on to, a joy and a positivity.¹⁰

One could note Rice's emphasis on sameness and lineage here, but perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that her reading transforms *Wise Children* into a story of grit: positivity through a lifetime of tribulations, enduring creativity against the grain. Her depiction echoes Rosalind Gill's comment that the "autonomous, calculating self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism" (2007, 164).¹¹ This reading by a creative practitioner is also marked by certain ethical assumptions about the kind of knowledge or experience one should derive from reading Carter, in a way reminiscent of what Merve Emre calls a 'paraliterary' reading: a

¹⁰ Emma Rice, in a television interview with the BBC, in *Wise Children* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0892kf6/wise-children>> [accessed 14 May 2020].

¹¹ Rosalind Gill cited in Thouaille, p. 4.

reading that is distinct from the authorised forms of close-reading and literary deciphering, and instead comes to literature in search of forms to mimic, or to feel empathy.¹²

In an interview with the BBC, Emma Rice is open about her long-lasting feeling of identification with Carter:

I've been in love with Angela Carter since my 20s. I think at the time, there wasn't anybody writing female characters like her. She wasn't bound by conventions or politeness, and I felt like she spoke for me. I thought she spoke for the kind of woman that I was and the woman I wanted to be.¹³

This passage replicates the faith of Carter's own friends in Carter's unabashed frankness and refusal of conventions. In Emma Rice's account of Carter, the author becomes a relatable example of personal achievement, but also a standalone figure not unlike Rice herself, a former artistic director of the prestigious Globe Theatre, whose tenure ended with some scandal.

A romantic fascination with Carter's attractive persona transpires in several contemporary accounts about her and is not unique to Rice. For example, Edmund Gordon's biography, *The Invention of Angela Carter* (2016) charts his quest for an unmediated access to her life through his decision to '[retrace] the fateful journey she'd made through Russia to Japan forty-two years earlier'.¹⁴ Despite the passing of time, Gordon is 'constantly aware of Angela's [sic] experience – like the text on a palimpsest – beneath the surface of [his] own'.¹⁵ Gordon's familiarity with Carter is suggested in his use of her first name, a denomination that demarks his work from scholarly usage but also, it is worth noting, from other literary biographies.¹⁶ The structure of the palimpsest offers a compelling frame for reading Rice's

¹² Emre.

¹³ Emma Rice, in a television interview with the BBC, in *Wise Children*.

¹⁴ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 418.

¹⁵ Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, p. 418.

¹⁶ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a wide-ranging analysis of the use of names in literary biographies, Gordon's choice gives his work a distinct tonality. For example, in his recent biography of Charles Dickens, Michael Slater exclusively refers to him by his surname. See Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) Similarly, Hermione Lee is cautious to avoid using the first name of her subject, Virginia Woolf, warning that '[a]ll readers of Virginia Woolf's diaries (even those who have decided to

production, which makes Carter's career the original script of the twins' and, I suggest, of Rice's own trajectory. The play's décor – an actors' trailer – is bedecked with collages and a portrait of Carter. Its soundtrack includes songs composed from Carter's youth poems, and testifies to the extent of Rice's research into her corpus. Rice's erudite knowledge of the author's corpus is a solid rejoinder to readings that would seek to hierarchise close reading and reading for identification and pleasure. In this way, Rice is reminiscent of the science fiction readers to whom Carter once addressed an approving nod.¹⁷

Indeed, the adaptation is faithful to the novel's multigenerational theme and intent and proves Rice's subtle, in-depth reading of the play. The production casts the protagonists at different ages, and presents older versions of Nora and Dora watching their younger counterparts go through their life's events. However, this stage adaptation does depart from Carter's in some crucial ways. One is the introduction of a practice of casting that disregards her actors' gender, race, or age. Rice explains her choice not to refer to the frequently used terms colour-blind and gender-blind to describe her casting policy in a text written as part of the play's production, championing instead a non-mimetic approach, 'a spirit that chimes with the character' when choosing a performer.¹⁸ Though the play's casting went through different iterations, as is normal practice for a touring play, both Dora and Nora were consistently played by actors of different genders and races: in her young adult incarnation, Nora is portrayed by a young black actor, Omari Douglas, who undergoes an abortive pregnancy on stage, while the oldest incarnation of Dora is performed by a white man, Gareth Nook.¹⁹ Rice is not new to

dislike her) will feel an extraordinary sense of intimacy with the voice that is talking there. They will want to call her Virginia, and speak proprietorially about her life.' See: Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Random House, 2010), p. 4.

¹⁷ Carter, 'Fools'.

¹⁸ 'Eyes Wide Open', *The Old Vic* <<https://www.oldvictheatre.com/news/2018/09/eyes-wide-open>> [accessed 8 June 2020].

¹⁹ 'Wise Children Cast', *The Old Vic* <<https://www.oldvictheatre.com/whats-on/2018/wise-children>> [accessed 18 June 2020].

such casting choices, having previously staged an adaptation of *Nights at the Circus* in which Lizzie was played by a (white) man, Carl Grose.²⁰

Rice's casting choices invite clear visual parallels with the Pantomime dame, which also square with her predilection for highly colourful decors and props, physical theatre, and acrobatics. Her strategy also harks back to Carter's own thoughts on pantomime expressed 'In Pantoland', according to which 'everything is excessive and gender is variable'.²¹ If we are to read Carter's story to the end, however, we must also remember that

[t]he essence of the carnival, the festival, the Feast of Fools, is transience. It is here today gone tomorrow, a release of tension not a reconstitution of order, a refreshment ... after which everything can go on again exactly as if nothing had happened.

Things don't change because a girl puts on trousers or a chap slips on a frock, you know. Masters were masters again the day after Saturnalia ended; after the holiday from gender, it was back to the old grind...²²

Carter's definition of the carnivalesque world of Pantomime therefore invites a reading of the genre as a transient upheaval of hierarchies and boundaries, rather than a transformative performance. By contrast, there might be a possibility that Rice's position opens up a potentially more liberatory way of reading gender swapping on stage.

Rice positions her casting choice as an explicitly political one, which also cements her status as a thought-leader in the cultural field:

The people that we present on stage need to represent the people we see on the tube or in the supermarket. It is imperative that a modern company creates access and casts diversely. Those with the power to employ have a duty to use that power wisely and to

²⁰ 'Theatre Review: Nights at the Circus at Lyric, Hammersmith', *British Theatre Guide* <<https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/nightscircus-rev>> [accessed 18 June 2020].

²¹ Angela Carter, 'In Pantoland', in *American Ghosts & Old World Wonders* (London: Penguin Random House, 2012), p. 383.

²² Carter, 'In Pantoland', p. 389.

share it wherever possible – this includes having as many women on stage as men and representing modern British life at every turn.²³

By choosing to cast her actors without trying to match their gender, race, or age to that of the script's protagonists, Rice enacts positive action through hiring practices. Discussions about the lack of diversity of the performing arts and cultural industry at large have only recently acquired a global reach. In the wake of events such as the spread of the hashtag 'Oscars so White' in 2015, audiences and stakeholders have started to take greater notice of the underrepresentation of Black and other ethnicities on screen, often summarised by the terms Black and Minorities Ethnic (BME), or Black and Asian Minorities (BAME).²⁴ Theatre being a considerably less mediatised industry, the subject of diversity on stage has yet to receive as much attention, but reports reveal the tendency of the performing arts to privilege white, able-bodied workers in both technical and performing professions.²⁵ While recent figures do reveal an increase in hiring of BME staff, these figures remain below the percentage of working-age BME people in the UK.²⁶ Onstage, casting choices such as Rice's do come with implications that may bypass policy intentions. Most strikingly, Lizzie's casting as a dame unwittingly feeds into stereotypes that portray old women as unsexed beings.

The script of *Wise Children* further departs from its original by eliminating the novel's portrayal of the twins' goddaughter Tiffany, who is explicitly depicted as a black woman, and

²³ 'Eyes Wide Open'.

²⁴ Reggie Ugwu, 'The Hashtag That Changed the Oscars: An Oral History', *The New York Times*, 6 February 2020, section Movies <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/movies/oscarssowwhite-history.html>> [accessed 18 June 2020].

²⁵ In their latest review of the make-up of the industry, titled 'Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2017 – 2018' Arts Council England found a proportion of 5% (an increase from 4%) of 'Black and Minority ethnic', or 'BME', staff working in Major Partner Museums, 12% in the National Portfolio workforce, 9% of Chief executives, and 12% of Artistic directors. See Arts Council England, *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2017 – 2018*, January 2019, pp. 6–7 <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Diversity_report_1718.pdf> [accessed 18 June 2020].

²⁶ Mark Brown, 'BME People Severely Underrepresented in Top English Arts Bodies', *The Guardian*, 15 January 2018, section Culture <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/jan/15/bme-people-underrepresented-top-english-arts-bodies>> [accessed 18 June 2020].

Melchior Hazard's sons from his third marriage, Gareth and Tristram. The novel ends with another instance of surrogacy, as the twins inherit Gareth's own children, two babies born of his likely intrigue with an indigenous woman in South America. In the novel, the introduction of Tiffany's character in the novel provides Dora with an opportunity to question the conventions presiding over family construction:

[...] our precious little Tiffany, the first Black in the family.

'Family', I say. Grandma invented this family. She puts it together out of whatever came to hand – a stray pair of orphaned babes, a ragamuffin in a flat cap. She created it by sheer force of personality. I only wish she'd lived to see our little Tiffany. There is a persistent history of absent family of absent fathers in our family, although Tiffany *did* get a daddy of her own, in the end, because Brenda married this ex-boxer, after all that.²⁷

Carter's language – 'the first Black' – is once again revealing of a racialised perspective that internalises her readers' whiteness while implicitly casting potential readers of colour as others. Simultaneously, Tiffany's integration into the twins' family sphere results in the introduction of a category of kinship overlooked by the production's emphasis on mothers and grandmothers: Dora and Nora become Tiffany's 'old aunties'.²⁸ As Patricia J. Sotirin and Laura L. Ellingson contend, 'the aunt may exceed or transgress normative feminine roles'.²⁹ The aunt is a labile figure, who can both undermine and reinforce essentialist categorisations of femininity as maternal and nurturing. Sotirin and Ellingson's analysis show the aunt to be a potentially critical figure, but argue that this form of kinship is more productive when understood as a practice, arguing that

²⁷ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 35.

²⁸ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 35.

²⁹ Patricia J. Sotirin and Laura L. Ellingson, 'What's up with Aunts?', in *Where the Aunts Are: Family, Feminism, and Kinship in Popular Culture* (Waco, UNITED STATES: Baylor University Press, 2013), pp. 1–14 (p. 3) <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cardiff/detail.action?docID=1120077>> [accessed 16 November 2020].

Aunting transgresses the myth of the loving, self-sacrificing mother and the ideal of the natural, nuclear family and affords an alternative relational perspective on how family arrangements and relations can be enacted and valued.³⁰

Dora and Nora's role in Tiffany's life appears to embody the liberating potentialities of aunting. The twins benevolently enable and protect Tiffany's experiments with dress and sexuality by keeping her 'flatties and a nice frock' in their own house so as to help Tiffany preserve a the appearance of respectability in front of her conservative father.³¹ They also console her when he rejects her choice of a lover (none other than Tristram Hazard), while also casting a severe, maternal look on their protegee's infatuation with a man not 'worth the paper she wiped her bum with'.³² Their attitude contrasts with that of their (official) half-sister and sworn enemy Saskia Hazard, whose incestuous relationship with her father's legitimate son Tristram completes her portrayal as the story's villain. The play replaces this process with the fairy-tale-like arrival of two new-born babies left behind by their anonymous mother, whose racial identity is left undiscussed. The theatrical ending thus surprisingly elides Grandma Chance's work to craft her family. Rice here risks occluding Carter's suggestive reopening of family boundaries – perhaps beyond her own intentions as director. She potentially reinforces a matrilineal reading of Carter's work that, in turn, may come to rest comfortably in the orbit of contemporary discourses that fetishise and naturalise the figure of the feminist author.

Acknowledging the limitations of Rice's production is not tantamount to suggesting Carter's texts would be beyond blame. In her novel, the twins 'boast the only castrato clock in London', which they call '[g]reat, tall, butch, horny' – one of a number of clues scattered around the novel to signify the novel's reshuffling of the family tree.³³ Rachel Carroll is one of

³⁰ Patty Sotirin and Laura L. Ellingson, 'Rearticulating the Aunt: Feminist Alternatives of Family, Care, and Kinship in Popular Performances of Aunting', *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 7.4 (2007), 442–59 (p. 454) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708607304538>>.

³¹ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 36.

³² Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 36.

³³ Carter, *Wise Children*, p. 4.

a number of critics to have recently pointed to the limits of any attempt to recuperate Angela Carter from a queer perspective. Carroll's analysis of *The Passion of New Eve* highlights the novel's tendency to reiterate transphobic tropes – in particular, the temptation to use the trans body as illustration, or metaphor for cisgender experiences of gender performativity – and the resulting difficulty in viewing Carter's writing as anticipating trans or queer theory.³⁴ Arguably, the castrato clock might be serving a similar function, using the trope of the butch woman as a symbol for the novel's deconstruction of father figures. This thesis has repeatedly pointed to areas of Carter's writings that create an Other, whether that other be queer subjects or women of colour. Rice's diverse casting practice redresses a tendency towards the erasure of certain subjects and identities in Carter's writing. Simultaneously, her reading of Carter in terms of grit and identification builds a less than comfortable matrilineal line between Carter's construction of mercenary women artists bent on generating an income and contemporary forms of neoliberal work, at which artists such as Emma Rice have had to become particularly adept, as revealed by her own company.

The company Wise Children was created thanks to a Grant for the Arts award from Arts Council England and given National Portfolio Organisation status.³⁵ According to Arts Council England, 'National Portfolio Organisations are leaders in their areas, with a collective responsibility to protect and develop our national arts and cultural ecology'.³⁶ Funding is awarded according to a three-band level in which an organisation's level of administrative

³⁴ Rachel Carroll, "'Violent Operations': Revisiting the Transgendered Body in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*", *Women: A Cultural Review*, 22.2–3 (2011), 241–55
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2011.587246>>.

³⁵ 'Arts Sector Demands Answers over Funding of Wise Children', *ArtsProfessional*
<<https://www.artspromotional.co.uk/news/arts-sector-demands-answers-over-funding-wise-children>> [accessed 8 June 2020].

³⁶ Arts Council England, *How Arts Council England Works with National Portfolio Organisations - Relationship Framework 2018-2022*, 4 October 2016, p. 5
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/NPO_2018-22_Relationship_Framework.pdf> [accessed 21 June 2020].

accountability increases in relation to the level of funding it has been granted.³⁷ From the outset, Wise Children was the topic of intense scrutiny and criticism from the arts world, with observers questioning the choice to award funding to a company with no existing track record of successful productions. The company's claims to a high level of community engagement were another focus of enquiry: Rice's choice of a London premiere, in particular, was seen to jar with her declaration that the company's primary geographical base would be the South West of England rather than the capital. Rice has since developed her 'School for Wise Children', a school offering courses to aspiring theatre professionals with an aim to address the sector's elitism. The initial outcry, however, impelled Rice to publish her funding application in a bid for transparency.

The adaption of Carter's novels by a company that has proven particularly skilled at deploying the most current tools of marketing and engagement – including a recent podcast produced during the 2020 lockdown – contribute to the transformation of her aesthetic into a brand. Carter's name and the title of her novel only appear a few times in Rice's published funding bids. The use of her novel nonetheless furthers her posthumous establishment by associating her with Rice's enterprise. In exchange, Carter's name and literary legacy both serve to sanction, while also furthering the creation of Rice's own creative signature. Carter was very much one of the 'writers as cultural practitioners interested in the uses to which their work is put' described by Brouillette, yet it is her portrayal as eccentric, resistant to conventions that seal her literary fame today.³⁸

Emma Rice's production testifies to changing political priorities. As do many of her productions (one emblematic example being her reinterpretation of *Tristan and Yseult* for the now defunct theatre company Kneehigh, which has been restaged countless times since its

³⁷ Arts Council England, *How Arts Council England Works with National Portfolio Organisations - Relationship Framework 2018-2022*, p. 4.

³⁸ Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, p. 18.

premiere in 2014), *Wise Children* includes a soundtrack made up of covers and original songs performed by the actors themselves.³⁹ At the end of the play, as the whole cast is reunited on stage, the protagonists nod along to an acoustic rendition of Cyndi Lauper's 1983 song 'Girls Just Want to Have Fun'.⁴⁰ Lauper's synthetic New Wave anthem is cut off after the end of the first stanza, whose lyrics offer a bittersweet if celebratory portrait of young women's aspirations in the early 80s:

I come home, in the morning light
My mother says "When you gonna live your life right?"
Oh momma dear, we're not the fortunate ones
And girls, they wanna have fun
Oh girls just wanna have fun...

That's all they really want...
Some fun...
When the working day is done
Oh girls, they wanna have fun
Oh girls just wanna (girls) have fun (they want)
(Wanna have fun)
(Girls)
(Wanna have)

Lauper's song bespeaks a generational divide marked by the onset of women's new aspirations – to enjoy life and its pleasures unfettered by gendered conventions and by 'momma dear'.

³⁹ The original songs have been released on Spotify as part of an EP: Wise Children Company, *Wise Children - Original Cast Recordings (Live Recording of 'Wise Children' Rehearsals at The Old Vic, London)*, 2019 <<https://open.spotify.com/album/7q2vPVrO3KjCxVMotiyhhM>> [accessed 17 November 2020].

⁴⁰ Cyndi Lauper, *Girls Just Want to Have Fun* (Portrait Records, 1983) [on CD].

Praised at its release as a feminist anthem, the song marks the shift towards a feminism inflected by the politics of girlhood in which daughters no longer wish to think through their mothers. ‘Girls Just Want to Have Fun’ echoes issues of generational transmission in the feminist movement which, by then, was reeling from the sex wars. Rice’s acoustic version is tinged with a creeping sense of sadness that contradicts the forced optimism of its lyrics, as if reckoning with the disappointed ambitions of her twenty-first century ‘girls’ – who, after two recessions, would indeed object to calling themselves ‘the fortunate ones’. The pace of the song is slower, and its use of a simple set-up – a guitar, the actress’s unmodified voice – resonates with the desires of an audience who has outgrown Lauper’s hopes for a sexual liberation that would bypass norms of masculinised violence and power. This interpretation also goes full circle in staging its own authenticity through onstage rendition and acoustic, unaltered sound, in a way that testifies to a new understanding of the work sphere. The scene charts the process of the subject’s own production as a polyvalent artist, idealising the notion of an authentic self which, it seems, can paradoxically be commodified ad libitum. Narrative structure also plays a part in questioning whether there is all that much fun to be had here: the song is performed immediately after the revelation that Peregrine might have sexually abused teenager Dora.

Rice’s artistic output is bound up in considerations that cement the alliance of literature with policy and turn Carter’s corpus into a compelling, aesthetically pleasing brand that foregrounds its own eccentricity to further its own prestige. In attempting to retrace a matrilineal genealogy from Carter to Rice, the metaphor of maternity proves a useful one in more than one way. Sophie Lewis contends that ‘pregnancy among *Homo sapiens* [...] perpetrates a kind of biological “bloodbath”’.⁴¹ Rather than a child magicked into the world, Emma Rice’s company *Wise Children*’s stage adaptation reveals the complicated birth of a new function for Carter’s legacy that frankly distances itself from any fascination with the

⁴¹ Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family* (New York: Verso Books, 2019), p. 2.

canon authorised by the tenets of aesthetic autonomy. The resulting production is a combative take-up of Carter's call for women to straddle the gap between literary creation and the market, in which Dora and Nora see their grit rewarded by the miraculous advent of a child. This is not to question the sincerity or thoroughness of Emma Rice's engagement with Carter or commitment to her canon, but rather to question the uses of Carter's legacy and repurposing of the thorny issue of maternity and creativity in works that claim to be inspired by or to adapt her writing. Maternity, it turns out, remains a sore point in women's writing: a *New Yorker* critic recently mentioned a decade characterised by 'cerebral fictions of motherhood'.⁴²

Carter's Career and the Afterlives of Autonomy

My thesis opened with Carter's derisive remark about another woman writer, who she accused of not writing for a living. I suggested that Carter's comment, as throwaway as it might seem to us, was underpinned by a sustained reflection on her writing career and the problem of value, economic, ethical, and literary. I reframed arguments about Carter's double allegiance to a male Avant-garde and to a critical feminist practice in terms of a reflection on the Bourdieusian issue of autonomy. My key point in doing so is that Carter did not solely engage textually with art produced by men but also with the institutions and practices their social position enabled them to establish, and with the impact of those institutions on late twentieth century writers. Some women artists have flourished from those institutions and will continue to do so. What Carter's writing questions, I have posited, is whether there is a way to be a woman artist that does not run into the material contradictions inherent to a patriarchal labour division present in the art world and legitimized through its aesthetic canons, from Decadence to Surrealism. Through this work, I argued that Carter attempted to propose a materialist middle ground between a

⁴² Hillary Kelly, 'A Novel That Imagines Motherhood as an Animal State', *The New Yorker*, 26 July 2021 <<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-novel-that-imagines-motherhood-as-an-animal-state>> [accessed 27 July 2021].

vision of the work of art disconnected from economics and the necessity for the artist to forge herself a path in the literary market. One way in which I suggested we view this process of elaborating a new formula for artistic careers is through the transition from Carter's admittedly critical focus on bohemian male figures to women working creative careers with an explicit desire to generate a revenue out of them. As I have shown, this model does result in Carter's centering of a white and heterosexual perspective that often silences other subjectivities.

The first chapter of this thesis had to contend with a paradox: Carter's writing and interviews at the end of her career reveal her ability to commodify and appropriate signs and symbols associated with popular and low-brow culture as well as the Bohemia and counterculture of the late twentieth century. Yet they also signal a continued faith in a surprisingly elitist divide between proper literary heritage and a contemporary televised culture assumed to be more naturally apt to be incorporated into a logic of economic value, even as Carter herself had brought aesthetics and references associated with high modernism and literary Avant-gardes into a mainstream literary market. One remarkable consequence of Carter's pragmatic elaboration of a new figure for the female artist is its divorce from earlier radical formulations that proposed to bypass race, gender, and sexual distinctions altogether. The introduction of this thesis cited the writings of a number of radical feminists who warned against a reformist socialism that would only introduce women into the labour sphere without resolving the foundations of their domination, leaving out mothers and women from lower classes. Sections of this thesis have also pointed to Carter's tendency to neglect, erase, or relegate women of colour to the margins of her writings, particularly in the 1970s. Carter's writing stays away from envisaging a post-gender or post-racial society. Rather, it casts a mournful look at the inequalities and indignities to which women find themselves confined by the condition of artistic autonomy. Leilah's near-death by hemorrhage followed by her turn to militarized violence and Jeanne Duval's barely sublimated syphilitic demise only find

phantasmagoric solutions in Sophie Fevvers's miraculous gestationless birth and Dora and Nora's eventual fairy tale finding of a biracial baby, enabled by an unnamed indigenous woman's disappearance. This is not only to criticize the limitations of Carter's conclusions but to acknowledge her own conflicted feelings about women's ability and hopes to escape the condition of patriarchal dominance.

Such limitations are visible in the second chapter of this thesis, which examined a range of texts taken from Carter's journalistic corpus from the 1970s through to the 1980s. It showed her at pains to deal with racialized and sexual outsiders: queer people and women of colour are implicitly excluded from Carter's didactic approach to the media landscape of the late twentieth century. Even as I highlighted such aporias, I also attempted to redress instrumental readings of Carter's journalism as secondary to her literary writing output. My claim is that, through her journalism, Carter furthered her self-stylisation as a public intellectual committed to deconstructing a new and proliferating media landscape in which women's position as subjects, and not solely objects of mediatic interest and representation, was still in question. I suggested that through this Carter engaged with the romance as the dominant genre through which late twentieth-century mass media shaped the views of its readers. In doing so, I believe, Carter herself engaged with a kind of authorship modelled by Baudelaire: the critic, attentive to the new needs of a bourgeois audience in need of further education to engage properly with the meanings implied by the arts and, in Carter's case, mass media. Notably, Carter's own position in the journalistic field at that time is often closer to that of a solitary agent: Carter's career in a mainstream bourgeois outlet remained mostly distinct from the publishing and journalistic boom of the 1970s. Even as women used media as a platform for skillsharing and consciousness raising, Carter's intellectual pursuits drove her towards a model of authorship that lent itself to less collaborative forms. As my first chapter also showed, while her private collections shows Carter's fascination and continued engagement with protest cultures of various kinds, she also

retreated from activist engagement early on in her life, and her writing generally expresses more discomfort than empathy for women who go down the route of political involvement. The figure Lizzie is a notable exception, although the fact that her pursuits remain hidden and covert for the entirety of *Nights at the Circus* suggest the difficulty to represent but also to live in accordance with revolutionary political principles.

In my third and fourth chapters, I charted Carter's process of critical detachment from autonomy in her literary writing. My third chapter, on *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, read the novel's staging of Desiderio's *ennui* as an exploration of one possible countermodel to the proliferation of new media. However, from the very the beginning of the novel, which also anticipates its ending, this position is revealed to be politically obsolete, and easily incorporated into the logic of state bureaucracy it allegedly resists. It also showed Carter to be an interested, engaged, and critical reader of the media theorists of the second half of the twentieth century, using new theories of subjectivity and spectatorship in her speculative fiction. As I observed, by the late 1970s, Carter had simultaneously turned away from the model of autonomy and from the pessimism of media theorists intent on pathologizing subjects born of new media landscapes. By contrast, I suggested that we could understand her position better by taking her medievalist training into account. Carter's reference to forms of active or embodied engagement with the arts, such as reading and illustrating a manuscript written by another, playing an instrument, or acting on stage, displaces the implicit relegation of these practices by the primacy conferred upon writing or composing. Carter, on the contrary, embraces such engagements as creative in and of themselves. By the same token, she also signals a different way of understanding authorship less at odds with profit-making. This turn foreshadows her engagement with a long line of female performers, which begins with Leilah and continues with her deconstruction of Baudelaire's Muse, Jeanne Duval, whom Carter recasts as a mercenary Madam eager to derive profit from the Baudelairian bounty: his

manuscripts, which she sells without a moment's hesitation (anticipating Dora's sale of her own dead lover's writings).

Perhaps because of this complex vision of the woman artist, it is no wonder that Carter's legacy is so fragmented and contradictory. Rice's adaptation actively engages with Carter's corpus through an ethical framework that seems derived straight from Carter's most adventurous female characters – Leilah/Lilith, Jeanne Duval, Sophie Fevvers, the twins – and takes their resilience in the face of adversity as a working model for what an artist *should* be – a form of what Emre would describe as reading to facilitate 'the physicalized production, transmission, and reception of feeling', both in Rice's audience and in Rice herself.⁴³ It is not entirely clear whether the type of writer Carter aspired to be is entirely at one with the kind of writers and creators who claim links to her work. What Rice's theatrical re-readings of Carter's work suggest, however, is the persistence of the Carterian legacy in the contemporary literary market.

⁴³ Emre, p. 55.

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