Angela Carter's Narrative Chiasmus *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve*

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> I don't on the whole remember my own dreams, but I quite often use the formal structures of dreams—formal structures which I tend to get from Freud rather than from my own experience. (Angela Carter to John Haffenden 82)

Encounters with Reality

Angela Carter's relationship with critical theory revealed a deep ambivalence throughout her career, a tension that makes it difficult to know how seriously the reader should take her use of that theory. We can read this ambivalence throughout Carter's posthumously collected non-fiction writings, *Shaking A Leg*, which have transformed critics' understanding of the fictional work for which she is best known. On the one hand, her repeated declarations of her commitments to materialism, feminism, and socialism led her to develop a free-form semiotic approach to cultural criticism and her own fiction, informed by an eclectic stew of many forms of 20th century Anglo-American and Continental philosophies in a kind of intellectual *bricolage*—a methodology she discussed with John Haffenden (92). As Carter's friend and critic Lorna Sage points out: "French structuralist thinkers (Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault) were important to her too, because they provided the armour of theory she could call on to protect her creative intuitions" (*Angela Carter* 2). On the other hand, few theorists escape Carter's humorous deflations (save, perhaps,

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Marcuse, Adorno, and Foucault).[1] While the collected writings reveal a feminist whose political commitments led her to spend an entire career punching holes in all forms of patriarchy's paper tigers, engaging her works becomes problematic insofar as these paper tigers often include the very critical discourses readers use to unpack her texts.

Because of this reflexive incorporation, it becomes tempting to read Carter's dense allegories as merely self-referential or parodic picaresques. Certainly the imagery at times can appear so outrageously surreal as to seem merely farcical. Carter's deliberate use of allegory, however, functions in a way similar to other works of magical realism, which for many practitioners serves as a deeply political genre. Carter herself critiqued the tendency of Gabriel Garcia Márquez's non-Hispanic readers to miss the allegories of Columbian history involved in his fiction, thereby reading his novels not as "a heightened reality, but in a timeless, placeless dream world . . . . The dreams he recounts are not holidays from reality but encounters with it" (*Shaking* 459). This mimetic encounter may seem hard to see when the imagery includes centaurs and talking wolves, yet I will argue that her work in all of its forms remains deeply committed to a kind of realism. Carter's technique differs from writers like her friend Salman Rushdie insofar as Carter's allegory functions less as an historical political critique with particular historical targets, and more as a critique of the psychoanalytically structured political economy of the psyche in our historical moment.

In this essay, I will argue that Carter's "theoretical armor" served not only as a rationalization of intuition, as Sage suggests, but rather as the very animating force of her strongest speculative fiction in the 1970s. Rather than seeing Carter's works as unstructured picaresque narratives rehearsing one form or another of contemporary theory, I will argue that Carter's works remain in constant dialogue with these theories. More specifically, I will attempt to provide a map for reading, demonstrating how Carter's aesthetic technique systematically incorporates and rewrites the psychoanalytic stage theories of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and Jacques Lacan as allegorical narrative structures in her 1970s novels, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Pas-*

[1] For example, Roland Barthes's study, *The Fashion System*, would be "an unsatisfactory book for someone whose mind doesn't function like clockwork on odd days and fireworks on even days, which is surely how Barthes's mind must have operated" (*Shaking* 144). Jean-Paul Sartre's relationship with Simone de Beauvoir, whose *Second Sex* was highly influential for Carter's brand of feminism, makes her ponder the question "every thinking woman in the Western world must have posed herself one time or other: why is a nice girl like Simone wasting her time sucking up to a boring old fart like J.-P.?" (*Shaking* 525).

sion of New Eve. Carter allegorizes psychoanalytic stage theory as a temporal progression both schematically and structurally in *Doctor Hoffman*, which functions as a kind of thesis to *New Eve*'s chiasmatic temporal antithesis. Carter's rewriting thereby does not merely rehearse or interrogate psychoanalysis, but also implicates psychoanalysis as a central animating ideology in the reproduction of patriarchy.

Urban Space as Postmodern Psychoanalytic Subjectivity

At the beginning of each work, *Doctor Hoffman* and *New Eve* both suggest that modern Western culture develops because of the repression of the Oedipal foundations that lie beneath it, much as the Oedipus Complex structures the adult male. Each novel begins with the current state of patriarchal society and a male figure who represents a reified aspect of that society. *Doctor Hoffman*'s Desiderio figures the unconscious path of desire and its projected "ideal" representations of women, while *New Eve*'s Evelyn serves as the conscious fruition of that development. The novels differ primarily in the temporal path of the literalization of psychoanalytic stage theory and in the novels' ultimate significations.

As one of the primary symbolic moves associated with Carter's form, both *Doctor Hoffman* and *New Eve* take as their starting point the topos of the city as a personification of contemporary postmodern patriarchy. In *Doctor Hoffman*, this city remains a bit obscure, as Carter leaves very little in the way of cultural markers to indicate either the date or country for the narrative action. While the country seems to be Brazil from both the Catholic cathedral and the immigration patterns Desiderio describes, many other indices suggest that the culture takes aspects from Japan and several Western cultures by way of particular culturally-specific verbal tags (for example, the country's currency consists of quarters (43) and dollars (78), implying that it is the United States, and Desiderio watches for a patrolling policeman's "torch" rather than flashlight (65), implying that action takes place in England.

While these tags could be merely authorial slips, the novel presents these multiple cultural forms to create a kind of Ur-patriarchy, a rather broad and oddly circumspect technique for an historical materialist (although she limits the critique to the United States in *New Eve*). *Doctor Hoffman* links the city directly with the positivist patriarch, the Minister of Determination, who had, in fact, "become the city" (28), and the novel equates the city itself with a bourgeois male:

> Historically, he [the City] had taken a circuitous path to arrive at such a smug, impenetrable, bourgeois affluence; he started life a slaver, a pimp, a gun-runner, a murderer and a pirate, a rakish villain, the exiled scum of Europe . . . . Yet the city, now, was rich, even if it was ugly; but it was just a little nervous, all the same. It hardly ever dared peer over its well-upholstered shoulder in case it glimpsed the yellow mountains louring far towards the north, atavistic reminders of the interior of a continent which inspired a wordless fear in those who had come here so lately. The word "indigenous" was unmentionable. (16)

This passage establishes the metaphor of the futuristic city as equivalent to the conscious subjectivity of the modern male, founded on the repression of his origins, most of which become literalized in the text: the cannibal chief, we learn, had a history as a "pimp" in New Orleans; the Count acts like a "rakish villain" who invents the "Pirates" of Death to save them; all of which begins with the "indigenous" River People episode.

This trope of the city as status quo psychoanalytic ante continues into *New Eve*, where Evelyn describes New York as a chaotic endpoint of the avoidance of the Oedipal foundations that structure it: "And this city, built to specification that precluded the notion of Old Adam, had hence become uniquely vulnerable to that which the streamlined spires conspired to ignore, for the darkness had lain, unacknowledged, within the builders . . . All Old Adam wants to do is, to kill his father and sleep with his mother" (16). The city, therefore, conceals "Old Adam," an important symbol for Carter. As opposed to Jesus' "new Adam," "Old Adam" was the Adam of the Old Testament. Carter equates Old Adam's fall with the crimes of Oedipus, the *preclusion* of which mimics the Minister's defenses against Doctor Hoffman's projections of the patriarchal city's unconscious desires (reinforced later, when Albertina informs Desiderio that "the images we sent out bounced off the intellectual walls the Minister had built" (194)).

Carter discusses the significance of this Old Adam figure twice in the "Polemical Preface" to her study of the works of the Marquis de Sade, *The Sadeian Woman*, each time in terms mixing patriarchal authority with the Lacanian associations for the symbolic order:[2]

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[2] In addition, Carter's notion of "Old Adam" may contain a side reference to D.H. Lawrence's story, "New Eve and Old Adam" (1934) and/or André Gide's 1902 novel *The Immoralist*, in which Michel views his search for self in similar terms: "the authentic being, 'the Old Adam' whom the Gospels no longer accepted; the man whom everything around me—books, teachers, family and I myself—had tried from the first to suppress. . . . And I would compare myself to a palimpsest; I shared the thrill of the scholar who beneath more recent script discovers, on the same paper, an infinitely more precious ancient text" (32). Christina Britzolakis suggests that "the technological creation of Eve alludes to Villiers de L'Isle *Adam's L'Eve Future*, 1886" (51). It is also interesting to note that Time's

> And we laugh wryly at the omnipotence of Old Adam, how he will always, somehow or other, get his way; and we do ourselves and Old Adam the grossest injustice when we grant him so much power, when we reduce sexuality to the status of lowest common denominator without asking ourselves what preconceptions make us think it should be so. (*Sadeian* 17)

> But Sade . . . is capable of believing, even if only intermittently, that it is possible to radically transform society and, with it, human nature, so that the Old Adam, exemplified in God, the King and the Law, the trifold masculine symbolism of authority, will take his final departure from amongst us. (*Sadeian* 24)

Old Adam emerges, therefore, as the calcified ideologies of patriarchal authority (religion, political power, and the law) to which we attribute immutability, yet which we must overthrow as part of any feminist project of liberation.[3]

Nicoletta Vallorani has been the most articulate critic to argue that we can read Carter's use of the urban landscape as part of the contemporary literary tradition that celebrates the city as the perfect manifestation of postmodern liberation from traditional hierarchies. To Vallorani, Carter's New York symbolizes the "postmodern metropolis," and she describes Carter in a way that would seem to make her the ultimate postmodernist author: "This is Angela Carter's city: the secular celebration of chaos . . ." (368).[4] Carter's vision of contemporary urban culture indeed serves as a metaphor for a postmodern topos of nonhierarchical, fragmented identity, culture, and ontology. But the novel also clearly sees this state of the world as a negatively oppressive place, not at all the liberating potentiality of postmodern urban space theorists or the de-sublimated desiring machines Deleuze & Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, which appeared the same year. *Doctor Hoffman* and *New Eve* construct the city as the embodiment of contemporary postmodern culture, and it functions as an aberration, a function of the

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"Woman of the Year" for 1975 included the following passage at the end of the article: "American women, if they have not arrived, are in the process of arrival. Just how far they will go—and how fast—is not totally clear, for women are themselves altering the destination, changing it from a man's world to something else. . . . The drama of the sexes remains—the Old Adam and the New Eve. As 1976 begins, the plot and characters are changing—for the better of both" (16). Whether or not Carter read this article is not certain, but the correlation is suggestive.

[3] This trope reappears in *Nights at the Circus*, where the clowns of chaos "danced the deadly dance of the *past* perfect which fixes everything fast so it can't move again; they danced the dance of Old Adam who destroys the world because we believe he lives forever"(*NC* 243).

[4] Regarding Baroslav's "fructifying chaos of anteriority, the state before the beginning of the beginning," Vallorani asserts: "In a way, this is also a definition of Carter's fictional space; a primordial chaos, whose elements are not melted into a rational and logical system, but merely summed up in a sequence with no understandable links. . . . Systematic deconstruction affecting all the items making up the urban landscape produces what Barbara Ward defines as the "unintended city": a city with no memories and no future, a cunning labyrinth with no exit. . . . New York is grotesque, a hybrid, a postmodern and self-reflective metropolis forever hiding the ancient rational project instead of revealing it" (367-370).

occlusion of the real power relations that truly structure Western patriarchy. The city's lack of memory is clearly not in its favor.

The beginnings of the novels, therefore, symbolize the current ideology that needs unraveling, and the remainder of the novels systematically deconstruct of the logic of that ideology. The rest of this essay will attempt to map out the complex process of that critical logic. My model of reading is the Linati schema for Joyce's *Ulysses,* and I will even provide a chart for decoding, since the works work within such formal aesthetic traditions. Carter learned this generic methodology during her training in medieval allegory at Bristol University in the early 1960s, and she constructs her allegories in the strictly medieval sense: each character and tableau maps onto specific ideas, theories, and other narratives in a densely symbolic fashion. As she told Haffenden, "One of the snags is that I do put everything in a novel to be read—read the way allegory was intended to be read, the way you are supposed to read Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight—on as many levels as you can comfortably cope with at the time" (86). Carter uses allegory to connect theoretical and experiential concerns, the translation of ideas into situations, concepts into narratives. Throughout the fiction, we continually read lines that cue the reader that, whatever other purpose in the narrative, these characters also function as reified abstractions.

Peep Show Parables

At the center of this argument is the idea that the core of Carter's methodology literalizes psychoanalytic stage theories, playfully considering what it would look like if these theories were *really* real. In *Doctor Hoffman*, two separate, yet interrelated, critiques underlie the narrative. The first highly compressed version of the critique appears when Desiderio discovers the peep show, a series of tableaux called "SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD IN THREE LIFELIKE DIMENSIONS" (42). This rehearsal of the stage theories then projects into the novel in a slightly different format. I will examine each peep show machine closely to see from where the imagery derives before exploring how these stages operate throughout the novel as a whole.

Carter restates the title of Exhibit One, "I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE," sixteen years later in her essay on Edgar Allan Poe, "Through a Text Backwards," and the Freudian connotation is clear: "'I have been here before.' In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud says this feeling of familiarity means that we are remembering the bodies of our mother" (*Shaking* 482). Exhibit One depicts

the place of origin, the mother's body, as a fragmented anatomical section of the lower half of her body. Through the figure's vagina, the viewer sees the body's interior, paradoxically as an endless semi-tropical forest with shifting vegetation and a river that leads "upwards towards the source [to] the misty battlements of a castle" that looks "as though its granite viscera housed as many torture chambers as the Château of Silling" (44-5). Desiderio takes this analogy of the Château of Silling from the Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. The text implies, as the link to Carter's later study of Sade suggests, that this view of our origins is not pure, but instead is determined by the works of previous generations. In fact, each of the displays has some adjectival phrase to highlight the simulated nature of the scene (it also implicates the Doctor himself, as his castle will figure in the final chapter of the novel).

In Exhibit Two, "THE ETERNAL VISTAS OF LOVE," Desiderio sees two three-foot eyes looking back at his own. The title comes from an obscure citation in Roger Cardinal and Robert Short's 1970 study, *Surrealism: Permanent Revelation*. There, the authors quote director Ado Kyrou's comment explaining why horror film legend Barbara Steele, best known for the classic Italian horror film *La Maschera del demonio* (1960), was so beloved by the modern surrealists: "The eyes of Barbara Steele transcend all appearances of reality: they reveal the eternal vistas of love" (73).[5] As usual in Carter, the surreal suggests the psychic. In psychoanalytic theory, the mutual gaze of the mother and child forms the first moment in the infant's subjectivity, in which there is no separation between subject and object, a model of "eternal regression" like two mirrors reflecting one another. Later in the novel, while discussing the Chinese logician Hui Shih, Albertina revisits this notion of the mutual gaze-as-eternal regression as the perfect model of static desire offered by the Doctor:

[5] Much of Carter's reading of surrealism, in fact, seems to have been influenced by Cardinal and Short's Surrealism: Permanent Revelation, which Carter obliquely references in "The Alchemy of the Word":

> Surrealism posits poetry as a possible mode, possibly the primary mode, of being. Surrealism was the latest, perhaps the final, explosion of romantic humanism in Western Europe. It demanded the liberation of the human spirit as both the ends and the means of art.
>
> Surrealism = permanent revelation
>
> Surrealism--permanent revolution
>
> So it didn't work out. (509)

> "We are two such disseminating mirrors."
>
> In the looking glasses of her eyes, I saw reflected my entire being whirl apart and reassemble itself innumerable times.
>
> "Love creates for itself a tension that disrupts every tense in time. Love has certain elements in common with eternal regression, since this exchange of reflections can neither be exhausted nor destroyed, but it is not a regression. It is a direct durationless, locationless progression towards an ultimate state of ecstatic annihilation." (202)

This love model offered by Albertina functions as a kind of solipsism-as-entropy, a simulacral version of the infant's relation to its mother's gaze. When Desiderio murders Albertina, therefore, he rejects both this particular brand of ahistorical solipsism and the installation of the Romantic and surrealist idealization of the ideal woman.

Exhibit Three, "THE MEETING PLACE OF LOVE AND HUNGER," has a very short description: "Upon a cut-glass dish of the kind in which desserts are served lay two perfectly spherical portions of vanilla ice-cream, each topped with a single cherry so that the resemblance to a pair of female breasts was almost perfect" (45). This symbolism is obvious, but we can emphasize the overt psychoanalytic significance by tracing Carter's use of Freud's phrase that describes the function of the maternal breast twice in *Sadeian Woman*. The first time she references it is in relation to the visual joke of Jane Mansfield's holding milk bottles to her breasts in Frank Tashlin's *The Girl Can't Help It*: "no," Carter writes, they are "by no means that magic place where Freud, the romantic, thought that love and hunger met" (69). The second time occurs during the "Kleinian Appendix: Liberty, Misanthropy and the Breast" section of *Sadeian Woman*, where Carter discusses Sade in relation to Melanie Klein's *Envy and Gratitude*: "In the terms of the analysis of Melanie Klein, 'good breast' is the prototype of the fountain of all nourishment . . . as Freud says, 'the place where love and hunger meet', a moving symbol of the existence and the satisfaction of the most basic of all human needs. The body of the mother is the great, good place, the concretisation of the earthly paradise . . ." (134). The third exhibit, therefore, corresponds to the Kleinian "good breast" section of psychoanalytic stage theory, closely followed by the response of the "bad breast" phase, where the infant, out of envy, tries to mutilate and destroy the maternal body.

Almost on cue, the next machine, Exhibit Four, "EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT THE NIGHT IS FOR," shows a scene where a "headless body of a mutilated woman lay in a pool of painted blood" with a knife sticking out of a segmented breast that hangs open like meat (45). Dressed in similar fetish-wear

as the first machine's maternal body, this body has "the remains of a pair of black stockings and a ripped suspender belt of shiny black rubber." We might be tempted to read this imagery as a third-wave feminist affirmation of sexual play, but until 1982, Carter believed that when women wore hyper-sexualized clothing, they demonstrated how they remained "the mere dupes of male fancy" (*Shaking* 127)—a point that the reader should keep in mind when considering Leilah's apparel in *New Eve*.[6] The fetish imagery thereby underscores the idea that images of femininity stay artificial constructions of the subject's development. In addition, the use of *meat* to describe the breast underscores Carter's notion that *flesh* becomes *meat* when the subject objectifies the other.

The head from the body in the fourth exhibit shows up in Exhibit Five, "TROPHY OF A HUNTER IN THE FOREST OF THE NIGHT" (46), where it drips "slow gouts of artificial blood" into an invisible receptacle. The novel revisits each of these images (the stabbed breast and William Blake's poem, "The Tyger"), in the climactic murder of Albertina. Fighting over Doctor Hoffman's "flaccid corpse," Desiderio bites Albertina's throat "as if I were a tiger and she were the trophy I seized in the forests of the night" (216), and stabs her "below the left nipple" (217). The preoedipal good breast/bad breast drama, according to Klein, resolves with the Oedipus phase, proper, which the peep show symbolizes by the next exhibit, "THE KEY TO THE CITY." Here a penis-shaped candle causes Desiderio to think for no overt reason that "this was supposed to represent the Minister's penis." The fact that the Minister's phallus is the "key to the city" emphasizes the Oedipal logic of the patriarchal structure.

In the final machine in the peep show proprietor's display: "Exhibit Seven: PERPETUAL MOTION":

> As I expected, here a man and a woman were conducting sexual congress on a black horsehair couch. The figures . . . look as though they might have been modelled in one piece and, due to a clockwork mechanism hidden in their couch, they rocked continually back and forth . . . neither could one conceive of a past beginning for they were so firmly joined together it seemed they must have been formed in this way at the beginning of time . . . They were not so much erotic as pathetic, poor palmers of desire who never budged so much as an inch on their endless pilgrimage. (46)

[6] It was after reviewing David Kunzle's *Fashion and Fetishisms* in 1982 that Carter began to change her opinion: "[I]t shocks me to think that, for so long, I went along with the standard feminist line on sexually specific clothing--that it showed women were the mere dupes of male fancy. How has it come about that feminists have picked up on the masculine notion that those women who aren't self-confessed feminists don't know what they're doing, half the time?" (*Shaking* 127).

This ahistorical, dehumanized androgyne becomes, in Carter's novel, the logical conclusion of psychoanalytic stage theory, in which the preoedipal self's feminine half projects into the world as a solipsistic, androgynous ideal. It would seem to depict Hoffman's former associate Mendoza's ideal of the "Willed Annihilation of the Orgiastic Instant" (104). It also foreshadows the final goal of Doctor Hoffman's plans: the imprisonment of Desiderio and Albertina in a cage of desire to provide the eroto-energy for the Doctor's projections.

Of course, the surreal imagery of Dr. Hoffman links through his name's symbolism to both E.T.A. Hoffmann, the Romantic author so important to Freud's essay "The Uncanny," and Albert Hofmann, the inventor of LSD. Hoffman's imagery, therefore, concretizes the unconscious, in much the same way as an acid trip concretizes the latent content of the psyche. In addition, like the surrealists, whom Carter described as a "Freudians themselves" and "a synthesis of Freud and Hegel" (*Shaking* 365) (and whom Carter admired and then repudiated), the Doctor united psychoanalysis with a panoply of essentialist traditions, from the myth of the Platonic androgyne to alchemy and neo-Hegelianism (97) (recall that one of the early manifestations Dr. Hoffman's desire machines is of pigeons perched upon chimney stacks, "shouting quotations from Hegel" (20)).

As a representative of both surrealism and psychoanalysis, the doctor's ideal gender became the androgyne, symbolized by his daughter, Albertina, whose name references Proust's epicene Albertine Simonet from *In Search of Lost Time*. Desiderio's investigation into the desire samples that provide the images of the peep show reveals that they "did indeed represent everything it was possible to believe by the means of either direct simulation or a symbolism derived from Freud" (108). And if the reader missed the overt psychoanalytic parallels, the first scene in which we see him directly, the Doctor sits on a stool beside the corpse of his dead wife (198)—a parody of the classical psychoanalytic session that, like Desiderio's necrophilic scene with Mary Anne, implicates psychoanalytic theory with the fetishization of a female other that exists nowhere in reality.[7]

Critiquing the Patriarchal Psyche: *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

The peep show machines, therefore, replicate the psychoanalytic account of identity formation, and also offer the reader a skeleton key to decoding the rest

[7] Beate Neumeier was the first to point out the subtext to this scene (145).

of the text. Table 1 schematizes the machines in terms of both the psychoanalytic stage and the novel's overall plot, which also replicates these psychoanalytic stages. I ask the reader to endure the methodology that follows, as I would normally avoid this level of plot summary, but the texts invite such stage-by-stage exegesis and do not make much sense without it.

The first two chapters set up the critique in terms of the first machine, in which a culture rooted in Sade and 19th-century aesthetics provides the real "source" of the mother's body and the origin of identity. From her first manifestation in Desiderio's dream as the black swan, singing in "an ultimate Platonic mode," Albertina functions as male desire's projected other as romantic double ("I never felt so alone," Desiderio reports), the reduction implied by surrealist idealism. As the epicene male ambassador, Albertina briefly transforms into Charlotte Corday, the royalist Girondin sympathizer who opposed the French Revolution and assassinated Marat in his bath. This emphasizes not only the highly conservative nature of the Doctor's project, which we should remember remains in the service of the Old Adam, but also the violence inherent in such representation. Albertina puts a knife to the Minister's chest, and the structure of this interaction places the Minister in the position of Marat, which may surprise any reader who wants to read the Minister as wholly an object of satire.

Charlotte Corday's first name was Marie-Anne, and this sub-textually connects Albertina to her next avatar, Mary Anne, the other half of the critique. Mary Anne's gothic house suggests that the surrealist and psychoanalytic constructions of woman as the passive other of man has its roots in several different 19th-century Romantic, Victorian, and decadent artists, including Tennyson's "Mariana in the moated grange" (47), which Millais painted in his 1851 work, "Mariana." The Millais parallel is re-emphasized by the "drowning Ophelia" motif (53), once again literalized by Mary Anne's drowning, and Desiderio's necrophilia only makes apparent the implicit fetishization of a woman who longs for death because of an absent lover.

Desiderio's imprisonment in the absent mayor's office uses the tropes of the maternal body, such as the façade's "stucco breasts" (63). As he climbs up the chimney to escape, he describes his actions in terms of a birth: "my overwrought senses soon convinced me the passage was steadily growing narrower and the walls were shrinking to crush me . . . the moment when my head broke into the fresh air surprised me as much as if I were a baby suddenly popped from the womb" (64-5). Desiderio climbing up the chimney parodies *Moby Dick's* Ishmael, who reported that his earliest memory or dream consisted of his attempt to climb up a chimney, which his step-mother prevented by pulling him back down.

Desiderio escapes to the River Indians, his time with them corresponding to the preoedipal stage of the infant. Mama's voice singing in their language, Desiderio says, takes "me back to my earliest childhood" (66), and the language's lack of plurals and the verb *to be* allows no distinction between particular and universal, or between self and other. This parallels the state of the infant before social inscription in the psychoanalytic model, and Mama and Aoi, each with an elongated clitoris, become the twinned projections of the phallic mother archetype. Desiderio describes the self-contained River Indian culture in terms of the solipsistic uroborus, a "pastoral country which seemed to have turned so deeply inward on itself . . . that nothing outside itself had any significance" (86), and this solipsism becomes central to the novel's critique. Additionally, Carter plays with the notion of Kali in her devouring mother aspect by depicting the literal threat of cannibalism, and as Desiderio escapes from them, he sees another peep show display that references the severed head from the fifth machine. This time, the "head of Dr Hoffman's ambassador turned like the world on its axis" (93). The novel suggests that Albertina functions as the fragmented, absent mother who provides the central axis of Desiderio's subjectivity—the axis mundi archetype of Jungian theory (the center point around which the world and self spins).

Desiderio's escape from the River Indians, however, only lands him in front of two more avatars of the phallic mother amongst the people of the fair, "another kind of self-consistent river" (98). The first is the passive Madame la Barbe, the "Bearded Bride" (106) who has a "maternal nature" (101) and who suffered under the gaze of the audience, from which she felt "penetrated by their eyes" (106). The second is Mamie Buckskin, Desiderio's "virile mistress" (109), whose rifle makes her "a fully phallic female with the bosom of a nursing mother and a gun, death-dealing erectile tissue, perpetually at her thigh" (108). Once again we have the Sadean binary that forms the basis of Carter's reading of Sade: passive Justine (Madame la Barbe) and aggressive Juliette (Mamie Buckskin).

At this point, Desiderio has an epiphany, finally noticing the relation between the peep show samples and Freudian symbolism. One of the peep show tableau had shown a series of stills with a young woman who looks like

Albertina being "trampled to death by wild horses" (107). This sample later becomes a memory that Desiderio has while centaurs rape Albertina, when he thinks of "a teasing image, that of a young girl trampled by horses. I could not remember when or where I had seen it, such a horrible thing; but it was the most graphic & haunting of memories and a voice in my mind, the cracked, hoarse, drunken voice of the dead peep-show proprietor, told me that I was somehow, all unknowing, the instigator of this horror" (180). The scene implies that the patriarchal unconscious creates the mythologizing of Albertina and the recurring image of rape in the Classical period (the mythological Nebulous Time).[8] Not only Albertina, but the entire cast (the peep show proprietor, the Count, the cannibal chief, et cetera) serve as a function of Desiderio as patriarchal desire.

The arrival of the acrobats of desire signals the Lacanian mirror stage, which Carter conflates with the beginning of the Oedipus complex proper. As they fragment and juggle their body parts, the acrobats "transcended their own bodies and made of themselves plastic anagrams" by an "arrangement of mirrors" (114), and their anal raping of Desiderio multiple times literalizes the projection of the phallus from the mother to the paternal function and the fragmenting of the self: "But I was so far outside myself they might just as well have cut me up and juggled with me and, for all I know, they did" (117). Afterwards, Desiderio goes to a cave, where he tries to "compose myself a little" (118), and he plays marbles with the 27 eyeballs that the acrobats had plucked off the mirrors and gave to him—an outrageous literalization of the logic of the Lacanian model, in which the subject attempts to unify himself or herself after the sense of loss at the separation from the mother's body. Desiderio uses the eyeballs, symbols of his own degradation and inscription from the Oedipal crisis, as the very items that will "compose" his self.

In Lacan's theory, the child resolves the Oedipal crisis by inscribing itself within the paternal symbolic order with the birth of the self as "I" in the realm of language. To parody this, Desiderio emerges from the cave with the entire fair and the town in which they performed (and symbolically, all of the preoedipal solipsism implied by the preceding scenes) wiped off the face of the earth: "there had been a total realignment of the landscape during my oblivion . . . . A jutting, truncated thrust of masonry hung over the valley, endlessly about to fall . . ." (119). The landscape, once again, functions as the projection of the psyche,

[8] As Jean Wyatt argues: "Rape is a basic trope of our Western cultural heritage: by Amy Richlin's count, Leda's is one of fifty rapes in Ovid's Metamorphoses alone" (558).

and the Oedipus complex links, as always with Carter, to the Biblical Fall. Out of this resolution arises the Sadean Count and Albertina as the valet, Lafleur. Lafleur subtly links Albertina with the Marquis de Sade's own valet, Latour, whom Carter discusses in *The Sadeian Woman* (30), once again implicating Albertina as a bystander to the Count's (Sadeian) transgressions (Lafleur was "only a tool of the Count's will" (*DH* 124)). Desiderio plays the empty eye/I that verifies and reinscribes patriarchal narcissism: "Was I his observer, whose eyes, as they watched him, verified his actions? Did his narcissism demand a constant witness?" (127). The Count functions as the ultimate representation of the symbolic order, constantly repeating the word "I" (124), as Desiderio tells us. The Count's appearance also begins the social creation of femininity as the other of man, symbolized by the prostitutes in the House of Anonymity, each of whom, as in the symbolic order, is a "figure in rhetoric" that is merely the "idea of the female" (132), unrelated to biological women outside of language.

Albertina, as the psychoanalytic and surrealist ideal, arises out of the same sense of longing for the lost unification with the maternal body. In the House of Anonymity, she splits into Lafleur and the Madame herself, and she takes Desiderio to the "Sphere of Spheres," a womb-like room in which Albertina reveals herself to Desiderio for the first time:

> We were exactly the same height . . . The earth turned on the pivot of her mouth. The sense of seraphic immanence which had afflicted me in the city was now fulfilled . . ..Her arms clasped my neck and her belly pressed against my nakedness as if striving to transcend the mortal flaw that divided us and so effect a total, visceral mingling, binding us forever, so that the same blood would flow within us both and our nerves would knit and our skins melt and fuse in the force of the electricity we generated between us.
>
> We moved towards the round bed that spun round like the world on an axis in the middle of the room. (136)

The metaphors pile up: Albertina is Desiderio's double; she is the axis mundi ("the pivot of her mouth"); and she is the Platonic Androgyne, as they try "to transcend the mortal flaw that divided us." We are here outside the mirror at the moment of narcissistic desire following the mirror stage. Albertina later describes her own splitting into both Lafleur and the Madame in terms that help to explain Desiderio's own fragmented desire: "Under the influence of intense longing, the spirit—or, let us even say, the soul—of the sufferer can create a double which joins the absent beloved while the original template goes about its everyday business" (167). We should keep this doubling in mind as a causal fac-

tor when unraveling all the repeated doublings throughout the text—Desiderio into Albertina; Desiderio into the Count; Albertina into her multiple avatars.

The Determination Police's arrival, however, signals a transformation, and Albertina fades as the Police chase Desiderio through the brothel, up "spiral staircases" (another axis mundi motif revisited in *Eve* via Tristessa's house of glass and mirrors). Their bullets destroy a hall of dark mirrors, negating the mirror's function since they become merely "unreflecting silvered glass" (138). Desiderio's identity as a temporal progression—as a metaphor for the development of desire in Western culture—is, in fact, unwinding.

The Count projects his self into his own negative double, the racist stereotype of the pimp/cannibal chief. Albertina later explains this fragmenting to Desiderio:

> His self-regarding "I" willed himself to become a monster. This detached, external yet internal "I" was both his dramatist and his audience. . . . When he reached a final reconciliation with the projective other who was his self, that icon of his own destructive potential, the abominable black, he had merely perfected that self-regarding diabolism which crushed and flattened the world as he passed through it, like an existential version of the cannibal chief's chariot. (168)

Albertina blames this solipsistic self-annihilation on the Count's "insistence on the authority of his own autonomy," and we have here the first intimation that Carter's critique of psychoanalysis also functions as a critique of the liberal humanist ideal of the autonomous self, defined outside of social relations. Carter's historical materialist stance viewed such definitions as a self-perpetuating delusion, as all people are subject to the socioeconomic and historical factors that structure them. For Carter, therefore, the psychoanalytic model forms a kind of onanistic solipsism that curls back upon itself like the uroborus, hoping for self-perpetuation, but meeting finally in self-annihilation.

Out of this moment arises the non-place of Nebulous Time, and the novel suggests that myths and religions originated as fantasies of a replacement unity to overcome the primal maternal fracture. Through the centaurs' culture, Carter offers a devastating parody of both Greco-Roman Classicism and the Judeo-Christian tradition. One the one hand, they have features of an "autocratic mould of pure classicism" (172) and the architecture has a "Virgilian rusticity for it had the severe, meditative quality of classicism" (173). On the other hand, the novel also ironically compares their beliefs to the central imagery of the Catholic Mass: "These hippolators believed their god revealed himself to them in the droppings excreted by the horse part of themselves since this manifested the

purest essence of their equine natures, and it was quite as logical an idol as a loaf of bread or a glass of wine, though the centaurs had too much good sense to descend to coprophily" (175). Like that of the River Indians, the centaurs' world forms a closed system, and their mythology parallels the myth of Eve in the Garden. A treacherous female, the Bridal Mare, deceives the Sacred Stallion by having an affair with the Dark Archer, with whom she murders and eats the Sacred Stallion, and forty days later, "the Mare, in a uroboric parturition, gives birth, with extraordinary suffering, to none other than the Sacred Stallion himself . . .. So that was why they held women in such low esteem!" (185). Herein lies the crux of Carter's demythologizing project, as the ascendancy of myth and the archetypes of the patriarchal unconscious stands at the endpoint of the stages of psychoanalysis. Albertina and Desiderio escape, however, by an intervention of Doctor Hoffman's army, and as they ascend in the Doctor's helicopter, they notice that the Centaurs represented not only classicism, but neo-classicism as well, as the valley spread out "like a French, eighteenth-century neo-classical fan painted by a follower of Poussin . . ." (192).

Albertina's final avatar as the hermaphrodite technician takes us beyond the mirror, to the beginning of Carter's short stories "Reflections" and "Wolf-Alice." The Doctor offers to entomb Desiderio and Albertina in a ceaseless cage of desire, where their two bodies will generate a solipsistic effusion of "eroto-energy" to power the Doctor's machines. This scene finally links up with the seventh peep show display, "PERPETUAL MOTION." This stage becomes a moment of the reflexive solipsism of patriarchy, the moment when the internalized fantasy of the lost phallic mother projects onto an ideal of the androgyne, negating any possibility of actual, freely acting women outside of such ideations.

Most of *Doctor Hoffman*'s characters and scenes, in fact, offer this negation of linear temporality through some form of ahistorical perpetual motion: from the River People's utopian society, which ignored the time and action of the rest of the world, to the traveling fair, which "acknowledged no geographical location or temporal situation for everywhere we halted was exactly the same as where we had stopped last"(98); from the acrobats of desire, "icons of perpetual motion, they knew nothing but the progress of their static journey towards willed, mutual annihilation" (215), to the Count at the House of Anonymity, where their costumes mask their identity except for a phallus, so that "the costumes were of no time or place" (130); from the Cannibal Chief, "the triumphant creation of nebulous time" (212), who claims that his "notion of

harmony, then, is a perpetual, convulsive stasis" (161), to the realm of Nebulous Time itself, which existed "outside the formal rules of time and place" (166), where "one could have imagined it the dawn of time, the anteriority of all times, since Nebulous Time was the womb of time" (189). Each temporal dislocation is offered and denied, first by the exigencies of the narrative, then by Desiderio's final rejection, symbolically enacted by his murder of Albertina. For an historical materialist like Carter, each of these systems function as delusional attempts to escape from reality, from the actual social and historical factors that create our common fate.

Doctor Hoffman, therefore, systematically literalizes the stages of various psychoanalytic traditions in order to subvert those traditions. Psychoanalysis, the novel suggests, serves as a useful tool to describe our Western culture not because of its objective validity for interpreting our culture, but because that very structure, in fact, *causes* our culture. To find that surprising would be like finding it surprising that the diatonic scale is useful to analyze Western music, when the rules of harmony demand that structure in the first place. The novel ends with no alternative conclusion. Desiderio solves the problem of the unconscious, but this merely unwinds the logic of the contemporary culture. What the world would look like without this logic—a gynoculture, a socialist regime, et cetera—the novel never addresses, as if the critique were an end in itself.

Perhaps this limitation is why Carter went on to write *The Passion of New Eve*, as Carter herself intimates while critiquing the methodology of the Marquis de Sade's version of pornography. In *The Sadeian Woman*, which she composed around the same time as *New Eve*, Carter discusses Sade's *Philosophy of the Boudoir* and critiques the climactic scene, in which Eugenie almost brings her mother to climax by penetrating her with a prosthetic penis, but fails because her mother faints first:

> So, finally, the violation of the mother is no more than a performance, a show; it demonstrates and creates Eugenie's autonomy but also the limits of her autonomy, for her freedom is well policed by the faceless authority beyond the nursery, outside the mirror, the father who knows all, sees all and permits almost everything, except absolute freedom . . . . He makes her faint because he can only conceive of freedom as existing in opposition, freedom as defined by tyranny . . . Instead of constructing a machine for liberation, he substitutes instead a masturbatory device. He is on the point of becoming a revolutionary pornography; but he, finally, lacks the courage.
>
> He reverts, now, to being a simple pornographer. (*Sadeian* 131-2)

But what is the alternative? Make mother climax and destroy the patriarchy? In many ways, Carter describes not only *Philosophy of the Boudoir*, but also

Doctor Hoffman. Desiderio "spoiled [his] climax" (208), and he never unites with Albertina, the projected phallic mother. Hoffman himself is the Marcusean practitioner of repressive desublimation, the "father who knows all, sees all and permits almost everything, except absolute freedom." Albertina remains, from beginning to end, *merely* the avatars of surrealist—idealist and psychoanalytic—discourse. For even in the final chapter, after Albertina has stripped herself of her outward idealist manifestations and become the guerilla commando, Generalissimo Hoffman, she fights for her father's side—the surrealist philosophy that makes her possible. *Doctor Hoffman* fails to become "revolutionary pornography."

"Welcome to anteriority": *The Passion of New Eve* and Inverted Narrative Form

Carter tries to overcome this limitation with the figure of Leilah in *The Passion of New Eve*, a novel in which Carter uses the images of surrealism and Lacanian psychoanalysis against itself in its most highly developed and formal way to create her "revolutionary pornography." *New Eve* takes the same formal stages of *Doctor Hoffman*, yet this time Carter critiques the modern male's development by tracing the chauvinist's etiology *backward* in time. This section will focus on Carter's critique of psychoanalysis by the same conflation of Freudian, Kleinian, and Lacanian theories of identity formation she used in *Doctor Hoffman*. In *New Eve*, however, she inverts the temporal trajectory, leading to nothing less than a complete subversion of male subjectivity, patriarchally-informed psychoanalyses, and any vision of the future that precludes a psychodynamically-informed feminist politics.

Carter uses science fiction as allegory: the post-apocalyptic present embodies the current state of culture as Evelyn, decadent European patriarch, finds his way to the new world and goes on a symbolic trip from presence to anteriority. Two arrows of time form *The Passion of New Eve*'s structure: the first is a progression, parroting and parodying the American myth of Westward expansion as the European travels west to the California coast; the second is an allegorical reversal of temporality in which landscape and ideology unwind to analyze subjectivity as a line of anterior descent, a backwards construction of gender and identity to reveal the modern Man's roots through reverse ontogenesis. As Eve tells us from California in chapter 12, "We start from our conclusions" (191).

We can see Carter's rationale for this reading in her other works. In interviews and non-fiction writings, Carter constantly gave metacritical cues as to how we should read her narratives. For example, in her 1988 article, "Through a Text Backwards: The Resurrection of the House of Usher," Carter claims that reading Edgar Allan Poe's short stories is often a tricky task, insofar as they "are so over-determined, so that it is very difficult to find out what is going on. That is, to find out what is *really* going on, what is going on under the surface. Because at first it looks as if *everything* is on the surface . . ." (*Shaking* 482). Carter cues the reader to understand that some texts that seem overtly psychoanalytical and symbolic (read: her own) often require a different approach to tease out the true intent of the text, what is "*really* going on." Her method at first seems highly idiosyncratic. After briefly discussing a pictorial technique in which inverting the painting produces an alternate image, she states that she decided to "invert 'The Fall of the House of Usher'—play it backwards, in the same way as one can play a movie backwards, and see what face is showed to me, then, and what story that face told about the Ushers and their author" (*Shaking* 483). She then does so for the reader, element by element. First stripping the plot to its structural elements, much as I am doing in this essay, she then inverts those elements and describes them in this reversed sequence to find some kind of latent content for a story that ostensibly already dramatizes the latent content. I say "some kind" advisedly, as Carter never gives a reason for this essay at all. At no point does she imply that Poe actually intended the reader to invert the linear temporal trajectory of his texts. Nor does she argue that anything in the text suggests that we need to read this way in order to discover what it "really" means. What I am suggesting is that by 1988 Carter wrote "Through a Text Backwards" in an attempt to give her readers a clue for how to read her own speculative fiction, where "at first it looks as if *everything* is on the surface."

In the penultimate chapter of *New Eve*, Evelyn, now Eve after her forced emasculation and gender reassignment at the hands of Mother, says to herself: "Welcome to anteriority, Eve; now I know we are at the beginning of the beginning" (166). "Welcome to anteriority" is a curious phrase, and it highlights two primary features of Carter's narrative technique in *New Eve*. First, *welcome* implies the arrival in space from one location to another; yet *anteriority* plays upon the doubling of its spatial meaning of the "front" of an organism with the temporal definition of "earlier, prior to." Spatial movement across the novel, in fact, has an analogous temporal movement towards the past. Futurity is anteriority. The fictional future is the historical past. Second (and related), anteriority, as a key psychoanalytic concept regarding the subject's past as an ever-present presence, extends the spatialization of time, in general, to the spatialization of identity, in particular. As the novel progresses from New York City to California, it traverses across the landscape of the psyche.[9]

The beginning, therefore, will help us to understand the nature of the critique. The morning after ejaculating to the image of silent film star Tristessa de St. Ange in a revival of *Wuthering Heights* thanks to the fellatio of a woman whose name he cannot remember, Evelyn arrives from England to take an academic post in a New York City overrun by dog-sized rats. New York teeters on the brink of civil war: African-Americans have begun building a wall around Harlem, and the Women have begun taking their revenge.

As in *Doctor Hoffman*, the city itself concretizes the metaphor of patriarchy in its current state. In this world, the male subject projects women into three distinct categories. The first is the image of the "holy mother" as embodied by Justine-like Tristessa, the old silent film actress whose plangent suffering makes her the "most beautiful woman in the world" (5). Tristessa, in this reading, literalizes Laura Mulvey's hypothesis of the object of the male gaze in cinema that she outlined in her highly influential essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," published two years before in *Screen*. According to Mulvey, women in cinema function on two planes: as object of desire and as a reminder of castration. Mulvey claims that represented women under patriarchy must perpetually suffer or they must be situated with a replacement phallus to overcome the anxiety (16-21). Tristessa, "Our Lady of Dissolution," is both the suffering woman and the woman with the phallus. By this point, the seasoned Carter reader is not too terribly surprised to learn later in the novel that Tristessa is, in fact, a transvestite. Only a man, the novel suggests, could live up to (which is to say, down to) such an "ideal" of feminine passive suffering, as Carter explained in her interview with Helen Cagney Watts: "Tristessa is a male projection of femininity, that's why she's doomed, her life is completely based on false premises. This character only had the notion of his idea of a woman before he set out to become one" (165). The second category under this patriarchal division wrought by the Oedipus is of the Women, the militant warriors who take sniping rifle shots at

[9] Roberta Rubenstein mentioned in passing this inverted temporality in *New Eve* in relation to history: "As Carter's Evelyn . . . journeys through diverse geographical settings in a postapocalyptic United States, he/she also journeys backwards through time into history and myth" (106). Cf. also Colin Manlove, regarding "landscapes as projections of the unconscious" (149).

men who pause too long in front of pornographic movie posters. The Women are the projection of masculine fears of actual women. They use for their symbol the traditional women's symbol ♀ with bared teeth in the circle—the old vagina dentata archetype.

Finally, the novel figures the third category of women in this patriarchal culture with the subliterate African-American Leilah, an inversion of the Oedipal fear of female sexuality. Leilah, a model dressed in fetishistic attire, literalizes the dark other of Western patriarchal fantasy, the holy whore who lives only to serve men. Evelyn describes Leilah as "limp, passive and obedient . . . a perfect woman" (34), and describes her elsewhere variously as a witch (20), a mermaid (22), a succubus, and a slave (29).[10] Evelyn quickly falls for her seduction, borne out of a general misogyny. As we learn at the end of the novel, Leilah really masks Lilith, Adam's first wife, made of "filth and sediment instead of pure dust" (Graves and Patai 65), who left him because, as his equal, she refused to lie beneath him during intercourse (Lilith also functions as the demon of Jewish folklore, who, punished for her claims of equality, went on to murder children).

After several weeks of their sadomasochistic relationship, Leilah becomes pregnant, and Evelyn feels disgust, a response to her differences from him as she comes to embody maternity, blackness, and the feminine. Evelyn drives to the deserts of the American West, where he quickly falls into the hands of another group of warrior women whose use the image of a broken phallus as their symbol. These women serve Mother, a monomaniacal plastic surgeon who endeavors to embody just about every mother goddess archetype in Asian and Western history, from Danae to Kali to "Jocasta. Jocasta. Jocasta" (62).

Mother, the "Castratrix of the Phallocentric Universe" (67), 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 hypothesized the notion of pre-patriarchal matriarchies. *The Sadeian Woman* offers Carter's most sustained attack on such attempts, where she claimed that romanticizing of Mother Nature through goddess-worship was "consolatory nonsense" (5):

[10] Ricarda Schmidt interprets the image of Leilah at the mirror as another rewriting of Lacan: "The woman then tries to transform herself into that symbol of woman that the male gaze shows her. In this mirror episode, Carter transfers the 'mirror stage' which Lacan described in relation to the development of the symbolic 'I' in children, to the symbol woman. The symbol into which Leilah transforms herself defines woman as object, as meat" (62).

> This theory of maternal superiority is one of the most damaging of all consolatory fictions . . . . It puts those women who wholeheartedly subscribe to it in voluntary exile from the historic world, this world, in its historic time that is counted out minute by minute, in which no event or circumstance of life exists for itself but is determined by an interlocking web of circumstances . . . . (106)[11]

For Carter, therefore, myth negates the premises of historical materialism, no matter how attractive the myth may seem. Mother plans to rape Evelyn, force his sex change, and impregnate him with his own sperm. To accomplish the gender reassignment, the women force Evelyn to watch—*A Clockwork Orange*-style—a barrage of images of women from Western history: from Leonardo paintings to Playboy centerfolds and old films of Tristessa. Mother's perfect new Eve, therefore, is contingent upon the stereotypical representations of women in patriarchal culture.[12]

Evelyn foils Mother's plan by escaping as Eve before her self-impregnation. Eve soon falls prey to Zero, Carter's highly didactic literalization of the patriarchy. He has a wooden leg like Melville's Ahab, and, like many of Carter's patriarchs, loves Nietzsche and Wagner. Zero obsesses over finding Tristessa, whom he believes caused his impotence. To accomplish this, he and his harem search the desert for Tristessa's fabled house of mirrors. Several rapes of Eve by Zero later, they find Tristessa's house, which they see is cylindrical and tiered like a "wedding cake," and they discover that Tristessa is, in fact, a man in drag. Outraged and amused, Zero and his wives set about destroying the interior of the house while Tristessa sabotages everything by setting the house in motion until it spins off its axis, collapsing in a pool of body parts of wax mannequins of famous celebrities.

Eve and Tristessa escape to the desert, where they fall into the hands of a renegade group of paramilitary 13-year-old boys, led by a teen "colonel" with a messianic complex who has a tattoo of Leonardo's "Last Supper" across his chest. The Colonel kills Tristessa, and they bury him in the desert. At night, Eve

[11] Lorna Sage reports many instances of Carter's troubled relations with many 1970s and 1980s feminists, such as the following: "She was not, either, able to repose securely in the bosom of the sisterhood, since her insistence on reclaiming the territory of the pornographers--just for example--set her against feminist puritans and separatists. Her later experience in Albany . . . where she taught writing in 1988 was not untypical: 'the only snag is the Women's Studies dept., which is truly terrifying--really hard line radical feminists, who have virtually boycotted me'" (*Angela Carter* 40-1).

[12] I also agree with Sally Keenan, who sees references to the Lacanian-informed French psychoanalytic theories of Cixious and Kristeva in both *New Eve* and *The Sadeian Woman*: "I believe that Carter makes explicit refernece to the maternal theories of Cixous and Kristeva in *The Passion of New Eve* and an implicit criticism of them underpins her attack on the mythicization of motherhood in *The Sadeian Woman*" (147).

steals a jeep and escapes to Los Angeles, a city splitting apart from civil wars within civil wars. Eve meets up with Leilah, now Lilith, who sends Eve into a cave to meet her mother. In the cave, Eve finds a broken mirror and a picture of Tristessa, which she rips into 4 pieces. After walking through several of the cave's chambers, the "walls of meat expelled me" (186), and Eve ends up on the shoreline, where Lilith pulls out a portable refrigerator and offers Eve her genitals back. Refusing her phallus, which they cast out to sea, Eve gets into a rowboat and sails away with the final invocation: "Ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries, bear me to the place of birth" (191).

Bizarre, to say the least. Most readings of the novel have dealt with the surface structure's obvious critiques about, in Carter's words, "cultural production of femininity," undoubtedly one aspect that Carter has in mind. As I suggested, however, this surface structure serves as only the first temporal manifestation of the plot. To see how Carter uses the tropes of psychoanalysis to subvert that discourse, we must follow her lead in "Through a Text Backwards" and begin with the narrative conclusions. We shall see that each of the novel's landscape and scenario placements in fact correspond to one or another of the Oedipal developments.

Beginning from the end, Eve's sailing out to sea in a rowboat inverts to a coming into being, on her way to the womb out of nothingness. Eve, at this level, has no gender identity. The phallus that will be inscribed later is in the water with her, not yet attached. In reverse Eve enters the cave, clearly described with all of the traditional Edgar Allan Poe metaphors for the womb: dimly red, warmly moist, and pulsating. This is the primordial mother, the actual, biological mother before the later appearance of Mother, whom the novel tells us, is the "abstraction of a natural principle" (49). Here, Eve/lyn has not yet formed the image of Tristessa (signified by her torn picture), nor has s/he established imaginary identity (signified by the non-reflecting mirror, an otherwise pointless gesture).

The next stage in Carter's inversion corresponds to Melanie Klein's discussion of the preoedipal period. Eve sees a sign painted in red that says "YEAR ONE" (172), a motif that plays both with Klein's notion of the infant and with the excited fervor Carter felt by the liberating period of her conversion to feminism:

> There is a tendency to underplay, even to completely devalue, the experience of the 1960s, especially for women, but towards the end of that decade there was a brief period of public philosophical awareness that occurs only very occasionally in human history; when, truly, it felt like Year One, that all that was holy was in the process of being profaned and we were attempting to grapple with the real relations between human beings. (*Shaking* 37)

Here Eve says to herself: "Welcome to anteriority, Eve; now I know we're at the beginning of the beginning." (166). This scene, therefore, serves as the "beginning" both in the sense of prelapsarian potentiality engendered by the feminist movement and the hermaphroditic self of the baby—the conflicting, warring factions corresponding to the unattached desires of the neonate. As we saw in our discussion of *Doctor Hoffman*, Klein argues that the child has not yet learned during the preoedipal stage to distinguish between subject and object, between its self and its mother. The child's subjectivity is determined solely by the perceptual field as self-consciousness—the I—has not yet established. As the narrative voice describes this landscape zone, it is "a system that might be perpetuated by factors entirely external to itself" (167). At this point, in a remarkable passage, Eve makes an interesting observation: "Ever since the interrupted continuum I refer to as myself had left Manhattan . . . it had lived in systems which operated within a self-perpetuating reality; a series of enormous solipsisms, a tribute to the existential freedom of the land of free enterprise" (167). This critique of solipsism (so important in *Doctor Hoffman*, as we have seen) in the earlier part of the novel becomes extremely important as we reverse the narrative's temporal trajectory.

As we continue to do so, Eve's move from California to the desert signifies the beginning of the division of the subject from its imaginary image of unification, corresponding to the Lacanian mirror stage. Once again, as with Albertina, the idealized image of women in a patriarchy (i.e. the silently suffering Tristessa) merely functions as a repressed unified image of the self before gendering. It is therefore a solipsism that we must reject in the interest of feminist politics. The desert is "the place where I became myself" (164), and again, reversing the narrative action, the child Colonel would actually dig up Tristessa from the "the desert's merciless breast" (145). The novel implies here yet another version of the Lacanian mirror stage, which correlates to the time of weaning. The child's loss of the mother's breast creates self-consciousness, and the image of the self replaces the wholeness of the mother/child dyad. As Eve articulates to Tristessa: "I went to you as towards my own face in a magnetic mirror, but when,

in accordance with all the laws of physics, you came towards me, I did not feel a sense of homecoming, only the forlorn premonition of loss" (110). Tristessa is a reflection, and Eve is still in a narcissistic attachment to herself before the full self-objectification in the mirror stage: as Eve says, after discovering her self through Tristessa, "He and I, she and he, are the sole oasis in this desert. . . . we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite together, the whole and perfect being to which he, with an absurd and touching heroism, had, in his own single self, aspired; we brought into being the being who stops time in the self-created eternity of lovers" (148). This establishment of Tristessa is put in motion by the Colonel and his child army. We have here another parody of Carter's of the primal Oedipal moment which rends the subject into subject and object, which leads to the full-blown imaginary phase, signified by the raising of Tristessa's glass-and-mirror house, the axis mundi archetype, out of the backyard pool of mannequin parts, signifying the beginnings of establishing the gendered subject out of the flux of gender potentialities.

The next stage in this inversion is the Oedipus complex proper, signified by Zero. Under the threat of the father, Tristessa becomes the fully alienated projection and image of externality, which explains the otherwise incoherent phrase: "Tristessa had no function in this world except as an idea of himself; no ontological reality, only an iconographic one" (129). In a patriarchy, men are supposedly closer to God (the Logos, or "Word" as in the John 1:1). Men have full access to language, and women's language and self-definition is a function of that patriarchal discourse. At Zero's ranch, therefore we have Eve's comments about her pregendered self and the other wives: "So our first words every morning were spoken in a language we ourselves could not understand; but he could . . . So he regulated our understanding of him and also our understanding of ourselves in relation to him" (97). The implication is that following the Oedipus complex, we inscribe ourselves with the language of the father, the Lacanian symbolic order. This language determines all of the future notions of gender, family, and society.

Finally, Eve's descent into Mother's artificial womb world signifies the establishment of the false archetype of the mother, the "abstraction of a natural principle," and the attainment of the phallus, the male subject's position within the patriarchal order. Alison Lee believes Beulah is the place where "Evelyn misrecognizes his image in a labyrinthine reworking of Lacan's mirror-stage" (242), an argument with which I agree, except that I see the mirror-stage proper

occurring during the Tristessa's house chapter. The novel implies that these stages all happen concurrently, though it characterizes (in reverse) the mirror stage as occurring before the Oedipus complex. It is here, after becoming the gendered infant, that Evelyn's stereotypes of women are established; as the novel puts it, the stereotypes are taken from "a consensus agreement on the physical nature of an ideal woman drawn up from a protracted study of the media and constructed here" (78). And once Evelyn becomes gendered, we are brought back to the beginning of the novel, the status quo ante that signifies the current state of male subjectivity in a patriarchy.

In all their exuberant excess, Carter's novels of the 1970s allegorize the limits and contradictions of modern Western culture. The psychoanalytic developmental trajectory shows how the society of Old Adam, or Oedipus, is established. The novels, however, do not ultimately affirm this division. Carter's work privileges only the particular and the historical. "History overtook myth," Lilith tells Eve at the end of the novel, and offers this relational model prefiguring the constructions of patriarchy as the alternative before the various "solipsisms" of the later (earlier) systems took hold. The works deflate psychoanalytic attempts of interpretation by incorporating those theories within the texts themselves. Aside from pointing to "history," however, they never offer an alternate vision of how to live, but remain locked in a continual, repetitive subversion, a methodology that continues into *Nights At the Circus*'s Fevvers and *Wise Children*'s Chance Sisters, who spend their lives critiquing patriarchal narratives without going anywhere new. Perhaps Carter was too successful. After effectively peeling back the layers of patriarchal causality to demonstrate how they construct our world, she may have begun to see the structure as apodictic. At the heart of Carter's speculative fiction of the 1970s, however, is a complex structural critique of the surrealism and the psychoanalytic ideas that so influenced her development and her aesthetics: art as allegorical agon.

Table 1: Psychoanalytic Stages in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve*

Psychoanalytic Stage	Peep Show Machines	Psychoanalytic Stage Actions	*Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (Plot)	*New Eve* (Reversed Plot)
Birth	1 I Have Been Here Before	Preceding Culture	The Mansion of Midnight and Mary Anne (Sade, Romanticism, and Decadence)	Eve on the ocean. "Ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries, bear me to the place of birth."
		Mother's Body	Mayor's house	The cave: "Eve returns to her mother;" "Walls of meat and slimy velvet. Inward."
		Birth	Desiderio's escape through the chimney	
Preoedipal (Phallic Mother)	2 The Eternal Vistas of Love	Infant/mother's mutual gaze	River Indians (Aoi and Mama); "language which took me back to my earliest childhood" (66); twinned projection of hermaphrodite (Mama and Aoi)	YEAR ONE; Civil wars within civil wars (California seceded from Union, now under another division); "a system that might be perpetuated by factors entirely external to itself"
	3 The Meeting Place of Love and Hunger	Good Breast		
	4 Everyone Knows What the Night is For	Bad Breast (envy)		
	5 Trophy of a Hunter in the Forest of the Night	Bad Breast (jealousy)	Ambassador's head rotating on a pole; Mamie Buckskin, the "fully phallic female"	
Oedipus Complex/ Fall of Man	6 The Key to the City	Mirror Stage	Acrobats of Desire	Desert's "merciless breast;" Colonel Christ; Tristessa's house of mirrors
		Phallus projected outside the mother	Acrobats rape Desiderio	Zero's ranch
		Attempts to unify subjectivity	Desiderio in the cave: tries to "compose myself a little;" Realignment of the landscape	
Resolution of Oedipus Complex / Taking Place in Patriarchal Order	7 Perpetual Motion	Symbolic Order: Birth of the "I"	The Count	
		Social creation of femininity	Prostitutes in the House of Anonymity; Albertina as axis mundi projection	Beulah: Mother's artificial subterranean womb world
		Patriarchal solipsism & its negation	Count: "I and my shadow fill the universe"; Death of the Count and the Chief	
		Myth as replacement unity	Nebulous Time	
Replication of Patriarchy		Final projection of hermaphrodite: woman as other	The Castle	New York City as Old Adam, repressing the past
Final State of Patriarchy		Denial of projected ideal; woman as elusive other	The City Under Siege	

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