The Flowers of Eve: How Baudelaire found his way into feminist science fiction

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1 Angela Carter is notorious for playing with a vast spectrum of literary, cultural and artistic allusions in her work. In her *Passion of New Eve* (1977), 1 specific intertextual reference is found to the poetry, prose and critical essays of Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire is but one of *The Passion*’s intertexts, but its import, I argue in this paper, is unequalled. The very substance of the Baudelairean aesthetic is woven into the fabric of Carter’s narrative. Isolation in the urban landscape, wandering, dandyism, the fetishization of women: it is all there, in Baudelaire. However, it is by re-contextualizing the various elements of the Baudelairean aesthetic that Carter makes strange – destabilizes – the iconic “Baudelaire” who has attained the status of symbol in Western culture. 2

2 There are a number of links between Carter and Baudelaire present in *The Passion of New Eve* that must first be acknowledged – on a stylistic level for instance, Carter’s writing echoes the opulent and fetishistic register of Baudelaire’s poetry, its decadent aesthetic. There are, in addition, three explicit references made to Baudelaire: to the “Baudelairean dandy” (p.132), to the “veritable Baudelairean albatross” (p.147) and, when read carefully, one also finds the plagiarized first line from the poem “Spleen LXXVII” (“I am like the king of a rainy country”). 3 These specific references are indices manipulated by Carter to cue the reader to the presence of Baudelaire in the novel. But the post-Romantic, pre-Symbolist poet’s most significant contribution comes, more elusively, in the form of allusion. Allusion is a subtle form of intertextuality that involves implicit reference without explicit citation. 4 Allusion depends, more than any other form of intertextual referencing, on the reader’s ability to discern the elements of intertextuality. Though the unveiling of a single or multiple allusion(s) is not essential to the comprehension of the text, it can nonetheless produce new ways of understanding the work at hand, and in
return, new ways of knowing the source text. Thus, it is more Baudelaire as a concept, an idea, a symbol – in short, as an allusion – than as a source of direct citation, which, I argue, serves as the intertext in Carter’s novel. In this paper, I trace Carter’s interpretation of Baudelaire by analyzing her re-inscription of three of the concepts that the poet made famous and that have come to be associated with him – the modern city, the flâneur and the dandy. I look at the strategies of replication, of modification and of subversion that Carter uses in her feminist science fiction novel to bring Baudelaire to life once more.

“The scrap-yard of Western Europe” : Carter and bricolage

Intertextuality : so commonplace in contemporary critical vocabulary, yet so often the subject of various definitions, uses and, consequently, misinterpretations. The basic concept behind theories of intertextuality is that a text does not function as a closed system of meaning ; rather, it is a piece of continual production, forever renewed through the dialogue it maintains with other texts (see Bakhtin, 1963 ; Kristeva, 1969 ; Barthes, 1968 ; Genette, 1966 ; Samoyault 2001). Carter’s approach to literary intertextuality is in line with a particular technique known as bricolage, in which the author creates a structure out of an already existing structure by rearranging previously arranged elements. As Genette puts it:

The nature of bricolage is to make use of materials and tools that, unlike those of the engineer, for example, were not intended for the task at hand. The rule of bricolage is “always to make do with whatever is available” and to use in a new structure the remains of previous constructions or destructions, thus making the specific manufacture of materials and tools unnecessary, though at the cost of a double operation of analysis (the extraction of various elements from various already-constituted wholes) and of synthesis (the forming of these heterogeneous elements into a new whole in which none of the re-used elements will necessarily be used as originally intended).

The structure created by this rearrangement is not identical to the original structure, yet it functions as a description and as an elaboration of the original by the very act of rearrangement. Simply put, the bricoleur breaks down literary works into themes and motifs and inserts these components into new contexts. Consequently, elements of playfulness, improvisation and sometimes, juxtaposition, reside in the bricoleur’s work.

Indeed, Carter’s approach embraces multiplicity over singular influence, bricolage over deferential citation. As Carter explains in an interview:

I have always used a very wide number of references because [I tend] to regard all of Western Europe as a great scrap-yard from which you can assemble all sorts of new vehicles... bricolage. Basically, all the elements which are available are to do with the margin of the imaginative life, which is in fact what gives reality to our own experience, and in which we measure our own reality.

Carter presents us with the suggestive image of the “scrap-yard” of Western Europe and herself as the magpie-like creature that rumsages through the debris, picking and choosing at her fancy. As such, Carter’s aesthetic practice is a subversive approach to canonicity. In her mixing and matching, she dismantles the boundaries between “high” and “low” culture, questions the legitimacy of power structures, and as she writes in her essay “Notes from the Front Line,” investigates the “social fictions that regulate our lives.” Nothing is sacred in Carter’s universe. In this respect, Carter’s promiscuous brand
of intertextual citation challenges over-arching narratives and modes of representation and promotes instead a discourse that is uncertain, heterogeneous and fragmentary. However, Carter’s textual practices require us to go beyond a first level of intertextuality and to reconsider the relationship between text and context, a distinctly feminist approach.

7 The feminist author cannot reject over-arching narratives in the way that Jean-François Lyotard (1979) proposed, nor can she fully embrace what Roland Barthes refers to as the “Death of the Author.” In his essay of the same name from 1968, Barthes calls for a refusal of the Author (whom he calls the “Auteur-Dieu”) and of the subject, which he intends to dis-locate. Though Barthes’s negation of the author’s authority is compatible with feminism’s rejection of patriarchal authority, in declaring the death of the author, Barthes assumes the existence of a unified and stable self, a view that is incongruent with feminist conceptions of subjectivity.

9 Though Barthes’s negation of the author’s authority is compatible with feminism’s rejection of patriarchal authority, in declaring the death of the author, Barthes assumes the existence of a unified and stable self, a view that is incongruent with feminist conceptions of subjectivity. As Nancy K. Miller argues “[b]ecause women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production that men have had, the postmodernist decision that the Author is Dead […] prematurely forecloses the question of agency for them.” Carter resists Barthes’s understanding of intertextuality as a challenge to authorship and concerns herself instead with the re-location of the subject, thereby entering into a project of re-contextualization. It is with this in mind that I now turn to address the presence of Baudelaire in *The Passion of New Eve*.

8 *The Passion of New Eve* is the story of a journey – one that involves both physical displacement and corporal transformation. A young Englishman, Evelyn, arrives in America in an undetermined, apocalyptic time. After mistreating a young woman and abandoning her in New York City – modeled after Baudelaire’s Paris – he rejects his life as a flâneur and flees to the desert. There he is captured by a cult of women and undergoes an involuntary sex change and becomes Eve. Reborn as a woman, enslaved and sexually abused, Eve confronts her misogynist past. She meets the retired film star Tristessa, who embodies yet subverts Baudelaire’s dandy. Now able to empathize with her, Eve no longer sees Tristessa as an object of male desire. Throughout this experiment in feminist renversement, Carter plays with Baudelaire.

“Paris change ! mais rien dans ma mélancolie / N’a bougé !”

9 The main city-space depicted in *The Passion of New Eve* is an apocalyptic New York City, writhe with revolution and turmoil. By the time Evelyn arrives in America, two groups of repressed peoples, the “blacks” and the “Women,” have taken over and the city is lawless, and falling to pieces. Carter’s depiction of New York recalls the depiction of another city, in another time, that is, the Paris of Baudelaire, a metropolis marked by chaos and decay.

10 Baudelaire is considered by many literary critics to be the “father” of urban poetry, and one of its few masters. He gave words to the disturbing condition of existence in the modern metropolis. During Baudelaire’s lifetime, the city of Paris underwent a radical transformation from the street-level up. Under the direction of Baron Haussmann, the city’s network of narrow streets dating as far back as the Medieval period were demolished to make room for broad boulevards, conceived as shrines to consumption and other commercial purposes. For Baudelaire however, as for other poets, bohemians and
artists living on the fringes of society, the new “capital of nineteenth-century modernity” became synonymous with alienation.\textsuperscript{14} Having little faith in the technological progress of the industrial revolution, and even less in the growing demographic of urban bourgeoisie, Baudelaire saw in the new Paris decay, depravity and dehumanization.

Baudelaire dedicates one section of \textit{Les Fleurs du mal} (1857), “Parisian scenes,” to life in the capital. At the heart of the Baudelairean interpretation of the city lie two contradictory impulses: the intention to describe and understand the city, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the wish to escape from its reality to a carefully constructed artificial paradise. Baudelaire produces formalized, rather than realistic depictions of Paris; few specific landmarks indicate that the city he refers to is Paris. Through this strategy, the city is represented as an unreal wasteland, suspended in a void between the past and the present. In “Paris Dream,” Baudelaire describes the chaos that is the new Paris:

This terrible landscape, such as mortal never witnessed – again this morning its image, vague and far-off, enraptured me [...] Babel of staircases, of arcades, an infinite palace it was, teeming with basins, with cascades tumbling into rough or burnished gold, ponderous cataracts hanging like crystal curtains, dazzling, on metallic walls. Colonnades, rather than trees, surrounded still pools in which gigantic naiads, like women, admired themselves.\textsuperscript{15}

The poet sees Paris as a confused mass of architecture, a “Babel of staircases, of arcades,” conjuring up the image of the labyrinth. Moreover, the city is dehumanized, a sterile landscape composed of “metallic walls,” a place so wholly artificial that colonnades, not trees, grow there.

Baudelaire’s conception of the city as a place of chaos is taken up by Carter in her depiction of the apocalyptic New York City. The rational project underlying the city of New York is obscured by its progressive deterioration. “A city of visible reason – that had been the intention” (p.16), Evelyn remarks. New York is instead “an alchemical city. It was chaos, dissolution, nigredo, night” (p.16). New York, like Baudelaire’s Paris, loses nearly any topographic features of the real city. Evelyn has no point of reference for New York. “Nothing in my experience had prepared me for the city,” (p.10) he says. Where he had imagined a “clean, hard, bright city,” he finds “lurid, Gothic darkness that closed over my head entirely and became my world” (p.10). Carter’s New York City is a figure of imprisonment, an area of endemic violence and dehumanization.

Into this place of chaos, Decay and Rot sow their seeds. Putrefaction is a cherished theme of Baudelaire’s. In “Une Charogne” (signifying literally a carcass, but also meat or flesh), the poet describes in a language at once lavish and terrible, a body he encounters one morning on a walk:

The sun beat down on that rotten meat, as if to be sure it was well done, and to render unto Mother Nature a hundredfold all she had joined together. And the sky watched that superb carcass blossom like a flower, the stench so strong you thought you might fall in a faint on the grass.\textsuperscript{16}

Similar imagery of decay applies to New York in \textit{The Passion of New Eve}. A reincarnation of “Une Charogne” occurs in Evelyn’s first impressions of New York. He says: “It was July and the city shimmered and stank […] I was astonished to see so many beggars in the rank, disordered street, where crones and drunkards disputed with the rats for possession of the choicest morsels of garbage.” (p.11). The animal imagery carries over into Carter’s interpretation: Baudelaire’s \textit{chienne} that devours the rotten flesh transforms
into fierce dumpster rats, vying for their share of trash. In both cases, animals feed off of human remains – whether it be flesh or refuse – in a grotesque display of carnivorism.

Furthermore, the city is quite literally crumbling around Evelyn. The revolutionary activity of the “blacks” and the “Women” inflicts destruction (they blow up wedding shops and universities) and puts a stop to services (the sewage system breaks down). All the while, the only creatures that seem to thrive are the rats, growing “fat as piglets and vicious as hyenas” (p.17). Chromatically, New York exhibits the colours of decay: it is “black,” its skies are “acid yellow” and “bitter orange,” and at the same time, “mineral green,” the colour of oxidized copper. Evelyn comes to the realization that: “The city had become nothing but a gigantic metaphor for death […]” (p.15).

In her depiction of the city of New York, Carter transposes essential elements of Baudelaire’s conception of metropolis. Carter’s re-inscription of Baudelaire’s perception of the city would be categorized by French semiotician Laurent Jenny as a form of “weak” intertextuality. Carter makes no direct citation or reference, only allusion. However, the reappearance of the city as seen by Baudelaire (as a place of chaos and decrepitude) cannot be cast off as mere coincidence. Baudelaire is implicit in Carter’s New York City, and so the scene is set for the particular characters who inhabit Baudelaire’s city to emerge in Carter’s.

“Multitude, solitude”: Part II, flânerie

In Les Fleurs du mal, Baudelaire introduces the flâneur. This term has no exact translation in English – stroller or ambler providing only approximations of its meaning. Essentially, flânerie is a form of city travel, of displacement. The flâneur strolls through the streets, on a whim, with only chance guiding the way. In the opening lines of one of his earliest flânerie poems, “The Sun,” Baudelaire describes the impulsive nature of his romps through the city:

Along the old outskirts of town, where Venetian blinds in hovel hide secret lecheries, when the cruel sun strikes with redoubled ray town and country, rooftop and wheatfield, I go to practice by myself my whimsical swordsmanship, sniffing at any corner for chance rhymes, tripping over words like curbs, bumping sometimes into lines long sought in dreams.

Baudelaire’s flâneur, in this early incarnation, roams the city to experience furtive pleasures (“my whimsical swordsmanship”) and to tease out its best-kept secrets. The capital here is considered a source of poetic inspiration, where the flâneur finds the rhymes and the words to fuel his verses and where the streets are the places where the artist can lose himself happily. However, in later manifestations, the flâneur is infused with melancholy, alienation and a certain something that can only be described as “spleen.” Paris was the exemplary lieu d’exil, the symbol of the lifeless condition of modernity. Nowhere is the flâneur’s exile felt more strongly than in amongst the crowds congregating in streets. Immersed in the swarming multitude, the flâneur experiences a profound sense of anonymity that borders on the effacement of his character. However, the art of the flâneur resides in his ability to transform his “spleen,” his pain and disillusionment, into jouissance. In the prose poem “The Crowd,” Baudelaire presents the drama of the flâneur, who expertly extracts pleasure from the crowd:

It is not given to everyone to blend into the multitude: enjoying the crowd is an art, and only he can gain a stroke of vitality from it, at humanity’s expense, whose
good fairy at his cradle bequeathed a taste for travesty and masque, along with hatred of home and passion for travel. Multitude, solitude: equal and convertible terms [...] Who walks alone with his thoughts draws a singular intoxication from this universal communion.  

The flâneur indulges in the crowd, drawing from it “une ribote de vitalité,” an orgy of vitality, and finding within it the means to satisfy his “goût du travestissement et du masque.” However, intoxication with the crowd and fascination without engagement are constant reminders that the flâneur is ultimately a solitary being. 

For Baudelaire, the flâneur was necessarily two things: unemployed and male. This 19th century city-traveler reappears in The Passion of New Eve in the form of Evelyn. Unemployed, Evelyn certainly is, but male – not for long. From the very first pages of the novel, Carter presents Evelyn as a wanderer. He moves from London to New York. His activities correspond with the displacement essential in flânerie. Throughout his time in New York, he is in continual motion, from banal, everyday activities – “I went to the drugstore […] to buy cigarettes” (p.19), to the climatic pursuit of the seductive Leilah through the streets at night: “We had walked for hours, for miles” (p.24). Evelyn’s impressions of New York take place exclusively at the street level, through what he sees and engages with on foot. 

In another trait characteristic of the flâneur, Evelyn experiences the city from the perspective of an outsider. Despite all the upheaval happening around him, he is not a participant, he is merely an observer, dependent on his sense of sight and his sense of hearing: “I saw a team of plump and energetic rats the size of six month babies hurl themselves on a German shepherd […]” (p.17). Evelyn also gathers information by hearsay: “Dreadful tales of the exploits of their militants [the blacks] circulated the lunch-counters where I ate a midday sandwich” (p.16). Evelyn reinforces the divide between himself and his fellow city-dwellers, becoming suspicious of others: “I knew that all about me was mined; I learned to trust nothing and nobody, not even the cop on the corner, least of all the panhandler whining for spare change as he stretched out his trembling, murderous hand.” (p.15). Like the flâneur, Evelyn widens the distance between himself and others, becoming more and more a recluse, until eventually, after the murder of his only friend the alchemist Baroslav, he realizes his near-complete solitude: “Now I was quite alone in the city” (p.18). 

A final aspect of flânerie found in Passion is the ability of the ambler to find within the city-space a reflection of his own interior space. “Horrible vie! Horrible ville!” exclaims Baudelaire in a paronomastic word play that establishes a link between the person and his or her surrounding environment. The boundaries between the physical and mental world are blurred and the poet-flâneur finds in the degenerate city a mirror of his own depraved consciousness. Try as he might to escape the city and, as seen above, the evil it embodies, he cannot. Likewise, in The Passion of New Eve, Evelyn discovers in the cityscape a reflection of his own psyche. “I saw the desolation of the entire megapolis and it was a mirror of my own.” (p.38). Evelyn plans to flee crumbling New York, to a thought-to-be uninhabited part of the world: 

I would go to the desert, to the waste heart of that vast country, the desert on which they turned their backs for fear it would remind them of emptiness – the desert, the arid zone, there to find, chimera of chimeras, there in the ocean of sand, among the bleached rocks of the untenanted part of the world, I thought I might find that most elusive of all chimeras, myself (p.38).
However, like Baudelaire’s flâneur who can never truly leave the urban metropolis, Evelyn cannot fully rid himself of the clutches of the city. The desert is no escape: “I was possessed. I had entirely succumbed to the dementia which had seized the city” (p.40).

Carter takes up Baudelaire’s idea of the flâneur and removes it from its original intention as a mode of existence in the fin-de-siècle European city, only to reappear in America, in a time of apocalypse and revolution. Carter calls attention to the gender of the city ambler, who, in Baudelaire’s vision, was taken-for-granted as male. The flâneur character in The Passion of New Eve is indeed a man (and a misogynist one, at that), but as soon as he leaves the city to travel in the desert, he undergoes a physical transformation and becomes female. The desert is a feminine space for Carter, ruled by a tribe of women and created in opposition to the decaying city. The flâneur is literally emasculated once he leaves the urban space, loses his individuality and becomes a member of the collectivity, of the tribe of Beulah. Carter demonstrates that Baudelaire’s flâneur cannot exist outside of the city as a man. It is in the desert that we meet a third Baudelairean figure, that of the dandy.

“La femme est... le contraire du Dandy”22 : Part III, the dandy

Baudelaire was among the first to theorize the notion of the dandy in his collection of essays, Le peintre de la vie moderne (1863), inspired by the life of his friend, Constantin Guys, the artist infamous for his fondness of anonymity. According to Baudelaire, the dandy is a creature who emerges in periods of transition, his own era marked by the transformation of the city into a modern, industrial one. The essay entitled “The Dandy” is a manifesto – a set of rules to be followed by the dandy in all aspects of his life. For Baudelaire, the dandy is a vessel through which life becomes art, an extension of the doctrine of l’art pour l’art. The dandy rejects work and condemns the production of anything but his own carefully tended self. Baudelaire writes: “These beings have no other calling but to cultivate the idea of beauty in their persons, to satisfy their passions, to feel and to think.”23 As such, Baudelaire’s dandy belongs to a “culte de soi-même” : he seeks to cultivate the idea of beauty in himself and most importantly, to exteriorize this beauty for others. The dandy is an actor, possessing rigorous self-discipline and absolute self-control. Baudelaire maintains: “The Dandy must aspire to be sublime, without interruption. He must live and sleep in front of a mirror.”24 The dandy presents himself as a work of art, and shelters his authentic self behind the fictitious façade. The dandy, narcissistic and vulnerable asks only : look at me, admire me, love me.

Furthermore, through his meticulous attention to his appearance, the dandy obfuscates his biological sex, transforming into an inherently androgynous being. Distinctly non-homosexual, Baudelaire’s dandy harkens back to a golden age, before the Fall into sin and duality.25 Though androgynous, the dandy, in Baudelaire’s world is a role that is always played by a man, never a woman. In Mon coeur mis à nu, published posthumously and which reads more as a series of thoughts than a memoir, Baudelaire writes:

Woman is the opposite of the Dandy. Therefore she should inspire horror. Woman is hungry, and she wants to eat ; thirsty, and she wants to drink. She is in rut and she wants to get laid. What admirable qualities ! Woman is natural, that is to say abominable. Thus she is always vulgar ; the opposite, in fact, of the Dandy.26
The intensity of Baudelaire’s antipathy towards women permeates this excerpt. He considers women to be “abominable” because of their inclination to live by their senses, seeking instant gratification of their bodily desires – hunger, thirst, sex. Women and dandies are anachronistic in Baudelaire’s vision, a trope that Carter challenges in her character Tristessa.

In the desert, the new Eve crosses paths with Tristessa, a retired Hollywood film star who had been Evelyn’s object of desire in his childhood. As an actress, she indulges in a performance of highly stylized, painstakingly constructed selfhood. She corresponds to the aspect of dandyism that is utterly theatrical construction, existing only in the eyes of the public and not beyond. Before his transformation, Evelyn grapples to define the actress: “Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah” (p.6). Tristessa is a creature of theatre, disguise, and rerouted sexuality – we in fact discover later that she is a man. Like that of the dandy, her biological nature, that is to say, her virility, remains indecipherable to her audience, concealed by careful arrangement of makeup and dress.

The image of feminine beauty Tristessa projects corresponds to the ideal of the nineteenth-century Decadents. Rhonda K. Garelick, in her study on the encounter between the decadent dandy and the female performer, defines the Decadent era as a crucial moment in the evolution of the phenomenon of the dandy. She writes: “During decadent dandyism – the latest stage of the movement in the final twenty years of the nineteenth century – the socially detached hero turned his attention from the spectacle of the self to the spectacle of the other, to the woman onstage.” These women were put in the spotlight and became minor celebrity figures who served as a tabula rasa upon which the dandy spectator could project his own creative musings. Tristessa, because she is biologically male, is able to incarnate male desire, as Evelyn notes: “He [Tristessa] had made himself the shrine of his own desires, had made of himself the only woman he could have loved!” (p.129). Tristessa’s painstaking attention to her appearance performs feminine perfection recalling the dandy’s narcissistic “cult of selfhood.” Carter blends the cult of selfhood of the dandy spectator with the cult figure of the female performer. Evelyn’s description of Tristessa echoes the consumptive femme fatale of the fin-de-siècle: “Tall, pale, attenuated enigma, your face an invitation to necrophilia, face of an angel upon a tombstone, a face that will haunt me forever, a face dominated by hooded eyes whose tears were distillations of the sorrows of the world […]” (p.121). Evelyn’s description of Tristessa as the “queen of suffering” is a macabre double-entendre that conjures up the burlesque performer of the drag queen, whose sexual energy is directed ambiguously at his audience.

In Tristessa, Carter has created a caricature of dandyism. Tristessa exaggerates all aspects of the dandy: she is not just theatrical, she is melodramatically so, thus making a mockery of the dandy’s flair for the dramatic. Whereas the dandy presents himself to the world as a work of art, Tristessa transforms into an object of mass consumption, produced by Hollywood, thereby blurring the boundaries between “high” and “low” cultural products. The dandy, according to Baudelaire, is a superior, singular being and therefore cannot be reduced to a sum of money, yet if we understand Tristessa as dandy, we are confronted with a commodified dandy, the antithesis of the icon of “art for art’s sake.” Carter’s ironic re-contextualization of fragments of dandyism in the character of Tristessa opens up a space to deflate Baudelaire’s poetics by negating the uniqueness of the dandy.
Carter corrupts Baudelaire’s dandy: Tristessa, as a man, goes beyond the general confines of dandyism, the absolute limit being androgyny, into producing a fully-fledged appearance of womanhood. Dandies would never cross-dress to the extent of becoming women, women being, as Baudelaire wrote, both too “natural” and too vulgar, for the sophistication of the dandy. In Carter’s feminist revisioning, the masculine unity of the dandyian figure is broken down and its integrity is compromised. In reincarnating a perverted version of the dandy in the character of Tristessa, Carter hijacks Baudelaire’s prized creation that epitomized the 19th century artistic temperament.

To love and to hate

To conclude, I call upon Laurent Jenny, who defines intertextuality as follows: “The specificity of intertextuality is such that it introduces the reader to a new way of reading that breaks with the linearity of the text. Each intertextual reference makes room for an alternative.” Carter does exactly this in The Passion of New Eve. She produces an alternate reading of a canonical poet reworking to different degrees the key notions that define Baudelaire: from revisitation – of the urban landscape – to modification – of the flâneur – to full blown perversion – of the dandy. Carter’s procedures of intertextual referencing run the gamut of possibilities that exist in the intertextual exercise and reveal the ambivalent relationship of the feminist author to her male, modernist predecessors. In Carter’s work, intertextuality is both an act of love and an act of hate. In order for her to deflate the canon, she must also reproduce elements of it, thus proliferating the source. Finally, Angela Carter’s practice resides in her willingness to acknowledge that we receive the past, whether it be textual or otherwise, in a form mediated by cultural influences, such as Baudelaire. Through the process of re-contextualization, Carter calls into question those values that have come to be associated with certain texts and their authors, values that she, in turn, is continually both haunted by and obsessed with in her own texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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NOTES

1. The edition referred to in this paper is that published by Virago Press (London) in 2009. All references to The Passion of New Eve will be cited directly in the text in parentheses.

2. Evidently fascinated by Baudelaire and his legacy, Carter will return to manipulating the poet as an intertext on another occasion, that of her 1985 short story, “Black Venus,” a re-writing of Baudelaire’s representation of Jeanne Duval, his Creole mistress and muse of the “Vénus noire” cycle of Les Fleurs du mal. Though Carter’s engagement with Baudelaire in this story is of a different order than in The Passion of New Eve (“Black Venus” makes the reference explicit, whereas in The Passion of New Eve the intertext is present in the form of allusion), her intention remains the same. In both, Carter succeeds in deflating Baudelaire’s poetics.

3. In its original French, the first line of “Spleen LXXVII” reads: “Je suis comme le roi d’un pays pluvieux.”


5. Genette adopts the term from anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who used it to describe mythic thought as “a kind of intellectual bricolage” (“une sorte de bricolage intellectuel.”)


15. Translation by Keith Waldrop, The Flowers of Evil, Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2006, p.133. The original reads: « De ce terrible paysage / Tel que jamais mortel n’en vit / Ce matin encore l’image / Vague et lointaine, me ravit […] Babel d’escaliers et d’arcades / C’était un palais infini / Plein de bassins et de cascades / Témoins dans son or bruni / Et des cataractes pesantes / Comme des rideaux de cristal / Se suspendaient, éblouissantes / À des muraillées de métal / Non d’arbres, mais de colonnades / Les étangs dormants s’entouraient / Ô

16. Waldrop, op. cit., p.42. In the original French the excerpt is as follows: « Le soleil rayonnait sur cette pourriture / Comme afin de la cuire à point / Et de rendre au centuple à la grande Nature / Tout ce qu’ensemble elle avait joint / Et le ciel regardait la carcasse superbe / Comme une fleur s’épanouir / La puanteur était si forte, que sur l’herbe / Vous crûtes vous évanouir. » “Une charogne,” Les Fleurs du mal, op.cit., pp.78-79.


24. The translation is my own. The original reads: « Le Dandy doit aspirer à être sublime, sans interruption. Il doit vivre et dormir devant un miroir. » From Baudelaire, Mon coeur mis à nu, op. cit., p.54.


27. Decadence proper is generally located from the early 1880s to the turn of the century.


29. Idem, p.5.

ABSTRACTS

This paper considers the use of literary intertextuality and its feminist implications through a case study of a specific intertextual reference found in Angela Carter’s 1977 novel *The Passion of New Eve*: that of the canonical work of Charles Baudelaire. In true feminist form, Carter deflates the nineteenth-century poet – who has risen to the status of myth in Western culture – by re-contextualizing the various elements of the Baudelairean aesthetic. After defining theories of intertextuality and the notion of *bricolage* as they pertain to Carter’s work, this paper goes on to examine how Carter reworks to various degrees the key notions that define Baudelaire as a canonical author: from revisitation, as found in the portrayal of the urban landscape, to modification, through the image of the *flâneur*, to full-blown perversion – the exaggeration of the beloved dandy. Carter’s practice is not a complete rejection of the canon. Rather, what this paper reveals is the ambivalent relationship of the feminist author to her male, modernist predecessors.


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