

# Abstracts for Fireworks: The Visual Imagination of Angela Carter



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# **Abstracts for Fireworks: The Visual Imagination of Angela Carter**

## **'The Strangeness of the World Made Visible': An Anamorphic Reading of Angela Carter and Paula Rego**

**Béatrice Bijon (Australian National University, Canberra, Australia)**

Angela Carter said of Frida Kahlo that she 'painted the strangeness of the world made visible' — an assertion that befits Angela Carter's own writing. It is also apposite to the work of Paula Rego, a painter who shared Carter's interests in fairy tales, sexuality, power, bodies, violence and the ambiguity of gender.

This paper will step outside the usual constraints of literary criticism by reading Carter's writing and Rego's paintings in relation to each other. In *Empire of Signs*, Barthes suggests 'the text does not 'gloss' the images, which do not 'illustrate' the text.' Rego's and Carter's opuses reveal the relevance of this idea. Carter's texts and visual rhetoric correlate with Rego's paintings and narrative drive, in a way that generates an interpretative oscillation between visual image and writing.

Focusing on the fairy tales, preoccupied as they are with the relationship between the sexes and the scenarios of familial dysfunction, this paper will explore the way both artists play with and subvert the codes of representation. In both Carter's and Rego's worlds, masculinity and femininity are toyed with, twisted, reinvented and perverted. In so doing they make forceful statements on power and agency.

A salient feature of both artists is that their works invite us to take multiple points of view in order to engage creatively, much as the painter of an anamorphosis requires the viewer to move around the painting. My aim in this paper is to develop an anamorphic reading that will embrace the realm of the visual and the textual in the writings and the paintings.

## **Angela Carter: Wilful Amateur**

**Sian Bonnell (Manchester Metropolitan University)**

'Wilful Amateurism' is a term I have coined to describe an aesthetic which can be compared, and possibly contrasted with the aesthetic of play and boundary transgression found in artists of the avant-garde such as Duchamp and Hannah Höch.

The experiential origins are feminist, inhabiting the domestic, absurdism and motherhood. Other key artists who I identify as Wilful Amateurs include John Cage, Claude Cahun, Cindy Sherman and Helen Chadwick.

According to a dictionary definition, wilfulness involves 'Asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason; determined to take one's own way; obstinately self-willed or perverse' (OED).

I re-claim the word amateur to describe an attitude or state of mind, common to the work of artists who possess the aesthetic I am identifying - and this reappropriation of the word amateur, I would argue, is a wilful exercise in itself.

What attracts me to the writing of Angela Carter is her wilfulness, transgression and performativity as evinced by her writing which, it has been argued, revolves around the invention of self. Carter has stated that her writing utilizes the method of bricolage which is in itself a visual methodology most often found in sculpture. This is crystallised in the way that her words convey a heightened and almost photographic sense that is far from descriptive. In this paper I propose that Angela Carter is a visual artist; a Wilful Amateur.

## ***Wise Children* and the Mask of Ageing: Angela Carter's subversive take on Appearance in Old Age**

**Zoe Brennan (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)**

Older female characters inhabit the margins of many of Angela Carter's narratives but take centre stage in her final novel *Wise Children* (1991) where seventy-five year old twins Nora and Dora Chance reflect on their lives as self-professed 'hoofers'. Throughout her work, Carter shows an interest in the fluidity of identity and in this talk I will explore it in terms of the ageing self. In particular I will focus on the Chances' appearance and how they manufacture a

'face' to show to the world; a process that is mentioned repeatedly in comments such as: 'we painted the faces we always used to have on to the faces we have now'. Their efforts to recapture a past visual appearance illustrates a tension that exists in individuals who feel that their maturing face and body 'masks' a more youthful interior. This paradigm, discussed extensively by Mike Featherstone in his influential gerontological theory the 'mask of ageing', is often posited as a barrier to successful ageing. I use this model to interpret the twins' efforts but explore whether or not in *Wise Children* Carter actually depicts an element of age resistance in their actions rather than just age denial. I will go on to suggest that Carter's suspicious attitude towards the norms of gendered identity, for which she is famous, extends to a questioning of conventional wisdom about 'age-appropriate' fashion, appearance and behaviour.

### **Angela Carter's Fleapit**

#### **Charlotte Crofts (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)**

Angela Carter's Fleapit features short films inspired by Angela Carter's love of 'anything that flickers', the intertextual cinematic references in her novels, her various film adaptations and one of the last things she wrote about 'The Granada Tooting'. The Fleapit is a miniature cinema, small enough to fit in a suitcase, which the user can control with their smart phone. This interactive installation invites you to become the projectionist - whereby you can dim the lights, open the curtains and play movies - whilst peering in through the tiny projection booth windows. By positioning you as a voyeur, the installation references the proto-cinematic optical devices and peep shows often found on piers, which Angela Carter references in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. The peephole recurs in her writing, such as the one through which Melanie spies on Finn in *The Magic Toyshop*. The aim of the installation is to draw attention to Angela Carter's cinematic eye, and her fascination with the act of looking.

### **'What Then?' Apocalypticism and Carter's Surrealist Aesthetics**

#### **Scott Dimovitz (Regis University, USA)**

In his classic 1936 analysis of modernist aesthetics, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' Walter Benjamin claimed that humanity's 'self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as aesthetic pleasure of the first order.' From the beginning of her writing career,

Angela Carter's fiction played with this alienated pleasure, even while Carter personally and politically feared the growing possibility of a literal annihilation of the planet from a nuclear holocaust. In fact, the triad of novels that make up what she referred to in her journals as the Manifesto for Year One—*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *The Passion of New Eve*, and *Nights at the Circus*—employ an almost sadistic pleasure in imagining and figuring destruction with a starkly visual symbolic vocabulary drawn from the surrealist artists she loved, yet grew to doubt. As this paper will explore, Carter's aesthetics merged her deep interest in surrealism and psychoanalysis with a postmodern fascination with kitsch and fragmentation, suggesting an almost Dadaesque early alliance with an aesthetics that celebrated annihilation as an end in itself.

One apparently contradictory feature of Carter's atheistic apocalypticism is that it is not inherently eschatological—exploring the traditional theological doctrines of the four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Similar to J. G. Ballard, whose writings in *New Worlds* magazine greatly influenced her, Carter's sense of darkly sadistic comedy was born out of being a 'child of the nuclear age... a child of irony and the absurd; of black humour, of guilt and of anger,' as she described in her 1983 essay, 'Anger in a Black Landscape.' Unlike Dr. Robert Kerans in Ballard's *The Drowned World*, however, Carter's use of apocalyptic motifs was not a celebration of the coming catastrophe, except insofar as it allowed the imagining of a world beyond the current order. Like many postmodern apocalyptic narratives, many of Carter's works figure the rupture not as an end, but as a beginning, reshaping and inverting the temporal trajectory of popular fantasies of the End Times into parables about the origin of the (always new) beginning. 'The Bomb' she argued, had 'become a very potent, perhaps the most potent, symbol of Original Sin' ('Anger'), where social destruction is the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, casting humanity from the Garden into the temporal cycle of pain, suffering, and death. As she analysed the apocalyptic tone in surrealist art in her 1978 essay, 'The Alchemy of the Word': 'A premonition of the imminent end of the world is always a shot in the arm for the arts; if the world has, in fact, just ended, what then?'

## **'In a silver frame, for life': Angela Carter's Poetry and the Function of Art**

**Sarah Gamble (Swansea University, UK)**

While Carter's poetry is in the process of being discovered, it has yet to be subjected to thorough critical analysis. I am particularly interested in the way in which the visual and linguistic coincide in her verse: accordingly, this paper proposes to examine how Carter frequently uses visual images as a starting

point for poetry, and to what end. Although some of her limited body of verse is undoubtedly inspired by literary – and particularly medieval literary – texts, others are poetic treatments of pictures, ‘translating’ an image from the realm of sight to the realm of language. In order to illustrate this process, I will analyse two of Carter’s poems: ‘The Magic Apple Tree’ (1965) and the 1966 version of ‘Poem for a Wedding Photograph’. Both not only reference specific artistic works, but also meditate on the function of art as the ‘freeze-framing’ of an image – as Carter writes in ‘Poem for a Wedding Photograph’, [f]rozen in this eternal moment / forever’.

## **Levels and Layers: Carter’s Medieval Aesthetics**

### **Katie Garner (University of St Andrews, UK)**

‘As a medievalist’, Carter remarks in her 1985 interview with John Haffenden, ‘I was trained to read books as having many layers’. The same interview contains Carter’s well-known and oft-quoted description of her work as bricolage, and her self-definition as a medievalist is a reminder that the medieval literature she studied while at the University of Bristol is an important part of the ‘great scrap-yard’ of material within her extraordinarily wide-ranging grasp. The recent publication of Carter’s poetry offers exciting new opportunities to explore her early engagement with reimagining medieval texts, such as *Piers Plowman* (in ‘William the Dreamer’s Vision of Nature’) and the medieval iconography of the unicorn (in ‘Unicorn’), and consider how this affects our reading of her early fiction. These poems and the early novels of the Bristol trilogy record the influence of medieval literature in the form of direct references and allusions, some of which this paper will trace, but it will also propose that the ‘many layers’ and allegorical qualities of the medieval texts that Carter knew and admired – *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Piers Plowman* and others – exert a broader influence on her narrative methods. Reading Carter as a medievalist who understood medieval texts as particularly open to multiple forms of interpretation can, I hope, prove a productive context for thinking about her blending of textual and visual intertexts and the shifting levels of signification in her work.

## **Angela Carter's Curious Alices through the Looking-Glass of Languages**

**Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère (University of Lausanne, Switzerland)**

Angela Carter's fiction is filled with references to Lewis Carroll's Alice books, from her early poems to the last collection of short stories. This paper shows how Carter captured her experience of linguistic and cultural estrangement through this favourite intertext. Unlike the ordinary mirror, which presupposes equivalence between languages, the Carrollian looking-glass opens up into a strange and wonder-filled space that Carter explored as a foreigner in Japan and a translator from the French. The cross-linguistic and transcultural imaginary that informs Carter's writing becomes visible through a translational and transcreative reading of her work which, in turn, sheds light on her intertextual source(s) in mirror-like fashion.

## **'An Infinite Plurality of Worlds:' *Nights at the Circus* and Deleuze & Guattari's Minor Literature**

**Rachel Hill (Goldsmiths University of London, UK)**

Sensual, seductive and seditious, Angela Carter's oeuvre is a battering ram, interrogating hegemonic discourse and unravelling dominant subject formations. Carter's literary challenges to phallogocentric thought and dictums are vociferously enacted through the multifarious becoming-minoritarian of characters in *Nights at the Circus*. Whether it is the hybridic avian-women Fevvers, the tiger-women Princess of Abyssinia, the occult activist Lizzie or the journalist-clown-shaman Jack Walser, all characters in *Nights at the Circus* experience affective encounters with alterity. These encounters dismantle normative renditions of subjectivity, subsequently precipitating experimentation with new ways of being in the world. As Carter herself stated, her work strove to create: 'The means of expression for an infinitely greater variety of experience than has been possible heretofore, to say things for which no language previously existed.' In the notion of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari posit the conditions under which literary work can realise Carter's aim to become revolutionary. Deleuze and Guattari delineate three characteristics of minor literature: the deterritorialisation or 'stuttering' of a language, the relation of characters to their larger milieu as explicitly political and the status of creative acts as a form of collective enunciation. Foregrounding its intensive, affective potentialities, minor literature 'stops being representative in order to move towards its extremities or its limits.' (Deleuze & Guattari) This paper will give an

account of the ways in which *Nights at the Circus* enacts minor literary strategies to challenge dominant narratives and ultimately invoke the people-yet-to-come.

## **Inscrutable? No, Terribly Scrutable: Carter and the Japanese Signs**

**Natsumi Ikoma (International Christian University, Japan)**

How Angela Carter spent her years in Japan has so far been 'mysterious' to the public (Gamble, 2006), but it is a shared knowledge that her literary style significantly changed post-Japan. Informed by an original source who intimately knows Carter's personal life in Japan, this paper examines the fascination she had for Japanese signs including performances of femininity at puppet theatres, and even human faces and bodies, in the way similar to the one described by Roland Barthes in *Empire of Signs* (1970). Being illiterate in Japanese language, Carter had a peculiar ability to grasp the signs as pure visual 'signifiers' independent of their 'signified' meanings. Especially fascinating to Carter were Japanese men; contrary to the usual conception of the 'inscrutable' Japanese, she said in an interview that she found them 'terribly scrutable' (Bell, 33). After one year of a devastating relationship with a Japanese man, Carter brewed an acute sense of alienation not only as a foreigner, but as a woman. This paper, by examining the original, personal information, and Carter's writing during the Japan years including her archived journals, argues that the struggle she had with and the influences from, these Japanese signs contributed to her theorization of femininity as performance, and to her development into a postmodern feminist writer, whose peculiar technique of mixing visual signs in her narrative continues to present to readers the world made unfamiliar and extraordinary.

## **'Now you are at the place of annihilation': Apocalypse, Trauma, and Spectrality in Angela Carter's 'The Scarlet House' and Robert Eggers' *The Witch***

**Hope Jennings (Wright State University, USA)**

Rooted in the gothic imagination, Angela Carter's story 'The Scarlet House' (1977) and Robert Eggers' film *The Witch* (2015) construct a dense network of images exploring archetypal horrors centered on patriarchal fears of the monstrous-feminine. Focused on the grotesque figure of the crone, or 'archaic mother,' and the association of women's bodies with animality and abjection, their texts expose traumatic histories of violence directed toward women. As apocalyptic

narratives, both texts depict entropic nightmares of increasing chaos, disorder, and degradation, acting out a fever dream of communal and individual memories through symbolic language drawn from history, folklore, and the visual arts. Carter and Eggers thus engage with spectrality (and spectral iconographies), where, according to Derrida, the spectral is that which returns to haunt the contemporary imagination despite all attempts to obliterate traces of its presence or memory, ultimately forcing us to confront and engage with radical otherness. Eggers has described his film as an 'inherited nightmare,' and that by 'going into deep, dark, horrific psychological places,' his aim was to show how 'the shadows of the past live on today.' Although Eggers does not indicate direct familiarity with her work, his film appears to be a response (or homage) to Carter's influential rewriting of folk and fairy tale. Moreover, *The Witch* has been praised and contested as 'empowering' for women, echoing debates that attempt to reconcile Carter's radical feminist politics with her unflinching depiction of sexual violence. The critiques against both often stem from interpretations that ignore the ways in which their texts operate at deeply allegorical levels, and this paper contends that Carter's work on folktale and gothic instructs us on how to 'read' *The Witch* as a modern and historical feminist fable.

### **The chance encounter of a stuffed dodo, a fallen star, and a fruit woman automaton... The Secret Life of Things Queering the Museal Gaze in Angela Carter's Postmodern Curiosity Cabinets**

**Anna Kérchy (University of Szeged, Hungary)**

My paper aims to explore how besides Angela Carter's obvious interest in the subversive potentials of visual performance arts – from puppet show and circus to cinema and vaudeville theatre, which provided explicit fictional frames to her major novels –, yet another historical counter-tradition of spectatorship, formative of her writing, can be tracked in her leitmotif of the proto-museum: the Renaissance Cabinet of Curiosities, the Victorian freak show, and even the Surrealist found object composites – privately owned, capriciously gathered, (pseudo) encyclopedic, hybrid collections of bizarre, marvellous objects resisting categorisation. While Carter's 'The Curious Room' locates a stuffed dodo, a fallen star, and a fruit woman automaton in the *Kunstkammer* of Austro-Hungarian monarch Rudolph II (whose collection of faked specimen of natural history, religious relics, and perplexing artwork ravished Carter just as much as his mad debaucheries thematised in Miklós Jancsó's avant-garde film *Private Vices, Public Virtues*); the living statues of Ma Nelson's brothel or Madame Shreck's museum of female monsters in *Nights at the Circus* are nods to the female 'exhibits' of

nineteenth-century travelling sideshows like P.T. Barnum's side museums; and all the oddly defamiliarised objects invested with private mythological significance, like the antiquarian Buzz's odd paraphernalia in *Love*, are reminiscent of the object oriented ontology Carter appreciated in Lautrémont's or Svankmajer's surrealist gambits. For Carter, the surprise quality of these non-institutionalised exhibits offers spectators an alternative to the ideologically disciplinary male gaze (Doane, Mulvey) or medical gaze (Foucault) by a museal gaze that implies an inherent queering of the look, as it allows for a transitory re-enchantment via a ritualistic (mis)remembering and creative forgetting, in a space where cultural imageries of this world can 'collide to display their heterogeneity, even irreconcilability, to network, to hybridize to live together in the gaze and the memory of the spectator' (Huysen). The hybridity of the proto-museal collections reflects Carter's dizzying intertextual play with art historical predecessors and former cultural epistemes, her transmedial confusion of déjà lu and the déjà vu, her postmodern patchworking writerly style, and fluid, gender-bending identity formations. I will interface the cultural history of curiosity cabinets, freak shows, and their surrealist 'ready-made' predecessors with Carter's strange object assemblages in order to celebrate Carter as a precursor of 'thing studies' and postmillennial artistic engagements with non-anthropocentrism, a tenet shared by recent speculative realist and new materialist philosophies (see *And Another Thing* exhibit curated by Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson in 2011).

## **Funeral Flowers and Femininity: Brutal Botany in Carter's Fairy Tales**

**Harriet MacMillan (University of Edinburgh, UK)**

In *The Language of Flowers*, Beverly Seaton details how, historically, 'a love of flowers [was] a touchstone of true femininity, an outward expression of woman's finest feelings' (1995:18). Indeed, a correlation between the feminine and nature has been emphasised for millennia, with Plato claiming that women 'imitate the earth' (Quoted in Lloyd, 1984: 2).

Angela Carter's fairy tales frequently engage with this supposed connection, using multipurpose metaphors to create a narrative landscape in which flowers are at once beautiful and dangerous to women. The narrator of 'The Bloody Chamber' (1979) is haunted by the image of the 'staining' lilies she is gifted by her husband, the murderous Marquis. Refracted many times over in the gilt mirrors that surround her, the lilies become at once a funeral offering marking the death of the narrator's childhood and a symbol of the Marquis himself, who is 'like one of those cobra-headed, funereal lilies' (2006:3). Carter's evocation of

the lilies in characteristically poetic prose provides the reader with striking visuals, but her clever double use of the metaphor forces it to serve as a space for both female protagonist and male antagonist. The Marquis, a serial murderer of women, subverts the purity of the floral image and severs it from exclusively feminine connotations.

This paper will provide a fresh analysis of the ways in which Carter establishes floral motifs as a means of enriching the visual quality of her stories whilst actively interrogating long-established preconceptions of femininity within a fairy tale framework.

## **Curating the Fairy Tale: A Feminist Practice**

### **Catriona McAra (Leeds College of Art, UK)**

As a feminist curator, my practice draws extensively on a Carterian methodology of demythologization. It also involves a close reading of the ways in which literary art interacts with a feminist subjectivity. My first exhibition in Dundee concerned the rewriting of female fetishism as a feminist fairy tale in visual terms (2010). Since then, I have extensively curated the fairy tales of Tessa Farmer, Samantha Sweeting and Leonora Carrington – all of whose work I would designate as Carterian in attitude.

In 2013 I curated a 'lying-in' event in London based on the findings of Angela Carter and Marina Warner, called *Conteuses: An Evening with Kate Bernheimer*. On this unique occasion, Bernheimer's fairy tale architecture was put into dialogue with the contemporary art of Samantha Sweeting and Tessa Farmer. As the curator of this event, I dressed as Lucy Gold, one of Bernheimer's characters.

For my first exhibition as academic curator at Leeds College of Art (2015), I juxtaposed Tessa Farmer's work with the local Cottingley fairy photographs in order to emphasize the topographies of girlhood and the transitional character of the child-woman as inherent to Farmer's practice.

More recently I have curated Leonora Carrington/Lucy Skaer (2016) with catalogue contributions from Marina Warner, among others. This all-female exhibition is underpinned by the poetics of Mexican novelist, Chloe Aridjis, whose characterization resembles the intimate embodiment of Carter. Angela Carter wrote about and anthologized the work of surrealist artist/writer Leonora Carrington in *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* (1986) after proclaiming: 'the

surrealists were not good with women' (1978). Writers like Susan Rubin Suleiman (1991), Natalya Lusty (2007) and Anna Watz (2016) have demonstrated that, like Carter, Carrington's carnivalesque imagery offered a feminist strategy for moving beyond the gender limitations of surrealism whilst retaining the marvellous of the everyday.

This illustrated paper will explore how the feminism of literary theory can inform exhibition narratives, and how such diverse curatorial strategies have been inherited from Angela Carter's critical and creative writing.

## **Visual Violence and Explosive Masculinity in Angela Carter's *Shadow Dance* (1965)**

**Hazel Montfort (Durham University, UK)**

*Shadow Dance* (1965) is grouped together with *Several Perceptions* (1968), and *Love* (1971) as Carter's 'Bristol Trilogy', a term first used by Marc O'Day in 1994. Despite Carter having written *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) and *Heroes and Villains* (1969) during this period, these texts are seen as separate and pursuing separate styles and themes. Though performance, ritual, and male violence would be continuously navigated throughout her work, *Shadow Dance* has mostly evaded a critical investigation in this vein. This paper will discuss René Girard's theory of 'sacrificial crisis', which explicates how acts of restorative violence are used to reassert destabilized societal hierarchies. A feminist reading of this paradigm—which I will employ—reasserts the complicity and victimhood of women within it. In my reading, *Shadow Dance* interrogates this violent drive and its destructive tendencies; explosive and theatrical acts of violence which both reaffirm the gendered relations of the various characters as well as create unsustainable patterns of behavior which demand deaths. While Morris, a visual artist, attempts to align his art with his reality, Honeybuzzard seeks to align his reality with his art. This tension between the signified and the signifier is played out across the battleground of women's bodies, from Ghislaine to Emily to the unnamed 'Struldbругs'. While this text offers little by way of a solution, it presents a skepticism of the masculinities which underpin it and the dehumanization necessary to rely on such a process; it is a shift of the gender theatre's curtain to see the bare and violent mechanisms beneath.

## **Religious Painting, Atheism and Gender in the Work of Angela Carter**

**Marie Mulvey-Roberts (University of the West of England, Bristol, UK)**

Angela Carter professed her atheism as a rigorous system of disbelief and critiqued religion throughout her work. The most obvious expression is her Surrealist film *The Holy Family Album* (1991), which represents the life of Christ in the history of Western art through a series of paintings, as if they are photographs in God's family album. The religious allegory contained in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) satirises medieval Catholicism in terms of the bizarre rituals and beliefs of a group of centaurs, based on a sadomasochistic theology that has been particularly damaging to women. The way in which the female is demonised as 'profane whore' or venerated as 'holy virgin' is evident from Carter's short story concerning the Wrightsman Magdalene. The focus is on a painting by Georges de La Tour in which he polarises his portrayal of Mary Magdalene between that of penitent and prostitute. Carter also considers the way in which an erroneous composite Magdalene has been created through art, not least through its dialectic with the Virgin Mary. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter exposes the fallacy of the idealisation of women from earth mother to screen idol, while the continuing denigration of women within religion is evident from a close reading of a neglected intertextual source, linking an episode in the novel regarding Zero and his wives to a modern-day cult. While scholarly attention has been devoted predominantly to her demythologising and iconoclastic radical scepticism in regard to myth, this paper will argue that this approach is equally applicable to religion, since it was regarded by Carter as another form of myth-making.

## **How to Cook a Jaguar: The Folkloric Motif of Human-Animal Transformation in the Works of Angela Carter and Ana Maria Pacheco**

**Mayako Murai (Kanagawa University, Japan)**

In this paper, I compare the uses of the folkloric motif of human-animal transformation in the works of Angela Carter and Ana Maria Pacheco. In particular, I focus on their recasting of the 'Beauty and the Beast' story and discuss how they use the motif of human to animal transformation as a metaphor for women's affirmation of difference, ambiguity, and fluidity. I argue that their works, inspired by storytelling tradition and informed by feminist aesthetics, encourage positive associations between femininity and animality in ways that challenge androcentric and anthropocentric views. In 'The Tiger's Bride,' Carter's rewriting of Madame de Beaumont's 'Beauty and the Beast,' the

heroine's physical transformation into a tiger signals her social, psychological, and sexual liberation from patriarchal oppression. The process of her philosophical awakening and her voluntary union with the dumb beast show suggests that rationality is not the human male's prerogative. Carter's description of the heroine's sensuous transformation resonates with Pacheco's visual retelling of a Brazilian folktale about a woman turned into a jaguar in her series of drypoints *Tales of Transformations* 1-6. In this tale, a grandmother tricks a jaguar and boils him in a large pot. Her granddaughter eats the meat and is turned into a jaguar herself. The final image shows the jaguar-woman and her grandmother walking hand in hand through starry woods with confidence, curiosity, and courage. In Pacheco's work, human beings and wild animals are shown as equally free, intelligent, and beautiful, suggesting a more fluid and interpenetrating mode of human-animal relationship.

## **Terrorism as a Role-Playing Game: Carter's 'Elegy for a Freelance' and Japan**

**Yutaka Okuhata (Birkbeck College, University of London, UK)**

In her essay 'Mishima's Toy Sword' (1971), which describes her experience of seeing the shocking TV news of Yukio Mishima's suicide—seppuku—in the military base in Tokyo in 1970, Angela Carter views Mishima as a kind of 'clown' in the context of 'the rice and circuses of modern Japan', stating that 'his action seemed wishfully laughable.' In another essay on Japanese terrorism, 'Death in Japan' (1972), Carter also interprets the hostage crisis committed by the Japanese Red Army in Karuizawa in 1972, which was broadcast live throughout the nation, as an 'elaborate psychodrama'. Reflecting such theatricality of both left- and right-wing terrorist incidents in Japan in the early seventies, Carter's dystopian short fiction 'Elegy for a Freelance' (1974), which anticipates her 1977 novel, *The Passion of New Eve*, represents radicals in London who are engaged in the violent role-playing game of terrorism. Although the female narrator of the story is directly involved in neither the murder of a landlord nor the 'execution' of X, her lover and a totalitarian leader of the group, Carter implies that, brainwashed to act in the role of 'Madonna of the Barricades', this woman as a 'player' has gradually changed her way of seeing the world and lost her natural identity. Focusing on the relationship between Carter and the horror of terrorism in Japan, this paper will explore how the characters are finally betrayed by the very roles that they have been playing when the game is suddenly over and "the time of the freelance assassins' ends without any notice.

## **Fabulous Beings and Comic Bodies**

**Kim L. Pace (Artist, UK)**

Whilst Angela Carter was herself inspired by the visual arts, her vivid, politicised writing has proved an important repository of ideas and imaginative possibilities for contemporary visual artists such as myself. I propose to look at a specific 'prong' that recurs in her writing – that centres on the carnivalesque – and that is highly inspirational. I would like to juxtapose particular examples from Carter's texts with images of my work, to elucidate further. Angela Carter was interested in what is associated with the fringes of society; she was – as I also am - drawn to material in the 'common domain' such as oral tales and the 'comic', which she saw as a preoccupation of working class culture.

Carter used the image and metaphor of the fabulous being throughout her writing, including puppets that escape and absurd, incredible beings that blur boundaries of established or perceived social norms. The carnivalesque characters in her writing explore ideas of agency and the act of self-construction: they also invert hierarchies, a recurrent theme within my own work. For example, in *The Magic Toyshop* and 'The Loves of Lady Purple', puppets are used to critique the idea of woman as doll or object, where the familiar becomes strange through a process of transformation. These references resonate in my own works, which aim to provide the potential to escape standard tropes of social performance - by transforming beyond the conventional limits of identity, thereby showing us alternative modes of being.

## **Uncanny Representations of the Marionette and Clockwork Figurine in the Fiction of Angela Carter and their Connections with E. T. A. Hoffmann's Stories**

**Paulina Palmer (Birkbeck College, University of London, UK)**

My paper will focus on Angela Carter's fictional representations of the marionette and clockwork figurine, discussing her association of these motifs with the concept of the uncanny and her utilisation of them to depict facets of gender and sexuality. Fictional texts by Carter to which I refer include *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and 'The Loves of Lady Purple'. I shall also explore the intertextual connections between Carter's treatment of the motifs and E.T.A. Hoffmann's depiction of them in 'Nutcracker and Mouse King' and 'The Sandman'. Theoretical analyses of the uncanny to which I refer include, in addition to essays by Sigmund Freud, Ernst Jentsch and

Helene Cixous, ideas from my study *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* (University of Wales Press, 2012).

In discussing Carter's fiction, I shall continue the analysis of her work in my two earlier essays published in Sue Roe (ed.), *Women Reading Women's Writing* (1987) and Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (eds), *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism* (1997). I shall also further my discussion in 'Jeanette Winterson's Development of Carnavalesque Motifs and Themes and their Queer Significance in the Fiction of Angela Carter' in the journal *Textus: English Studies in Italy* (forthcoming).

### **Some Kinds of Love: Angela Carter, Art and Objects**

#### **David Punter (University of Bristol, UK)**

In this paper I would like to focus on Angela Carter's fifth novel, *Love*, which was published in 1971. *Love* appears to tell the story of a disastrous triangle – the constantly shifting relationships between Annabel and the brothers Buzz and Lee – and yet, seen through a different lens, it is less the narrative that stands out than the place in which it is largely set, an apartment which is crammed with objects, 'a heterogeneous collection' which 'seemed to throb with a mute, inscrutable, symbolic life', as Carter puts it. Buzz is a photographer, and 'cardboard crates of prints and negatives' accumulate in his room. To Annabel, who draws and sketches incessantly, Lee is at one point no more 'than a collection of coloured surfaces'; 'her pictures had never referred to the objects they might have seemed to represent but, to her, had been palpable things themselves'. There is therefore here an emphasis both on physical space and on the object (in all possible senses) of art; in a manner reminiscent of Elizabeth Bowen, the things take on a life of their own, a life by which Annabel is pathologically drained. We could alternatively see this as a reversal, or melding, of foreground and background; Annabel sees herself on occasion as 'no bigger than a blade of grass' while the things in the collection grow, multiply, smother and fall apart. This could be seen as a strategy of surrealism; but the flat canvasses of cubism, matched by Annabel's own frightening flatness of affect and alienation from common understandings of life, might be a more fruitful comparison.

## **Bathos, not Pathos: Verbal and Visual humour in Angela Carter's Narratives**

**Victor Sage (Emeritus Professor, University of East Anglia, UK)**

Carter's devotion to the rehabilitation, or rather the habilitation *tout court*, of the Victorian painter Richard Dadd who assassinated his father – was partly driven by the pun in his name – he killed his dad. This awful joke, which I heard her make, was a profoundly serious one, because she put a great deal of effort into publicising his work and in supporting the first-ever exhibition of that work in London in the 1970s. There was, it seemed, no contradiction; and, recalling this, and other jokes of hers, this paper reflects on the topic of her humour and her love of clowns (particularly the Marx Brothers); the treatment of comic structures in her work and the clash of registers which is always present and which often generates a not unmixed laughter. Stylistically, she is a lover of romantic, structural hyperbole; but she subjects her own flights to a series of clownish pratfalls and pert street language and Cockney debunking. Carter is a writer and a lover of the Grotesque, who celebrates the Grotesque Woman. When she burst on the scene with *Fireworks* in the early 1970s, she had just returned from Japan, where she had felt herself to be a giant wherever she went. But these explosively short texts were written in a room that was too small for a novel, she says in the introduction to that book. This paper will examine the workings of comic structures in a range of Carter's writing across the visual and verbal realms.

## **Angela Carter's Feminist ekphrasis in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman***

**Julie Sauvage (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier, France)**

'Time is a Man, Space is a Woman and her Masculine Portion is Death': throughout the 1970s, Angela Carter repeatedly referred to this line from William Blake's 'Vision of the Last Judgement' to present the relationship between space and time as a war of the sexes, and I would like to show that it provides a key to understanding her feminist use of ekphrasis. In the first novel Carter published during this decade, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, she explicitly thematised the opposition between time and space, and challenged artistic rules and boundaries by using ekphrasis as a locus of tension/amalgamation between masculine, temporal arts and feminine, spatial arts, between narratives and mute, still images.

The narrator—named after a sixteenth-century master, Monsù Desiderio — thus depicts works ranging from *Explosion in a Cathedral*, to *The Legend of Briar Rose* by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones or Marcel Duchamps' surrealist *Étant Donnés*, generally as scenes enacted by the characters in his narrative. Such tableaux ultimately show that time always underlies images, that they cannot still the narrative flow but rather originate it and, conversely, that a narrative can be brought down to a set of images which, in turn, can generate narratives. In this novel, the intricacies of spatial and temporal arts demonstrate that the 'masculine portion' of space and images, the ekphrastic blend of narrative and painting finally represents narrative life, not death.

## **Magic Realism: Contemporary Figurative Art As Political Oracle**

### **Dominic Shepherd (Arts University Bournemouth, UK)**

Angela Carter's writing is referenced within the magic realist movement (including other authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie). In this paper I wish to look at visual artists working with 'magic realism' in Britain over the last thirty years. Artists such as Paula Rego, Tessa Farmer and myself draw on this movement. I wish to expand on the use of 'magic realism' as an oracle, a form of divination. Carter, as with the other magic realist writers, used their invented worlds to critique political realities. The 'Magical' has a considerable and consistent history in the creative act from Lascaux cave paintings to Joseph Beuy's shamanic performances. Reflecting Carter's use of language and surreal narratives to create intuitive readings of the socio/political landscape my contention is that the creative act in painting allows for a similar osmosis, a magical act that creates singular works of art that consistently reflect contemporary social and political realities. As a practitioner I wish to articulate, through words and visuals, on the very personal act of creativity and how 'making' is an act of exploring the unknown through 'stuff', an area considered in current theories of 'New Materialism'.

## **Kaleidoscopes, stereoscopes and phantasmagoria: the promises and disappointments with other ways of seeing**

### **Caleb Sivyer (Cardiff University, UK)**

Angela Carter's love of cinema is well known, evidenced by her essays on individual films and stars, her account of going to the Granada cinema in Tooting as a child, and the extensive allusions to cinema throughout her fiction. Given

Carter's intense focus on a variety of issues connected with gender, it is no surprise that her representation of visuality shares strong similarities with the work of Laura Mulvey and John Berger, both of whom wrote about masculine structures of looking in the 1970s. In my presentation, I will explore the variety of alternatives to what Mulvey calls the 'male gaze' that appear throughout Carter's oeuvre. Drawing on Jonathan Crary's research into the plethora of optical devices invented in the nineteenth century, which he argues reconfigured the visual field in significant ways, I will look at how Carter's fascination with devices other than the cinematograph, such as the kaleidoscope, stereoscope and phantasmagoria, register in her work the desire for alternative scopic regimes. Additionally, I will note Carter's ambivalence about such alternatives, in particular with reference to *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, a text that explores both the promises and the disappointments of alternative ways of being. I will argue that, whilst Carter sees the visual field as culturally constructed and therefore open to change, she is also concerned that alternative ways of looking are open to appropriation by patriarchal power structures and that, although promising to liberate the gendered field of vision, they may end up reproducing the structure of the male gaze, much as Hoffman's 'desire machines' promise liberation but in fact deliver a new kind of totalitarianism.

## **The art of irezumi: depicting 'People as Pictures' in the works of Angela Carter**

**Helen Snaithe (Swansea University, UK)**

The illustrated body is a popular motif in Carter's work of fiction: from the biblical landscape that appears on Jewel's back in *Heroes and Villains* (1969); to the intricate designs woven into the centaurs' bodies in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972); to the illustrated figures of Corinna Sargood's drawings that feature in *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1991; 1992), tattoos act as an occupational badge that reveal a broader understanding of a social and cultural framework in Carter's work.

I argue that Carter's visual representation of 'People as Pictures' reflects a contextual narrative that explores Carter's own interests in the practices of irezumi, a form of Japanese tattooing. Discussed in *Shaking a Leg*, irezumi is heavily referenced in the masochistic practices of the centaurs in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, used as a ritualised form of tradition that reinforced hierarchical oppression, as well as a form of punishment. Yet, tattoos can also be read as a form of communal bonding, and as a way of 'reclaiming'

narrative: Sargood's influences from Japanese tattoos in her illustrations are testimony to the evolving nature of the visual representation of the body.

It is perhaps fitting that the communal value of the tattoo also functions as a legacy of Carter's work. This paper will finish with a discussion that not only recognises the cultural context and influences of Carter's use of irezumi, but also acknowledges the extent to which her works of fiction have influenced scholars and readers alike to mark their own bodies with literary and visual interpretations of Carter's work.

### **A 'holiday from the persistent self': dandyism, fashion and subcultural style in Angela Carter's fiction of the 1960s.**

**Catherine Spooner (Lancaster University, UK)**

Carter's short essay, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style' (1967), argues for the changeability of fashion as a liberating force, through which 'girls have been emancipated from the stiff forms of iconic sexuality' (*Shaking a Leg*, 109). The essay encapsulates in highly condensed form some of the major sartorial concerns of her fiction of the 1960s and throughout her career: style as rebellion; dandyism; performance; disguise and fancy dress; fetishism. In it, the white wedding dress, 'the supreme symbol of woman as a sexual thing and nothing else whatever' (*Shaking a Leg*, 108), is contrasted with the fecund invention of subcultural style, from hippy bricolage to the Hell's Angels' beastly dandyism.

As this paper will demonstrate, this theme is elaborated in Carter's novels of the 1960s: *Shadow Dance* (1966); *The Magic Toyshop* (1967); *Several Perceptions* (1968); *Heroes and Villains* (1969); and *Love* (1971). In these novels, Carter repeatedly returns to the iconic symbol of the white wedding dress and its defilement in order to put into play her conception of style as creative rebellion. Accordingly, her fiction of the 1960s delineates and celebrates a particular sensibility that could be described as subcultural. Drawing on classic criticism including Dick Hebdige (1979), Elizabeth Wilson (1985) and Angela McRobbie (1989) and reading Carter's fiction alongside 1960s fashion images, this paper will explore the ways in which subcultural style became a major influence on Carter's aesthetic sensibility. In doing so, it will argue that the 'holiday from the persistent self' (*Shaking a Leg*, 106) that fashion offers is ambivalent for Carter, alternately presenting the heady possibilities of liberation and the sinister dangers of escapism.

## **'The Rough and the Holy: Angela Carter's Marionette theatre'.**

**Maggie Tonkin (University of Adelaide, Australia)**

Angela Carter's writing has often been read through the prism of theatricality: performance, and performativity are pervasive motifs within the critical tradition that has grown up around her work. These discussions have often focused on the performativity of gender in Carter's fiction, and on her writing itself as a form of performance, even of spectacle. In contradistinction to this tradition of reading performance and performativity metaphorically, this paper will focus on a specific representation of literal performance in Carter's work: the marionette theatre. It will investigate the depictions of marionettes in the short story, 'The Loves of Lady Purple' from *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974) and *The Magic Toyshop* (1963) in the light of her rejection of theatrical naturalism in the essay 'Acting it Up on the Small Screen' (1979). Taking the marionette theatre as exemplary of her interest in demotic theatrical forms, this paper will situate her depictions of marionettes within specific cultural traditions of puppetry, as well as the literary history of the animate puppet and the 'man or marionette' debate central the twentieth-century European theatrical avant-garde. Peter Brook's categories of the theatre as deadly, holy and rough, as advanced in his 1968 classic, *The Empty Space*, will be pivotal to my analysis.

## **Mannequins of Desire: Angela Carter, Cindy Sherman and Surrealism**

**Anna Watz (Linköping University, Sweden)**

This paper proposes a 'bifocal reading' of Angela Carter's novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972). On the one hand, it investigates the novel's intertextual relation to surrealist visual art, which it argues provides a provocative illustration of the performative way in which desire is structured (anticipating to some extent Judith Butler's formative account in *Gender Trouble*). At the same time, the paper seeks to extend the context of Carter's feminism by aligning her not only with literary peers, but with the work of her contemporaries in the visual arts.

The paper focuses on the episode in the novel in which artificial prostitutes, 'wax mannequins of love', appear displayed in cages for the visual pleasure of male guests. This fantasy scene ironically alludes to the 'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme' of 1938, which featured the installation *Rue Surréaliste*: a long corridor where fetishised female shop window mannequins were on display.

This installation – which in itself, albeit ambivalently, plays with myths of femininity and with blurred lines between desire, consumerism and violence – is shown to have been one of the structuring principles of the protagonist Desiderio's erotic imagination, indicating that desire not only shapes representation, but that representation in turn conditions desire.

Carter's feminist strategy of ironic reiteration will be read alongside that of photographer Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), who like Carter parodically exhibits the constructedness of femininity and sexuality in her art. The analysis will focus on Sherman's *Sex Pictures* (1992) – images which like Hoffman explicitly reference surrealist representations of violated and fragmented female bodies through an ironic staging and manipulation of mannequins.

**Blood, sexuality, puberty, werewolves: revisiting Angela Carter's revolutionary feminist Gothic horror 'The Company of Wolves' in folktale, YA fiction and film.**

**Gina Wisker (Brighton University, UK)**

Published in book form in 1979, the film directed by Neil Jordan in 1984, 'The Company of Wolves' was truly revolutionary in its exposure of the cautionary folk tale Little Red Riding Hood as a narrative of cultural, moral restraint on the sexual awakening of young women. Equally revolutionary was its reawakening of Gothic horror as a mode of unsettling complacent behaviours and beliefs, reviving the link between the defamiliarisation and uncanny of Gothic horror with the opportunities it offers and enacts for reinterpretation and overturning of repressive, dangerous, mindsets and behaviours. Carter's short story moves from a mix of terror, the everyday and the archival work of folk tale in a way reminiscent of the work of Sabine Baring Gould, to gather them up into a liberating celebration of women's sexual power and independence. Rosaleen, the young heroine chooses the welcoming arms of the sexually alluring wolf to the meek compliance, sexual shyness and patriarchal power games which usually restore order in the more conventional versions of the tale. Carter turns the tables on conventions of respectable female sexual behaviour 'Truly, it felt like Year One' (1988). Significantly, she also re-awoke our interest in Gothic horror, establishing it as the genre by which to challenge conventions (family, identity, sexuality, gender roles), and representations of all kinds of 'normality'.

This paper re-explores the excitement and challenge of Carter's short story which influenced both werewolf and vampire fiction and film (mainstream and YA), focusing on young women's sexuality and puberty such as Suzy McKee

Charnas's *Boobs*, and the film *Gingersnaps*. We also focus on the success of Neil Jordan's film in enacting deep seated terrors through (then unusual, now familiar,) horror special effects, particularly visualising metamorphosis, commonplace now in contemporary horror films. 'The Company of wolves' uses the figure of the werewolf to transform both expressions of women's sexuality and independence, and Gothic horror as a vehicle for cultural critique, initiating a moment of liberation and new energies for both. We will look at Angela's Carter's story, Neil Jordan's film, the film *Gingersnaps* and Suzy McKee Charnas's *Boobs*.

### **'[T]he Chinese influence on my researches' (p. 252): The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman and Chinese Philosophy**

**Heidi Yeandle (Swansea University, UK)**

South American mythology, Japanese culture, Western philosophy, French literature: these are just some of the influences on Angela Carter's surreal novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) which have been examined to date. However, references and allusions to Chinese Philosophy are also central to the text, and it is this aspect of Carter's intertextuality that I am concerned with here. Archival research demonstrates that Carter extensively researched Chinese Philosophy while she lived in Japan (1969-72), where she wrote *Doctor Hoffman*. During this time she read and made lengthy notes on two key texts on Chinese thought: Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*, Volume IV: I (1962) and Derk Bodde's 1952 translation of Fung Yu-lan's *A History of Chinese Philosophy* Volume I: *The Period of the Philosophers* (MS 88899/1/93). Her research encompasses a number of areas of Chinese thought, with notes on the well-known concept of yin and yang as well as Taoism more broadly. Confucian thought is also included in her research, as are notes on the School of Names in Chinese Philosophy. These aspects of her reading inform Doctor Hoffman's work, as demonstrated by the 'great number' of Chinese books in his cupboard (p. 244) and the 'pair of sliding doors with Chinese characters painted on them', which corresponds to his family motto (p. 254). My paper will examine how Chinese Philosophy informs Doctor Hoffman's endeavour to redefine reality, from concepts of naming and beginnings to reflections and harmony.