

The Politics of Gender and the Visual in Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter

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Summary

This thesis investigates the relationship between gender and the visual in texts by Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter. Drawing on visual studies, gender studies and film theory, I argue that my selected texts present the gendered visual field as dynamic and layered, foregrounding both a masculine economy of vision and the possibility of alternative forms of gendered subjectivity and ways of looking.

The Introduction discusses the key methodological frameworks used in this thesis, including Jonathan Crary's account of the historical construction of vision, the debates around gender, mobility and visibility centred on the figure of the *flâneur*, and Laura Mulvey's account of the cinematic male gaze. I argue for the importance of recognising that the field of vision is a site of contestation composed of an interplay of connected gendered looks. Chapter One focuses on the unresolved tensions between different gendered looks in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) which take place across a number of spaces and are mediated by a variety of visual frames. Chapter Two turns to *Orlando* (1928) to explore Woolf's playful subversion of a masculine visual economy through a protagonist who changes sex and dress. In addition to this vacillation of appearance, I argue that the text's representations of London in the 1920s, in particular the department store and motor-car, contribute to a proliferation of gendered looks. In turning to *The Passion of New Eve* (1979), Chapter Three shows how Carter foregrounds the violence involved in the performance of gender, particularly as mediated through the cinema, and further subverts masculine vision by representing gender as a masquerade. The fourth chapter focuses on *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) and argues that, despite its intended revolutionary purpose, Hoffman's optical invention fails to transform the gendered visual field and instead reinscribes the patriarchal conventions of gender and looking that it has the potential to subvert.

Ultimately, this thesis suggests that the works examined foreground the gendered visual field as a site of contested forms of gendered subjectivity and ways of looking. The texts map out an unresolvable tension between the masculine, hegemonic conventions which exert a powerful influence in everyday life and the possibility of going beyond them.

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Introduction

[M]odernity is inseparable from on one hand a remaking of the observer, and on the other a proliferation of circulating signs.

– Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*

From the middle of the nineteenth century, as if in a historical relay of looks, the shop window succeeded the mirror as a site of identity construction, and then [...] the shop window was displaced and incorporated by the cinema screen.

– Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping*

Going far beyond highlighting a woman's to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself.

– Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'

Historical Constructions of Gender and the Visual

Clarissa Dalloway sits before her mirror feeling the disparate parts of her self being assembled into a dartlike specular double, while in Evelyn's eyes Leilah seems not to recognise the person in the mirror as herself. Orlando views the mind as a phantasmagoria, while Desiderio remembers Albertina as a series of images in the kaleidoscope of desire. Orlando's cross-dressing increases her pleasures and multiplies her experiences, while Albertina's 'extravagantly oversignified', androgynous costume unsettles the discerning gaze of Desiderio.¹ Speeding in her motor-car, the countryside appears to Orlando as a series of 'green screens', while Desiderio aboard a ship looks up at the sky as a cyclorama. As examples like these reveal, the writings of Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter are peppered with visual devices, surfaces and looks, which produce various effects and perceptions of gendered subjectivity. Objectified and fetishised bodies, misrecognised identities, commodified images

¹ Maggie Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence: Critical Fictions/Fictional Critiques* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 82.

of femininity, and dispersed and fragmented subjects create a series of dynamic and ambiguous gendered visual fields. Through both fictional and non-fictional works, Woolf and Carter display a fascination with the politics of the gendered field of vision.

This thesis constitutes a critical exploration of two key periods of the twentieth-century, the 1920s and the 1970s, as represented in works by Woolf and Carter respectively, in order to think about the relationship between gender and the visual in the following ways: forms of spectatorship such as voyeurism, identification and objectification; the way subjects both consume and are produced through images; the different visual representations of gendered identity; and the way optical devices and visual frames are related to subjectivity, literary techniques, and forms of observation. Both Woolf and Carter showed an astute awareness of how visual practices, codes of visibility, and new optical devices shaped the gender practices of their day, such as the rise of the cinema and television, new sartorial practices and fashions, and new forms of motorised transport. Most importantly, both shared a sense of the uneasy struggle of being a woman within largely patriarchal structures of visibility during the 1920s and the 1970s respectively. Woolf, for example, wrote about both the ways in which women are looked at from without and persecuted from within by internalised, masculine images of femininity, such as the infamous ‘Angel in the House’.² Likewise, although Carter is frank about her deep love of the cinema, she never fails to note Hollywood’s production of destructive images of femininity. Indeed, both Woolf and Carter were aware of the socially sanctioned ways of looking, which usually positioned the woman as a passive image to be enjoyed by a male spectator whilst encouraging the latter to identify with powerfully illusionistic images of masculinity. They challenged hegemonic forms of the relationship between gender and the visual and in their fiction gestured towards new ways of conceiving this relationship.

Woolf and Carter wrote about such issues in their own particular ways, and indeed it is common to situate them on opposing sides of the Modernism/Postmodernism divide. Within one model of this division, Brian McHale argues that whilst Modernist works tend to focus on questions relating to epistemology – ‘What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?’ – Postmodernist texts are dominated by more ontological concerns such as how the world and subjectivity are constituted and what happens

² For the former, see for example Woolf’s ‘A Room of One’s Own’; for the latter, see Woolf’s essay ‘Professions for Women’, in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 140-45.

when boundaries (textual, social, corporeal, etc.) break down.³ It is certainly possible to fit the writings of Woolf and Carter into such a model, given that so many texts by the former raise issues of the reliability of perception and knowledge, and focus attention on the consciousness of their characters, whilst a great many works by the latter involve corporeal metamorphosis and the confrontation of different realities.⁴ However, a close look at their writings reveals a more complex situation. Woolf, for example, demonstrated a clear interest in ontological issues, such as the being and becoming of the body, in texts such as *Flush* (1932) and *Orlando* (1928), whilst a text like *Nights at the Circus* (1984) by Carter raises epistemological issues, in particular the reliability of the central character and the veracity of the eye-witness testimony of its narrator.⁵ Further problematizing the line separating their writings, Isobel Armstrong argues that Carter's writings owe a debt to Woolf's experimental writing, in particular 'the possibilities for bravura fantasy in *Orlando*'.⁶ As this thesis will make apparent, the writings of both Woolf and Carter are concerned with epistemological and ontological issues as they relate to the gendered field of vision. For example, in writing about highly ambiguous gendered bodies, about what the body could become (an ontological issue), Woolf and Carter cast doubt on the legibility of the gendered body and hence on the efficaciousness of the discerning/mastering gaze (epistemological issues). The ontological instabilities of world and body trouble the epistemological foundations of masculinised vision.

However, there are clear stylistic differences in their works which reflect the different historical constructions of gender and the visual, and the spaces in which these two are configured in particular ways. Woolf's prose in texts like *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) captures the multiple perspectives of the city through techniques like stream-of-consciousness, free-indirect discourse and fragmented sentences. Carter, by contrast, writes in what Armstrong describes as 'a stylised, objectifying, external manner, as if all experience [...] is self-consciously

³ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 9-10.

⁴ McHale discusses Carter's work as an example of postmodernist fiction. For example, in a discussion of her *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, he writes that Carter 'elaborates the ontological confrontation between this world and the "world next door" into a literal agonistic struggle, analogous to the science-fiction *topos* of the "war of the worlds"'. McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, pp. 78-79 (emphasis in original).

⁵ Whilst *Flush* raises questions about animal life and the opposition between the human and the animal, *Orlando* (as Chapter Two will make clear) focuses on the ambiguity of the human, sexed body. Both texts also raise epistemological issues, such as the perception of gender or the reliability of knowledge about animal life. Carter's *Nights at the Circus* centres on an epistemological question concerning the central character Fevvers, 'Is she fact or is she fiction?', and is told from the point of view of Jack Walser, a reporter trying to answer this very question. Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (London: Vintage, 2006 [1984]), p. 3.

⁶ Isobel Armstrong, 'Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus: Carter and Tradition', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 266-86 (p. 267). The link between Woolf and Carter is also made explicit by the fact that Carter wrote a libretto based on Woolf's *Orlando*. See 'Orlando: or, the Enigma of the Sexes', in *The Curious Room: Plays, Film Scripts and an Opera*, ed. Mark Bell (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), pp. 155-82.

conceived of as *display*, a kind of rigorous, analytical, public self-projection'.⁷ This intensely visual style reflects the way in which various forms of spectacle, from fashion to cinema and television, were becoming increasingly dominant in the 1970s. Hence, what I want to examine in detail is how Woolf and Carter represent the visual contexts of the 1920s and 1970s and the negotiations of gendered subjects in these times. For example, I want to ask how Woolf represents women's negotiations of the gendered visual field of London in the 1920s, with its variety of spaces, motorised vehicles and multiple perspectives.

There are a number of compelling reasons to place Woolf and Carter side by side in an analysis of the gendered field of vision. To begin with, both writers explore the relationship between gender and visibility in strikingly similar ways and contexts, despite writing many decades apart. Both were fascinated with the gendered field of vision of the modern metropolis, with how the city offers a multiplicity of perspectives, spaces and sources of stimulation. The characters in much of their fiction experience of a sense of gender fluidity, which is often strongly tied to the dynamic spaces and visual signifying systems of the urban environment. In both their fiction and non-fiction, Woolf and Carter write about the connections between walking, writing, and looking within the context of the city. This in turn goes hand in hand with a shared passion for modern visual culture, from modernist painting and photography to the cinema and television. Most pertinent to this thesis is their shared preoccupation with film, with both cinematic language and expression, and with the ways in which film constructs images of gendered subjectivity. Woolf and Carter recognised that cinema both upholds existing patriarchal structures of looking and representations of gender, and has the potential to challenge these and create new ones. A noteworthy example of this shared interest in cinema can be seen in their mutual interest in *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (1919), one of the most influential avant-garde films associated with the school of Expressionism. Woolf turns to this film in her essay 'The Cinema' in order to imagine a new cinematic language not dependent on earlier media. Whilst Carter is also clearly interested in cinema's capacity to create new ways of seeing and narrative techniques, references and allusions to *Caligari* in her work are often there to suggest that filmic techniques have become established and normalised structures by the 1970s. Hence, moving between texts by Woolf and Carter sheds light on the tension between established and new ways of seeing, as both writers are concerned with the question of how to negotiate structures of gender and the visual.

⁷ Armstrong, 'Woolf by the Lake', p. 278 (emphasis in original).

The choice of texts follows on from this rationale as each one captures this shared set of interests and concerns. All of my primary texts explore gender fluidity, the negotiation of gendered subjectivity within the space of the city, and multiple forms of looking influenced by various visual devices such as the cinema. More particularly, these texts have been selected because they speak to each other in interesting ways. For example, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* explores the negotiation of gendered subjectivity and gendered forms of looking within the context of London in the 1920s, making clear that different spaces and visual frames have the capacity to transform the relationship between gender and the visual. Department stores, motorised vehicles, and the rise of the cinema alter gendered modes of looking in profound ways. Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, published almost fifty years later, touches on similar ideas but reworks them by imagining what happens when a city is bombarded by newer visual technologies and images. As this text suggests, the proliferation of technologies of simulation blurs the line between the real and the optical, and leads to more ambiguous and fluid forms of subjectivity. Both Woolf and Carter thus show an interest in the relationship between visual culture and identity, or between the "I" and the "eye". *Orlando* and *The Passion of New Eve* also speak to one another in a number of significant ways, justifying the choice of placing these texts side by side rather than sticking to the chronology of publication. Both texts centre on a protagonist that changes sex, both explore in different ways the impact of cinema upon subjectivity and ways of looking, and both feature meditations on clothing, cross-dressing and gender masquerade. It is noteworthy also that Carter wrote a libretto based on Woolf's *Orlando*, another example of the influence that the latter had on Carter. By tracing a path from *Mrs Dalloway* to *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, this thesis plots a relay of looks from the 1920s to the 1970s in order to explore the changing configuration of gender and the visual.

Given that the gendered visual field is historically constructed, this thesis draws on a variety of theoretical works which analyse this from different perspectives, including visual studies, film studies, and feminist theory. The most important account of the historical construction of vision for this thesis is Jonathan Crary's analysis of the change from classical to modern vision which, according to him, arose in the early nineteenth century. In the next section, therefore, I outline his main argument and the points of relevance for my own work. In the sections that follow this, I examine the other important theoretical works for this thesis, including feminist writings on the figure of the *flâneur* and Laura Mulvey's influential work on the concept of the male gaze in cinema.

The Historical Construction of Vision

One of the central premises of this thesis is that visibility is historically constructed. The invention of new visual technologies, such as the cinema, and the establishment of new visual practices produces codified forms of display and ways of looking. One of the most insightful accounts of the historical construction of visibility is Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. In this book, Crary examines a profound transformation of the visual field in the early decades of the nineteenth century, as a result of new optical devices like the stereoscope, advances in optical science, and new social discourses that depend upon new understandings of visibility. Rather than resort to purely technological explanations, Crary constructs an account that takes in technology, the body, theoretical discourses and social arrangements of power. As he argues at one point, '[p]roblems of vision' are 'fundamentally questions about the body and the operation of social power'.⁸ For Crary, the 'observer' must hence be thought of on the same plane as technologies, discourses and economies, rather than from some position of supposed neutrality outside of these things. The observing subject 'is both the historical product *and* the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification'.⁹ Crary's choice of the term 'observer' rather than, say, spectator, lies in its etymology: as he notes, the word 'observer' derives from 'observare', which does not mean literally 'to look at', but rather 'to conform one's action, to comply with,' as in the observing of rules. Hence, the observer is more than just someone who looks; crucially, 'an observer is more importantly one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations'.¹⁰ This is not to suggest that there is ever only one type of observer for, as Crary argues, any given period is 'an irreducibly heterogeneous system of discursive, social, technological, and institutional relations', a 'continually shifting field'.¹¹ Crary thus tries to balance his approach by offering an account of the dominant ways of seeing in the nineteenth century and at the same time acknowledging the possibility (and in some cases actuality) of other modes of vision. These remarks thus offer an important corrective to those accounts of

⁸ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 3.

⁹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 5 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

¹¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6. Given this, Crary states that his aim is to examine only 'some of the conditions and forces' that either 'defined or allowed' the model of the observer in the nineteenth century (p. 7).

the visual which place too much emphasis on hegemonic forms of looking, thereby appearing to foreclose the potential for both alternative forms of vision and practices of resistance.¹²

Crary's argument about the transformation of the visual in the early decades of the nineteenth century centres on a change in how the visual field, and by extension the observer, was conceptualised. As he explains, before the nineteenth century, the 'structural and optical principles of the camera obscura coalesced into a dominant paradigm' of the visual field and its concomitant observer.¹³ The camera obscura was more than an optical device: it functioned as a 'philosophical metaphor' for truth, and stood as a model of 'how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world'.¹⁴ What is most important in the camera obscura, though, is 'its relation of the observer to the undemarcated, undifferentiated expanse of the world outside, and how its apparatus makes an orderly cut or delimitation of that field allowing it to be viewed, without sacrificing the vitality of its being'.¹⁵ As Crary goes on to note, the observer of the camera obscura is 'isolated', a 'free sovereign individual' and a 'privatized subject'.¹⁶ A significant related function was the decorporealization of vision: the act of seeing was 'sunder[ed]' from the physical body.¹⁷ The camera obscura thus models the observer as separate from the act of representation and from the objects of his/her gaze.

New optical devices appearing in the early decades of the nineteenth century, such as the stereoscope and phenakistiscope, changed all of this, leading to a more subjective model of vision in which the body played a crucial role in the production of certain kinds of optical effects. The illusion of three-dimensional images seen in the stereoscope, for example, was made possible by a new understanding of, and hence manipulation of, the human sensorium such that the latter functioned as a component of the visual mechanism. As Crary puts it, in this period 'the visible escapes from the timeless order of the camera obscura and becomes lodged in another apparatus [...] the human body'.¹⁸ Devices such as these thus challenge the earlier association between perception and truth, and locate the observer as a component of the production of visual effects rather than from a position of external visual mastery. Interestingly,

¹² This particular problem of overestimating the power and reach of hegemonic forms of looking is similar to a danger which has been identified in Angela Carter's writing: namely, her representation of the dominance of masculine desire and patriarchal oppression. I will discuss this in more detail later in the Introduction.

¹³ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 27.

¹⁴ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 29. For an account of how the camera obscura played an important role in the works of various thinkers from Descartes to Freud, see Sarah Kofman, *Camera Obscura of Ideology*, trans. Will Straw (London: The Athlone Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 34.

¹⁶ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 39. Crary gives two examples of works that make clear this point: Newton's *Opticks* (1704) and Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690).

¹⁸ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 70.

the stereoscope created a strange, even paradoxical, sense of tangibility: by creating the illusion of tangible images just in front of the eyes, this device turned the sensation of tangibility ‘into a purely visual experience’. Hence, as Crary puts it, the stereoscope ‘conflated the real with the optical’.¹⁹ Vision, therefore, not only becomes more corporeal in the nineteenth century, but the boundary separating corporeality from the image becomes blurred – the consequences of which would become increasingly profound in the twentieth century.

More broadly, Crary argues that these new optical apparatuses were ‘the outcome of a complex remaking of the individual as observer into something calculable and regularizable and of human vision into something measurable and thus exchangeable’.²⁰ This would be (partly) responsible for the burgeoning growth of visual devices for both scientific study and entertainment purposes. These devices also ‘involved arrangements of bodies in space, regulations of activity, and the deployment of individual bodies, which codified and normalized the observer within rigidly defined systems of visual consumption’.²¹ Hence, the term subjective vision should not be read as suggesting that power lay in the eyes of the individual observer, but rather that the human sensorium was intimately involved in the production of new visual experiences and discourses. Nevertheless, the desire to be in control of observation still persisted and thus worked in tension with this exploitation and regulation of the observer. To return to the stereoscope, on the one hand this device disempowered the observer because it did not allow for a complete overview of the visual field. The stereoscopic image is planar and its sense of depth ‘has no unifying logic or order’. Consequently, by contrast with the spectator of a painting, the eyes of the stereoscope-spectator ‘never traverse the image in a full apprehension of the three-dimensionality of the entire field, but in terms of a localized experience of separate areas’.²² In fact, the stereoscopic image is not one image, but two ‘nonidentical models’ which only come together to form a unified image when placed at the correct distance from the eyes. Given this necessity for close proximity of eyes to optical device, the stereoscope also immobilises the observer. On the other hand, though, one particular practice that developed in stereoscopic visual consumption betrays a desire for visual control, or what Crary calls ‘ocular possession’: because of its effects of tangibility, ‘the stereoscope

¹⁹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 124. This phrase captures one of the key aspects of the two novels by Carter that I focus on in chapters three and four, where visual technologies (most notably the cinema) mediate experience so deeply that reality often appears as a species of visual effect, as in Plato’s allegory of the cave. With reference to the works of both Walter Benjamin and Jean Baudrillard, Crary argues that, in the nineteenth century, there occurred ‘a new valuation of visual experience: it is given an unprecedented mobility and exchangeability, abstracted from any founding site or referent’. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 14.

²⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 16-17.

²¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 18.

²² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 125.

became increasingly synonymous with erotic and pornographic imagery'.²³ In this context, Crary quotes Walter Benjamin on the need to take possession of the object “in an image and the reproduction of an image”, a need which Benjamin saw as ‘central to the visual culture of modernity’.²⁴ There is thus a crucial tension at the heart of visual culture and its optical devices: between techniques of subjection and subjectification, and the desire for individual control and mastery, associated with visual pleasure. More importantly for my purposes, it is noteworthy that the desire for visual control manifested in this example is closely related to erotic representations of the gendered body.

Whilst Crary’s account of the historical construction of vision centres on the nineteenth century, I take up some of his key arguments and insights to think about the construction of vision in the twentieth century. Through my readings of key texts by Woolf and Carter, I analyse the constructions of visuality that are dominant in the 1920s and the 1970s, respectively. More specifically, I am interested in how each author represents both the ‘prescribed set of possibilities’ within which their characters see and the alternative forms of vision they are able to construct or discover. Woolf and Carter’s works are peppered with representations of, and allusions to, visual frames, optical devices and iconographies, and so I want to consider how each of these positions the observer in particular codified ways. Crary’s analysis of the observer’s changing relationship to visuality is thus immensely helpful in my readings. However, I want to bring gender into this analysis of the historical construction of vision and ask how Woolf and Carter represent the gendered subject’s relationship to visual culture and its complex structures – something which Crary leaves out of his account. My readings explore how each text represents the ways in which gendered subjectivity is mediated by visual structures and how the gendered subjects depicted negotiate these structures and to what end. How one sees and how one is looked at are both, as Crary argues, a matter of social power, and I want to focus on the particular ways in which vision is socialised in terms of gender.

Both Woolf and Carter were keenly aware of the plethora of old and new perspectives, visual devices and ways of looking during the respective periods in which they wrote, and so their writings register how men and women negotiated these shifting visual fields in different ways. In Woolf’s texts, the particular configuration of gender and visuality is formed by and within the context of urban life in the 1920s, in which women were becoming increasingly

²³ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 127.

²⁴ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 127; Walter Benjamin, ‘A Small History of Photography’, in *One-way Street*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 240-257.

mobile and visible, participating in ‘the circulation and exchange of looks in the urbanized and commodified modern scene’ as Liz Conor puts it. Conor goes on to argue that ‘it was as visual images, spectacles, that women could appear modern to themselves and others’.²⁵ Woolf’s female characters are seen walking or riding omnibuses through the urban environment, gazing at window displays and exploring department stores, and negotiating both their appearance and their roles in a society which is still very much patriarchal but becoming increasingly modern. By contrast, Carter’s writing emerges from and confronts a later configuration of gender and the visual, which is formed out of the seductive visions of femininity in Hollywood cinema, pornography’s representation of women, and the political upheavals of the 1960s. Her novels thus display a fascination with male-scripted versions of femininity which appear in the technologically produced (and reproduced) images of magazines, cinema and television, and which constitute a society saturated by spectacle.

Mapping Gendered Looks in Woolf and Carter

Given the different configurations of gender and the visual in works by Woolf and Carter, and given the historical differences separating the 1920s from the 1970s, I want to connect the different devices and modes of looking both within and between each period. To do so, I borrow a phrase from Anne Friedberg, whose work brings together Crary’s concern with the historical development of vision with a feminist analysis of gender. Friedberg writes that ‘[b]y the middle of the nineteenth century, as if in a historical *relay of looks*, the shop window succeeded the mirror as a site of identity construction, and then – gradually – the shop window was displaced by the cinema screen’.²⁶ I take up this phrase, ‘relay of looks’, in order to describe the relationship between the different ways of looking both within a single text and across all my primary texts. Whilst the connections that Friedberg makes between the mirror, the shop window, and the cinema screen do not necessarily form a strict evolutionary or linear development, nevertheless it is useful to think of them as forming a relay, through which the gaze is transported and the visual field continually transformed. Similar to Crary’s image of a ‘continually shifting field’, Friedberg does not postulate a single gaze or way of looking, but

²⁵ Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 2.

²⁶ Anne Friedberg, ‘Les Flâneurs du Mal(l): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition’, *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (May 1991), 419-431 (p. 422; emphasis added). This relay of looks could be extended today to the personal computer screen and mobile phone screen.

writes of a ‘mobilized gaze’ which passes through different contexts and takes on different qualities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Friedberg begins her account of this modern, mobilised gaze with the figure of the *flâneur*, the male walker and detached observer of modern, urban life who appears in the nineteenth century, but she quickly connects his gaze to a number of other looks. The rise of the department store, for example, puts the gaze into ‘the service of consumption’, which opens up a space for a female, or *flâneuse*’s, gaze. This ‘spatial and temporal mobility’ then leads to what she refers to as an ‘apparatical sequel: the cinema’.²⁷ The apotheosis of this chain of looks for her is the shopping mall, which synthesises the space of the street, the department store, and the cinema, and further blurs the boundaries between public and private space. By connecting the *flâneur*’s gaze with that of the shopping mall spectator ‘as if in a historical relay of looks’, Friedberg is able to trace both lines of development and discontinuity, thereby avoiding a totalising narrative that obscures breaks and sudden changes. Nevertheless, she argues that from the nineteenth to the twentieth century the gaze becomes increasingly mobile and virtual, which in turn produces ‘an increasingly detemporalized subject’.²⁸ As she explains, photography

brought with it a virtual gaze, one that brought the past to the present, the distant to the near, the miniscule to its enlargement. And machines of virtual transport (the panorama, the diorama, and later, the cinema) extended the virtual gaze of photography to provide virtual mobility.²⁹

With a dramatic increase in the number of optical devices, displays and images beginning in the nineteenth century, the observer of modern life becomes more and more enmeshed in visual practices that place him/her in a virtual relationship to objects. Such a subject, therefore, must negotiate his/her identity and place within a constellation of images and looks.

Like Crary, Friedberg is alert to the differences between optical devices and how these suggest quite different subjectivities. For example, the panorama and the diorama were both ‘designed to *transport* [...] the spectator-subject’ producing a virtual ‘spatial and temporal mobility’.³⁰ However, unlike the panorama, ‘the diorama spectator was immobile, at the center of the building, and the “views” were mobilized’.³¹ In many cases, then, ‘as the “mobility” of the gaze became more “virtual” [...] the observer became more immobile, passive’.³² Different

²⁷ Friedberg, ‘Les Flâneurs du Mal(l)’, p. 421.

²⁸ Friedberg, ‘Les Flâneurs du Mal(l)’, p. 420.

²⁹ Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 4.

³⁰ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 20.

³¹ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 26.

³² Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 28.

visual devices thus created different subjectivity-effects, mobilising or immobilising the spectator, enclosing or expanding the gaze. Unlike Crary, however, Friedberg's work takes into consideration the gender implications of this shifting visual field. In fact, she appears to allude to his omission of gender when she notes that 'genealogies of the nineteenth-century observer have [...] retained a resistance to the gendered subject'.³³ Correcting such genealogies of vision, Friedberg argues that 'at the base of modernity, the social underpinnings of gender began to shift' as women were 'empowered with new forms of social mobility as shoppers, as tourists, as cinema-goers'.³⁴ As she goes on to argue, though, such empowerment is 'paradoxical' because although 'new freedoms of lifestyle and "choice" were available, [...] as feminist theorists have amply illustrated, women were addressed as consumers in ways that played on deeply rooted cultural constructions of gender'.³⁵ Whilst the department store, for example, marks the emergence of a newly mobilised and empowered female gaze, 'the relation between *looking* and *buying*, and the indirect desire to possess and incorporate through the eye' puts the woman's gaze in the service of capitalist commodity fetishism.³⁶ As well as empowering women, then, the department store window display also represented a new form of imprisonment by encouraging an identification between shopping and freedom. As Friedberg puts it, as a 'form of incorporation, shopping can be likened to identification: "I shop, therefore I am" but also "I am what I buy"'.³⁷ The department store thus signifies both female emancipation and the harnessing of women's economic resources in the pursuit of profit by appealing to their desires for self-expression. Friedberg's perspective is therefore a subtle one in that it holds together both the positive and negative aspects of the transformation of gendered visual life.

Gendered Gazes in the Modern City – The *Flâneur/Flâneuse* Debates

Friedberg's example of the empowerment of women's visual and spatial mobility within the modern metropolis is particularly relevant for my analysis of Woolf's work because the latter engages with this problematic in her representation of London in the 1920s. Because Woolf's female characters register the challenges of being a visible and mobile subject within the modern city, it is worth taking stock of a set of debates which began in the 1980s around gender

³³ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 17.

³⁴ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 4.

³⁵ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 36.

³⁶ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 37.

³⁷ Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(l)', p. 424. Angela Carter plays on this Cartesian sentence herself in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, as the eponymous character transforms Descartes's act of cogitation into desire.

and mobility, and which centred on the figure of the *flâneur*. Whilst the *flâneur* is in some ways a marginal figure, it is often celebrated as an exemplary and heroic actor on the stage of modern life, associated with the new spaces and experiences of modernity. Elizabeth Wilson explains:

The proliferation of public places of pleasure and interest created a new kind of public person with the leisure to wander, watch and browse; the *flâneur*, a key figure in the critical literature of modernity and urbanization. In literature, the *flâneur* was represented as an archetypal occupant and *observer* of the public sphere in the rapidly changing and growing great cities of nineteenth-century Europe.³⁸

The *flâneur* is a heroic observer of modern life because he is at home in the anonymity of the crowd, able to walk alone through the urban environment savouring the transient and ephemeral impressions that constitute life in the modern metropolis, detached from everything around him. Given the intense stimulation of the great city, detachment is perhaps an almost inevitable response, but one consequence is that the visual becomes dominant in the phenomenology of *flâneurie*.³⁹ As Wilson puts it, '[t]he *flâneur* spends most of his day simply looking at the urban spectacle'.⁴⁰ His interests are thus predominantly aesthetic, although some characterisations of the *flâneur* suggest an association with commodification too: Crary, for example, refers to the *flâneur* as 'a mobile consumer of a ceaseless succession of illusory commodity-like images'.⁴¹ Whether or not such images were ultimately reducible to their monetary value, the *flâneur* certainly stood aloof from the sights of modern life.

Most significantly, the *flâneur* is clearly a masculine figure and exists in a world starkly demarcated along gender lines. Given the ideological separation of public and private spheres in the nineteenth century, the *flâneur* is usually held to be an exclusively male figure. Only men were permitted to wander alone through the urban streets, taking in the pleasures of the city. One of the only exceptions was the figure of the prostitute, a figure that is, crucially, mediated by men and by money.⁴² When respectable, and therefore chaperoned, women appeared in public, they were looked at as fleeting and arousing figures by the *flâneur*.

³⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', *New Left Review* 191 (January/February 1992), 90-110 (93; emphasis added).

³⁹ In this context, see Georg Simmel's account of the blasé attitude that is a consequence of overstimulation in the modern metropolis, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', *Simmel On Culture*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 174-85; see also Walter Benjamin's discussion of the shocks of modernity in 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 152-96.

⁴⁰ Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 94.

⁴¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 21.

⁴² Janet Wolff argues that there was no female equivalent to the *flâneur*, offering the example of George Sand's cross-dressing in support of her argument: by disguising herself as a man, 'the life of the *flâneur* [became] available to her', for as she well knew 'she could not adopt the non-existent role of the *flâneuse*. Women could not stroll alone in the city'. Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse', *Theory Culture Society*, 2.3 (1985), 37-46 (p. 41).

However, such women were not to be directly engaged with by the *flâneur* for this would undermine his sense of detachment; instead, they must be held at a distance like the other impressions of modern city life.⁴³ Indeed, there is an equivalence between woman and urban environment in the *flâneur*'s gaze. Relevant here is David Harvey's observation that Balzac's Paris is 'often depicted as a woman (playing opposite Balzac's male fantasies)' and that he 'is out to possess Paris'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Harvey adds that Balzac 'needs the city to feed him images' and that his greatest aim and desire is to 'construct an Archimedean position' from which to survey and master the city, a 'synoptic vision'.⁴⁵ The city as woman must arouse and simultaneously be controlled by the man as hero of modernity.

The *flâneur* is not just an observer but a recorder of modern life, which brings in questions of voice and literary control as well as visual dominance. As Rachel Bowlby puts it, the *flâneur* is a nineteenth-century 'conception of the writer as walker'.⁴⁶ The appearance of women, like the other impressions of modern life, is recorded by this literary *flâneur*, and so once again woman is not just gazed at but placed within the confines of narrative. Indeed, the forms of writing associated with urban life, such as the feuilleton and the magazine article, are, according to Wilson, not just 'inquisitive, anecdotal, ironic, melancholy, but above all voyeuristic'.⁴⁷ Many accounts of the *flâneur* begin with Charles Baudelaire, and indeed his work makes clear this idea that the *flâneur* is both observer and recorder of modern life. In his poem 'A une passante', from *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1861), Baudelaire evokes the figure of the passing woman, who catches the gaze of the *flâneur*, returns it briefly and then disappears.⁴⁸ Later, the *flâneur* then captures this bewitching and fugitive figure in his writing, turning her into something eternal. The passing woman is thus not so much a real and autonomous being, but 'a mere projection from the spectator' in Bowlby's words. She continues: 'Her passing is really his, as he zooms by just catching sight of her; her partial and fleeting appearance belongs

⁴³ Crary discusses the significance of distance in his discussion of the autonomization of vision: 'The loss of touch as a conceptual component of vision meant the unloosening of the eye from the network of referentiality incarnated in tactility and its subjective relation to perceived space. This autonomization of sight, occurring in many different domains, was a historical condition for the rebuilding of an observer fitted for the tasks of "spectacular" consumption'. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 49. Harvey also notes that 'in its cerebral functions, Paris takes on a masculine personality as the intellectual centre of the globe' (p. 49).

⁴⁵ Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁶ Rachel Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 194.

⁴⁷ Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 96. See also Benjamin on the way in which modern forms of writing, such as newspapers and magazines, take part in the process by which 'narration' is replaced by 'information', which in turn is replaced with 'sensation', what Benjamin refers to as 'the increasing atrophy of experience'. Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 155.

⁴⁸ Angela Carter plays with this image of the passing woman in *The Passion of New Eve*, which I will analyse in Chapter Three.

to the same phenomenon'.⁴⁹ As a projection, woman is akin to the ephemeral images projected by an optical device. Furthermore, the *flâneur* is also associated with a particular visual apparatus, as Baudelaire writes that 'the lover of universal life', the dandy and *flâneur*, is like 'a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness'.⁵⁰ Woman, therefore, appears to the *flâneur* as a series of kaleidoscopic images evoking wonder and frustration; within this masculine field of vision, she is, as Bowlby writes, 'man's projection, a creature of the masculine imagination'.⁵¹ Whilst the *flâneur's* gaze positions woman as part of the ephemera of modernity, his writing 'substantialises her fragmentariness' which 'keeps her, fits her to him, in the image of his imagination'.⁵² Combining observation and writing, then, the *flâneur* is doubly-voyeuristic, and woman is coded as both visual and textual object. It is for these reasons that the *flâneur* has 'emerged in postmodern feminist discourse as the embodiment of the "male gaze". He represents men's visual and voyeuristic mastery over women'.⁵³

Although there is some agreement about this account of the mobility and visual mastery of the *flâneur*, there has been much fierce debate about the status of women in the late nineteenth century and about the possibility of a female equivalent to the *flâneur*. Whilst Janet Wolff argues against the possibility of a *flâneuse*, critics such as Wilson and Mica Nava argue that women were not in fact invisible within the public sphere but moved with some freedom thanks to new spaces of leisure and consumption such as the department store, as touched on above. As Wilson argues contra Wolff, in the department store 'a woman, too, could become a *flâneur*'.⁵⁴ The department store also upsets the distinction between public and private space: in a characterisation that recalls Crary's picture of a 'continually shifting [visual] field', Wilson asserts that urban space is not so much monolithically masculine but 'contradictory and shifting'.⁵⁵ Similarly, Nava argues that Wolff overestimates the importance of the *flâneur*, countering that this figure was merely a marginal observer. Excluded from accounts which privilege the *flâneur* as the emblematic figure of modernity is 'the everyday spectatorship of

⁴⁹ Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations*, p. 202.

⁵⁰ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), pp. 1-40 (p. 12); qtd. in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 113. Crary also notes that Baudelaire discusses the stereoscope and phenakistiscope in his essay 'Morale du joujou', which has been translated into English as 'The Philosophy of Toys' by Paul Keegan. Available at: <http://gv.pl/index.php/main/lalki/pdf/baudelaire.pdf>

⁵¹ Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations*, p. 203.

⁵² Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations*, p. 202.

⁵³ Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 98.

⁵⁴ Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 101.

⁵⁵ Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur', p. 103. In this context, Wilson cites Doreen Massey's point that modernism 'privileged vision over the other senses and established a way of seeing from the point of view of an authoritative, privileged, and male, position'. See Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 232.

ordinary people, and especially ordinary women'.⁵⁶ She therefore locates Wolff's account within what she sees as a pessimistic tradition of feminist historiography which concentrates too much attention on the subordination of women. By contrast, her broad argument is that the absence of women from the literature of modernity is not indicative of a real absence of women from the spaces of modernity, but stems from the perceived threat of cultural change which the presence of women in public spaces signified for many male writers and commentators.⁵⁷ In its exclusion of women, the discourses of modernity constitute 'a form of denial' and 'a way of attempting to hold back the modern'.⁵⁸

Rita Felski's work on the gender of modernity is also relevant here, as she argues that many of the now-classic accounts of modernity tend to foster illusory associations between masculinity and modernity and between femininity and tradition. In such accounts, modernity is associated with figures like Faust or Oedipus, 'drawing on metaphors of contestation and struggle in an ideal of competitive masculinity'.⁵⁹ Left out of these narratives is female psychology and social interaction, and a wealth of female figures such as Hedda Gabler, Salome and Lulu. By correcting the male-centred accounts of modernity, the image of this period becomes richer and more complex. The private/public distinction becomes a lot less clear-cut than commentators such as Wolff assume: with women taking advantage of public spaces, such as tearooms, galleries and department stores, as well as new forms of public transport, including trains, buses and tubes, what emerges is, in Nava's words, 'a picture in which middle class women were much closer to the dangers and the excitement of city life than the notion of separate spheres would lead us to anticipate'.⁶⁰

Hence the *flâneur* should not be taken as representing the only or even the dominant visual regime of modernity, for women too participated in significant ways in this visual field, including taking an active role in commodity culture. As Nava argues, the department store was 'central to the iconography of consumer culture; it exemplified the ubiquity of the visual

⁵⁶ Mica Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store', in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 38-76 (pp. 40-41).

⁵⁷ According to Nava, this anxiety stemmed in part from the changes to labour practices and to consumerism. Whilst men were experiencing new constraints in their places of work due to the disciplinary techniques associated with Taylorism and Fordism, women were 'stepping out': the work women did as consumers required 'substantial levels of skill and expertise', and allowed for a greater degree of individual freedom, than did the work that their husbands were carrying out in the factories. Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal', p. 57.

⁵⁸ Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal', p. 46.

⁵⁹ Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 2. Felski gives as an example of a male-centred account of modernity Marshall Berman's seminal *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1982). For a different approach that uncovers women's roles in modernity, Felski mentions Gail Finney's *Women in Modern Drama* (1989).

⁶⁰ Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal', p. 43.

in the new “scopic regime” and ‘both produced and was produced by the experience of women’.⁶¹ In this environment, women were ‘arbiters of taste and interpreters of the new’, often the first ones to encounter ‘new fashions and domestic novelties’, and helped to decide what was ‘worth adopting’. Hence, in a world that was attaching an ever-greater importance to ‘external appearances’ and ‘surface impressions’, women ‘played a crucial part in the development of [...] taxonomies of signification’.⁶² They were not just objects for the *flâneur*’s gaze, but gazing subjects too: the department store opened up a space for women ‘to stroll aimlessly, to be a *flâneuse*, to observe people, to admire and parade new fashions’. It therefore ‘legitimised the desire of women to look as well as be looked at – it enabled them to be both subject and object of the gaze’.⁶³ These accounts of the *flâneuse* thus share with Friedberg’s model a belief in not overestimating the reach and power of masculine structures of visibility and mobility, but in acknowledging and emphasising the complexity of gendered spaces and visual practices. Whilst they are clear about the patriarchal conventions and limitations that structure the gendering of vision and of public life, they also acknowledge the shifting quality of visual culture in which there are other ways of looking and other forms of social mobility.

Woolf, Gender, Visuality

This account of the gendered visual field of the modern city as continually shifting and as involving a relay of looks is fruitfully read alongside and in dialogue with Woolf’s representations of women’s experiences of the metropolis. Woolf was greatly concerned with issues of female emancipation, mobility and visibility, as the first two chapters will make clear. In terms of gender, she wrote a number of essays addressing the position and role of women in society, but she was clearly ambivalent about getting involved in feminist politics. Whilst in ‘Professions for Women’, Woolf encouraged women directly to develop their own minds by fighting the inward ‘phantoms’ which hold them back from pursuing careers or expressing their opinions, in letters and diary entries she displayed what Alex Zwerdling sees as a ‘reluctant’ political participation.⁶⁴ Indeed, as Zwerdling goes on to show, although Woolf engaged with the Women’s Suffrage movement from a young age, she quickly grew tired of activism, seeing the work as mechanical and the speeches predictable, and by 1924 she wrote in her diary “‘I

⁶¹ Nava, ‘Modernity’s Disavowal’, p. 46.

⁶² Nava, ‘Modernity’s Disavowal’, pp. 47-48.

⁶³ Nava, ‘Modernity’s Disavowal’, p. 53.

⁶⁴ See Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’; Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 212.

have travelled on”’.⁶⁵ Despite this reluctance to engage wholeheartedly in feminist activism, Woolf wrote a great deal about women’s lives, histories and writings, and many later feminists drew on her work in developing their own feminist ideas and practices.⁶⁶ However, some scholars have looked at Woolf as an ambivalent feminist figure. For example, in the late 1970s Elaine Showalter found fault with Woolf’s concept of androgyny and saw her experimental style as deflecting attention away from her feminist argument. Toril Moi, by contrast, argued that both of these aspects of Woolf’s work in fact form the basis for understanding what she sees as Woolf’s radical sexual and textual politics.⁶⁷ Most importantly for my own approach to Woolf is the work of Rachel Bowlby, whose essays also make a virtue out of the ambiguity of Woolf’s feminism and of her representations of gender. In an essay on Woolf’s *Orlando*, for example, Bowlby argues that this text’s playful ambiguity can be read not as a fault on Woolf’s part, but as an investigation of ‘quite serious questions about the significance or determinability of sexual difference’.⁶⁸ Instead of taking Woolf to task for favouring experimentalism over a clear feminist stance, she argues that it is to Woolf’s credit that her text hovers between different, shifting positions. I take up Bowlby’s productive readings of Woolf’s ambiguity because they can be fruitfully read alongside Crary’s idea of a ‘continually shifting [visual] field’. As I will argue in the two chapters on Woolf, it is the shifting quality of her work which illuminates the complex relationship between gender and the visual, as opposed to any kind of definitive judgement about this relationship.

It is hardly surprising that Woolf should represent the visual field as continually shifting, for she was fascinated with a variety of visual cultures, many of which find their way into her writings. Her ties to the Bloomsbury group painters, in particular Duncan Grant and Roger Fry, meant that painting exerted an immediate influence upon her. As well as being photographed herself for *Vogue* magazine, Woolf was also an active photographer, inspired in

⁶⁵ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf Vol. 2: 1920-1924*, ed. Anne Oliver Bell (London : Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 318, qtd. in Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Naomi Black, *Virginia Woolf as Feminist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Jane Marcus, *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf* (London: Macmillan, 1981), *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), and *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); and Anne E. Fernald, *Virginia Woolf: Feminism and the Reader* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁶⁷ Elaine Showalter, ‘Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny’, in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (London: Virago, 2009), pp. 215-43; Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁶⁸ Rachel Bowlby, ‘Orlando’s Vacillation’, in *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 43-53 (p. 51).

part by her great-aunt, the Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. Critics such as Jane Goldman, Maggie Humm and Pamela L. Caughie have explored Woolf's relationship to visual culture and illuminated its wide-ranging influence upon her writing, taking into consideration not just painting and photography, but also new optical technologies from telescopes to x-ray machines.⁶⁹ Indeed, as Humm argues, Woolf was born into a period which 'witnessed a transformation in the production of the visual more profound than the discovery of Renaissance perspective'. Therefore, it is no surprise that modernists like Woolf were 'obsessed with issues of visual culture'. As Humm emphatically states, 'Woolf's responses to modern visual cultures are what make her a modernist writer'.⁷⁰ One of the most important visual arts for this thesis is cinema, and this too exerted a powerful force over Woolf's writing. In her lifetime, she witnessed both avant-garde film movements and cinema as a form of popular, mass entertainment. In an essay on the cinema published in 1926, Woolf makes clear that she detests the clichés of mainstream film, but sees potential in this relatively new medium for original and unique forms of expression. In preying upon other media, such as literature, films simplify the complexity of literary narrative: 'A kiss is love. A smashed chair is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse'.⁷¹ However, Woolf argues that there are hints of cinema's own unique potential as a medium and as a language. The effect of a blemish on the celluloid during a performance of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* leads Woolf to imagine a cinema that tries less to imitate other media than to utilise the more abstract processes of image production unique to film, such as montage, in order to render the 'innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression'.⁷² She goes on to argue that film could visualise 'fantastic contrasts' at a speed no writer could ever match, and that 'the past could be unrolled, distances could be annihilated'.⁷³ This latter image suggests that Woolf sees cinema as participating in modernity's compression of time and space.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ See, for example, Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*; Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), (ed.) *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Pamela L. Caughie, *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York & London: Garland, 2000).

⁷⁰ Maggie Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 214-30 (p. 215).

⁷¹ Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema', in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 172-76 (p. 174).

⁷² Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 174. This film would also prove important for Angela Carter and, as I will show, there are allusions to it in her writings.

⁷³ Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 175.

⁷⁴ See the work of David Harvey on time-space compression, for example *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

Like Friedberg, Woolf places the cinema within a relay of looks in a rich and suggestive passage near the end of her essay:

Watching crowds, watching the chaos of the streets in the lazy way in which faculties detached from use watch and wait, it seems sometimes as if movements and colours, shapes and sounds had come together and waited for someone to seize them and convert their energy into art. (p. 176)

Here, Woolf positions the cinema's camera-gaze, and by extension the film-spectator's gaze, in relationship to the multiple looks within the space of the street. She thus creates an imaginary relay of looks, rather than a single, hegemonic gaze, and suggests that cinema's transformation of the *flâneur's* gaze would move away from detached observation and towards a more energetic look.⁷⁵ But although Woolf sees much potential for film to participate in the maelstrom of modern life, at the time of writing there are only hints of what cinema could become. As Woolf writes towards the close of her meditation on film, 'the cinema has been born the wrong end first. The mechanical skill is far in advance of the art to be expressed'.⁷⁶

The last few years has witnessed a growing body of scholarly works on Woolf's relationship to cinema. David Trotter devotes a chapter to Woolf in his *Cinema and Modernism*. He begins by pointing out that on the few occasions when Woolf's relationship to cinema has been taken up, it usually appears in the form of an analogy: Elaine Showalter, for example, argues in her introduction to the Penguin edition of *Mrs Dalloway* that the novel's 'narrative technique [...] is very cinematic'.⁷⁷ By contrast, Trotter argues that Woolf was inspired by the way film uses movement to define space, and that this allowed her to 'say things about the common life'.⁷⁸ What film made clear to Woolf is that life goes on without us – what Trotter refers to as 'constitutive absence'.⁷⁹ This is clear from Woolf's cinema essay, where she notes that the spectator of documentary films 'see[s] life as it is when we have no part in

⁷⁵ There is something similar going on in Roger Fry's essay 'An Essay in Aesthetics', in which he writes that a 'somewhat similar effect to that of the cinematograph can be obtained by watching a mirror in which a street scene is reflected'. Whilst looking at a street scene directly forces us to 'adjust ourselves in some way to its actual existence', by looking at it through a mirror 'we are able to abstract ourselves completely' and look at the scene 'as a whole'. The cinema spectator and this mirror-spectator appear here to share something with the detached gaze of the *flâneur*, who abstracts himself from the activities and desires of the city around him. The view of the city 'as a whole' also suggests an affinity with the 'synoptic' gaze of Balzac, as David Harvey has argued. Roger Fry, 'An Essay in Aesthetics', in *Vision and Design* (New York: Dover, 1998), pp. 12-27 (p. 14).

⁷⁶ Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 176.

⁷⁷ Elaine Showalter, 'Introduction', in *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. xi-xlvi (p. xxi). Winifred Holtby also writes of Woolf's cinematic technique, arguing that both *Jacob's Room* and the short story 'Kew Gardens' employed such a technique. Winifred Holtby, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir* (London: Continuum, 2007). See David Trotter's discussion in *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 159.

⁷⁸ Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p. 161.

⁷⁹ Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p. 169.

it'.⁸⁰ Therefore, when Woolf came to write *To the Lighthouse* she was able not only to write of life from multiple centres of consciousness (as in *Mrs Dalloway*), but also to imagine life from an 'eyeless' perspective, or, as Trotter has it, life 'not rendered from any identifiable point of view'.⁸¹ Hence, *To the Lighthouse* is partly about the necessity of not seeing, in the sense that 'we look without seeing, or are looked at without being seen'.⁸² Despite this illuminating account of Woolf's relationship to cinema, Trotter does not consider how Woolf's interest in cinema relates to gender.⁸³

Laura Marcus has also written of Woolf's interest in cinema, and like Trotter, she too considers notions of eyelessness, absence and the world viewed without a self.⁸⁴ She develops an interpretation that builds on Woolf's fascination with the blemish on the screen at the performance of *Dr Caligari* and its intimation of a future cinema, along with her comments on the opposition between the eye and the brain.⁸⁵ Marcus speculates that Woolf 'found in cinematic devices a way of bridging time and space in her fiction' such as can be seen in the abrupt changes in location, time and perspective in *Jacob's Room*.⁸⁶ Following critics like Showalter, Marcus too sees *Mrs Dalloway* as a cinematic text in which Woolf plays with the 'devices of the cinema, including flashbacks and tracking shots', and she relates this novel to the city symphony films popular at this time, such as *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* and *Man With a Movie Camera*.⁸⁷ This relationship between cinema and the city in Woolf's writing is developed with reference to Raymond Williams's remark in *The Country and the City* that there is 'a direct relation between the motion picture [...] and the characteristic movement of

⁸⁰ Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 173.

⁸¹ The word 'eyeless' appears in the 'Time Passes' section. See Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 147; Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p. 169.

⁸² Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p. 172.

⁸³ He does, however, end his chapter on Woolf by considering a story by Elizabeth Bowen, entitled 'Dead Mabelle', which explicitly concerns the relationship between (cinematic) images and gender.

⁸⁴ Marcus relates these ideas to a wider set of debates about not just cinema but a specularised modernity, linking Woolf's ideas in her cinema essay to the works of Stanley Cavell, Kracauer and Bazin, and Deleuze.

⁸⁵ Marcus quotes Stephen Heath on the blemish, who interprets it as an 'excess of seeing' and a 'thing that sticks out on the screen, radically *obscene*'. Stephen Heath, 'Cinema and Psychoanalysis: Parallel Histories', in *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 25-56 (p. 31). Marcus also links Woolf's comments about the blemish and the eye to films that attack the eye, such as Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* and Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

⁸⁶ Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 120. See also Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004) for more on the cinematic aspects of Woolf's fiction.

⁸⁷ She cites James Donald on Woolf's interest in cinema: the attraction of cinema for Woolf lay in 'the ontological precision of the camera' which 'opened up new ways of recording and dramatising London'. James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone, 1999), p. 132. See also chapter 5 ("A Hymn to Movement": The "City Symphony" of the 1920s and 1930s') of Marcus's *Dreams of Modernity: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 89-109.

an observer in the close and miscellaneous environments of the street'.⁸⁸ Marcus also devotes a significant part of her analysis to *To the Lighthouse*, and argues that the 'Time Passes' section of the novel can be read as a form of experimental cineplay: Mrs Ramsay appears after her death as light projected onto the wall of an empty room, time is condensed as in cinematic cuts, and there is a close connection between dreams and cinema here too.⁸⁹ Marcus describes this form of cinematic-like writing as a 'ghostly realism' because it is suggestive of the filmic medium, a medium that is 'complete without us'.⁹⁰ Her detailed examination of Woolf's relationship to cinema thus draws out many of the important connections between literary narrative, the cinema, urban space and various looks. However, like Trotter, there is almost no discussion of the gendered dimension in this relay of gazes, of how the influence of cinematic form impacted upon Woolf's concern with gendered visuality.

One critic who has drawn out some of the implications for gender from Woolf's relationship to various visual devices is Humm. In an essay on Woolf and visual culture, Humm begins by noting that Woolf's short story 'Portraits' 'stages a number of gendered gazes shaped by a photographic syntax'.⁹¹ By repressing chronological narrative and emphasising visual associations, each of the mini-stories in 'Portraits' presents a different photograph of 'the unconscious optics of modernity', an idea that Humm takes from Benjamin.⁹² Likewise, Humm argues that in the cinema essay 'Woolf wants film to trigger spectators' unconscious optics by moving away from a mimetic representation of emotions'. Woolf's approach to cinema is thus 'pioneering', as it peers under the surface of filmic images to get to the 'psychic transformations' by which 'buried memories and dreams' are excavated in the cinema. Woolf thus anticipates the debates about psychoanalysis and cinema, for she 'understands that spectators are sutured into film by means of cinematic associations, montage and repetitions'.⁹³ Humm's other examples of Woolf's visual writing include *The Waves*, which she argues features the equivalent of close-ups and unusual viewpoints, and *Flush*, in which the 'doubling and questioning of subjectivity' is accomplished through the use of an older visual device: the

⁸⁸ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), p. 242. Marcus also cites Tony Pinkney's argument from his introduction to Williams's *The Politics of Modernism*, in which he says that film is uniquely responsive to the ephemeral quality of city life and is the definitive Modernist mode. See Tony Pinkney, 'Editor's Introduction: Modernism and Cultural Theory', in Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against The New Conformists* (London: Verso, 2007), pp 1-29.

⁸⁹ See Marcus's discussion in *The Tenth Muse*, pp. 145-48. Marcus also considers the links between Woolf and photography, and draws the relationship between Mrs McNab and the telescope into her discussion as well.

⁹⁰ Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*, p. 148.

⁹¹ Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', p. 220.

⁹² Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', p. 220.

⁹³ Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', p. 223.

mirror. This use of the mirror to imagine subjectivity demonstrates Woolf's 'ability to think visually' and construct a 'visual ontology'.⁹⁴

Even more helpfully, Humm connects Woolf's interest in the visual to Crary's account of specular modernity, arguing that, like many Modernists, Woolf was interested in the way new optical devices such as the cinema, the telescope and the x-ray machine 'shape[d] modernity's epistemologies'.⁹⁵ Out of a scepticism about representing this visually complex world came new literary techniques such as stream-of-consciousness and "'multimedia"' works like Woolf's *Orlando* and *Three Guineas* which combine text and images.⁹⁶ In terms of gender, Modernist women's experiments with visuality such as these formed part of a re-negotiation of the gendering of images and gazes, and what Humm calls 'a more inclusionary modernism'.⁹⁷ Again, she turns to 'Portraits' for an example of this: by adopting a photographic vocabulary, the viewpoints become more dynamic and varied, and thus break away from models of gendered vision which overemphasise masculine structures of domination. As Humm puts it, 'the visual surface [...] frames unrevealed information', which therefore 'enables the urban spaces of modernity in these stories to become places of relationships rather than sites of a dominating male gaze'.⁹⁸ Indeed, Humm even uses a phrase similar to Friedberg's, as she writes of a 'circulation of looks' in Woolf's 'Portraits'.⁹⁹ Alongside Bowlby's work, then, Humm's provides a useful framework for thinking about the relationships between Woolf's multiple forms of writing, optical devices (particularly the cinema), and the gendering of images and looks. My aim in the chapters on Woolf is to use this idea of a relay or circulation of looks as a structuring device in order to analyse the complexity of the gendered visual fields in *Mrs Dalloway* and *Orlando*. I will scrutinise the looks, visual frames and optical devices in these texts in order to tease out Woolf's representation of both the 'system of conventions and limitations' in which the observer is 'embedded', to use Crary's formulation, as well as the other visual practices which co-exist with these dominant forms.

Woolf Chapter Summaries

In the first chapter, I map a relay of gendered looks throughout the urban metropolis represented in *Mrs Dalloway* in order to demonstrate that this text pictures the gendered field of vision as

⁹⁴ Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', p. 226.

⁹⁵ Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 2.

⁹⁶ Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures*, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures*, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures*, p. 27.

⁹⁹ Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures*, p. 33.

shifting and complex. Instead of representing the gendered visual field of the city as universally masculine, *Mrs Dalloway*, I argue, makes clear that it is a site of contestation in which differently gendered looks interact and conflict. This is made apparent by the text's fluid movement across different spaces and by the use of free-indirect discourse to move from the outer surface of the environment to the inner consciousness of its inhabitants, creating a multi-perspective field. In order to analyse this, the chapter considers three dominant visual frames – the mirror, the window and the omnibus window – and across the spaces of the home, the street and the omnibus. In the case of each frame and space, the novel shows that women must negotiate the tension between their status as gazing subjects and objects of the (male) gaze. The chapter also draws on Woolf's essay 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' for its conceptualisation of the relationship between women, walking and writing, and on her short story 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection' for its treatment of the relationship between gender and the mirror. This chapter thus takes in a number of spaces, looks and surfaces in order to demonstrate that Woolf was keenly aware of the conflicts and negotiations that lie at the heart of gendered visual life.

The second chapter turns to Woolf's serious fantasy text *Orlando* in order to explore radically alternative visions of the gendered body and of ways of looking. It argues that, whilst *Mrs Dalloway* goes some way to decentring the idea of a male gaze by plotting a dispersed relay of looks across multiple spaces and perspectives, *Orlando* goes further by putting both the legibility of gender and the idea of clear vision into serious doubt. *Orlando* captures the bewildering phantasmagoria of modern life in its depiction of a character that not only cross-dresses but changes sex midway through the text. Orlando's ambiguous sartorial and sexual identities resist those discourses which constitute the visual regime of modernity in which, as Crary puts it, 'the subject [...] became *visible*'.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, Orlando's identity embodies the new qualities of the visual sign in modernity, where visual experience is 'given an unprecedented mobility and exchangeability, abstracted from any founding site or referent'.¹⁰¹ Orlando's ambiguous gender visibility is thus part of what Crary calls the 'autonomization' of the visual, whilst resisting the attempts to subject the body to new technologies and practices of surveillance.¹⁰² The gendered body thus becomes hard to read

¹⁰⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 14.

¹⁰² Orlando could also be read as embodying what Michael Levenson refers to as 'a new metaphysics of character', which he sees as inaugurated by the psychoanalytic case history. He goes on to argue that on this model, character is 'the precipitate of fantasies, desires, and dreads; it is an overlay of past and present; it possesses an inexhaustible convergence of meanings'. Michael Levenson, *Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 83; cited in Laura Marcus, *Dreams of Modernity*, p. 11.

and as a result the masculine gaze loses its (spurious) authority. Furthermore, by having her male character transform into a woman as an adult, Woolf is able to foreground the conventions of femininity in a stark and striking way. For similar reasons, Woolf is also able to foreground the shocks of modernity, as Orlando is an outsider to this world: he is born during the reign of Elizabeth I and lives on into the early twentieth century. Woolf's representation of the urban milieu thus makes clear the upheavals that took place, which affected both gender and visibility.

The Gendering of the Spectator in the 1970s

There is much continuity between Woolf and Carter's representation of the gendered field of vision. Like Woolf, Carter also displays an interest in the gendering of space and in the ambiguity of the gendered subject. She too plays with the figure of the *flâneur*, for example, making explicit its sexual economy, which I analyse in Chapter Three. Much of what I have outlined above is therefore applicable to the chapters on Carter. However, a number of differences must also be taken into consideration. In turning to Carter's work from the 1970s, the relay of looks that I trace extends to take in Hollywood cinema and pornography, as well as a number of older devices alluded to in Carter's texts, such as the stereoscope. Whilst the language of film was an important influence on Woolf's writing, with Carter the focus lies more with the content of film, specifically cinematic representations of femininity and the gendered looks that film facilitates. Because of this, her work is productively read in dialogue with the debates that focus on the concept of the male gaze, inaugurated by Laura Mulvey in the mid-1970s. I therefore want to summarise the key points of Mulvey's argument before looking at Carter's wider interests in gender and the visual.

Published in *Screen* in 1975, and therefore appearing between the two texts by Carter on which I focus, Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' has proved to be one of the most influential accounts of gender and the visual. Whilst there are reasons to be sceptical of the reach of Mulvey's model, it still provides a provocative and powerful account of cinema's representation of femininity.¹⁰³ The essay argues that Hollywood narrative cinema is structured by a 'male gaze', which determines the way in which images of men and women are to be looked at by spectators.¹⁰⁴ Referring to her approach as 'textual', Mulvey explains in an interview that the 'look on the screen organizes the desire and involvement of the spectator'.

¹⁰³ For an overview and critique of the reach of Mulvey's concept of the 'male gaze', see Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman, 'The Gaze Revisited, or Reviewing Queer Viewing', in *A Queer Romance: Lesbians, Gay Men and Popular Culture*, ed. Paul Burston and Colin Richardson (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 13-56.

¹⁰⁴ Mulvey's account of narrative cinema thus focuses on the 'system of conventions and limitations' in which the spectator is 'embedded', to use Crary's formulation. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

However, aware of the relative simplicity of this approach, she quickly adds that ‘there are also multiple audiences and spectator positions, multiple ways in which different kinds of social groups are distanced, or entranced by the images on the screen’.¹⁰⁵ Whilst acknowledging that resistance to hegemonic visual practices is therefore possible because of the multiplicity of empirical spectators, Mulvey’s argument is that narrative cinema participates in and strengthens a wider culture of patriarchal forms of visibility. As she famously argues: ‘In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly’.¹⁰⁶ Hollywood cinema is thus positioned as part of a culture which tends to turn women into passive objects for the enjoyment of male spectators. As Kaja Silverman puts it, cinematic forms of looking ‘re-articulate the existing symbolic order in ideological orthodox ways’, by reinforcing the opposition between the male gazing subjects and the female objects of the gaze.¹⁰⁷ John Berger outlined a similar thesis to Mulvey in *Ways of Seeing* (1972). There, Berger argued that in a patriarchal society, women must learn to survey themselves in order to gain a degree of control over how they are treated. As he put it: ‘Men survey women before treating them. Consequently how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. To acquire some control over this process, women must contain it and interiorize it’. In a formulation reminiscent of Mulvey’s essay on the male gaze, Berger then summarises his argument: ‘One might simplify this by saying: *men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at’.¹⁰⁸

Relying on a psychoanalytic framework derived from Freud and Lacan, Mulvey adds that images of women also produce a sense of anxiety in male spectators because they signify sexual difference (castration).¹⁰⁹ According to Mulvey, the male spectator has two ‘avenues of

¹⁰⁵ Roberta Sassatelli, ‘Interview with Laura Mulvey: Gender, Gaze and Technology in Film Culture’, *Theory Culture Society*, 28 (2011), 123-43 (p. 129).

¹⁰⁶ Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 14-27 (p. 19) — originally published in *Screen* 16.3 (1975), 6-18. Cinema is hardly unique in this respect as women have been ‘coded for strong visual and erotic impact’ by many other media, and Mulvey gives the examples of pin-ups, striptease and the Ziegfeld shows (p. 11). What is arguably unique to cinema is the combination of erotic spectacle and narrative, and the active directing of the spectator’s gaze. As Shohini Chaudhuri puts it, cinema ‘incorporates permutations of the look into its very structure, pre-determining how the woman is to be looked at’. Shohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 35.

¹⁰⁷ Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 221.

¹⁰⁸ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 40-41 (emphasis in original). Berger also analyses the way in which the convention of the nude in painting creates an association between woman, image and moral vanity.

¹⁰⁹ Jacqueline Rose observes that ‘Freud often related the question of sexuality to that of visual representation’, with one of the most famous examples being that of the boy-child who averts his gaze from the sight of the naked female body in an attempt to disavow sexual difference (castration). Jacqueline Rose, ‘Sexuality in the Field of Vision’, in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 225-33 (p. 227).

escape' from the castration anxiety evoked by the image of woman and which Hollywood cinema provides: voyeurism and fetishism. The first strategy is associated with a 'preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma', which involves investigating the troubling mystery that is woman, ascertaining her guilt and then either punishing or saving her. As Mulvey points out, this structure is typical of *film noir* in which the male protagonist (often a detective or policeman) ascertains the guilt of the *femme fatale* and neutralises her threat.¹¹⁰ The second strategy is completely to disavow the anxiety by either substituting a fetish object or else by transforming the represented figure itself into a fetish 'so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous'. As an example of this, Mulvey points to the 'over-valuation' and 'cult of the female star'.¹¹¹ Here, Mulvey gives a gender-inflected version of Benjamin's Marxist interpretation of the fetishism of film stars. He argues: 'The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity'.¹¹² Where Benjamin's argument relies on the notion of commodity fetishism, which disguises the labour that went into producing a given commodity, Mulvey draws on a psychoanalytic model of fetishism, which suggests that what is obscured is not labour but sexual difference (woman). Whilst the second avenue of escape for the male spectator 'builds up the physical beauty of the object' and thus turns woman into a pleasurable and harmless spectacle,¹¹³ the first has associations with sadism, subjecting the woman on screen to mechanisms of judgement, control and forcible change. As I will show, Carter draws on both the voyeuristic conventions of *film noir* and the practice of fetishism in her depiction of femininity and exaggerates them in order to foreground the sexual violence involved.

Mulvey also notes another kind of visual pleasure in narrative cinema which is associated not with voyeurism or fetishism, but with narcissism. 'The conventions of

¹¹⁰ Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', 13. The genre of *film noir* is particularly relevant for thinking about the relationship between anxiety, knowledge and pleasure with respect to the image of woman because it is a genre which, in Mary Ann Doane's words, places 'a disturbance of vision' at the very heart of its 'signifying system'. As she goes on to add, *film noir* articulates 'the issue of knowledge and its possibility or impossibility [...] with questions concerning femininity and visibility'. Mary Ann Doane, 'Gilda: Epistemology as Striptease', *Camera Obscura* 4.2 (1983), 6-27. It is precisely because woman disturbs masculine vision that she must be investigated and dealt with appropriately in order to assuage male anxiety. For more on this, see also Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991) and E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Women in Film Noir* (London: BFI, 1998).

¹¹¹ Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', 14.

¹¹² Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-44 (p. 224).

¹¹³ As Rose puts it, 'we know that women are meant to *look* perfect, presenting a seamless image to the world so that the man, in that confrontation with difference, can avoid any apprehension of lack. The position of woman as fantasy therefore depends on a particular economy of vision'. Rose, 'Sexuality in the Field of Vision', p. 232 (emphasis in original).

mainstream film focus attention on the human form' and take advantage of the 'fascination with likeness and recognition'.¹¹⁴ Mulvey links this desire for recognition to Lacan's theory of the 'mirror stage', in which the young child recognises/misrecognises itself in the specular double, a process which constitutes the foundations of the ego. Given the child's physical incapacities, the image is seen as more complete and powerful than the infant's experience of his/her body. Therefore subjectivity has a significant relationship to images: the image 'constitutes the matrix of the imaginary' and hence 'of the first articulation of the "I", of subjectivity'. Mulvey thinks that film plays on this 'love affair/despair between image and self-image' by providing images for identification, images which function as 'ego ideals'.¹¹⁵ Mulvey's example is again the Hollywood star system, but it is not just the fame and glamour of the actor or actress which is important here; it is also the image of a powerful and successful character on-screen which invites spectator identification/idealisation.¹¹⁶ This too functions as an escape strategy from castration anxiety, for the spectator's identification with a strong, masculine controlling figure on screen allows him to disavow his own lack. Again, Carter plays with notions of identification but often subverts them by showing that the mirror's failure to reflect back a comforting self-image has the potential to undo the stability of the masculine subject. Whilst Mulvey does not take into consideration an alternative female gaze in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', she does consider the female spectator in a later article centred on King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946). There, Mulvey recapitulates her earlier point that 'regardless of the actual sex [...] of any real live movie-goer', masculinity 'as "point of view"' is imposed upon the spectator through 'patterns of pleasure and identification'.¹¹⁷ However, once again drawing on Freud, Mulvey also argues that the female spectator can, temporarily and precariously, occupy a 'transvestite' position of spectatorship in relation to a female protagonist on screen and rediscover her initial masculinity, which was repressed in her assumption of femininity.¹¹⁸ Mulvey thus allows for female spectatorship but sees it as based in contradiction because of the wider problem of being a woman in a patriarchal society. I do not consider this position in the chapters on Carter because both the novels I there discuss feature male protagonists, and therefore the issues at stake concern masculine spectatorship.

¹¹⁴ Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Although Mulvey does not refer to it in her essay, her account of the spectator's relationship to cinematic images can be read as an example of what film theorists refer to as 'suture', a concept on which I will draw in Chapter Three. For an explanation of 'suture', see Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*.

¹¹⁶ The continuing prevalence of the super-hero film might be a relevant example here.

¹¹⁷ Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 29-38 (p. 29).

¹¹⁸ Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts', p. 37.

Other feminists have put forth alternative models of gendered spectatorship or have nuanced Mulvey's account. Mary Ann Doane, for example, has raised the issue of 'proximity and distance in relation to the image', arguing that for female spectators the problem is how to identify with the image of woman given 'a certain over-presence of the image – she *is* the image'.¹¹⁹ Given this position, there is therefore a dangerous lack of distance between spectator and image: either the female spectator over-identifies with the image of woman or else she takes the latter as the narcissistic object of her desire. Doane thinks both options are equally untenable from a feminist perspective and so suggests that the female spectator treat the image of woman as a masquerade. Here she draws on Joan Rivière's influential article 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' (1929), which argues that some women 'put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men' for behaving in typically masculine ways.¹²⁰ Most importantly, and in anticipation of poststructuralist ideas of the constructed character of gender, Rivière makes the bold assertion that there is no real difference between 'genuine womanliness and the "masquerade"' because, 'whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing'.¹²¹ This account allows Doane to argue that the female spectator can create a productive sense of distance between herself and the image of woman on-screen by seeing the latter as a masquerade of femininity, thus making the image 'manipulable, producible, and readable by the woman'.¹²² This model of gender as masquerade is particularly helpful in reading Carter's texts as she experiments with the sex and the gender of both the spectator and the performer of femininity on the film screen. Her characters are always in close proximity to, and mediated by, images and therefore their gender is foregrounded as a performance for the gaze of others.

Whilst the above ideas all centre on the spectator's relationship to the image, Mulvey and others have also noted the relationship between the look and narrative structures in film, and this is useful for thinking about the connections with Carter's (and Woolf's) literary narratives. In her discussion of voyeurism in narrative film, Mulvey states that the voyeuristic gaze has 'associations with sadism' because the woman gazed at is subject to narrative as well

¹¹⁹ Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23.3-4 (1982), 74-88 (pp. 77-78).

¹²⁰ Joan Rivière, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', in *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Neil Badmington and Julia Thomas (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 25-33 (p. 25).

¹²¹ Rivière, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', p. 28.

¹²² Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade', p. 87. This idea is tempered, however, by the fact that, as Doane points out, female characters in films who masquerade are often punished. She gives the examples of *Leave Her to Heaven*, *Humoresque*, and *Beyond the Forest*. In each film, woman is 'constructed as the site of an excessive and dangerous desire. This desire mobilises extreme efforts of containment and unveils the sadistic aspect of narrative. In all three films the woman dies' (pp. 83-84). However, she insists that feminist film theory should not overestimate this repressive hypothesis about the subjugation of women, and instead continue to elaborate female spectatorship 'in order to dislocate it' (p. 87).

as visual control.¹²³ Within a typical male-driven narrative, the woman functions as a passive object of exchange between men, and on those occasions when she is represented as possessing a strong degree of agency, she is usually punished.¹²⁴ For Mulvey, the sadistic quality of many narrative films suggests an intimate, though perhaps not immediately obvious, relationship between the function of narrative and sadism. She writes: ‘Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person [...] all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end.’¹²⁵ Teresa de Lauretis has suggested that this phrase might be reversed and that all stories might be ‘claimed by sadism’. Indeed, whilst Mulvey is here offering a definition of sadism, de Lauretis argues that it could fruitfully be read rather as a definition of narrative.¹²⁶ Whether or not narrative necessarily involves sadism, the important point here is that feminist critics have noticed an overlap between visual and narrative control, whereby women are not the agents of narrative propulsion and causality, but are rather visual objects which freeze the action.

However, in this latter notion lies yet another danger for the masculine spectator and so a potential resource for feminism. Although woman is an ‘indispensable element of spectacle’, as Mulvey puts it, ‘her visual presence tends to work against the development of story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation’.¹²⁷ The fetishization of woman as static image thus carries the potential danger of halting the masculine plot of development and progress, and of then exposing what the fetish conceals: sexual difference (castration). It may well be that cinema’s turn to narrative film was in part motivated by an unconscious desire to neutralise or disavow some of the frustrations that arose in the projection of gendered images.¹²⁸ By placing erotic images of women within a masculine narrative, the anxiety of sexual difference signified by woman is held at bay. Another critic who has taken up this opposition between woman as object of desire and narrative propulsion is Peter Brooks, whose

¹²³ This relationship between the look and narrative control is similar to the *flâneur*’s mode of observation as noted earlier with reference to Bowlby’s work.

¹²⁴ *Film noir* once again provides the clearest examples of this, with a large number of the women in these films – the *femme fatales* – imprisoned, converted to so-called good women, or even killed. See for example *Double Indemnity*, dir. by Billy Wilder (Paramount Pictures, 1944) and *Cat People*, dir. by Jacques Tourneur (RKO Radio Pictures, 1942).

¹²⁵ Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, 14.

¹²⁶ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 103. See also Mulvey, ‘Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”’, in which she draws on the work of Vladimir Propp in order to discuss the roles that women are often given in narrative cinema. See Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

¹²⁷ Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, p. 19.

¹²⁸ David Trotter argues that cinema became a narrative medium because it could ‘simulate but never deliver’ on the promise of instantaneity. David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 13.

work I refer to on a number of occasions throughout the thesis. In particular, I draw on his analysis of how literary texts represent the sight of the gendered body, which he argues becomes ‘newly problematic’ in nineteenth and twentieth century texts.¹²⁹ Brooks takes up Roland Barthes’s idea of reading as akin to striptease to argue that the end of narrative is not just the solution to an initial enigma but the body itself as the ultimate object of desire. These ideas will be important in my analyses of Orlando’s ambiguously gendered body in Chapter Two and in the troubling effect that Albertina has in Carter’s *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* in the fourth chapter. In these examples and others, the body of woman tends to appear as a beautiful but disconcerting sight which halts the masculine-controlled narrative.

Throughout this thesis, I will be paying attention to this tension between movement and stasis with respect to various gendered images and looks. Both Woolf and Carter represent this problematic in different ways, from the way that constrictive forms of feminine dress reduce a woman’s mobility whilst increasing her visibility as an object of the male gaze, to the cinematic-fetishistic gaze that halts the literary narrative in an act of erotic contemplation.¹³⁰ Carter in particular makes clear the tension between woman as erotic spectacle and as anxiety-producing object for a male gaze. Furthermore, the texts by Carter under examination in this thesis are recounted from the perspective of male characters whose plots are slowed down by images of women and whose narratives depend upon a certain amount of violence (directed towards women in most cases).

Carter, Gender, Visuality

Given this representation of violence towards women, Carter has elicited much criticism from scholars (particularly in the 1970s and 1980s), many of whom see this as tantamount to overemphasising the power of patriarchal institutions. Although she claimed at one point that she was ‘a feminist writer’ and indeed ‘a feminist in everything else’, her work often provoked a good deal of consternation and even anger.¹³¹ In particular, her argument in *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), that the pornographic writings of the Marquis de Sade could be put in the service of feminism, shocked and angered many feminists at the time who saw no positive value in pornography. As Carter reports in an interview, referring to

¹²⁹ Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 25.

¹³⁰ As I will show in Chapter Two, Woolf slows down or freezes her narrative in *Orlando* by inserting photographs of her protagonist into the book.

¹³¹ Angela Carter, ‘Notes from the Front Line’, in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 45-53 (p. 46).

de Sade as a ‘moral pornographer [...] got me into a lot of trouble with the sisters’.¹³² Similarly, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, published the same year, proved controversial for its representation of feminine sexuality – a mix of eroticism, aggression and passivity. Indeed, the two works are closely linked: Margaret Atwood has described them as ‘two different approaches to the problem of the “nature” of women and thus of men’.¹³³ Carter’s fascination with the darker aspects of gender and sexuality, in particular with ‘renegotiating the relationship between predator and prey’, along with what some have seen as her enthrallment to a male literary tradition, have elicited much criticism for not taking a clear feminist line.¹³⁴ Patricia Duncker reads ‘The Company of Wolves’, for example, as suggesting that ‘rape is inevitable’ and so all the heroine can do is ‘strip off, lie back and enjoy it’. For Duncker, this kind of message is itself almost inevitable because she sees both pornography and the fairy tale as fundamentally based on ‘the language of male sexuality’.¹³⁵ In a similar vein, Robert Clark argues that Carter’s texts tend to ‘reproduce’ patriarchal ideas and structures at the same time as they supposedly critique them. Only the reader who ‘already brings a feminist knowledge to the text’ will be able to receive the ‘knowledge of patriarchy’ which Carter’s texts make possible. Other readers will be ‘distraught witnesses of depravity’, able only to ‘get what pleasure they can from their own sickness’.¹³⁶ However, as other scholars have argued, these critiques tend to oversimplify both Carter’s work and her various intertexts. Like some accounts of the male gaze, they overestimate the power of patriarchal structures, reifying them

¹³² Anna Katsavos, ‘A Conversation with Angela Carter’, *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 14.3 (1994). Available at: <http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/a-conversation-with-angela-carter-by-anna-katsavos/>. For scholarship on Carter’s *The Sadeian Woman*, see for example Sarah M. Henstra, ‘The pressure of new wine: Performative reading in Angela Carter’s *The Sadeian Woman*’, *Textual Practice*, 13.1 (2008), 97-117; Sally Keenan, ‘Angela Carter’s *The Sadeian Woman*: Feminism as Treason’, in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 132-48.

¹³³ Margaret Atwood, ‘Running with the Tigers’, in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 133-50 (p. 134).

¹³⁴ Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 133.

¹³⁵ Patricia Duncker, ‘Re-Imagining The Fairy Tales: Angela Carter’s Bloody Chambers’, *Literature and History* 10.1 (1984), pp. 3-14 (p. 7). Duncker argues further that ‘the women’s equivalent of soft porn, romance novels and “bodice-rippers”, all conform to recognisably male fantasies of domination, submission and possession’. She also charges all heterosexual feminists, including Carter, with having failed to envisage autonomous female desire outside of what she sees as the sexist mainstream language of eroticism (p. 7).

¹³⁶ Robert Clark, ‘Angela Carter’s Desire Machine’, *Women’s Studies* 14 (1987), 147-61 (p. 159). Clark is also in alignment with Duncker when he argues that Carter’s women are only able to enjoy their own sexuality at the cost of ‘accepting patriarchal limits to women’s power’ (p. 149). For an alternative view of these matters see Lucie Armitt, ‘The Fragile Frames of *The Bloody Chamber*’, in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 88-99. For a critique of Clark’s paper, see Elaine Jordan, ‘Enthrallment: Angela Carter’s Speculative Fictions’, in *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women’s Fiction*, ed. Linda Anderson (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), pp. 19-40.

to the point of not allowing for resistance from within.¹³⁷ Carter's approach has the advantage of taking the fantasies of patriarchy seriously in order to push them to the point of implosion, rather than adopting an outside position supposedly uncontaminated by patriarchal ideas. The excess of violence and sex in many of her texts can thus be read as a political gesture, one which undermines patriarchal fantasies by embodying them fully so as to expose both their fantastical character and the attraction they hold for many people.¹³⁸

More recent scholarly works on Carter have helped to foster more nuanced readings, in part by unpacking the intertextual fabric of her writings. Such works include Rebecca Munford's *Re-Visiting Angela Carter* (2006) and *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers* (2013), and Maggie Tonkin's *Angela Carter and Decadence* (2012).¹³⁹ These important studies help illuminate the connections between Carter's works and the many writers that influenced her (such as Poe, Baudelaire and Proust), as well as other media such as the cinema.¹⁴⁰ In broadening out the scholarly work on Carter, these contributions also move beyond the more common-place studies of Carter and gender, which focus on Carter's relationship to de Sade and the fairy tale, and which often rely on Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity.¹⁴¹

Whilst much attention has been paid to Carter's representations of gender, very little scholarly work has to date explored the importance of cinema or of visual culture more generally in her work. By the 1970s, the cinema had developed substantially from Woolf's time. Not only had technical enhancements like sound and colour become mainstream, but a new set of avant-garde film movements had emerged. The French New Wave, for example,

¹³⁷ In this respect, see Armitt's reading of the fairy tale in 'The Fragile Frames'. For example: 'According to Duncker, the fairy-tale itself is so entrenched in patriarchally restrictive kinship systems that no amount of revision can free it up for positive feminist aims. But in firmly situating these texts within a predetermined formulaic inheritance it is actually Duncker, rather than Carter, who remains ensnared' (p. 89). Charlotte Crofts argues that Carter's feminism is 'paradoxical both on the level of ironic appropriation and in her oscillation between various feminist, theoretical and political perspectives: joint aspects of a feminist practice of writing which recognises ongoing textual negotiations and refuses to come to rest in a single, definitive position. The real political potential of Carter's feminist politics of cultural appropriation lies in awareness of the ambiguities of ironic appropriation.' Charlotte Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter's Writing for Radio, Film and Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 12.

¹³⁸ This reading is partly inspired by Todd McGowan's interpretation of the films of David Lynch in *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹³⁹ Rebecca Munford, *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), and *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Maggie Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence: Critical Fictions/Fictional Critiques* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁴⁰ See also Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *Reading, Translating, Rewriting: Angela Carter's Translational Poetics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013); Sonya Andermahr and Lawrence Phillips (eds.), *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

¹⁴¹ See Christina Britzolakis's criticisms of the popular readings of Carter and gender performativity in 'Angela Carter's Fetishism', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 43-58.

played a significant part in pushing film forward as a serious artistic medium, and was an important influence on Carter's career. She was particularly enthusiastic about the films of Jean-Luc Godard, which she describes as '[d]ynamite' and 'an education in cinema and how to see it'.¹⁴² Like Mulvey, Carter was also fascinated by the period of classic Hollywood cinema, for its magic, its stars and its powers of seduction. She also displayed an intense passion for female film stars who challenged masculine structures of looking, in particular Louise Brooks' performance in *Pandora's Box*: 'Like Manet's Olympia, she is directly challenging the person who is looking at her; she is piercing right through the camera with her questing gaze to give your look back, with interest'.¹⁴³ Carter's writings thus display a much wider interest in the cinema than Woolf, taking in more than just film form. From the description of Ghislaine as the Hammer Horror 'bride of Frankenstein' in *Shadow Dance* (1966) to the Hollywood production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *Wise Children* (1991), Carter's oeuvre is saturated with filmic references and allusions. Much of Carter's journalistic writing on the cinema is collected in the 'Screen and Dream' section of her collected journalism and writings, entitled *Shaking a Leg*.¹⁴⁴ The essays in this section take in a variety of aspects related to the cinema, including films, actors, and directors. In a more autobiographical essay, Carter writes about her first experiences of the cinema with her father when he took her to the Granada in Tooting. She describes how

'to step through the door of this dream cathedral of voluptuous thirties wish-fulfilment architecture was to set up a tension within me that was never resolved, the tension between inside and outside, between the unappeasable appetite for the unexpected, the gorgeous, the gim-crack, the fantastic, the free play of the imagination...and harmony, order. Abstraction. Classicism'.¹⁴⁵

Carter also claims that it was in this particular movie theatre that she 'fell in love with cinema'.¹⁴⁶ In a BBC documentary made during the last year of her life, Carter claimed that there was 'something sacred about the cinema', which she explained was a result of it being 'public' so that people would share 'the same experience', the 'same revelation'.¹⁴⁷ One of the main reasons I argue that the 1970s is a crucial decade for Carter's career is that it is in this

¹⁴² Angela Carter, 'Jean-Luc Godard', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 464-66 (p. 465).

¹⁴³ Angela Carter, 'Barry Paris: Louise Brooks', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 472-79 (p. 473).

¹⁴⁴ Angela Carter, *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 427-89.

¹⁴⁵ Angela Carter, 'The Granada, Tooting', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 488-89 (p. 488).

¹⁴⁶ Carter, 'The Granada, Tooting', p. 489.

¹⁴⁷ Kim Evans (dir.), 'Angela Carter's Curious Room', *Omnibus*, BBC, 15 September 1992.

period that she writes *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), a novel which features ‘a careful and elaborate discussion of femininity as a commodity, of Hollywood producing illusions as tangible commodities’.¹⁴⁸ Carter’s interest in the self-referential films of Godard thus makes its way into her fiction, as novels like *New Eve* are texts about films and about how gendered subjects view films.

Whilst there is significantly less work on Carter and cinema than there is on Woolf, some scholarship in this area has started to appear. In an essay published in *Re-Visiting Angela Carter*, Sarah Gamble examines the influence of Godard on Carter’s writing, arguing that her early novels show Carter ‘experimenting with translating techniques developed for the visual representation of action on the screen onto the page’.¹⁴⁹ This not only helps explain Carter’s intensely visual style but also goes some way to making sense of her controversial representations of femininity. For, whilst some critics have charged Carter with a dangerous reactionary fascination with female victimisation, thus contradicting her supposedly feminist position, Gamble argues that this reading can be corrected by comparing Carter’s work to Godard’s: both show ‘female victimization in the process of its construction and, in so doing, laying the mechanisms of oppression open to subversion and revision’.¹⁵⁰ Carter’s mannered style thus forces the reader to see that her portrayal of female subjectivity is ‘devoid of naturalism’ and therefore ‘what we take to be our essential, real, *inescapable* selves are just as much inventions as anything with which they present us’.¹⁵¹ Like Godard then, Carter’s style is related to her political vision. Just as Godard breaks with continuity through techniques like the jump-cut, so Carter’s early fiction is characterised by ‘a disorientating sense of discontinuity’.¹⁵² Her portrayal of women as artificial is thus part of a wider project of anti-naturalism and deconstruction.

Appropriately enough, one of the only other essays on Carter and cinema comes from Mulvey, who examines the representation of cinema in several of Carter’s works.¹⁵³ In

¹⁴⁸ John Haffenden, ‘Angela Carter’, in *Novelists in Interview* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 76-96 (p. 86).

¹⁴⁹ Sarah Gamble, ‘Something Sacred: Angela Carter, Jean-Luc Godard and the Sixties’, in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, Ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 42-63 (p. 43).

¹⁵⁰ Gamble, ‘Something Sacred’, p. 46.

¹⁵¹ Gamble, ‘Something Sacred’, p. 46 (emphasis in original). The only other reference to Carter’s interest in cinema in *Re-Visiting Angela Carter* appears in a short passage in Julie Sanders’s essay ‘Bubblegum and Revolution: Angela Carter’s Hybrid Shakespeare’. There, Sanders discusses the appearance of Hollywood cinema in Carter’s novel *Wise Children* and her short story, ‘The Merchant of Shadows’ (p. 115).

¹⁵² Gamble, ‘Something Sacred’, p. 47.

¹⁵³ Linden Peach also briefly considers the importance of cinema for Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*. He writes, for example, that this novel ‘suggests that “the great communal myths” are increasingly Hollywood projections and exposes the “ego-ideals of the past” as grand illusions’. Linden Peach, *Angela Carter* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 123.

particular, she praises *The Passion of New Eve* for managing to ‘put into a few words something about the cinema that critics and theorists can spread over chapters’.¹⁵⁴ She goes on to add that with this novel ‘[i]t is hard to think of any more succinct summing-up of the paradox of cinema and its projection of fantasy and illusion on to the female body’.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, Mulvey states emphatically that Carter’s fascination with film was so intense that her writing is ‘pervaded’ by the cinema ‘even when the cinema itself is not present on the page’.¹⁵⁶ In contrast to Gamble’s focus on avant-garde cinema, Mulvey stresses Carter’s ambivalent love of Hollywood, the ‘cinema of illusion and glamour’ which ‘fetishised the appearance of erotic femininity into the star’s image’.¹⁵⁷ She also explores the notion that Carter’s interest in fairy tales and the Gothic is linked with her interest in cinema, speculating that film continued the ‘irrational suspension of disbelief’ which oral storytelling had fostered but which was under threat from a modern, enlightened world.¹⁵⁸ As Mulvey goes on to argue:

The aftermath of the Enlightenment saw the birth of the Gothic and a proliferation of phantasmagoric technologies. For instance, ghosts were summoned up in special performances in Paris after the Revolution; and magic lanterns and ghost photography fascinated the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁹

Cinema is also part of this tradition of irrational devices that accompany the rationalisation of modernity, and Mulvey gives the example of the parallel between Freud’s rationalisation of the unconscious in psychoanalysis’s scientific aspirations and Georges Méliès’s discovery of the illusory capabilities of cinema. In Chapter Four, I develop this important point about the irrational role that optical devices play with respect to Carter’s novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972). In this kaleidoscopic text, Carter engages with the illusory visions of a number of optical technologies, including the phantasmagoria, the peep show and of course cinema. The novel’s central opposition between the rational world of the Minister of Determination and Doctor Hoffman’s irrational world of mirages created by his desire machines stages Mulvey’s point about the co-presence of rational discourses and irrational optical technologies. Carter’s demythologisation project is thus only one part of her

¹⁵⁴ Laura Mulvey, ‘Cinema Magic and the Old Monsters: Angela Carter’s Cinema’, in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 241-52 (p. 242).

¹⁵⁵ Mulvey, ‘Cinema Magic’, p. 243.

¹⁵⁶ Mulvey, ‘Cinema Magic’, p. 241.

¹⁵⁷ Mulvey, ‘Cinema Magic’, p. 243.

¹⁵⁸ Mulvey, ‘Cinema Magic’, p. 251. Mulvey quotes Carter on how, in modern societies, machines ‘do our dreaming for us’ and thus ‘within that “video gadgetry” might lie the source of continuation, even transformation of story-telling and story performance’. Angela Carter, ‘Introduction’, *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, ed. Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1990), p. xxi.

¹⁵⁹ Mulvey, ‘Cinema Magic’, p. 252. For a more developed argument along similar lines, see Terry Castle, ‘Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie’, *Critical Inquiry* 15.1 (1988), 26-61.

work, as she simultaneously celebrates the powerful illusions created by optical devices such as the cinema.

The most comprehensive analysis of Carter's interest in visual culture is to be found in Charlotte Crofts' *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter's Writing for Radio, Film and Television* (2003), which devotes several chapters to Carter's work for both cinema and television. Crofts also considers the influence of visual culture on Carter's literary works, citing, for example, part of a radio interview in which Carter admitted that she was 'perfectly conscious of using all kinds of narrative technique that [she had] taken from the cinema'.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, Carter adds that the experience of a society of cinema-goers has 'completely altered the way that we approach narrative on the page'.¹⁶⁰ Crofts argues that Carter's interest is less in the cinema per se, but rather in the 'patriarchal structures of looking' which appear in mainstream film. Carter's 'preoccupation' with the cinematic apparatus 'bears a remarkable similarity to the concerns of early feminist film theory' including the work of Mulvey.¹⁶¹ In fact, Carter's works not only anticipate Mulvey's idea of the male gaze, but also feminist film theory's interest in the figure of the *femme fatale*, for several of Carter's texts feature gender as a kind of masquerade, holding femininity at a distance and so subverting the patriarchal attempts to control and delimit it.¹⁶²

Whilst a small number of critics have thus begun to examine the influence of visual culture upon Carter's writings, this thesis aims to explore this relationship in greater detail, focusing on two novels published in the 1970s: *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve*. My aims are threefold: first, I want to look more closely at the influence of cinematic representations of gender and structures of looking within Carter's fiction. Secondly, I want to examine the relationship between cinema and other visual devices which Carter draws on in her work, such as the stereoscope and the phantasmagoria, in order to analyse the different subjectivity-effects associated with each optical device. In Chapter Four in particular, I want to see whether or not the broader range of visual devices contributes to a change in the structure of gender relations. Thirdly, my examination of Carter's interest in visual devices and ways of looking forms part of a wider relay of looks with the chapters on Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *Orlando*. The aim here is to see how the gendered visual field

¹⁶⁰ Angela Carter, 'Interview', Radio 4 (1989), qtd. in Charlotte Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter's Writing for Radio, Film and Television* (Manchester University Press, Manchester: 2003), p. 92.

¹⁶¹ Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire*, p. 94.

¹⁶² Crofts relates Carter's *femmes fatales* to the work of Doane. See Doane's 'Film and the Masquerade' and *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis*. Maggie Tonkin has recently written about Carter and the *femme fatale* in her book *Angela Carter and Decadence*.

changes from the 1920s to the 1970s in these authors' texts and how their characters negotiate gender and visual issues differently.

Carter Chapter Summaries

Chapter Three concentrates on *The Passion of New Eve*, a novel that, like *Orlando*, features a male protagonist who is transformed into a woman and hence also puts the legibility and stability of sex into question. Whilst *Orlando* gestures towards a cinematic gaze in its representation of the perspective from a moving motor-car, Carter's text makes cinema explicit by placing it at the heart of her novel. The protagonist of *New Eve* is obsessed with the enigmatic figure of Tristessa, a famous Hollywood film actress who turns out to be a male transvestite. Given the changing sex and gender of both spectator and actress, this chapter therefore maps out a complex and shifting set of gendered looks: from Evelyn's voyeuristic male gaze to Eve's sympathetic female gaze, the latter in identification with Tristessa's performance of suffering femininity on-screen. This chapter also analyses Carter's representation of the *femme fatale* figure from *film noir*, and considers the novel's contrast between a voyeuristic and fetishistic gaze directed at cinematic images, and the physical medium of film itself, which gestures towards a recognition of the body. An important difference, which I note, between Woolf's representation of gender and the visual, and Carter's, is the latter's emphasis on gender violence. The construction and performance of gender, and the masculine structures of looking represented in *New Eve* involve enormous amounts of violence, in most cases directed towards women or gender-ambiguous characters. Throughout this chapter, therefore, I look for alternatives to the violent male gaze in *New Eve*.

Chapter Four looks back to Carter's earlier text *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* in order to examine whether or not a broader range of visual devices opens up the gendered field of vision in new ways and moves beyond the violence of the male gaze. Besides cinema, a number of other optical devices, including the phantasmagoria, kaleidoscope, and stereoscope, are also present, creating a broader relay of looks than in the previous chapter. Once again, Carter explicitly foregrounds the gendered violence associated with masculine structures of looking and visual representations of femininity, and so I scrutinise the way in which this works. The main focus of this chapter, however, lies with the title's 'desire machines', fictitious and futuristic new devices which Hoffman claims will liberate the unconscious mind and so, as a consequence, human society. By transforming unconscious desires into tangible objects, or 'mirages' as the novel refers to them, the desire machines make the subject newly visible and undermine traditional ways of looking and legibility. This chapter

asks whether or not such devices transform the masculine structures of gender and the visual. I conclude with this particular text by Carter because it dramatizes the insidious structuring role that visual devices play in the construction and performance of gendered identities within the visual field. Hoffman's desire machines are more than simply one link in a chain of looks because they mediate experience to such a degree that they become less a 'medium' than a 'life form' in their own right.¹⁶³ In a world where the optical is the real, I want to inquire into the fate of woman.¹⁶⁴ What I argue is that Carter's text once again foregrounds the violence of a masculine visual economy whilst gesturing towards other gendered ways of seeing and being visible in a similar way to Woolf's *Orlando*.

A Relay of Looks from Woolf to Carter

What this thesis ultimately argues is that it is instructive to consider the complexity of the relationship between gender and the visual, across different periods and literary works, in order to appreciate its dynamic and shifting quality. Whilst masculine structures of gender and visibility tend to assume a hegemonic position, there are always creative negotiations which subtly resist and find alternatives to patriarchal institutions. The texts I have selected in this thesis all foreground this tension in interesting ways. Woolf's texts tend to focus on negotiating a masculine visual field within the modern metropolis, with its multiple perspectives, new technologies and gendered spaces. Whilst *Mrs Dalloway* emphasises the difficulty for women to negotiate their mobility and visibility within the city, *Orlando* finds playful and radical forms of gender performance which frustrate the masculine gaze and expand the possibilities and pleasures of gendered subjectivity. Carter's representations of the gendered visual field in the 1970s tend to focus less on the particular space of the city and more on dominant visual structures, most notably cinema and pornography. Unlike Woolf, Carter emphasises and explores the extreme forms of violence associated with the construction of gender and with masculine forms of visibility in order to demythologise them both. However, this carries the potential danger of overestimating the power of patriarchal structures. Throughout this thesis, I argue that what makes Woolf and Carter's representations of the politics of gender and the visual significant is their recognition of the importance of depicting the gendered visual field

¹⁶³ I take these terms, 'medium' and 'life form', from Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener's *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ For an account of the enormous shifts in social power as a result of this change at the level of the visual sign, see Jean Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Sage, 1993). There, he argues that in modernity there is a destabilisation of traditional regimes of signs as a result of a new abstraction and mobility of signs thanks to new processes of mechanical reproduction. Signs are no longer tied to caste and class, but arbitrary. See for example chapter two, 'The Order of Simulacra'.

as contradictory and continually shifting. In such a field, gendered subjectivity is always in process, discovering and creating new ways of being and of looking.

Chapter 1

Sights of Identity: Mirrors, Windows and Mobile Views in *Mrs Dalloway*

The real function of the mirror was [...] to make the woman
connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight.

– John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Woolf's image of the window suggests that people are not
completely sealed to one another. There is an opening.

– Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Window: Knowledge of Other
Minds in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*'

Woolf [...] found ways in which to imagine subjectivities
reconfigured for and by transport.

– David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age*

Introduction

Four years after publishing *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf published a short story about a significant object which appeared in her earlier novel: the mirror. In 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection' (1929), Woolf pictures the way in which a mirror participates in voyeuristic and objectifying structures of looking, as the narrator uses the looking-glass to fix objects so as to render them transparent. By extension, this use of the mirror acts as a questioning of the limits of literary mimesis because the story suggests that rendering objects visible fails to capture everything about them. The story's narrator casts himself as 'one of those naturalists' who, because disguised, is able to watch 'the shyest animals [...] themselves unseen'.¹ Through this voyeuristic-like gaze, the narrator observes a scene in which '[n]othing

¹ I am here reading the narrator as masculine for a number of reasons. First, as the story makes clear, the narrator displays an aggressive attitude towards Isabella, attempting not only to observe her without being seen but to pin her down, fix her, and prize her open. Secondly, as Hsiu-Chuang Deppman points out, 'most truth-driven individuals in Woolf's fiction are disagreeable men – Dr. Holmes in *Mrs Dalloway*, Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, for example – who play an important role in lubricating the oppressive machinery called "society"'. Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, 'Rereading the Mirror Image: Looking-Glasses, Gender, and Mimeticism in Virginia Woolf's Writing', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 31.1 (2001), 31-64 (p. 50).

stayed the same for two seconds together’, as in the images viewed in a kaleidoscope.² As if in response to this visually chaotic scene, the mirror appears to aid the narrator by fixing objects in place in an attempt to capture their reality objectively, ‘portray[ing] objective reality like a photographic still-life’, in Claudia Olk’s words.³ Indeed, Woolf writes that ‘the looking-glass reflected the hall table, the sunflowers, the garden path so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held there in their reality unescapably’.⁴ The story then narrows its focus and becomes concerned centrally with not just observing but visually capturing the mistress of the house, Isabella Tyson. At first she appears to evade the gaze of the narrator and his mirror as she disappears into her garden, out of sight of the looking-glass. But there is a subtle hint of menace here which suggests the more active role that the mirror plays with respect to subjectivity: the narrator explains that Isabella was ‘sliced off by the gilt rim of the looking-glass’.⁵ Building on this, the story then evokes the violence involved in the determination to see and to know another person. Despite Isabella not wishing to be known, the narrator implores the reader to ‘fix one’s mind upon her’ and to ‘fasten her down’.⁶ The desire to ‘penetrate’ into another’s mind is aided by the mirror, as ‘all the time [Isabella] became larger and larger in the looking-glass, more and more completely [did she become] the person into whose mind one had been trying to penetrate’.⁷ Finally, stopping ‘dead’ in front of the mirror, Isabella is subjected to its petrifying gaze: ‘the looking-glass began to pour over her a light that seemed to fix her’, turning her into ‘an enthralling spectacle’ in which ‘[e]verything dropped from her’.⁸ Isabella is turned into ‘woman herself’, ‘naked in that pitiless light’ and ‘perfectly empty’.⁹ The story ends with a warning: ‘People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms’.¹⁰

² Although the sexual connotations of voyeurism are not yet apparent at this stage of the story, they soon appear with reference to spying on a woman.

³ Claudia Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), p. 96.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection’, in *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 215-19 (p. 215).

⁵ Woolf, ‘The Lady in the Looking-Glass’, p. 216.

⁶ Woolf, ‘The Lady in the Looking-Glass’, p. 217.

⁷ Deppman reads this in terms of a violent rape: ‘It is a sexualised epistemological assault that intends to penetrate and colonize the space of feminine unknowability. [...] Isabella embodies the mystique of femininity, therefore to control Isabella’s mind and body is to control woman as a whole’. Deppman, ‘Rereading the Mirror Image’, p. 50.

⁸ Woolf, ‘The Lady in the Looking-Glass’, p. 219. This mortifying function of the mirror is strengthened by an earlier passage in the story: ‘in the looking-glass things had ceased to breathe and lay still in the trance of immortality’. Woolf, ‘The Lady in the Looking-Glass’, p. 216. The links between voyeurism, penetration and petrification are suggestive of the myth of the Medusa, whose gaze turned observers to stone.

⁹ Interestingly, the narrator is never reflected by the mirror and thus hovers within the space of the house as ‘a ghost-like presence’ in Claudia Olk’s words. Olk also characterises the narrator as a ‘voyeur’ and a ‘detective’ for the ways in which he looks at and investigates Isabella’s life. Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, pp. 96-98.

¹⁰ Woolf, ‘The Lady in the Looking-Glass’, p. 219.

Woolf's story thus foregrounds the violence of the gaze, picturing it in terms of petrification and penetration. Furthermore, as Isabella is transformed not only into a spectacle to be enjoyed but also a transparent object to be known, the story links linking visibility, knowledge and control.¹¹ Whilst Isabella does not wish to be known, the narrator nevertheless incites the reader's erotic desire to see and to know her, so that she becomes an object of both epistemophilia and scopophilia (pleasure in looking). The looking-glass plays an important role in this by making clear to Isabella her status as a 'visible body', always potentially subject to the gaze of another.¹² Woolf also makes clear the gender implications of such a visual structure, as Isabella is not only stripped naked by the mirror (the light it pours over her is likened to 'acid'), but also essentialised as 'woman herself'.¹³ Furthermore, she is turned into a fetishized version of femininity: she is reduced to her adornments and accessories ('her long shoes, her basket, and something sparkling at her throat'), petrified into a 'still' and 'dead' body, and then stripped as part of 'an enthralling spectacle'.¹⁴ In a condensed form, therefore, Woolf makes clear the (at least potential) violence involved in making the gendered body visible and in the use of visual devices.

Added to this is the story's clear questioning of the limits of literary mimesis through its representation of the mirror's ability to capture the reality of things and characters. That Isabella is described as 'perfectly empty' suggests that this seemingly objective mirror-gaze fails to expose the rich interior life of a character. Furthermore, as Olk argues, Woolf's casting of the narrator as a naturalist and botanist can be read in the light of her criticism of the 'naturalist novelist' in 'A Room of One's Own', who is in Olk's description 'content to merely describe and categorise his subject in accordance with a fixed system of classification'.¹⁵

¹¹ Although I do not wish to pursue this matter in my own reading of Woolf's story, the linking of visibility and knowledge could be read in tandem with Michel Foucault's work on the ways in which visibility became increasingly tied to new disciplines of knowledge and apparatuses of control. See Michel Foucault's discussion of 'panopticism' in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Because the looking-glass appears to trap Isabella in the gaze of the narrator, and by extension the reader, Foucault's suggestive phrase 'Visibility is a trap' would be useful for a reading of this kind (p. 200).

¹² Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', p. 219.

¹³ The acid image here suggests that Isabella is not only stripped naked but also dissolved by the mirror. The relationship between acid and light here may well have been influenced by Woolf's experiences with photography, as acid is used in the processing of film negatives. As well as taking a large number of photographs herself, Woolf's aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron, was also a renowned photographer. Although her relationship to her aunt was an ambivalent one, Woolf did write an introduction to the Hogarth Press edition of Cameron's photographs. For more on Woolf and photography, see Emily Setina, 'A Camera of Her Own: Woolf and the Legacy of the Indomitable Mrs. Cameron', *Literature Compass* 4.1 (2007), pp. 263-70, and Maggie Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (New Brunswick and New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', p. 219.

¹⁵ Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 97; Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 115. Also of importance here is Woolf's

Despite the narrator's desire to 'fasten [Isabella] down', all that his narrative is able to record is her outward appearance.¹⁶ The limitations of literary mimesis therefore sit alongside and feed into the violence of the gendered gaze, as it too participates in processes of objectification and voyeurism.¹⁷ Isabella is both objectified through the male gaze and reduced to an empty object in the narrative, making clear not only the violence of certain ways of seeing but the failure to capture her. As the story makes clear, to see Isabella truly 'one must imagine'; the gaze fundamentally fails to illuminate or expose her.¹⁸

Like Woolf's later short story, *Mrs Dalloway* also features a meditation on the role of the mirror in the construction of gendered subjectivity. It too pictures the way in which the mirror gazes at and fixes the observer by delimiting the boundaries of the visible body. The novel's representation of Clarissa Dalloway, as she prepares for her party during the course of a single day, centres on how she looks at the world around her and how she is seen by others. Her bedroom-mirror plays a significant role in shaping her position within the visual field as well as making her self-conscious about the structures of visibility to which she is subject. Unlike the looking-glass story, *Mrs Dalloway* also features other visual frames which produce different effects for the visual subjects involved, the most important of these being the window. In contrast with the mirror, the representation of windows in the novel emphasises the way in which they project the gaze of the observer outward and hence gesture towards a more open or ecstatic conception of identity. Both Clarissa and her daughter Elizabeth have such an experience whilst riding an omnibus, as the mobile perspective allows them to reimagine their femininity so that they become not just objects of the gaze but gazing subjects in their own right. Woolf also uses the window as a bridge between Clarissa's present experiences and her memories of the past, for much of the novel concerns Clarissa's view of the decisions she made as a young woman and shows her struggling to come to terms with the course of her life.

By moving across a number of perspectives, the text creates a kaleidoscopic and panoramic vision of London which, as a consequence, figures the relationship between gender

'Modern Fiction' where she also criticises the naturalist or materialist novelist for an overly descriptive form of writing. Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 6-12.

¹⁶ Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', p. 217.

¹⁷ Deppman characterises Woolf's story as a 'criticism of sexist and realist oppression'. Deppman, 'Rereading the Mirror Image', p. 51. Ruth C. Miller argues that the 'fatal consequences of the mirror's imitation of art serve as a warning to the artist. He must ensure that his work does not disdain life, despite its mixed quality: otherwise, it will become merely a monument to itself'. Ruth C. Miller, *Virginia Woolf: The Frames of Art and Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 94.

¹⁸ Woolf, 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', p. 219. This opposition between seeing and imagining appears in many of Woolf's essays and fictions. Later in the chapter, a similar opposition between the eye and the brain will be examined in two of Woolf's essays.

and the visual as a fluid and dynamic negotiation rather than a monolithic and inflexible structure. The representation of the gendered field of vision in *Mrs Dalloway* is thus closer to Crary's notion of a 'continually shifting field', rather than the models of visuality found in works by Mulvey and Berger, which picture gender in terms of strict binary oppositions and seemingly inflexible and hierarchical structures.¹⁹ As I noted in the Introduction, for Crary, an observer is one who sees within 'a prescribed set of possibilities' and is 'embedded in a system of conventions and limitations' which are 'discursive, social, technological, and institutional'.²⁰ The advantage of Crary's model is that it allows for more nuance, taking in a variety of factors which shape structures of vision and allowing for the possibility of negotiations of such structures. For what *Mrs Dalloway* shows is that visual frames and technologies can be used in different ways and do not determine a single use or structure of visibility. In response to the diverse range of visual frames and perspectives in *Mrs Dalloway*, this first chapter plots a 'relay of looks' through three key spaces in the novel – the home, the street, and the omnibus – and mediated by mirrors, windows and mobile views.²¹ Examining the ways in which characters see and are seen within these spaces and through these frames, the chapter outlines the gendered 'system of conventions and limitations' which the observers in this text see within and negotiate.²² The overall argument of the chapter is that, in this particular novel, Woolf illuminates both the problems of being a gendered subject within the field of vision (particularly for women) and gestures towards potential solutions in the form of new spaces, new visual frames and new ways of seeing. Furthermore, Woolf does this without reducing the complexity of the relationship between gender and visuality to a monolithic model which either ignores or de-emphasises forms of resistance.

The chapter divides into three sections in order to focus on three key negotiations of the gendered visual field. The first of these sections begins with the space of the street in order to draw out Clarissa's ambivalent response to walking through London. In order to conceptualise the relationship between walking, visuality and subjectivity, I begin with an analysis of Woolf's essay 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' (1927). The essay is pertinent because it foregrounds a similar ambivalence about urban strolling which Clarissa feels in *Mrs Dalloway*. Whilst she enjoys the movement of urban perambulation, dissolving

¹⁹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 6.

²⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

²¹ Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(l): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition', *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (May 1991), 419-431(p. 422).

²² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

into the kinetic urban environment and utilising the array of visual delights available to engage in creative acts of imagination, Clarissa is also aware of being a highly visible body, most notably in the eyes of male pedestrians. The pleasures of street-walking are thus joined by the problem of being visible before the male gaze. Building on this, the section then switches to the male perspective of Peter Walsh in order to examine more fully the masculine position of observation within the city. Peter takes advantage of the nineteenth-century association of public space as masculine, adopting the position of the *flâneur*, and subjecting an anonymous woman to his voyeuristic gaze. However, this section concludes by arguing that Woolf undermines Peter's adoption of the *flâneur*-like gaze through parody, chiefly by including the anonymous woman's gaze but also through some humorous observations about the construction of Peter's masculinity. This section thus foregrounds the contested character of the urban street, where gendered subjects must negotiate their places as both visible bodies and gazing subjects.

Section two then considers the mobile viewing position of the omnibus as a potential solution to Clarissa's experience of dangerous visibility. What both she and her daughter Elizabeth find is that the omnibus not only protects them from this visibility but also facilitates and empowers their own active look. In projecting their gaze outward through the omnibus window, they are able to move away from an inwardly directed gaze and engage in more creative acts of imagination. Furthermore, in her description of the omnibus, Woolf's prose mirrors the female gaze of Clarissa and Elizabeth, dispersing the oppressive male gaze at the level of narrative focalisation. However, this outward or ecstatic gaze is contrasted with an episode in which Clarissa sits before her mirror. As in the looking-glass story, Clarissa finds that her mirror makes her self-conscious of her appearance and reduces her to the status of a visible object. This section thus contrasts these two kinds of look and notes the difficulty of breaking away from certain structures of visibility. Therefore, whilst the positive potential of the omnibus is tempered by the fact that the omnibus episodes are short and do not appear to lead to substantial changes in either Clarissa or Elizabeth, Woolf's prose participates in the attempt to create and maintain new forms of gendered subjectivity and ways of looking.

The chapter concludes with a meditation on a third visual frame: Clarissa's experiences of looking out of the window from within her home. Like the mobile view of the omnibus, the window here facilitates Clarissa's own active visual pleasure, projecting her gaze away from her body and out into the world. However, what she sees from her window is another window across the street from her house. Her window thus becomes a kind of mirror, and this link is strengthened by the fact that on one occasion her neighbour, an old lady, stares back at Clarissa.

Through this female reciprocal gaze, the window thus synthesises the two earlier frames of the mirror and the omnibus window, combining the self-conscious look of the former with the ecstatic gaze of the latter. For what Clarissa finds in this view is an image of the unobserved life, as the old lady appears to act without the kind of heightened self-consciousness which troubles Clarissa. However, this is undercut somewhat by Clarissa's voyeuristic-like gaze and an earlier and strongly negative view from a window in which Clarissa feels cut off from the world outside. Like Woolf's representation of the mobile view of the omnibus, then, the window here functions as a gesturing towards other configurations of the relationship between gendered subjectivity and ways of looking, whilst acknowledging the contradictions and obstacles that make change difficult.

These three sections explore *Mrs Dalloway's* positioning of the gendered subject within a dense network of subjectivity effects and gazes which must be negotiated. The chapter constitutes an exploration of how Woolf attempted to break out of certain forms of, and particular representations of, gendered visual life by developing a writing style that emphasises the diversity of forms of subjectivity and ways of looking. What interests me throughout the chapter is Woolf's attempts to resist processes of objectification and fetishisation, and work against the idea of an omniscient perspective or a totalising viewpoint. This can be situated within Woolf's broader textual ambitions, most obviously her avowed desire to break with conventional forms of realism, as can be seen in essays like 'Modern Fiction'. Whilst this latter project is larger than the scope of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that Woolf's desire to move away from what she sees as a reductionist realism is related to her desire to find new ways of representing gender, more specifically women's experiences and lives. The complex and contradictory negotiations that women have to make in the 1920s are captured by Woolf's modernist writing project.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf contextualises these negotiations within the modern urban metropolis, with its multiple perspectives of pedestrians, motor vehicles, aeroplanes and various visual displays around the city such as department-store windows. Her prose emulates the busyness of the city, with its constant sense of movement, people and technology, as well as the multiple perspectives, through use of free indirect discourse, to create a modernist image of the metropolis: fragmentary, fast-paced, and quotidian. That there is no one, omniscient perspective in both the novel and the modern city contributes to the battle of looks that takes place in the novel and helps to undermine those perspectives that attempt to master that which

lies before the eye.²³ The use of free indirect discourse to move swiftly in and out of the minds of her different characters shows the discrepancies that exist between two or more points of view, especially the gap between outer appearance and inner perspective. Furthermore, the typically modernist questioning of the reliability of perception and of the notion of objectivity, troubles the desire for an objective view of the gendered subject. The failure of Woolf's characters easily and assuredly to read the sky-writing of an aeroplane, for example, is an emblem of the opaqueness and inscrutability of identity. Woolf's representations of the modern city, consciousness, and subjectivity more generally thus foreground both their individual complexity and the complexity of relations between them, and draw inspiration from a number of modern forms of representation: from Cubist painting to the cinema.²⁴ By representing this urban environment and its inhabitants as a complex web of shifting perspectives and dynamic spaces, Woolf emphasises the idea that gendered subjectivity is a constant negotiation with various structures of visibility.

The Space of the Street: Walking, Looking, Becoming

Woolf's essay 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' is concerned with the experience of walking through the city streets on a winter's evening. The main focus of the essay is on how this activity produces a new form of self or consciousness that is grounded not only in walking but in different kinds of visual pleasure that are afforded from such urban strolling. There is a repeated tension, or series of tensions, between surface and depth that runs throughout the essay, and which relates to these two main themes of identity and visual pleasure. Although the essay gestures towards a new form of subjectivity grounded in perambulation and visual pleasure, by the close of the essay this new self is given up and there is a return to the more familiar self, associated with the domestic sphere.

Woolf begins her essay by suggesting that one often finds an excuse for leaving one's home in order to take a walk through the streets in the early evening. It is significant that the excuse this female narrator creates is that of obtaining a pencil, suggesting links between women, writing and walking.²⁵ This then opens the door to a new form of subjectivity, one

²³ As noted in the Introduction, David Harvey argues that Balzac attempted to create a 'synoptic vision' in much of his writing about the city of Paris. See the section entitled 'Balzac's Synoptic Vision' in David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 49-50.

²⁴ As I observed in the Introduction, a number of scholars have explored the influence of cinema and other visual media upon Woolf's work.

²⁵ Rachel Bowlby develops these three elements in her essay 'Walking, Women, Writing', in *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 191-219.

which is close to the figure of the *flâneur*. Although Woolf never uses this term, her essay articulates a similar subject-position for the female urban stroller.²⁶ Woolf characterises this form of subjectivity in terms of self-transformation, anonymity, and scopophilia. She says that in walking out in the evening we are ‘no longer quite ourselves’, that we ‘shed the self our friends know us by’, and become a member of ‘that vast republican army of anonymous trampers’.²⁷ By contrast, remaining at home in the ‘solitude of one’s own room’ leads only to familiar experiences that perpetuate our habitual sense of self, or, in Woolf’s words, ‘we sit surrounded by objects which perpetually express the oddity of our own temperaments and enforce the memories of our own experience’.²⁸ For example, a particular object such as a bowl on a mantelpiece may stimulate the memory of where one obtained it, as well as a number of connected experiences. This Proustian experience of involuntary memory is powerful, but nonetheless limiting in that it focuses attention on the past and reinforces the known self.

By contrast, opening the door and stepping out into the street frees one from this familiar set of experiences and opens up a new form of subjectivity. Woolf uses a striking image of what this new self is like, one which centres on the visual pleasure that is afforded from rambling through the streets at night:

The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.²⁹

Here we find the notion of becoming anonymous, through the stripping away of the social mask, and the central place given to visual pleasure in the haunting image of the ‘enormous eye’. Throughout the rest of the essay, this eye dominates the experiences recounted: walking through the urban environment is all about pleasure in looking. This leads to a number of remarks about surface and depth: whilst the ‘brain sleeps’, the eye ‘[glides] smoothly on the surface’; ‘[t]he eye is not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure’.³⁰ This image of the enormous eye may be understood as an embodiment of scopophilia. Furthermore, since this eye synecdochically stands for a new form of subject, we can hear the ‘I’ in the ‘eye’, suggesting that subjectivity is closely linked to structures of vision.

²⁶ As discussed in the Introduction, Woolf’s writings on urban strolling anticipate the debates about the *flâneur* and the *flâneuse*. As well as the essays by Wolff, Wilson and Nava, see also Griselda Pollock, ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity’, in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 50-90.

²⁷ Virginia Woolf, ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’, in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 177-87 (p. 177).

²⁸ Woolf, ‘Street Haunting’, p. 177.

²⁹ Woolf, ‘Street Haunting’, p. 178.

³⁰ Woolf, ‘Street Haunting’, p. 178.

This distinction between surface and depth, eye and brain, also appears in Woolf's essay 'The Cinema' (1926), where she writes that in watching a film '[t]he eye licks it all up instantaneously, and the brain, agreeably titillated, settles down to watch things happening without bestirring itself to think'.³¹ However, Woolf also notes that in watching certain kinds of films (especially documentary films) the brain is needed to make sense of their reality status because we 'behold [the events] as they are when we are not there'.³² We see a similar dichotomy in 'Street Haunting', where the eye glides over the surfaces of the streets enjoying the sights on offer, and the brain is engaged in imaginative acts that dive below the surface, speculating on what is happening in such scenes. For example, in a typically voyeuristic scene, the narrator describes looking at lit-up windows in various houses and offices, and imagines clerks reading correspondences or a woman measuring out the number of spoons of tea. However, she quickly notes a danger in this by warning of 'digging deeper than the eye approves' which will '[impede] our passage down the smooth stream'.³³ Instead of diving below the surfaces on view, Woolf writes that we must 'be content still with surfaces only'.³⁴ There is thus a tension at the heart of the visual as it relates to movement. Strolling through the urban environment affords the eye numerous visual impressions which it can glide over. Whilst the brain can settle down and let the eye enjoy moving from sight to sight, the danger is that not only will it be needed to make sense of some experiences but that the boundary between eye and brain will be blurred in the act of speculation – the word 'speculation' itself bringing together both the act of looking and the act of thinking.³⁵ Focusing on one sight and speculating on it halts the eye in its tracks and substitutes voyeuristic pleasure for the pleasure of experiencing an accumulation of transitory visual impressions. Perambulation itself is thus stopped as the eye and brain fixate and speculate on a single object of interest.

³¹ Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema', *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, Ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 172-76 (p. 172).

³² Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 172. Woolf makes a similar point in 'A Sketch of the Past': 'For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye.' Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002), pp. 78-160 (p. 108).

³³ Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 179. The image of the street as a stream echoes the title of another essay by Woolf, entitled 'Oxford Street Tide', in *The London Scene: Six Essays on London Life* (London: Daunt Books, 2013), pp. 19-26.

³⁴ Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 179.

³⁵ This suggestive word has occasioned a rich and voluminous amount of scholarship. Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) explores some of the valences of the term speculation in relation to what Derrida calls a 'hauntology'. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006). Sara Gerend reads the ghostly elements in Woolf's 'Street Haunting', arguing that the narrator's adventure 'describes a spectral city subjectivity'. Gerend, "'Street Haunting': Phantasmagorias of the Modern Imperial Metropolis', *Literature Compass*, 4.1 (2007), 235-42 (242, footnote 1).

‘Street Haunting’ thereby draws our attention to both the pleasures of looking and the pleasures of speculating, of enjoying gliding over surfaces and of enjoying digging below them to imagine forms of life. This tension is also related to another dichotomy: that between the promise of a new form of subjectivity through urban strolling and the threat of dissolution of self that compels a return (indeed retreat) to one’s home and habitual routines. Woolf conceptualises this potential to transform one’s subjectivity in spatial terms: whilst conventional ‘[c]ircumstances compel unity’, the pleasures of walking in the city allow one to ‘leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into [new] footpaths’.³⁶ Woolf then condenses this dichotomy with respect to visual pleasure into a metaphorical opposition between the butterfly and the moth. Early on we read that the eye ‘rests only on beauty; like a butterfly it seeks out colour and basks in warmth’.³⁷ At the end of the essay this activity is seen at first in wholly positive terms: ‘to escape is the greatest of pleasure; street haunting in winter the greatest of adventures.’ However, this is contrasted by the sentiment that ‘it is comforting to feel the old possessions, the old prejudices, fold us round, and shelter and enclose the self [...] which has battered like a moth at the flame of so many inaccessible lanterns’.³⁸ Whilst strolling through the city and enjoying the visual impressions is presented positively, it is clear that there is also an attendant danger that such an activity, if carried on for too long, threatens the very existence of the self. The potential for expansion and change is thus tempered by the danger of dissolution. Exposing oneself to the visual surfaces of the city is both pleasurable and potentially destructive.

Read as social commentary about the connections between gender and class, the essay clearly stands poised on the threshold, signified by the opposition between the privilege of the home and the destitution of the streets. As Susan Merrill Squier puts it, the ‘voice and viewpoint of “Street Haunting” oscillate between insider and outsider’.³⁹ On her walk through the London streets the narrator encounters the poor, the hungry and the destitute, and although, as Squier points out, there is a momentary identification with these figures, it is short-lived and the narrator finally ‘retreats to the security of her own home’.⁴⁰ More importantly for my purposes,

³⁶ Woolf, ‘Street Haunting’, p. 182 and p. 187.

³⁷ Woolf, ‘Street Haunting’, p. 179.

³⁸ Woolf, ‘Street Haunting’, p. 187. Relevant here is Woolf’s essay ‘The Death of the Moth’, in which the ‘enormous’ and ‘various’ ‘possibilities of pleasure’ dwarf the ability of the moth to make the most of such opportunities. Nevertheless, despite the moth’s diminutive stature, its dancing is seen by the narrator as revealing ‘the true nature of life’. Virginia Woolf, ‘The Death of the Moth’, in *Collected Essays Vol. I*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1968), pp. 359-61.

³⁹ Susan Merrill Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 46.

⁴⁰ Squier, *Woolf and London*, p. 47.

this oscillation can also be read in gendered terms. Squier argues that because the privileged space and possessions of the home are ‘so overwhelmingly held by men’, this traditionally feminine space of the home ‘falls under male control and reflects male values’ in Woolf’s essay.⁴¹ On this reading, leaving the domestic sphere to stroll freely through the streets signifies freedom from male control and the class and gender prejudices that come with privilege and possessions. Although the narrator never fully identifies with the marginal figures she encounters, and although she returns to the privilege and safety of the home, the essay nonetheless gestures towards the possibilities of otherness and change. The movement through space and the spectacle of the city promise new forms of existence as well as forms of novel entertainment.

‘Street Haunting’ provides a productive conceptual map for thinking about the woman walker in the metropolis in *Mrs Dalloway*, for the latter text is also concerned with the tensions between private and public space, stasis and movement, and with the potential for new forms of subjectivity which emerge from urban strolling and forms of urban visual pleasure. *Mrs Dalloway* features more developed forms of the tensions found in ‘Street Haunting’ by providing a number of viewpoints on and within the urban environment, and contrasts differently gendered perspectives. Woolf’s essay thus functions as a useful starting point for thinking about gendered subjectivity, walking and looking, but is made richer by the more complex account found in *Mrs Dalloway*.

This ‘was what she loved’: Clarissa Goes Street-Haunting

At the beginning of the novel, Clarissa leaves her house and walks through the streets and parks of London. The visual spectacle of the urban metropolis and the kinetic quality of this space excite her mind so that as she moves through the streets she simultaneously moves through her memories and ideas. This combination of perambulation and speculation recalls the twin figures of the eye and brain in ‘Street Haunting’. R. S. Koppen has coined the phrase ‘mind weaving’ to refer to the metonymic chain of associations which issues from Clarissa’s decision to buy flowers at the beginning of the novel.⁴² I want to suggest that this phrase captures Clarissa’s engagement with walking through the London streets because it makes clear both her movement and her mental activity. Her first comment on being outside – ‘what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach’ – reminds Clarissa of her youth at Bourton. This in

⁴¹ Squier, *Woolf and London*, p. 51.

⁴² R. S. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 74.

turn evokes a sense of freedom as she remembers how she would ‘burst open the French windows and [plunge] [...] into the open air’.⁴³ This is the first of many instances in which windows are associated with freedom, a link that will be developed later in the chapter. For now, though, I merely wish to note the importance of the window in Clarissa’s own conception of her identity, and specifically with a sense of potential for change.⁴⁴ Added to this image of freedom associated with leaving the domestic sphere are additional comments which temper this positivity with a sense of foreboding: the air is ‘chill and sharp’, but also ‘solemn’ as if ‘something awful was about to happen’ (p. 1). This sense of anxiety is associated almost immediately with Peter Walsh, as Clarissa’s memory turns from contemplating the garden at Bourton to his interrupting her with some question or other, such as ‘Musing among the vegetables?’ (p. 1). This connection between Clarissa’s image of freedom and Peter as an interruptive presence appears throughout the novel, as will be shown throughout this chapter. The novel’s opening thus sets up the image of the street as an ambiguous space, promising both a sense of freedom and a degree of potentially uncomfortable exposure.

In the midst of the busy streets, it is clear that what Clarissa enjoys is the sense of movement which the urban environment provides, as evidenced by her list of vehicles and people, as well as the number of verbs the narrator uses:

In people’s eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June. (p. 2)⁴⁵

As well as revealing her love of movement, what is also interesting to note here is that Clarissa includes other people’s eyes. Importantly, these eyes are not cast as objectifying (male) eyes; they are merely other points of view that help create the image of a city of multiple perspectives. However, one particular pair of eyes reveals itself as male and subjects Clarissa to a traditional objectifying male look: ‘A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her [...] a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious [...] There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright’ (pp. 1-2). Here, Clarissa is placed firmly in opposition to that

⁴³ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 1. All other references are given parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁴ This chain of associations created between the window, the gaze, and the past is also suggestive of the cinema, in which spectators gaze at images of the (real or imagined) past as if through a window. Julia Briggs writes that in the process of writing *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf was ‘evolving a technique for narrating the past as memories, almost like cinematic flashbacks’. Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 145.

⁴⁵ Andrew Thacker also points out that Woolf’s use of repetition, the semi-colon, and the alternating short and long clauses captures the busyness of the urban environment, in particular ‘the motion and pauses of life in city streets.’ Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 158.

which she herself loves: the city, the dynamism, and the sense of freedom evoked by this kinetic space. Scrope Purvis's gaze places her within the category of nature and reduces her to something static, something to be watched and admired. However, she does not apprehend his gaze and so walks off, continuing her meditation, unprovoked by his look.⁴⁶ With this contrast of looks, Woolf foregrounds a tension between differently-gendered gazes which hints at the traditionally-masculine public space. Whilst the street offers freedom, of movement and of thought, it also exposes Clarissa to the gendered lines that demarcate this space.

The notion of the male gaze encountered in the street is further developed in a second scene, through Clarissa's confrontation with her old friend Hugh Whitbread in St. James's park. As she walks through the park, her thoughts move from topic to topic, taking in the war, cricket, horses and seductive window displays. The park itself makes a vivid impression on her: 'the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks' (p. 3). However, her impressionistic thoughts and gliding eye are interrupted when she notices Hugh moving towards her. In conversation, Clarissa expresses her love of walking in London, thereby stressing movement once again: "I love walking in London," said Mrs Dalloway. "Really, it's better than walking in the country" (p. 3). Hugh explains that his wife has been taken ill and this triggers sympathy in Clarissa, who 'had visited Evelyn Whitbread in a nursing home' many times (p. 3). However, this is complicated by Clarissa's self-consciousness about her appearance in front of Hugh:

[She] felt very sisterly and oddly conscious at the same time of her hat. Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it? For Hugh always made her feel, as he bustled on, raising his hat rather extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of eighteen [...] she always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish. (p. 4)

Once again there is the contrast between Clarissa's point of view, which looks outward, and a male gaze which fixes her in place and centres on her physical appearance (this time also infantilising her). Unlike the previous example, though, this particular male gaze is registered through Clarissa's consciousness and so appears as an internalised gaze which induces a heightened self-consciousness. As Woolf's sentence construction makes clear, Clarissa's self-consciousness about her physical appearance sits uneasily alongside her female sympathy for Hugh's ailing wife. Makiko Minow-Pinkney puts it slightly differently, arguing that Clarissa's 'spontaneous movement of female solidarity is *undercut* by her awareness of herself as sexual

⁴⁶ Mrs Dalloway herself likens her appearance to a bird a few pages later: 'she had a narrow pea-stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's' (p. 7). This could be read as evidence that she has internalised certain ways of looking at women.

object of the male gaze'.⁴⁷ By contrast, I read these two impulses as held together in an uneasy tension, for Woolf's writing foregrounds a world of contradictions and uneasy combinations of desires, situations and relationships. In the above passage, what is most interesting is that Clarissa is trying to hold together her outwardly directed sympathy with her own self-consciousness.⁴⁸ This becomes clearer still in Clarissa's observations of Hugh's appearance, which reveal that she is conscious also of his performance of masculinity. As she notes, Hugh speaks 'extravagantly' to her and affects 'a kind of pout or swell of his very well-covered, manly, extremely handsome, perfectly upholstered body' (p. 3). His 'little job at Court' is given, parenthetically in Clarissa's thoughts, as the reason for his being 'almost too well dressed' (p. 3).⁴⁹ With this counter-perspective, Clarissa is able to undermine the power of Hugh's male gaze by thinking about the material dimension from which his point of view is constituted. In other words, Clarissa overcomes (to a certain degree at least) her self-consciousness in the face of Hugh's look by imagining how his performance of masculinity contributes to his way of looking at her. She therefore denaturalises and decentres his perspective by seeing his gaze as emanating not from some natural or universal being, but rather from an intricately upholstered body. In this way, Woolf pictures the relationship between gender and visibility as a dynamic web of shifting subjectivities and looks.

Clarissa's enjoyment of public space is also tempered by the sense of absence and alienation that it provokes in her. Alongside her enjoyment of the everyday movement of London's streets, Clarissa feels that she is 'outside, looking on' (p. 5), and as if she were 'out, out, far out to sea and alone' (p. 6). In Olk's words, Clarissa's 'way of seeing largely consists of the surface world accessible to the senses', and whilst she clearly enjoys walking in the city, she 'remains herself barred from it and unknown to most of the people she sees'.⁵⁰ More problematic still, her identity seems to dissolve in the absorbing and busy city streets: 'she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that' (p. 6). As Andrew Thacker puts it, '[t]he city is

⁴⁷ Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 66-67 (emphasis added).

⁴⁸ Briggs also observes a tension in *Mrs Dalloway* between images from within and images of the other: 'Seeing their experiences from within gives the reader a more fluid and changeable sense of who they are – more like the confused and fluctuating sense we have of ourselves, compared to the more sharply defined pictures we have of other people'. Briggs, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 132.

⁴⁹ Woolf discusses the construction of masculinity through clothing and adornment in 'Three Guineas'. For example, she writes that men's clothes 'make us gasp with astonishment', referring to them as 'splendid' and 'extremely ornate'. She notes further that 'every button, rosette and stripe seems to have some symbolic meaning', though 'no single pair of eyes can observe all these distinctions, let alone account for them accurately'. Virginia Woolf, 'Three Guineas', in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 151-414 (pp. 177-78).

⁵⁰ Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 72.

not just fascinating to gaze at, but absorbing in the sense that Clarissa dissolves into the city, or, more precisely, into the movements of the city'.⁵¹ Whilst being an outsider might appear to protect her from the objectifying looks of Hugh Whitbread and Scrope Purvis, the pleasure of dissolving into the urban environment threatens to undermine her agency. A related danger arises from the association of public space as masculine and the traditionally masculine mode of urban perambulation: *flânerie*. On this model, Clarissa's dissolving into the city carries the danger of making her visible only as part of the urban spectacle, 'one of the curiosities in which the [male] *flâneur* will take an interest in the course of his walking'.⁵² Clarissa is thus faced with negotiating the modality of her visibility, as well as the problem of being an outsider. This ambivalent view of the relationship between street-space and identity recalls the twin images of butterfly and moth from 'Street Haunting,' which condense both the pleasures and dangers of urban strolling. Whilst everything is 'absolutely absorbing', Clarissa's eye flitting enjoyably and distractedly over every surface, there is also the recognition that 'all this must go on without her' as if the metropolis absorbs her identity as well as attention (p. 6). It is partly in response to this threat that Clarissa imaginatively projects her identity onto the world around her in a bid for survival: 'somehow in the streets of London, in the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, [...] she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home' (p. 6). This sense of living-on in and through the world can be read as an attempt by Clarissa both to align her identity with the movements of the city instead of being reduced to her bodily appearance (as the male looks would insist), and to avoid the danger of a dissipation of identity within the maelstrom of the metropolis.

Woolf also writes of another (perhaps even greater) problem encountered in negotiating the relationship between gender and visibility: the danger of invisibility. For as soon as Clarissa is alone again after Hugh leaves her, she begins to worry about not being seen by anyone: she 'had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown' (p. 8). Her reasoning for this is that there is, for her, 'no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street' (p. 8). This comment suggests that aging plays a significant role in Clarissa's relationship to her gender, as the feminine body appears to become invisible with age. Compounding this problem is the role her marriage plays in contributing to her invisibility: 'this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway' (p. 8). Clarissa's relationship with her

⁵¹ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 159.

⁵² Bowlby, 'Walking, Women and Writing', p. 196. See the Introduction for a fuller discussion of the debates about *flânerie* and Woolf's relationship to them.

husband not only contributes to her invisibility, but also forces her to subsume her own point of view under his. ‘With twice his [Richard’s] wits, she had to see things through his eyes – one of the tragedies of married life’ (p. 67). In all of the passages quoted here and above, Woolf skilfully draws out the complex negotiations with which Clarissa is faced. Clarissa has to find a path through problems of visibility and invisibility, the problem of her own gaze, and of the gazes of others which she sometimes internalises. In contrast to models of gendered visibility such as Mulvey’s, then, Woolf constructs a rich and subtle picture of a shifting visual field which positions gendered subjects in a variety of ways.

Undermining the *Flâneur*’s Gaze

If Clarissa is faced with a complex web of gendered looks, Peter Walsh, by contrast, appears to have a much easier time as he walks through the London streets. This is in part because he takes advantage of the traditional view of the public sphere as masculine and adopts a position of observation that is close to that of the *flâneur*. As Thacker points out, in contrast with Clarissa’s ‘ecstatic trip’, Peter ‘[utilises] gender categories to organise [the city’s] representational spaces’, specifically the opposition between masculine/public space and feminine/private space.⁵³ Peter finds support for his sense of masculinity in the spaces he traverses, in the objects he finds around him, and in his mode of observation. However, it quickly becomes clear that Peter in fact encounters a series of threats to his masculinity which show the equally constructed (and precarious) character of his gender and relationship to the visual – he, like Clarissa, is a part of the same complex and shifting web of gendered visual relations.

After a disappointing encounter with Clarissa (because she spurns his desire for her), Peter strolls through streets associated with economic and military power, such as Whitehall, as if in an attempt to bolster his injured male pride by soaking in the sights of masculine power and success. However, his relationship to the masculinity of the monuments, statues and a group of marching soldiers he encounters is ambiguous, for he both mocks and admires them. Upon seeing the rigidly disciplined young boys he tries to walk in step with them but quickly notes that ‘I can’t keep up with them’ (p. 44). A few lines later he acknowledges that ‘one might laugh; but one had to respect it’ (p. 44). More interestingly, upon seeing the ‘exalted statues’ of Gordon, Havelock and Nelson, Peter finds himself subjected to their ‘marble stare,’ a petrifying and petrified look which might recall the myth of the Medusa, but which for Peter

⁵³ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 160.

symbolises a ‘renunciation’ of masculinity, which he himself ‘did not want in the least’ (p. 44).⁵⁴ He thus looks at the statues as ‘spectacular images’ and ambivalent points of identification; they not only stand as images of successful masculinity but also for Peter’s fraught relationship to his own masculinity. As with the soldiers, there is an element of defiance in Peter’s look of identification alongside his admiration.

Despite his defiant stance, Peter is, in Thacker’s words, ‘unable to escape [masculinity’s] strictures’.⁵⁵ Walking through Trafalgar Square moments later, Peter spots an ‘extraordinarily attractive’ young woman and proceeds immediately to transform her into an idealised figure of womanhood, adopting a typically masculine gaze (p. 45). Thacker argues that Woolf ‘implies a link between the “marble stare” [...] and the lascivious gaze of Peter at the attractive woman’.⁵⁶ Certainly, Peter demonstrates an aggressive masculinity as he stares at her, ‘[s]traightening himself and stealthily fingering his pocket-knife’ (p. 45). Whilst the statues of great men above looked down on Peter with a ‘marble stare’, here it is Peter’s own gaze which petrifies, reifying the woman into an image of his desire.⁵⁷ As he stares at her, she seems to ‘shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting’ (p. 45). It is immediately clear that Peter is not just ‘an observer’ but also ‘a voyeur,’ as Laura Marcus observes.⁵⁸ His description of the woman suggests that the space of the street functions as a fantasy space for him, allowing him to make up a little adventure for his particular version of ‘Street Haunting’. This is made clear by both the impossible combination of attributes Peter assigns to the woman and by the contrast between these attributes and his lack of real knowledge of her. Such an impossibly attractive woman, both in terms of her qualities and in the way that she appeals exactly to Peter’s desire, could only be imaginary. Peter reveals this most obviously when he

⁵⁴ On the topic of the Medusa as it relates to gender and sexuality, see Sigmund Freud, ‘Medusa’s Head’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 18*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 272-73. Laura Mulvey takes up some of these ideas in her essay on visual pleasure, such as how the male gaze in classic narrative cinema partly derives pleasure from fetishizing images of woman. A number of other feminists have re-worked Freud’s ideas, such as Hélène Cixous. See her ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’, trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1.4 (1976), 875-93.

⁵⁵ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 162.

⁵⁶ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 162.

⁵⁷ This constitutes a reversal of Freud’s ideas about castration anxiety, as here it is the man who stares. However, this does tie in with Mulvey’s idea of the male gaze: masculine forms of looking petrify the woman in order to avert castration anxiety in advance.

⁵⁸ Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 141. In Chapter Three, I will examine a parallel stalking scene in Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*, in which Eve(lyn) follows Leilah through the streets of New York. In Carter’s version, however, Leilah actually sheds veil after veil of her clothing, thus ironically playing on this association of the male urban stroller as voyeur.

admits that ‘one must invent, must allow oneself a little diversion’ (p. 45).⁵⁹ Woolf thus sets up an opposition between the male stroller as voyeur and the woman in the street as fantasy vision; the street space is dominated by a male gaze which subjects women to its impossible desire.

The imaginary quality of Peter’s gaze appears further when he imaginatively dresses the woman with stereotypically feminine items, which he takes from the seductive window displays they both pass by on their journey: ‘her cloak, her gloves, her shoulders combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows to make the spirit of finery and whimsy which dwindled out of the shops on to the pavement’ (p. 46). In this scenario, then, Woolf adds the shop window to her representation of a relay of looks, triangulating Peter’s *flâneur*-like gaze through the visual structure of the commercial display window. But whilst Peter adorns the woman with the feminine accoutrements which beckon the look of the passer-by, transforming her into the image of his desire, he eschews the possibility of seeing himself as an object of vision, a surface over which an eye might glide, defined by his appearance. Instead, he defines himself through his actions, romanticised though they are: ‘he was an adventurer, reckless, he thought, swift, daring, indeed [...] a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned proprieties, yellow dressing-gowns, pipes, fishing-rods, in the shop windows’ (p. 46). This traditional opposition between action and appearance recalls Berger’s thesis in *Ways of Seeing* that ‘*men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at’.⁶⁰ Similarly, Rachel Bowlby argues that whilst Peter is defined by his difference to these ‘accoutrements of masculinity’, the young woman is made more desirable by ‘the fetishistically feminine bits and pieces visible as they pass’.⁶¹ Peter’s linking of the woman in the street with the enticing window displays not only alludes to the rise of department stores and their appeal to a female consumer gaze,⁶² but more broadly strengthens the association between women and appearance. Peter effectively transforms the woman into a display mannequin, veiling her with various pieces of clothing after she has ‘shed veil after veil’ just moments before. In the process, she is reduced to the status of an object to be seen, an object with the purpose of enticing the gaze of passers-by. By contrast with his frustrations at Clarissa, this woman is passive like a doll, malleable in his eyes.

⁵⁹ The imaginary character of the woman is also revealed in Peter’s imagining that ‘the traffic had whispered [...] his name, not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts’ (pp. 45-46).

⁶⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 41.

⁶¹ Bowlby, ‘Walking, Women and Writing’, p. 205.

⁶² For a discussion of this see Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (London: Methuen, 1985). Anne Friedberg also discusses this in ‘Les Flâneurs du Mal(1)’ and *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

Peter follows the young woman until she reaches her home. As she is about to enter her house she looks back in his direction, the only instance of her look registered in the text. Woolf writes that she took ‘one look in his direction, but not at him, one look that bade farewell, summed up the whole situation and dismissed it triumphantly, for ever’ (p. 47). While this is not a direct challenge to Peter’s gaze – she does not look at him – it effectively dismantles his little adventure, as is revealed by Peter’s comments immediately afterwards: ‘Well, I’ve had my fun [...] And it was smashed to atoms – his fun, for it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl’ (p. 47). These comments in some ways undermine Peter’s adventure, foregrounding the fantasy of his mode of observation. The reference here to atoms is also significant, for it gestures towards that which cannot be seen with the naked eye, suggesting that despite Peter’s intense gaze, there are things that escape his vision. His particular way of looking at the woman (voyeuristic and fetishistic as he dresses and undresses her) obscures that which is unseen: the inner ‘atoms’ stand here for the woman’s consciousness and her point of view.

Atoms also appear in Woolf’s ‘Modern Fiction’, in which she refers to the ‘myriad impressions’ which the mind receives as like ‘an incessant shower of atoms’.⁶³ Here too atoms stand for that which cannot be seen or that which is difficult to see, but in the context of this essay Woolf uses the concept of atoms to develop a contrast between different literary styles. Woolf’s criticism of realist, or what she calls ‘materialist’, writing is that it conceives of life in terms of what is visible to the human eye: ‘a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged’. By contrast, Woolf argues that life is more like ‘a luminous halo’, something both much harder to see and capture in writing. Hence her examples of Modernist writing throughout the essay are all based on the idea of capturing that which challenges the human eye and therefore require a different literary method: Joyce’s writing captures ‘the flickerings of that *innermost flame* which flashes its messages through the brain’ and features ‘sudden lightning flashes of significance’, whilst Chekhov’s works often force readers to ‘accustom [their eyes] to *twilight*’.⁶⁴ The apotheosis of this series of visual metaphors appears in Woolf’s statement that ‘the moderns’ are interested in ‘the *dark* places of psychology’.⁶⁵ Modernist writing, for Woolf, is thus concerned with both those things which are difficult to see and with the problem of perception itself. Woolf’s essay thus helps illuminate the significance of the term ‘atom’ as it appears at the end of an intensely visual scenario in which Peter’s voyeuristic gaze focalises

⁶³ Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’, pp. 10-11 (emphasis added).

⁶⁵ Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’, p. 11 (emphasis added).

the narrative. Along with the brief reference to the woman's look, the appearance of 'atoms' makes clear the limitations of Peter's look by registering the presence of something which he cannot see, thus challenging his perspective.

Peter's mode of perambulation and observation clearly recalls the figure of the *flâneur*, with the anonymous woman standing for the figure of the passing-woman or *passante*. He is an affluent man of leisure who can afford to stroll through the urban streets taking pleasures at the sights on offer. His comments about inventing the 'escapade' with the woman are also suggestive of *flânerie*, for as Bowlby notes in a discussion of the *flâneur*, '[t]he walker is a writer; and what he notes, with his eyes and with his pen, is the woman'.⁶⁶ Bowlby also quotes from Louis Huart's essay on the *flâneur*, written in the nineteenth century, which proposes that the *flâneur* 'composes a whole novel, on the sole basis of a single encounter [...] with a little lady in a lowered veil'.⁶⁷ The reference to veiling here can be fruitfully linked with the comment about the woman shedding 'veil after veil' in front of Peter's eyes. That he then veils her imaginatively with the seductive items from window displays also fits nicely with Huart's image of the 'lowered veil' because it is suggestive of a voyeur's pleasure at peeping at something partially hidden from view (the lowering of the veil revealing the desired secret beneath). The association of writing and walking in the figure of the *flâneur* is also useful for comparing the different narratives of Peter and the narrator of 'Street Haunting'. Where the latter composes stories of marginal figures – the homeless, the outcasts, the poor – on her walk through London, Peter instead composes a typically masculine story of the passing woman. Peter's story-telling is not only more limited in scope, it is also more precarious, for the object of his desire actually undermines his *flânerie*-novel. That Peter includes the passing woman's look in his account transforms her from a gazed-at object into a gazing subject with her own agency. Furthermore, she looks past him as if he were invisible and unimportant rather than an adventurer or hero of modern life. As Bowlby puts it, 'The inclusion of the *passante*'s angle of view has produced a parody of the scene whose conventions are clearly understood by both parties, transforming it into a gentle power game where she comes out with the victory'.⁶⁸ The passing woman also signals the end of Peter's little escapade by emphasising her independence when she takes out her key, enters her home, and shuts the door. 'Peter's imaginary girl with her own latch-key and her playful rejection of standard femininity is a model New Woman'.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Bowlby, 'Walking, Women and Writing', p. 198.

⁶⁷ Louis Huart, *Le Flâneur*, in Bowlby, 'Walking, Women and Writing', p. 198.

⁶⁸ Bowlby, 'Walking, Women and Writing', p. 206.

⁶⁹ Bowlby, 'Walking, Women and Writing', p. 206.

The *flâneur*'s gaze and narrative are thus shown to be no longer viable as the social conditions of the urban metropolis are in the process of changing.

The *flâneur* is not only challenged by new configurations of gender and space, but also by changes in urban transportation. As Anne Friedberg argues, one of the causes for the disappearance of the *flâneur* is the increase in traffic. But whilst the *flâneur* is 'killed' by traffic, his 'perceptual patterns', 'distracted observation and dreamlike reverie', live on in the figure of the modern consumer, whose mode of observation is captured by the phrase 'just looking'.⁷⁰ However, whilst Friedberg plots a 'relay of looks' from the *flâneur* to the consumer, she devotes no attention to the perceptual patterns of the observer from the wheel of a motor-car or aboard an omnibus.⁷¹ It is to the latter that I now turn, for in two key passages in *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf makes clear that the mobile view of the omnibus provides a new and empowering perspective for female travellers.

Transporting the Female Gaze – The Imaginative Space of the Omnibus

Both Clarissa and Elizabeth are shown riding an omnibus at different points in the text, and the importance of these passages lies in how they utilise the mobility and visual frame of the mobile view. I want to explore this different space and perspective in order to see to what degree they find the omnibus to be a source of empowerment as they move through the city streets. I will begin with Elizabeth's encounter with an omnibus and then proceed to compare this with her mother's experience. Just as this chapter is structured around a relay of looks across three contested spaces, so too the significance of the omnibus for Elizabeth can best be seen by contrasting it with her experiences elsewhere: namely, the domestic sphere of the home, walking through the London streets, and finally a visit to a department store. Whilst Elizabeth is almost always represented as subject to the gaze of others, her journey aboard the omnibus provides her with the rare opportunity of being alone and hence independent. Her trajectory through these different spaces creates a circular movement as she moves outward from the home, through the streets and the store, onto the omnibus, and finally back home in order to attend her mother's party. Each space requires her to negotiate the different gendered practices of looking and being looked at which shape her identity as a young woman. However, it is only

⁷⁰ Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(l)', p. 421. Bowlby uses this phrase for the title of her book which looks at consumer culture in a number of naturalist writers: *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola*.

⁷¹ Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(l)', p. 422.

with the omnibus that Elizabeth finds a space and a perspective from which to engage imaginatively and independently with her sense of subjectivity.

Beginning with the domestic space of the home, Elizabeth is represented here as a subject over which her mother and Miss Kilman fight, and they subject each other as well as Elizabeth to discriminating looks. As Miss Kilman waits for Elizabeth to get ready for an excursion to the Army and Navy Stores, she aggressively observes Clarissa and thinks of '[overcoming] her' and of '[humiliating] her' (p. 110). She sees Clarissa as superficial, her life 'a tissue of vanity and deceit' (p. 113). By contrast, Clarissa despises Miss Kilman for being 'ugly, clumsy' and rude (p. 113). Woolf's use of free indirect discourse allows for quick shifts between these two perspectives, and therefore foregrounds the tension between inner feeling and outer appearance, looking and being looked at. The failure of Clarissa and Miss Kilman to get along is shown to stem, partly, from the fact that they both overvalue outward appearance as a marker of character. As for Elizabeth, it is clear that Clarissa occasionally looks with disappointment at her daughter for the lack of attention she gives to typically feminine things linked with appearance: '[Clarissa] had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for [them]' (p. 8). Miss Kilman again looks differently at Elizabeth by encouraging her to value education over appearance, advising her to 'not let parties absorb her' (p. 116). Elizabeth is thus caught between these two different female looks: the cynical and bitter gaze of Miss Kilman who looks down unfavourably on attention to appearance, and her mother's more traditional feminine gaze which instead values appearance. The space of the home is thus one in which the visual is important as a signifier of gender and class position, with Clarissa and Miss Kilman taking opposing positions about the correct appearance to adopt as a woman.

If the Dalloway home signifies a space of decadent appearances for Miss Kilman, the streets outside fail to offer a more positive space for her: '[b]eaten up, broken up by the assault of carriages, the brutality of vans, the eager advance of myriads of angular men, of flaunting women [...] [all this] seemed to break, like the spray of an exhausted wave, upon the body of Miss Kilman' (p. 113). Unlike Clarissa, who enjoys the dynamism of the urban environment, Miss Kilman looks at the assemblage of moving vehicles as a violent force that threatens the body of the pedestrian. More particularly, her comments about the men and women of the street reveal Miss Kilman's view of the gendered character of public space. Whilst the image of the 'angular men', with their penetrative sharp angles and 'eager advance', suggests a threatening force for the female pedestrian, the image of the 'flaunting women' betrays a traditionally

masculine association of the female urban stroller as prostitute.⁷² Miss Kilman thus appears to have adopted the traditional view of the public sphere as a masculine space, the presence of women signifying their status as commodities on display for a male gaze. Her use of the word ‘flaunting’ also suggests moral disapproval of women who draw attention to their appearance, especially in public. Like the prostitutes walking the masculine streets, Elizabeth’s impetuous omnibus ride might well shock Miss Kilman as a form of ‘dangerous mobility’ to use Wendy Parkins’ phrase.⁷³ In terms of the visual, it is the very visibility of the street that Miss Kilman dislikes, though it is interesting that she appears to place the blame on women for the fact that they are objectified and commodified as visual objects. This is a consequence of her bitter resentment of the Dalloways’ wealth and emphasis on surface appearance, but it also stems from her bodily shame: she anxiously repeats the word ‘flesh’ over and over, and reflects that ‘people could not bear to see’ her ‘unlovable body’ (pp. 113-14). Miss Kilman thus displays a conflicted relationship with gender and visibility, insecure about her appearance and judgemental about the attention others give to their appearance.

The Army and Navy Stores might be thought to offer some respite from the overly-visible and traffic-filled streets, but Miss Kilman seems equally uncomfortable here. She chooses ‘portentously’ from the array of different petticoats and is looked at by the store assistant as ‘mad’ (p. 114). The two women then sit down for tea, but this proves equally disappointing due to Miss Kilman’s lack of conversation and sour demeanour, and Elizabeth is understandably keen to leave. With the excuse of going to pay, Elizabeth escapes from the depressing Miss Kilman and exchanges the ‘rather stuffy’ department store for the pleasure of being ‘out in the air’ (pp. 116, 118). Whilst this short episode thus figures the store as a space of confinement and frustration, there are hints in the text that this space has the potential to transform feminine subjectivity.⁷⁴ The lift that transports the two women from floor to floor gestures towards the immensity of this space in which a woman could wander freely; an array

⁷² The association between women in the public sphere and prostitution was a prevalent one. For an analysis of the prostitute in Walter Benjamin’s work, see Susan Buck-Morss, ‘The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering’, *New German Critique*, 39 (1986), 99-140. In Chapter Three, I will note how the urban stroller as prostitute becomes more significant in Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*.

⁷³ Wendy Parkins, *Mobility and Modernity in Women’s Novels, 1850s-1930s: Women Moving Dangerously* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷⁴ As Mica Nava writes, ‘The department store [...] contributed to the creation of modern female identities [...] it provided a spectacular environment in which to stroll aimlessly, to be a *flâneuse*, to observe people, to admire and parade new fashions. This was a context which legitimised the desire of women to look as well as be looked at – it enabled them to be both subject and object of the gaze, to appropriate at one go the pleasure/power of both the voyeur and the narcissist’. Mica Nava, ‘Modernity’s Disavowal: Women, The City and The Department Store’, in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. Mica Nava and Alan O’Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 38-76 (p. 53).

of petticoats are shown to be on display – ‘brown, decorous, striped, frivolous, solid, flimsy’ (p. 114) – suggesting the link between sartorial transformation and new forms of identity; and finally the example of the ‘trunks specially prepared for taking to India’, foregrounds the department store as a space of global (as well as local) connection (p. 117). However, Miss Kilman appears uninterested in the possibilities for transformation the store holds out to her and instead quickly becomes overwhelmed by the vast number of commodities on sale, which subsume her identity. As she ‘blunder[s] off among the little tables’, she loses her way (and herself) in the store, finding herself ‘hemmed in’ by the trunks marked for India, the ‘accouchement sets and baby linen’ and ‘all the commodities of the world, perishable and permanent, hams, drugs, flowers, stationery, variously smelling, now sweet, now sour’. Drowning in this sea of objects, Miss Kilman momentarily re-discovers herself ‘lurching with her hat askew, very red in the face, full length in a looking-glass’ (p. 117). Although it is not commented upon, what is apparent from this is Miss Kilman’s discomfort and disorientation within the department store. This is not a place of empowerment for her, and her attitude also clearly prevents Elizabeth from utilising this space’s imaginative possibilities. Whilst these brief passages are left undeveloped by Woolf, they do minimally point towards some of the ways in which the department store participated in the transformation of the relationship between space and gender.⁷⁵

Outside in the fresh air and free from Miss Kilman, Elizabeth repeats her mother’s sentiment earlier in the text, exclaiming that it was ‘so nice to be out of doors [...] so nice to be out in the air’ (p. 118). But her sense of freedom quickly fades from view, for the visibility of the street appears to remind her of the fact that, because of her age, she is now frequently scrutinised visually by men:

And already, even as she stood there, in her very well-cut clothes, it was beginning.... People were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water, and garden lilies; and it made her life a burden to her, for she so much preferred being left alone to do what she liked [...] Every man fell in love with her, and she was really awfully bored. (pp. 118-19)⁷⁶

Elizabeth, again like her mother, becomes self-conscious about her appearance whilst walking outside, and this tempers the sense of independence and liberation she feels upon leaving the department store. Added to this pressure is the recollection of Clarissa’s dismay at Elizabeth’s lack of care shown towards her appearance: ‘That [Elizabeth] did not care more about it – for

⁷⁵ In the following chapter, I will return to the importance of the department store as Woolf represents this key space more fully in *Orlando* and this text’s concern with sartorial transformation.

⁷⁶ In the next chapter, this issue of comparing women with various objects recurs in Woolf’s *Orlando*, but there the protagonist fails to find a suitable object of comparison for his lover, Sasha.

instance for her clothes – sometimes worried Clarissa’ (p. 119). Woolf registers the powerful effect of Clarissa’s scrutinising gaze upon Elizabeth by switching almost imperceptibly from Elizabeth’s to Clarissa’s point of view within a single paragraph, made clear at the end by the tag ‘thought Clarissa’ (p. 119). Elizabeth thus feels not only the desirous looks from her (imagined or remembered) suitors, but also the discerning gaze of her mother, made more emphatic by the change to the latter’s perspective. Elizabeth is thus a highly looked-at object, and she feels it keenly.

Despite this pressure, Elizabeth asserts her independence by boarding an omnibus ‘most competently [...] in front of everybody’ (p. 119). The text switches here from the view of Elizabeth as object of the gaze to gazing subject: Elizabeth takes a seat on the top of the omnibus, and ‘her fine eyes, having no eyes to meet, gazed ahead’ (p. 120), thereby signalling the fact that she is both free to look and free from the gaze of others. Elizabeth utilises the commanding view of the omnibus window to become a spectator of the street space, whilst her position of invisibility saves her from being seen as a ‘flaunting woman’. Her new mobile perspective in effect disperses all of the different looks which focus on Elizabeth.⁷⁷ Furthermore, unlike the passing woman at whom Peter Walsh voyeuristically gazes, Elizabeth freely enjoys the pleasures of moving through the street space without the danger of being turned into the passive object of such a gaze, transformed into a part of the urban landscape or made into an object of the *flâneur*’s narrative. Instead, Elizabeth writes her own narrative aboard the omnibus in which she becomes an empowered adventurer: the omnibus is described as an ‘impetuous creature’ and ‘a pirate’ (p. 119), with Elizabeth ‘respond[ing] freely’ to each movement of the omnibus ‘like a rider’ (p. 120). Woolf’s prose even emulates the fragmented rhythm of the omnibus as it starts and stops, and weaves around the streets.⁷⁸ However, whilst the momentum of the omnibus transforms her into an active rider, in visual terms she is a much more ambiguous figure: in contrast with her active gaze, Elizabeth is likened to ‘the figure-head of a ship’, placing her in a more passive visual role (p. 120). Hence, even here Elizabeth must negotiate her place within the structures of gender and the visual – female emancipation is never represented as simple or straightforward.

⁷⁷ Mieke Bal uses the phrase ‘dispersing the gaze’ in the first chapter of her *Looking In: The Art of Viewing* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001), p. 41.

⁷⁸ A good example can be found in the following sentence, which darts and weaves like the omnibus: ‘The impetuous creature – a pirate – started forward, sprang away; she had to hold the rail to steady herself, for a pirate it was, reckless, unscrupulous, bearing down ruthlessly, circumventing dangerously, boldly snatching a passenger, or ignoring a passenger, squeezing eel-like and arrogant in between, and then rushing insolently, all sails spread, up Whitehall’ (p. 119).

Most importantly, however, the omnibus functions as a catalyst by inspiring Elizabeth to imagine a professional career for herself. The omnibus turns the urban environment into a kind of canvas or imaginative screen for her identity, for as she rides up The Strand, Elizabeth imagines taking up various professions. In part, this imaginative act is caused by the environment itself: ‘She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand’ (p. 120). Elizabeth also notes that ‘no Dalloways came down the Strand daily; she was a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting’ (p. 121). Elizabeth uses the omnibus as a means of engaging with different spaces, her independent mobility empowering her to become a pioneer. The relationship between personal identity, space and movement is clear, as ‘[t]he movement through unfamiliar parts of the city inspires Elizabeth with ideas of a life quite different from that of her mother’.⁷⁹ But her imaginative act is also possible because the omnibus provides Elizabeth with a viewing position that entails freedom from the reproofing looks of her mother and Miss Kilman, both of whom attempt to influence and shape her. The omnibus is thus unique in *Mrs Dalloway* because it combines a sense of free movement, a protective space free from the various gazes encountered elsewhere, and a mobile and expansive view which facilitates imaginative acts. David Trotter has written that Woolf, along with a number of other modernist writers, ‘found ways in which to imagine subjectivities reconfigured for and by transport understood as a connective medium’.⁸⁰ Alongside this, I want to add that Woolf also found a way of reimagining female subjectivity vis-à-vis visuality through the mobile and expansive view of motorised transport. The omnibus transports the female gaze and in the process gestures towards the transformation of women’s roles and status in the modern world.

One of the most important of these transformations concerns the agency of women, which is sometimes seen in tension with their role as spectators. As Parkins argues, ‘urban spectatorship tends to be represented as the dominant mode of modern life,’ the downside of which is that when women are able to become spectators of modern urban life, they are relegated to the ‘sidelines [...] unable to enter the field of action’. She goes on to say that women want to participate as well as observe modern life.⁸¹ The significance of Elizabeth’s riding of the omnibus alone is thus twofold: on the one hand, it represents the participation of women in the observation of modern life, a role often exclusively held by men and embodied

⁷⁹ Rachel Bowlby, ‘Thinking Forward through Mrs Dalloway’s Daughter,’ in *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 71.

⁸⁰ David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 28.

⁸¹ Parkins, *Mobility and Modernity*, p. 16-17.

most often in the figure of the *flâneur*. On the other hand, her use of this modern position of spectatorship is utilised to imagine a career, signalling the fact that she wants to participate in modern life too. Beyond *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf often used images of modern transportation for her discussions of women's agency and their representation in modern writing. In 'A Room of One's Own', the sight of a taxi acts as the catalyst for a meditation on androgyny, whilst in pieces such as 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' and 'An Unwritten Novel', the image of a train appears in Woolf's critique of nineteenth-century realist forms of representation, in particular of women.⁸² The omnibus has a similar function in *Mrs Dalloway*, gathering together women's mobility and agency, forms of spectatorship, and the representation of the modern urban environment with its multiple points of view and sense of movement.

However, to the degree that the omnibus encourages a form of urban spectatorship without necessarily leading to a more active role in this environment, it could be argued that Elizabeth's act of looking from the omnibus window functions as a fantasy only. The window of the omnibus can be linked to those other important and ambiguous windows of the modern urban metropolis: the seductive window displays of department stores that tie the female gaze to the act of consumption. Seeing the omnibus window as another kind of mediating device between (public) space and ways of looking, and linking it to the window display of the department store in particular, opens the possibility that Elizabeth is merely 'window shopping' or 'just looking' when she imagines possibilities for a future career. As Thacker points out, Elizabeth 'peers' at the City of London 'but does not go [there].'⁸³ On this reading, the window-view from the omnibus acts as kind of a fantasy screen only. Similarly, Bowlby notes that Elizabeth's 'daydreams' are 'marked [...] by a fantasy of transgression' related to both her mother and her tutor, both of whom in fact encourage Elizabeth to pursue a career.⁸⁴ Miss Kilman encourages Elizabeth by noting that 'all professions are open to women of your generation' (p. 115), whilst her mother takes the notion of professional women for granted: '[b]ut then, of course, there was in the Dalloway family the tradition of public service. Abbesses, principles, head mistresses, dignitaries, in the republic of women' (p. 121).

⁸² Virginia Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.1-149 (pp. 126-28); Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 32-36; Virginia Woolf, 'An Unwritten Novel' in *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 106-15. For a thorough discussion of the role of modern forms of transportation in Woolf's work see Bowlby's collection of essays *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*, in particular the first essay. In the following chapter, I will examine the importance of the motor car for mobilising Orlando and transforming her perception.

⁸³ Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, p. 155.

⁸⁴ Bowlby, 'Thinking Forward'. p. 74.

Therefore, Bowlby concludes, 'Elizabeth's professional fantasy is thus ironic in that it functions as an escape from what she perceives as the constraints of two supporters of professions for women, the mother and the governess'.⁸⁵ This then undermines Elizabeth's act of imagination aboard the omnibus and hence the reading of it as gesturing towards other possibilities for feminine identity in the public sphere. Her idea of herself as a doctor or a farmer is akin to looking at an outfit in a department-store window.

Another problem with Elizabeth's empowering omnibus experience is that, like the narrator in 'Street Haunting', she ultimately feels compelled to return home and adopt a more traditional feminine role for her mother's party: 'She must go home. She must dress for dinner' (p. 121).⁸⁶ Once again, 'circumstances compel unity'; Clarissa's party calls Elizabeth back to the 'straight lines of personality'.⁸⁷ In doing this, Elizabeth 'effectively returns [...] to the position of the idealised object', an object to be gazed at rather than an active gazing subject.⁸⁸ As one of the servants reports during the party, 'Miss Elizabeth looked quite lovely; she couldn't take her eyes off her; in her pink dress, wearing the necklace Mr. Dalloway had given her' (p. 147).⁸⁹ Not only does Elizabeth adopt a typically feminine appearance, but by wearing the necklace her father gave her, she signifies the fact that her identity is partly constituted through male desire and through the patriarchal line. Despite this patriarchal signifier, Mr Dalloway initially fails to recognise Elizabeth, seeing only an object of (feminine) visual pleasure:

For her father had been looking at her, as he stood talking to the Bradshaws, and he had thought to himself, Who is that lovely girl? And suddenly he realised that it was his Elizabeth, and he had not recognised her, she looked so lovely in her pink frock! (p. 172).

Like her mother's feelings of self-consciousness before Hugh's look, Elizabeth here is very much aware of herself as an object of the male gaze, noting that she 'had felt [her father] looking at her as she talked to Willie Titcomb' (p. 172). Mr Dalloway even confesses to his daughter that he had not recognised her, but Elizabeth makes no objection and is in fact flattered by this: 'He had looked at her, he said, and he had wondered, Who is that lovely girl? And it was his daughter! That did make her happy' (p. 172). Riding the omnibus, Elizabeth had begun

⁸⁵ Bowlby, 'Thinking Forward,' p. 74.

⁸⁶ As Bowlby puts it, Elizabeth 'readily returns [...] to her domestic calling as a good, civilised daughter'. 'Thinking Forward', pp. 74-75.

⁸⁷ Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 182 and p. 187. Sara Gerend glosses this section of 'Street Haunting' as 'society demands the individual's singularity'. Gerend, "'Street Haunting': Phantasmagorias', p. 239.

⁸⁸ Bowlby, 'Thinking Forward,' p. 75.

⁸⁹ In the following chapter on *Orlando*, clothing will be one of the main aspects of my analysis, for Woolf uses dress to explore new forms of gendered identity and to put pressure on the male gaze.

to see herself in a new light, shedding her familiar self and becoming an observer like the narrator of 'Street Haunting'. But here, she is seduced by her father's gaze into an identification of herself as an object of visual pleasure. Hence, the pleasures of deviating from the straight lines of conventional femininity and of developing a gaze of one's own are clearly precarious projects, given the comfort of 'the old possessions, the old prejudices' which 'fold us round, and shelter and enclose the [conventional] self'.⁹⁰ Whilst the advantage of the omnibus lies in the element of chance it introduces into urban movement – Elizabeth's spontaneous decision to board an omnibus puts her at the mercy of its trajectory and route – as well as its status as an in-between space (both part of and not part of the street), the domestic space's familiarity and sense of routine is a comforting, static shelter to return to after being 'blown about at so many street corners'.⁹¹ Elizabeth's expansive gaze from the mobile window aboard the omnibus certainly gestures towards a sense of visual empowerment for women, but capitalising on this and making it a permanent structure of experience is difficult given both the flattering and scrutinising gazes of her parents, her tutor and the party guests. Elizabeth appears merely to flirt with the possibilities for other forms of feminine subjectivity opened up by the omnibus, but ultimately returns to the familiar and comforting structures of conventional femininity.

'She felt herself everywhere': Clarissa's Expansive Gaze

Clarissa's interest in motorised transport is registered early on in the text: standing at the entrance of St. James's Park, she looks intently at the 'taxi cabs' and 'omnibuses in Piccadilly'; but whilst she finds this sight 'absolutely absorbing', she also feels detached from it, 'outside, looking on' (pp. 5-6). Similarly, Clarissa is also captivated yet alienated by the sight of the mysterious grey car that backfires whilst she is buying flowers. As she tries to peek inside the car, 'a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen' (p. 11). In all of these examples, Clarissa is an outsider to the experiences these motorised vehicles offer. However, later in the text Peter recounts an omnibus journey which he and Clarissa made, in which she, like Elizabeth, utilises the omnibus window to reimagine her sense of self.⁹² But also like her daughter, Clarissa's experiences here merely gesture towards new forms of feminine

⁹⁰ Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 187.

⁹¹ Woolf, 'Street Haunting', p. 187.

⁹² Thacker draws attention to the difference between the isolated travel of the taxi cab and the communal travel of the omnibus in order to explain Clarissa's ambivalent experience of identity in relation to the city. *Moving through Modernity*, pp. 158-59. I would argue that in relation to this point, it may be that the difference between Clarissa's look and the male looks analysed in this chapter is linked to this difference of travelling solo or communally. To the degree that solo travel encourages a sense of alienation from others, it might well feed into an urban iconography which privileges objectification, fetishism, and similar ways of looking that depend on a separation of subject and object.

subjectivity intimately connected with visuality; she too seems unable to capitalise on her experience and effect a more lasting change. Whilst Elizabeth's sense of expansion, catalysed by the mobile view of the omnibus, centred on her imagining a career for herself, Clarissa's experience takes a more abstract form in the text. Looking through the omnibus window, Clarissa imaginatively projects her sense of self outward and onto the urban landscape around her. However, this movement is countered in the text by her experiences before her mirror and the party she organises, both of which draw her back to a more unified and conventionally feminine sense of self. There is thus a tension at the level of her subjectivity, much like that analysed above with respect to her daughter: a tension, that is, between an expansive or dispersed sense of self and a unified and enclosed selfhood.

Before analysing Clarissa's experience of subjectivity from the mobile perspective of the omnibus, I want to consider a different visual frame: the mirror. By contrast with the omnibus window, Clarissa's bedroom-mirror unifies the disparate parts of her identity and discourages a more expansive sense of self. Sat before her dressing-table mirror, Clarissa contemplates her 'delicate pink face' and sees herself as if from the outside, describing herself as 'the woman who was that very night to give a party' (p. 31). Immediately, it is clear that the mirror plays a role in alienating Clarissa from herself, encouraging her to scrutinise herself as if from a disembodied perspective. This is strengthened by Clarissa's concern about her age and appearance, and with what Peter Walsh will think of her after not having seen her for many years: 'What would he think, she wondered, when he came back? That she had grown older?' (p. 31). In addition to this, Clarissa sees herself in terms of the habitual and the familiar, and it becomes clear that her looking-glass has played a constant role in shaping her identity, reminding her each day of her appearance. Gazing at her reflection she becomes aware of the 'many million times she had seen her face' and observes the familiar 'contraction' her face makes (p. 31). This sense of self is strengthened by her 'purs[ing] her lips' because it 'give[s] her face point' (p. 31). Then comes her most significant observation before the looking-glass:

That was her self – pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman. (p. 31)

In this passage, Woolf represents subjectivity as a continual process, as something habitual,⁹³ and she draws attention to the way in which a certain kind of persona is constituted and maintained in terms of the visual. Clarissa's mirror compels a sense of unity with respect to her

⁹³ This sense of a habitual and familiar self recalls the opening of 'Street Haunting' where the narrator associates the home with familiarity and links this to subjectivity.

subjectivity and makes her into an object of visual contemplation. Whilst the self may in reality be, as Clarissa believes, a series of parts, often incompatible, the mirror creates the effect of a coherent and unified subject in which all these disparate elements are assembled into a whole. As Olk argues, the mirror ‘presents a seemingly objectified image’ of the subject and ‘confines the field of vision to a segmented part of the world’.⁹⁴ This makes sense given that the mirror is, in Friedberg’s words, a ‘site of identity construction’ and has been widely theorised in terms of subjectivity.⁹⁵ For Clarissa, her mirror encloses her identity within the delimited boundaries of her body as seen in her reflected image, an idea that Woolf returns to in her short story about the looking-glass. Narrowing her focus, the mirror (along with private space of the room) draws Clarissa’s gaze inward and encourages her to see her self as something contained, homogeneous and centred on her bodily appearance.⁹⁶ In social terms, the mirror strengthens her role as a certain kind of woman because through the mirror Clarissa ‘[projects] her social roles and duties on her image of her self’ and ‘re-establishes her superficial public image’: as she puts it, looking into the mirror, she is ‘a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to’ (p. 31).⁹⁷ Here it is also worth recalling that Clarissa has to ‘see things through [Richard’s] eyes’ (p. 67). The mirror plays a part in helping to maintain Clarissa as bourgeois housewife, party hostess and as an object of the gaze of others.

By contrast, the visual frame of the omnibus window projects Clarissa’s gaze outward, encouraging her to imagine her identity in more expansive terms. As Peter recalls, whilst ‘on top of an omnibus’ one day, Clarissa expounded a theory of subjectivity in order ‘to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction’, of ‘not knowing people [and] not being known’ (p. 134). Clarissa had remarked that one often does not see certain people for large stretches of time and thus cannot know them very well. This is so because ‘the part of us which appears [is so] momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us’ which ‘spreads wide,’ ‘haunting

⁹⁴ Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 91.

⁹⁵ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 66. Studies on the role of the mirror in identity construction are too numerous to mention, but many of them draw on Jacques Lacan’s influential notion of the ‘Mirror-stage.’ See his ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’, in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Norton, 2006), pp. 75-81. Other critics, such as Berger, have pointed out the ideological role that mirrors have often played. In this latter case, the presence of a mirror in female nude paintings has often been remarked for its implicit hypocrisy, with the association made between women and vanity. See chapter three of his *Ways of Seeing*. See also D. W. Winnicott, ‘Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development’, in *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 149-59.

⁹⁶ In the three other chapters of this thesis I will explore how the mirror plays a much more ambiguous and often disturbing role, fragmenting the subject rather than unifying it. The clearest example of this appears in Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*, the subject of chapter three. There, the protagonist’s sense of self as a man is in part undermined when looking at his reflection in a mirror, after being surgically transformed into a woman. Whilst Woolf uses the mirror to show how femininity is often enclosed within certain visual structures, Carter uses it to question the limits of the visual with respect to gender identity.

⁹⁷ Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 93.

certain places' (p. 135). Here, Clarissa sees subjectivity as embedded in space, and as split between a visible part and an invisible part. It is crucial that she expounds this theory whilst aboard a moving omnibus, the mobility seemingly the catalyst, once again, for a different kind of perspective on subjectivity. Clarissa contrasts the mobility of the bus and its expansive visual panorama with the stasis and firmly bounded nature of the seat in order to emphasise her theory of subjectivity as dispersed throughout the world:

But she said, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not "here, here, here"; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her [...] one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. (p. 135)

Whilst the mirror leads Clarissa to think about the various forces that 'call on her' to make herself into a unified and centred self, the omnibus window has the opposite effect, freeing her up and allowing her imaginatively to spread her sense of self outwards onto the heterogeneity of the world.⁹⁸ Peter recalls that Clarissa's expansive theory of subjectivity was just one of 'heaps of theories' which she made up, and also remembers that she was 'all aquiver in those days and such good company' (p. 134). Indeed, Clarissa's gaze appears to have often been directed outward, akin to an explorer: she was frequently 'spotting queer little scenes, names, people from the top of a bus, for they used to explore London and bring back bags full of treasures' (p. 134). The mirror-scene suggests by contrast that Clarissa is more concerned with her duties as a somewhat conventional housewife, as she worries about her party, her dress, and what Peter will think of her appearance. As with Elizabeth, the omnibus's mobile view therefore gestures towards an alternative model of femininity in which an active female gaze plays a crucial role in expanding the feminine subject.

Despite the omnibus's commanding and panoramic view, it is worth remarking that it is from this mobile perspective that Clarissa is inspired to suggest that 'the unseen part of us' is less 'momentary' and 'spreads wide'. In fact, she also wonders if this unseen part of the self 'might survive [...] after death' (p. 135). Woolf thus uses the visual frame of the omnibus window to gesture towards the limitations of the visual alongside the idea of an active, female gaze. In contrast with Peter's assumption of the voyeuristic gaze of the *flâneur*, Clarissa utilises the visually commanding view of the omnibus not only to empower herself but also to acknowledge the limitations of vision and the importance of the unseen. Clarissa's identity becomes fragmented in response to the view from a moving vehicle. This then opens up ideas

⁹⁸ Clarissa's experience here is similar to the account of the perspective from a speeding motor car in Woolf's essay 'Evening over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car'. However, as this essay is more relevant to Orlando's experiences of driving in a motor car, I will look at this essay in some detail in the following chapter.

concerning the boundaries of the self, and problematises the notion of a totalised or omniscient point of view. Rather than feeling frustrated by this disruptive experience, Clarissa uses it to reimagine her identity as dispersed throughout her environment, rather than chained to her body. This implicitly challenges the idea of the male gaze, for if identity is seen as (and lived as) dispersed throughout the world then Peter's voyeuristic and fetishistic gaze is put under pressure. Clarissa's experience aboard the omnibus thus challenges conventional conceptions of both identity and visuality.

However, the emancipatory potential of this scene is put into question by a number of factors. In the context of the novel as a whole, Clarissa's omnibus experience is a brief one, and whilst this scene gestures towards a more utopian vision of female subjectivity, the majority of other scenes represent Clarissa as a heavily conflicted woman, one who has compromised in various ways throughout her life.⁹⁹ It is also worth remarking that the omnibus episode appears in Peter's recollection, and so he provides the focalisation here, not Clarissa. Whilst Clarissa's expansive gaze acts contrary to Peter's voyeuristic male gaze (which turns women into objects of vision), this episode is imaged through Peter's perspective and thus compromised. A related problem lies in Clarissa's projection of her identity onto the urban landscape outside of the omnibus. Whilst this gesture opens up her subjectivity by redrawing the boundary-lines of the self, it also carries the danger of turning her into just another object within the urban landscape. Squier makes this point when she argues that Clarissa 'thinks of herself not as an important figure, but as part of the background'.¹⁰⁰ She goes on to argue that Peter Walsh, by contrast, 'proclaims not passive merging with his surroundings, but active intrusion into them'.¹⁰¹ Given, furthermore, that Peter focalises the omnibus scene, Clarissa is doubly in danger of appearing as an object of vision here. To the degree that the omnibus scene is seen through Peter's eyes, Clarissa's projection of her identity onto the urban landscape positions her as a passive object of Peter's male gaze.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Clarissa's memories of her relationship with Sally Seton are perhaps the most obvious example here. Whilst Clarissa eventually marries Richard Dalloway, her recollections of her life before this suggest that her life could have taken a number of quite different paths, including also marriage to Peter Walsh. Furthermore, Clarissa's sensuous description of her desire constitutes a similar moment to her experience aboard the omnibus. In the former she describes a moment of 'illumination; a match burning in a crocus' (p. 27). Once again, then, Clarissa reimagines her subjectivity in terms of a moment of vision. Clarissa's experience of an expansive self aboard the omnibus, an experience left undeveloped, also recalls Woolf's account of mobility in 'Street Haunting' whereby mobility is figured in terms of a moth getting too close to a flame. Woolf thus tends to present mobility in ambivalent terms in many of her writings.

¹⁰⁰ Squier, *Woolf and London*, p. 95.

¹⁰¹ Squier, *Woolf and London*, p. 98.

¹⁰² The association of public space as masculine forms the backdrop of this problem. In Charles Baudelaire's influential account of the modern city, woman is seen as just another sight on display within the urban environment. As Rebecca Munford writes in this context, 'In Baudelaire's account, the prostitute's presence is a

I also want to argue that whilst the omnibus window is an important visual frame for the role it plays in opening up the relationship between gender and visibility, it is tempered by not only the mirror but Clarissa's performance of subjectivity whilst at her party. Like her mirror, the party calls on Clarissa to assemble the heterogeneous parts of herself and to become a certain kind of woman – in the terms of 'Street Haunting', the party compels unity. Whereas on the omnibus Clarissa had looked outwards, both literally and figuratively, at the party she becomes an inward-looking woman who plays the artificial role of hostess, 'effusive [and] insincere', in Peter's words (p. 148). In fact it is Peter's look that reminds Clarissa of her insincerity: 'He made her see herself; exaggerate' (p. 148). In assuming the role of party hostess, Clarissa aligns her subjectivity with a model of bourgeois femininity, in which ladies are scrutinised for their appearance: as Lord Lexham tells Clarissa, "you ladies are all alike" (p. 148). Clarissa herself seems to adopt this very perspective when she notes that one of her female guests is 'not even caring to hold themselves upright' (p. 149). The space of the bourgeois home and the inward-looking visual frame has encouraged Clarissa to concentrate her attention on her appearance and on the appearances of other women at the party. Whilst the omnibus projected her look outward towards a new vision of female subjectivity, the party restrains her gaze and centres it upon her body, a body which Clarissa is all too aware of as aging and hence ignored – an important aspect of the gendered, visible body which I explore in the following section.

Reciprocating the Gaze through the Synthetic Window

I want to conclude by considering a final visual frame, one that synthesises the opposition outlined above between the mirror and the omnibus window. At two points in the text, Clarissa gazes out of a window from her home and like the omnibus's mobile view it too takes her gaze outward, away from both her bodily appearance and the confinement of the home in which she functions as housewife and hostess. What she sees, however, is another window opposite her own. Looking out of one window and into another, Clarissa spots an old lady – her neighbour – and on one occasion their gazes appear to meet as if in an act of female solidarity. This window, then, becomes a kind of mirror, but one which, instead of reflecting Clarissa's gaze at herself, connects it to that of another woman. Through this act of female reciprocity Clarissa is able to derive a sense of the common life, and as the old woman appears unselfconscious (as

vital aspect of the kaleidoscopic contours of the modern cityscape at which the male *flâneur* directs his covetous gaze'. Rebecca Munford, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 89.

if unwatched) in her movements, Clarissa also admires her as an embodiment of privacy. This latter idea thus builds on her remarks during the omnibus journey about the larger, unseen part of the self and its implicit questioning of the limits of vision.

The first encounter with the sight of the old lady occurs in the context of (and as if in response to) Clarissa's frustrations about connecting with people and her anxieties about how she is perceived by others. These problems centre on Clarissa's fondness for parties and her inability to form a positive relationship with Miss Kilman. To begin with, Clarissa notes that she feels 'desperately unhappy' and after going through various reasons why, she decides that it centres on her parties: 'Her parties! That was it! Her parties! Both of them [Peter and Richard] criticised her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties' (p. 106). Whilst Peter derides Clarissa for what he sees as her 'insincere' role as hostess, imagining that she 'liked to have famous people about her [...] [and] was simply a snob', Clarissa conceives of her parties as 'an offering' and an attempt to bring people together: 'Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair [...] And [her party] was an offering; to combine, to create' (p. 107). As Clarissa looks at much of her life as having not 'the slightest importance' and worries that after her death 'no one in the whole world would know how she had loved [life]', her parties represent an attempt to connect with people and to create something meaningful, a 'moment' in one of the text's most significant words (pp. 107-08). Her parties may well compel unity and call on Clarissa to be a particular kind of woman – insincere in Peter's eyes, dartlike and definite in Clarissa's – but they also represent a chance to connect more deeply with people and thus evoke a shared feeling of the common life. Clarissa is thus frustrated in her attempts to create connections with people that move beyond the surface level of appearances and the judging eyes of others.

Similar frustrations and anxieties also emerge in Clarissa's fraught relationship with Miss Kilman, who interrupts Clarissa's thoughts above about the problem of her parties. Elizabeth and Miss Kilman are about to leave for the Army and Navy Stores, but when the former dashes upstairs to find her gloves, Clarissa and Miss Kilman are forced together for a brief moment. The text moves back and forth between their perspectives but shows only a failure to connect in a meaningful way as each subjects the other to a judgemental gaze. Whilst Clarissa looks disparagingly upon Miss Kilman as '[h]eavy, ugly, commonplace, without kindness or grace', Miss Kilman sees Clarissa as shallow and desires to 'overcome her; to unmask her' (p. 110). Both women thus scrutinise and reduce each other to the level of bodily appearance. Miss Kilman takes note of Clarissa's 'small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion', and pities her for having 'trifled [her] life away!' (p. 110).

Furthermore, she desires to 'subdue' Clarissa, to 'make her weep' and 'humiliate her', but since 'this was God's will, not Miss Kilman's', the latter is only able to look at her with scornful and spiteful pride: 'So she glared; so she glowered' (p. 110). Equally, Clarissa directs a judgemental gaze at Miss Kilman, comparing her to 'some prehistoric monster armoured for primeval warfare,' but then quickly cuts her down into a pathetic figure: 'the idea of her diminished' and she 'lost her malignity' to become 'merely Miss Kilman, in a mackintosh' (p. 111).¹⁰³ Instead of finding common ground, they each look at the other from a distance and are thus divided from one another by their adherence to their respective forms of femininity. Miss Kilman, for example, actually chooses to purchase 'cheap' clothing as if appearance is what matters most: she 'had her reasons [...] she did not, after all, dress to please. She was poor, moreover; degradingly poor' (p. 108). Likewise, Peter is correct that Clarissa can be a snob, her judgement of Miss Kilman's mackintosh being a clear example of this. Neither women are thus able to communicate successfully with each other, to find common ground, such as in their fears of death or their attempts to create meaningful lives for themselves.

It is in the context of these two key moments that Clarissa first encounters the old lady. After Miss Kilman and Elizabeth leave, Clarissa moves to a window as if desirous of escape from her frustrations. From this visual frame, Clarissa looks outside but quickly focuses on the window of a neighbouring house opposite. Spying inside, she spots the old lady moving through her home as if unwatched by Clarissa:

Had she [Clarissa] ever tried to convert any one herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves? And she watched out of the window the old lady opposite climbing upstairs. Let her climb upstairs if she wanted to; let her stop; then let her, as Clarissa had often seen her, gain her bedroom, part her curtains, and disappear again into the background. Somehow one respected that – that old woman looking out of the window, quite unconscious that she was being watched. There was something solemn in it – but love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul. The odious Kilman would destroy it. Yet it was a sight that made her want to cry. (p. 111)

After subjecting Miss Kilman to her judgemental gaze, it is ironic that here Clarissa pictures herself as someone who respects difference and who refrains from attempting to convert others to her point of view or way of life. Furthermore, the values she attaches to privacy and to the idea of living as if unwatched are undercut by her voyeurism. Despite these contradictions, this scene is significant for the way in which it gestures towards the value of the unseen and of a life which is unhindered by the obsessions with the visible, most notably apparent in Clarissa's respect for what she calls 'the privacy of the soul'. Furthermore, and like the omnibus window,

¹⁰³ The importance of clothing for gender will be discussed in the following chapter on Woolf's *Orlando*.

this visual frame also expands Clarissa's horizons and takes her self-conscious gaze outside of both herself and her home. Unlike the omnibus's mobile perspective, though, the window here connects Clarissa to others, even if she remains firmly behind the protective shield of glass. Whilst Clarissa often feels a strong sense of separation from the people around her, the window here not only protects her from what is outside but also functions as an opening and a medium of connection to the world and to others.¹⁰⁴

As the passage continues, it becomes clear that movement, once again, is also crucially important here: '[The old lady] was forced [...] to move, to go – but where? Clarissa tried to follow her as she turned and disappeared, and could still just see her white cap moving at the back of the bedroom. She was still there moving about at the other end of the room. [...] She could still see her' (p. 112).¹⁰⁵ Like Clarissa's urban perambulations and Elizabeth's increased mobility aboard the omnibus, here too the issue of movement is not only stressed but placed in relationship to the act of looking and of being seen. In one sense, Clarissa's gaze, which follows the old lady as she moves about her home, recalls Peter's voyeuristic gaze as it follows the anonymous woman around the streets of London. What is different here, however, is that Clarissa's focus is on the old lady's movements and not her objectified image, and what she derives from this is not a voyeuristic fantasy but a sense of the shared 'common life'.¹⁰⁶ David Trotter argues that in this encounter 'the primary focus is on the movement, not the person moving', and what Clarissa derives from this is 'a sense rather than a meaning'.¹⁰⁷ Whereas Clarissa's gaze directed at Miss Kilman centred on the judgement of her character based on the presumed meaning of her appearance and manners, here Clarissa focuses her attention on what connects her to the old lady, something shared and which can be sensed from the way she moves. Hence, for Clarissa 'the "mystery of life" consists of the question of how to relate to others',¹⁰⁸ and is expressed in the phrase 'here was one room; there another' (p. 112).¹⁰⁹ Hence

¹⁰⁴ As Martha Nussbaum observes, 'Woolf's image of the window suggests that people are not completely sealed to one another. There is an opening, one can see through or see in, even if one cannot enter'. Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Window: Knowledge of Other Minds in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*', *New Literary History*, 26.4 (1995), 731-753 (p. 743).

¹⁰⁵ The importance of movement here recalls not only the positive value Clarissa attributes to it whilst walking in the city, but also 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', in which Isabella's initial movements evade the mirror until she is caught in its gaze and stripped bare.

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 148.

¹⁰⁷ David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 163.

¹⁰⁸ Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁹ Miller argues in this context that Clarissa's view of the old woman is 'primarily an act of looking in a window rather than looking out' and that her conclusion is 'not an affirmation of her continuity with the outside world' but 'a recognition of the autonomy of another person'. Miller, *Virginia Woolf: the Frames of Art and Life*, p. 108. Whilst I agree that the old lady does stand for a vision of autonomy, Miller's argument that Clarissa's conclusion is not an affirmation of her continuity with the outside world appears to ignore the mirror-like quality of the scene in which two women, framed by two windows, face each other.

the voyeurism of Clarissa's gaze is here attenuated by the sisterly solidarity which she finds with the old lady, something she failed to achieve with Miss Kilman.

Later in the narrative, during her party, Clarissa encounters the old lady for a second time, but on this occasion she is shocked to find her gaze returned:

She parted the curtains; she looked. Oh, but how surprising! – in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her! [...] She was going to bed, in the room opposite. It was fascinating to watch her, moving about, that old lady, crossing the room, coming to the window. Could she see her? It was fascinating [...] to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed alone. She pulled the blind now. (p. 164).

Whilst the party provides the general context which frames this encounter, the more specific and immediate context is provided by Clarissa's intense thoughts about death, triggered by the news of Septimus Smith's suicide. That his death comes from leaping out of a window adds a sinister dimension to the window's association with escape and a certain kind of vision.¹¹⁰ Upon learning of Septimus's death, Clarissa's thoughts move from 'the terror' of being alive and of having to live 'to the end', to the realisation that 'she had never been so happy' in her life (p. 164). As her thoughts become more positive, Clarissa walks to the window and it is here that she once more spies the old lady. Clarissa is again fascinated by the sight of the old lady's movements and the sense of connection between the women becomes even stronger than before as the old lady stares back at Clarissa, thereby shattering the 'protective invisibility' that the window earlier provided.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the window here becomes a kind of mirror, but one that produces a different effect to Clarissa's looking-glass. Whilst Clarissa's mirror-image played a similar role to her parties, calling on her to assemble her self into the perfect party hostess, this metaphorical mirror-image produces 'a symbol of both independence and isolation in patriarchal society'.¹¹² Additionally, it not only stands for the values of privacy and independence, but also allows Clarissa to 'resist' the 'incessant parties' which '[blunt] the edge of her mind' (p. 69).¹¹³ It is an inspiring sight which positively affects Clarissa for it is '[b]y means of this mirror image of her self' that she can 'secure this female space in herself'.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ It is beyond the scope and particular aims of this chapter to consider Septimus's role in the novel. However, it is worth mentioning in brief here that Septimus's relationship to Clarissa is one of the central aspects of the novel as a whole and that the window is one of the main links between them. At the beginning of the text, Clarissa notes that, 'standing [...] at the open window' she feels that 'something awful was about to happen' (p. 1). This then foreshadows Septimus's death at the end of the novel. As Olk remarks, 'The window in *Mrs Dalloway* is a formal device to indicate the parallel existence of Clarissa and Septimus'. Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 73. Whilst Olk also notes that Clarissa and Septimus have 'two kinds of vision', I do not wish to consider this aspect of the novel for it does not bear on my present concerns with gender and visuality. Septimus's vision has more to do with his experiences of war and his shellshock.

¹¹¹ Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 75.

¹¹² Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, p. 69.

¹¹³ Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, p. 69.

¹¹⁴ Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, p. 80.

Woolf thus stresses the positive value of transparency; the window allows for the gaze to move both outwards and inwards as the observer both sees and is (able to be) seen.

In these two examples, then, the window synthesises the operations of the looking-glass and the omnibus window by projecting Clarissa's gaze outward, connecting her with others through the transparency of the glass, and then facilitating the internalisation of the positive, inspiring sight she beholds. However, like the other visual frames examined in this chapter, the window is an ambiguous mediating surface. Alongside Clarissa's voyeurism sits an earlier example of a view from a window which stresses the opaqueness of the glass rather than its transparency, and signifies Clarissa's feeling of exclusion from important events outside the home:

[Clarissa] paused by the open staircase window which let in blinds flapping, dogs barking, let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed, since Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her. (pp. 25-26)

On this occasion, the window appears as a barrier indicating Clarissa's 'detachment from the world surrounding her', more specifically from a lunch party which her husband attends.¹¹⁵ This window only lets in the noises of the outside world; it does not provide Clarissa with an expansive perspective from which to look out at the city beyond the window. Ruth C. Miller writes that '[c]haracters who suffer from more exacerbated forms of alienation' in Woolf's writings are 'portrayed as condemned to remain behind a pane of glass'.¹¹⁶ As if imprisoned behind this window, Clarissa feels 'shrivelled, aged, breastless', a sight not to be seen in contrast with Elizabeth's visually exciting body which men are constantly eying. The window therefore is not always pictured in positive terms in *Mrs Dalloway*: whilst on two occasions it empowers Clarissa, in this last example it signifies and perhaps even fuels her alienated view of herself.

This synthetic window is also the point at which the text most clearly highlights its concern with the visual in a similar way to 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass'. The exchange of looks between the two women, framed by the two windows, draws attention to the structures of looking not only in terms of the gendered gaze but also in terms of literary technique. Like her use of the mirror in the short story, Woolf's use of the window in *Mrs Dalloway* gestures

¹¹⁵ Oik, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 72.

¹¹⁶ Miller, *Virginia Woolf: The Frames of Art and Life*, p. 102. Miller gives as one of her examples the case of Septimus, for whom beauty exists 'behind a pane of glass', as the novel puts it. Miller argues that his method of suicide 'reinforces Clarissa's intuition that his death was an affirmation, rather than a denial, of the value of life' (p. 102).

towards narrative modes of seeing and sits within a tradition of using windows and houses to refer to literary representation.¹¹⁷ Woolf herself pictures the novel in architectural terms in 'A Room of One's Own' and again refers to the mirror:

If one shuts one's eyes and thinks of the novel as a whole, it would seem to be a creation owning a certain looking-glass likeness to life, though of course with simplifications and distortions innumerable. At any rate, it is a structure leaving a shape on the mind's eye, built now in squares, now pagoda shaped, now throwing out wings and arcades, now solidly compact and domed like the Cathedral of Saint Sofia at Constantinople.¹¹⁸

Woolf's shifting point of view in *Mrs Dalloway* embodies her belief in the multiplicity of perspectives on reality. For her, there is no one, objective perspective on the world, but a series of subjective and variously-mediated viewpoints. Just as she sees the novel as a rich form that can provide any number of views of reality, so *Mrs Dalloway* embodies this idea by shifting focalisation and foregrounding the visual frames which mediate vision. If the idea of a male gaze, or the masculinisation of vision, is associated with the idea of an objective and single perspective, then Woolf's prose disperses such a masculine point of view by providing a multiplicity of points of view. The window in particular makes clear the issue of focalisation in *Mrs Dalloway*, but sits alongside the other visual frames of the novel rather than as a master perspective on reality and within narrative technique. What the three meditations in this chapter reveal is Woolf's subtle and complex representation of the problems of being a gendered subject in the field of vision, especially for women. The modern metropolis provides a number of spaces and perspectives from which to observe and be observed. Each of the visual frames in *Mrs Dalloway* plays an ambiguous role: mirrors, windows and mobile views can both empower the female gaze and turn women into objects of vision. The novel thus presents readers with a shifting field of gendered vision, and a relay of gendered looks.

¹¹⁷ Henry James's description of the house of fiction is a classic example of the novel as architectural space, but there are many other examples of houses and windows throughout literary history. As Olk argues, 'works such as *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Bleak House*, or *The House of the Seven Gables* abound with the trope of windows and houses' and 'they produce new types of observers, and experiment with modes of seeing and narrative'. Olk, *Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Vision*, p. 54. Another important example, not mentioned by Olk, is Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, in which the narrator looks down from his window to observe the world, and describes himself as 'a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking'. Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Novels: Mr Norris Changes Trains and Goodbye to Berlin* (Vintage: London, 1999), p. 243.

¹¹⁸ Woolf, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 92.

Chapter 2

Veiling, Fabricating, Moving: Negotiations of Gender in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

In *Orlando* fabric, fabrication, writing, sexuality, and clothing are all interwoven.

– Christy L. Burns, 'Re-dressing Feminist Identities'

When we move into the modern world, we come upon indications that the individual identity has become newly important and newly problematic, and that the identification of the individual's body is a subject of large cultural concern.

– Peter Brooks, *Body Work*

Introduction: Re-dressing Clarissa's Party

Around the time that she published *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf wrote a series of short character sketches which formed a kind of after-life to the novel, centring on Clarissa's party.¹ The significance of the party lies in the fact that, as Stella McNichol argues in strongly visual terms, it is 'able to bring into *sharp focus* something which in the *blur* of everyday life might easily escape. Under its *glare* and because of its stresses people become vulnerable'.² These stories are also illustrations of what Woolf refers to, in a diary entry in April 1925, as 'party consciousness' and 'frock consciousness', describing the important links between clothing, fashion and femininity.³ The most developed of these stories is 'The New Dress' (1927), a sketch that emphasises the anxieties around a woman's dress through that recurrent visual frame in Woolf's writing: the looking-glass.⁴ The mirror appears so frequently in the text that

¹ Stella McNichol writes in the introduction to her edited collection of some of these stories: 'The novel comes to an end; the party goes on'. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway's Party: A Short Story Sequence*, ed. Stella McNichol (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 9.

² McNichol, 'Introduction' *Mrs Dalloway's Party*, p. 9 (emphasis added).

³ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, ed. Anne Oliver Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1980), p. 12. Woolf also makes clear in her diary that she had a rather ambivalent attitude towards clothing. At one point, for example, Woolf refers to what she calls her 'clothes complex', which arises when she is 'asked out' for some social occasion (p. 81). Similarly, in 'A Sketch of the Past', Woolf confesses that when she was 'six or seven perhaps, I got into the habit of looking at m face in the glass', but that her 'looking-glass shame has lasted all my life'. She continues: 'Everything to do with dress – to be fitted, to come into a room wearing a new dress – still frightens me; at least makes me shy, self-conscious, uncomfortable'. Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', p. 81.

⁴ Two other stories are worth noting briefly here. In 'The Introduction', published posthumously in 1973, Lily Everit is troubled by feeling self-consciously a woman, thanks not only to 'the little chivalries and respects of

the story takes on the qualities of a kaleidoscope or hall of mirrors, as images are reflected and refracted constantly. The sketch centres on Mabel Waring's painful self-consciousness concerning her new dress as she becomes aware of her appearance through both the gaze of others and her reflection in a looking-glass during Clarissa's party. Mabel has her first 'serious suspicion that something was wrong' with her dress when her attention is drawn to 'all the appliances for tidying and improving hair, complexion, clothes' upon first arriving at Clarissa's house. Upstairs things get worse as Mabel finds herself in a corner of the room where 'a looking-glass hung and looked. No! It was not *right*'.⁵ The sight of her mirror-image triggers her long-term anxiety 'of being inferior to other people' and she imagines that all of Clarissa's guests 'were thinking – "What's Mabel wearing? What a fright she looks! What a hideous new dress!"⁶ Mabel even imagines the guests' 'eyelids flickering' and then 'shutting rather tight' as they approach her, as if their eyes were cameras capturing her humiliation – the flickering like a flash-bulb and the shutting of the eyes like the closing of the lens.

The problem with Mabel's dress lies with her aim of trying to look 'original', since she believes 'she could not be fashionable'.⁷ She takes inspiration from an old 'Paris fashion book' in which she discovers dresses that appear to her 'prettier' and 'more womanly' than contemporary versions.⁸ However, it turns out that self-fashioning through clothing is a much more complex project because, once at the party, Mabel looks instead with 'horror' at how her 'pale yellow' dress is 'idiotically old-fashioned'; what had 'looked so charming in the fashion book' does not look so now on her own body and in front of Clarissa's guests. Through this experience of what Lisa Cohen describes as 'sartorial mortification', Mabel feels like 'a

the drawing-room', but also because of her dress. Both of these evoke a series of metaphors of femininity, as Lily feels that she had 'come out of her chrysalis', 'this frail and beautiful creature', 'this butterfly', in short, 'a woman'. Virginia Woolf, 'The Introduction', in *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 178-82 (p. 179). R. S. Koppen argues that the dress here is 'the visual symbol which "proclaims" one a woman' and is 'the materialisation – in fabric, frills, and colour – of [these] familiar metaphors of femininity'. R. S. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 30. Also published in 1973 is 'Ancestors', in which a middle-aged woman, Mrs Vallance, feels uncomfortable with the idea of men 'noticing women's clothes'. Furthermore, and by contrast with contemporary sartorial practice, Mrs Vallance holds up as an ideal her 'stately mother', who 'never seemed to dress differently summer or winter [...] but always looked *herself* in lace', a critique of the modern idea of self-fashioning. Virginia Woolf, 'Ancestors', in *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 175-77 (p. 176).

⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'The New Dress', in *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 164-71 (p. 164; emphasis in original).

⁶ Here, Woolf puns on Mabel's surname so that 'Waring' can be heard as 'wearing'. Although it might be a bit of a stretch, there is also a hint of hesitation in her first name as 'Mabel' is close to 'maybe'. This is a story, after all, about the anxieties of experimenting with clothing, about trying to wear a daring new dress.

⁷ Woolf, 'The New Dress', p. 164.

⁸ Woolf, 'The New Dress', pp. 164-65.

dressmaker's dummy standing there, for young people to stick pins into'.⁹ Mabel's attempt at creating a different model of femininity thus results in disappointment and disempowerment as she pictures herself as a passive and inert model on which to hang dresses for the gaze of prospective shoppers.¹⁰ Frock consciousness is here an awareness of the difficulties of sartorial self-fashioning, more specifically of the gap between fantasy (the fashion-book images) and reality (how she looks in the dress at the party). It is crucial to remember here that Woolf's story presents this problematic from Mabel's point of view and not from the perspective of those people who gaze at her. The point of view of the latter has been internalised by Mabel.

Woolf joins this 'frock consciousness' with the notion of 'party consciousness' through Mabel's thoughts about the reality/unreality of the party and of the self: 'a party makes things either much more real, or much less real, she thought'. Before Clarissa's party, Mabel had experienced 'an extraordinary bliss' in trying on her new dress, as for a brief moment 'what she had dreamed of herself was there – a beautiful woman [...] [s]uffused with light'.¹¹ However, this vision quickly vanishes once at the party and Mabel is 'woken wide awake to reality': 'she saw through everything. She saw the truth. *This* was true, this drawing-room, this self, the other false'.¹² Mabel therefore experiences the painful realisation that her identity is dependent on the opinions and looks of others; her imaginary idea of herself is confronted by how she is seen by others. As Koppen reads it, Mabel's 'projection of self is painfully exposed, turning to negative introjection'.¹³ Once again the story makes clear the difficulties of self-fashioning, this time by foregrounding the social visibility of the party: Mabel's vision of herself is placed in confrontation with how others see her.

In terms of gender, Mabel is confronted with the fact that there is, in Cohen's words, 'an exhaustingly small space dividing proper femininity from its failure'.¹⁴ The problem of femininity, as the story makes clear, is one intimately bound up with visibility: Mabel's struggle to define her womanhood is presented as the problem of being seen by others.¹⁵ In

⁹ Lisa Cohen, "'Frock Consciousness': Virginia Woolf, the Open Secret, and the Language of Fashion", *Fashion Theory*, 3.2 (1999), 149-74 (p. 152); Woolf, 'The New Dress', p. 165.

¹⁰ It is crucial to note here that the story presents this from Mabel's point of view: she sees herself (partly) through the looks of others.

¹¹ Cohen reads this image of Mabel suffused with light as 'an almost cinematically spectacular visibility'. Cohen, "'Frock Consciousness'", p. 154. As I will argue in this chapter, the influence of cinema can be seen in Woolf's rendering of Orlando's experience driving a motor-car.

¹² Woolf, 'The New Dress', p. 166 (emphasis in original).

¹³ Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Cohen, "'Frock Consciousness'", 153.

¹⁵ It is worth recalling here that both Elizabeth and Clarissa Dalloway experience a similar problem of visibility: whilst Elizabeth suffers from the problem of being all too visible (she has become aware of the fact that men are beginning to notice her and compare her with various images), Clarissa feels invisible, describing herself as 'shrivelled, aged, [and] breastless'. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 25.

fact, both the mirror image of Mabel and how she appears in the eyes of others are what is dominant in Woolf's story. As Cohen usefully phrases it, 'Woolf puts Mabel's experience of visibility on display', and '[w]e don't see Mabel so much as we see her being seen'.¹⁶ Thus, party and frock consciousness meet at the level of the visible as Mabel's attempts at self-fashioning constitute a contest for meaning within the field of vision of Clarissa's party.¹⁷ The story ends in failure with Mabel giving up on her attempts to transform herself through clothing and she leaves Clarissa's party 'wrapped [...] round and round and round, in the Chinese cloak she had worn these twenty years'.¹⁸ However, she turns her attention instead to other sources of transformation: 'She would go to the London Library tomorrow [...] she would walk down the Strand [...] She would be absolutely transformed [...] she would never give a thought to clothes again'.¹⁹

Whilst 'The New Dress' suggests the difficulties of female self-fashioning, in 1928 Woolf published *Orlando: A Biography*, a text which is by contrast playful and even gleeful about the possibilities for transforming the gendered subject through sartorial experimentation.²⁰ In the place of Mabel's failure to produce a new version of femininity through self-fashioning, *Orlando* substitutes 'a playful and performative vestimentary practice' which leads to multiple and successful forms of self-transformation through dress.²¹ As a result, the novel's protagonist becomes difficult to make sense of and read. In fact, the subject of the book mirrors the form of the text, for *Orlando* is a challenging work to classify and make sense of because it features aspects from a number of different genres, and as a result it has been described variously as an anti-novel, experimental fiction, modernist/post-modernist fiction, and fantastic (auto)biography.²² The hybrid character of the text makes sense, of course, given the fantastic and highly ambiguous narrative that Woolf constructs. This fictional and parodic

¹⁶ Cohen, "Frock Consciousness", p. 153.

¹⁷ The story also suggests that Mabel's failure is both a result of economic poverty, of 'never having money enough', and of her particular character: 'the yellow dress was a penance which she had deserved' (p. 169).

¹⁸ Woolf, 'The New Dress', p. 171.

¹⁹ Woolf, 'The New Dress', p. 170.

²⁰ After *Orlando*, Woolf continued to be exercised by the question of whether or not a person can change and whether such change involves more than a transformation of dress. In *Between the Acts* (1941), Miss la Trobe overhears someone in the audience asking "'D'you think people change? Their clothes, of course...but I mean ourselves... [...]—do we change?'" Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 108-09.

²¹ Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, p. 37.

²² Rachel Warburton, "'Nothing could be seen whole or read from start to finish": Transvestism and Imitation in *Orlando* and *Nightwood*', in *Styling Texts: Dress and Fashion in Literature*, ed. Cynthia G. Kuhn and Cindy L. Carlson (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2007), pp. 269-90 (p. 269). Pamela L. Caughie refers to *Orlando* as an example of what she refers to as 'transgenre' writing. 'Transgenre' texts reconfigure, according to Caughie, not only 'notions of gender but also of time, identity, history and the very nature of writing and reading'. Pamela L. Caughie, 'The Temporality of Modernist Life Writing in the Era of Transsexualism: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Einar Wegener's *Man into Woman*', *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*, 59.3 (2013), 501-25 (p. 502).

biography, which draws on elements from Woolf's life, spans roughly four centuries, from the Elizabethan age to the 1920s. The eponymous hero not only lives throughout this period (aging almost imperceptibly) but changes sex during his time as ambassador to Charles II in Constantinople, which leads to a blurring of the boundary between male and female from that point onwards.²³ By having her protagonist change sex as an adult, Woolf is able to emphasise the conventions of sex and gender in a more striking manner, as what is in reality learned unconsciously by infants is here learned more self-consciously by the grown-up Orlando. In particular, Orlando is forced to conform to conventions of feminine dress when she returns to England, and Woolf has great fun with Orlando's missteps in learning how an English lady should dress and behave. However, Orlando soon discovers the pleasures of cross-dressing as a way of regaining those privileges accorded to men that she has lost in becoming a woman, and as a result the boundary between the body and clothing is also blurred. The tension between constraint and rebellion runs throughout the text as Orlando attempts to negotiate the conventions of the gendered visual field. Whilst in the eighteenth-century Orlando responds to the restrictions placed on women's mobility in the public sphere by cross-dressing as a man, in the Victorian age she submits to the severe sartorial constraints placed upon women, willingly adopting the imprisoning crinoline dress. However, things change once again in the twentieth-century as Orlando is given new freedoms as a woman and so she becomes a mobile observer of modern life, traveling through London on her own, visiting department stores and racing through the streets in a motor-car. Hence, by having her protagonist live through this long period of time, Woolf is able to show both the restrictions on self-fashioning within the gendered visual field as well as the possibilities for change. *Orlando* therefore features a much broader 'relay of looks' than *Mrs Dalloway*, and the long historical sweep of the text fits well alongside Crary's analysis of the historical construction of vision as Orlando's status as an 'observer' changes according to the different configurations of 'the body and the operation of social power'.²⁴

As this brief overview makes clear, *Orlando* is a very playful and fantastic text, but its exploration of the relationship between gender and the visual is nevertheless profound and

²³ Julia Briggs observes that *Orlando*'s spatial and temporal scope aligns the text with cinematic representations of time and space, which Woolf herself had commented on in her essay on cinema: 'The extensive view that took in both Tower Bridge and Constantinople foreshortened space, and would ultimately foreshorten time. As she had foreseen in her 1926 essay on "Cinema", "The past could be unrolled, distances could be annihilated" in celebrating the transcendent powers of love and the imagination'. Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 190.

²⁴ Anne Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(l): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition', *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (May 1991), 419-431 (p. 422); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 3.

provocative.²⁵ Rachel Bowlby calls the novel a ‘what if’ text and ‘a *serious fantasy* which imagines what femininity (or, for that matter, another masculinity) might be in quite different conditions’.²⁶ Whilst in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf made use of multiple perspectives and free indirect discourse to reveal the gendered visual field as characterised by tensions and points of negotiation, in *Orlando* she turns instead to fantasy and humour in order to better illuminate the historical construction of gendered subjectivity and visibility, and to open up a space in which to reimagine the relationship between them. *Orlando* playfully reimagines what it might mean to be a gendered subject by blurring a number of boundaries, as noted above: boundaries between male and female, clothing and the body, and between various literary genres. That clothing stands out as the central image of this boundary-blurring makes sense because, as Elizabeth Wilson observes, clothing ‘marks an unclear boundary ambiguously, and unclear boundaries disturb us’.²⁷ *Orlando* plays with such ambiguity by undermining the idea of a stable connection between sartorial signifiers and a supposedly natural sex, so that Orlando’s clothes are never a clear indication of the sexed body underneath. As a consequence of this ambiguity, the idea of a controlling and scopophilic gaze is undermined because the visual legibility of Orlando’s gender is put into doubt. For Orlando, though, this ambiguity is a source of empowerment, for by taking advantage of certain sartorial conventions she can transform herself into an active observer. Hence, identity appears as akin to a costume, something to be fabricated, which both frustrates the gaze of others and empowers the wearer.

Woolf uses a number of literary and extra-literary strategies in order to foreground the complicated relationships between gender, sex and visibility in *Orlando*. Firstly, the narrator offers a number of contradictory accounts of Orlando’s life, as well as multiple and conflicting theories of the relationship between clothing and the body, with the result that a stable and

²⁵ For a useful account of the fantastic, see Lucie Armitz’s *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Arnold, 1996). Relevant for this chapter is Armitz’s remark that the ‘individual form of the metamorphic body stands at the centre of the transforming dimensions of fantasy fictions’ (p. 2). She also notes that, because it deals with the unseen and the unsaid, that which has been silenced or made invisible, fantasy is ‘well equipped to represent subversive elements in society’ (p. 2). Armitz takes up Todorov’s distinction between fantasy as genre and fantasy as an anti-generic mode to argue for the continued critical importance of the fantastic. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975). Although I do not engage with a reading of *Orlando* in terms of the fantastic, I think that Woolf’s text would fit Todorov’s second category of the fantastic because of the way it blurs the boundaries between different genres, resisting and subverting each one.

²⁶ Rachel Bowlby, ‘Introduction’, in Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, ed. Rachel Bowlby (London: Oxford, 1998), pp. xii–xlvi (p. xlvii; emphasis added). Jacqueline Rose notes that ‘Modernist literary writing could certainly demonstrate, alongside the syntactic and narrative shifts for which it is best known, oscillations in the domain of sexuality, a type of marking of the sexual proprieties on which the politer world of nineteenth-century realist fiction had been based’. Rose also notes the ‘trouble’ and the ‘joy’ of reading Balzac’s *Sarrasine* because of the ‘indecipherable sexuality’ of the castrato character. Jacqueline Rose, ‘Sexuality in the Field of Vision’, in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 225–33 (p. 229).

²⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), p. 2.

consistent picture of Orlando is never achieved. Furthermore, a number of ellipses punctuate the narrative so that the text is one with significant gaps in it, open for interpretation. Secondly, the narrator uses a variety of pronouns to refer to Orlando with the result that Orlando's sex becomes untethered from a stable form of signification and s/he becomes an ambiguous linguistic object. Unlike *Mrs Dalloway*, then, *Orlando* features a more self-conscious and more clearly unreliable narrator, who records things that real biographers could never witness or know, who on occasion neglects obviously important matters, and who offers a contradictory account of Orlando's life. The text thus becomes a critique of biography, of the desire and the ability to record a life, as Orlando troubles the narrator's (and by extension the reader's) omniscient gaze through the ambiguities of the gendered, clothed body. Lastly, although the book contains a number of illustrations used as evidence of Orlando's appearance, these are in fact staged photographs of Vita Sackville-West and reproductions of paintings of her ancestors, thus blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, and problematizing the notion of portraiture. Orlando's identity is thus impossible to pin down, visually and textually, as s/he appears in multiple forms.²⁸ In consequence, Woolf's representation of Orlando as hybrid disrupts attempts to objectify her, to subject her to a scopophilic, male gaze, and to control her.²⁹

From the descriptions above, it should be clear that *Orlando* is a distinctively modern and modernist text, through its inclusion of photographs, its playfulness with respect to various boundaries – sexual, historical, visual and literary – and in its portrayal of gendered subjectivity as fabricated.³⁰ The most obvious indication of this lies in its representation of twentieth-century London, the context in which the text itself was written. This is a world in which technology and new social forms (most obviously, through modern capitalism) have transformed or altered many of the conventions relating to both gender and visuality, including the notion of the separation of the spheres, consumption of goods, transport and

²⁸ As Rachel Bowlby observes, the very name Orlando is ambiguous, containing both 'or' and 'and', thereby suggesting that Orlando is both a liminal and a hybrid figure: Orlando can be read as male and/or female, masculine and/or feminine. Rachel Bowlby, 'Orlando's Vacillation', in *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 43-53 (p. 44).

²⁹ In a wider sense, Orlando's ambiguous identity could be used as an example which undermines those discourses which attempt either to turn gendered bodies into passive spectacles or to control them through a quasi-scientific gaze. Relevant here are those nineteenth-century discourses, such as phrenology, which constituted an attempt to categorise people from scientifically observable physical distinctions.

³⁰ *Orlando* is both aesthetically modernist through, for example, its playful satirising of the biography genre and historically modern because it registers many of the enormous changes brought about in modernity, such as the development of motorised vehicles and the rise of the department store. Marshall Berman brings these two categories together in his classic study *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, referring to his book as 'a study in the dialectics of modernization and modernism'. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 16. Berman conceptualises modernism as an aesthetic response to the 'world-historical processes' that take place in the modern period (p. 16).

communication, and clothing and fashion. Orlando's encounters with electrical lighting, department stores and motorised vehicles all emphasise the growing significance of technology within modern society, and she experiences these and other upheavals of modernity in a characteristically modern manner as a feeling of shock.³¹ In such a chaotic environment, Orlando's identity becomes fragmented by the modern sense of speed, the increasing number of points of view from which to observe and be observed, and the new possibilities for transforming the self, such as those of modern consumerism. Orlando's shifting and ambiguous identity, and the difficulties of seeing and reading him/her, are thus emblematic of the upheavals of modern life and of what Crary describes as a 'continually shifting field'.³²

As in the previous chapter, I trace a 'relay of looks' through *Orlando* in order to emphasise the point that Woolf represents the gendered field of vision as shifting and something to be negotiated – not a monolithic system that simply and only oppresses women. There are, however, a number of differences between this and the last chapter. As already noted *Orlando* uses fantasy to reimagine gendered subjectivity and takes a longer historical view in order to stress the historical construction of gender and visibility. Another significant difference concerns one of the nodes in my relay of looks: where the previous chapter considered the female gaze from the point of view of an omnibus, this chapter looks instead at Orlando's experience of driving a motor-car. Whilst both vehicles empower the female subject's mobility and gaze, the latter introduces a greater degree of individual freedom because the driver is in control of the speed and the destination. Orlando's motoring thus functions as an extension of her free movement in the eighteenth century, though she no longer has to cross-dress. The other significant and new node in the relay, already noted, is *Orlando*'s frequent concern with clothing and fashion. Orlando's changing costume affects both how she is observed and what she is able to observe because it alters her visibility and mobility. Whilst her cross-dressing is clearly the high-point of this aspect of the text, I consider other examples of sartorial practice in the text which complicate the idea of self-fashioning through clothing, such as the restrictive conventions of dress in the Victorian period. My relay of looks also takes into consideration the department store once again, though here it plays a more important role and is linked with the idea of fabricating a new self.³³ However, whilst the department store empowers the female

³¹ The experience of shock in modernity is central to the works of both Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin. See, for example, Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 174-85; Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 152-96.

³² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

³³ As Wilson observes, fashion is 'essential to the world of modernity, the world of spectacle and mass-communication', and of course to the world of consumption, such as through the department-store. As she goes

gaze and female mobility, its inducement to cultivate an individual style through the purchase of clothes and accessories introduces dangers associated with consumerism, such as the objectification and commodification of the body, and the strengthening of imaginary identifications between consumers and the idealised images used to sell commodities.

By focusing on clothing, the department store, and the motor-car, this chapter constructs a relay of looks similar to the previous chapter, emphasising the shifting and historically constructed character of gendered subjectivity and visibility. The central question that animates this chapter, however, centres on whether or not Woolf's turn to fantasy and a broader sweep of historical time suggests ways of conceiving the relationship between gender and the visual in more pluralistic and open ways, such that visibility is not so much a trap as a field which offers room for experimentation. Mabel's experience in 'The New Dress' focuses on her failure to negotiate the gendered visual field as her experiment in sartorial self-fashioning leads her to internalise what she perceives as the judging stares of Clarissa's party guests so that she sees herself as a passive mannequin. *Orlando's* serious fantasy appears to promise a more successful negotiation of gender by exploiting ambiguities of dress, sex and perspective.

Fashioning Orlando's Ambiguous Body

Orlando is quickly established in the text as both a conventionally active man and as a passive object to be looked at. Born in the time of Elizabeth I and living on a grand estate, Orlando first appears in an attic 'slicing at the head of a Moor' (p. 13).³⁴ Supplementing this image of aggressive and active masculinity is an account of his patriarchal lineage, as the narrator recounts that Orlando's 'fathers' had all been accomplished warriors, striking 'many heads of many colours off many shoulders' (p. 13). The narrator then changes tack and spends considerable time describing Orlando's bodily appearance, thus making him into a passive image. After describing him as an agent acting upon the world, Orlando is then scrutinised by the narrator as a set of disassembled body parts: red cheeks 'covered with peach down', 'slightly drawn back' lips and teeth of 'exquisite and almond whiteness', and eyes that are like

on to note, fashion is not only experienced as 'a form of bondage' and a 'compulsory way of falsely expressing an individuality that by its very gesture (in copying others) cancels itself out', but also as a way of 'successfully [expressing] the individual'. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p. 12. Orlando herself appears to make the link between clothing, the department-store and the fabrication of the self, whilst riding an elevator in a department-store. She thinks to herself that '[t]he very fabric of life now [...] is magic'. Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 286.

³⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 13. All further references are given parenthetically in the text.

‘drowned violets’ (p. 15). As a result of this, Orlando’s subjectivity is fragmented, fetishized and aestheticized, turned into a beautiful set of images to be admired by readers.³⁵

This tension between Orlando as active agent and as passive image is repeated when Queen Elizabeth visits Orlando’s home, for like the narrator, she too reduces Orlando to a group of disembodied parts through her penetrating and desirous gaze: ‘Eyes, mouth, nose, breast, hips, hands – she ran them over; her lips twitched visibly as she looked’ (p. 24). The Queen’s gaze also has an omnipresent and surveillance-like quality as her eyes are said to be ‘always [...] wide open’ (p. 22).³⁶ As Orlando stands before the Queen ‘she [flashes] her yellow hawk’s eyes upon him as if she would pierce his soul’, also emphasising the violent aspect of her disembodying gaze (p. 24). Of all his body parts, it is Orlando’s legs which are given the most attention, as the Queen gazes fetishistically at ‘a pair of the finest legs that a young nobleman has ever stood upright upon’ (p. 22). In a text which is frequently concerned with mobility, it is significant that it is Orlando’s legs which are focused on here and turned into objects of visual pleasure.³⁷ Under the Queen’s intense stare, Orlando blushes ‘a damask rose’ colour, but this too is used further to reduce him to his appearance, for this act of blushing ‘became him’ (p. 24). Furthermore, the Queen joins the narrator in turning Orlando into a kind of text, as she too ‘read[s] him like a page’ (p. 24).³⁸ In contrast with this treatment of Orlando as a passive visual object lies his status as an active observer and agent, seen most clearly in the Queen’s promotion of Orlando to the position of ‘Treasurer’. However, she continues to treat him as an object for her visual enjoyment, adorning him with rings, chains, and a ‘jewelled order of the Garter’ tied around his knee (p. 24). Another example makes clear which of these roles is the more important: whilst Orlando is desirous of sailing ‘for the Polish wars’ in order to follow in the footsteps of his warrior-fathers, the Queen recalls him when she realises that she may lose her beautiful lover, for ‘how could she bear to think of that tender flesh torn and that curly head rolled in the dust? She kept him with her’ (p. 24). So she keeps Orlando close by her side, promising him ‘a splendid career’, lands and houses, despite the fact that he is ‘suffocated from [her] embrace’ (p. 25).

³⁵ As noted in the previous chapter, Woolf discusses the construction of masculinity through clothing and adornment in ‘Three Guineas’.

³⁶ Though, interestingly, her role as active spectator or bearer of the gaze is undercut by the qualification ‘if the waxworks at the Abbey are to be trusted’ (p. 22). Whilst Queen Elizabeth is thus an active looker, the reference to her wax figure turns her into an object of the gaze of others.

³⁷ As I will show later on, Orlando’s legs are again scrutinised as objects of visual pleasure, though on this latter occasion it is after Orlando has become a woman. Shortly after this, Orlando’s mobility is curtailed due to the restrictions placed on women’s mobility within the eighteenth-century city.

³⁸ This may well be a play on the meaning of the word ‘page’ as Orlando becomes a kind of page-boy for the Queen.

Whilst Orlando is frequently turned into an object of visual pleasure, there are also hints early on that his body is one that troubles the gaze of others and their picture of him. On one occasion, the Queen's image of Orlando comes undone through a minor act of infidelity, as she catches him 'kissing a girl'. Fittingly, she observes this act in a mirror, this visual frame revealing something about Orlando that she fails to see in her attempts to turn him into an image of her desire. This treacherous image shatters her belief in her (visual) hold over Orlando and so she appropriately shatters the mirror with her 'golden-hilted sword', a violent act of (imaginary) penetration (p. 26).³⁹ A more troubling example of Orlando's enigmatic body-image occurs at the very beginning of the book, in an ambiguous first sentence which puts the legibility of Orlando's body into doubt, and hence questions the reliability of vision with respect to clothing: 'He – for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it' (p. 13). Whilst the narrator appears to dismiss doubt about Orlando's sex, the problem of clothing as a signifier of the body is raised and thus reintroduces doubt. On this reading, the 'it' refers to Orlando's sex, of which there could be no doubt. Clothing therefore merely and temporarily disguises this indisputable fact about the body, the sex of which is, in theory at least, determinable by unveiling it and subjecting it to an examining gaze.

A different reading of this ambiguous passage attributes this 'it' not to the sex of Orlando but to the notion that 'there could be no doubt' about his sex. What is disguised in this case is not the body but doubt about what kind of a body it is, suggesting therefore that there are grounds to be sceptical about determining Orlando's sex.⁴⁰ This opening sentence suggests that there are problems with both linguistic and visual determination of a person's sex. Along these lines, Bowlby argues that *Orlando* 'withholds' the obviousness of what Sigmund Freud refers to as the 'unhesitating certainty' with which most people feel about determining the sex of someone upon first seeing them.⁴¹ This chapter follows Bowlby's point in arguing that *Orlando* indeed puts considerable pressure on our 'unhesitating certainty' about reading a person's sex from their clothing, and more generally from their performance of gender. Such certainty reduces the heterogeneous experiences of both the body and sartorial practice to a

³⁹ This violent stabbing of Orlando's reflected image extends the Queen's earlier penetrating, hawk-like gaze.

⁴⁰ The sentence also offers a contradictory view of fashion, for if fashions are conventional forms of dress (at least some people understand what a given fashion looks like) then it appears contradictory to say that the fashion of the time disguised Orlando's sex yet there is no doubt of his sex.

⁴¹ Freud writes: 'When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is "male of female?" and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty.' Sigmund Freud, 'Femininity', in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), pp. 139-67 (p. 141). See Bowlby, 'Orlando's Vacillation', p. 44.

simplistic and sometimes violent binary economy of two sexes and their straightforward, sartorial practices.⁴² As will become clear by the end of this chapter, Orlando's ambiguous identity and changing sartorial practices allow him/her to be read as a "third sex", which, as Marjorie Garber argues, 'questions binary thinking and introduces crisis'.⁴³ Throughout the text, Orlando not only puts into question binary notions of identity, but also makes apparent the limits and limitations of a 'gender-seeking vision'. In addition, and as the opening sentence already makes clear, there is even doubt about the narrator's biography as the first word of the text – 'He' – is shown to be an enigma. *Orlando* thus begins with doubt, with a crisis, about gendered identity and its relationship to the visual.

Given this initial presentation of Orlando as an enigma, some readers might expect, or at least desire, an eventual unveiling of this mysterious figure and an exposure of the 'truth'. Roland Barthes, for example, likens classical realist narrative to striptease, thereby linking structures of looking, gender and literary narrative.⁴⁴ Peter Brooks explains:

Barthes' model of narrative as striptease refers to the "classic" (or "readable") text which works toward a progressive solution of preliminary enigmas, toward a full predication of the narrative "sentence," toward a plenitude of meaning. The desire to reach the end is the desire to see "truth" unveiled. The body of the object of desire is the focal point of a fascinated attention.⁴⁵

This idea of narrative striptease or narrative unveiling is worth considering when thinking about the relationship between structures of looking, gender, and narrative technique in *Orlando*, for the text is clearly driven in part by a desire to unveil the ambiguous truth, life, and body of Orlando. However, Woolf's text is also transparently not what Barthes would consider a realist or 'readable' text as it not only takes aspects from a variety of genres (including non-realist genres such as fantasy) but also refuses or fails to solve the riddle of Orlando's ambiguous identity by the close of the narrative. *Orlando* thus mobilises the desire for a plenitude of meaning and the solving of enigmas, but ultimately frustrates readers by withholding the final

⁴² Whilst the violence of such an economy is not explicit in *Orlando*, in the following chapter I will examine a case of very explicit and extreme violence performed on the body in Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*. Evelyn is surgically transformed into a woman against his will and then subjected to a variety of bodily and psychic violations which are referred to as lessons in femininity.

⁴³ Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 11.

⁴⁴ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975). Writing of classical narrative (as found in the writings of Zola, Dickens and Tolstoy), Barthes says that 'we do not read everything with the same intensity of reading [...] our very avidity for knowledge impels us to skim or to skip certain passages (anticipated as "boring") in order to get more quickly to the warmer parts of the anecdote', and in doing so 'we resemble a spectator in a nightclub who climbs onto the stage and speeds up the dancer's striptease, tearing off her clothing' (pp. 10-11).

⁴⁵ Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 19.

unveiling which would satisfy this readerly desire.⁴⁶ From the outset, Orlando's identity is presented in terms of veils and secrets, and throughout the narrative Orlando is subject to various processes of veiling and unveiling, by turns exciting and frustrating the reader's gaze. As I will show, many crucial scenes from Orlando's life are teased in this way, most notably Orlando's sex-change: the narrator declares that it would be better if 'we could see nothing' of this episode and yet only a couple of pages later describes how the naked and newly female Orlando looks 'more ravishing' than any other human being 'since the world began' (pp. 129, 132). The attention paid to clothing not only forms part of the text's frustrating of the desire for an unveiling of the truth, but also creates a literary gaze which is fetishistic, finding an alternative pleasure in the articles of veiling. Brooks, indeed, observes that this often occurs in literary texts, arguing that whilst the body is supposedly the central object in many narratives, the literary gaze often becomes 'arrested and transfixed by articles of clothing, accessories, bodily details, almost in the manner of the fetishist'.⁴⁷ Orlando is often represented in terms of his/her dress, and since his/her many costumes are not a reliable source of information about his/her identity (as the opening sentence paradoxically makes clear), the text appears to offer alternative pleasures for readers, such as this fetishistic enjoyment which Brooks discusses above. In a wider sense, this playing with veils, truth and the body is part of Woolf's parodying of the biographical literary form, as the idea of a central 'truth' to Orlando's identity is undermined by the fact that s/he appears only as a series of layers. As Christy L. Burns observes:

Woolf plays on a twentieth-century conception of truth, derived from the Greek notion of *alethea*, unveiling. In her novel truth is destabilized and turns into parody through an emphasis on period fashions, cross-dressing, and undressing of "essential" bodies.⁴⁸

An important consequence of this conception of truth and identity as composed of an endless series of layers is that oppressive structures of looking, such as ones that position woman as a passive object of the male gaze, are challenged. Woolf in a sense shows that the male gaze depends upon a disavowal of the complex layering of subjectivity: it must transform subjectivity into a single surface that signifies feminine desirability for a heterosexual masculine eroticism. By playing with but not adhering to the realist mode of an unveiling of

⁴⁶ In her essay 'Modern Fiction', Woolf distances herself from what she describes as realist or materialist writers and positions her own writing as modern. In part, this separation concerns how literary texts represent aspects of reality and what they offer readers, particularly in terms of the way plots unveil the truth.

⁴⁷ Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Christy L. Burns, 'Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions Between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40.3 (1994), 342-364 (p. 343).

truth, Woolf creates a text which gestures beyond the pleasures of narrative striptease by revelling in the pleasures of ambiguity and literary fetishism.

Orlando as a Newly Born Woman⁴⁹

One of the most significant scenes in which Woolf plays with veiling and unveiling occurs when the narrator struggles with how to represent Orlando's transformation into a woman during the latter's time in Constantinople.⁵⁰ Although this scene constitutes a kind of narrative climax because Orlando's body is finally stripped of its ambiguous layers of fabric to reveal the body of a woman, the narrator is at times uneasy about revealing the fact of this metamorphosis and therefore attempts to veil Orlando's newly-sexed and temporarily naked body from the reader's gaze. There is thus a tension between solving the enigma of Orlando's sex by describing the body without clothing and veiling this troubling body in the name of modesty. As a result of the narrator's indecision, this combination of veiling and unveiling mobilises excitement, anticipation and frustration, and an erotic gap thus opens up between clothing and the body.⁵¹ The narrator's anxiety is in marked contrast with Orlando's own lack of awareness of her new body, and it is only when she returns to England that she becomes self-consciously feminine. For now, though, what is important to note is that Orlando's strangely gender-mobile body troubles the visual and linguistic gaze of the narrator as he struggles with letting readers see it and with naming it, moving between different pronouns in a confusing way.

The narrator begins his account of Orlando's metamorphosis by stating his desire to hide something – it is not clear initially what he wants to conceal – from the reader: '*obscurity descends*, and would indeed that it were deeper! Would, we almost have it in our hearts to exclaim, that it were so deep that we could *see nothing* whatever through its opacity!' (pp. 128-29; emphasis added). Furthermore, the narrator confesses that he would rather end his account here, 'take the pen and write Finis', but 'Truth, Candour, and Honesty', the 'austere gods' who watch over the biographer, demand the truth (p. 129). However, he adds that there are three ladies, of Purity, Chastity and Modesty, who will aid him in keeping hidden this troubling

⁴⁹ Here, I borrow the title from Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément's *The Newly Born Woman*, a text which is also concerned with unveiling woman of all the various layers which have been placed upon her. Also like *Orlando*, this work questions the binary opposition of male/female and explores some of the ways in which subjectivity is multiple and constructed from a series of differences.

⁵⁰ Briggs observes that Constantinople is an appropriate city for Orlando's sex-change to take place in because it is 'a fantasy city on the threshold of Asia, outside European history and tradition, a city looking in two directions at once, a city of dualities'. Briggs, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 200.

⁵¹ As Barthes asks, 'Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the garment gapes?*' Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 9 (emphasis in original).

matter. They sing that the truth should be ‘unknown’, not ‘flaunt[ed] in the brutal gaze of the sun’, and they ‘make as if to cover Orlando with their draperies’ (p. 131). But despite their attempts to help the narrator to veil the truth, they cannot prevent this moment of revelation and so they leave for lands in which reside people who ‘prefer to see not; desire to know not’ (p. 132). After much prevaricating, the narrator finally reveals that Orlando ‘stood upright in complete nakedness before us’, and with trumpets pealing ‘Truth! Truth! Truth!’ the narrator at last confesses, paradoxically, that ‘he was a woman’ (p. 132).⁵²

In attempting to cover Orlando’s naked body, and thus conceal the fact that *he* is now a *she*, the narrator actually arouses more curiosity, for, as Brooks writes, ‘[w]hen the body becomes more secret, hidden, covered, it becomes all the more intensely the object of curiosity’.⁵³ Because the narrator does not reveal the source of his anxiety immediately but instead alludes to something shameful, dark and too shocking to gaze on, dramatizing his account through the image of a battle between the forces of truth and those of purity, chastity and modesty, the reader’s desire to discover what has happened to Orlando is forcefully incited. This then functions as another instance of a fetishistic literary gaze which, as Kathryn Banks and Joseph Harris explain, ‘attaches more importance to the means (the discarding of the clothing) than to the end (the final moment of nakedness)’.⁵⁴ The narrator cannot simply describe Orlando’s naked body but must repeatedly attempt to veil it: whilst he admits that ‘[n]o human being [...] ever looked more ravishing’, the realisation that Orlando combines ‘the strength of a man’ with ‘a woman’s grace’ appears to unsettle, for ‘Chastity, Purity, and Modesty’ return to throw ‘a garment like a towel at the naked form’ (pp. 132-33). But even these supposedly pure ladies reveal a contradictory desire to spy on Orlando as, ‘inspired, no doubt, by Curiosity’, they ‘peeped in at the door’ to catch a glimpse of this unsettling yet clearly exciting body. The towel thrown at Orlando misses ‘by several inches’, but whilst the narrator displays much unease about this naked form, Orlando seems calm and unsurprised: in marked contrast with Clarissa Dalloway before her mirror, ‘Orlando looked himself up and down in a

⁵² Maggie Humm discusses the presentation of Orlando’s naked body for the spectator in the filmic adaptation of *Orlando* by Sally Potter. Discussing the sex-transformation scene in which we see Orlando standing naked before the camera, Humm argues that by having Tilda Swinton (as Orlando) face the camera and address the audience directly, the spectator’s (male) gaze is doubled. This then ‘sensitises us as spectators to the activity of gazing’. This doubling of vision is, she argues, ‘a metonymy of the doubling of gender’. Hence, Orlando is both in control of the gaze and an object to be looked at. See Maggie Humm, ‘Postmodernism and *Orlando*’, in *Feminism and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 142-78 (p. 165).

⁵³ Peter Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Kathryn Banks and Joseph Harris, ‘Introduction,’ in *Exposure: Revealing Bodies, Unveiling Representations*, ed. by Kathryn Banks and Joseph Harris (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 9-22 (p. 12).

long looking-glass, without showing any signs of discomposure' (p. 133).⁵⁵ At this stage, Orlando is seemingly unaware of how this change of sex will alter both how she looks and how she is looked at.

The narrator also struggles with how to refer to Orlando linguistically, switching pronouns at one point:

Orlando had become a woman [...] But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as *he* had been. The change of sex, though it altered *their* future, did nothing whatever to alter *their* identity. *Their* faces remained, as *their* portraits prove, practically the same. *His* memory – but in future we must, for convention's sake, say "*her*" for "*his*", and "*she*" for "*he*" – *her* memory then, went back through all the events of *her* past life without encountering any obstacle. (p. 133; emphasis added)

In this passage, the narrator here comes unstuck in language in the face of Orlando's surreally mobile body. If the opening sentence foregrounded the difficulties of identifying Orlando's sex because of the ambiguity of clothing, then the sex-change complicates matters further by opening up the question of how to refer to bodies which change sex. Given that Orlando's face apparently does not change as a result of the metamorphosis, it therefore becomes more difficult to identify Orlando from his/her appearance. In response to this confusing situation, the narrator explains that '[m]any people' have been 'at great pains to prove' either that 'Orlando had always been a woman' or that 'Orlando is at this moment a man' (pp. 133-34). However, he himself refuses to weigh in on the matter and defers to 'biologists and psychologists [to] determine' this problem of sex. For him, there is simply a clear boundary separating Orlando the man, from birth 'till the age of thirty', and Orlando the woman, from the latter age onwards (p. 134). Given the text's frequent boundary-crossing and blurring of lines, this statement is highly unsatisfactory in its reductive simplicity.⁵⁶ Not only does the sex-change problematize the binary opposition of sexed bodies, but, as Bowlby points out, Orlando's very name refuses binary systems in its combining of the words 'or' and 'and'.⁵⁷ Ambiguity lies at the very heart of Orlando's identity and so the narrator's attempt to explain it away disavows this slipperiness.

⁵⁵ In the following two chapters, I will show how mirrors almost always unsettle in Carter's fiction because they appear to unravel the (perhaps illusory) unity and stability of the self.

⁵⁶ A humorous example of the problem of boundaries occurs in the transition between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the turn of the century, Orlando notes both a clock striking midnight and a deterioration of the weather. As she hears each stroke, more and more clouds gather until London becomes quite dark. 'With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of clouds cover the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun' (p. 216).

⁵⁷ See Bowlby's discussion in 'Orlando's Vacillation', pp. 43-53.

Orlando as a Newly Dressed Woman: Sartorial Mobility and Immobility

This tension between Orlando's ambiguous, mobile identity and the narrator's attempts to contain it is mirrored by Orlando's experiences of clothing, for, upon returning to England, she finds herself having to negotiate the conventions and restrictions placed on female dress and behaviour. After spending some time with a group of gipsies, Orlando decides to return home to England and so discards her 'Turkish trousers' and adopts 'a complete outfit of such clothes as women then wore' (p. 147).⁵⁸ The travelling gipsies are not strongly differentiated according to gender, for 'except in one or two important particulars' the gipsy women 'differ very little from the gipsy men' (p. 147). Sailing back to England aboard the '*Enamoured Lady*', Orlando joins a much more gender-differentiated society, as she is quickly made aware. Foregrounding the importance of fabric for the fabrication of a female self, Orlando notes that it was 'not until she felt the coil of skirts about her legs and the Captain offered [...] to have an awning spread for her on deck, that she realized with a start the penalties and privileges of her position' (p. 147).⁵⁹ One of the first 'penalties' that occurs to her concerns the way that such clothes weigh down her body, thus hampering her spontaneous free movement: "these skirts are plaguey things to have about one's heels. [...] Could I, however, leap overboard and swim in clothes like these? No!" This then leads to the thought that she must, therefore, depend upon 'the protection of a blue-jacket,' in other words a man (p. 148). Later, her thoughts turn to the 'most tedious discipline' that is required in order to maintain her feminine appearance, including hairdressing, washing, powdering, lacing and, significantly, 'looking in the looking-glass', which will take 'another hour' of her time (p. 150).⁶⁰ Dressed in conventionally feminine attire, then, Orlando begins to become self-conscious about her femininity as something constructed and in constant need of maintenance, as well as how it restricts her mobility. This encounter with the conventions placed on feminine attire introduces Orlando to dress as a 'symbolic system', in which clothes 'interpellate and discipline', and signify 'the place of individual bodies in social, economic, or sexual orders'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Orlando's wearing of Turkish trousers is suggestive of women's dress reform and a number of women began wearing trousers of various kinds during the early decades of the twentieth-century, something which Woolf may well be alluding to here. The harem style trousers, or pants, were made famous by Paul Poiret in the second decade of the twentieth-century.

⁵⁹ As Briggs argues, Orlando's sex-change and her apprenticeship in femininity alludes to the idea that 'all women begin their imaginative lives, if not as men, then at least as unconscious of their gender, and have to learn to think of themselves as women'. Briggs, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 202.

⁶⁰ Here, the function and status of the looking-glass has changed from the earlier scene in which Orlando gazed at her naked and newly transformed body. Now it has become part of the machinery of feminine construction and maintenance.

⁶¹ Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, p. 1. Orlando also reflects here on her earlier attitude towards the appearance of women and how her viewpoint has changed now that she is a woman. 'She

Exasperated at the thought of what it will take to perform and conform to her femininity, Orlando tosses her foot ‘impatiently, and shows an inch or two of calf’. The exposure of what should be veiled is spotted by a sailor high above her on the mast, who voyeuristically peeps down at her. The shock he experiences is so violent that he ‘missed his footing and only saved himself by the skin of his teeth’ (p. 151).⁶² Like the Queen’s fetishisation of Orlando’s body parts earlier in the text, the sailor focuses his desiring gaze on Orlando’s legs. This time, however, Orlando learns that as a woman her body is dangerously evocative. Orlando is now subject to new codes of appearance and dress, and her body must be concealed so as not to excite the male gaze. However, precisely because the female body must be veiled, it is turned into a private and exciting source of fascination.

Despite the fact that she is forced to learn the conventions of feminine appearance, it quickly becomes apparent that Orlando is neither solely a man nor solely a woman, but an ontologically in-between being. Criticising both men and women for the particular configuration of gender relations within English society (“‘what fools they [men] make of us – what fools we [women] are!’”), ‘as if she belonged to neither’ sex, Orlando ‘seemed to vacillate; she was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each. It was a most bewildering and whirligig state of mind to be in’ (p. 152).⁶³ However, such ambiguity is not tolerated within English society and Orlando becomes subject to various legal battles in order to determine her identity, specifically whether she is alive or dead, man or woman. Although the lawsuits are chiefly about property inheritance, and thereby foreground sexual inequality vis-à-vis private property, there is also a sense that the anxiety about her identity goes deeper. Before the legal battles can be determined, Orlando’s properties are put in Chancery and the Law gives her ‘permission to reside in a state of incognito or incognita, as the case might turn out to be’ (p. 161).⁶⁴ Orlando’s identity must be kept secret (her body made

remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled. “Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires,” she reflected’ (p. 150).

⁶² There is another incident of what could be read as voyeurism, this time involving real injury on the part of the voyeur. During a party held by Orlando, when he is ambassador to the King in Constantinople, an English naval officer falls from a tree whilst observing a Lady who is described as being able to ‘fasten the eyes of all upon her’ (p. 123).

⁶³ Orlando’s ambiguously sexed body looks forward to Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*, which also features an ontologically in-between protagonist as well as other characters whose gender and sex are not aligned in a straightforward manner. Also relevant here is an important point made by Rose about how meaning can become unstable in the face of ambiguous images of gender: ‘If meaning oscillates when a castrato comes onto the scene, our sense must be that it is in the normal image of the man that our certainties are invested and, by implication, in that of the woman that they constantly threaten collapse’. Rose, ‘Sexuality in the Field of Vision’, p. 232.

⁶⁴ Although Woolf does not use the term ‘lawsuit’ in *Orlando*, it is interesting to note the pun here – between the legal and the sartorial meaning of the word ‘suit’ – given that Orlando is ordered by law to remain ‘incognito’.

private), as it is indeterminable, though awaiting determination and inscription by the law. The law forces the private body to signify, but to signify according to the law's codes which, like the narrator, recognise only the strict binary structure of male or female. Orlando's ambiguous identity calls this legal gaze into question and exposes its arbitrary and violent character, for the law finally intervenes with an arbitrary and absurd judgement that, contrary to the evidence, Orlando is 'indisputably, and beyond the shadow of a doubt [...] female' (p. 243). Echoing the opening sentence, once again there is supposedly no doubt about Orlando's sex, but what such judgements ultimately suggest is not that Orlando's body is indisputably male or female, but that she must internalise both the judgement and the binary logic upon which it rests.⁶⁵

However, as the text frequently points out, Orlando's identity continues to 'vacillate', resisting the law's reductive gaze and judgement (p. 152). For example, although Orlando has the body of a woman, she still retains her memories as a man: '*His* memory [...] went back through all the events of *her* past life' (p. 133; emphasis added). As the narrator once again shifts pronouns mid-sentence, it becomes apparent that Orlando's identity is split between male and female. Orlando herself comments on the complexity of identity in a statement that suggests the importance of images for identity: "What a phantasmagoria the mind is and meeting-place of dissemblables!" (p. 169). One implication of this picture of the mind is that identity cannot simply be reducible to the body, but must take into consideration the complex web of images and identifications that make up the psyche – in Orlando's case the images of himself/herself remembered in the past and projected into the future. Burns draws attention to this when she argues that the different pronouns used by the narrator to refer to Orlando 'are comfortably accommodated in a single "identity" determined by memory chains' which is a 'mark of the disidentification present in identity'.⁶⁶ Orlando's comment is also significant because the phantasmagoria offers an alternative conception of vision to that of the arbitrary and singular gaze of the law.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ In the following chapter, I will analyse Carter's representation of the violence of reducing identity to either male or female, as Evelyn is surgically transformed into a woman and made to internalise conventional images of femininity. This surgical transformation acts as a more violent example of the kind of legal and textual judgement found here in *Orlando*.

⁶⁶ Burns, 'Re-Dressing Feminist Identities', p. 350.

⁶⁷ Relevant here is work on the visual paradigms that structure the institutions of modernity, such as the law and medicine. See Martin Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', in *Modernity and Identity*, eds. Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 178-95; see also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991) and 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 146-65.

The phantasmagoria was a type of magic-lantern show that placed the spectator in a darkened environment and then projected light onto a curtain from the back in order to hide the lanterns from the audience. Many shows displayed images of skeletons, ghosts and other supernatural beings, and this, combined with the hidden mechanism of the optical device, created an association between the phantasmagoria and a visual world of fantasy, ambiguity and disorder. This was in stark contrast with the rational order and control symbolised by devices like the camera obscura or Jeremy Bentham's designs for the panopticon, both of which were emblematic of institutions like the law with their hierarchical and disciplining gaze. The broader significance of the phantasmagoria lies in the way it has been used metaphorically to stand for the dark underside of the Enlightenment project and the irrational enchantments of capitalist consumerism.⁶⁸ Whilst both the phantasmagoria and the panopticon place the spectator in a position of immobility, the former stands more easily for a certain kind of visual delight and enjoyment, while the latter is used to stand for notions of control and discipline: the former blurs boundaries between darkness and light, fantasy and reality, while the latter attempts to separate elements hierarchically and create order. Therefore, there is a contrast in *Orlando* between the rational gaze of the law that determines Orlando's identity (and which sits alongside the realist gaze which attempts to unveil the truth), and the perspective from her own consciousness which is a profusion of incongruous images. The law attempts to order this chaos by arbitrarily assigning a sex to Orlando, whilst her description of the mind undermines this gesture because of the multiple and ambiguous images that permeate her consciousness. Later in the chapter, I will show how the profusion of images in the twentieth-century section of the text develops the sense of a phantasmagoric visual order, making clear the way that identity is constructed from a set of disparate images and identifications.⁶⁹ But even at this point in the text, the allusion to the phantasmagoria provides a rich image of identity as ghostly, ambiguous and hard to pin down, thus putting pressure on the reductive gaze of the law. It also makes clear the relationship between gendered identity and ways of looking, linking consciousness to a technical visual device.⁷⁰ This particular coupling is suggestive of what

⁶⁸ Crary discusses the phantasmagoria in *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 132-33; for a more thorough consideration of the phantasmagoria, see Terry Castle, 'Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', *Critical Inquiry*, 15.1 (1988), 26-61.

⁶⁹ In Chapter Four, I will analyse Carter's allusion to the phantasmagoria in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. In this text, the phantasmagoria is associated not with the mind but with a particular reconfiguration of the city.

⁷⁰ There is a relatively substantial body of work which compares consciousness with the cinematic apparatus. Henri Bergson, for example, compares the two in works such as *Creative Evolution* and 'Introduction to Metaphysics'. Gilles Deleuze takes up such work in his two books on cinema: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. For a more recent discussion of the relationship between cinema and

Crary sees as the turn towards forms of subjective vision from the early nineteenth century onwards as new optical devices and new understandings of perception decentre the classic conception of the observer from the centre of the world, an older model of vision associated with the camera obscura and with perspective painting.⁷¹

This tension between two models of vision – between the gaze of the law and Orlando’s phantasmagoric consciousness – also appears at the level of Orlando’s relationship to clothing. For whilst clothes often appear in *Orlando* as a form of restriction placed upon the body, enforcing the subject’s position within a strict symbolic order and particular mode of visual signification, there are also examples of sartorial playfulness in which clothing is used in the service of individual experimentation. On these occasions, dress functions in a similar way to the veil of images projected by the phantasmagoria in that it troubles the borderlines separating reality from fantasy, and the body from the layers of fabric. Orlando takes advantage of this potential for visual experimentation in order to negotiate her place within the gender and visual structures of her society. In an arresting image, the narrator links this flexibility and ambiguity of clothing with the phantasmagoric character of consciousness, remarking that the self is ‘a perfect rag-bag of odds and ends,’ literalising the metaphor so that ‘a piece of a policeman’s trousers [lies] cheek by jowl with Queen Alexandra’s wedding veil’. Despite this image of subjectivity as a confusing and confounding jumble of fabrics, the narrator takes comfort in the notion that ‘nature’ has ‘lightly stitched together’ this assortment of rags by ‘a single thread’ (p. 75). However, such a comment disavows the fact that so many details of Orlando’s identity clearly give the lie to a belief in a unifying strand. Undermining this belief further is the narrator’s own admission that ‘nature’ itself ‘delights in muddle and mystery’, and is not only responsible for the rag-bag self, but also for confusing the narrator linguistically such that his sentences become ‘unwieldy’ in their length – in such sentences the narrator appears to lose the thread of his argument (p. 75). The image of the single thread that ties together both Orlando’s identity and the narrator’s account looks rather precarious in the context of a nature

consciousness, see Bernard Stiegler’s concept of ‘Cinematic Consciousness’ in his *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). In the following chapters, I will examine the importance of cinema for Carter’s work and how it plays an important role in shaping the performance and experience of gender and visibility.

⁷¹ As I noted in the Introduction, Crary argues that the camera obscura was ‘paradigmatic of the dominant status of the observer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, whilst new devices like the stereoscope helped create and stood for a new model of the observer, one who is not seen as detached from the operation of the optical device but implicated in its workings. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 7-8. Later in the book, Crary notes the opposition between the phantasmagoria and more scientific, rational models of visibility when he observes that David Brewster (inventor of the stereoscope) ‘optimistically saw the spread of scientific ideas in the nineteenth century undermining the possibility of phantasmagoric effects’ (p. 133).

which plays ‘queer tricks’ and delights in ambiguity (p. 75). Likewise, conventionally gendered clothing can merely create the illusion of a stable sex when in fact the body itself is more mobile:

Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often *it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness*, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above. (p. 181; emphasis added).

In this description, clothing gives only a surface impression of gender stability when the bodies underneath may well vacillate and thus problematize the idea of a binary model of sex.⁷² Clothes, according to this model, perpetuate the illusion of a unified and stable body.

However, clothes not only create this surface effect of stable gender difference for the gaze of an outside observer, but also affect the gaze of the wearer. In a passage that anticipates later accounts of the relationship between gender and the visual, exemplified by Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*, the narrator explains that by comparing pictures of Orlando as a man and as a woman, one can detect a difference of outlook as a result of their respective clothing: ‘The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders’ (p. 180). This sartorial difference consequently changes the way that they look at the world:

The man looks the world full in the face, as if it were made for his uses and fashioned to his liking. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even of suspicion. Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same. (p. 180)⁷³

As a result of the change in her dress, and not her sex, Orlando’s perspective and status as an observer shifts so that she develops a more subtle appreciation of the gender relations of her society.⁷⁴ Her formerly male gaze looked at the world in a straightforward manner, treating things at face value and believing in the notion that the world addressed him directly

⁷² Compare this image of the intermixing of the sexes with Woolf’s description of androgyny in ‘A Room of One’s Own’, published the same year as *Orlando*: ‘it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly’. Woolf, ‘A Room of One’s Own’, p. 136.

⁷³ In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger writes: whilst ‘[a] man’s presence is dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies [...] a woman’s presence expresses her own attitude to herself, and defines what can and cannot be done to her’. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 39-40. The opposition in *Orlando* between the man’s straightforward look and the woman’s sidelong glance also anticipates Berger’s famous pronouncement, quoted in the Introduction, that ‘[m]en look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at’ (p. 41). Berger explains this by saying that, in a bid to gain a degree of agency in a patriarchal society, women internalise the male gaze in order to influence how men will treat them, given the premise the men ‘survey women before treating them’ (p. 40).

⁷⁴ Here it is worth recalling Cray’s point that an observer is not just one who sees, but who conforms to or complies with certain rules, one who ‘sees within a prescribed set of possibilities’ and who is ‘embedded in a system of conventions and limitations’. Cray, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

(‘fashioned to his liking’) as if he were at the centre of the visible world. By contrast, her new female gaze offers an enlarged perspective because it recognises that there are other dimensions to reality, that men and women must negotiate the socially constructed world differently. As a woman, Orlando recognises that there are multiple positions of observation; she does not occupy the visible centre. Therefore, having experienced life as both a man and a woman, Orlando benefits from observing the world from both angles – the straight and the sidelong – and appreciates the socially-constructed character of visuality and gender.

Living in eighteenth-century England as a woman does, however, restrict Orlando’s mobility and hence her field of vision, and so she resorts to cross-dressing as a man to regain her right to wander through and observe London’s streets alone at night.⁷⁵ Orlando’s cross-dressing strengthens the text’s concern with gender as constructed,⁷⁶ but this episode also demonstrates how Woolf anticipated feminist debates about the possibility of the *flâneuse*, a female counterpart to that iconic figure of modernity, the *flâneur*. As I noted in the Introduction, Wolff argues that women’s experiences of modernity were curtailed by strict gender codes governing spatial mobility so that in general most women were not able to adopt the position of the solitary stroller or *flâneur*. She gives the example of George Sand, who disguised herself as a man in order that the ‘life of the *flâneur*’ was made ‘available to her’, for ‘as she knew very well, she could not adopt the non-existent role of the *flâneuse*. Women could not stroll alone in the city’.⁷⁷ Orlando too is frustrated by the limits placed on her freedom and so one night she dresses in a ‘black velvet suit richly trimmed with Venetian lace’ in which ‘she looked the very figure of a noble Lord’ (p. 206). After taking ‘a turn or two before the mirror’, a comment which hints at Orlando’s greater self-consciousness concerning her appearance, Orlando lets herself ‘secretly out of doors’ in order to wander the streets late at night, incognito and a trespasser (p. 206).⁷⁸ Outside, Orlando is spotted by a young woman, who turns out to be a prostitute, and the narrator here reinstates the masculine pronoun to refer to this encounter,

⁷⁵ Orlando’s experience of reduced mobility and angle of vision tallies with Crary’s argument that problems of vision are ‘fundamentally questions about the body and the operation of social power’. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ As Garber writes: ‘The appeal of cross-dressing is clearly related to its status as a sign of the constructedness of gender categories.’ Garber, *Vested Interests*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ Janet Wolff, ‘The Invisible *Flâneuse*’, *Theory Culture Society*, 2.3 (1985), 37-46, (p. 41). As outlined in the Introduction, many critics disagree with Wolff’s position with respect to the *flâneuse*, seeing it as simplistic and overestimating the dominance of patriarchal control.

⁷⁸ A note to the text explains that Vita Sackville-West enjoyed walking around cities at night dressed as a man. As Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth write, ‘it was through discourses of space that Woolf articulated the exclusions and boundaries that regulated women’s bodies and minds’ and hence ‘[p]olitical subversion is often figured [...] in spatial terms through the figure of the trespasser’. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth, ‘Introduction: Approaches to Space and Place in Woolf’, in *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, ed. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 1-28 (p. 2).

strengthening the notion that clothing determines the sex: ‘the young woman looked up at *him* (for a man *he* was to her) [...] she accepted *his* arm’ (p. 207; emphasis added). Relevant here is Sandra Gilbert’s observation that Woolf’s ‘view of clothing implie[s] that costume is inseparable from identity – indeed, that costume creates identity’.⁷⁹ Treating Orlando as a man, the prostitute takes Orlando to her room, and once there, she ‘roused in Orlando all the feelings which become a man. She looked, she felt, she talked like one’ (p. 207). However, Orlando’s recent experiences as a woman lead her to suspect that this young woman’s behaviour, dress and way of speaking ‘were all put on to gratify her masculinity’, thereby revealing a keen appreciation of the constructedness of gender (p. 207).

Once inside her room, there occurs a fascinating combination of veiling and unveiling. The young woman, now known as Nell, ‘drew behind a screen, where [...] she rouged her cheeks, arranged her clothes, [and] fixed a new kerchief round her neck’ (p. 208). In response to this, Orlando ‘could stand it no longer’ and ‘flung off all disguise and admitted herself a woman’ (p. 208). As Nell puts on one kind of mask, Orlando takes off another. In fact, each woman positions herself differently with respect to space, mobility and visibility. Whilst Nell is concerned with the gaze of the mobile male passer-by and thus makes herself into a highly visible, commodified and passive object, Orlando is focused on empowering her own ability to look and move, and so she is like the narrator of ‘Street Haunting’, who becomes an enormous, wandering eye. As a consequence, Orlando becomes difficult to see and hence frustrates the narrator’s gaze:

As we peer and grope in the ill-lit, ill-paved, ill-ventilated courtyards [...] we seem now to catch sight of her and then again to lose it. The task is made still more difficult by the fact that she found it convenient at this time to change frequently from one set of clothes to another. (p. 211)

Orlando’s sartorial mobility allows her to evade the surveillance-like gaze of the narrator and others who might constrain her movements.⁸⁰ Whilst this creates a problem for the omniscient narrator, Orlando herself only appears to gain from such sartorial mobility:

[Orlando’s] sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. For the

⁷⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert, ‘Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature’, *Critical Inquiry*, 7.2 (1980), 391-417 (p. 391).

⁸⁰ Relevant here is Mary Ann Doane’s observation that woman is often represented as a source not only of mystery but of frustration for masculine ‘mastery and control’. Doane argues that female sexuality is often seen as non-localisable and thus woman ‘becomes the other side of knowledge as it is conceived within a phallogocentric logic. She is an epistemological trouble.’ Mary Ann Doane, ‘*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease’, *Camera Obscura*, 4.2 (1983), 6-27 (p. 10). Although Doane’s examples are drawn from *film noir*, Orlando could well be described as epistemological trouble, given the illegibility of her identity. The narrator’s frustrations at keeping track of her suggest that Orlando is dangerously mobile and visible.

probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally. (p. 211)

Here, Orlando shifts identities as regularly as she changes her clothes, so that, as Gilbert puts it, ‘costumes are selves and thus easily, fluidly, interchangeable’.⁸¹ It is also worth noting that this new understanding of identity as fluid and interchangeable only comes after Orlando is transformed into a woman and feminised by English society. As Bowlby argues, Orlando’s ‘feminization adds, if anything, to her powers by giving her even more opportunities for experience and angles of vision’.⁸² More significantly, in blurring multiple boundaries and in enlarging her experience and gaze, Orlando embodies the notion of a ‘third sex’, which Marjorie Garber explains is not a term or a sex, but ‘a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility’.⁸³ Orlando has been read in terms of the idea of a third sex by other critics, most notably by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.⁸⁴ However, Garber argues that such readings tend to maintain the idea of a binary opposition between male and female, in which cross-dressing is threatening for men but empowering for women.⁸⁵ By contrast, Garber argues that ‘one of the most important aspects of cross-dressing is the way in which it offers a challenge to easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of “female” and “male”, whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural’ (p. 10). On such a reading, Orlando’s sartorial mobility is not to be read as simply an imitation of masculinity in a bid to gain more authority, but as a radical gesture that looks beyond the gender

⁸¹ Gilbert, ‘Costumes of the Mind’, 405. The playfulness with respect to clothing in *Orlando* is no doubt in part a reflection of the transformations in women’s clothing around the time that Woolf was writing. The early twentieth century saw much upheaval with respect to women’s fashion, as evidenced for example by Paul Poiret’s new designs for women’s clothing along with the illustrations by Georges Lapape that accompanied them. As noted earlier, Orlando’s wearing of harem pants after his transformation into a woman recalls the use of such clothes by fashion designers like Poiret.

⁸² Rachel Bowlby, ‘Introduction’, in *Orlando*, p. xxix. In her essay ‘Orlando’s Vacillation’, Bowlby makes the point that Orlando’s frequent changing of costume and sex gives her ‘a mobility of sexual identity in which she did not engage as a man’. Rachel Bowlby, ‘Orlando’s Vacillation’, p. 49.

⁸³ Garber, *Vested Interests*, p. 11.

⁸⁴ See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth-Century*, Vol. 2, *Sexchanges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); See also Gilbert, ‘Costumes of the Mind’ and Susan Gubar, ‘Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing for Female Modernists’, *The Massachusetts Review*, 22.3 (1981), 477-508. Despite Garber’s criticisms, Gubar does argue that the female cross-dresser sometimes reaches beyond the attempt to imitate men and ‘transcend[s] the dualism of sex-role polarities, calling into question the categories of culture, specifically the category of gender upon which female socialization depends’. Gubar, ‘Blessings in Disguise’, p. 479. Minow-Pinkney’s account of Orlando’s cross-dressing is also worth noting briefly here. She argues that Orlando’s disguise is ‘a play with the boundary between seeming and being, blurring their sharp distinction and opening up a space of heterogeneity within unitary being. The recurrent disguises are another enactment of the impossible concept of androgyny, a literal realisation of the heterogeneity of sexuality by metonymical movement, though now on a naturalist level’. Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 132.

⁸⁵ See Garber’s discussion of the way in which the notion of the ‘third sex’ is ‘assimilated’ to both the male and the female pole of the gender binary. Garber, *Vested Interests*, p. 10.

binary that underpins her experience of the gendering of clothes, space and visibility. With this in mind, the narrator's difficulty in seeing Orlando as she switches her costume and travels through ill-lit streets also feeds into this idea of a third sex beyond the gender binary. As Garber writes of the visibility of the cross-dresser, the tendency to 'appropriate the cross-dresser "as" one of the two sexes, is emblematic of a fairly consistent critical *desire to look away from the transvestite as transvestite*, not to see cross-dressing except as male or female manqué'.⁸⁶ In the context of her vacillating sex, Orlando's cross-dressing raises the question of how to look at her: as a man, as a woman disguised as a man, or as something else? The text keeps this question open in the narrator's inability to explain the enigma of Orlando's identity and in his difficulty of catching a glimpse of her. Orlando as cross-dresser thus raises questions concerning her visibility.

However, this radical sartorial and sexual mobility comes under threat during the nineteenth century, as Orlando becomes subject to the strict Victorian conventions of feminine attire, embodied by the crinoline dress. Driving in her carriage one day, Orlando looks down at her knees and sees 'with a start that she [is] wearing black breeches', which causes her to '[blush] till she had reached her country house' thirty miles away, proving her 'chastity' (p. 223). Upon reaching her home, Orlando immediately wraps herself in a 'damask quilt' to hide her (once again) dangerous legs, until her housekeeper informs her of the existence and fashion of the crinoline dress (p. 223). In contrast with both Orlando's original clothing and her transvestite costume, the crinoline reduces her mobility and signifies female confinement with its cage-like structure and cumbersome size.⁸⁷ Furthermore, whilst Orlando's cross-dressing created an impression of masculinity so that she could increase her mobility and angle of vision, the crinoline by contrast conceals that most visible sign of sexual difference: pregnancy. As the narrator explains in a manner that resembles this act of denial, the crinoline is designed to hide 'the fact; the great fact; the only fact; but, nevertheless, the deplorable fact; which every

⁸⁶ Garber, *Vested Interests*, p. 10 (emphasis added).

⁸⁷ The crinoline was much parodied; see, for example, Elizabeth Gaskell's story 'The Cage at Cranford', in which a crinoline is mistaken for a bird cage. Elizabeth Gaskell, 'The Cage at Cranford', in *Cranford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 166-75. Tamar Garb has argued that the body in the nineteenth century, and in modernity more generally, was always gendered, and that gender itself was organised in terms of a strict binary opposition between masculine and feminine. She writes: 'According to the dictates of science and philosophy, modern men and women were expected to look dramatically different from one another. To the nineteenth-century European mind, a "masculine woman" or a "feminine man" represented an unnatural aberration'. She also notes the importance of visuality for this gender distinction: 'If men and women were to occupy their prescribed roles, then they had to look their parts, inhabiting those social fictions as if they were either inevitable or acquired without effort. Appearances testified to the maintenance of a social order based on visible distinctions. If boundaries were transgressed, chaos could ensue'. Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), p. 11.

modest woman did her best to deny until denial was impossible' (p. 224). It is not just the fetishised legs which Orlando must hide, but her sex as it appears most pronounced by the swelling of her pregnant body. However, as the narrator's excited prose makes clear, this concealing and veiling of the female body once again makes it 'all the more intensely the object of curiosity'.⁸⁸ As with Orlando's bodily metamorphosis earlier in the text, this second (and related) kind of bodily transformation must be veiled.⁸⁹

Modern Shocks, Motor-cars, and Mobile Views: Orlando in the Modern World

Not all of Orlando's experiences in the nineteenth century are as restricting and repressive as her imprisonment in the crinoline dress; some scenes from this section of the narrative suggest a more mobile and expansive view of identity, and look ahead to Orlando's position as an observer of and within the twentieth century. One such episode functions as a bridge between these two historical periods by anticipating Orlando's later encounters with motor-cars and department stores, as well as the characteristically modern experience of shock. From the mobile position of observation of her carriage as she drives through St. James's park one afternoon, Orlando's gaze is captured by a sunbeam 'marbling the clouds with strange prismatic colours' (p. 221). This spectacle of light and colour anticipates the urban environments of the twentieth century, in particular the giant glass structures of the modern metropolis, those temples to consumerism which attract and arouse the gaze of passing pedestrians through the use of glass and lighting, for 'as it struck the earth, the sunbeam seemed to call forth, or light up, a pyramid, hecatomb, or trophy' (p. 221).⁹⁰ Upon closer inspection, Orlando discovers 'a conglomeration [...] of the most heterogeneous and ill-assorted objects, piled higgledy-piggledy in a vast mound', including

widow's weeds and bridal veils [...] crystal palaces, bassinets, military helmets, memorial wreaths, trousers, whiskers, wedding cakes, cannon, Christmas trees, telescopes, extinct monsters, globes, maps, elephants, and mathematical instruments. (p. 222)

⁸⁸ Peter Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 15.

⁸⁹ Interestingly, Carter notes the way in which female fashions in the nineteenth century, such as the crinoline, cover over the female body and its desires. She writes that 'extravagantly sexual forms of women's fashions', including the crinoline, 'blossomed in an atmosphere of general sexual repression, in which a particular veil was drawn over the reality of female desire'. Angela Carter, 'David Kunzle: *Fashion and Fetishisms*', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 157-61 (p. 159).

⁹⁰ The importance of light and colour in the twentieth century can be seen in the development of not only electrical lighting, but also neon lighting, the cinematic projection of light, and later technicolour film. Within the text, Orlando's experience from the carriage also anticipates her later experience of perception from a speeding motor-car which presents her with a series of blurred landscapes which the narrator describes as 'green screens'. I will turn to this later in this section.

Not only does this list include a number of objects associated with vision (telescopes, maps, and globes), with colonialism and the plotting of capitalism's lines of trade, but it also contains an allusion to one of the most significant precursors of modern consumerism: the Crystal Palace. Built in London's Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition in 1851, and designed by Joseph Paxton using the newly invented cast plate glass, as well as cast and wrought iron, its importance lies in the fact that it functions as a marker of the significant transformations in production, advertisement/display, and consumption under modern capitalism. It is also one of the 'prototypes for the delineation of a modern aesthetic', one of fragmentation, ephemerality, promiscuity (the end of vernacular design), and of disembodied images.⁹¹ Along with a number of other modern buildings, the Crystal Palace marks the beginnings of a modern style partly because of its monumental size (it was the largest glass structure of its time), but mainly because of the way it assembled a veritable cornucopia of objects from around the world and presented them as a unified spectacle for a large audience. It was, as Thomas Richards argues, 'the model for a consumer society that had not yet come into being', for its glass structure and display of incongruous objects was like a modern shopping mall.⁹² This glimpse of the future, in which vastly different objects are juxtaposed in a single surface display, repels Orlando:

The incongruity of the objects, the association of the fully clothed and the partly draped, the garishness of the different colours and their plaid-like juxtapositions afflicted Orlando with the most profound dismay. She had never, in all her life, seen anything at once so indecent, so hideous, and so monumental. (p. 222)

In response to this 'garish' display which violates traditional aesthetics, Orlando averts her gaze and is 'determined not to look [at it] again' (p. 223).⁹³ Her reaction appears to be influenced by the spirit of her age, embodied in her crinoline dress so that, once again, 'costume creates identity': her restrictive dress leads to a narrow vision of life.⁹⁴ It also anticipates her initial reaction of shock in the face of the technical and social revolutions of the twentieth century as her carriage is later replaced by a motor-car, the Crystal Palace becomes a department store, and the sunbeam is exchanged for electrical lighting. However, with these

⁹¹ Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 136.

⁹² Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 120. Richards compares the Crystal Palace to a shopping mall, noting that, like the shopping mall, the Palace 'set up an elaborate traffic pattern for channeling people around things'. He also notes that the Great Exhibition 'was perfectly suited to legitimate the capitalist system, and the class whose interests it served' (p. 4). For more on the Crystal Palace, see also Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁹³ Richards writes that inside the Palace it was 'impossible to draw the line between the many and various things put on display; in such a space things seemed to lose their distinctness and enter into a vast space of association in which everything [...] appeared in a novel light'. Richards, *Commodity Culture*, p. 31.

⁹⁴ Gilbert, 'Costumes of the Mind', p. 391.

later experiences, Orlando's averted gaze is transformed into a look of awe and fascination as she discovers the pleasures of modern looking, associated with speed, consumerism and modern forms of spectacle. Before turning to these experiences, though, I want to unpack the term 'shock' in more detail and take a slight detour through an important essay by Woolf on the perspective from the aeroplane as this will help to make sense of Orlando's experience of the modern visual field and its challenging of older forms of perception.⁹⁵

In 'Flying over London' (1950), Woolf uses the unfamiliar and at times surreal perspective from an aeroplane in order to foreground the modern structures of vision in the twentieth century, in particular the notion that life is frequently reduced to its surface detail. As with the omnibus in the previous chapter, I want to situate the look from the plane as another node within this chapter's relay of looks, for it helps make sense of Orlando's experience of shock at the unfamiliar sights and perspectives that appear in this last historical period of the text.⁹⁶ The essay begins by noting the defamiliarising effect which the extreme height of the aeroplane has on the narrator's vision: from up high the narrator experiences both the dropping away of the earth and the yet 'stranger' experience of 'the downfall of the sky'. This strange new perspective challenges the 'inveterately anthropocentric' mind, for as the plane climbs higher, the familiar 'carvings and frettings' which mark the earth dissolve, and eventually 'no human being [is] visible'.⁹⁷ Woolf then modifies this gaze slightly by introducing a pair of Zeiss glasses (binoculars) in order that the narrator can observe and discern human life below. The narrator's technologically-aided and voyeuristic gaze turns human life into an object of visual scrutiny, like bacteria at the end of a microscope or stars in the lens of a telescope.⁹⁸ As with Orlando's clandestine movements around the city at night while disguised as a man, the

⁹⁵ Just as Crary examines the 'heterogeneous system of discursive, social, technological, and institutional relations' which creates the conditions for the observer, so too my examination of Orlando's experiences in the twentieth century centre on those forces which alter her status as an observer, including motorised vehicles, electrical lighting and department-stores. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

⁹⁶ The essay itself features a number of looks, most significantly the contrast between the look from the plane and the look from the street. Although Orlando does not have first-hand experience of the perspective from an aeroplane, 'Flying over London' is instructive for her experiences of the new and multiple perspectives within the modern metropolis.

⁹⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'Flying over London', in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 207-12 (pp. 207-08). The experience of flying in an aeroplane is revealed at the conclusion of the essay to be an imaginary one. Despite the lack of first-hand experience of flying in an aeroplane, the narrator has clearly been affected by the existence of air travel and the new perspectives it produces on familiar reality. The essay thus appears to suggest that sensory perception is radically transformed by modern technology regardless of individual experience. Even someone who has not flown can imagine a view of the land from which the earth appears empty of human life.

⁹⁸ For a consideration of Woolf's fascination with telescopes and the relation to her narrative strategies, see Holly Henry, 'From Edwin Hubble's Telescope to Virginia Woolf's "Searchlight"', in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela L. Caughie (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 135-58.

narrator here goes ‘trespassing’ in the ‘fine air’, hidden from view and able to gaze in secret.⁹⁹ Spying voyeuristically on a number of pedestrians from above, the narrator is dismayed to find that whilst they too display a similar visual absorption, their gaze is not directed back at the narrator in the aeroplane. Instead, the ‘furious desire’ in their eyes is directed at ‘a sight of something [...] in a shop window’.¹⁰⁰ The narrator quickly grows frustrated and becomes ‘resentful’ of all the ‘flags and surfaces and of the innumerable windows’. The view from the aeroplane thus disturbs ordinary sense perceptions and values: ‘Everything had changed its values seen from the air. Personality was outside the body, abstract.’¹⁰¹ Woolf’s essay thus represents some of the changes to modern forms of looking as a result of new technologies: the multiplication of perspectives (the view from modern vehicles, microscopes, telescopes, photographic and film cameras), the birth of a distracted and consumerist gaze, and the transformation of the urban environment into a series of images and screens. Just as Orlando’s sartorial practices suggested the notion that identity is a costume or a style, so the modern world and its new technologies turn everything into a series of stylised and seductive surfaces. ‘Flying over London’ also shows the sense of boredom and frustration that comes with such an emphasis on the visual, as the narrator longs to ‘be rid of surfaces’ and to enjoy less abstract pleasures. She turns to the depth and interiority of the body, wishing that she could ‘animate the heart, the legs, the arms’ and ‘give up this arduous game’ of ‘assembling things that lie on the surface’.¹⁰² Whilst the modern world witnesses the opening up of new and strange perspectives, it also ushers in a modality of vision which tends to reduce the world to a single surface so that value becomes more and more abstract. The perspective from the aeroplane ultimately frustrates the narrator because, whilst it offers a new and unfamiliar vision of the world, it also turns it into a series of abstract images and the observer into a detached spectator of life. The high point of this detachment is reached when the narrator looks away from the surface of images below and contemplates the sky above. In this ‘moment of renunciation’, the narrator contemplates ‘the idea of death [...] extinction’.¹⁰³ The essay thus contrasts a series of beautiful but abstract images of life with a dark vision of nothingness, a polemical metaphor of the modern world.

⁹⁹ Woolf, ‘Flying over London’, p. 207.

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, ‘Flying over London’, p. 210. In another surreal image, the narrator at first sees all the people below as ‘millions of insects’ (p. 210). Woolf often used images of insects in her writings. In *The Voyage Out*, for example, the view from the ship as it passes by England turns the people into ‘aimless ants’ that appear to be ‘swarming about’ aggressively, ‘almost pressing each other over the edge’. Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, ed. Lorna Sage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 29.

¹⁰¹ Woolf, ‘Flying over London’, p. 211.

¹⁰² Woolf, ‘Flying over London’, p. 211.

¹⁰³ Woolf, ‘Flying over London’, p. 208.

‘Flying over London’ thus usefully foregrounds the experience of shock in the face of new technologies and social practices which alter existing ways of looking and create new perspectives. Before turning to Orlando’s altered perception in the face of such transformations, I want to turn first to two influential accounts of shock from the literature on modernity in order to flesh out the concept. In an essay on Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin notes that ‘shock’ is a prominent feature of the modern world thanks to the rise of the metropolis with its anonymous urban mass, the revolution in industrial production, and the invention of new technologies. In such a world, experience becomes increasingly fractured and fragmented so that the individual becomes more and more isolated and hence not easily able to form ‘an image of himself’ and to ‘take hold of his experience’.¹⁰⁴ Despite this, however, Benjamin states that Baudelaire was able to place shock ‘at the very centre of his artistic work’, and that it was of ‘decisive importance for his personality’.¹⁰⁵ Of particular relevance is the urban crowd, which Benjamin describes as an ‘agitated veil [...] through [which] Baudelaire saw Paris’.¹⁰⁶ Once again, there is a close link between vision and the idea of the veil.¹⁰⁷ Developing this idea of altered perception in and by the metropolis, Benjamin proposes that in the twentieth century the traffic of motor vehicles further ‘involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions’, which later culminates in film’s establishment of ‘perception in the form of shocks [...] as a formal principle’.¹⁰⁸ Benjamin also writes eloquently and suggestively of the way in which human beings inevitably adapt to such shocks by internalising the logic of technology: ‘Baudelaire speaks of a man who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy. Circumscribing the experience of the shock, he calls this man “a *kaleidoscope* equipped with consciousness.”’¹⁰⁹ This image will be helpful later on in making sense of Orlando’s perception whilst driving a motor car, for Woolf represents her perception in terms a series of screens, as if Orlando were (to adapt Benjamin) a cinema equipped with consciousness. Benjamin thus provides a useful way of conceptualising both the experience of shock and the subject’s

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 155.

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, pp. 159-60. As Tim Armstrong notes, although Benjamin draws on Freud’s ideas about shock and trauma, he locates the source of shock within the modern urban environment rather than the modern melodrama of the family and the timeless machinations of the unconscious. Benjamin does, however, mention Freud’s idea of the ‘protective shield’ which attempts to protect the psyche from overstimulation. To this degree then, Freud appears to locate at least one type of shock in the external environment, even if a greater type of shock lies in the constitution of the unconscious. See Tim Armstrong, ‘Two Types of Shock in Modernity’, *Critical Quarterly*, 42.1 (2000), 60-73.

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 164.

¹⁰⁷ This recalls the various veils that are placed over Orlando as well as my discussion of the phantasmagoria earlier in the chapter, in which the veil was a part of this optical device.

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 171.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 171 (emphasis in original).

response to new forms of technological and/or social sensation. As he argues, ‘technology [subjects] the human sensorium to a complex kind of training’.¹¹⁰ In the context of Orlando’s experiences, I want to discover what such training does to gendered ways of looking, and specifically whether or not new technologies open up the gendered field of vision.

In his essay ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, Georg Simmel also emphasises the primacy of shock in the experience of modernity, writing that ‘[t]he psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli’.¹¹¹ More importantly, what Simmel adds to Benjamin’s account above is the important role that images play in the consciousness of the metropolitan individual, who is highly stimulated by the ‘rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions’.¹¹² Simmel argues that the response to such overstimulation is the cultivation of a ‘blasé attitude,’ which consists in the ‘blunting of discrimination’ so that objects appear ‘in an evenly flat and gray tone’.¹¹³ Drawing out the importance of the eyes, Simmel writes that ‘interpersonal relationships of people in big cities are characterized by a markedly greater emphasis on the use of the eyes than on that of the ears’.¹¹⁴ As with Benjamin, modern transportation plays a significant role here, for Simmel argues that before modern, mass transport ‘people were never put in a position of having to stare at one another for minutes or even hours on end without exchanging a word’.¹¹⁵ The modern metropolis is thus characterised visually as a space that contains both fascinated forms of looking and inattentive gazes as objects either stand out as spectacles to be avidly consumed or fade into the background and are passed over by blank stares. With this picture of modernity in mind, it will be crucial to observe how Orlando negotiates such a visually complex environment and how this affects her relationship to gender.

The account of Orlando’s experiences of modern London does indeed echo Simmel and Benjamin’s descriptions of modernity, as the narrator emphasises the sensations of the modern city and describes them in terms of shock: a clock beats ‘like a hammer’, the light becomes ‘brighter and brighter’, and Orlando becomes overwhelmed to the point that ‘a terrific explosion [sounds] right in her ear. Orlando leapt as if she had been violently struck on the

¹¹⁰ Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 171.

¹¹¹ Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, p. 175.

¹¹² Simmel, ‘Metropolis and Mental Life’, p. 175.

¹¹³ Simmel, ‘Metropolis and Mental Life’, p. 178.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 187.

¹¹⁵ Simmel, quoted in Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 187.

head' (p. 284). Slightly later, the narrator even remarks that 'it is a great shock to the nervous system, hearing a clock strike' (p. 292). This sensory overload culminates in the narrator's marking of time, echoing the striking clock: 'It was the eleventh of October. It was 1928. It was the present moment' (p. 284). Unlike Clarissa Dalloway, Orlando does not (initially) take pleasure in the hustle and bustle of the modern city: 'Her ears were now distracted by the jingling of innumerable bells on the heads of innumerable horses. [...] She walked out into the Strand. There the uproar was even worse. [...] the uproar of the street sounded violently and hideously cacophonous' (p. 261). Such chaos leads Orlando to suppose that some catastrophe has taken place: 'Disaster! Disaster! At first Orlando supposed that she had arrived at some moment of national crisis' (p. 262). Hoping to find an explanation for this troubling state of affairs, she 'look[s] anxiously at people's faces', but this only confuses her further and she eventually recognises, like Poe's 'man of the crowd', the fact that '[e]ach man and each woman was bent on his own affairs' (p. 262).¹¹⁶ Orlando thus realises that the modern city's urban mass creates a space of anonymity in which one can move as one of the crowd, invisible, met only by blank stares. To a degree, this is the role of the *flâneur* who gazes absent-mindedly around him and enjoys being incognito.¹¹⁷ However, the traffic in fact suggests the death of the *flâneur*, for, as Friedberg argues, '[t]raffic and the decline of the arcade [...] killed the *flâneur*'.¹¹⁸ The rise of the department store also played a role here, as it legitimised female mobility within the public sphere.¹¹⁹ Consequently, the gender exclusivity of the urban stroller was put to an end as the *flâneur* was joined by female strollers, and the distracted male gaze was '[transformed] into a commodity'.¹²⁰ That Orlando can walk the streets of London without being looked at suggests that female mobility has been legitimised (by the department store, among other factors), a sharp contrast with her earlier experience of having to disguise herself as a man in order to wander through the city at will and alone.

Another example of the transformation of sensory perceptions in the modern world is that of electrical light, which made streets that were once dark into places of visibility, thus

¹¹⁶ Benjamin mentions Poe's story in his essay on Baudelaire. Benjamin, 'Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 166. Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Man of the Crowd', in *Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Tales*, ed. David Van Leer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 84-91.

¹¹⁷ As Baudelaire writes, 'The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito'. Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), pp. 1-40 (p. 9).

¹¹⁸ Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(I)', p. 421.

¹¹⁹ As I noted in the Introduction, there is a large body of feminist scholarship on the importance of the department-store for shaping modern female subjectivity.

¹²⁰ Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal (I)', p. 420. As Friedberg argues, the 'perceptual patterns' of the male *flâneur*, 'distracted observation and dreamlike reverie', were the 'prototype for those of the consumer' (p. 421).

encouraging greater movement. The invention of electrical light also contributed to the increased role of images in modernity as window displays could be illuminated and advertising could take the form of electrically lighted signs. For Orlando, this new illumination opens up novel possibilities for gazing, as, taking up a position by her ‘favourite station in the window’, she observes the ‘most remarkable’ new transformation of modern life: ‘Look at the lights in the houses! At a touch, a whole room was lit; hundreds of rooms were lit.’¹²¹ There is further evidence of this voyeuristic-like gaze in the statement that ‘[o]ne could see everything in the little square-shaped boxes; there was no privacy’ (p. 283).¹²² The illumination of the modern world appears to put more and more of life on display, encouraging a voyeuristic and objectifying gaze. It is significant that the first object which draws Orlando’s gaze within this illuminated world is the appearance of modern women: ‘How narrow women have grown lately! They looked like stalks of corn, straight, shining, identical’ (p. 283). The movement from bright electrical light – that which increases the visibility of things – to women’s appearance is surely not coincidental, for images of women gain a new focus in the modern world, with its bright advertisements and films that display women enlarged and sexualised for visual pleasure.¹²³ Furthermore, the greater illumination of the modern world is shown to be connected to the increased visibility and mobility of women.¹²⁴ It is also important to register the fact that here Orlando remarks on the look of the androgynous modern woman, thereby registering the changes in women’s fashions in the twentieth century. Women are not just

¹²¹ Orlando’s observations from the window recall, once again, Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’ as well as E. T. A. Hoffmann’s ‘My Cousin’s Corner Window’. Both stories concern characters who observe life go by from the advantage point of a window. In the latter, the narrator says that, ‘from the window of a tiny room’, his cousin can ‘overlook the entire panorama of the splendid square at a single glance’. See E.T.A. Hoffmann, ‘My Cousin’s Corner Window’, in *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 377-401 (p. 378).

¹²² Peter Brooks argues that peering inside people’s houses (and, by extension, people’s private lives) is one of the central aspects of much literature, but especially realist works: ‘Removing housetops in order to see the private lives played out beneath them: the gesture also suggests how central realist literature is attached to the visual, to looking at things, registering their presence in the world through sight.’ Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 3.

¹²³ Relevant here also is the association which André Breton draws between femininity and electricity. In *Nadja*, he writes that beauty ‘consists of jolts and shocks’ and that it ‘will be CONVULSIVE or will not be at all’. André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 160. Katherine Conley argues that ‘in the spark that Automatic Woman’s electric persona emits lies the potential for shock and dynamic change, which makes of her more than a machine’. Katherine Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 19.

¹²⁴ As quoted in the Introduction, Conor argues that at this time women were becoming increasingly mobile and visible, participating in ‘the circulation and exchange of looks in the urbanized and commodified modern scene’, and that they appeared modern to ‘themselves and others’ in the form of ‘visual images’ and ‘spectacles’. Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 2.

newly visible but exploring the ways in which they appear within the modern gendered field of vision.

The Department Store and the Consumer's Gaze

Like the sunbeam which illuminates the Crystal Palace earlier in the text, the electric lights of the twentieth century light up window displays and department stores, those dream-worlds which empower women's mobility and the female gaze. By contrast with the 'ill-lit' courtyards of the eighteenth century, the streets of 1920s London are constantly illuminated: 'the sky was bright all night long; and the pavements were bright; everything was bright' (p. 283). Within this illuminated, modern metropolis, Orlando is able to wander freely as a woman without having to resort to cross-dressing again, and her mode of walking recalls the figure of the *flâneur* as she wanders 'without thinking, up one street and down another' (p. 262). However, her gaze is aligned more closely with that of the modern consumer as it is captured by the seductive window displays around her:

[V]ast windows piled with handbags, and mirrors, and dressing gowns, and flowers, and fishing rods, and luncheon baskets; while stuff of every hue and pattern, thickness or thinness, was looped and festooned and ballooned across and across. (p. 262)

Those forces which play a role in empowering Orlando's mobility and vision, such as the department store and modern lighting, also bring with them the dangers of consumerism, as Orlando's freedom to look within the public sphere is inflected by the acquisitive gaze of the consumer and her urban perambulation directed towards those commodified spaces where looking and buying are closely aligned. In the above passage, Orlando's earlier aversion to the juxtaposition of incongruous objects is absent, suggesting that the Crystal Palace's garishly modern aesthetic display has been normalised by the modern department store. Orlando becomes most strongly aware of the passionate consumer gaze as she observes a crowd of shoppers who crossed the busy streets 'without looking where they were going' and 'buzzed and hummed round the plate-glass windows within which one could see a glow of red, a blaze of yellow, as if they were bees' (p. 285). This is an example not of the *flâneur*'s dispassionate gaze but of 'the shoppers' passionate engagement in the world of things to be purchased and possessed'.¹²⁵ If earlier in the text Orlando had to negotiate gendered visual fields in which women must not appear within certain spaces or must conform to particular forms of visual signification when they are visible, in twentieth-century London Orlando has to negotiate a

¹²⁵ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, 'The *flâneur* on and off the streets of Paris', in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 22-42 (p. 35).

differently configured visual field in which consumerism threatens to reduce women to the roles of mannequins and avaricious shoppers.

This highly commodified visual field is explored further in the text when Orlando visits one of London's major department stores, Marshall & Snelgrove's, and here once again her experience takes the form of a series of sensory shocks. Overwhelmed and distracted by the lights '[swaying] up and down', enveloped by the scents, and 'shot' upwards at speed by an elevator, Orlando realises that '[t]he very fabric of life now [...] is magic', for she cannot fathom the mechanisms of such an environment. For whilst in the eighteenth century 'we knew how everything was done', in the current century when one can 'rise through the air', 'listen to voices in America', and 'see men flying', ordinary people 'can't even begin to wonder' how it is all done (p. 286). Benjamin describes this turn toward sensation as a reflection of an 'increasing atrophy of experience' in the modern world, as individuals struggle to make sense of experience and form an image of themselves.¹²⁶ Similarly, Friedberg argues that 'the social formations of modernity [are] increasingly mediated through images'.¹²⁷ One consequence of the greater presence of images and sensation in the modern world is that gendered subjects are tasked with negotiating their identity within this often bewildering and fantastic relay of images and looks. Friedberg conceptualises this modern visual field as one in which processes of virtualisation play a greater role, which entails a separation between objects and their production, and between images and the objects they refer to or represent. The department store, for example, creates a 'perceptual displacement' and 'defers external realities'.¹²⁸ In *Orlando*, the 'voices in America' provide a suitable example of this, as they are mechanically recorded and reproduced, and then circulated all over the world so that the voice becomes disembodied.¹²⁹ Processes of virtualisation also play a role in reducing the world to a series of images. As Orlando notes, 'each time the lift stopped and flung its doors open, there was

¹²⁶ Benjamin, 'Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 155. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Benjamin writes that technical reproduction 'can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself'. Just as Orlando marvels at being able to listen to voices in America, so Benjamin gives as an example of technical reproduction 'the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, [but] resound[ing] in the drawing room'. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-44 (p. 215).

¹²⁷ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 4.

¹²⁸ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 122.

¹²⁹ See Friedberg's discussion of the commodification of singing with respect to the works of Karl Marx and Walter Benjamin, in her *Window Shopping*, pp. 54-55. Mabel experiences something similar in 'The New Dress', as she identifies with the images of fashionable nineteenth-century Parisian women in a magazine. When she tries to emulate their appearance with her new dress though, she encounters the problem of the look of the other as embodied in Clarissa Dalloway's party guests. They do not see her as she sees herself (or wants to see herself) and so break the virtual link between her body and the images with which she has identified in the magazine. Whilst the virtualisation of the modern world might sometimes appear to suggest a greater flexibility with respect to self-fashioning, Mabel's experience makes clear the limits of this.

another slice of the world displayed' (p. 286).¹³⁰ In this way, visual experience 'is given an unprecedented mobility and exchangeability, abstracted from any founding site or referent'.¹³¹ The department store thus contributes to the process of turning all aspects of modern life into a series of images to be consumed, as here the world is put on display for the consumer. In a world where experience is mediated by images and life is turned into a spectacle, self-fashioning becomes a matter of manipulating, successfully or not, a series of images.

It is no surprise, therefore, that, in a repetition of the earlier movement from Orlando's marvelling at modern electrical light to her surprise at women's new appearance, here too she turns from the fantasy-space of the department store to the look of modern women: Orlando 'took out a little looking-glass and a powder puff. Women were not nearly as roundabout in their ways, she thought [...] as they had been when she herself first turned woman' (p. 288). Musing on one of the historical changes with respect to femininity and the visual, Orlando notes that what constitutes a 'normal' appearance for a woman has greatly altered since her first experiences of womanhood. Once again, Orlando's fantastically long life and her transformation into a woman during her adulthood allow Woolf to foreground the changing and constructed character of femininity.¹³² Orlando's observation of the changing appearance of women within the department store is important because it strengthens the idea that identity is fluid and can be altered through self-fashioning. As Friedberg argues, the department store provides a space in which 'psychic transubstantiation is possible through purchase'.¹³³ Femininity in and through the department store necessitates a negotiation with the new forces of consumerism and modern fashion. With this change in modern female subjectivity, new fears arose about the dangers of consumerism. Whilst many such dangers, such as the fetishization of commodities or the enslavement to images and fashion, are clearly applicable to both sexes, Nava observes that the department store was often 'accused of "unleashing passions"' specifically in women, and that people often worried about the female shopper's

¹³⁰ In the following chapters, this sense of virtual flâneurie increases as Carter's protagonists inhabit worlds where identity is even more strongly mediated by images and virtual realities – the cinema in *The Passion of New Eve* and the science-fiction "desire machines" in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.

¹³¹ Cray, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 14. Furthermore, Cray argues that modernity 'coincides with the collapse of classical models of vision and their stable space of representations. Instead, observation is increasingly a question of equivalent sensations and stimuli that have no reference to a spatial location' (p. 24).

¹³² Minow-Pinkney argues that by having an adult become a woman, Woolf is able to bring 'a critical adult consciousness to bear on the feminisation usually undergone by a female child. Fantasy lets her write a *Bildungsroman* with an already mature protagonist'. Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, p. 128.

¹³³ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, pp. 121-22. Friedberg is actually writing about the shopping mall here, but her analysis actually begins with the department-store and traces a line of development from the department-store to the shopping mall, arguing that they both contribute to a growing "virtualisation" of everyday life.

relationship to temptation, gullibility and an unhealthy covetous gaze.¹³⁴ Whilst Woolf's text does not explicitly display such anxieties, Orlando's observations about the new appearance of modern women within the context of the department store does foreground the fact that modern female identity is partly shaped by patterns of consumerism. It is also clear that Orlando's initial experiences of Marshall & Snelgrove's emphasise the strong, perhaps disempowering, effect the department store has on her: 'Shade and scent enveloped her', 'Light swayed up and down' and the items on her shopping list 'change[d] as the light fell on them. Bath and boots became blunt, obtuse; sardines serrated itself like a saw' (p. 286). As Orlando attempts to locate the items on her list, she loses her way and almost leaves the store in an 'outrage' and 'without buying anything' (p. 287). What the text does suggest, therefore, is that the new mobility in the modern world is experienced not only as empowering for women, but also in terms of shock and a (potential) loss of agency.

The Motorist's Gaze

This is even more so with respect to Orlando's experiences at the wheel of a motor car, for, like *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando* too features modern motorised vehicles which are shown to alter the protagonist's sense of time, space and perception, as well as contributing to the expansion of her mobility. However, the latter text exchanges the fixed route of the omnibus for the individually-directed motor car, extending Orlando's desire to wander at will so that driving becomes 'a kind of *flânerie* on wheels'.¹³⁵ Unlike Elizabeth and Clarissa Dalloway, Orlando has control over both the direction and speed of travel of the vehicle.¹³⁶ Woolf herself experienced the individual freedom of the motor car when she and Leonard purchased their first automobile, a second-hand Singer, and she describes in her diary how it produced 'a great opening up in our lives', an expansion of 'the map of the world in ones [*sic*] mind', and most

¹³⁴ Nava, 'Modernity's Disavowal', p. 59. Nava cites Émile Zola's characterisation of female shoppers as a mindless 'horde' but also as victims of the powerful force of the department-store. For example, Zola writes of the department-store as a remorseless 'machine' in which 'the vast horde of women were as if caught in the wheels of an inevitable force'. Émile Zola, *The Ladies' Paradise*, trans. Brian Nelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 16. Nava also observes that a large part of the anxiety about women's relationship to shopping centred on the idea of 'uncontainable sexuality that the urban context itself seemed to mobilise' (p. 60). The department-store was, therefore, an ambiguous space that aroused both positive and negative reactions about the changes to gender relations under modernity.

¹³⁵ Leena Kore Schröder, "'Reflections in a Motor Car": Virginia Woolf's Phenomenological Relations of Time and Space', in *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, ed. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 131-47 (p. 136).

¹³⁶ Michel de Certeau refers to trains and buses as a 'travelling incarceration' for the reason that whilst the carriage is mobile, the passengers are immobile. Quoted in Nigel Thrift, 'Driving in the City', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.4-5 (2004), 41-59 (p. 45).

interestingly how ‘another [window] opens with the motor’.¹³⁷ This suggestive image of the ‘window’ recalls the importance of windows in the previous chapter, for the different ‘looks’ they occasioned and mediated. Like the omnibus, the motor car provides a new mobile perspective on the world which forces a change in the human sensory organisation, creating the need for new modes of thought, new forms of representation, and new ways of seeing, all of which radically alter the structures of subjectivity. This then contributes to *Orlando*’s concern with ways of looking, further challenging the authority of sight and adding yet another ambiguous angle of vision to the text’s multiplicity of looks.

Woolf did not react positively to the motor car at first, associating ‘cars with imperialism and class privilege’, as can be seen in the description of the grey car at the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway*.¹³⁸ Her hostility to the motor car can be seen even more clearly in her essay ‘The Cheapening of Motor-cars’, where she attacks it for destroying the countryside roads as well as the injuries it causes to pedestrians.¹³⁹ Likewise, Orlando is initially concerned by the danger of so many vehicles when she first observes the busy streets of twentieth-century London. She describes the ‘[c]arriages, carts, and omnibuses’ as ‘alarmingly at loggerheads’, and in another instance of shock ‘the uproar of the street sounded violently and hideously cacophonous’ (p. 261). Despite this chaos, Orlando notes that the constant stream of people made their way through the ‘lurching and lumbering traffic with incredible agility’ (pp. 261-62). This skill in negotiating traffic foregrounds the changes produced in ‘the human sensorium’ due to the ‘complex kind of training’ which motorised vehicles subject pedestrians to within the modern city.¹⁴⁰ It is not long, however, before Orlando herself adapts to these new sensations and discovers the excitement of driving. Spotting a motorised vehicle for the first time from her window, Orlando seems struck by a sense of wonder which recalls her earlier perception that the fabric of modern life is magic: “‘Look at that!’” she exclaimed [...] when an absurd truncated carriage without any horses began to glide about of its own accord. A carriage without any horses indeed!’ After being called away momentarily, Orlando is quick to return

¹³⁷ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 3: 1925-1930, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth, 1980), p. 147 and p. 151; qtd. in Minow-Pinkey, ‘Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars’, p. 162.

¹³⁸ See the discussion of this in Lorraine Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 118; *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 11. The mysterious car that Clarissa observes suggests images not only of imperialism and class privilege, but also of patriarchy and invisible power. The occupant of the car is unknown, though passers-by have just enough time to see ‘a face of the very greatest importance’ before ‘a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen’ (p. 11). This suggests the invisibility of power, all-seeing but not seen. The upholstery of the car is ‘dove-grey’, adding to the sober image of the car as signifying respect and authority; it is not an object to look at and enjoy.

¹³⁹ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Cheapening of Motor-cars’, in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), p. 440.

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 171.

to her window in order to have ‘another look’ (p. 282). Reflecting on what she has seen, Orlando appears to register the way in which this new technology of motorised vehicles transforms the structures of time and space, and therefore of perception: ‘Everything seemed to have shrunk’ (p. 283).

This modern experience of what David Harvey calls ‘time-space compression’ appears even more intensely when Orlando adopts the position of the motor-car driver.¹⁴¹ Before considering this, I want to take a detour through Woolf’s essay ‘Evening over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car’, written around the same time as *Orlando*, for it provides an illuminating account of motor-perception, useful when read alongside Orlando’s experiences of motoring. Woolf’s essay is centrally concerned with the way in which the speeding motor car challenges ordinary patterns of perception, in particular the problem of taking in the beauty of a scene as it passes by at speed: ‘beauty spread at one’s right hand, at one’s left; at one’s back too; it was escaping all the time; one could only offer a thimble to a torrent that could fill baths, lakes’.¹⁴² Like many of the early nineteenth-century optical devices which Crary examines, the motor-car’s mobile view here challenges the observer’s sense of visual mastery, leading to what the essay describes as a form of ‘impotency. I cannot hold this – I cannot express this – I am overcome by it – I am mastered’.¹⁴³ The narrator not only struggles with perceiving the beauty of the landscape but also with conveying ‘what one saw now over Sussex so that another person could share it’.¹⁴⁴ However, a second voice within the mind of the narrator suggests the idea of relinquishing this desire for mastery, and so ‘the self splits up’. Instead of trying to master all that one sees, the advice of the second voice is to ‘sit and soak; to be passive; to accept’.¹⁴⁵ Two more voices enter the fray and introduce a sense of melancholy about the fleetingness of time and excitement about the future respectively.¹⁴⁶ As the sun finally sets and there is no longer anything to see, the narrator ‘summons’ these disparate voices

¹⁴¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). See in particular chapter 16 ‘Time-space compression and the rise of modernism as a cultural force’, pp. 260-83.

¹⁴² Virginia Woolf, ‘Evening over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car,’ in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays* ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 204-06 (p. 204).

¹⁴³ Woolf, ‘Evening over Sussex’, p. 204. As noted in the Introduction, Crary writes that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the eye was aligned with visual devices like the camera obscura and that the ‘authority of an ideal eye remained unchallenged’. Developments in the early nineteenth century, however, challenged this visual authority because the eye and the optical device (such as the stereoscope) ‘were now contiguous instruments on the same plane of operation’. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 129.

¹⁴⁴ Woolf, ‘Evening over Sussex’, p. 204.

¹⁴⁵ Woolf, ‘Evening over Sussex’, pp. 204-05.

¹⁴⁶ The fourth voice spots a flickering light in the distance which then leads to a vision of the future in which sophisticated technology brings ‘magic gates’, fans which ‘cleanse houses’, and lights ‘intense and firmly directed’ which will ‘go over the earth, doing the work’. Woolf, ‘Evening over Sussex’, p. 205.

together, much like Clarissa Dalloway's mirror: "Now we have got to collect ourselves; we have got to be one self."¹⁴⁷ Despite this gesture, the narrator acknowledges that the view from the motor car did, at least momentarily, lead to the 'death of the individual'. Also worth noting is the narrator's creation of 'a little figure [...] advancing' towards the future and which sits lifeless 'on my knee'. Leena Kore Schröder sees this figure as a 'lifeless mannequin' and 'a puppet' in need of animation.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the narrator then says that a 'violent thrill ran through us; as if a charge of electricity had entered in to us' leading to an affirmation of 'something' and 'a moment of recognition'.¹⁴⁹ Although the essay never explains this enigmatic figure, it is suggestive of the increasingly electrified and technological future. The essay then ends with the body, which 'had been silent up to now', talking of food, warmth and a bath, and finally bed.¹⁵⁰

'Evening over Sussex' is thus important for its exploration and problematizing of issues of visuality and, by implication, gender. The view from the motor car challenges the idea of visual mastery by 'undermin[ing] the integrity of the gazing subject'.¹⁵¹ By extension, it also undermines masculine forms of vision, since they often go hand in hand with the idea of visual mastery as critics like Mulvey and Berger have noted. The narrator's admission of impotency when faced with the wealth of stimuli passing by challenges discourses of vision which focus on (often masculine) forms of empowerment, such as F. T. Marinetti's aggrandising of the motor car as part of his hyper-masculine and technological vision of the future. Furthermore, the essay's acknowledgement of multiplicity through the splitting of the self also represents a questioning of conventional power structures that depend upon the notion of the unitary and masterful individual. As Andrew Thacker argues, 'the figure of transport produces a kaleidoscopic sense of the modern self that [Woolf] embraced for its potential to unsettle fixed structures of power'.¹⁵² Although 'Evening over Sussex' is not explicit about the implications

¹⁴⁷ Woolf, 'Evening over Sussex,' p. 205. The reunification of the self in 'Evening over Sussex' also suggests that split subjectivity is not necessarily viable as a permanent state of being. Furthermore, as Parkins makes clear throughout her study of representations of women's mobility in modernity, greater mobility and the movement away from the domestic sphere do not always guarantee a larger sense of agency and emancipation. Like many of the authors that Parkins considers, Woolf avoids simplifying the issue of mobility by drawing out its ambiguities.

¹⁴⁸ Schröder, "'Reflections in a Motor Car'", p. 139.

¹⁴⁹ Woolf, 'Evening over Sussex', p. 206.

¹⁵⁰ Woolf, 'Evening over Sussex', p. 206.

¹⁵¹ Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 180. Thacker also argues, following Michel de Certeau, that Woolf's essay can be read as privileging the tour over the map, spatial movement over space as territory and abstract. For de Certeau's distinction between the map and the tour, see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 118-22.

¹⁵² Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 184. Thacker gives as an example of this point the scene from *A Room of One's Own* in which a man and a woman get into a taxi together, which then inspires Woolf's famous

for gender, the fragmenting of the self is suggestive of a vision of gendered subjectivity not limited by the binary model of masculine/feminine, but instead takes a more expansive view of the heterogeneity of the subject.¹⁵³ Ultimately, though, the essay is, as Thacker notes, ‘inconclusive’ and ‘mysterious’ more than anything else, suggestive of certain issues without putting forth a definitive view of matters.

Returning to *Orlando*, the transformation of perception caused by the motor car appears even more clearly when Orlando swaps her external position of observation of the motor-car for the perspective of the driver: ‘She ran downstairs, she jumped into her motor-car, she pressed the self-starter and was off’ (p. 285). From this mobile and ever-changing perspective, the world becomes an impressionistic spectacle:

Vast blue blocks of building rose into the air; the red cowls of chimneys were spotted irregularly across the sky; the road shone like silver-headed nails; omnibuses bore down upon her with sculptured white-faced drivers [...] But she did not allow these sights to sink into her mind even the fraction of an inch [...] lest she should fall into the raging torrent beneath. (p. 285)¹⁵⁴

Orlando’s perception is here transformed as a result of the speed of the motor car in combination with the intense stimuli of the city, and as a result of this overstimulation she notes the importance of not allowing her consciousness to be too deeply penetrated by the sights around her. Instead, her mind must pass over everything quickly, adopting a stance close to Simmel’s blasé attitude.¹⁵⁵ This response to the mass of stimuli does, however, produce a number of side-effects, such as Orlando’s new perception of pedestrians as a hindrance to her sense of speed and continual motion. Frustrated by their distracted gazes and crossing of her path ‘without looking where they were going’, she dehumanises them like the narrator of ‘Flying over London’, turning them into a swarm of ‘bees’ (p. 285). In her impatience with pedestrians, Orlando shouts from her car ““Look where you’re going!” “Don’t you know your own mind?” “Why didn’t you say so then?”” while the motor-car shot, swung, squeezed, and

account of androgyny. Thacker argues that in this way Woolf ‘seems to invest the taxi with the capacity to unsettle established categories of thought’ (p. 183).

¹⁵³ However, there is still the presence of the narrator who gathers all the disparate selves together. As I will argue in a moment, *Orlando* too features this contrast between multiple selves and what the text refers to as a ‘Key self’ which unifies these others.

¹⁵⁴ This passage is an example of Woolf’s close relationship to modernist art practice, including impressionism and post-impressionism. For a consideration of the links between Woolf’s writing and modern art, see *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Diane F. Gillespie (London: University of Missouri Press, 1993) and *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁵ Simmel writes that, faced with a high amount of stimuli, the metropolitan ‘develops an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him’. Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, p. 176. In the passage above, Orlando appears to adopt what Simmel describes as an attitude of ‘reserve’ as a means of protecting herself from being overwhelmed by the pressure of overstimulation.

slid, for she was an expert driver' (p. 292).¹⁵⁶ The character of Orlando's perception also appears in a telling phrase: she looks at the pedestrians with merely 'one flick of her eye', suggesting that the speed of the motor car and the mass of stimuli provided by the metropolis have affected her mode of looking (p. 285).¹⁵⁷ As with the aeroplane, the view from the motor car transforms subjectivity into something abstract as the urban crowd is reduced to a swarming, mindless mass and Orlando's reserve is quickly replaced with anger.¹⁵⁸ In terms of gender, Orlando's aggressiveness and dehumanising of pedestrians recalls the machine-like masculinity of Marinetti's 'Futurist Manifesto', which in part champions the speed and power of the motor car. Marinetti waxes lyrical over the possibilities of modern technology and its ushering in of a new era characterised by efficiency and power. His vision of a modern, mechanised world is aggressively masculine, celebrating war, speed, and the destruction of the past, and he openly states in the manifesto that futurists will fight, amongst other things, feminism. His ideal is a kind of super-man, who arises thanks to the creation of modern, technological warfare because it 'initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body'.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ By contrast with Orlando's enjoyment of the speed and control afforded by driving, *Mrs Dalloway* represents Peter Walsh as a passive spectator of the motor car when he gazes through the window of 'a motor-car manufacturer in Victoria Street.' His look here is clearly narcissistic, for he not only enjoys looking at the cars, but at 'himself, reflected in the plate-glass window'. Whilst for Orlando, the motor car is connected with women's increased mobility, for Peter it is tied rather anxiously to his precarious masculinity: 'Clarissa had grown hard, he thought; and a trifle sentimental into the bargain, he suspected, looking at the great motor-cars capable of doing – how many miles on how many gallons? For he had a turn for mechanics; had invented a plough in his district, had ordered wheel-barrows from England [...] all of which Clarissa knew nothing whatever about'. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 42. In this passage, Peter tries to bolster his damaged masculinity by not only judging Clarissa harshly but also by puffing himself up through his supposed expertise in mechanics. Furthermore, Peter appears to use the commodified, fantasy display of motor cars to engage in an act of 'psychic transubstantiation' (to use Friedberg's phrase again), re-imagining himself in heroic terms as someone who brings the fruits of advanced civilisation to a primitive people. Minow-Pinkney argues that it is 'as if such interest and knowledge somehow reassure him of his masculine, able, and progressive self-identity, which he is in great need to assert to Clarissa, whom he has just seen'. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, 'Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars', *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela Caughie (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 159-82 (p. 161). She also points out that Sir William Bradshaw has a grey car too, which 'so eloquently symbolizes his success in the patriarchal power game and establishment ideology' (p. 161).

¹⁵⁷ Thacker argues that 'Orlando's savage "flick of her eye" emphasises how motoring had also altered the visual apprehension of fellow inhabitants in the city, here being drained of all colour'. Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 177.

¹⁵⁸ Once again Simmel provides a helpful interpretation of this when he writes that 'the inner aspect of this outer reserve is not only indifference but, more often than we are aware, it is a slight aversion, a mutual strangeness and repulsion, which will break into hatred and fight at the moment of a closer contact, however caused'. Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 179.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 234. See also F. T. Marinetti, 'The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism', trans. Lawrence Rainey, in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence S. Rainey (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), pp. 3-6.

Orlando's representation of driving comes uneasily close to Marinetti's championing of the speed of the motor car and of the aggression it unleashes.¹⁶⁰

However, one aspect of Woolf's representation of the motor car in *Orlando* does offer a counter-image to Marinetti's masculinist portrait, as Orlando's inability to read signs from the speeding vehicle suggests a kind of impotency similar to the narrator of 'Evening over Sussex'. The motor car thus contributes to the sense of illegibility which the text announces in the opening line, as it provides a mobile and fragmented perspective on the surrounding environment – one which challenges the idea of the motor-car driver as all-powerful and in control. Like her mobile sex and costume, a number of signs that Orlando observes from her speeding motor-car appear difficult to read: a 'procession with banners upon which was written "Ra – Un"', 'Amor Vin – that was over a porch', and 'Applejohn and Applebed, Undert-. Nothing could be seen whole or read from start to finish', thereby revealing the sense of fragmentation caused by modern forms of technology such as high-speed travel (p. 293). The reader too struggles to decipher these signs as Woolf's prose emulates the 'piecemeal nature' of the perceptions of the motorist.¹⁶¹ Thus, whilst David Trotter notes that Woolf 'has for the most part been read as a Modernist exponent of a syntax of velocity', the breakdown of perception and linguistic legibility due to the speed of the car suggests a more ambivalent attitude towards speed.¹⁶²

Furthermore, the idea of not being able to read something (from start to finish) is an appropriate and fitting description of the process of reading *Orlando* – of trying to make sense of Orlando's ambiguous identity. The illegibility of the signs here replicates the broader thematic of a text which fails or refuses (fully) to unveil its protagonist. It also has a historical dimension within the text, as it contrasts sharply with an earlier example of sign-reading during the eighteenth century. From her position aboard the ship which returns her to England, Orlando can clearly see 'a variety of painted signs swinging in the breeze' and is easily able to 'form a rapid notion from what was painted on them of the tobacco, of the stuff, of the silk [...] and of a thousand other articles which were sold within' (p. 159). By contrast, the angle of vision provided by the motor car two centuries later produces 'instead of this completeness and

¹⁶⁰ See Marinetti's description of driving in 'The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism', which not only celebrates the speed of the car but also shows the driver's frustration with people who get in his way, most notably a pair of cyclists.

¹⁶¹ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 177. More generally, Briggs states that 'Modernism as a literary style dominates the final chapter'. Briggs, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 206.

¹⁶² David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 235. The phrase 'syntax of velocity' is taken from Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 127.

legibility' and a 'readily readable correspondence of the sign to its recognisable, conventional meaning', signs which speed by 'too fast to be comprehended'.¹⁶³ The visual field of the twentieth century has become newly unstable and the authority of sight has come under threat from mobile and technologically-mediated perspectives.

An important consequence of this change in visual structures is that the gendered body also becomes newly difficult to decipher, as the epigraph from Brooks suggests. As Orlando continues driving, her identity becomes as fragmented and unreadable as the illegible signs:

After twenty minutes the body and mind were like scraps of torn paper tumbling from a sack and, indeed, the process of motoring fast out of London so much resembles the chopping up small of identity which precedes unconsciousness and perhaps death itself that it is an open question in what sense Orlando can be said to have existed at the present moment. (p. 293)

This chopping up of identity echoes the Queen's earlier cutting up of Orlando's body into body parts. Whilst Woolf uses the metaphor of paper scraps, Thacker argues that Orlando's self here becomes 'like snapshots of the surrounding landscape taken from the speeding car, and almost impossible to synthesise into a more unified picture'.¹⁶⁴ Further evidence of this fragmentation of the self appears in two earlier passages: 'trying to collect herself', Orlando says that "Nothing is any longer one thing" (p. 290). Almost immediately following this, the narrator describes how 'the most successful practitioners of the art of life [...] somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system', thereby finding a balance between past and present experiences (p. 291).¹⁶⁵ In all of these passages, both the self and what it sees are multiple, so that Orlando seems to become Baudelaire's 'kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness'.¹⁶⁶ Coincidentally, Leonard Woolf referred to Virginia's enjoyment of motoring as a 'kaleidoscope of travel' in yet another metaphorical use of this optical device.¹⁶⁷ There is thus an intimate relationship between problems of perception and the constitution of subjectivity, as the breakdown of language and legibility makes clear. Raymond Williams notes that these problems emerge in Woolf's

¹⁶³ Rachel Bowlby, 'Orlando's Undoing', in *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 110-24 (p. 121).

¹⁶⁴ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 178.

¹⁶⁵ Bowlby parses this passage as suggesting that the self is 'constituted, and unevenly so, by layerings of times and sights impinging in disparate ways' upon the subject's experience of the present moment. Bowlby, 'Orlando's Undoing', p. 121. Compare this passage about the disunity of the self with the narrator's faith that 'nature' has 'lightly stitched together' this assortment of rags (that is, Orlando) by 'a single thread' (p. 75). The motor car experience shows that the self is not unified by a single thread, but is composed of multiple and disparate parts.

¹⁶⁶ Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', p. 9. Also quoted in Benjamin, 'Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 171.

¹⁶⁷ Leonard Woolf, *Downhill all the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919-1939* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967), p. 179.

modernist writing in part due to the particular characteristics of the modern city: '[i]n Virginia Woolf the discontinuity, the atomism, of the city were aesthetically experienced, as a problem of *perception* which raised problems of *identity*'.¹⁶⁸ Orlando's position within the modern metropolis and her perspective from the motor car alter her status as an observer, one who is, in Crary's words, both the 'historical product *and* the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification'.¹⁶⁹ The experience of driving is just such a process of subjectification, as Orlando discovers that she has 'a great variety of selves to call upon'. Even more than the narrator of 'Evening over Sussex', Orlando changes selves 'as quickly as she drove – there was a new one at every corner', so that what he variously calls 'the conscious self', 'the true self', 'the Captain self' and 'the Key self' remains 'aloof' (pp. 295-96). The narrator also admits to not having 'found room' to account for all of these selves, so that his narrative functions as another subjectification procedure, reducing the multiplicity and ambiguity of Orlando's identity (pp. 294-95). In fact, this has an explicitly gendered dimension as the narrator also complains that it is 'discomposing' for the biographer to have to write about this multiplicity of selves because 'the truth is that when we write of a woman, everything is out of place [...] the accent never falls when it does with a man' (pp. 297-98). Thacker argues that this represents 'an interesting gendering of space and place' and that 'femininity exists heterotopically, akin to the travelling car and the kaleidoscopic selves'.¹⁷⁰ If what is multiple and difficult to read here is femininity, then it puts pressure on masculine forms of looking which objectify and classify the female body, depending also upon a strict separation between masculine and feminine. The fragmentary character of Orlando's identity appears to disperse the male gaze as the narrator struggles to account for all of Orlando's selves in a similar way to his difficulties in keeping track of her when she frequently changes costume.

However, the motor car also provides a unifying visual experience that counteracts such fragmentation and allows Orlando to regain her sense of a unified self. The narrator explains that Orlando might have been 'given over for a person entirely disassembled were it not that here, at last, one green screen was held out on the right, against which the little bits of paper fell more slowly' (p. 293). Another 'green screen' appears on her left and soon 'green screens

¹⁶⁸ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), p. 241 (emphasis added). Williams also draws links between the perceptual transformations occasioned by modern motor vehicles and forms of modern imagery, such as cinema. 'This fragmentary experience – now accelerated by "motoring fast" – has remained a perpetual condition. It is deeply related to several characteristic forms of modern imagery, most evident in painting and especially in film which as a medium contains much of its intrinsic movement. There is indeed a direct relation between the motion picture, especially in its development in cutting and montage, and the characteristic movement of an observer in the close and miscellaneous environment of the streets' (p. 242).

¹⁶⁹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 5 (emphasis in original).

¹⁷⁰ Thacker, *Moving through Modernity*, p. 179-80.

were held continuously on either side, so that her mind regained the illusion of holding things within itself” (p. 293). The initially fragmented and impressionistic view from the speeding motor car is transformed into a screen, which in turn attenuates Orlando’s experience of being disassembled by turning her into a unified subject. Bowlby suggests that these screens can be read as ‘Orlando’s personal cinema viewed from the car’ which provide her mind with ‘the “illusion” of holding things together within itself’.¹⁷¹ Here, Orlando becomes, to adapt Baudelaire’s phrase, a cinema equipped with consciousness. Whilst Woolf argues in her essay ‘The Cinema’ that film has the potential to challenge our conventional ways of seeing, Orlando’s experience of being unified by the ‘green screens’ suggests not so much a challenge to perception as a unifying and stabilising of it. Hence, if these ‘green screens’ are read as cinema screens, then they fit closer with Benjamin’s model of film in which shock is ‘established as a formal principle’, or, as two recent commentators put it, film as a ‘new means of adjusting to [the experience of shock]’.¹⁷² Whilst the motor car functions in part as a new source of shock by undermining Orlando’s stable perception, the ‘green screens’ by contrast convert the fragmented, impressionistic sights of the countryside into stable, framed images, thereby adjusting Orlando to such shocks. Just as the department store converts the heterogeneous elements of the world into a safe display for the shopper’s gaze, so the view from the motor car transforms the countryside into a series of ‘green screens’, which can be read variously as film images, paintings or postcards.¹⁷³ Orlando’s experiences of fragmentation and unity here reveal an important similarity between *Orlando* and *Mrs Dalloway*: just as Clarissa Dalloway experiences her sense of self as variously heterogeneous and fragmented whilst on the omnibus and unified and ‘dart-like’ before her mirror, so too Orlando’s subjectivity is experienced as both unified and fragmented, only for her these two states coexist during a single trip in a motor car. *Orlando* thus represents the motor car as a site of multiple subjectification procedures.

¹⁷¹ Rachel Bowlby, ‘Orlando’s Undoing’. p. 122.

¹⁷² Benjamin, ‘Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 171; Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, *Cities: Re-Imagining the Urban* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 34. Amin and Thrift argue that in the face of excessive stimulation within the modern world, new media like film functioned as ‘both new sources of shock and new means of adjusting to such experience’. See also Virginia Woolf, ‘The Cinema’, in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 172-76. In the following chapters I will show how Carter explores the ways in which film and the cinematic apparatus undoes the unity of the subject, by contrast with the ‘green screens’ in *Orlando*.

¹⁷³ As Wolfgang Schivelbusch writes in a similar vein about tourism, ‘[f]or the twentieth-century tourist, the world has become one large department store of countrysides and cities’. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 197.

For ‘nothing could be seen whole’

The fragmentation of Orlando’s perception and subjectivity caused by the mobile perspective of the motor car is the apotheosis of this text’s preoccupation with the problems of seeing/reading the ambiguously-gendered body. What has become clear by this point in the novel (if, indeed, anything is clear about this most ambiguous of texts) is that, like the fragmented signs she observes from the speeding car, Orlando cannot be ‘seen whole’ or ‘read from start to finish’. Indeed, as the text playfully hints on its last page, the attempt to solve the enigma of Orlando’s identity may well prove to be a ‘wild goose’ chase (p. 314). *Orlando* clearly challenges what Barthes sees as the dominant mode of classical realist texts: the unveiling of secrets and the “‘truth” unveiled’.¹⁷⁴ It might be tempting to look outside of the main body of the text for clues that would solve the riddle of Orlando’s identity, for example by observing that Woolf dedicated the book to Vita Sackville-West and that the latter appears in many of the illustrations which Woolf inserted in the book, dressed up as Orlando.¹⁷⁵ However, this constitutes yet another example of veiling and fabrication, increasing the fragmented and vertiginous character of the text as yet more signs are added to this polysemic text. The illustrations, in particular, lead in many different directions: some are reproductions of paintings of Vita’s ancestors, whilst others are of her posing in various costumes representing Orlando at different points in his/her life. This blurring of the lines between art and life constitutes yet another instance of the text’s frequent boundary-crossing and suggests that ‘real life itself is [...] made up of imaginary identifications’.¹⁷⁶ The photographs are an ingenious touch, as their inclusion plays on the notion that, as Susan Sontag puts it, photographs ‘furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we’re shown a photograph of it’.¹⁷⁷ In a text which creates so much doubt about its protagonist, the inclusion of photographs might be hoped to dispel some of this uncertainty and to give a clear picture of Orlando’s identity. However, they only make things more complicated by foregrounding the

¹⁷⁴ Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Vita was the inspiration for the book and Woolf borrowed a number of aspects from Vita’s life when writing her mock-biography (for example, Orlando’s house is named after Vita’s childhood home, Knole House). In a diary entry in 1927, Woolf documents the moment of conception of the book: ‘And instantly the usual exciting devices enter my mind: a biography beginning in the year 1500 & continuing to the present day, called Orlando: Vita; only with a change about from one sex to another’. Virginia Woolf, *A Writer’s Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Harcourt, 1982), pp. 114-15.

¹⁷⁶ Bowlby, ‘Introduction’, in *Orlando*, p. xix.

¹⁷⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 5.

problematics of seeing and the idea of evidence, as well as introducing yet another gap in the text, this time between word and image.¹⁷⁸

As a result of this combination of fabricated photos and incomplete textual evidence, Orlando appears as a heterogeneous collection of ‘images’. Indeed, as the narrator resignedly puts it at one point, it is ‘with fragments [...] that we must do our best to make up a picture of Orlando’s life and character’ (p. 120). Whilst this might appear to be a kind of failure, I want to argue that what *Orlando* does by emphasising the fragmented character of its protagonist is to problematize the idea of an unambiguously gendered body and the objectifying and fetishising gaze which depends upon clear separations, such as that between male and female bodies. The representations of Orlando trouble the idea of a (male) gaze which positions the (female) body as a passive object of visual pleasure because they show a body which is always in the process of being veiled, a body which fabricates itself through (amongst other things) various sartorial practices, and a body which is always only partially legible. Orlando’s ambiguous identity frustrates the desire to see the truth unveiled and constitutes a playful negotiation of the relationship between gender and the visual, as perspectives and visual frames multiply to produce once again a ‘continually shifting [visual] field’.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ The various photos of Orlando as both man and woman produce what Rose calls ‘a disturbance in the visual field’ because of the ‘uncertain sexual identity’. Rose, ‘Sexuality in the Field of Vision’, p. 226.

¹⁷⁹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

Chapter 3

Cinematic Masquerades of Femininity in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*

A critique of the Hollywood movie is a critique of the imagination of the twentieth century in the West.
– Angela Carter, 'Robert Coover: *A Night at the Movies*'

Screen idols [...] embody one single passion only: the passion for images.
– Jean Baudrillard, *America*

Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du Paradis* [...] is the definitive film about romanticism [...] in which it always seems possible to jump through the screen [...] and live there, in a state of luminous anguish.
– Interview with Angela Carter, by Rosemary Jackson

Introduction

In 1979, Glyndebourne Opera House commissioned Angela Carter to write a libretto for an opera of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Although never completed, the fragments of her libretto were published posthumously as 'Orlando: or, the Enigma of the Sexes'.¹ Carter remains largely faithful to the novel, but does make some interesting changes, for example adding a brief discussion of Aristophanes' speech from Plato's *Symposium*, thereby strengthening the theme of androgyny. She also gives a voice to Orlando's servants, which not only transforms Woolf's original omniscient narration into a polyvocal text, but also foregrounds issues of class difference. About a decade after this commission, Carter appeared in Tom Paulin's controversial documentary *J'accuse Virginia Woolf*, broadcast by Channel 4 in 1991. As part

¹ Angela Carter, 'Orlando: or, the Enigma of the Sexes', in *The Curious Room: Plays, Film Scripts and an Opera*, ed. Mark Bell (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), pp. 155-82. Little has been written on Carter's treatment of *Orlando*. See Maria de Deus Duarte, "'What a wonderful piece of work is a woman!': *Orlando* and *The Enigma of the Sexes*", *Via Panorâmica: Revista Eletrônica de Estudos Anglo-Americanos / An Anglo-American Studies Journal* Série 3.3 (2014): 21-42.

of the documentary's polemical, and at times reductive, critique of Woolf's work, Carter dismissed *Orlando* as 'an orgy of snobbery', 'the apotheosis of brown-nosing' and 'a slobbering valentine to a member of the upper classes'.² Carter's hostility is surprising not just because she had already written the libretto by this point, but because her own writing practice owes a significant debt to Woolf's work. Like *Orlando*, Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* features an ambiguously gendered protagonist who changes sex from male to female.³ Furthermore, *New Eve* similarly demonstrates an interest in the links between gender, clothing and narrative, playing with the boundaries separating essence from appearance, being from seeming, and the body from the clothes with which it is revealed or disguised.⁴

New Eve centres on the experiences of Evelyn, an Englishman who travels to New York in search of a job but finds only a crumbling and chaotic city on the verge of collapse. Whilst there, Evelyn forms an abusive relationship with Leilah, a black prostitute whom he finds simultaneously alluring and repulsive. He grows bored with her when she becomes pregnant and after she undergoes a botched abortion, Evelyn flees her and the apocalyptic metropolis, heading into the desert. However, he is quickly captured by a separatist and feminist group of women under the direction of Mother and taken to their underground city of Beulah. Once there, he is surgically transformed into a woman as part of Mother's plan to replace the existing patriarchal society with a new matriarchal one, with Evelyn reborn as the titular New Eve and placed at the centre of a new mythology based on an essentialised Womanhood.⁵ However, shortly after surgery, Eve escapes from Mother before this plan can be put fully into action but is once again captured, this time by a violent and misogynist poet named Zero, who makes Eve self-conscious of her femininity through his brutal treatment of her. The text complicates matters further when Eve later comes face to face with her movie screen-idol, Tristessa,

² Jeff Mordan (dir.), *J'accuse Virginia Woolf*, written by Tom Paulin, Fulmar Productions for Channel Four, 29 January 1991.

³ *The Passion of New Eve* will hereafter be abbreviated to *New Eve*.

⁴ Kathryn S. Laing describes *New Eve* as, variously, 'a dialogue' with, 'an oedipal debate with' and 'a rewriting of' Woolf's *Orlando*. Kathryn S. Laing, 'Chasing the Wild Goose: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*', in *Virginia Woolf Out of Bounds: Selected Papers from the Tenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jessica Berman and Jane Goldman (New York: Pace University Press, 2001), pp. 86-91 (pp. 86-87).

⁵ The split between Evelyn and Eve is one of the most significant narrative strategies of the novel, and the text frequently problematizes the separation of male from female, masculine from feminine. Therefore, I will refer to Evelyn and Eve in most instances as Eve/lyn, with the exception of those moments when I want to stress the protagonist's male or female body, or particular points in the novel's chronology (before or after the sex change). The notion of a new Eve is, in part, a reworking and a parody of the New Adam of American myth. See, for example, R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955). Carter is also reworking a nineteenth-century French text about a fictionalised Thomas Edison who constructs a female automaton. See Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, *Tomorrow's Eve*, trans. Robert Martin Adams (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

described as the most beautiful woman in the world but who turns out to be a man in drag. Tristessa is murdered by a group of hyper-masculine militia and Eve escapes yet again, this time to the west coast, where she is reunited with Leilah, now revealed as Lilith, Mother's daughter. Lilith informs Eve that their plan has been put on hold as the entire country is falling apart amidst a new civil war. After a surreal experience of time and identity in a cave by the sea, Eve sails off in a small vessel, in search of a new beginning.

From this brief plot summary, Carter's debt to Woolf is immediately apparent, for *New Eve* recalls Orlando's experience of two kinds of self-fashioning, namely cross-dressing and bodily metamorphosis, which appear in Carter's novel as split between Tristessa and Eve/lyn respectively. Carter's text also explores the links between gender, clothing and narrative, as Eve's retrospective narrative of how he became a she attempts to give an account of her metamorphic self, a self which is clothed in variously-gendered attire throughout, and which she describes as 'a blank sheet of paper' upon which femininity is then violently inscribed by Zero.⁶ There are also a number of smaller allusions to *Orlando*, such as the crashing of 'trumpets and cymbals' after Evelyn's transformation into Eve, which recall the trumpets that blast 'Truth!' after Orlando's metamorphosis (p. 77).⁷ Despite these similarities and echoes, it is clear that Carter's text departs from *Orlando* by representing its protagonist's transformation as a violent event, with Evelyn's sex-change carried out against his will and through surgery rather than a benevolent magic. Furthermore, whilst Orlando becomes aware of her new femininity in light-hearted and humorous ways, such as her experiences of wearing a cumbersome dress for the first time and accidentally revealing a portion of her ankle, Eve's 'apprenticeship in womanhood' is as 'savage [...] as could have been devised', as she learns how to perform her femininity through Zero's regular and brutal acts of rape and abuse (p. 107). One of the central aims of this chapter, then, is to explore and analyse Carter's representation of gendering as a violent process, for in the majority of scenes where gender plays a significant role, violence of one kind or another is never far away.⁸

⁶ Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (London: Virago, 1982), p. 83. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

⁷ Laing notes this allusion as well as a number of others to Woolf's *Orlando* including the presence of the philosopher John Locke (who is unnamed in *Orlando* and appears in the epigraph to *New Eve*) and the appearance of birds (the wild goose in *Orlando* finds an echo in the bird of Hermes in *New Eve*). Laing, 'Chasing the Wild Goose', pp. 87-88.

⁸ A number of critics have approached Carter's work in terms of her representation of gender as a violent process. See, for example, Jean Wyatt, 'The Violence of Gendering: Castration Images in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Passion of New Eve* and "Peter and the Wolf"', in *Critical Essays on Angela Carter*, ed. Lyndsay Tucker (New York: G. K. Hall & Co, 1998), pp. 60-80.

Alongside representations of gendered violence, *New Eve* also clearly delights in fantasy and in play, and uses both to explore the notion of the subject as malleable because constructed from a multiplicity of forces, ideas and practices. As I noted in the Introduction, Armstrong argues that ‘Carter’s work comes out of the possibilities for bravura fantasy in *Orlando*’ as well as other works by Woolf.⁹ Furthermore, she explains that Carter ‘takes up that liberated sense of a multiple subject which begins to be discovered at the end of *To the Lighthouse* and leads to an element of fantasy, openness and play’.¹⁰ Carter’s work, Armstrong suggests, is characterised by ‘the pleasure principle, playing with dream-work and transgression’, with the gendered body closely bound up with fantasy, as it is in *Orlando*.¹¹ The body is a site of multiplicity, of competing desires and pleasures, but also of different social ideas and discourses, and thus it is in a sense unknowable (hence the need to examine it and make sense of it/control it). In its negative form, the gendered body is subjected to what Carter calls ‘extraordinary lies’ or myths ‘designed to make people unfree’, especially women.¹² But in its more positive or free form, Carter represents the body in terms of openness, play and bravura fantasy – not so much in terms of what the body is but what it might become. Closely bound up with her interest in bodies and fantasy is Carter’s love of the visual. As already noted, Armstrong observes that Carter writes in ‘a stylised, objectifying, external manner, as if all experience, whether observed or suffered, is self-consciously conceived of as *display*, a kind of rigorous, analytical, public self-projection’.¹³ As I will argue, Carter’s interest in the visual takes both a negative and a positive form. With *New Eve*, Carter foregrounds the violence associated with the iconography of the cinema, in particular the ways in which Hollywood fetishizes and commodifies femininity. Nonetheless, Carter also clearly enjoys writing about the visualised body, and delights in the power of the visual arts to seduce and fascinate. Indeed, with respect to Hollywood cinema Carter wrote that ‘I resented it, it fascinated me’.¹⁴ *New Eve* displays this same ambivalence with respect to cinema, both revelling in the powers of illusion which the cinematic apparatus can conjure up and exposing the dark underside of cinema, with

⁹ Isobel Armstrong, ‘Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus’, in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 266-86 (p. 267). In this essay, Armstrong contrasts Carter with Anita Brookner, arguing that each takes up a different ‘inflection’ of desire from Woolf’s complex work. By contrast with what she sees as Carter’s particular debt to Woolf, Armstrong suggests that Brookner takes up the strain of elegy in Woolf’s work and the notion of desire as lack.

¹⁰ Armstrong, ‘Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus’, p. 273.

¹¹ Armstrong, ‘Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus’, p. 273.

¹² Angela Carter, ‘Notes from the Front Line’, in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 45-53 (p. 47).

¹³ Armstrong, ‘Woolf by the Lake, Woolf at the Circus’, p. 278 (emphasis in original).

¹⁴ Angela Carter, ‘Author’s Introduction’, in *Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings* (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 5.

its cult of fetishised movie stars, its commodification of femininity, and the fostering of violent modes of looking such as objectification and voyeurism.

In this chapter I look at the ways in which *New Eve* explores various forms of violence connected with the gendering of subjectivity and with respect to a phallic field of vision which in most cases is closely tied to cinematic forms of spectatorship and imagery. A clear example of this appears in the opening scene, in which Evelyn consumes cinematic images of femininity in a voyeuristic and fetishistic manner. However, even after this episode Eve/lyn's experience outside of the movie theatre is filtered through a cinematic lens as he continues to adopt a conventionally masculine and voyeuristic position of observation. In fact, as Maggie Tonkin observes, 'the entire novel can be read as a dialogue with the feminist theories of the gaze and spectatorship dominant at the time of its writing'.¹⁵ Whilst Carter herself refers to the novel as an 'anti-mythic novel' and 'a feminist tract about the social creation of femininity', my focus is upon the specifically cinematic creation of femininity, itself a kind of mythic creation.¹⁶ *New Eve* is thus in dialogue with ideas by Mulvey and other feminist film theorists concerned with masculine structures of looking which position spectators in strictly gendered ways. However, as I hope to show, Carter's text looks beyond the limitations of such theorising by problematizing the separation between a male gaze and a female object, and by exploring more ambiguous configurations of the relationship between gender and the visual.

Because much of Eve/lyn's experience is triangulated via cinematic images and ways of looking, I make use of the concept of 'suture' from film theory to illuminate the relationship between his/her look and the objects (often women or images of women) at which s/he gazes, as well as the structure of Eve/lyn's own identity, itself intimately bound up with images and implicated in visual structures. Kaja Silverman explains that 'suture' refers to those 'procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers'.¹⁷ The spectator's place within cinematic signification is dictated 'by means of interlocking shots' and his or her gaze is connected not only with the images projected onto the screen but with both the camera's gaze and the gaze(s) of the actor(s).¹⁸ Because the film dictates what the spectator is able to look at, there is always the danger that the viewer will become aware of his/her passivity.

¹⁵ Maggie Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence: Critical Fictions/Fictional Critiques* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 195. In a similar way, Scott Dimovitz argues that 'Carter's works' are more productively read as 'in constant dialogue' with various works of theory rather than as merely 'rehearsing one form or another of contemporary theory'. Scott Dimovitz, 'Angela Carter's Narrative Chiasmus: *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve*', *Genre* 42 (2009), 83-111 (p. 84).

¹⁶ Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', p. 47.

¹⁷ Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 195.

¹⁸ Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 201.

Hence, many film theorists argue that films tend to conceal this passivity and their own role in directing the spectator by encouraging the viewer to identify with one of the central characters on-screen.¹⁹ In suturing the spectator to the images projected, films thus also suture over those aspects which threaten to break the cinematic illusion and the spectator's comforting sense of visual pleasure. In terms of gender, Silverman notes that feminist film theorists have argued that one of film's primary methods of such concealment lies in its 'setting up [of] a relay of glances between male characters within the fiction and the male viewers in the theater audience'. In addition, films also displace values of passivity 'onto a female character within the fiction'.²⁰ As Mulvey argues, classic narrative film offers two kinds of visual pleasure: the first involves the spectator's identification with images of active male characters which flatter his/her ego and the second derives from using images of passive female characters as objects of sexual stimulation.²¹ For feminists, then, the operation of suture is part of the masculine scopopic regime that positions women as objects of the male gaze.

As I will show in this chapter, Evelyn's way of looking tends to replicate this model of cinematic looking as he treats women, both on and off screen, as objects for his scopophilic gaze. However, *New Eve* also problematizes this visual structure by transforming Evelyn into a woman, thereby changing his position of observation and making him/her more self-conscious about his/her mode of spectatorship. In fact, the concept of suture is given a literal form in the stitching of Evelyn into a new body. After this operation has occurred, Mother then attempts to re-suture the relationship between Eve/lyn's body and the images with which s/he identifies so that his/her mind becomes feminine too. Despite these suturing operations, both physical and mental, a split between Eve/lyn's sense of self and the images s/he consumes persists which the text refuses to suture up and thus erase. *New Eve* also looks behind Tristessa's cinematic image of woman and the ways in which transvestism upsets masculine structures of looking. The discovery that Tristessa is a man in drag causes much trouble for Eve/lyn as s/he has to rethink the nature of his/her scopophilic gaze as well as the deeper meaning of idealised images of femininity. Lastly, *New Eve* also plays with the sense in which readers are sutured to Eve's retrospective narrative because it is not obvious until the sex-change is revealed that the narrative is told by Eve. The text thus blurs the boundary between

¹⁹ This applies in most cases to conventional films, such as classic Hollywood films. There are many examples of other film traditions which play on this passivity, forcing the spectator to confront their position in the cinematic apparatus. There is a rich tradition of films which do this, including the films of Jean-Luc Godard and more recently Michael Haneke.

²⁰ Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 222.

²¹ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 14-27.

Evelyn and Eve, not only creating a moment of shock and re-evaluation midway through the text but also forcing readers to pay attention to those passages which move subtly between Evelyn's and Eve's point of view. The text thus also refuses to suture up the gap between the narrating 'I' and the narrated 'I', and between Eve's voice and the various textual images of Eve/lyn. In this way, *New Eve* shows the limitations of the visual as it is only through the temporality of narrative that readers are able to appreciate the surprise that what they have been reading was all along voiced by Eve.²² In contrast with the pleasures of suturing, Carter's text demonstrates what Barthes sees as the pleasure of gaps and seams, what he refers to as an 'intermittence', a 'tear' and the 'edges' between two things.²³ *New Eve* is a text that refuses the pleasures of a linear narrative and the frozen, fetishized images of femininity in classic cinematic representation because Eve/lyn's sexual and gender mobility invites readers to re-read and reconsider material in the light of new knowledge gained midway through the narrative.

As in the previous two chapters, I will again plot a 'relay of looks' throughout the text, taking in not only the cinematic gaze but also once again the *flâneur's* gaze (which Evelyn adopts during his time in New York), as well as what I want to call a queer gaze. Eve/lyn's gaze is ultimately best described as queer because neither the subject nor the object of the gaze has a single and stable gender. The clearest representation of this is Eve/lyn's gaze directed at Tristessa because, like Orlando, both characters put pressure on the idea of a stable and legible gender. A central aspect of this chapter will therefore be devoted to analysing how Carter subverts gendered ways of looking which privilege the masculine observer and which involve violence directed at women as objects of the gaze. *New Eve* also features a number of visual frames which mediate the different looks, the most important of which are the cinema screen, the mirror and the window. Once again, I will pay careful attention to how each frame mediates the different looks that appear in the text. The combination of these looks and visual frames is best described as a relay because *New Eve* makes clear that each look and frame reconfigures the other adjacent examples: Evelyn's *flâneur*-like gaze as he wanders around New York at night bears a number of similarities with his earlier cinematic gaze directed at Tristessa's screen

²² A cinematic adaptation of the novel would struggle to represent this gap because it would prove challenging to conceal Eve's sex from spectators if the film were told from her point of view in the same way the novel is Eve's retrospective narrative. In this way, the novel constitutes a rejection of the cinematic in utilising a distinctively non-cinematic form of narrative.

²³ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 10. This kind of pleasure Barthes calls, in French, *jouissance*. It is rendered into English by Barthes's translator as 'bliss'. Barthes writes that whilst the text of pleasure 'contents, fills' and comforts its readers, the text of bliss 'discomforts' and 'unsettles' (p. 14). *New Eve* often fits the latter category more than the former, as it unsettles ideas about the nature of sex, gender and desire.

image, for example. The relay of looks in this chapter thus extends beyond those constructed in the previous chapters, with the cinema in particular a more important node. Given the violence in *New Eve* noted above, this chapter asks whether or not Carter represents the same problems with respect to the gendered visual field as Woolf did in *Mrs Dalloway* and *Orlando*, and whether Eve/lyn's experiences suggest a way out of masculine structures of gender and the visual.

The Gendered Body in the Cinematic Field of Vision

New Eve immediately begins with the act of cinematic spectatorship, as the opening pages detail a night out at the cinema in which Evelyn takes 'some girl or other' to see a re-run of an old film starring Tristessa, the latter billed as "The most beautiful woman in the world" (p. 5). This important scene condenses many of the dominant themes of the text and sets up the central dynamic that I want to focus on in this chapter: the relationship between the subject and the object of the gaze within a gendered field of vision. The first sentence makes clear the relationship between gendered bodies, cinematic spectatorship, and desire: 'The last night I spent in London, I took some girl or other to the movies and, through her mediation, I paid you a little tribute of spermatozoa, Tristessa' (p. 5). The novel thus begins with the act of looking, with a female film star the object of its first-person narrator's sexually charged male gaze, and introduces the first of several enclosed spaces: the cinema theatre. Throughout the narrative, Eve/lyn passes through a number of enclosed spaces, all of which play a role in Eve/lyn's changing identity and the structures of looking in which s/he engages.

The gendered body takes three forms in this passage and relates to the visual in different ways. At the centre is Tristessa's cinematic body, a body composed of light and dark which is projected onto a screen in magnified form and exists to be looked at by spectators. The language suggests that this body is looked at with such fervent desire that it becomes almost a religious body, one which invites tribute and worship.²⁴ Then there is the 'girl' Evelyn has taken to the cinema on a date, whose body acts as a conduit connecting Evelyn's gaze with Tristessa's image, but is otherwise disposable and insignificant.²⁵ Lastly, there is the almost invisible body

²⁴ It is clear that Tristessa is part of 'the cult of stars' which is 'not a secondary phenomenon, but the supreme form of cinema, its mythical transfiguration' according to Jean Baudrillard. See his *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2010), p. 59. This religious worship of Tristessa is also related to the novel's religious title, which conflates Old and New Testaments.

²⁵ Her insignificance is evidenced by the fact that Eve/lyn repeatedly says that he cannot remember the girl's name (see pages 5-8 in which he repeats this fact three times). The only details Eve/lyn gives are that she had 'grey eyes and a certain air of childlike hesitancy' (p. 9). Helen Stoddart observes that whilst Evelyn is 'embarrassed by [the girl's] tears', he enjoys 'the on-screen spectacle of Tristessa's "crucifixion by brain

of Evelyn, a body that is here not an object to be looked at but a body that looks. It is, however, also an immobile body, transfixed by the cinematic body on screen, suggesting a passivity which the film likely conceals in its presentation of Tristessa as object of the male gaze. Despite this hint of passivity, Evelyn's male body appears primarily as an active subject of the gaze, as we can hear the 'eye' in the repeated 'I' in the opening sentence.²⁶ The body's materiality is registered only in the ejaculation at the sight of Tristessa's filmic image. In this scenario, then, male bodies look and female bodies are looked at (or contribute to the enjoyment of other female bodies to be looked at).²⁷ This first enclosed space of the darkened cinema theatre is akin to Plato's cave, where images are projected onto a wall; Evelyn's transfixed gaze is held in place by the fantasy of the on-screen images in a similar way to the prisoners' in the cave.²⁸

This opening parallels Mulvey's argument, noted in the Introduction, that in a patriarchal society 'pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly.'²⁹ Evelyn's cinematic gaze can be read quite straightforwardly in these terms, and indeed the novel often presents the relationship between gender and the visual in this way. As I also noted in the Introduction, Mulvey has written on Carter's representations of cinema and this therefore strengthens the idea of a dialogue between the two writers. She praises *New Eve* as one of the best representations of classic cinema's masculine visual economy.³⁰ However, part of what makes the novel so fascinating is that it does not stop here. In the course of the narrative, the text problematizes and undermines this masculine cinematic economy by returning Evelyn's male gaze, by exploring other visual modalities or ways of seeing, and by finding alternatives to the visual. Even the opening scene contains elements that do not easily fit into Mulvey's model and instead gesture towards other ways of engaging with filmic images of the gendered body. For example, there are a number of 'sentimental queers' in the audience

fever". Helen Stoddart, 'The Passion of New Eve and the Cinema: Hysteria, Spectacle, Masquerade', in *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 111-31 (p. 114).

²⁶ This sliding between the 'I' and the 'eye' recalls Woolf's 'Street Haunting' essay where the narrator becomes a giant eye as she walks through the London streets.

²⁷ This situation will be reversed later in the text as Evelyn is turned into a (female) body to be looked at.

²⁸ Jean-Louis Baudry makes the point that the 'different elements' of the cinema such as the 'projector, darkened hall, [and] screen' reproduce 'in a striking way the *mis-en-scène* of Plato's cave'. Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', *Film Quarterly*, 28.2 (1974-75), 39-47 (p. 45). F. M. Cornford also makes the connection between Plato's cave and the cinema theatre in his translation of Plato: 'A modern Plato would compare his Cave to an underground cinema'. *The Republic of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 228, note 2.

²⁹ Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 19.

³⁰ As Mulvey argues, it is 'hard to think of any more succinct summing-up of the paradox of cinema and its projection of fantasy and illusion on to the female body than the opening of *The Passion of New Eve*'. Laura Mulvey, 'Cinema Magic and the Old Monsters: Angela Carter's Cinema', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 241-52 (p. 243).

whose visual enjoyment differs from Evelyn's because instead of gazing voyeuristically at Tristessa's image, they identify and sympathise with her. These men 'had come to pay homage' to Tristessa because she 'perfectly expressed a particular pain they felt as deeply as, more deeply than, any woman' (p. 5). For Evelyn, though, this is 'a pain whose nature [he] could not *then* define although it was the very essence of [Tristessa's] magic' (p. 5; emphasis added). Eve's narrative voice subtly intervenes here, cutting across Evelyn's voyeuristic gaze by gesturing towards a later moment when s/he too will look at Tristessa's image with sympathetic identification, as opposed to voyeuristic and fetishistic pleasure. This cross-gender identification (men identifying with the image of woman) is significant because it breaks with the binary structure of visuality that Mulvey identifies in classical Hollywood narrative cinema, whereby the spectator, positioned by the film as masculine, is directed to identify (narcissistically) only with the male figure on screen, who directs the action of the film. The woman on the screen, by contrast, is there to signify 'to-be-looked-at-ness' and functions as an erotic object only.³¹ *New Eve* suggests that a queer spectator can break with this visual structure by identifying with the pain and violence involved in the performance of femininity. This sympathetic gaze will appear in a developed form later in the narrative when Eve/lyn is forced to assume the position of object of the gaze, thereby experiencing the violence of gendering first-hand.

Whilst Mulvey's model of a masculine cinematic visual economy is politically provocative in its foregrounding of the gendered violence that classic narrative films build into their visual codes, it is important to be open both to other elements within conventional models of spectatorship and alternative ways of looking. Edward Snow argues that by focusing exclusively on the violent aspects of the gaze, critics often '[eliminate] from the onlooking "male" ego whatever elements of identification with, sympathy for, or vulnerability to the feminine such images bespeak'.³² Although Evelyn clearly engages in the kind of violent scopophilia identified by Mulvey, he also comes to appreciate the destructiveness of such a visual economy after being turned into a woman as well as upon discovering the masculinity behind Tristessa's performance of idealised femininity. Eve/lyn thus comes to see things from the other side of the male gaze and from the other side of the camera. *New Eve* is thus a novel that, in Helen Stoddart's words, looks at 'the processes of [both] gender identification and

³¹ Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 19. As mentioned in the Introduction, Mulvey considers the female spectator in her later essay, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 29-38.

³² Edward Snow, 'Theorising the Male Gaze: Some Problems', *Representations*, 25 (1989), 30-41 (p. 31).

objectification which occur around cinematic representations of female “stars”³³. Whilst representing and repeating the violence of the male-authored images of suffering femininity, the novel also explores forms of sympathetic identification as an attempt to challenge the dominance of the male gaze.

Additionally, *New Eve* also looks behind Tristessa’s fetishized and disembodied images to consider the material body of film itself, the celluloid through which light passes to create these images.³⁴ Eve/lyn considers the relationship between this filmic body and the images of Tristessa on screen in a rich passage:

The film stock was old and scratched, as if the desolating passage of time were made visible in the rain upon the screen [...] yet these erosions of temporality only enhanced your luminous presence since they made it all the more forlorn, the more precarious your specious triumph over time. For you were just as beautiful as you had been twenty years before, would always be so beautiful as long as celluloid remained in complicity with the phenomenon of persistence of vision; but that triumph would die of duration in the end, and the surfaces that preserved your appearance were already wearing away. (p. 5)³⁵

By drawing attention to the fact that the passage of time is registered by and in the film stock, Eve/lyn opens the way for a reading of the image of woman on screen not as a timeless, frozen spectacle for a male gaze, but as a body that participates in various temporalities: cinematic/narrative, historical and corporeal. Once again, this challenges Mulvey’s model, for she argues that the spectacle of woman in narrative cinema tends to work against the narrative flow of the film’s story by ‘[freezing] the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation’.³⁶ To be sure, in most cases Tristessa is enjoyed in the form of the static image: Eve/lyn says that her film ‘stills became posters’, that ‘she inspired a style’ and that the ‘wall of [his] cubicle at school had been plated with her photographs’ (p. 6). However, by changing the focus of his gaze from the idealised and fetishised images to the material degradations of the celluloid, Eve/lyn suggests a way of looking at the female body on screen which recognises its

³³ Stoddart, ‘*The Passion of New Eve* and the Cinema’, p. 112.

³⁴ Whilst it may be argued that no image is ever truly disembodied, there is certainly a sense in which images are often consumed as if they were disembodied, floating freely in a kind of abstract space. The fact that cinematic images are projected by passing light through the physical body of the celluloid in a sense re-embodies the images – it reminds us that images have a bodily existence. Perhaps it would be better to say that certain kinds of visual devices and uses of images create the effect of disembodiment. Jonathan Crary’s study of visual devices in the nineteenth century makes clear the bodily dimension to certain forms of looking, where the spectator’s body (often the eyes) contributes to or allows for the experience of the images. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 129.

³⁵ In Carter’s short story ‘The Merchant of Shadows’, the role of the film director is described as a ‘priest’ who ‘prints the anagrams of desire upon the stock’. Angela Carter, ‘The Merchant of Shadows’, in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 363-75 (p. 372).

³⁶ Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, p. 19.

materiality.³⁷ Because Tristessa's images exist only as long as the film stock is preserved, it is a short step to the idea of Tristessa as a corporeal subject who ages, rather than as a fetishised, ahistorical image of the eternal feminine.³⁸ This other way of looking also threatens to undermine the cinematic illusion and its creation of an idealised femininity. As Stoddart succinctly puts it, what Carter shows in *New Eve* is that cinema is not only 'the optimum technological vehicle for the parading of the phantasms of gender', but also a medium that 'always threatens to expose the visible means through which "the natural" appears precisely as an apparatus of vision (the screen's "visible rain" and "worn stuttering")'.³⁹ Eve/lyn's recognition of the decay of the celluloid thus has the potential to break the cinematic spell that tries to disguise highly staged and stylised images of femininity as natural. Despite such danger, at this point in the narrative Evelyn is able to read 'these erosions of temporality' as only enhancing Tristessa's 'luminous presence' because they are signs of her, admittedly 'precarious', 'triumph over time' (p. 5). The recognition of the passage of time is thus appropriated in the service of preserving the idea of eternal feminine beauty.⁴⁰

The above passage also contains a key phrase that appears throughout the text: 'persistence of vision'.⁴¹ Whilst the phrase refers ostensibly to a now-discredited theory attempting to explain the perception of motion as due to the structure of the eye, it functions in the text in a much broader and more suggestive manner. At one level, the phrase points to the fact that Tristessa's beauty is dependent on both the film stock being preserved and on the existence of spectators who continue to desire to, and do in fact, watch her films. The

³⁷ As Stoddart points out, the marks on the film stock 'draw attention to the materiality and construction of the representational mode'. At the same time, however, 'Tristessa's image is produced and, more importantly, reproduced before a spectator who actually derives pleasure (albeit sadistic) from his awareness of the distorting means of her reproduction and from the fiction of Tristessa's immediate physical presence'. Stoddart, 'The Passion of *New Eve* and the Cinema', p. 115. She also references Walter Benjamin's argument that the original work of art is the 'prerequisite to the concept of authenticity' but that mechanical reproduction erodes this authenticity. Hence, as Benjamin proposes, the 'cult of the movie star' represents the film industry's attempt to deny this 'shrivelling of the author' with the 'phony spell of a commodity'. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-44 (pp. 214, 224).

³⁸ Carter was clearly fascinated by the way in which photographic images capture and preserve the objects on the other side of the camera lens, for in an essay on the figure of the *femme fatale* she writes that Louise Brooks is 'preserved in the fragile eternity of the film stock'. Angela Carter, 'Femmes Fatales', in *Shaking a Leg: Collective Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 427-432 (p. 428). Cinema thus participates in the fetishisation of youthful, female beauty.

³⁹ Stoddart, 'The Passion of *New Eve* and the Cinema', p. 121.

⁴⁰ It is only later, after Eve/lyn comes to appreciate the artificiality of Tristessa's femininity that s/he appreciates the fact that cinematic femininity is a product of the cinematic apparatus of vision. There are, of course, hints of Tristessa's fake femininity. For example, Eve/lyn acknowledges that 'no drag-artiste felt his repertoire complete without a personation of [Tristessa's] magic and passionate sorrow' (p. 6). The irony is that Tristessa turns out to have been a kind of female impersonator all along.

⁴¹ The phrase also occurs repeatedly in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, which I will look at in the next chapter.

relationship between spectator and image is therefore crucial to the way the gendered body is looked at in the cinematic field of vision: a screened body is one that exists in so far as it can be, and is, looked at by a spectator. Later in the text, Eve/lyn even suggests that Tristessa's very existence depends upon being seen, saying that she 'would live as long as persistence of vision' and that it was her 'flesh itself that seemed made of light, flesh so insubstantial only the phenomenon of persistence of vision could account for his presence' (pp. 119, 147). In these later examples, it is clear that cinematic structures of looking have played a significant role in shaping Eve/lyn's perception even outside the cinema theatre, for Tristessa's very flesh appears as a projection or simulacrum – as if images are more real than physical objects for Eve/lyn.⁴² Tristessa shimmers as if she were an autonomous cinematic image, freed from her place on the screen – a luminous body.⁴³ That Tristessa's existence is dependent upon persistence of vision suggests that the gendered subject acquires a sense of unity through repetition, for, just as the phrase 'persistence of vision' captures the idea that the quick succession of static images produces the effect of a single moving body upon the human eye, so by extension the gendered body's illusory unity is produced by a series of repeated acts. Given that Tristessa is in reality a man in drag, her existence as a woman is dependent upon her persistent performance of femininity and her being seen persistently as a woman by others. Carter thus foregrounds not only the cinematic construction but the corporeal construction of the gendered subject.

On another level, 'persistence of vision' functions in terms of narrative focalisation, as Alison Lee has suggested. Given the various images of gendered bodies in the text and given the complex focalisation of Eve looking back at herself as Evelyn, who in turn gazes at other characters, gendered images, and himself in various mirrors, Carter's novel constitutes a bewildering visual medley. In her approach to reading this ambiguously focalised text, Lee suggests that the phrase 'persistence of vision' is akin to metaphor in that it 'carries over from one image onto another' and that it 'encourages a back-and-forth reading [...] [recontextualising] earlier images in terms of later ones, and later, in terms of earlier'.⁴⁴ However, whilst it might be tempting to try to sort the various images and acts of focalisation into a coherent, linear or correct order, the text resists such a move, according to Lee, because

⁴² Later in the chapter, I will make several references to the work of Baudrillard, for whom reality in the latter half of the twentieth century becomes increasingly characterised by the simulacrum – the copy of a copy and without an original.

⁴³ I will return to this point about Tristessa in a later discussion in this chapter. In the following chapter, Hoffman's desire machines are represented as an extension of the cinema in that they produce autonomous images which are freed from any screen.

⁴⁴ Alison Lee, 'Angela Carter's New Eve/lyn: De/En-Gendering Narrative', in *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers*, ed. by Kathy Mezei (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 238-49 (p. 242).

the narrative voice remains, irreducibly, 'a site of struggle'.⁴⁵ The best example of this is the 'psycho-surgery' that Eve/lyn is subjected to after being given the body of a woman. Here, Eve/lyn is bombarded with stereotypical images of femininity, including films starring Tristessa, in order that s/he identify herself as a woman. Eve/lyn thus learns to see herself through patriarchy's construction of femininity. Further complicating matters, Eve/lyn still remembers being a man and occasionally acts like one, which emphasises even more strongly the notion that femininity is an imperfect construction and a regulated performance. Read in terms of focalisation, then, the phrase 'persistence of vision' reveals and even exacerbates the narrative possibilities in the novel rather than enabling the reader to transform the textual fragmentation into a linear narrative. As Lee argues, 'Carter uses [the phrase] to emphasize a relationship rather than an inexorable forward movement'.⁴⁶ I will return to this issue when analysing the sex-change scene later in the novel, but for now I want to register the point that this cinematic novel creates a sense of visual, as well as gender, indeterminacy at the level of narrative focalisation as well as thematic content.⁴⁷

This visual indeterminacy also appears with respect to Eve/lyn's multiple perspectives on Tristessa, which oscillate between scopophilia, a disillusioned gaze, and a scrutinising regard which recognises Tristessa's femininity as a cinematic construction. To begin with, Eve/lyn recalls that he 'had loved Tristessa out of pure innocence when [he] was a little boy and the sculptural flare of her nostrils haunted [his] pubescent dreams' (p. 6). He even wrote her an 'ink-stained, ill-spelt love letter' and in return received from MGM 'a still from *The Fall of the House of Usher*' in which Tristessa looks 'ethereal in her shroud' (p. 6). Movie references abound here, evoking images of Hollywood and famous movie stars, and Tristessa is grouped with Billie Holliday and Judy Garland as 'women who expose their scars with pride' (p. 6). Indeed, her very name evokes suffering in its closeness to 'triste' in Italian and 'tristeza' in Spanish, both of which mean sadness. Eve/lyn confesses that 'the spectacle of Tristessa's suffering always aroused' him but tries to avoid responsibility by suggesting that suffering was 'her vocation' and that she suffered 'exquisitely' (p. 8).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Eve/lyn's enjoyment

⁴⁵ Lee, 'Angela Carter's New Eve/lyn', p. 239.

⁴⁶ Lee, 'Angela Carter's New Eve/lyn', pp. 241-42.

⁴⁷ This strengthens the link between *New Eve* and *Orlando*, for as I argued in the previous chapter, Woolf's text focuses on the indeterminacy of Orlando's ambiguous subjectivity.

⁴⁸ Tristessa's performance of masochistic, suffering femininity is a version of the Marquis de Sade's character Justine, whom Carter argues in *The Sadeian Woman* is a model for many representations of femininity in the twentieth-century, such as Marilyn Monroe. As she puts it, the 'public sexual ideology of Hollywood finally formulated itself, in the nineteen forties, as a version of Justine's own. Female virtue was equated with frigidity and a woman's morality with her sexual practice'. Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 1979), p. 71.

of Tristessa makes him a '[c]onnoisseur of the poetry of masochism', to borrow a phrase from Carter's *The Sadeian Woman*.⁴⁹ In passages such as these, it is clear that Eve/lyn is positioned as a masculine spectator, in thrall to fantasy images of femininity which are created to flatter the male ego.

By contrast, Eve/lyn also recalls looking at Tristessa in disillusionment, his gaze being transformed by a photograph of her 'in trousers and sweater, swinging, of all things, a golf club'. She is described as looking 'long, lean, [and] flat-chested', showing her teeth 'in a grin that did not come naturally to her', for her authentic smiles always 'came in a code that signified nothing to do with joy'. The effect of this uncharacteristic pose is to undo the spell of her filmic fantasy and spoil Eve/lyn's scopophilia: 'I was shocked and bewildered by this photograph' and it 'marked the beginning of my disillusion with Tristessa' (p. 7). This disillusionment is also linked with iconographic changes within the film industry, for the 'vogue for romanticism in the late forties' was quickly replaced by images of '[s]trong-women with bulging pectorals' – 'bread, rather than dreams' in Eve/lyn words (p. 7).⁵⁰ The golf photo was apparently an attempt on the part of 'MGM's publicity department' to 'show Tristessa was only human, a girl like any other girl'. However, because Tristessa's 'allure had lain in the tragic and absurd heroism with which she had denied real life', she 'could make only the most perfunctory gestures towards [it]'. Besides, Eve/lyn adds, 'nobody had ever loved her for anything as commonplace as humanity' (p. 7). Just as Edgar Allan Poe claimed that 'the death [...] of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world', so Evelyn's scopophilia is only aroused by images of suffering, idealised femininity.⁵¹ Seeing Tristessa as an ordinary woman transforms his enthralled gaze into a detached and disillusioned glare.

Whilst Evelyn's view of Tristessa thus alternates between enchantment and disillusionment, a third perspective appears in Eve's more critical regard, which recognises that Tristessa's femininity is a cinematic construction. First, Eve's retrospective narrative gaze appears in the recognition of a tension between image and flesh: '[Tristessa] had been the

⁴⁹ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Julia Simon has noted that since Tristessa is modelled, in part, on Greta Garbo, Roland Barthes's distinction between Garbo and Audrey Hepburn is relevant to Evelyn's comments above about the changing representations of femininity within the cinema. Barthes contrasts what he refers to as Garbo's 'essential beauty' and 'lyricism of Woman' with Hepburn's 'individualized' face. Roland Barthes, 'The Face of Garbo', in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 56-57 (p. 57). See Julia Simon, *Rewriting the Body: Desire, Gender and Power in Selected Novels by Angela Carter* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 127. When Eve sees herself for the first time, she describes what she sees as 'a lyrical abstraction of femininity' (p. 74).

⁵¹ Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', in *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. G. R. Thompson (London: W.W. Norton, 2004), pp. 675-84 (p. 680).

dream itself made flesh though the flesh I knew her in was not flesh itself but only a moving picture of flesh, real but not substantial' (pp. 7-8).⁵² This sentence captures nicely the way in which the text as a whole slides ambiguously between fleshy bodies and imaged bodies, often making it unclear where the reality of the gendered body lies. Eve's critical gaze appears most emphatically when s/he says that 'all [Tristessa] signified was false!' and that her existence was 'only notional; [she was] a piece of pure mystification' (p. 6). Occurring, as this passage does, at the very beginning of the text, readers are not aware of Tristessa's secret at this point. However, it is possible to appreciate the fact that this perspective represents a retrospective viewpoint and hence challenges Evelyn's youthful perspectives on Tristessa. This opening thus sets up a complex and ambiguous narrative focalisation, as Eve/lyn's gaze changes subtly from enchantment to disillusionment and finally to a critical regard, sliding between past and present, fantasy and reality.

Veiling and Unveiling the Female Body as *Femme Fatale*

Evelyn's night at the cinema is described as a last enjoyment of Tristessa's cinematic beauty, for the following day he flies to America, seemingly leaving behind his obsession with her image: 'I thought I was bidding a last goodbye to the iconography of adolescence' (p. 8). However, Eve/lyn's experiences in America not only return him to this iconography but take him deeper into it. At a superficial level, Evelyn continues to watch Tristessa's films throughout his travels in America. In New York, there is 'a little cult revival [...] of Tristessa's films' and Eve/lyn says that he 'grew used to seeing her magic face when I turned on the [TV] set after midnight' (p. 15).⁵³ More substantially, Eve/lyn not only meets Tristessa in person, thereby coming face-to-face with her image, but in a sense steps into his adolescent iconography as Mother turns him into a woman resembling the objects of his scopophilic gaze. Far from leaving behind this iconography, then, Evelyn's journey to, and across, America takes

⁵² This is very similar to the way Baudrillard has written about film stars: 'They are not something to dream about; they are the dream. And they have all the characteristics of dreams: they produce a marked condensation (crystallization) effect and an effect of contiguity (they are immediately contagious), and, above all, they have that power of instantaneous visual materialization (*Anschaulichkeit*) of desire, which is also a feature of dreams.' Baudrillard, *America*, p. 59. In the next chapter, Desiderio uses the same terms of dream and flesh to characterise his disappointment with Hoffman's castle, itself a kind of dream-factory just like the Hollywood that manufactures images of suffering femininity. Mulvey also comments on this sentence from *New Eve*, writing that the illusion of cinema is 'conjured up through reality, the star herself and the materials of cinema, but then substance [is] transformed into the insubstantial and reality subordinated to fantasy'. Mulvey, 'Cinema Magic and the Old Monsters', p. 243.

⁵³ There is a play on the word 'cult' here, as Eve/lyn refers to Tristessa as 'Our Lady of Dissolution', adding that she '[presided] over the catastrophe of the city' (p. 15). Eve/lyn thus blends the idea of movie cult revival with a religious cult.

him deeper into it: as Eve/lyn later explains, ‘I went towards [Tristessa] as towards my own face in a magnetic mirror’ (p. 110). This retrospective insight suggests that Eve/lyn’s relationship to Tristessa involves a kind of return of the repressed that must be worked through.⁵⁴

There is another sense in which Evelyn is wrong about leaving behind the cinematic iconography, for, upon arrival in New York, he finds the city to be an intensely cinematic space. The ‘lurid, Gothic darkness’ and the breakdown of society are suggestive of *film noir* and the disaster movie respectively (p. 10). In fact, even before arriving in the city, the power of cinema had already structured Evelyn’s expectations regarding the city: ‘I’d been hooked on a particular dream, all manner of old movies ran through my head when I first heard I’d got the job there – hadn’t Tristessa herself conquered New York in *The Lights of Broadway?*’ (p. 10). Evelyn’s experience of New York as a cinematic city anticipates Jean Baudrillard’s argument that the heart of the cinema in America is not ‘to be found in the studios’ but is instead ‘all around you outside, all over the city, that marvellous, continuous performance of films and scenarios’.⁵⁵ For Baudrillard, the American city is ‘a screen of signs and formulas’ and ‘seems to have stepped right out of the movies’. Furthermore, in an uncanny repetition of Evelyn’s narrative trajectory, which begins in the cinema theatre and then moves outside to the city, Baudrillard writes that ‘[t]o grasp [the city’s] secret, you should not [...] begin with the city and move inwards to the screen; you should begin with the screen and move outwards to the city’.⁵⁶ Evelyn’s dreams of New York reveal that his initial perception of the city is filtered through film, and his recollection of Tristessa conquering Broadway appears to suggest that he pictures his own journey there in a similar fashion. Once again, far from having left behind the cinematic iconography of his adolescence, Evelyn has clearly internalised it so deeply that it is as if he looks at reality through a movie screen. Whilst in Woolf’s fiction, new perspectives and visual frames provide temporary angles of vision, such as the omnibus window, Evelyn’s gaze here reveals how the visual frame of the cinema screen has become such a prevalent

⁵⁴ Eve/lyn in a sense steps through the mirror, despite his belief that he is moving in the opposite direction. This recurs when Eve/lyn leaves New York. This gesture of stepping towards and through the mirror not only recalls *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) but also Carter’s short story ‘Flesh and the Mirror’ (1974). As I will explore in more detail later on, the mirror is a central visual frame of Eve/lyn’s experiences in America, linked closely to the problem of how one sees the gendered body as well as the experience of specular subjectivity.

⁵⁵ Baudrillard, *America*, p. 58. Strengthening this reading, Nicoletta Vallorani refers to *New Eve*’s representation of New York as a ‘postmodern metropolis’. Nicoletta Vallorani, ‘The Body of the City: Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*’, in *Critical Essays on Angela Carter*, ed. Lindsey Tucker (New York: G. K. Hall & Co, 1998), pp. 176-90 (p. 179). She also writes that ‘New York is [...] pure image, the slide of a city, endlessly reproducing itself like a modern work of art’ (p. 182).

⁵⁶ Baudrillard, *America*, p. 58.

feature of everyday life that subjects internalise its view of reality. Evelyn's experiences in America will force him to question the effects of adopting a cinematic gaze, and eventually he will reject this way of seeing. Until that point, it is as if Evelyn's eye has been supplanted with a camera-eye.⁵⁷ Like Orlando's perception from the speeding motor-car, Evelyn in America becomes a 'cinema equipped with consciousness'.⁵⁸

Carter herself wrote much about her fascination with cinema, on one occasion noting the enormous influence of Hollywood and its transmission of American life around the world:

But it was the movies that administered America to me intravenously, as they did to the entire generation that remembers 1968 with such love. It seemed to me, when I first started going to the cinema intensively in the late Fifties, that Hollywood had colonised the imagination of the entire world and was turning us all into Americans. I resented it, it fascinated me.⁵⁹

Evelyn too seems to have had his imagination 'colonised' by Hollywood cinema, and this passage succinctly captures *New Eve*'s ambivalent position vis-à-vis cinematic representations of gender: both fascinated with and critical of them. Crofts explains that Carter 'was drawn to the cinema because it allowed her to explore and demythologise [certain] structures of looking [...] within the mainstream'.⁶⁰ This idea is made explicit in *New Eve* by turning a male, voyeuristic, cinema-spectator into a woman, and then subjecting him to the very visual structures he himself previously enjoyed as a man. Mulvey, who has also devoted much energy to demythologising gendered structures of looking within film, suggests that the frequent '[t]ransformations and metamorphoses' in Carter's writings lend them a 'magic cinematic attribute'.⁶¹ She looks at a number of Carter's works with respect to cinema, characterising *New Eve* in particular as a 'celebration of cinema'.⁶² Elaine Jordan picks up on many of the filmic references in this novel, noting the 'allusions to *Metropolis*, Greta Garbo, *Sunset*

⁵⁷Carter's novel thus echoes a number of films and cinematic-texts, such as Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie-Camera* and Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*.

⁵⁸As noted in the previous chapter, Charles Baudelaire refers to modern man as a 'kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness'. Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), pp. 1-40 (p. 9). Also quoted in Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 152-96 (p. 171). Carter herself borrows Baudelaire's phrase to describe Walsler in her later *Nights at the Circus* (1984): 'He was a kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness. That was why he was a good reporter'. Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 7.

⁵⁹Carter, 'Author's Introduction', in *Expletives Deleted*, p. 5.

⁶⁰Charlotte Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter's Writing for Radio, Film and Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 91.

⁶¹Mulvey, 'Cinema Magic and the Old Monsters', p. 241. Charlotte Crofts argues that Carter's 'preoccupation with the apparatus behind the objectification of the female body bears a remarkable similarity to the concerns of early feminist film theory' and then goes on to discuss Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' Crofts, *Anagrams*, p. 94.

⁶²Mulvey, 'Cinema Magic and the Old Monsters', p. 241.

Boulevard, the swimming pool of frozen tears, and so on'.⁶³ Gamble also notes the centrality of cinema in this novel, observing that Evelyn is at first a 'detached spectator, unable to believe that he is not still in a movie theatre'.⁶⁴ As Eve/lyn says, 'the city [...] kept me, in my innocence, all agog in my ring-side seat. The movie ran towards its last reel. What excitement!' (p. 15).⁶⁵ Such detachment is later undermined by Eve/lyn's sex-change, which turns him into his own 'masturbatory fantasy' (p. 75), subject to the violence of the male gaze, as well as by his face-to-face encounter with Tristessa and the discovery of her secret. Gamble also points out that Eve/lyn "'knows" America through cinema' but fails to grasp that 'America is cinema'.⁶⁶ The distinction between original and copy, or in the terms of the novel, between the real and the reel, does not hold here. Instead, America embodies Baudrillard's concept of the 'hyperreal', in which 'the real' appears through and is validated by a collection of copies, models and fictions.⁶⁷ Given the way that cinema suffuses both American culture and Carter's novel, *New Eve's* depiction of America constitutes a 'hyper-reel' space with Evelyn floating (at first naively) through a kind of cinematic hallucination, experiencing the real as reel.

Building on existing work on Carter and cinema, I want to develop here a more nuanced account of Eve/lyn's complex relationship to cinema with respect to how it informs his/her vision of what it means to be a gendered subject. The focal point and hinge of Eve/lyn's relationship to cinema concerns his/her changing understanding of Tristessa's performance of suffering femininity on the movie screen. Eve/lyn begins to understand the mechanism of cinematic representations of femininity, and what it says about the constructed character of gender, only once s/he has been transformed into the very image of idealised femininity which

⁶³ Elaine Jordan, 'That Dangerous Edge', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 201-26 (p. 215). Jordan also argues that the 'picaresque sequential structure of *The Passion of New Eve*, crossed by arcane imagery of albatrosses and hermaphrodites, uses Eisenstein's working metaphor of cinema montage as an alchemical process, imaginary and technological' (pp. 344-45).

⁶⁴ Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 121. In the following chapter, Desiderio is also a 'detached observer' as Elaine Jordan points out in her essay 'That Dangerous Edge', p. 214. The image of the detached observer in New York also appears in de Certeau's representation of New York in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: an elevated position of observation in the city 'transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more'. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 92.

⁶⁵ As I will analyse in the final section of this chapter, there is a reversal of this metaphor of film running towards its last reel near the end of Eve/lyn's narrative. As part of a surreal set of experiences in a cave by the sea, Eve/lyn perceives time in reverse and compares it to spools of film curling back in upon themselves.

⁶⁶ Gamble, *Angela Carter*, p. 121.

⁶⁷ See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). See the first essay, 'The Precession of Simulacra', for an account of the concept of the hyperreal.

s/he consumes and once s/he discovers Tristessa's secret. Before examining this, I want to return to Evelyn's experiences in New York in order to trace his engagement with another of the text's important representations of femininity, the depiction of Leilah as a *femme fatale*, and to note the first appearance of another of the novel's frames: the mirror. Whilst Tristessa is an amalgamation of some of the most famous film stars and characters from classic Hollywood cinema, Leilah also alludes to a number of female film stars, in particular those associated with the role of the *femme fatale* such as Barbara Stanwyck's performance in *Double Indemnity* and Rita Hayworth's Gilda. Leilah's performance of femininity has been noted by scholars as a fetishisation of womanhood, but the resonance of her performance with that of the *femme fatale* figure has been almost entirely overlooked.⁶⁸ An examination of Leilah's cinematic quality, however, adds to an understanding of the novel's concern with filmic representations of femininity. Leilah's use of the mirror to create her *femme fatale* persona will play an important part in this, the mirror relaying the gaze from and to the cinema screen. Furthermore, her mirror also plays a significant role in Eve/lyn's cinematic consciousness because it reflects back to him not only Leilah's construction of femininity but his own gaze which is complicit with this structure.

The figure of the *femme fatale* is alluded to early on in the context of Eve/lyn's description of how he envisages New York before his arrival there, thereby foreshadowing Leilah's appearance. After explaining that he 'imagined' the city as 'a clean, hard, bright' place, its phallic 'towers [...] a paradigm of technological aspiration', he adds that he imagined the place inhabited by 'a special kind of crisp-edged girl with apple-crunching incisors and long, gleaming legs like lascivious scissors' (p. 10). Woman is here visualised as simultaneously erotic and threatening, conjuring up the figure of the beautiful but deadly *femme fatale*. That New York turns out to be a 'lurid, Gothic darkness' with 'shadows' that pursue Evelyn situates the city within *film noir* territory (pp. 10, 15). Strengthening this reading is Evelyn's detached gaze, which recalls the discerning eye of the hard-boiled detective, who wanders the shadowy and dangerous streets at night.⁶⁹ Of course, Gamble is correct that Evelyn's detached gaze is also reminiscent of the movie spectator, for he observes New York as a series of images held

⁶⁸ Tonkin is the only critic to engage with Leilah as a *femme fatale* (see chapter 9 of *Angela Carter and Decadence*, pp. 170-96). She discusses a number of Carter scholars who have already noted Leilah's fetishistic performance of femininity, including Gregory J. Rubinson, David Punter, and Andrzej Gasiorek (p. 172).

⁶⁹ Benjamin writes that the *flâneur* becomes 'an unwilling detective' in 'times of terror', when 'everyone is something of a conspirator'. Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', trans. Harry Zohn, in *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 46-133 (p. 72).

at a safe distance.⁷⁰ Evelyn is thus observing and taking part in the “film” of New York simultaneously. However, Evelyn is not just a detached spectator, for his statement that he was ‘agog in [his] ring-side seat’, excited by the ‘promise of violence’, makes it clear that he is also attached to the spectacle before him (p. 15). This combination of attachment and detachment makes sense, for classic Hollywood films (including the *film noir* genre, which was popular in the 1940s) create for the spectator an imaginary sense of proximity to what is presented on screen, whilst simultaneously keeping them at a safe distance.⁷¹ Todd McGowan calls this ‘proximity from a distance’ and explains that this ‘allows the spectator to avoid any encounter in the cinema that might challenge or alter the spectator’s subjectivity’.⁷² This model of cinematic spectatorship illuminates Evelyn’s particular mode of observation in the opening chapters, for he enjoys an erotic attachment to what he sees alongside a cool detachment that allows him to disavow his position and responsibility as an observer. This only changes when Evelyn is forcibly turned into the kind of woman he idealises and objectifies, thereby removing the proximity at a distance as he becomes the image on the movie screen.⁷³

When Evelyn first encounters Leilah, his detached look resonates not only with a cinematic gaze, but also with the *flâneur*’s mode of observation and view of women, particularly as represented by Baudelaire. To begin with, just as Baudelaire writes that woman is a ‘dazzling and bewitching’ figure ‘who holds wills and destinies suspended on her glance’, so Eve/lyn says that ‘[he] was lost the moment that [he] saw her’ (p. 19).⁷⁴ In response to this feeling of dispossession, Evelyn confesses that, ‘[a]s soon as I saw her, I was determined to have her’ (p. 19).⁷⁵ His description therefore strips Leilah of her agency and power over him by reducing her to a series of discreet body parts and accessories: ‘tense and resilient legs’,

⁷⁰ This notion of images held at a distance recurs in the following chapter, when Desiderio looks into a number of peep show exhibits that feature eye-pieces on long stalks. The latter function to create an illusory distance between spectator and spectacle, reassuring the spectator that s/he is not implicated in what s/he sees.

⁷¹ As noted in an earlier footnote, some films attempt to work against this combination of proximity and distance by making the spectator feel too close to the image, producing a sense of horror. In this way, these films actually undo the pleasure of a safe fantasy and challenge the spectator to confront certain issues. Filmmakers from Godard to Haneke have developed cinematic techniques that confront the spectator rather than letting them remain within an unchallenging and safe fantasy space.

⁷² Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 2.

⁷³ As I will later show, this challenge to Evelyn’s position as an observer is also a result of the fact that the comforting space of the cinema theatre (which provided the model for his masculine mode of observation) is replaced with a series of increasingly claustrophobic spaces that do not allow for a safe distance between spectator and screen.

⁷⁴ Baudelaire, ‘The Painter of Modern Life’, p. 30.

⁷⁵ The combination of enchanting spectacle and the desire to possess recalls Baudelaire’s poem ‘Tu mettrais l’univers entier...’ (‘You’d entertain the universe...’), in which a woman’s eyes are ‘illuminated like boutiques’, as if woman is a commodity on display, trying to seduce the consumer into purchasing her and owning her. Baudelaire, ‘You’d entertain the universe...’, in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 53-55 (p. 53).

‘black mesh stockings’, a ‘pair of black, patent leather shoes with straps around the ankles, fetishistic heels six inches high and [...] an immense coat of red fox’ (p. 19).⁷⁶ Leilah appears here as reduced to her attire, again recalling Baudelaire, who asked rhetorically what poet ‘would venture to separate [woman] from her costume?’⁷⁷ Despite this, though, Leilah remains a threatening, if sexually exciting, figure like the *femme fatale* and Evelyn fantasises about her ‘legs [...] coiled or clasped around [his] neck’ (p. 19). In terms of who controls the gaze in this scenario, things are far from clear. On the one hand, Evelyn imagines that Leilah ‘must have known I was staring at her, [for] a woman always knows’, perhaps implying that women, in his view, are subordinate to the male gaze which keeps them under constant surveillance (p. 19). On the other hand, though, there is also a suggestion that Leilah is in fact in control of the gaze, for ‘a certain quivering, as of the antennae of her extravagant hair, suggested she was aware of every nuance in the atmosphere around her that *she charged* with the electric glamour of her presence’ (pp. 19-20; emphasis added).⁷⁸ Furthermore, whilst Leilah ‘flaunt[s] [her] small, high, pointed breasts on which the nipples, painted bright purple to match her mouth, stuck out a full half-inch from the flesh’, she also returns Evelyn’s voyeuristic gaze, staring at him ‘for an endless second with all manner of mocking invitations in their opaque regard’ (p. 20). Later on, Evelyn will discover that Leilah was faking complicity with male fictions of femininity in an attempt to ensnare him as part of Mother’s plan. For now, though, he is, in Stoddart’s words, ‘too wrapped up in the way Leilah’s illusion feeds his own narcissism’ to spot this plot of seduction.⁷⁹ His description of Leilah as a series of fetishised objects suggests

⁷⁶ This recalls the cutting up of Orlando into discreet body parts in the previous chapter by both the narrator and Queen Elizabeth.

⁷⁷ Baudelaire, ‘The Painter of Modern Life’, p. 31. He also goes on to say that woman is ‘obliged to adorn herself in order to be adored’ (p. 33). In an interview with Rosemary Jackson, Carter describes how the *femme fatale* is sometimes recognisable from her clothing and discreet body parts alone: ‘I think of Barbara Stanwyck’s descent down the stairs in *Double Indemnity*. First, you see the stiletto-heeled shoe then the ankle with the chain around it, then the legs and the full, rich shine of her stockings. You know she is going to be a *femme fatale* long before you even see her face’. Rosemary Jackson, ‘Angela Carter’, *Bomb*, 17 (1986). Available at: <http://bombmagazine.org/article/821/angela-carter>

⁷⁸ Evelyn’s belief that a woman always knows when she is being looked at chimes with John Berger’s thesis in *Ways of Seeing* that women ‘interiorize’ the ever-present gaze of men in a bid to ‘acquire some control over’ how they are treated. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 40. I will return to Berger’s argument shortly to see to what degree it helps to explain the dynamic between Evelyn and Leilah. The image of Leilah as an electric woman, charging the atmosphere with her glamour, alludes to the surrealist notion of automatic woman as producing a kind of shock through her beauty, as well as the association of automata, androids, and electricity with femininity. For a discussion of this see chapter 3 of Rebecca Munford’s *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁷⁹ Stoddart, ‘*The Passion of New Eve* and Cinema’, p. 122.

that he fails to see her as an agent performing a complexly layered role, and instead looks upon her as a mere collection of passive parts available for his use.⁸⁰

As Leilah leads Evelyn through the dark, labyrinthine streets, his descriptions of her veil her in a number of iconographies and images of femininity, including Baudelaire's figure of the prostitute, the figure of the striptease model and Tristessa's cinematic femininity. Despite his placing of her in the role of woman-as-image, it remains unclear who is in control of the gaze. To begin with, in a description that both repeats and parodies Baudelaire's comparisons of woman to various animals, Leilah is 'a strange, bird-like creature, plumed with furs, not a flying thing, nor a running thing, nor a creeping thing, not flesh nor fowl, some in-between thing, hovering high above the ground' (p. 21).⁸¹ Continuing this theme of animalistic woman, Evelyn positions Leilah as 'my prey', though a few pages later he revises this, acknowledging that in reality his prey had in fact 'played the hunter' (pp. 21-25). Indeed, he describes her 'vague song', 'stumbling dance' and 'hot, animal perfume' as 'palpable manifestations of seduction' (p. 21). Continuing the associations with the Baudelairean prostitute and the *femme fatale* of *film noir*, Evelyn is simultaneously 'appalled and enchanted' by Leilah as she leads him 'deep into the geometric labyrinth of the heart of the city' where the 'shadows were harsh, unkind' (p. 21).⁸² Literalising Peter Walsh's imaginary stripping of an anonymous woman in *Mrs Dalloway*, Leilah slowly and seductively peels off layer after layer of her outfit for Evelyn's voyeuristic gaze, thereby transforming this *flânerie* into a mobile striptease. Despite taking place in the streets, Evelyn sees it as a private striptease, for 'nobody seemed able to see her but [him]' (p. 22). On one occasion, Leilah discards her coat and reveals 'two nipples like neon violets' to Evelyn, as if beckoning him on while he waits for a set of traffic lights to turn green (p. 22). Leilah also appears to utilise Tristessa's image as part of her seduction, for at one point in their journey she stops in front of the 'lighted portico of a movie theatre' so that

⁸⁰ Relevant here is Robert Stoller's view that '[a] fetish is a story masquerading as an object', because this captures something about Evelyn's false perception of Leilah: she is, in a sense, acting out a story, but in such a way that Evelyn perceives her as merely an object (or series of objects). Robert Stoller, *Observing the Erotic Imagination*, qtd in Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 1.

⁸¹ This also recalls Scrope Purvis's view of Clarissa Dalloway as birdlike. Carter also develops the association between femininity and birds in her later novel *Nights at the Circus*, which puns on the term 'bird'. See also Baudelaire's use of animalistic imagery in the Jeanne Duval cycle of his *Les Fleurs du Mal*. For example, in 'The Jewels', Baudelaire refers to her as a 'tiger tamed'. Baudelaire, 'The Jewels', in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 47-48 (p. 47).

⁸² Munford notes many of the allusions to the Gothic and to Baudelaire in these passages. She writes, for example, that 'Baudelaire's Gothic gaze turns outwards, away from the crumbling castle [...] to the labyrinthine space of the modern city. While the aristocratic villain finds form in the figure of the dandy, and the romantic outcast in the figure of the *flâneur*, the prostitute provides an image of infernal femininity'. Munford also observes that 'Baudelaire's influence' appears in Carter's representation of 'female prostitutes and performers [...] particularly Leilah'. Munford, *Decadent Daughters*, pp. 16-17.

she is suddenly ‘outlined against the face of Tristessa, a face as tall as she was’ (p. 23). Heightening the sense of the visual and looking forward to the description of Tristessa later in the narrative as ‘flesh [...] made of light’, Evelyn describes Leilah here as ‘no more than trick photography’ (p. 23). Indeed, the very landscape itself is likened to photography as Evelyn says that all around them, ‘as if cut out of dark paper and stuck against the sky, were the negative perspectives of the skyscrapers’ (p. 23). In all of the above images, Evelyn pictures Leilah’s femininity as subordinate to the male gaze, though there are also suggestions that Leilah is acting out various scripts of male-constructed femininity in a bid to seduce him.

Matters get more ambiguous when Evelyn and Leilah begin an intense but abusive relationship, for it is never entirely clear who has the upper hand, in terms of both power and the visual. In many ways, Leilah continues to be represented as a merely passive performer, a prostitute selling her image. She tells Evelyn that she earns a living as ‘a naked model’ and that sometimes she also ‘danced, naked’ or ‘took part in a simulated sex-show’ (p. 26). This appears to strengthen Evelyn’s conviction that she is not really a material subject, but an image to be looked at, a spectral woman: ‘She was unnatural, she was irresponsible. Duplicity gleamed in her eyes and her self seemed to come and go in her body, [...] she a visitor in her own flesh’ (p. 27). Furthermore, Evelyn sets up an opposition between himself as spectator and Leilah as spectacle when he says that she ‘danced her naked dance for me’ (p. 27). However, this power structure is undercut by the fact that Leilah also dances ‘for her reflection in her cracked mirror’, a suggestion that Evelyn’s gaze is not necessarily dominant or the only perspective present (p. 27). This passage is also significant because it introduces the second important visual frame in the novel: the mirror. Unlike the cinema screen, the mirror reflects back the gaze of the spectator, inducing a state of self-conscious reflection. The cracks in Leilah’s mirror are also pertinent as they suggest that there are fracture lines in both the gendered subject and the images with which it is constituted. In a sense, the cracks might remind the spectator of the materiality of the mirror and hence of the subject reflected. At this point, however, the mirror does not lead to Evelyn becoming more self-conscious of his identity or of the idealised images of femininity at which he gazes. Instead, his look and attention are focused on what Leilah’s image signifies and his control of her.⁸³

There are a number of echoes of Woolf’s *Orlando* at this point, with respect to clothing and the enigma of the gendered body. Recalling the narrator’s anxiety about Orlando’s

⁸³ This scene of a man watching a woman dance before her mirror echoes Emile Zola’s famous scene in *Nana* when Count Muffat watches Nana looking at herself in a mirror. I will refer to this scene in the last section of the following chapter.

ambiguous body, Evelyn says that he made Leilah 'lie on her back and parted her legs like a doctor in order to examine more closely the exquisite negative of her sex', for she unsettles him and reminds him of the 'myth of the succubus, the devils in female form who come by night to seduce the saints' (p. 27).⁸⁴ Evelyn's gaze thus takes on a quality of surveillance as he attempts to gain control of Leilah's femininity through inspecting her body.⁸⁵ A further link with *Orlando* appears in *New Eve's* repeated concern with clothing. Evelyn sees Leilah's identity, for example, as closely bound up with her dress, and her acts of veiling and unveiling her body are looked upon as signifying her femininity: 'To watch her dressing herself, putting on her public face, was to witness an inversion of the ritual disrobing to which she would later submit her body', not to mention the earlier striptease through the streets at night. Furthermore, Evelyn confesses that 'the more clothed she became, the more vivid became my memory of her nakedness' (p. 30). For Evelyn, then, clothing and unclenching are both part of a single scopic logic, in which femininity exists as an image for the spectator's gaze. Indeed, observing her array of colourful clothes, Evelyn says that Leilah 'walked in technicolor', in yet another metaphor drawn from cinema (p. 29). Like Baudelaire, Evelyn is transfixed by the artifice with which Leilah constructs her femininity, detailing the 'assemblage of all the paraphernalia' she uses to create the 'fiction of the erotic dream' of idealised, male-scripted femininity (p. 30).⁸⁶ Evelyn's fetishisation of Leilah's body also recalls Orlando's first experiences of conventional feminine attire, in particular the accidental revealing of a little skin around her ankle which almost causes a sailor to fall to his death in excitement. In both texts, veiling and unveiling are part of a masculine visual economy in which the female body is constructed as an erotically charged visual object. By contrast, Evelyn's own relationship to clothing is almost entirely absent at this point as he focuses all his attention on Leilah.⁸⁷ Despite enjoying her performance of femininity and his objectification of her, Evelyn disavows his own implication in this visual economy, judging Leilah for being 'a slave to style' and for 'her ritual incarnation, the way she systematically carnalised herself and became dressed meat' (p. 31).

⁸⁴ In another act of reversal, this violent inspecting gaze will later be directed at Eve/lyn as Zero examines the body of the newly born Eve.

⁸⁵ Evelyn also controls Leilah by '[tying] her to the iron bed with [his] belt' (p. 27).

⁸⁶ In both his essays and poetry, Baudelaire is obsessed with a woman's paraphernalia (gauzes, muslins, jewellery, perfume and so on) and suggests that there is no separation between a woman and her constructed appearance. In 'The Painter of Modern Life', for example, Baudelaire asks: 'What poet, in sitting down to paint the pleasure caused by the sight of a beautiful woman, would venture to separate her from her costume?' Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', p. 31.

⁸⁷ Only when Evelyn is transformed into Eve will he become self-conscious of his appearance.

Evelyn's objectification of Leilah appears most clearly in a crucial scene in which his gaze is triangulated via her mirror. Observing Leilah and her specular double leads Evelyn to characterise her as a split subject, with her double both her and not her simultaneously:

She became absorbed in the contemplation of the figure in the mirror but she did not seem to me to apprehend the person in the mirror as, in any degree, herself. The reflected Leilah had a concrete form and, although this form was perfectly tangible, we all knew, all three of us in the room, it was another Leilah. Leilah invoked this formal other with a gravity and ritual that recalled witchcraft; she brought into being a Leilah who lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection. (p. 28)

This passage recalls Berger's argument that in a patriarchal society women internalise the gaze of men in a bid to influence how they are treated. As Berger argues, this strategy comes 'at the cost of a woman's self being split into two' so that both 'the *surveyor* and the *surveyed*' exist as 'two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman'.⁸⁸ Leilah's invoking of an image-double suggests that she manufactures a specular version of femininity for the gaze of not only Evelyn but her paying customers. However, in Evelyn's eyes there is little difference between these two versions of Leilah as he treats her like a prostitute even in her own apartment: 'Oh, my domestic brothel! All the delights of the flesh available in one institution of bone and muscle' (p. 29). Leilah is thus not only like the nineteenth-century prostitute who, '[c]irculating through the city', functions as a 'commodified cultural icon, dressed-up in the costume of male desire', but a prostitute even at home.⁸⁹ Evelyn thus collapses the difference Berger sets up between surveyor and surveyed, reducing Leilah to the latter and thus depriving her of agency. Once again, this perception of Leilah reflects Evelyn's failure to recognise her active role in manipulating him by constructing a flattering image of femininity for his male gaze.

Furthermore, as Aidan Day correctly observes, another passage that focuses on the cracked mirror shows that Evelyn is also 'implicated in the emptiness of a subjectivity defined in terms of representation or reflection'.⁹⁰ Evelyn says of Leilah that she 'seemed to abandon her self in the mirror, to abandon her self to the mirror' (p. 30). Crucially, though, he also acknowledges that he too is part of the fictional space of the mirror-world when he says that Leilah 'allowed herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream into which the mirror cast *me*' (p. 30; emphasis added). Further, Evelyn states that 'together, *we* entered the same reverie, the self-created, self-perpetuating, solipsistic world of the woman watching herself

⁸⁸ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 40.

⁸⁹ Munford, *Decadent Daughters*, p. 90.

⁹⁰ Aidan Day, *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 111.

being watched in a mirror' (p. 30; emphasis added). As Day argues, Carter thus 'goes further than Berger in analysing the nature of the gaze' because she shows how the male subject also becomes 'a function of the mirror, an agent not of being but of representation'.⁹¹ Of course, this does not change the power dynamic between Evelyn and Leilah, as Day also acknowledges. For example, Evelyn ties Leilah to the bed, beats 'the wind-bells out of her' and looks down on her as 'a born victim' (p. 28). Physical violence aside, though, what Carter does make clear is that Evelyn's position of subject of the gaze is no less implicated in a structure of visual images than Leilah as object of the gaze.

Evelyn expresses his preference for femininity as image when he confesses that he eventually 'grew bored with [Leilah]' and that she 'became only an irritation of the flesh' – the material body is an annoyance, 'an itch that must be scratched' and 'not a pleasure' (p. 31).⁹² Once he discovers that she is pregnant with his child, his 'desire for her vanished'. The female body as material, reproductive body, is 'an embarrassment' and 'a shocking inconvenience' (p. 32). Leilah is thus a kind of 'decadent vamp' or 'Medusan figure', representing the 'dangerous, all-consuming reproductive body – the female body as leaking vessel'.⁹³ However, after an illegal and botched abortion which sends Leilah to the hospital, Evelyn does reflect on the fact that, in the beginning, she 'had become the thing I wanted of her', and that his original attraction to her was due to her being 'a perfect woman; like the moon, she only gave reflected light. She had mimicked me' (p. 34).⁹⁴ Mirroring his relationship to New York as cinematic screen,

⁹¹ Day, *The Rational Glass*, p. 111.

⁹² Evelyn also expresses here his greater excitement at the idea of Leilah than the reality of having a relationship with her. As Carter writes in *The Sadeian Woman*: 'Final condition of the imaginary prostitute: men would rather have slept with her than sleep with her. She is most arousing as a memory or as a masturbatory fantasy [...] This is the Monroe syndrome'. Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 80. Evelyn, similarly, shows a preference for Leilah's image of femininity over the reality of her body. Once the illusion has worn off, Evelyn is anxious to discard Leilah. Similarly, Rita Hayworth notes that men tended to assume (and wish) that her personality was the same as her *femme fatale* role in the film *Gilda*. As she famously quipped, 'Men go to bed with Gilda, but wake up with me'. See Barbara Leaming, *If This Was Happiness: A Biography of Rita Hayworth* (London: Penguin, 1989).

⁹³ Munford, *Decadent Daughters*, p. 90. In the final section of this chapter, I will examine Eve/lyn as maternal body and position him/her as a 'delicate vessel' to use George Eliot's phrase from *Daniel Deronda*. Eve/lyn's anxiety about the maternal, leaky body is confronted through his/her own pregnant body, which plays a part in forcing him/her to re-evaluate the cinematic fetishisation of woman – a fetishisation which disavows the female body as threatening.

⁹⁴ In a review of Bertolucci's *La Luna*, Carter takes issue with the association of woman with the moon, arguing that this is yet another instance of the mystification of woman, along with the insulting notion that women merely reflect the light of men. Carter, 'Bertolucci: La Luna', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 442-49 (p. 446). Also relevant here is a passage from *Tomorrow's Eve* in which the ideal woman is represented as mute and passive, gaining significance only from the male regard and embodied in the statue of Venus. 'The goddess is veiled in stone and silence. From her appearance comes this word: "I am Beauty, complete and alone. I speak only through the spirit of him who looks at me. [...] For him who reflects me, I am the deeper character he assigns me"'. Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, *Tomorrow's Eve*, p. 41.

Evelyn admits that he had also turned Leilah into a screen, as well as a mirror that would reflect back to him a consolatory image. However, in his fetishisation of Leilah, what she ultimately reflected back to him was ‘the fatal lack in me’ (p. 34). Evelyn thus acknowledges that the fetish is, in Tonkin’s words, ‘simultaneously a consolation prize for the subject’s lack of power, and the screen that obscures that very same powerlessness’.⁹⁵ As Tonkin also astutely observes, Evelyn’s description of his time in New York ‘closely reworks aspects of the *noir* genre’ and in particular his relationship with Leilah ‘follows the arc of the *noir* script from the hero’s sexual obsession with the *femme* through his need to punish her’.⁹⁶ Evelyn’s ultimate punishment of this fatal woman, though, is to abandon her, as he flees from his feeling that he has been infected not only by a sickness of the ghetto, but also Leilah’s ‘slow delirious sickness of femininity, its passivity, its narcissism’ (p. 37).⁹⁷ As the structure of the fetish-screen fails and the body intrudes on his subjectivity, Evelyn experiences his fantasy as a kind of nightmare and thus flees in terror.

Re-suturing the Masculine Subject

Evelyn heads into the desert, where he hopes ‘the primordial light, unexhausted by eyes, [will] purify [him]’ (p. 38). However, with hindsight Eve notes that in reality he was ‘speeding towards the very enigma [he] had left behind – the dark room, the mirror, the woman’ (p. 39). Evelyn is captured by a group of militant feminists and taken to their underground city of Beulah, presided over by the multi-breasted Mother, Carter’s parody of the mythologisation of woman as archetypal holy mother and goddess. Mother is a self-constructed being, using technology to reinvent myth in a bid to construct a new matriarchal society. Her transformation of Evelyn into Eve in part involves plastic surgery, making Mother a ‘deified plastic surgeon’ in Tonkin’s words.⁹⁸ Indeed, Beulah is described as a ‘triumph of science’, a place where

⁹⁵ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 23.

⁹⁶ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 191.

⁹⁷ Eve/lyn’s characterisation of Leilah as both alluring and repulsive alludes both to the *femme fatale* and the female vampire, and Carter notes the similarity of these figures in an essay on Edgar Allan Poe: ‘The vampire. Especially, the female vampire, the *femme fatale*, epitomising the fear of and longing for sexuality, symbolising sex and femininity as compulsion and disease. She is the woman who takes by force the blood and life and potency of a man. [...] The vampire is a tacky theatrical device’. Carter, ‘Through a Text Backwards: The Resurrection of the House of Usher’, in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 589-99 (pp. 598-99). Stoddart reads Evelyn’s blaming of Leilah in the passage above as an indication that he has become ‘the reflection of the image Leilah has constructed’ for him. As she further explains, ‘he becomes what she has merely appeared to be; the projection doubles back on the real’. Stoddart, *The Passion of New Eve and the Cinema*, p. 124. Leilah’s fetishisation of herself thus exposes Evelyn’s own lack and undermines his position of superiority as the man.

⁹⁸ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 178. With respect to Mother’s castration of Evelyn and transformation into Eve, Wyatt argues that *New Eve* ‘explores the narrative possibilities of Freud’s concept of woman as a castrated man’. Wyatt, ‘The Violence of Gendering’, p. 60. Kari Jegerstedt also takes this line,

‘magic [...] masquerades as surgery’ (p. 49). Given the prevalence of plastic surgery in the film industry, Mother’s role as surgeon appears to allude to this fact, particularly also given the text’s focus on cinematically-constructed femininity. Furthermore, the blueprints for Eve’s body are constructed from a series of media images of femininity and after the surgery Eve is made to watch, among other things, films starring Tristessa. There do appear to be limits to Mother’s surgical powers, though, as she is said to have refused Tristessa’s request for a sex-change because of the ‘awfully ineradicable quality of his maleness’ (p. 173).

Evelyn is imprisoned in a room deep underground, one of the strangest enclosed spaces in the text. The room is ‘quite round’ and the walls have ‘an unnatural sheen’, making them ‘slick’ and ‘lifeless’ (p. 49). Evelyn describes it as both ‘a science fiction chapel’ and ‘a blind room seamless as an egg’ (pp. 50-51). Most intriguingly, the room begins to look like an incubation chamber, as if in preparation for the birth of New Eve. After falling asleep, Evelyn wakes to find the room transforming before him:

[T]he darkness changed its colour, a rosy light began to suffuse the room. The pinkish glow spread, seeped, leaked up the round walls of my cell until everything was lambent; the radiance intensified until it became reddish and, by degrees, crimson. The temperature increased until it was at blood heat. (pp. 51-52).

From a loud-speaker Evelyn hears the refrain ‘NOW YOU ARE AT THE PLACE OF BIRTH’ and so realises that ‘the warm, red place in which I lay was a simulacrum of the womb’ (p. 52).⁹⁹ Whereas Evelyn’s preferred space of the cinema theatre facilitates a comforting mode of observation characterised by ‘proximity at a distance’ which allows him to disavow his own body to become a disembodied and unthreatened I/eye, the womb-room in Beulah places him at the centre of the spectacle, subjecting him to the gaze of others (Beulah’s prison guards) and making him self-conscious of his own corporeality. The difference between these two enclosed spaces is akin to Crary’s distinction between the classical, objective observer associated with the camera obscura and the subjective, embodied observer associated with early nineteenth-century visual inventions, such as the stereoscope, which depend upon the body in order to produce their visual effects.¹⁰⁰ Evelyn acknowledges that his body is now no longer invisible,

arguing that the ‘speculative question’ animating *New Eve* can be construed as ‘a parodic-allegorical literalization of a Freudian theme: “What if woman really *was* a ‘castrated man?’” Kari Jegerstedt, ‘The Art of Speculation: Allegory and Parody as Critical Reading Strategies in *The Passion of New Eve*’, in *Angela Carter: New Critical Readings*, ed. Sonya Andermahr and Lawrence Phillips (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 130-46 (p. 131).

⁹⁹ Vallorani suggests that Beulah itself is ‘built on analogy to a womb’. Vallorani, ‘The Body of the City’, p. 184. She refers to the passage where Eve/lyn says that Beulah ‘lies in the interior, in the inward parts of the earth’ (p. 47).

¹⁰⁰ The womb-like room also evokes the panoptic spaces of nineteenth-century prisons, as designed by Jeremy Bentham and made popular in scholarly debates about visuality and power by Michel Foucault. Carter’s awareness of Foucault’s work on the panopticon is more clearly visible in her later novel *Nights at the Circus*

as it was in the cinema, when he admits that he feels ‘shame at [...] being observed’. As well as an allusion to the Biblical Eve’s experience of shame after her transgression, it also hints at Evelyn’s change of perspective as he begins to realise the violence of his gendered gaze (p. 51).¹⁰¹

Carter’s manuscripts for *New Eve* also reveal a second enclosed space in Beulah which has stronger links to the cinema. In a section cut from the final version of the novel, Evelyn enters another dome-shaped room in which ‘Mother was about to give me a picture show’.¹⁰² The experience is ‘mercifully brief but unmercifully affecting. My sensibility was ravaged’. After a number of phallic images are projected onto the ceiling of the dome, such as Apollo rockets, the lips of a woman’s vulva appear, thereby unsettling Evelyn’s gaze:

[T]he image of her oozing hole, in full, natural colour, was instantly projected upon the centre of the dome so that we were all at once walled about with her most intimate flesh, & of which the archetechronics [*sic*] were so perfect that her hairy corona occupied the place where the skirting board would have been.¹⁰³

By comparison with the fetishistic spectacle of Tristessa’s suffering femininity which Evelyn finds arousing, the image of a woman’s genitals appears as a revelation of the disavowed sexual difference that the fetish conceals. Furthermore, whilst the images of Tristessa were projected onto the cinema screen held at a safe distance from the spectator, Mother’s dome is like a planetarium, its images surrounding Evelyn to produce a feeling of claustrophobia. Evelyn’s observation that he was ‘walled about with her most intimate flesh’ suggests a threat of engulfment, an allusion, perhaps, to the *vagina dentata*. In contrast to his consumption of images of femininity, this engulfing image of the vulva threatens to consume him.¹⁰⁴ Like the

(1984). For an analysis of this see, for example, Margaret E. Toye, ‘Eating Their Way Out of Patriarchy: Consuming the Female Panopticon in Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus*’, *Women’s Studies*, 36 (2007), 477-506.

¹⁰¹ Evelyn’s experiences in Beulah momentarily resurrect the *femme fatale* script from New York, for he suddenly suspects that Leilah might be Mother’s ‘unknowing acolyte’. ‘When Leilah lured me [...] she had organised the conspiracy of events’ which lead to his capture at Beulah (p. 58). In particular, his imprisonment in this womb-like room leads Evelyn to reflect on his relationship to Leilah: ‘[she] had lured me here, at last; Leilah had always intended to bring me here, to the deepest cave, to this focus of all the darkness that had always been waiting for me in a room with just such close, red walls within me’ (p. 58). As Tonkin explains, ‘Leilah had disguised herself as a *femme fatale*, with full knowledge of the punishment this would entail, in order to obscure her real purpose, which was to select an exemplary misogynist for surgical reconstruction’. Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 192. Again, it is Evelyn’s anxieties and fears that lead him to picture his experience through the cinematic, turning his captors into dangerous women with malign desires and purposes.

¹⁰² Angela Carter, ‘MS: The Passion of New Eve’, in *Angela Carter Papers* (London: The British Library), Additional MS88899/1/5, p. 32.

¹⁰³ Carter, ‘MS: The Passion of New Eve’, Additional MS88899/1/5, p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ For an analysis of this theme in Carter’s oeuvre, see Emma Parker, ‘The Consumption of Angela Carter: Women, Food, and Power’, *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 31.3 (2000), 141-69. With respect to *New Eve*, Parker notes that Mother is referred to as “‘ineradicable vent of being, oracular mouth”” and “‘our lady of the cannibals”” (p. 152). She also points out that the symbol used by Mother’s group of militant

womb-simulator room, this space too prevents Evelyn from positioning himself as an objective, disembodied observer and instead includes his body as part of the spectacle so that he becomes a subjective observer, contiguous with the visual apparatus.

The greatest transformation of Evelyn's position of observation comes, however, from his sex-change, for, by giving him the body of a woman, Mother forces him to recognise the role his gender plays in his perspective on the world. Because Evelyn will come to be looked upon as a woman, he will (in theory) internalise the gaze of the other and so adopt the look of a woman – Eve/lyn will look *like* a woman and look *as* a woman. However, this process of internalisation is not a smooth one, and initially at least Eve/lyn is conscious of a split between his bodily appearance and his gaze, registered once again through a mirror.¹⁰⁵ Eve/lyn's experience of seeing him/herself for the first time in a mirror differs significantly from Clarissa Dalloway's experience of unification before her looking-glass, and instead recalls the scene in which Leilah gazes at her specular double.¹⁰⁶ Before his sex-change, Evelyn associates the mirror almost exclusively with (the construction of) femininity, as can be seen not only in his observations of Leilah but also in his description of one of Beulah's female guards, who looked 'like a woman who has never seen a mirror in all her life, not once exposed herself to those looking glasses that betray women into nakedness' (p. 54). The sentiment expressed here betrays Evelyn's typically patriarchal view of the relationship between femininity and the mirror, in which the latter is seen as an integral element of feminine beautification, transforming woman into an object to be seen.¹⁰⁷ Intriguingly, when Evelyn is dressed as a woman in preparation for his transformation, he compares his new feminine appearance with that of this unattractive guard: 'now I was dressed like this girl, I looked like this girl's sister, except that I was far prettier than she' (p. 55). This passage anticipates the revelation that

feminists is the symbol for anatomical femaleness with teeth added to the inside of the circle, which alludes to the threat of the *vagina dentata*.

¹⁰⁵ Carter's staging of a split in the subject as perceived by gazing into a mirror is clearly an allusion to Jacques Lacan's notion of the 'Mirror-stage', which for him is one of the central foundations of mature subjectivity. The infant recognises him/herself in the mirror in a moment of jubilation, but because the specular double appears complete, autonomous and in control, Lacan argues that this is an act of misrecognition because in reality the infant is helpless and dependent. The specular double is thus an ideal and idealised self. See Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Norton, 2006), pp. 75-81.

¹⁰⁶ Sat before her mirror, Clarissa says: 'That was her self – pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman.' Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷ As Berger argues in *Ways of Seeing*, the patriarchal function of a mirror is 'to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight'. Berger also notes the hypocrisy of associating woman with vanity in the tradition of the nude: 'You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting *Vanity*, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure'. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 45.

Tristessa's performance of femininity is a masquerade and contributes to the text's central idea that idealised images of femininity originate in masculine desire. After the sex-change, Eve/lyn's relationship to the mirror radically changes, as it reveals a deep fracture in his/her subjectivity: 'I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines' (p. 74). Furthermore, s/he realises with a shock that Mother has even turned him into an image from his own fantasy, the object of his gaze:

They had turned me into the *Playboy* center fold. I was the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my own head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And – how can I put it – the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself. (p. 75; emphasis in original).

Eve/lyn's observation turns out to be prescient, for s/he later discovers that Eve's appearance was the result of 'a consensus agreement' on what constituted the 'ideal woman' and was 'drawn up from a protracted study of the media' (p. 78). More troubling, though, is the fact that the mirror has introduced a split down the middle of Eve/lyn's subjectivity: mind and body are severed so that his/her mirror-image and body are not identified with as himself/herself, as compared with his memories of being a man. Eve/lyn may have been given the body of a woman, but s/he still identifies with being a man.

Anticipating this problem, Mother follows up the corporeal surgery with what Eve/lyn refers to as 'psycho-surgery' or 'programming', which consists of hours of films and 'video-tape sequences designed to assist me to my new shape' (pp. 71-72). Fittingly, this includes 'old Hollywood' films which provide Eve/lyn with 'a new set of nursery tales' (p. 71).¹⁰⁸ Eve/lyn wonders if these films were selected on purpose 'as part of the ritual attrition of my change in ontological status: this is what you've made of women! And now you yourself become what you've made'. Whatever the case, these films 'spun out a thread of illusory reality' and show him 'the pain of womanhood', part of New Eve's secularised passion. Tristessa, once again, returns to Eve/lyn 'in seven veils of celluloid' and demonstrates to him 'every kitsch excess of the mode of femininity' (p. 71). Eve/lyn also considers the possibility that Mother wants him to 'model [his] new womanhood upon [Tristessa's] tenebrous delinquency [*sic*] and so relegate [him] always to the shadowed half being of reflected light', like his earlier view of

¹⁰⁸ Eve/lyn is also subjected to long videotapes of imagery traditionally associated with femininity or the female body: female animals, various paintings of the Virgin and Child, caves, roses, the sea and the moon (p. 72). This passage reads as ironic hyperbole, a critique of all those mystifications of the feminine, which Carter refers to as 'consolatory nonsenses'. Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 5. As many critics have noted, Mother and her attempt to reinvent a matriarchal society can be read as a comment on 1970s feminism in its attempt to celebrate mythical notions of the feminine, such as the holy mother and the eternal feminine. See Tonkin's excellent discussion of this in Chapter 9 of *Angela Carter and Decadence*, pp. 170-96.

Leilah (p. 72). However, since Mother knows that Tristessa is in fact a male transvestite, Eve wonders, retrospectively, if there was a ‘subtler reason’ for the Hollywood films: perhaps Mother wanted Eve/lyn to understand that femininity is only ever a construction and a simulacrum (p. 72).¹⁰⁹ In watching Tristessa from this newly and ambiguously gendered position of observation, Eve/lyn’s gaze takes on different qualities, in particular developing the earlier suggestion of a sympathetic regard. Instead of gazing at her voyeuristically, Eve/lyn identifies with Tristessa, and to such a degree that s/he imagines inhabiting Tristessa’s very being as if it were a costume:

I swam in and out of your sickness, your ache of eternal longing, your perpetual reverie, your beautiful lack of being, as if your essence were hung up in a closet like a dress too good to be worn and you were reduced to going out in only your appearance. (p. 72).

Here, Carter plays with the idea of subjectivity as akin to clothing in a similar way to Woolf’s *Orlando*. Just as Orlando’s sex-change and cross-dressing problematised the relationship between inner and outer identity, so too Tristessa’s performance of femininity and Eve/lyn’s identification with it blurs the lines between ontological being and iconographic representation.¹¹⁰ Tristessa’s ‘eternal longing’ is a self-conscious performance of masochistic, male-authored femininity and Eve/lyn appears to recognise this in the passage above, though it is only once s/he discovers Tristessa’s secret that s/he will appreciate this fully – the reference to a closet is also an intimation of this secret made by Eve as retrospective narrator. Most significantly, of course, both Tristessa’s appearance and her essence are likened to costumes, suggesting that all identity is a construction.

Mother’s use of physical and psychical surgery makes apparent the idea that Evelyn has been stitched or sutured into both a new body and a new mind. Whilst the plastic surgery literally re-stitches Evelyn’s body, the subjection to hours of films is a bid to re-suture Evelyn’s structures of identification so that he begins to identify himself as a woman. Just as the concept of suture in film studies refers to the ways in which cinematic texts ‘confer subjectivity upon their viewers’, as Silverman puts it, so Mother’s psycho-surgery aims to confer on Eve/lyn a

¹⁰⁹ If Eve is modelled on Tristessa, then she is effectively a copy of a copy, or a simulacrum. Along with the comparison of the cinema theatre to Plato’s cave, this image of the simulacrum also recalls Plato and his denigration of images as mere resemblances. Carter was herself intrigued by the idea that gender and sexual identity is always a copy without an original, thereby anticipating Judith Butler’s work in some ways. In an interview with Anna Katsavos, Carter makes an interesting observation: ‘I was having a conversation with a friend of mine about a gay couple we knew, and I said their relationship seemed to be sometimes a cruel parody of heterosexual marriage. My friend thought for a while and said, “Well, what’s a heterosexual marriage a parody of then?”’ Anna Katsavos, ‘A Conversation with Angela Carter’, *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 14.3 (1994). Available at: <http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/a-conversation-with-angela-carter-by-anna-katsavos/>

¹¹⁰ Stoddart characterises *New Eve* as ‘a fantasy about crossing certain borders, not just through masquerade on the surface but through physical transgression also’. Stoddart, ‘*The Passion of New Eve* and the Cinema’, p. 128.

new, female psychic-subjectivity.¹¹¹ Mother effectively wants to re-position Eve/lyn within various chains of signification so that s/he is constantly given reinforcement as a woman – Eve must be not just physically but ideologically/symbolically a woman.¹¹² Silverman observes that the operation of suture ‘is successful at the moment that the viewing subject says, “Yes, that’s me,” or “That’s what I see”’, but as Eve/lyn’s mirror experience demonstrates, Mother’s suturing operation has thus far been unsuccessful.¹¹³ As well as re-suturing Eve/lyn into new patterns of behaviour and ways of looking, Mother has also to de-suture Eve/lyn from his habitual and long-formed associations as a man, including his masculine position of observation. The difficulty of this can be observed from the fact that Evelyn has been gazing at Tristessa since he was ‘a little boy’, a suggestion that his assumption of the male gaze is a deep-seated habit (p. 6). Furthermore, even if Mother can permanently change Eve/lyn’s gaze, there is the larger problem of transforming the visual structures of patriarchal culture, hinted at in a description of Tristessa’s impact upon Evelyn’s society: ‘Her stills became posters; she inspired a style for one season, they named a discotheque after her, and a chain of boutiques’ (p. 6). Evelyn’s position as masculine observer is thus a function of the visual culture he grew up in, and not just his own idiosyncratic desires.

Whether or not Mother can expect to transform the visual structures of patriarchy, she does appear to have some success with Eve/lyn. Whilst Eve/lyn is, initially, ‘literally in two minds’, after some time Mother’s suturing operation begins to have an effect so that ‘at length the sense of having been Evelyn began, in spite of himself, to fade’ (pp. 77-78). However, as the rest of the text makes clear, Eve/lyn’s identity and gaze are never entirely transformed and s/he never fully becomes the essentially feminine subject whom Mother desires her to be. The split in Eve/lyn’s identity, perceived in the mirror, persists despite Mother’s designs and best attempts. Furthermore, Eve/lyn escapes from Beulah before Mother’s lessons in femininity are completed. However, the next stage in Eve/lyn’s journey involves being subjected to another kind of training in how to be a woman, one which is more violent and unremitting.

Lessons in Femininity, Cinema Magic and the Medusa’s Gaze

¹¹¹ Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 195.

¹¹² Of course, the fact that Eve/lyn’s narrative uses both sets of pronouns (he/she) and names (Evelyn/Eve) means that linguistically, Mother’s project ultimately fails. Eve/lyn is ambiguously located as a subject of discourse.

¹¹³ Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, p. 205.

Eve/lyn escapes Beulah's 'essentialist patriarchy' only to be captured again, this time by Mother's antithesis, the tyrannical and hyper-masculine Zero.¹¹⁴ Zero is 'the first man' that Eve/lyn meets as 'a woman', and her introduction to a new sexual economy could not be more brutal: Zero 'unceremoniously' rapes her, his body compared to 'an anonymous instrument of torture' whilst Eve's is '[her] own rack' (p. 86). Whilst Mother mythologises the female body as a sacred vessel that can bring about a new matriarchal civilisation, Zero believes that women 'were fashioned of [...] a more primitive, animal stuff' and hence treats them with derision and violence (p. 87). His love of Wagner, Nietzsche, and guns, and his mythologisation of masculinity, appear as a form of compensation for the fact that he is deficient as a man: Zero is one-eyed, one-legged and infertile. Furthermore, his extreme sadism is matched by the masochism of his harem of wives who 'loved him blindly' and had the 'blinded look of nuns, all postulants in the church of Zero' (p. 87).¹¹⁵ As Eve/lyn explains, Zero is 'powerful yet impotent, since his power depended on his dependants' (p. 102).

Eve/lyn explains that her time in Zero's captivity was 'as savage an apprenticeship in womanhood as could have been devised for [her]', and explains that his 'peremptory prick turned [her] into a savage woman' (p. 107). Zero not only uses physical force to discipline his wives, but maintains a violent scopical regime, for, as Eve/lyn explains, Zero 'flagellated me with the unique lash of his regard' (p. 90). Such a gaze poses a particular danger for Eve/lyn because, despite Mother's training, s/he is conscious of the fact that, although '[she is] a woman, [she is] now also passing for a woman'. In what could well be a nod to Joan Riviere's famous essay on womanliness as a masquerade, s/he adds that 'many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations' (p. 101).¹¹⁶ To be sure, Eve/lyn acknowledges that Mother

¹¹⁴ Day, *The Rational Glass*, p. 117. Interestingly, Eve/lyn says that in escaping Beulah 'I felt myself almost a hero, almost Evelyn, again' (p. 81). This comment is suggestive of the power of conventional narrative associations between masculinity and heroes and represents for Eve/lyn a barrier to his/her identifying fully with the idea of being a woman.

¹¹⁵ The representation of Zero and his wives clearly echoes the sexual politics of the Marquis de Sade's works, the latter of which Carter wrote about in *The Sadeian Woman*. The comment about the wives' blind look is also in marked contrast with Zero's gaze. Zero possesses a violent and surveillance-like gaze, always watchful both for signs of Tristessa (whom he seeks) and signs as to who or what Eve/lyn is, since s/he arouses his suspicions.

¹¹⁶ Joan Riviere argues that women often put on a mask of womanliness in order to disguise masculine qualities which they feel may lead to reprisals from men. More radically, though, she also argues that there is no substantial difference between genuine womanliness and the masquerade of womanliness. Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as a masquerade', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), 303-13. Riviere's essay has proved enormously influential for later psychoanalytic work, such as that of Jacques Lacan, as well as for anti-essentialist feminist theory, such as Judith Butler and Mary Ann Doane. Also relevant here is Carter's remark in 'The Wound in the Face' (1975) that 'fashionable women now tend to look like women imitating men imitating women'. Angela Carter, 'The Wound in the Face', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 136-40 (p. 137). For queer readings of *New Eve* see Rachel Carroll, "'Violent Operations": Revisiting the Transgendered Body in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 22:2-3 (2011), 241-55; Catrin Gersdorf, 'The Gender of Nature's

has created a 'perfect' woman such that 'Venus herself had risen from the surgery' (p. 107).¹¹⁷ However, 'Zero's suspicions' are roused when Eve/lyn, out of fear, starts 'to behave *too much* like a woman', inadvertently drawing attention to her femininity as a masquerade (p. 101; emphasis in original). Because something about Eve 'rang false', Zero orders her one evening 'to undress' so that he can 'examine [her] with almost a jeweller's eye; he could have been inspecting a diamond he feared might be flawed' (p. 106).¹¹⁸ Like Orlando, Eve/lyn's body is comprehensively scrutinised as Zero goes over her 'point by point, breasts, belly, the junction of the thighs, knees, feet, the gaps between the toes, everywhere' (p. 106). Strengthening the link between *New Eve* and *Orlando*, Eve/lyn refers to her body as 'my disguise' and worries that Zero might discover 'a flaw' that reveals her previous masculinity (p. 107).¹¹⁹ In another instance of the cracked mirror motif, Eve/lyn notes that she 'could hardly make out New Eve's reflection' in 'a broken mirror' at the back of Zero's bar (p. 94).

Zero's sexual violence and surveillance-like gaze also force Eve/lyn into a recognition of the complexity of his/her split identity: 'when he mounted me with his single eye blazing like the mouth of an automatic [...] I felt myself to be, not myself but he' (p. 101). This unsettling experience of a 'lack of self', Eve/lyn adds, also 'brought with it a shock of introspection, [and] forced me to know myself as a former violator at the moment of my own violation' (pp. 101-02). Unbeknownst to Zero, therefore, his sadistic treatment actually strengthens the split inside Eve/lyn, for it reminds the latter of his own violent behaviour as a man. Much like Orlando's vacillation from one sex to the other, Eve/lyn oscillates between the two perspectives of Evelyn and Eve. One on occasion, Eve/lyn uses the third-person to position himself as a male subject and distance himself from Eve's female identity when s/he says 'Poor Eve! She's being screwed again!' (p. 91). Conversely, when Eve/lyn's memory is involuntarily 'swept [...] back to prep school', s/he adopts the position of Eve and looks on her past self as belonging to someone else: 'it was not a real memory, it was like remembering a film I'd seen once whose performances did not concern me' (p. 92). In contrast with the opening scene of the novel, Eve/lyn is here split between spectator and actor, and between subject and object of

Nation: A Queer Perspective, *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 46.1 (2001), 41-54; Heather L. Johnson, 'Unexpected Geometries: Transgressive Symbolism and the Transsexual Subject in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 166-83; Joanne Trevenna, 'Gender as Performance: Questioning the "Butlerification" of Angela Carter's fiction', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 11.3 (2002), 267-76.

¹¹⁷ The reference to Venus here once again recalls *Tomorrow's Eve* as Edison's creation of the Ideal woman is compared to the statue of Venus throughout the text.

¹¹⁸ Zero's examination of Eve repeats Evelyn's earlier investigation of Leilah's body.

¹¹⁹ This remark about Eve/lyn's disguise of femininity again recalls Riviere's essay on womanliness as a mask that conceals traits of masculinity.

the gaze, as if s/he has learnt to appreciate both sides of the cinematic screen. Furthermore, echoing the earlier description of Tristessa's identity as a costume, Eve/lyn uses a sartorial metaphor to describe his/her split self: 'my memories no longer fitted me, [for] they were old clothes belonging to somebody else' (p. 92). Continuing this theme of clothing, Zero orders his wives to dress up 'in the style of high pornography' for his visual pleasure. Eve/lyn explains that they adorned their bodies with 'wigs', 'pointed heels', 'stockings', 'tinsel cache-sexes', and 'tassles, which we attached to our bare nipples' (p. 103). This reminds him/her of 'watching Leilah watch herself in the mirror', producing an awareness of 'all the lure of that narcissic [sic] loss of being, when the face leaks into the looking-glass like water into sand' (p. 103). Here, Eve/lyn understands the construction of femininity as image and appreciates the seductive power of such images.

Like Eve/lyn, Zero is also enthralled by Tristessa, but instead of enjoying her images of masochistic femininity, he feels threatened by what he perceives as her Medusa-like gaze. Zero sits like an impotent film-director at 'a leather-topped desk looted from a Hollywood producer's desert hideaway', horrified by but powerless before Tristessa's screen power (p. 89). A poster of Tristessa as Madeline Usher is the only decoration in his room, and is 'pinned to the wall behind his head' as if he cannot bear to look directly at her (p. 90). In a clear allusion to the petrifying gaze of the Medusa, Zero explains that Tristessa 'magicked the genius out of [his] jissom, that evil bitch!' (p. 91).¹²⁰ Zero, therefore, also worships Tristessa, though less as a Lady of the Sorrows figure and more as a terrible demon.¹²¹ As a result, cinema takes on a different quality with Zero: the screen becomes a conduit for the emasculating power of woman, for 'Tristessa had magicked away [Zero's] reproductive capacity via the medium of the cinema screen' (p. 104). Zero's fear centres on the female gaze, as his wives explain to Eve/lyn that during a cinematic adaptation of *Madame Bovary*, Tristessa's eyes, 'eyes of a stag about to be gralloched, had fixed directly upon [Zero's] and held them'. As a result of Zero taking mescaline, Tristessa had 'grown to giant size, and her eyes consumed him in a ghastly epiphany. He'd felt a sudden, sharp, searing pain in his balls' and with 'visionary certainty, he'd known the cause of his sterility' (p. 104). Tristessa thus returns the male gaze, staring out from the film screen at the spectator, denying him visual pleasure and castrating him with her

¹²⁰ Carter repeats this association of the film actress with the Medusa in 'The Merchant of Shadows' when the narrator describes what he at first believes to be the widow of Hank Mann as having 'a Medusa look' because of her over-done 'wig'. Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', p. 370.

¹²¹ This recalls Eve/lyn's likening of Leilah to a 'succubus' (p. 27).

look.¹²² Here, ‘disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish’ fails.¹²³ Zero’s experience of Tristessa is similar to Carter’s characterisation of Louise Brooks’ performance in *Pandora’s Box*: ‘Like Manet’s Olympia, she is directly challenging the person who is looking at her; she is piercing right through the camera with her questing gaze to give your look back, with interest.’¹²⁴ Carter also suggests that Brooks’ character is killed by ‘Jack the Ripper’ because ‘she turns towards him the full force of her radiant sexuality; like the sun, he cannot bear to look at her for long’.¹²⁵ There is a hint of this also in Zero’s experience at the cinema, for afterwards he becomes a man ‘who could not cast a shadow’, as if Tristessa’s gaze was also dazzlingly bright (p. 104).¹²⁶

After Mother’s use of images of Tristessa, Zero’s relationship to these same images produces yet another change in Eve/lyn’s perspective, as Tristessa moves from fetishized spectacle to (ironic?) role model and finally to an image of woman returning the male gaze.¹²⁷ As Eve/lyn learns to look at Tristessa from different points of view, s/he is able to recognise that cinematic femininity is predominantly constructed from and for male, heterosexual desire – from ‘the furious shadow of his imaginings’, in Carter’s words.¹²⁸ In a repetition of Evelyn’s positioning of Leilah, Zero casts Tristessa in the role of *femme fatale* and himself as innocent male hero. As a result, though, Eve/lyn understands his ‘misrecognition of Leilah as a *femme fatale*’.¹²⁹ Once again, Eve/lyn’s new position as a complexly gendered subject offers him/her a new angle of vision and hence enlightenment.¹³⁰

¹²² Julia Simon argues that ‘Tristessa turns into a *femme fatale*’ here because she ‘appropriates the agency of the male gaze’. As Mulvey argues, the structure of the male gaze places the male spectator as bearer of the look and the woman on screen as a passive object. Simon, *Rewriting the Body*, p. 128.

¹²³ Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure’, p. 22.

¹²⁴ Angela Carter, ‘Barry Paris: *Louise Brooks*’, in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 472-79 (p. 473).

¹²⁵ Carter, ‘Barry Paris: *Louise Brooks*’, p. 472. The relationship between light and control appears in Cray’s *Techniques of the Observer* in a discussion of Descartes. There, Cray notes that the ‘light of reason’ allows for clear and distinct ideas in the interiority of Descartes’s thinking subject, whilst by contrast the ‘potentially dangerous dazzlement of the senses by the light of the sun’ must be rejected in the endeavour to discover indubitable knowledge (p. 43). Analogously, in order to maintain his absolute authority, Zero cannot bear to look at Tristessa as if she were like the sun, which dazzles the senses and thus disturbs the desire for control and certainty.

¹²⁶ This also creates an association between Tristessa and the figure of the vampire. The Zero can no longer cast a shadow suggests also that he has been transformed into a vampire himself.

¹²⁷ Eve/lyn’s perspective will change yet again when s/he meets Tristessa in person.

¹²⁸ Angela Carter, ‘Femmes Fatales’, p. 428.

¹²⁹ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 194.

¹³⁰ Despite this, though, Eve/lyn continues to mythologise Tristessa: ‘Here she was, always invariable [...] – her huge eyes filled with that wild surmise, that fated quietude. Here she is, my patroness, my guardian angel; I might have known she would be here, to welcome me to pain’ (pp. 90-91). Even at this point in the narrative, Tristessa embodies the male-written script of suffering femininity. It is only once Eve/lyn comes face to face with Tristessa that a significant change in his/her perspective will occur.

In a fairy-tale-like manner, Zero believes that only by killing Tristessa will he be able to restore 'the procreativity to his virility' (p. 98). Before this though, his only response to Tristessa is to deface her image by writing over it 'PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE', and by using it as 'a target for the throwing of knives' (p. 91). Zero attacks her image, penetrating it with sharp phallic blades and '[baring] his teeth venomously at the poster' (p. 92). He even tries to rid himself of Tristessa in a form of vocal abjection, for '[c]ertain hissing sibilants' emitted during sexual climax 'were almost on the point of becoming her serpentine name, as if he were spitting her out in his unfruitful orgasms' (p. 98). Despite this effort at ejecting her poisonous presence, Zero remains trapped by Tristessa, pouring obsessively over 'pile upon pile of yellowing magazines', all filled with 'pictures of Tristessa' (p. 105).

Unveiling the Feminine Cinematic Masquerade

Zero's obsession eventually leads him to discover Tristessa's hiding place in the desert, which Eve/lyn says is 'Hollywood's best kept secret' (p. 105). Although this most visible of female icons is now retired and 'perfectly invisible', Zero uses the superior and panoptic vantage point of a helicopter to find her location in yet another example of his dominating gaze (p. 105). It turns out that Tristessa's house constitutes a radically different kind of enclosed space compared with the previous examples. By contrast with the darkness of the movie theatre in which her luminous image appears, Tristessa's home is a towering and transparent glass palace that 'glitter[s]' brightly (p. 109).¹³¹ Neither simply a mirror that reflects the gaze nor a screen for a projected gaze, her glass house is an in-between space that facilitates looks that travel both inward and outward. Similar to *Mrs Dalloway*, the window here frames a different economy of the gaze and combines the other visual frames in the novel: the cinema screen and the mirror. Given Tristessa's visibility and display on the cinema screen, one might be tempted to read this glass house as suggesting a kind of naked transparency. However, her tightly kept secret turns this transparent space into a more paradoxical frame: this glass-house is actually a

¹³¹ Tristessa's glass palace creates a slight echo of the Crystal Palace of the 1851 Great Exhibition, a space of display which was alluded to in Woolf's *Orlando*. As I will shortly show, Tristessa's glass palace has a room which displays wax-works of famous and dead film stars, which gives it a museum- or exhibition-like quality. Linden Peach argues that Tristessa's 'house of glass [...] signifies the postmodernist cycle of self-construction and self-replication which America, once signifying the European dream of spiritual greatness, has become'. Linden Peach, *Angela Carter* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 101. Similarly to Tristessa in *New Eve*, the retired film director Hank Mann, in Carter's 'The Merchant of Shadows', lives in an 'austere cube of pure glass'. Near the conclusion of the story, 'a set of concealing crimson curtains' covers the entire length of the glass house and the narrator almost expects 'to see the words, THE END, come up on the curtains'. Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', pp. 366, 374.

space where secrets are hidden in plain sight.¹³² Eve/lyn seems to confirm this when s/he confesses surprise at Tristessa's ability to hide in a house made entirely of glass. 'How could she hide here, where everything was visible?' (p. 116). As Carter notes, however, 'the most mysterious of all is, as Octavio Paz said, the absolutely transparent'.¹³³ Like her transparent palace of glass, Tristessa herself takes on this paradoxical and mysterious quality of glass, allowing spectators to look at and through her masquerade of femininity.

Tristessa's glass house is also significant for the dizzying effect it produces on Eve/lyn, as it not only possesses a spiral staircase but the entire structure revolves on a hidden axis making Eve/lyn 'giddy' (p. 120) as s/he ascends this 'merry-go-round' (p. 114).¹³⁴ One room within the house stands out because it houses a series of glass coffins, themselves atop glass biers. This layering of ever-smaller glass containers creates a structure equivalent to the matryoshka (Russian) doll and produces a *mise-en-abyme* effect as each glass vessel leads to another. Referred to as 'THE HALL OF THE IMMORTALS', the room's coffins contain waxwork figures of famous and deceased film stars, including Jean Harlow, James Dean, and Marilyn Monroe. Lit only by candlelight, 'the figures looked more life-like than ever', recalling the mannequins in a waxwork museum, in which life appears uncannily suspended on the threshold separating life from death (p. 117).¹³⁵ Eve/lyn says it was as if she had 'stumbled into a cave where all these fabulous beings had retired, when their time on the screen was up' (pp. 117-18).¹³⁶ Furthermore, this shrine to Hollywood's 'unfortunate dead' has an otherworldly 'greenish, mysterious light' and 'enormous shadows', as if Eve/lyn had, alternatively, been transported into an expressionist film, such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (p. 117). Tristessa's house is thus an unsettling place in which reality and fantasy are uncannily combined so that cinema stars appear to live immortal lives and images have as much reality as physical beings.

¹³² Given Carter's well documented interest in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, and given that Carter places Tristessa, the movie star with a startling secret, inside a completely transparent building, it makes sense to connect this scene with Poe's 'The Purloined Letter', in which a letter is hidden in plain sight instead of hidden in some kind of darkened space. Given further that Tristessa displays herself on the film screen for the entire world to see, her secret is thus hidden in plain sight. Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', in *Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Tales*, ed. David Van Leer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 249-65.

¹³³ Carter, 'Femmes Fatales', p. 428.

¹³⁴ It is noteworthy that whilst Beulah is constructed as a downward spiral deep into the earth, the staircase in Tristessa's glass palace ascends upwards towards the sky. This difference captures the symbolic difference between the two places: while the former is associated with the body, and more particularly the female reproductive body, the latter is associated with the lightness of the image.

¹³⁵ Marina Warner has written about the uncanniness of the wax doll in *Phantasmagoria*. In the chapter entitled 'On the Threshold: Sleeping Beauties', Warner examines the oldest surviving waxwork in Madame Tussaud's in London, named 'The Sleeping Beauty'. She writes that the figure is both 'uncanny' and 'intimate', conveying 'a seductive vision of erotic, feminine catalepsy, which the peculiar translucence and slight sweatiness of the wax medium suit so creepily'. Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 49.

¹³⁶ This image constitutes another allusion to Plato's cave.

It is not only her house which has a dizzying or abyssal effect on Eve/lyn but Tristessa herself. Eve/lyn says that moving towards her was like moving ‘towards my own face in a magnetic mirror’, and that coming face-to-face with this specular double induced a horrifying sense of vertigo: ‘it was like finding myself on the brink of an abyss’, producing a ‘giddiness that seized me and shook me’ (p. 110). Eve/lyn makes clear the reflexive quality of this abyss when s/he explains that ‘the abyss on which you opened was that of my self, Tristessa’ (p. 110). ‘Stars encourage us to face our fantasies’, Graham McGann observes, and meeting Tristessa certainly forces Eve/lyn to face a number of his/her fantasies.¹³⁷ As the substitution of the mirror for the screen suggests, Eve/lyn’s primary fantasy revolves around the disavowed fact that Tristessa’s screen-image is also a mirror ‘reflecting the spectator’s innermost desires’, as Dani Cavallaro observes.¹³⁸ Cavallaro goes on to argue that there is, indeed, ‘an underlying analogy between the screen and the mirror’ which becomes apparent when considering ‘Leilah’s specular image’ and ‘Tristessa’s cinematic image’ in parallel.¹³⁹ Eve/lyn’s repeated experience of mirrors and screens appears to reach an apotheosis and point of enlightenment when meeting Tristessa, for s/he then realises that the latter’s image functions as both a screen for the spectator’s projected desires and a mirror reflecting back images which visualise those desires, offering a form of satisfaction. However, the abyssal quality which Tristessa produces when up-close suggests that there is literally nothing behind this visual mechanism, and that both Tristessa as object of the gaze and Eve/lyn as bearer of the gaze are constructions of the masculine ‘erotic dream’ of Hollywood’s illusionistic cinematic apparatus (p. 30).

Meeting Tristessa in person forces Eve/lyn to acknowledge her corporeal as well as her iconographic existence, but this confrontation only adds to the ambiguity of the film star. Upon first seeing her in the flesh, laid out in a coffin like *Sleeping Beauty*, Eve/lyn believes Tristessa to be dead, yet ‘so like her own reflection on the screen it took my breath away’. In fact, the evidence of her body produces a shock because ‘that spectacular wraith might have been only the invention of all our imaginations and yet, all the time, she had been real’ (p. 118). This confusion of body and image plunges Eve/lyn into a ‘fugue of feeling’ in which, ‘like a drowning man, I relived my entire life up to that point in a single instant’ (p. 118). This experience of time past is intertwined with the cinematic, as each memory focuses on

¹³⁷ Graham McGann, ‘Biographical Boundaries: Sociology and Marilyn Monroe’, in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 325-338 (p. 326).

¹³⁸ Dani Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter: A Critical Investigation* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2011), p. 85.

¹³⁹ Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter*, p. 85.

Tristessa's influence: 'I was again the child whose dreams she had invaded and also the young man for whom she had become the essence of nostalgia' and lastly 'New Eve, whose sensibility had been impregnated with that of Tristessa [...] in the desert' (pp. 118-19). After Eve/lyn's memories are filtered through images of Tristessa, these same images then appear to be projected onto the latter's body, as if it were a movie screen:

It was as if all Tristessa's movies were being projected all at once on that pale, reclining figure so that I saw her walking, speaking, dying, over and over again in all the attitudes that remained in this world, frozen in the amber of innumerable spools of celluloid from which her being could be extracted and endlessly recycled in a technological eternity, a perpetual resurrection of the spirit. (p. 119)

In this passage, Tristessa's iconographic existence covers her body like a veil, suggesting that her image is more real than her flesh and that it obscures or blocks access to the body.¹⁴⁰ There is a similarity, here, with cinema, where the projected images are what absorb the spectator, whilst the celluloid remains hidden from sight. Celluloid is important, however, for the role it plays in the commodification of femininity, for, in an allusion to Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Eve/lyn describes how freezing Tristessa's being in celluloid has made her endlessly reproducible. Through this process of mass production, Tristessa becomes immortal, able to '[cheat] the clock in her castle of purity' (p. 119). There is also a suggestion of necrophiliac desire in Eve/lyn's perception of Tristessa as 'a sleeping beauty who could never die', as if the ideal woman is eternally passive, an inert body that functions as a screen for male desire (p. 119).¹⁴¹ Despite these comments about immortality, Eve/lyn also repeats the sentiment that Tristessa will continue to exist only 'as long as persistence of vision', which places her existence in the hands, or rather eyes, of spectators (p. 119). Tristessa is still dependent on the gaze of others for her continued existence, her body functioning as an appendage to her image.

¹⁴⁰ In this representation of Tristessa's body as covered over with her cinematic image, Carter comes close to Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum. As Leonard Wilcox explains, for Baudrillard 'images, signs, and codes engulf objective reality; signs become more real than reality and stand in for the world they erase'. Leonard Wilcox, 'Baudrillard, DeLillo's *White Noise*, and the End of Heroic Narrative', *Contemporary Literature*, 32.3 (1991), 346-65 (pp. 346-347). This association of woman with the image is also, again, a central idea in feminist film theory. Mary Ann Doane, for example, writes: The woman's beauty, her very desirability, becomes a function of certain practices of imaging – framing, lighting, camera movement, angle. *She is thus, as Laura Mulvey has pointed out, more closely associated with the surface of the image than its illusory depths, its constructed 3-dimensional space which the man is destined to inhabit and hence control*. Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23.3-4 (1982), 74-88 (p. 76; emphasis added).

¹⁴¹ Simone de Beauvoir discusses the Sleeping Beauty myth as an embodiment of man's ideal woman in the section on 'Myths' in *The Second Sex*: 'It is clear that in dreaming of himself as donor, liberator, redeemer, man still desires the subjection of woman; for in order to awaken the Sleeping Beauty, she must have been put to sleep'. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 216. The Sleeping Beauty figure is also important in the following chapter.

Despite her affinity with light, Zero captures Tristessa by ‘impal[ing] her with the ‘beam of light’ from his torch ‘as if she could not stand light, as if she had been kept from light so long she could have crumbled at the touch of it’ (p. 120). Caught in this glare, Tristessa’s eyes, far from being Medusa-like, ‘moved like the eyes of the blind move [...] so, try as I would, I could not imagine how she saw the world, what connections she made between looking and seeing’ (p. 121). Her age has turned her into a spectral being, ‘spare and emaciated’, and Eve/lyn again has a kind of cinematic flashback as s/he recalls seeing Tristessa on-screen in ‘childhood cinemas’ (p. 122). Tristessa is now

nothing so much as her own shadow, worn away to its present state of tangible insubstantiality because, perhaps, so many layers of appearances had been stripped from it by the camera – as if the camera had stolen, not the soul, but her body and left behind a presence like an absence that lived, now, only in a quiet, ghostly, hypersensitised world of its own. Even her terror had a curiously stylised quality. (p. 123)

Like a cinematic version of Poe’s ‘The Oval Portrait’, Tristessa’s being has been transferred into art so that she becomes another dead muse.¹⁴² The camera makes Tristessa insubstantial, transforming her into her ‘own portrait’ so that she has ‘no function in this world except as an idea’ of herself and exists as a being with ‘no ontological status, only an iconographic one’ (p. 129).¹⁴³

In a literalization of the camera’s stripping of Tristessa’s appearances, and in yet another example of the violence of the male gaze, Zero ‘[rips] away her chiffon negligé’ and uses his ‘knife’ to ‘slit [her] g-string’, revealing to a shocked audience the ‘rude, red-purple insignia of maleness, the secret core of Tristessa’s sorrow’ (pp. 127-28).¹⁴⁴ That the body of a man lies behind Tristessa’s projected image of suffering femininity also literalises Carter’s argument in *The Sadeian Woman* that the film actress is ‘an imaginary prostitute’ selling not

¹⁴² Elisabeth Bronfen analyses a number of stories, including Poe’s ‘The Oval Portrait’, which involve the transformation, literal or otherwise, of woman into an image. In a section on Poe’s story, she argues that ‘[f]or the masculine artist, incorporating the feminine power of creation engenders and requires the decorporalisation of the woman who had inspired the artist as model and whose capacities to give birth are what the painting sessions imitate’. Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 112. See Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Oval Portrait’, in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 201-04.

¹⁴³ Beate Neumeier makes a similar point about objects being turned into images when she argues that Carter’s ‘Gothicism’, a ‘blend of fairy tale and pornography’, demonstrates ‘the replacement of the ontological by the iconographic’. Furthermore, she argues that Carter uses the Gothic ‘to reveal the process of transformation of human beings, particularly women into symbols and ideas by the process of gender construction’. Beate Neumeier, ‘Postmodern Gothic: desire and reality in Angela Carter’s writing’, in *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 141-51 (p. 149).

¹⁴⁴ Similarly to *Orlando*, there is some pronoun confusion here in describing Tristessa’s ambiguous gender: ‘His wailing echoed round the gallery of glass as his body arched as if he were attempting to hide herself within himself, to swallow his cock within her thighs’ (p. 128). The passage in *Orlando* occurs on page 133.

her flesh but her image.¹⁴⁵ This revelation of Tristessa's flesh also exposes 'the cultural myth of the *femme fatale*' that appears throughout the text, showing it to be a harmful male fantasy.¹⁴⁶

Carter confirms this in interview with reference to a famous portrayal of the *femme fatale*:

In *The Passion of New Eve* the central character is a transvestite movie star, and I created this person in order to say some quite specific things about the cultural production of femininity. The promotion slogan for the film *Gilda*, starring Rita Hayworth, was 'There was never a woman like Gilda', and that may have been one of the reasons why I made my Hollywood star a transvestite, a man, because only a man could think of femininity in terms of that slogan.¹⁴⁷

In a similar vein, Eve/lyn says that Tristessa was able to be 'the perfect man's woman' because he had 'made himself the shrine of his own desires, had made of himself the only woman he could have loved!' (pp. 128-29).¹⁴⁸ Tristessa thus embodies the idea that 'woman is indeed beautiful only in so far as she incarnates most completely the secret aspirations of man' (p. 129).¹⁴⁹ More particularly, Tristessa also makes clear Hollywood's role in revealing that femininity is a masquerade, for, as Kate Webb argues, the film stars who inspired Tristessa (such as Garbo and Dietrich) 'were so manifestly queens of artifice, creatures of dream and design' that 'they flaunted an idea only previously rumoured in books: that femininity itself

¹⁴⁵ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 76. Similarly, in an essay on Linda Lovelace, Carter likens the cinema to 'an imaginary brothel'. Angela Carter, 'Lovely Linda', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 69-72 (p. 71).

¹⁴⁶ Carter, 'Femmes Fatales,' p. 428.

¹⁴⁷ John Haffenden, 'Angela Carter', in *Novelists in Interview*, ed. John Haffenden (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 76-96 (p. 85). In the Omnibus documentary on Carter's life and work, she claimed that '*The Passion of New Eve* has as its heroine somebody who has been completely constructed by the rules of the cinema, really on terms quite strictly of what men want from goddesses'. Kim Evans (dir.), 'Angela Carter's Curious Room', *Omnibus*, BBC, 15 September 1992. Simon notes that *New Eve* presents an ambiguous image of cross-dressing, one which does not necessarily stress the subversive potential of transvestism. 'Against the liberatory notion of drag, critics have stressed the way in which cross-dressing may be complicit with the ruling power-structure: the transvestite's over-compliance with female gender roles creates the very stereotype of the patriarchal notion of woman.' Simon, *Rewriting the Body*, pp. 129-30. That Tristessa's transvestism may, in fact, be complicit with a patriarchal cinematic iconography contrasts sharply with Orlando's experience of cross-dressing, which frustrates the male gaze of the narrator and increases her own mobility and look.

¹⁴⁸ This notion of the man who plays the role of woman appears also in 'The Merchant of Shadows'. The narrator says that Hank Mann, 'having made' his actress through his films, 'he then *became* her, became a better she than she herself had ever been'. Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', p. 375.

¹⁴⁹ Compared with Orlando, Tristessa is a much less ambiguously sexed and gendered subject. As Laing argues, 'Tristessa alone cannot embody the vacillation of the sexes imagined by Woolf'. Laing, 'Chasing the Wild Goose', p. 89. Peach argues that Eve/lyn 'fails to make a distinction between transvestism and female masquerade', where the former is 'a man dressed as a woman' and the latter 'a man dressed as a woman masquerading as Woman'. Peach, *Angela Carter*, p. 115. The crucial point here, as Peach makes clear, is that female masquerade actually subverts the idea of a 'natural' femininity. Also relevant here is Stephen Heath's point that whilst the 'masquerade is a representation of femininity', femininity itself 'is representation, the representation of the woman'. Stephen Heath, 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade', in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1996), pp. 45-61 (p. 53).

was a drag act'.¹⁵⁰ The unveiling of Tristessa's body, therefore, reveals the lack of foundation behind the images of suffering femininity.

Once Zero and his harem discover that Tristessa's femininity is a masquerade, they revel in the idea of identity as a carnivalesque performance. The wives discover a 'mirrored dressing-room' and, 'eager as children, [begin] to dress up' in Tristessa's clothes, mimicking her masquerade of femininity (p. 131).¹⁵¹ Zero then takes things further by dressing up Eve/lyn in an 'evening suit, tails and a white tie' and Tristessa 'as George Sand' in a complex web of gendered significations (p. 132).¹⁵² Compounding this confusion, Eve/lyn observes Tristessa's 'reflection in the mirror step back and the reflection of that reflection in another mirror' step back in yet another *mise-en-abyme* effect, suggesting that the constructed layers which make up the gendered subject have no end or foundation (p. 132).¹⁵³ Dressed as a man, Eve/lyn seems 'at first glance' to become his old self again 'in the inverted world of mirrors'. However, 'this masquerade is more than skin deep' as under 'the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove', suggesting that whilst identity is a mask, some masks are harder to remove than others (p. 132). Zero closes this double-drag masquerade with a parody wedding ceremony, which Eve/lyn describes as 'a double wedding' since 'both were the bride, both the groom' (p. 135). He also forces Tristessa to rape Eve/lyn and then proceeds to rape her himself.¹⁵⁴ In this playful yet violent scene, Carter

¹⁵⁰ Kate Webb, 'Angela Carter at the Movies', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 2010: Available at: <https://katewebb.wordpress.com/2010/05/03/angela-carter-at-the-movies-daily-telegraph/>. It is instructive to turn to Heath once again: 'The masquerade is obviously at once a whole cinema, the given image of femininity'. Heath also turns to Marlene Dietrich as an example of the cinematic masquerade: 'Dietrich wears all the accoutrements of femininity *as* accoutrements, does the poses as poses, gives the act as an act [...] Dietrich gives the masquerade in excess and so *proffers* the masquerade, take it or leave it, holding and flaunting the male gaze; not a defence against but a derision of masculinity'. Heath, 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade', p. 57. Carter claimed that in watching Dietrich's film career unfold before her, she was 'able to watch the progression of her lacquering. She becomes more and more an object, an object of desire.' Evans (dir.), 'Angela Carter's Curious Room'.

¹⁵¹ Zero's wives also make 'a bonfire of the rolls of films' that Tristessa has kept, a symbolic destruction of Hollywood's idealised images of femininity (p. 130). Adding to this carnivalesque scene, the wives dismembers Tristessa's wax figures of Hollywood's dead stars and reassemble them 'haphazardly, so Roman Navarro's head was perched on Jean Harlow's torso and had one arm from John Barrymore Junior, the other from Marilyn Monroe and legs from yet other donors' (p. 134).

¹⁵² The complexity of these layers of identity can be seen from the fact that Tristessa is a man dressed as a woman (George Sand) who cross-dressed as a man.

¹⁵³ As Jordan argues, Carter's writing demonstrates that 'there is no end to the construction of gender and sexuality, as masquerade, as mimicry and as creative affirmation that can take us by surprise. The abyss between desire and its satisfactions, and between the thinkable and the thing thought of, is crucial to the persistence of desire and thought'. Jordan, 'That Dangerous Edge', p. 211. Furthermore, compare this mirror scene with the earlier one in which Leilah watches herself dressing. Whilst that scene presented Leilah with her specular double, the later scene with Tristessa multiplies his image ad infinitum, suggesting that stable identity comes undone when seen in purely visual terms. This is also, therefore, part of the undoing of Tristessa's performance of abstract, idealised femininity.

¹⁵⁴ Whilst this scene evokes the subversive notion of the carnivalesque, the violence of the scene and Zero's control of the performance undercuts the subversive potential. Carter represents this problematic in her short

takes up Woolf's exploration of the notion that identity is a costume from *Orlando*, but pushes the idea to breaking-point as the multi-layered sartorial performances staged within a hall of mirrors create a dizzying kaleidoscope of images of highly ambiguous gendered bodies.¹⁵⁵

The ambiguous pair escape Zero and his harem into the sterile desert and there the seed of future change is planted as Tristessa impregnates Eve/lyn.¹⁵⁶ Despite this corporeal encounter, Eve/lyn continues to perceive Tristessa in cinematic terms as a 'fabulous beast, magnificent, immaculate, [and] composed of light' (p. 143). The sun, indeed, illuminates Tristessa from behind so that 'he seemed to me surrounded in the oblong glory of light which emanates from divine figures – an aureole or vessica, celestial limelight' (p. 147). Furthermore, the 'transforming light covered his nakedness like a garment; no, it was his flesh itself that seemed made of light, flesh itself so insubstantial only the phenomenon of persistence of vision could account for his presence here' (p. 147).¹⁵⁷ Here, Tristessa moves from a being who reflects (or refracts) light to one who emanates luminescence, yet one who remains dependent upon the gaze of spectators. Furthermore, although Tristessa's illusion of femininity has been exposed, the 'habit of being a visual fallacy was too strong for him to break; appearance, only, had refined itself to become the principle of his life' and he 'flickered upon the air' (p. 147).¹⁵⁸ Even their sexual encounter is filtered through the cinematic, as they both become screens and projectors: 'we now projected upon each other's flesh' all the 'modulation[s]' of 'our selves'

story 'In Pantoland'. At the end, the narrator argues that the 'essence of the carnival [...] is transience. It is here today and gone tomorrow, a release of tension not a reconstitution of order, a refreshment...after which everything can go on again exactly as if nothing had happened'. She continues with reference to cross-dressing: 'Things don't change because a girl puts on trousers or a chap slips on a frock, you know. Masters were masters again the day after Saturnalia ended; after the holiday from gender, it was back to the old grind...' Angela Carter, 'In Pantoland', in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 382-89 (p. 389).

¹⁵⁵ In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter analyses a similarly parodic Sadeian wedding scene in her chapter on Juliette. This wedding also involves cross-dressing as well as incest and infanticide. Carter describes it as a 'charade of sexual anarchy', a 'gross parody of marriage', and a 'demonstration of the relative mutability of gender'. However, she also argues that the wedding results in 'Juliette's annihilation of her residual "femaleness"', which represents 'the climax of her career'. Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 113. The wedding is hence not ultimately subversive, for the man in charge of the ceremony, Noirceuil, 'is careful to omit certain elaborations that would truly suggest an anarchy of the sexes', such as Juliette being placed in a role of dominance over him (p. 114). In both her fiction and essays, then, Carter is sensitive to the difficulty of being truly subversive.

¹⁵⁶ I will return to the matter of Eve/lyn's pregnancy in the final section of the chapter.

¹⁵⁷ A similar image appears in 'The Merchant of Shadows', as the narrator suggests that in California 'Light was made Flesh'. Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', p. 363. The narrator also says that the light, 'when it is distilled, becomes the movies' (p. 364).

¹⁵⁸ According to Webb, Carter once claimed that she "'like[d] anything that flickers'". Webb goes on to say that Carter found 'in cinema's luminescent beings an image of her aesthetic sensibility, which was at war with the essential in art.' Webb, 'Angela Carter at the Movies'.

(p. 148). Eve/lyn adds that s/he sees ‘fragments of old movies playing like summer lightening on the lucid planes of [Tristessa’s] face’ (p. 149).¹⁵⁹

Adding to the text’s concern with the notion of stripping the female body, Tristessa says that his performance of femininity originated in a striptease act, though Eve/lyn refers to his account as a ‘fictive autobiography’ (p. 152). Tristessa describes how he would hide behind a torn curtain and then slowly reveal his legs so that the audience would ‘pound their fists and glasses on the tables’. After much excited shrieking, ‘up the curtain would go, slowly, stripping me inch by inch’, until the audience’s eyes ‘struck me through like arrows while I danced and they howled like the damned in hell’. He then explains that ‘Tristessa is a lost soul who lodges in me’, a figure who ‘came and took possession of my mirror one day when I was looking at myself. She invaded the mirror like an army with banners; she entered me through the eyes’ (p. 151). As if worried that Tristessa will enter Eve/lyn’s eyes, he says that s/he must close her eyes ‘when you look at me’ (p. 151). Here, Tristessa appears to comprehend the intersubjective power of the gaze, in which both spectator and spectacle are created in the same moment, products of the same scopic economy. Although Eve/lyn’s encounter with Tristessa helps him/her to appreciate this construction of a masculine visual economy, these last passages show that cinema and the gendered gaze continue to mediate Eve/lyn’s experience as s/he cannot perceive Tristessa as anything but a cinematic spectacle. It is only when Eve/lyn reaches the West Coast and enters the text’s final enclosed space that s/he finally breaks with the economy of the cinematic gaze by leaving behind this obsession with Tristessa and Hollywood.¹⁶⁰

Beyond the Cinematic

Upon arriving in Los Angeles, Eve/lyn discovers a post-apocalyptic space of deserted roads and shops. Commenting on her motivation for travelling to California, Eve/lyn says that s/he was ‘filled with a raging curiosity to see the end of the world’, once again betraying his/her role as a voyeuristic and detached spectator (p. 167). Whilst New York was pictured in the style of *film noir*, Los Angeles takes on the appearance of the post-apocalyptic or disaster film. However, Eve/lyn also acknowledges his/her own role in the performance: ‘all around me gave

¹⁵⁹ Even the desert is experienced as a cinematic landscape then. As Baudrillard writes: ‘It is useless to seek to strip the desert of its cinematic aspects in order to restore its original essence [...] The cinema has absorbed everything’. Baudrillard, *America*, p. 73. Carter wrote a short story which is, in part, based on the cinematic representation of the desert. Angela Carter, ‘John Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*’, in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 332-48. In this story Carter adapts John Ford’s Jacobean tragedy into a screenplay, as if it were to be filmed by the director John Ford, known for his iconic films set in the American deserts.

¹⁶⁰ Ironically, it is only in the home of Hollywood that Eve/lyn leaves behind his/her obsession with the cinematic.

me the sense of trompe l'oeil, of theatre, of a stage set for some ghastly catastrophe and I myself as yet the only actor who'd appeared' (p. 168).¹⁶¹ This last comment reveals that Eve/lyn has learned to see him/herself from the other side of the screen/mirror, as object as well as bearer of the gaze. Furthermore, Eve/lyn's view of himself as a detached observer back in New York is altered when s/he reunites with Leilah (now renamed Lilith), who confesses that she had seduced him as part of Mother's plan and hence was never Evelyn's prey. Lilith also explains that Mother's plan has been postponed as history has overtaken myth, and as a result she suffered a 'nervous breakdown' and 'retired to a cave by the sea' (p. 174). After driving out to meet her, they find a 'mad old lady' sitting in a 'wicker garden chair' singing 'popular songs of the thirties in a thin voice of cracked yet piercing sweetness' (pp. 176-77). Wearing 'a two-piece bathing costume', a 'stole of glossy and extravagant blonde fur', and her face painted with 'white powder and scarlet lipstick', Mother '[sings] the lights of Broadway' as if nostalgic for an earlier and better age (p. 177).¹⁶² Such nostalgia for Broadway suggests that she is, and perhaps always was, in the grip of a certain kind of spectacle and masquerade of femininity.¹⁶³ However, her abandonment of her matriarchal project nevertheless foreshadows Eve/lyn's rejection of the cinematic economy of the gaze during his/her experience inside the last enclosed space of the text, a sea cave to which s/he is now directed by Lilith.¹⁶⁴

Whilst the encounter with Tristessa revealed an abyss behind his cinematic images of femininity, and by extension within Eve/lyn as spectator, this revelation failed to change Eve/lyn's cinematic perception of reality, as s/he continues to describe Tristessa in terms of filmic images.¹⁶⁵ By contrast, the experiences within the claustrophobic sea cave allow Eve/lyn to leave the cinematic scopic economy behind in favour of a new relationship to the body mediated by ideas of literary and evolutionary time. Upon first entering the cave, Eve/lyn is immediately struck by the way it affects his/her body: s/he has to 'fold' his/her body 'into the

¹⁶¹ In a sense, Eve/lyn takes up a similar role to Tristessa in New York. Just as Tristessa '[presided] over the catastrophe of [New York]', so now Eve/lyn appears as the only actor in Los Angeles (p. 15).

¹⁶² Continuing the text's concern with cinema and old retired film stars, Mother's nostalgia for an earlier age perhaps alludes to a figure like Norma Desmond from Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Desmond used to be a prolific silent-film actress, but now finds herself (like Mother in *New Eve*) out of a job because of the rise of the "talkies" which demand very different acting abilities.

¹⁶³ This scene also recalls Evelyn's meditation on what he expects to find in New York. As he asks, picturing the city before his arrival, 'hadn't Tristessa herself conquered New York in *The Lights of Broadway*?' (p. 10).

¹⁶⁴ Just as Mother has retired to a cave and given up on her project, Eve asks Lilith if they should put away 'all the symbols [...] until the times have created a fresh iconography?' (p. 174). This constitutes yet another desire to move beyond the patriarchal iconographies, such as Hollywood cinema. Harriet Blodgett also interprets this sentence as a reflection of Carter's desire to create a fresh iconography and move beyond the male impersonation of her earlier works. Harriet Blodgett, 'Fresh Iconography: Subversive Fantasy by Angela Carter', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 14.3 (1994), 49-55.

¹⁶⁵ Similarly, as Eve/lyn had said about Tristessa, the 'habit of being a visual fallacy was too strong for him to break' (p. 147).

interstice of rock' so that she becomes 'flat as a flounder', and as s/he pushes on through s/he is 'like a cheese, oozing forward' (pp. 179-80). Despite moving forward, Eve/lyn sees this as a 'concrete regression' and a return to her mother (p. 180). The only light she has is a torch, which she drops, so that all is '[d]arkness and silence' (p. 180). The closeness of the walls leads Eve/lyn to imagine himself/herself 'pressed as between pages of a gigantic book', a metaphor that draws on the literary rather than the cinematic to make sense of experience (p. 180). There is also a suggestion that Eve/lyn has begun to perceive the importance of renouncing the male gaze and its concomitant violence when s/he says that s/he will 'petrify here, like Lot's wife' (p. 180). With this biblical image, Eve/lyn simultaneously highlights the danger of the male gaze and betrays a fear that leaving the past behind will not be easy.

Eventually Eve/lyn finds an open space where a light clicks mechanically on, revealing a number of objects, the most important of which is yet another mirror. Whilst earlier mirrors highlighted femininity as a construction and were interchangeable with the cinema screen, this one is 'broken, cracked right across many times so it reflected nothing [...] and I could not see myself' (p. 181). The double structure of projection/introjection associated with the mirror/screen is thus broken, the cracked mirror also a symbolic destruction of the male gaze. A further rejection of the visual occurs in a second and smaller cave, a space that recalls the womb-space in Beulah through water the temperature of 'blood heat' and a 'dim, red light' (pp. 181-82). Here, Eve/lyn finds a 'glossy publicity still of Tristessa at the height of her beauty', which s/he responds to by saying 'how glorious it is to be a woman!' (p. 182). At the sight of an autograph signed on one corner of the photograph – "Loving you always, Tristessa de St. A." – Eve/lyn 'choke[s] on a sob', but then in 'a fury' seizes the photograph and rips it 'in four pieces', letting the 'fragments drop into' the water (p. 182). Like the broken mirror, the destruction of Tristessa's image constitutes a rejection of the visual structure in which Eve/lyn has for so long been ensnared and in particular her enjoyment of feminine suffering as evidenced by her turn from sadness to anger.

In a further rejection of the visual, the text also returns to the distinction set up at the beginning between film as projected image and film as celluloid, now with the emphasis laid firmly upon the latter. This turn to the film as corporeal object appears during a sequence of surreal events in which Eve/lyn's sense of being a unified subject unravels. Firstly, Eve/lyn experiences time 'running back on itself' so that the words 'duration' and 'progression' appear 'meaningless', and an abyss opens up once again, producing 'a sensation of falling' (pp. 182-83). The body then comes to the fore as Eve/lyn squeezes through a womb-like fissure, its walls like 'meat and slimy velvet', shuddering and sighing, and rippling with a 'visceral yet perfectly

rhythmic agitation' as if 'ingest[ing]' his/her body (p. 184).¹⁶⁶ It is then that the idea of the film stock returns, in a bewildering experience of evolutionary time in reverse: 'Rivers neatly roll up on themselves like spools of film and turn in on to their own sources' (p. 185).¹⁶⁷ In a surrealist reversal of the opening scene of the novel, the film turns back on itself and its celluloid body curls up so that no more projections can take place. Whilst Eve/lyn's earliest comments about the film stock centred on how the (forward) passage of time enhanced Tristessa's immortal beauty as long as the persistence of vision continued, the image of spools of celluloid curling up into themselves in a reversal of the passage of time implies that Tristessa's beauty, indeed her very image, recedes into darkness where it cannot be seen by the spectator.¹⁶⁸ The experience of an abyss opening up in the sea cave thus leads to a different result from the one experienced in Tristessa's glass house, as now Eve/lyn is able to accept the emptiness behind the cinematic image and end her enthrallment to the cinematic scopic economy in favour of a new sense of corporeality.

This sequence of experiences in the cave, therefore, represents the apotheosis of *New Eve's* demythologisation of the cinematic construction of femininity, as Eve/lyn finally rejects this masculine visual economy. The combination of the opaque mirror, the destruction of Tristessa's previously fetishised image of masochistic femininity, and the image of celluloid folding up signifies the end of a scopic regime based on the commodification of fetishised images of femininity for a voyeuristic male spectator. Whilst the cinema theatre in the opening scene facilitated Eve/lyn's enjoyment of the projected images in terms of the reassuring structure of 'proximity at a distance', the womb-like cave forces him/her to give up the illusion of detached observation and become contiguous with the corporeal space. As a result, the representation of femininity changes from the static time of the fetishised image to the evolutionary temporality of the maternal body.

¹⁶⁶ In an interesting reading of *New Eve's* repeated concern with the womb, Jegerstedt argues that 'Evelyn's whole journey can be seen as a repeated quest back to the womb', and in a reversal of Freud's idea of penis-envy, Eve/lyn can be said to be afflicted with womb-envy. Jegerstedt, 'The Art of Speculation', p. 141.

¹⁶⁷ Lorna Sage refers to this as 'an evolutionary re-run', suggesting perhaps that it is akin to a film or TV show which is shown as a repeat. Lorna Sage, 'Death of the Author: Obituary Essay on Angela Carter', in *Good As Her Word: Selected Journalism*, ed. Sharon Sage and Victor Sage (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), pp. 65-80 (p. 77).

¹⁶⁸ In her brilliantly inspired essay on Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher', Carter retells the story by reversing the narrative order, which she compares to playing a movie backwards: 'I decided that I would 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 shown to me, then, and what story that face told about the Ushers and their author'. Carter, 'Through a Text Backwards', p. 590. Something similar is happening in the above scene in *New Eve*, for Eve/lyn is only able to move beyond the masculine, cinematic visual economy by reversing the filmic projection to the point at which Tristessa's image recedes into darkness.

Indeed, Eve/lyn's last experiences focus on her pregnant body as opposed to Tristessa's image, mirroring the turn from film's projected images to the body of the film stock. During her final moments in the cave, Eve/lyn emits a 'single, frail, inconsolable cry like that of a newborn child', which not only places her in the same position as her own unborn child but is also an acknowledgement of her precarious and dependent bodily existence (p. 186). This image of the feminine body is markedly different to the images of femininity masqueraded by both Leilah and Tristessa, for whilst the latter pair represent static, fetishised images for a male gaze, the former is an image of the body as implicated in narrative time – a bearer of new life and meaning, not simply an object of someone else's gaze and narrative. At the beginning of *New Eve*, Eve/lyn characterises Tristessa's femininity in terms of immortal beauty, suggesting that she will 'triumph over time', and positions her as a passive object of the male gaze with the comment that her beauty exists 'as long as celluloid remained in complicity with the phenomenon of persistence of vision' (p. 5). This economy of meaning is rejected as a destructive way of visualising and positioning the feminine subject, in favour of Eve's pregnant body as a site productive of meaning. Instead of being treated as a sight to be looked at voyeuristically and fetishistically, the pregnant body is a vessel which creates and transports meaning, both corporeal and narrative. Eve/lyn refers to the baby inside of her, for example, as 'a tribute to evolution', which captures something of the different conception of time associated with her feminine body because it locates her within a larger narrative of life rather than the static time of frozen images of fetishised feminine beauty (p. 186). To borrow a phrase from George Eliot, Eve has become a 'delicate vessel', a being that produces meaning through time and not just a sight to behold.¹⁶⁹ Eve's status as a vessel carrying a future potential embodies the power of narrative, or what Peter Brooks refers to as a 'future temporal unfolding'.¹⁷⁰ Eve/lyn's rejection of the cinematic and embrace of her bodily identity is an attempt to find meaning outside of masculine narrative and visual structures, in which woman is positioned as static image and object, and man as hero who drives the narrative towards its end.

New Eve's complex narrative structure contributes to the demythologisation of a masculine visual economy, for Eve's retrospective account is characterised by an irreconcilable split between Evelyn and Eve. In order to make sense of the narrative, it is helpful to adopt Lee's notion of a 'back-and-forth reading', placing different images in the text side by side.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 103.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 253.

¹⁷¹ Lee, 'Angela Carter's New Eve/lyn', p. 242.

After discovering that Evelyn will be transformed into a woman, readers who assumed that the narrative voice was masculine will have to revise their reading of earlier passages. This complexity of narrative voice and the surprise it produces could not be captured in a single, static image, but must be arranged in a sequence of images read in different directions. Stephen Heath writes that ‘any discourse which fails to take account of the problem of sexual difference in its own enunciation and address will be, within a patriarchal order, precisely indifferent, a reflection of male domination’.¹⁷² *New Eve* avoids this problem by constructing a narrator-protagonist whose ambiguous sex is made apparent at the level of enunciation so that the issue of sexual difference is always at stake.¹⁷³ This, too, has implications for visibility, for the complexity of narrative voice resists the fetishising tendency of cinematic modes of looking. The split between Evelyn and Eve might be erased in a filmic adaptation of the novel as an image and/or voice-over would likely fail to capture the complexity of gender masquerades and surprises in the text and instead become trapped in the very scopophilic structures which it attempts to critique.¹⁷⁴

What *New Eve* ultimately makes clear is that the gendered body is mirrored by the tension between film as image and film as celluloid. The opening scene’s focus on Evelyn as detached, scopophilic observer and Tristessa as fetishised image is replaced at the novel’s close by the image of the filmic body folding in upon itself and Eve/lyn’s rejection of Tristessa’s image in favour of a new corporeal existence. Indeed, the folding up of the celluloid is like Eve’s pregnant body in that both are ready to be unfolded, their meaning existing in a future to come. *New Eve* thus folds up the cinematic body in order to begin again. In ‘Notes from the Front Line’, Carter explains that she frequently wrote about sexuality and ‘its manifestations in human practice’ because it was ‘primarily through [her] sexual and emotional life that [she] was radicalised’.¹⁷⁵ She also writes of the moment, 1968, in which she began to question ‘the nature of [her] reality as a woman’ and understand how the ‘social fiction’ of her femininity was ‘created, by means outside [her] control and palmed off on [her] as the real thing’.¹⁷⁶ Out of this process of enlightenment, Carter says that she began to experience a ‘sense of limitless freedom’ as ‘a new kind of being’.¹⁷⁷ In a way, this describes something of

¹⁷² Stephen Heath, ‘Difference’, *Screen*, 19.3 (1978), 51-112 (p. 53).

¹⁷³ For a discussion of *New Eve*’s narrative structure with respect to gender, see Ruth Page, ‘Gender’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 189-202.

¹⁷⁴ Peach argues that *New Eve* ‘refuses to guarantee a voyeuristic subject position for its readers’ because it both ‘makes voyeurs of its readers and then subverts their voyeurism’. Peach, *Angela Carter*, p. 115.

¹⁷⁵ Carter, ‘Notes from the Front Line’, p. 49.

¹⁷⁶ Carter, ‘Notes from the Front Line’, p. 47.

¹⁷⁷ Carter, ‘Notes from the Front Line’, p. 49.

Eve/lyn's journey in *New Eve*, as s/he comes to understand that Tristessa's images of suffering femininity are a masquerade palmed off as the real thing in the service of patriarchal capitalism. The novel's final page also points towards the birth of a new kind of being, not only through Eve's unborn child but also in Eve/lyn's hope of beginning again. 'We start from our conclusions', Eve/lyn announces, and one such conclusion is that s/he had, until now, lived his/her 'whole life' in Tristessa's 'hall of mirrors' which turned out to be 'a glass mausoleum' (p. 191). Although Eve/lyn continues to dream of Tristessa, s/he hopes that the ocean will 'bear [her] to the place of birth', to a new beginning beyond the structure of the male gaze.

Chapter 4

Kaleidoscopes, Phantasmagorias, and Peep-Shows: The Technological Gaze in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

Matter was an optical toy for him.

– Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

Mutability is having a field day.

– Angela Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style'

Introduction

In 1974, Angela Carter published a collection of short stories under the title *Fireworks*, many of which were written during her time in Japan, alongside her novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.¹ In one story, 'Flesh and the Mirror', a woman's experience of seeing herself reflected in a mirror forces her to acknowledge that her performance of self is, in large part, dictated by visual structures beyond her control. Like Evelyn and Leilah's relationship to the mirror in *New Eve*, the woman here comes to realise that she is cast into a certain role by the mirror, and that, as a consequence, her initial conception of herself as a detached and masterful observer overestimates both her own agency and the malleability of the visual field. I want to begin with this story because it explores in a condensed form the relationship between the freedom or authorship of the individual observer and the visual structures within which this observer is situated, a relationship that is central to *Desire Machines*.

'Flesh and the Mirror' concerns a young woman who, returning to Japan after some months at home in England, looks for her Japanese lover during her first night back in Tokyo. After failing to find him, the woman is thrown into contact with a 'perfect stranger' and decides to spend the night with the latter instead.² The hotel room which they rent has 'a mirror on the ceiling', and it is this object on which the story hinges because it transforms her image of

¹ *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* will hereafter be abbreviated to *Desire Machines*.

² Angela Carter, 'Flesh and the Mirror', in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 68-74 (p. 69).

herself as both an observer and author of her subjectivity.³ Before this pivotal moment, the woman imagines herself as ‘the creator of all and of myself’, moving through a series of ‘expressionist perspectives’ in her ‘black dress’ and looked at by the crowds of people surrounding her, which she likens to ‘waves full of eyes’ as if she were the centre of a vast spectacle.⁴ She also positions herself in a way similar to the ideal observing eye of perspective painting when she says that the ‘world stretched out from my eye like spokes from a sensitised hub that galvanised all to life when I looked at it’.⁵ From this god-like position of observation, the city functions as a ‘projection’ from her mind and possesses ‘the enigmatic transparency, the indecipherable clarity, of dream’. In addition, the woman pictures herself as the author of her own appearance through a sartorial metaphor when she says that she was ‘always rummaging in the dressing-up box of the heart for suitable appearances to adopt’. However, there is the intimation of a problem lurking below this conception of the observer, as the woman acknowledges that she ‘suffer[s] a great deal’ when ‘too close to reality’.⁶ It is this fear of getting too close to reality which appears to be the cause of her stance as a detached observer, much like Evelyn in *New Eve*. Apropos of her living in Asia, the woman explains that ‘it always seemed far away from me. It was as if there were glass between me and the world’, the glass acting as both barrier and mediating surface. As a result of this, she experiences her subjectivity as divided, split between a puppet-master figure and a ‘puppet’ on ‘the other side of the glass’ whose strings she herself pulled.⁷ From this double perspective, the woman admits that she had

³ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 69. Scott Dimovitz reads the story as ‘a sustained investigation of the mirror in relation to the fine line between self-consciousness and solipsism’. Scott Dimovitz, “‘I Was the Subject of the Sentence Written on the Mirror’”: Angela Carter’s Short Fiction and the Unwriting of the Psychoanalytic Subject’, *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 21 (2010), 1-19 (p. 5).

⁴ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 68. As Dimovitz points out, the woman is ‘deprived of experiencing experience as experience not as the result of a particular masculine oppression [...] but by an internalization of romantic scripts from an unnamed source’. Dimovitz, “‘I Was the Subject of the Sentence Written on the Mirror’”, p. 7 (emphasis in original).

⁵ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 68. As John Berger explains, the ‘convention of perspective [...] centres everything on the eye of the beholder. It is like a beam from a lighthouse – only instead of light travelling outwards, appearances travel in. [...] Perspective makes the single eye the centre of the visible world. [...] The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God’. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 9.

⁶ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 69. Analysing a similar passage about reality in *Desire Machines*, Dani Cavallaro observes that this notion of not being able to get too close to reality is one that appears in the works of both T.S. Eliot and Carl Jung. Although this idea appears in ‘quite distinct contexts’ within their respective works, nevertheless both Eliot and Jung expressed the notion that ‘human beings simply cannot tolerate too much reality’. Dani Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter: A Critical Investigation* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2011), p. 59. Carter’s narrator further explains her situation by likening herself to Emma Bovary, imagining ‘other things that could have been happening’ and feeling ‘cheated’ and ‘dissatisfied’ with reality. Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 69.

⁷ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 69. The figures of puppet and puppet-master frequently recur throughout Carter’s oeuvre. See, for example, ‘The Loves of Lady Purple’, in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 41-51, and *The Magic Toyshop* (1967).

previously ‘attempted to rebuild the city according to the blueprint in my imagination’, but that the city had ‘refused to be so rebuilt’.⁸ It is in seeing her reflected image in a mirror that she comes to acknowledge the failure of this project and her misperception of herself as at the centre of, and in control of, the visible world.

The mirror brings about this transformation of perspective in a number of ways. First, seeing the bodies of herself and her lover in the mirror leads her to realise that their conjunction was not a result of her choosing, but was ‘cast at random by the enigmatic kaleidoscope of the city’, a suggestion that the visual structures of her environment dictate her position as an observer. Secondly, the ‘stippled’ light she observes on their skins replaces the earlier image of sartorial freedom (dressing-up the self) with one in which their bodies are clothed in ‘a mysterious uniform’, rendering them both ‘anonymous’. The apotheosis of this illuminating experience, though, lies with the recognition that the mirror has transformed the woman’s subjectivity as an observer: the ‘magic mirror presented me with a hitherto unconsidered notion of myself as I’. As with the narrator of Woolf’s ‘Street Haunting’, this ‘I’ is also an ‘eye’. This I/eye is one that is ‘defined by the action reflected in the mirror’, and thus the woman recognises that she is not a detached, controlling observer but ‘the subject of the sentence written on the mirror’.⁹ This confrontation with her specular double, therefore, transforms the woman’s status as an observer/author, for it decentres her position as a detached and controlling eye, and positions her at the level of the written rather than that of the writer. In Crary’s terms, she recognises that she is not an ‘isolated’ and ‘autonomous’ observer, a ‘free sovereign individual’ detached from images and visual structures.¹⁰ Instead, like his model of the observer in the nineteenth century, she is implicated in and positioned by the visual structures of the mirror and the kaleidoscopic city, ‘contiguous’ with their operation rather than detached from them.¹¹ As she says of the relationship between herself as observer and her image in the mirror, ‘I was not watching it. There was nothing whatsoever beyond the surface of the glass’. In this image, the woman as observer is located on the same visual plane as the mirror, and therefore not a detached eye. That she had previously been able to disavow this is explained by the notion that ‘[w]omen and mirrors are in complicity with one another to evade the action I/she performs that she/I cannot watch, the action with which I break out of the mirror’. The mirror in the hotel

⁸ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 69.

⁹ Carter, ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, p. 70. This idea of the mirror as positioning the observing subject recalls the scene in *New Eve* when Evelyn observes Leilah watching herself in her mirror, for, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, the mirror casts both Leilah and Evelyn into its erotic dream.

¹⁰ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 39.

¹¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 129.

room, however, 'refuse[s] to conspire' with her and thus makes her confront the reality of her position within the visual field.¹² Even in her attempts to evade the mirror and what it reveals, the narrator cannot escape from the recognition that her actions are dictated by visual structures beyond her control: her 'demonstration of perturbation was perfect in every detail, just like the movies', suggesting that even her acts of defiance have been scripted for her.¹³

As well as transforming her perception of her own identity, this revelatory mirror experience also alters her perception of her absent lover and her relationship to him. She begins by noting that, in fact, she does not know how he 'really looked' since 'he was plainly an object created in the mode of fantasy', his face only matching the one 'created' by her consuming 'rage to love'. Building on this, the woman also confesses that when she had first met him, she had wanted to take him apart 'as a child dismembers a clockwork toy', and that, in another instance of the penetrating gaze, she 'wanted to see him far more naked than he was with his clothes off'. Much like Woolf's 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection', only with the genders inverted, there is a desire to strip the other bare, to inspect him closely in order to master him and to see if he truly is the object desired. Likewise, turning this dissecting gaze upon herself reveals that she, too, is a creation: 'I had also to labour at the idea of myself in love'.¹⁴ Realising that she felt guilty not during but only after sleeping with the stranger, she asks herself 'was I in character when I felt guilty or in character when I did not?' Perplexed by this question, she resorts to another cinematic metaphor to capture her strange situation:

I no longer understood the logic of my own performance. My script had been scrambled behind my back. The cameraman was drunk. The director had had a *crise de nerfs* and been taken away to a sanatorium. And my co-star had picked himself up off the operating table and painfully cobbled himself together again.¹⁵

Through the mediation of a mirror, then, the woman not only loses the image of herself as a detached observer and author of her reality, but her very subjectivity starts to come undone when she turns her gaze upon her own performance of self. This mirror experience leads her to the realisation that she is subject to the conventions and limitations of a visual field which pre-exists her and resists her desire to be master of the image. Her attempts to live as if she were in control of the appearance of both herself and the city around her fail because she is not a sovereign subject, a detached and god-like observer hovering above everything, but instead

¹² Carter, 'Flesh and the Mirror', p. 70.

¹³ Carter, 'Flesh and the Mirror', p. 71.

¹⁴ Carter, 'Flesh and the Mirror', p. 72.

¹⁵ Carter, 'Flesh and the Mirror', p. 73 (emphasis in original).

contiguous with images and visual structures – as she puts it, the subject of the sentence written on the mirror.¹⁶

Desire Machines concerns a similar problem to ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, as the titular Doctor Hoffman attempts to turn the world into a kind of grand optical toy in the hope that a society constructed out of autonomous images will lead to the absolute autonomy of the individual. In the terms of ‘Flesh and the Mirror’, Hoffman’s aim is to turn the woman’s illusory experience of self and city into a reality, so that every individual is free to be whatever s/he wants to be, free from structures of visuality that position and limit him/her. Hoffman’s plan for a society of the spectacle is not one that induces alienation and abstraction, but instead liberates the individual by putting desire at the centre and letting it run wild.

Desire Machines tells the story of Desiderio, a young man sent on a mission to assassinate Hoffman and destroy his technological apparatus, which is gradually transforming the world into a surreal new reality. Hoffman’s desire machines are said to free unconscious material from every human subject and to reify such material into autonomous and palpable mirages. In thus undoing the boundary separating reality from fantasy, Hoffman transforms the world into a chaotic space in which objects from dreams, memories, and imaginings stand toe-to-toe with real, physical beings. He justifies such chaos on the grounds that it will lead to greater freedom and autonomy, with individuals able to realise all of their desires. The leader of Desiderio’s city, the Minister of Determination, disagrees with the doctor’s ideology and attempts to block the mirages. When this proves too difficult, he tasks Desiderio with eliminating Hoffman instead. Matters are complicated by the fact that Hoffman sends his beautiful and enigmatic daughter, Albertina, to seduce Desiderio and persuade him to join their cause. Albertina appears throughout the text in various guises, a kind of woman in flux who excites Desiderio all the more for being so ephemeral and metamorphic. He thus falls immediately in love with her and his narrative is largely driven by his desire to consummate his love for her. However, when he eventually confronts Hoffman, Desiderio rejects the doctor’s project and murders both him and his daughter. Behind the flux of alluring mirages is a monotonous machinery of copulating lovers and cold mechanisms. As critics have noted,

¹⁶ Although I have argued that the story makes a specific point, I do agree with Dimovitz that the story ‘leaves the reader with nothing but questions’. Dimovitz, “‘I Was the Subject of the Sentence Written on the Mirror’”, p. 9. Despite this ambiguity, it is possible to read the story as one woman’s coming-to-consciousness about the problem of the relationship between the individual observer and the visual field, even if she does not arrive at a set of definitive answers to the problems raised.

Hoffman's project looks less like a project to free the imagination and more like the imprisoning society of the spectacle combined with a repressive sexual politics.¹⁷

Like *New Eve*, *Desire Machines* also displays Carter's intense fascination with the visual, but in the latter text her scope is much broader, taking in a number of iconographies besides the cinematic, including pornography, the peep-show, and Surrealism. A number of visual devices appear in the text as part of the diegetic world, whilst others appear as metaphors that Desiderio uses to characterise his experiences. Given this range of visual devices, Friedberg's notion of a 'relay of looks' is once again helpful for thinking of both the similarities and the differences between the various looks in the text. Consequently, one of the central questions of this chapter is whether this greater range of visual devices and looks constitutes an opening up of the gendered field of vision – creating or facilitating new and different looks and images – or whether it simply perpetuates conventionally patriarchal ways of looking and images of femininity. More specifically, the chapter asks whether or not Hoffman's desire machines lead to a restructuring of the relations between gender and the visual. This chapter thus considers both the broad range of real visual technologies and the imaginary optical device of Hoffman's desire machines.

Carter makes it clear from the beginning that the novel is concerned with desire in looking, or scopophilia, in the name she gives to Hoffman's invention. She thus foregrounds the fact that the field of vision in this text is one suffused with desire (there is no neutral looking in this text, whatever that might mean). The gendered body is at all times in the novel seen through the lens of desire and each technological device for imaging or representing it is similarly bound up with desire, often pornographic. Hoffman is quite explicit about the relationship between desire and vision, claiming that his desire machines will liberate desire by removing all restraints that block its complete and free expression in the form of autonomous mirages. The centrality of desire in the text is also clear narratologically, as not only does the narrator's name allude to desire through its semantic similarity to the word 'desire', but Desiderio's narrative is driven quite explicitly by his desire for Albertina and he repeatedly remarks about spoiling the narrative climax for his readers. Tonkin is correct when she states that '[d]esire is everywhere in the novel', for Desiderio's narrative of his journey traces a path

¹⁷ Susan Rubin Suleiman has provided the most comprehensive account of the novel's relationship to both Surrealism and to what Guy Debord referred to as 'the society of the spectacle'. Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 115-32.

through the various emanations of his desires.¹⁸ These include a sadistic count that terrorises others with his desire, a team of circus performers called the Acrobats of Desire who brutally rape Desiderio, and a number of women who clearly represent masculine images of desired and desirable femininity. There is also a tension at the heart of Desiderio's desires, for whilst he is told at one point to 'objectify [his] desires', he maintains that his most important desire 'can never be objectified'.¹⁹ This refers to his desire for Albertina, who remains tantalisingly forever out of his reach. All of these examples make it clear that Carter is fascinated with the relationship between desire and ways of seeing the gendered body, and that for her every way of looking at and representing the gendered body is inflected by desire.

As I will make clear in my analysis, the kind of desire Carter is most interested in is typically masculine. It is a desire to objectify the female body, to strip it bare in order to master it, and to turn it into a spectacle for the perspective of the voyeur. Desiderio clearly displays both scopophilia and epistemophilia, delighting in images of femininity that flatter him and harbouring the desire to penetrate Albertina's various disguises to find the authentic woman beneath. Whilst Desiderio, like Evelyn before him, predominantly displays qualities similar to those which characterise Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze', I also want to pay attention to other kinds of desires, looks and images of the gendered body in this text. Like my analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*, this chapter aims to consider the potential spaces of difference opened up by new technologies and practices, particularly as mediated by different visual devices. Hoffman's desire machines are scrutinised for their potential to change the conventional, patriarchal relations between gender and the visual. Whilst a critic like Sally Robinson focuses on how *Desire Machines* uses a 'strategic engagement with various master narratives of Western culture' in order to critique 'the politics of representation', my analysis focuses instead on how the text's engagement with various visual technologies contributes to the theoretical debates about gender and the visual.²⁰ As with my analysis of cinema in the previous chapter, so in the present chapter I interrogate Hoffman's desire machines and the other visual devices in the novel to see whether or not they open up new, non-oppressive ways of looking at the gendered body.

¹⁸ Maggie Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence: Critical Fictions/Fictional Critiques* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 84.

¹⁹ Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 6. All further references are given parenthetically in the text.

²⁰ Sally Robinson, *Engendering the Subject: Gender and Self-Representation in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 117.

Contextualising Hoffman's Revolution: Surrealism, Godard and the 1960s

According to Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Desire Machines* stages the question: 'Is there a future for the totally free imagination espoused by Surrealism [...] in a society ruled by images?'²¹ The fight between Hoffman and the Minister is a battle over the use of images, and it embodies both the hopes for and disappointments with new iconographies, such as that of Surrealism. As critics like Suleiman have pointed out, Surrealism was one of the most important influences on Carter's writing, including *Desire Machines*. Like all her engagements with Surrealism, this novel displays Carter's ambivalence about the positive potential of this movement for effecting social as well as aesthetic change. This is made explicit in her essay 'The Alchemy of the Word', in which she writes of both her initial love for and eventual disappointment with Surrealism. The essay also provides a way of understanding Hoffman's revolutionary project in *Desire Machines*. In her essay, Carter states that 'the Russian Revolution of 1917 suggested the end of one world might mark the commencement of another world,'²² a description that fits Hoffman's project to destroy one world in order to create another. Carter highlights the relationship between social revolution and new ways of seeing when she writes further that the commencement of a new world would hopefully result in human beings taking possession of 'their own means of expressing the reality of [their] life, i.e. art'. It is this idea that Carter uses to make sense of Surrealism's celebration of 'the capacity for seeing the world as if for the first time'.²³ Again, Hoffman's desire machines parallel Carter's explanation of Surrealism in so far as there is a shared attempt to reactivate in people the ability to see or image the world anew. The mirages that Hoffman springs loose from the unconscious are distinctly surreal, such as birds that shout quotations from Hegel or painted horses that step out of their paintings. Furthermore, Desiderio likens Hoffman to a poet, one who uses his knowledge 'to render the invisible visible' (p. 21). Hoffman can thus be read as a surrealist and revolutionary poet, one who wants to effect social change through radical aesthetics. Indeed, Suleiman not only argues that Hoffman can be described as a 'Surrealist image-maker' but goes on to say that *Desire Machines* 'can be read as a reflection on the opening pages of Breton's first *Surrealist*

²¹ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination', p. 117.

²² Angela Carter, 'The Alchemy of the Word', in *Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings* (London: Vintage, 2006), pp. 67-73 (p. 67).

²³ Carter, 'The Alchemy of the Word', p. 67. In 'Notes from the Front Line', Carter writes of her 'adventures in anarcho-surrealism', which contributed to her 'personal process of maturing into feminism'. Carter, 'Notes from the Front Line', in *Shaking a Leg*, p. 46. See also Carter's essay on Bataille, 'George Bataille: *Story of the Eye*', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 86-88. Carter refers to Bataille as her 'grand old surrealist fellow-traveller and sexual *philosophe*', and writes of his 'theory of active sexuality as the assertion of human freedom', the latter an apt description of Hoffman's project in *Desire Machines* (p. 88; emphasis in original).

Manifesto', in which dream and imagination are pitted against so-called real life and the realist attitude.²⁴

By the end of her essay, however, Carter reveals her eventual disappointment with Surrealism:

The surrealists were not good with women. That is why, although I thought they were wonderful, I had to give them up in the end. They were, with a few patronised exceptions, all men and they told me that I was the source of all mystery, beauty, and otherness, because I was a woman – and I knew that was not true. [...] When I realised that surrealist art did not recognise I had my own rights to liberty and love and vision as an autonomous being, not as a projected image, I got bored with it and wandered away.²⁵

Carter is explicit here about the gender politics of Surrealism and about her desire for women to be more than passive muses or projected images. One of the central questions of this chapter, therefore, will be whether Hoffman's revolutionary project for liberating unconscious desire and for rendering the invisible visible leads to a meaningful change in the conventional structure of gender and the visual, in which men are bearers of the gaze and women are turned into projected images. Carter's conclusion in her essay about Surrealism's limitations with respect to gender suggests an answer to this question. As Anna Watz Fruchart points out, Carter's dialogue with Surrealism is both 'in line with surrealist goals of unshackling reality and creating a new liberated world' and critical of 'the surrealist inability to imagine subjecthood for such a liberated woman'.²⁶ Whilst this suggests one possible answer in advance, I want to scrutinize the images of gender within *Desire Machines* to see whether or not it offers space for a surrealist revolution of gender and the visual. More specifically, I want to see to what extent the women in this surrealist text have agency to define and redefine their own image.

A second important historical context for *Desire Machines* is to be found in Carter's admiration for the decade of the 1960s and in particular the films of Jean-Luc Godard. In an essay on Godard, Carter writes that the 1960s was a period characterised by the feeling of

²⁴ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination', p. 119. See André Breton, 'Manifesto of Surrealism', in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), pp. 1-47. Breton writes, for example, that the imagination, which 'knows no bounds', is enslaved by 'the realist attitude', the latter inspired by 'positivism' and made up of 'mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit' (pp. 4-6).

²⁵ Carter, 'The Alchemy of the Word', p. 73. Despite this critique of Surrealism, Anna Watz reminds readers that the essay is, 'more than anything, a celebration of the surrealist spirit'. Anna Watz, 'Angela Carter and Xavière Gauthier's *Surréalisme et sexualité*', *Contemporary Women's Writing*, 4.2 (2009), 100-113 (p. 107).

²⁶ Anna Watz Fruchart, 'Convulsive Beauty and Compulsive Desire: The Surrealist Pattern of *Shadow Dance*', in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 21-41 (p. 38). In her essay on Carter's translation of Gauthier's *Surréalisme et sexualité*, Watz argues that the translation 'played a decisive role in Carter's feminist reassessment of surrealism in the 1970s'. Watz, 'Angela Carter and Xavière Gauthier's *Surréalisme et sexualité*', p. 100.

vertigo, which she argues had ‘nothing to do with the ephemeral pop mythology of the Beatles or mini-skirts, but with Vietnam, with the Prague spring, culminating in the events of May in Paris, ’68’.²⁷ The link between the vertigo of the 1960s and Hoffman’s project to free the imagination is made clear when Carter goes on in her essay to explain that this vertigo came from the belief that ‘imagination might truly sieze [sic] power’.²⁸ Furthermore, the language Carter uses to describe the source of this vertiginous feeling recalls her characterisation of the Russian Revolution in her essay on Surrealism: ‘Vertigo that came from the intoxicating, terrifying notion that the old order was indeed coming to an end’ and that new ‘beings [were] about to be born’.²⁹ Carter associated Godard’s films (such as *Vivre sa vie*), along with many of the other *auteurs* of the French New Wave, with this revolutionary upheaval.³⁰ As Gamble writes, in Carter’s eyes, Godard ‘epitomized the intellectual promise of the 1960s’.³¹ His films were both ‘a medium’ through which new ideas were communicated and ‘provided a framework within which [Carter] could make sense of the freewheeling cultural anarchism of the period’.³² In her essay ‘Truly, It Felt Like Year One’, Carter writes that in the 1960s new things ‘were becoming accessible to me [...] that I’d never imagined – ways of thinking, versions of the world, versions of history, of ways for societies to be’.³³

Similar to her assessment of Surrealism, though, Carter writes about her later disappointment with the failures of the 1960s and of avant-garde cinema. She suggests that films such as Godard’s stopped appearing in mainstream theatres in part because cinema ‘became privatised’ in the 1970s, thus ‘betray[ing] the film-maker’ and ending what she saw as cinema’s distinctive quality, its bringing together people in the form of ‘communal rituals in the dark’. She also situates cinema’s failure with respect to television, arguing in her usual polemical style that the ‘little box to which we scornfully left our parents glued all those years ago gobbled up the dream factory and the reality factory, too’.³⁴ As with her essay on Surrealism, there is a strong sense of disappointment in the failure of a movement to bring

²⁷ Angela Carter, ‘Jean-Luc Godard’, *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. by Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 464-66 (p. 465).

²⁸ Carter, ‘Jean-Luc Godard’, p. 465.

²⁹ Carter, ‘Jean-Luc Godard’, p. 465.

³⁰ In one interview, Carter claimed that the ‘early Godard films had a very strong effect on the way I observe and see the world’. Rosemary Jackson, ‘Angela Carter’, *Bomb*, 17 (1986). Available at: <http://bombmagazine.org/article/821/angela-carter>

³¹ Sarah Gamble, ‘Something Sacred: Angela Carter, Jean-Luc Godard and the Sixties’, in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Text, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. by Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 42-63 (p. 44).

³² Gamble, ‘Something Sacred’, p. 45.

³³ Carter, ‘Truly, It Felt Like Year One’, in *Very Heaven: Looking Back at the 1960s*, ed. Sara Maitland (London: Virago, 1988), pp. 209-16 (p. 211).

³⁴ Carter, ‘Jean-Luc Godard’, p. 465.

about change, in terms of both politics and the politics of representation. Although *New Eve* is more explicit about its relationship to cinema, *Desire Machines* also makes clear Carter's fascination with film, but it triangulates this interest through an engagement with the relationship between film and the radical movements of the 1960s. David Punter has argued that *Desire Machines* can be read in terms of 'the defeat of the political aspirations of the 1960s, and in particular of the father-figures of liberation, Reich and Marcuse'.³⁵ The question above, of whether Hoffman will turn out to be a disappointing surrealist with respect to the representation of femininity, can thus be reformulated in the terms of Carter's writings on the political movements and spirit of the 1960s. Here it is a question of whether Hoffman will also embody Carter's disappointment with the wasted potential of the 1960s and with what she calls the privatisation of cinema. In fact, the two questions are very closely related in that both Surrealism and the spirit of the 1960s were quickly privatised and turned into consumer lifestyles. In this, I agree with Suleiman's point that Hoffman is an allegory not so much of a 1960s radical philosopher, such as Herbert Marcuse, or of the Surrealists, but rather of 'the technological appropriation [...] of Surrealism and liberation philosophy'.³⁶ This recuperation of Surrealism and radical politics is part of a broader movement of appropriation within capitalist societies. The role of technology in capitalism is similarly double-edged: whilst containing possibilities for liberation and change, it is susceptible to being used to strengthen old orders and norms. In Suleiman's terms, technology can be used both to open up the (surrealist) imagination and to lead to a 'reign of images'.³⁷

Desire Machines not only looks back to historical movements and moments, but also forward in quite a prescient way to new technologies, and new uses of existing technologies, that would come to dominate the latter part of the twentieth century. Hoffman's futuristic desire machines anticipate commercial, special effects-dominated movies, as well as the personal computer, the internet, and mobile devices. In particular, the desire machines' combination of liberating and controlling desire is suggestive of contemporary society, in which technology is utilised not only in the service of ever more elaborate spectacles but also in the care of the

³⁵ David Punter, 'Angela Carter: Supersessions of the Masculine', *Critique*, 25.4 (1984), 209-22 (p. 211).

Ricarda Schmidt, by contrast, argues that the novel shows that the 'absolute rule of desire would make life just as repressive, sterile and static as the absolute rule of reason'. Ricarda Schmidt, 'The journey of the subject in Angela Carter's fiction', *Textual Practice*, 3.1 (1989), 56-75 (p. 61).

³⁶ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination', p. 125. Suleiman notes also that Marcuse was himself aware of this and referred to it as 'repressive desublimation', the 'latest ruse of capitalism' as Suleiman puts it.

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

self.³⁸ As Ali Smith writes, *Desire Machines* is ‘a visionary book for a virtual age’.³⁹ Hoffman’s desire machines clearly represent the use of sophisticated modern technology to restructure society, and the text often depicts his technological marvel as the next step after the development of cinema and television. The text is thus Janus-faced, looking in two directions simultaneously with respect to visual devices. It looks to both past and future visual technologies, from the kaleidoscope and the phantasmagoria to the cinematograph and the computer.

My analysis focuses on how these different optical devices picture the gendered body and participate in structures of gendered looking. More particularly, the central question is whether the desire machines as revolutionary optical device create or contribute to gendered structures of the visual which are more egalitarian, or whether they fall back on traditional masculine and heterosexual images of women and ways of looking. To return to the terms of Suleiman’s question, this chapter will ask whether Hoffman’s desire machines create the conditions for a freer imagination with respect to images of the gendered body and to gendered ways of looking, or, on the contrary, whether Hoffman’s visual revolution actually constitutes the appropriation of technology to strengthen traditional, patriarchal images of femininity and structures of looking.

Visual Order and Disorder

Desire Machines begins by presenting a stark contrast between the world of the Minister of Determination, associated with order, rationality, and the reality principle, and the world of Doctor Hoffman, characterised by disorder, imagination, and the pleasure principle.⁴⁰ There is also an opposition at the level of the visual, as Desiderio explains that ‘[d]uring the war, the

³⁸ One might think here of the various technological devices, such as smartphone applications, which are used to improve the self, making it fitter, healthier, more in touch with other people, always up to date with news, and constantly entertained with music and video. In the Omnibus documentary about Angela Carter, Lorna Sage explained Carter’s life-long interest in images and how it related to her writings: ‘She took apart the pictures we have of ourselves with a very sceptical eye. We live nowadays surrounded by images of ourselves – blow ups of ourselves, representations of ourselves, shadows of ourselves through the media, through film, and of course, through books – a much older media. But a lot of the time our art ignores this fact, but she took it on and her books introduce people, if you like, to their images, introduce people to their shadows, introduce them to their other selves’. Kim Evans (dir.), ‘Angela Carter’s Curious Room’, *Omnibus*, BBC, 15 September 1992.

³⁹ Ali Smith, ‘Introduction’, in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. vii-xii (p. viii). Suleiman also suggests that the novel ‘takes on a particularly prescient, ironic cast’ in that the character of Hoffman was conceived by Carter in Japan, the country that would ‘become the world’s leading manufacturer of advanced electronic equipment’. Suleiman, ‘The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination’, p. 127.

⁴⁰ As Suleiman points out, this concern with different ontological worlds makes the text postmodern in the terms set out by Brian McHale in his *Postmodernist Fiction*. See Suleiman, ‘The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination’, p. 117. This last opposition is Carter’s characterisation of the decade of the 1960s, from *Nothing Sacred*: ‘The pleasure principle met the reality principle like an irresistible force encountering an immovable object.’ Carter, *Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 84.

city was full of mirages', but now '[s]hadows fall only as and when they are expected' (p. 3). This contrast captures the sense of visual disorder instigated by the desire machines as well as the eventual re-instigation of a traditional order. This coupling of social revolution and visual technology recalls Benjamin's description of the initially momentous impact of cinema: 'Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second.'⁴¹ Hoffman's desire machines are just as explosive, upsetting notions of time and space, as well as the ability to differentiate the real from the unreal. Furthermore, just as Benjamin argues that the film camera presents 'a different nature' to our perception than that which the naked eye alone sees, so Hoffman's mirages fashion a world in which previously unconscious material is revealed to the conscious eye. The desire machines in a sense literalise Benjamin's notion of film as introducing an 'unconscious optics'.⁴² As Cavallaro puts it, the desire machines 'are essentially machines of the eye' and the novel as a whole is 'primarily a text about the machinery of vision'.⁴³ The fight between Hoffman and the Minister thus takes place on the border separating the conscious from the unconscious, each man trying either to contain or let loose unconscious material. To return to Carter's phrasing from her essay on Surrealism, this struggle expresses itself at the level of art, at the level in which a people attempt to express their lives to themselves. In freeing the unconscious, Hoffman hopes that people will re-image the world around them, turning everyone into revolutionary artists of a sort. By contrast, the Minister's attempts to keep unconscious material repressed represent the contrary desire to maintain traditional ways of seeing which reinforce a traditional hierarchical social order.

This opposition between order and disorder also appears within Desiderio himself, and is expressed through a metaphor that recalls the relationship between fabric and fabrication in

⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-44 (p. 229). Benjamin's explosive metaphor also finds a literal expression in Hoffman's destruction of the Minister's beloved Cathedral in an almighty explosion of fireworks. This incident figures the opposition between Hoffman and the Minister as one between a surrealist and a traditionalist.

⁴² Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 230. There is also, once again, a link here with Woolf's interest in the cinema. As already noted, Woolf is critical of films which are overly mimetic and which attempt to emulate literary texts. By contrast, Woolf imagines the great potential of the cinema to lie with its unique ability to create unconscious associations for its spectators. As Maggie Humm writes, 'Woolf wants film to trigger spectators' unconscious optics by moving away from a mimetic representation of emotions'. Maggie Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 214-30 (p. 223). Also relevant here is Carter's description of the Granada cinema at Tooting as 'like the unconscious itself [...] public and private at the same time'. Angela Carter, 'The Granada, Tooting', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 488-89.

⁴³ Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter*, p. 69.

Orlando: ‘I must unravel my life as if it were so much knitting and pick out from that tangle the single, original thread of my self, the self who was a young man who happened to become a hero and then grew old’ (p. 3). Just as the narrator of *Orlando* believes in ‘a single thread’ that ties together the ‘perfect rag-bag of odds and ends’ that is the self, so Desiderio too fundamentally believes in the order associated with the Minister.⁴⁴ Hoffman’s attack on traditional order is also an attack upon the conception of the self as a unified being, for the surrealistic reshaping of the world that his desire machines effect blurs the lines between the real and the imaginary. A consequence of this is that it becomes difficult to maintain the sense and practice of a unified self, since the experiences that shape this self are themselves ambiguous. This recalls the concept of shock, which I explored in Chapter Two: Hoffman’s army of mirages creates the effect of shock that characterises experience within the modern metropolis, where consciousness is bombarded with a bewildering amount and variety of stimuli. Furthermore, given the close ties between Hoffman and Surrealism, and given Albertina’s effect upon Desiderio (about which I shall say more shortly), it is possible to characterise this shock more particularly as a species of what André Breton referred to as ‘convulsive beauty’. Watz Fruchart explains that convulsive beauty combines delight and dread, and is often ‘obscene, violent and pornographic’.⁴⁵ Particularly relevant here, though, is the fact that, as Rosalind Krauss argues, convulsive beauty ‘shakes the subject’s self-possession, bringing exhaltation [sic] through a kind of shock’.⁴⁶ Watz Fruchart explains further that this shocking of the self out of its comfortable sense of self-possession results from a collapsing of the distinction between imagination and reality, which accurately describes Hoffman’s project. Through such an experience the ‘limits of the self start sliding and the subject is jolted out of its customary ways of thinking’, an experience which is both ‘liberating and frightening’.⁴⁷ *Desire Machines* thus makes clear early on that Hoffman’s project to liberate desire is one that involves a dismantling of the unified subject.

It is for this reason that Hoffman’s attack is so effective and difficult to combat. Rather than bombarding the city with physical and externally produced imagery (or indeed by simply attacking it with physical force),⁴⁸ the desire machines work by externalising and reifying unconscious desires from within each person in the form of ‘mirages,’ which then move around

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 75.

⁴⁵ Watz Fruchart, ‘Convulsive Beauty’, p. 27. I will return to this later when I come to examine the peepshow that appears later in the narrative.

⁴⁶ Rosalind Krauss, ‘Corpus Delicti’, *October*, 33 (1985), 31-72 (p. 59).

⁴⁷ Watz Fruchart, ‘Convulsive Beauty’, p. 28.

⁴⁸ Another strategy would be the creation of a panoptic dystopia, such as the society that appears in George Orwell’s *1984* (1949).

autonomously. This creates a much more difficult problem for defending the city from Hoffman's attack for, as Desiderio says, the problem for the city's inhabitants was that 'the enemy was [already] inside the barricades, and lived in the minds of each of us' (p. 5). Towards the end of Desiderio's narrative, he recalls hearing a recording of the Minister that makes clear the latter's attitude towards this unearthing of the unconscious: 'our very spirits were tormented without cease by deceitful images springing from that dark part of ourselves humanity must always consent to ignore if we are to live in peace together' (p. 246). Hoffman's project is thus like the dark and uncanny underside of the Enlightenment, his desire machines akin to those elements that accompany the age of reason as, in Terry Castle's words, a 'toxic side effect': the optical illusions, magic lantern shows, phantasmagorias, and the very experience of the uncanny itself.⁴⁹ The Minister attempts desperately to repress and conceal this toxic underside by trying to maintain a logical and social hierarchy in which each object has a single name, being and place.

Once again, the mirror appears as a key visual device, here acting as a catalyst for the workings of the desire machines by helping to create yet more autonomous images. Whereas Clarissa Dalloway's looking-glass played a role in unifying the heterogeneous elements comprising her sense of self, in *Desire Machines*, mirrors contribute to a greater sense of heterogeneity, thus threatening a social order which depends upon visual stability and unity. Much like Eve/lyn's look of non-recognition at her newly feminine body in a mirror in *New Eve*, so Desiderio says that 'nothing I saw was identical with itself any more. I saw only reflections in broken mirrors' (p. 4). This clearly threatens the existing social order and so the Minister takes steps to halt this undoing of the law of identity:

The Minister sent the Determination Police round to break all the mirrors because of the lawless images they were disseminating. Since mirrors offer alternatives, the mirrors had all turned into fissures or crannies in the hitherto hard-edged world of here and now. (p. 4)

Whilst Hoffman clearly exploits the structure of the mirror as part of his project to free the desiring subject from the chains of a conventional visual and social order, at this stage it remains an open question whether or not this contributes to the loosening of gender norms and in particular the emancipation of women with respect to visual structures. If it is true that Clarissa's experience of the unifying power of the mirror involves a kind of violence in so far as it contributes to the maintenance of her appearance as a traditional, bourgeois woman, it is not obvious that Hoffman's society of plural, anarchic images will necessarily lead to a freer

⁴⁹ Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 8.

relationship between women and the visual. This is something that will need to be borne in mind later when analysing the images of women that appear in the text. For now, though, it is worth considering the point that if Hoffman's revolution is an allegory for the modern consumer society, ruled by images, then it is clear that his transformation of a traditional society into one organised around spectacle has the potential to create not (or not just) greater freedom, but new forms of imprisonment and disaffection.

In fact, something like the latter is given confirmation when Desiderio claims in his introduction that Hoffman's reign of images did not excite him but rather 'bored [him]' (p. 3). He goes on:

In those tumultuous and kinetic times, the time of actualized desire, I myself had only the one desire. And that was, for everything to stop. [...] I survived because I could not surrender to the flux of mirages. I could not merge and blend with them; I could not abnegate my reality. [...] I was too sardonic. I was too disaffected. (p. 4)

Hoffman's 'first disruptive coup' is to transform the audience at an opera into peacocks 'in full spread'. Rather than expressing wonder at this spectacle of the marvellous, Desiderio is 'bored and irritated' (p. 11). Significantly, he couches his boredom in the iconography of cinema: 'I felt as if I was watching a film in which the Minister was the hero and the unseen Doctor certainly the villain; but it was an endless film and I found it boring for none of the characters engaged my sympathy' (p. 21). Much like Eve/lyn in *New Eve*, Desiderio's invocation of a cinematic iconography reveals his position as a detached and passive cinema spectator, protected from the potential transformational effects of the spectacle.⁵⁰ However, this sense of boredom and safety, like the ennui of the *flâneur*, is undone through Desiderio's journey to find Hoffman, as each mirage encountered along the way engenders a more dangerous sense of proximity between spectator and spectacle by mobilising his desire.⁵¹ In fact, although Desiderio might conceive of himself as a *flâneur*, in Keith Tester's words a 'sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze', it becomes clear later on that what he sees is the result of Hoffman's technologies of vision.⁵² Chief among these

⁵⁰ Here it is worth recalling Todd McGowan's point that the 'proximity from a distance' of conventional cinematic spectatorship 'allows the spectator to avoid any encounter in the cinema that might challenge or alter the spectator's subjectivity'. Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 2.

⁵¹ Cavallaro also notes that Desiderio's bored and detached gaze positions him as a kind of *flâneur*, and expands upon this idea by suggesting that he 'presages [...] the portrayal of the *flâneur* proffered by Christine Boyer in the specific context of the cybercity'. Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter*, p. 70. Cavallaro provides an interesting passage from Boyer which features one of the optical devices that Desiderio refers to in his narrative: 'At each step the *flâneur* takes [...] new constellations of images appear that resemble the turns of a kaleidoscope'. Boyer, *CyberCities: Visual Perception in the Age of Electronic Communication* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 51, qtd. in Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter*, p. 70.

⁵² Keith Tester, 'Introduction', in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-21 (p. 7).

is Albertina, and as is clear from Desiderio's choice of metaphors, she is mostly seen through iconographies that do not allow for detached spectatorship, but on the contrary draw him into the spectacle. The first of these iconographies are the kaleidoscope and the phantasmagoria.

The Ambiguous Albertina in the Phantasmagoria

In its overall representation of Albertina, *Desire Machines* stages, once again, Brooks' point that, in the modern world, 'individual identity has become newly [...] problematic, and that the identification of the individual's body is a subject of large cultural concern', for in the course of the novel, Albertina shifts and changes so frequently that she remains an exciting yet frustrating enigma for Desiderio.⁵³ This point is nicely illustrated early on when Desiderio describes how he pictures Albertina in his memory as 'a series of marvellous shapes formed at random in the kaleidoscope of desire' (p. 6). As in *New Eve*, this text also opens with a woman seen through the lens of a visual device – with the kaleidoscope replacing the cinema.⁵⁴ Like Tristessa, Albertina is a flickering muse, her marvellous image exciting a male gaze.⁵⁵ Of course, Desiderio's enjoyment of Albertina as kaleidoscopic spectacle is tempered by his painful longing for her: his sole desire is 'to see Albertina before I die', a desire which can never be satisfied objectively for, as he admits, he murdered her (p. 6). Forever separated from Albertina, Desiderio pictures himself in terms of a different iconography when he explains that he is 'condemned to live in a drab, colourless world, as though [he] were living in a faded daguerreotype' (p. 7). This contrast sets up an interesting divide between masculine and feminine images, for whilst Albertina is associated with the multiple mirrors of the kaleidoscope which produce fluctuating, colourful images, Desiderio is linked with a static and colourless image produced by the single mirror of the daguerreotype. Added to this is the difference in the position of the observer's eye with respect to each device: whereas the daguerreotype produces an image that can be regarded at a distance from the observer's eye,

⁵³ Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 25. Albertina thus shares something with Orlando in so far as both resist the control of the (male) gaze.

⁵⁴ In a different context, Lucie Armitt argues that Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* could best be pictured as a series of images in a kaleidoscope. 'Kaleidoscopes, giving pleasure through providing ever-shifting, compulsive repetitions of interconnecting images, epitomize more than anything else the manner in which *The Bloody Chamber* utilizes intertextuality inside and outside its frames.' Lucie Armitt, 'The Fragile Frames of *The Bloody Chamber*', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. by Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 88-99 (p. 98).

⁵⁵ This flickering quality positions both Tristessa and Albertina as part of the ephemeral in Baudelaire's characterisation of modernity: 'By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable'. Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), pp. 1-40 (p. 13).

the kaleidoscope requires the observer to place his/her eye close to the lens in order to see the images produced. In the latter case, then, the optical device and the eye become, in Crary's words, 'contiguous instruments on the same plane of operation'.⁵⁶ The implication of this is that Albertina appears more strongly as an emanation of Desiderio's desire and gaze, and hence his status as a detached observer is put in question. With this initial opposition then, Carter quickly establishes a set of gender differences which structure the visual, showing how the male desiring gaze is strongly implicated in the production of a version of femininity which signifies visual pleasure, proximity and flux.

Continuing this association between femininity and kaleidoscopic images, Albertina makes her first appearance amidst the surreal spectacle which Hoffman has created out of Desiderio's city, thereby forging a link between femininity and a model of the city characterised by fragmentation, ephemerality and spectacle.⁵⁷ Conversely, the link between masculinity and the iconography of the daguerreotype is reinforced by Desiderio's description of the city before Hoffman's attack as a 'thickly, obtusely masculine' place, 'solid, drab' and unchanging (p. 10).⁵⁸ In fact, Desiderio claims that cities are either 'women and must be loved' or 'men and can only be admired or bargained with' (p. 10). More interesting than this abstract opposition, though, is the contrast between Hoffman's transformation of the city and the Minister's response. In yet another allusion to a popular visual device, Hoffman's attack is described by Desiderio as effecting a '*phantasmagoric* redefinition' of the city, turning it into 'the kingdom of the instantaneous' in which everything fluctuates endlessly (p. 12; emphasis added).⁵⁹ Hoffman has thus transformed the solid, rational, and unchanging city into a postmodern metropolis, the latter characterised by, in Harvey's words, '[f]iction,

⁵⁶ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 129.

⁵⁷ The importance of the city for this novel can be observed in Carter's claim that '*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* began as an inventory of imaginary cities'. Haffenden, 'Angela Carter', in *Novelists in Interview*, ed. John Haffenden (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 76-96 (p. 95).

⁵⁸ Indeed, as he goes on to say, '[i]t seemed it would never change' (p. 9). Desiderio's emphasis on stasis and the lack of change appears to locate the city in a kind of pre-modern or pre-industrial period. Hoffman's transformation of the city is akin to industrialisation or perhaps better yet the culmination of industrialisation in the early twentieth-century – mechanical reproduction, technological spectacles and the like.

⁵⁹ Marina Warner has written about the phantasmagoria in her book of the same name. There, she argues that Etienne-Gaspard Robertson's 'Gothic moving picture show' not only 'turned any spectator from a cool observer into a willing, excitable victim', but also that it 'shadows forth great silent movies like F. W. Murnau's vampire movie *Nosferatu* (1919) and Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919)'. She goes on to add that the phantasmagoria 'foreshadows the function of cinema as stimulant' and that through its flickering illusions 'conveyed a feeling of time passing'. Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 147-48. These remarks recall Woolf's 'The Cinema', specifically her description of a flickering black mark on the celluloid of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, which then suggests to her the expressive possibilities of filmic language.

fragmentation, collage, and eclecticism, all suffused with a sense of ephemerality and chaos'.⁶⁰ Lending further credence to this idea, Desiderio says that a city is 'a vast repository of time' and that, like those postmodern architects who turn urban space into a pastiche of different historical periods, Hoffman's desire machines unearth the past so that forms from different time-periods mingle together uneasily (p. 12). If the city transformed by the desire machines is best described as postmodern, then one implication of this is that the model of femininity as ephemeral image associated with Albertina becomes closely tied with the picture of the postmodern city. On this reading, both woman and the postmodern city trouble the masculine desire for a controlling, synoptic perspective because they are associated with fragmentation, ephemerality and chaos.⁶¹ In response to Hoffman's attack, the Minister, who rules the city 'single-handed', desperately attempts to maintain social order with his army of fascist-like Determination Police, a vast technological apparatus for determining the real from the unreal, and, most ridiculously, by permitting travel through the city only by bicycle 'since it can only be ridden by that constant effort of will which precludes the imagination' (pp. 11, 15).⁶² More generally, the Minister's plan for the city is part of his more abstract work of 'setting a limit to thought' (p. 17).⁶³ This plan is thus associated with masculine, rational order, closer to the modernist ideals of urban planning than to the postmodern design of space as playful, ephemeral and eclectic.

In describing Hoffman's transformation of the city as phantasmagoric, *Desire Machines* alludes to those discourses on the modern metropolis which focus on the transformation of traditional structures of perception. Christina Britzolakis argues that '[i]t is often said that the machine-based rhythms of metropolitan life produce a new aesthetic corresponding to a transformed perception of the urban environment as "phantasmagoric"'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 98. Dimovitz also reads the city in *Desire Machines* as 'a personification of contemporary postmodern patriarchy'. Dimovitz, 'Angela Carter's Narrative Chiasmus: *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *The Passion of New Eve*', *Genre*, 42 (2009), 83-111 (p. 85).

⁶¹ As mentioned in Chapter One, Harvey's analysis of what he calls 'Balzac's Synoptic Vision' is relevant here. David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 49-50.

⁶² The bicycle as a symbol of rationality also appears in Carter's story 'The Lady of the House of Love', in the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). Angela Carter, 'The Lady of the House of Love', in *Burning Your Boats: Collected Short Stories* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 195-209.

⁶³ The close relationship between the Minister and the masculine city he is trying to protect appears in a couple of suggestive passages. In the opening chapter, Desiderio says that the Minister 'had become the city' (p. 26). Later on, when observing one of the peep-show exhibits entitled 'THE KEY TO THE CITY', which depicts a 'candle in the shape of a penis', Desiderio is 'struck with the notion that this was supposed to represent the Minister's penis' (p. 47). Both of these passages strengthen the idea of the city as a masculine space, organised along patriarchal lines.

⁶⁴ Christina Britzolakis, 'Phantasmagoria: Walter Benjamin and the Poetics of Urban Modernism', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 72-91 (p. 73). Mica Nava also refers to the urban landscape of modernity as a phantasmagoria in

She goes on to argue that the notion of the metropolis as phantasmagoria ‘implies a certain phenomenology of the city’, one characterised by the transformations of experience through technology, urban crowds and the blurring of the boundaries between interior and exterior spaces.⁶⁵ It was Benjamin who pioneered this approach to the city as phantasmagoria, and, as Britzolakis explains, in early drafts of his unfinished *Passagenwerk* ‘the mythic elements of commodity culture – the “dream worlds” of advertising, for instance – are seen as fixations of fantasy energy which are potentially available for social transformation’.⁶⁶ The terminology used here is close to that of Hoffman’s project, for the desire machines are said to be powered by ‘eroto-energy’ and clearly transform the conventional social order (p. 246). The key to Benjamin’s phenomenology of the city lies with the display of commodities because this emphasises a mode of perception based on intoxication and distraction. As a result of this perceptual fetishism, there is no ‘stable, singular perspective’ from which to view the modern city, its ‘fleeting, ephemeral character’ demanding instead a ‘discontinuous, fragmented and imagistic’ perspective.⁶⁷ As Desiderio says, ‘[h]ardly anything remained the same for more than one second and the city was no longer the conscious production of humanity; it had become the arbitrary realm of dream’ (p. 13).⁶⁸ The desire machines thus threaten both Desiderio’s ability to ‘take visual possession of the city’ and his love of order and harmony.⁶⁹ Through the influence of new technologies of display, then, the metropolis ‘becomes the home

‘Modernity’s Disavowal: Women, The City, and The Department Store’, in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. by Mica Nava and Alan O’Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 38-76 (p. 53). Anne Friedberg continues this tradition by describing the shopping mall as a phantasmagoric space: ‘The shopper-spectator strolls through a phantasmagoric array of commodified images and experiences’. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. xi.

⁶⁵ Britzolakis, ‘Phantasmagoria’, p. 73.

⁶⁶ Britzolakis, ‘Phantasmagoria’, p. 83.

⁶⁷ Britzolakis, ‘Phantasmagoria’, p. 73. Benjamin developed these ideas in a number of his works, but most prominently in his unfinished ‘Arcades Project’, a study of Second Empire Paris. In ‘Angela Carter’s Fetishism’, Britzolakis explains the genesis of Benjamin’s work on the concept of the phantasmagoria: ‘Benjamin arrived, by way of a Marxist appropriation of Freud, at the key concept of the phantasmagoria. The commodified environment of nineteenth-century Paris becomes a spectral theatre, where commodities disport themselves as fetishes on display. The chief emblem and embodiment of this phantasmagoric landscape, which appears as allegory in the poetry of Baudelaire, is the prostitute. In the prostitute, Benjamin argues, the female body has lost its aura of natural femininity and has become a commodity, made up of dead and petrified fragments, while its beauty has become a matter of cosmetic disguise (make-up and fashion)’. Christina Britzolakis, ‘Angela Carter’s Fetishism’, in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 43-58 (p. 47).

⁶⁸ Desiderio’s characterisation of the city as a realm of dream clearly alludes to the rise of new spaces of display in the metropolis, but in particular the department store, which has often been referred to as a fantasy palace and a dream-world. See Nava’s ‘Modernity’s Disavowal’, and Rosalind Williams’ *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Wilson, ‘The Invisible Flâneur’, *New Left Review* 191 (January/February 1992), 90-110 (p. 98). Desiderio makes clear his love of order and harmony when he says that he loved the stable and unchanging ‘pose’ of the Ancient Egyptians, the ‘pristine’ genius of Mozart and Marvell, and the ‘clear, hard, unified and harmonious’ Minister (pp. 4-5).

of a peculiarly modern kind of subjectivity' based on display and spectacle, and where shock reigns supreme.⁷⁰ It is clear that Hoffman's phantasmagoric transformation of the city disrupts many aspects of subjectivity and the social order. However, since I am concerned with whether or not this transformation affects the relationship between gender and visibility, I want to turn now to the descriptions of Albertina, who first appears within this phantasmagoric city, to see if and how she troubles masculine structures of vision.

Albertina initially appears to Desiderio as a 'curious, persistent hallucination' on the 'borders of [...] sleep', making her a troublingly liminal figure poised between Hoffman's surreal world and the imaginary world of dreams (p. 22). This is especially significant given that sleep is characterised by Desiderio as the 'last privacy' and the only space where certainty is still possible within the otherwise chaotic city, for, 'while we slept, at least we knew that we were dreaming' (p. 14). Albertina thus appears between the realms of certainty and uncertainty, making her doubly uncertain, for Desiderio cannot place her in either Hoffman's 'endless' and 'boring' film or in his own comfortably reassuring, if 'aesthetically exhausting', dreams (p. 22). Whilst the daytime mirages are the work of 'an inefficient phantasiast' and bore Desiderio, Albertina's appearances unsettle him 'obscurely' because 'nothing about [them] was familiar' and because 'she never changed' (pp. 21-22). She comes to him every night 'in a negligé [...] which clung about her but did not conceal her quite transparent flesh, so that the exquisite filigree of her skeleton was revealed quite clearly', thereby foregrounding the relationship between eroticism and death and foreshadowing Desiderio's eventual murder of her (p. 22).⁷¹ Albertina is also associated with Hoffman's mirages when Desiderio says that she 'shimmered a little, like the air on a very hot summer's day' (p. 22). Furthermore, Albertina's 'flesh of glass' anticipates Tristessa's glass palace and the latter's strange combination of transparency and opaqueness, constantly visible on the cinema screen yet hiding her secret all the time (p. 22). In fact, despite Albertina's transparent body, Desiderio confesses that he 'could not read' the sign-system that her appearances constituted (p. 22). Continuing this idea of reading Albertina's identity, when Desiderio awakes one morning, he finds messages 'written in lipstick on [his] dusty windowpane', including 'BE AMOROUS', 'BE MYSTERIOUS' or,

⁷⁰ Britzolakis, 'Phantasmagoria', p. 75. Just as I showed how this concept of modern shock appears in Woolf's texts, so here it appears again in *Desire Machines*, this time with respect to Desiderio's reaction to Hoffman's transformation of his beloved city into a phantasmagoria.

⁷¹ Her appearance here also plays on the erotic gap between clothing and the body. Roland Barthes's question from *The Pleasure of the Text* is again relevant: 'Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the garment gapes?*' Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 9 (emphasis in original).

most intriguingly, 'DON'T THINK, LOOK' (p. 22). Appearing as they do in this phantasmagorical city, they read almost as advertising slogans.⁷²

Albertina appears a second time to Desiderio in the form of a black swan, which he describes as a deeply unsettling and uncanny figure: 'I could see it was alive' but not in 'the same sense that I was alive and I shuddered with dread' (p. 27). The sight of this haunting figure also evokes in Desiderio the 'fear of the unknown' (p. 27) as well as recalling memories of '[lying] awake at night' as a child, listening to his 'mother panting and grunting like a tiger in the darkness beyond the curtain' so that he 'thought she had changed into a beast' (p. 28). Opening its wings, the swan reveals a blackness that is 'intense as the negation of light' and 'the colour of the extinction of consciousness' (p. 30). However, instead of striking Desiderio the swan begins to sing 'a thrilling, erotic contralto' thereby reassuring him that it was 'also a woman' and that it is she, not him, who is 'about to die' (p. 28). The last thing he sees is a 'golden collar around her throbbing throat' with a single word engraved upon it: 'ALBERTINA' (p. 28). Albertina's guise as a black swan recasts the myth of Leda and the Swan with the woman in disguise as the beast and performing a different kind of seduction, one in the style of the operatic *liebestod*.⁷³

It is Albertina's third appearance, as ambassador to her father, that stands out as the most ambiguous image of the gendered body and therefore as the most difficult to identify (although Desiderio refers to this figure as a man, thereby downplaying the gender ambiguity). It is here too that some critics, such as Tonkin, have sought to recuperate a more positive model of gender from a novel that otherwise appears to represent only negative or regressive images of femininity. Tonkin argues that Albertina is 'fantastically mutable: variously inanimate, bestial and human; and serially androgynous, masculine and feminine.'⁷⁴ In yet another nod to the complex sense of fabrication in *Orlando*, Albertina is here a strange mixture of costumes,

⁷² The line 'DON'T THINK, LOOK' is also likely based on Carter's experience in Japan, where she wrote *Desire Machines*. As she says 'Since I kept trying to learn Japanese, and kept on failing to do so, I started trying to understand things by simply looking at them very, very carefully'. Angela Carter, *Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 28. There is also a cinematic angle to this line. Benjamin quotes Georges Duhamel on film as writing: "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images". Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, quoted in Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 231.

⁷³ Carter evinces a continual fascination with the myth of Leda and the Swan, as it appears in her earlier novel *The Magic Toyshop* as well as the later *Nights at the Circus*. Natsumi Ikoma has written the most comprehensive analysis of this figure of the black swan in *Desire Machines*. Natsumi Ikoma, 'The Proustian Mystery of the Black Swan in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*', *Contemporary Women's Writing*, 2.2 (2008), 155-73.

⁷⁴ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 82. In her chapter on *Desire Machines*, Tonkin reads the character of Albertina as a reworking of the figure of Albertine from Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

cosmetics, and adornments, and is thus ‘extravagantly oversignified’.⁷⁵ The ambassador has ‘skin like polished brass’, ‘glossy hair so black it was purplish’, a ‘blunt-lipped, sensual mouth’, eyes like those painted on Ancient Egyptian sarcophagi, and dark crimson finger nails. Furthermore, he is dressed flamboyantly in ‘gold thongs’, ‘flared trousers of purple suede’ with a belt consisting of ‘several ropes of pearls’. This gender ambiguity is compounded by the ambassador’s bestial-like qualities for, as Desiderio notes, his gestures are ‘all instinct with a self-conscious but extraordinary reptilian liquidity’, and he ‘move[s] in soft coils’. Desiderio’s ambivalent response to this performance recalls the surrealist concept of convulsive beauty as well as the figure of the *femme fatale*, for the ambassador produces in Desiderio both fear and attraction:

I think he was the most beautiful human being I have ever seen – considered, that is, solely as an object, a construction of flesh, skin, bone and fabric, yet, for all his ambiguous sophistication, indeed, perhaps in its very nature, he hinted at a savagery which had been cunningly tailored to suit the drawing room. (p. 30)

In this strange role, Albertina’s ‘desirability is inextricable from [her] ontological indeterminacy’.⁷⁶ Like *Orlando*, *Desire Machines* revels in the multiplicity and indeterminacy of the gendered body. However, Desiderio’s response to Albertina’s gender-ambiguous performance is highly ambivalent, combining the frustration and anxiety of *Orlando*’s narrator with the increase in pleasure experienced by Orlando upon gaining a new sense of mutability. If, as Brooks argues, the modern world witnesses a crisis in the identification of the individual’s body, *Desire Machines* suggests that in the postmodern world this crisis is also a source of excitement.⁷⁷

The discussions between the ambassador and the Minister clearly reveal a clash of visual cultures, between an old sober model and a new ‘society of the spectacle’.⁷⁸ The Minister attacks the ambassador over Hoffman’s destruction of his beloved cathedral, that ‘masterpiece of sobriety’ which was ‘given the most vulgar funeral pyre’ by being dissolved ‘in a display of

⁷⁵ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 82. Despite this high level of ambiguity, Desiderio refers to Albertina in this guise as a man and uses the masculine pronoun.

⁷⁶ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 83.

⁷⁷ Buried underneath his enjoyment of Albertina-as-image is Desiderio’s disavowed anxiety about her ability to unsettle his sense of self. Desiderio is never able fully to enjoy Albertina; her constant transformations ultimately unsettle his subjectivity for he can never pin her down or enjoy her as ever-changing woman. I therefore agree with Suleiman in her characterisation of Desiderio as ‘ambivalence itself’. Suleiman, ‘The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination’, p. 123. As with Orlando, Albertina could also be described in Doane’s terms as ‘epistemological trouble’. Mary Ann Doane, ‘*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease’, *Camera Obscura*, 4.2 (1983), 6-27 (p. 10). Albertina is both a source of frustration and excitement, making her a *femme fatale* figure for Desiderio. As Doane says of the *femme fatale*, her characterisation as ‘unknowable’ is also the ‘lure of her attraction’ (p. 10).

⁷⁸ See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*.

fireworks' (p. 32). Clearly revealing the relationship between power and the visual, the Minister adds that the cathedral was 'like the most conventional of stone angels' and that 'its symmetry expressed the symmetry of the society which had produced it' (p. 33). In contrast with the Minister's values of sobriety, harmony and solemnity, the ambassador revels in linguistic playfulness and argues for the free expression of desire. He completes the Minister's sentence 'It was an artifice-' with '-and so we burned it down with *feux d'artifice*-' (p. 33). As Carter writes in an essay, '[i]n the pursuit of magnificence, nothing is sacred. Hitherto sacrosanct imagery is desecrated'.⁷⁹ The pair also argue over the metaphysics of the visual. In a clearly gendered example, the Minister likens Hoffman's mirages to the 'early days of cinema' because 'all the citizens are jumping through the screen to lay their hands on the naked lady in the bathtub!'⁸⁰ The ambassador retorts that 'their fingers [actually] touch flesh'. Whilst the Minister tries to dismiss this claim by referring to these mirages as merely 'substantial shadow', the ambassador returns with '[a]nd what a beautiful definition of flesh!' (p. 35). The Minister nevertheless persists in his argument, likening Hoffman to a 'forger' who has palmed off 'an entire currency of counterfeit phenomena', but the ambassador again responds pragmatically: 'You cannot destroy our imagery' (p. 36). This represents the struggle between a cynical realist and a poetic pragmatist, as whilst the Minister views the mirages as unreal and counterfeit, the ambassador focuses entirely on the very real effects these images have upon the city. Despite denying their reality, the Minister nevertheless desperately attempts to control and ward off the mirages by blocking Hoffman's desire machines with a giant wall and creating a laboratory for testing objects for their reality status. The ambassador provokes the Minister at one point by producing 'a small mirror from his pocket', which he then holds up 'so that [the Minister] saw his own face' (p. 37). The Minister's response is to hide his eyes and scream, as if fearing that it will cause a split in his notion of self.

Albertina's disguise as the ambassador is productively read alongside Carter's essay 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', in which she writes that the 'capricious goddess' of 'Mutability' is the driving force of fashion in the 1960s. As she memorably puts it, 'Mutability is having a field day'.⁸¹ The eclectic combinations of clothing and adornment are significant because they suggest 'a new attitude to the self' and the 'discovery of new selves'. Furthermore,

⁷⁹ Angela Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 131-35 (p. 134).

⁸⁰ This reference to early film spectators who were supposedly overwhelmed by the spectacle on screen and who responded to the image as if it were real suggests a more potent image of cinema than Desiderio's earlier reference to his life as a boring film. Here the film spectacle unsettles the spectator rather than provides pleasurable viewing at a safe distance.

⁸¹ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 132.

the creation of a 'personal style' is an expression of freedom which both reveals the forgotten truth that 'all human contact is profoundly ambiguous' and undermines 'the frozen, repressive, role-playing world' that maintains order partly through strict dress-codes.⁸² The latter is evidenced by the Minister's Determination Police, who clearly signify fascist order through their 'ankle-length, truculently belted coats of black leather, their low-crowned, wide-brimmed fedoras and their altogether too highly polished boots' (p. 18). Whilst both the Determination Police and Albertina can be said to use 'sartorial weapons', the latter dresses in 'superdrag' in order to affront official dress-codes and thus have a field day with mutability.⁸³ In the terms of Carter's essay, whilst the sartorial regime of the police functions as 'a body blow', Albertina's sartorial provocation is 'a fragment of a kaleidoscope' which upsets distinctions and order.⁸⁴

Albertina's performance of gender mutability is also significant because it breaks through Desiderio's boredom, producing 'a fine tracery of cracks' in the 'surface of [his] indifference' (p. 38). Her enigmatic appearances also bring out Desiderio's scopophilia and epistemophilia. He pictures her as a magic trick which disguises 'a living being beneath' because 'such tricks imply the presence of a conjurer', and his ultimate ambition is 'to rip away the ruffled shirt and find out whether the breasts of an authentic woman swelled beneath it' (p. 40). Relevant here is Brooks' observation that '[w]hen the body becomes more secret, hidden, covered, it becomes all the more intensely the object of curiosity'.⁸⁵ As in *Orlando*, the desire to see and the desire to know are closely linked, and clothing often excites the gaze.⁸⁶ Albertina's early appearances set the terms of Desiderio's relationship to her and constitute a central thematic of the text. Both the narrative and Desiderio work towards an unveiling, as in Barthes's model of narrative as striptease: an unveiling of both the textual body and the corporeal body of Albertina.⁸⁷

As I will show later on, Desiderio's desire is never completely satiated because he fails to discover a real or true self beneath Albertina's various guises, despite his (often violent) attempts to find one. This desire to unmask Albertina, however, relates to psychoanalytic

⁸² Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', pp. 132-33. Carter's example of sartorial order is 'a typical Chinese Red Guard' who, she argues, is 'a sternly garbed piece of masculine aggression, proclaiming by his clothes the gift of his individual self to the puritan ethic of his group' (p. 133).

⁸³ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 134.

⁸⁴ Carter, 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style', p. 133.

⁸⁵ Brooks, *Body Work*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ It is also worth recalling, once again, Peter Walsh's imaginative undressing and redressing of the anonymous woman he stalks through the London streets in *Mrs Dalloway*.

⁸⁷ This concern with stripping the (female) body recurs later in the text when Albertina, disguised as a valet, is violently stripped in front of Desiderio's ever-watchful gaze. This later scene is one of many examples in the novel where desires are enacted or repeated in a new form.

discourses that picture female sexuality as an enigma, such as Freud's famous remark that '[t]hroughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity'.⁸⁸ Tonkin writes that Desiderio's 'vain hope that there is an "authentic woman" lurking behind each embodiment' is clearly linked to the idea of uncovering some kind of truth at the heart of woman's sexuality.⁸⁹ She also usefully points out the links between Albertina and Marcel Proust's Albertine. It is clear, for example, that Desiderio displays a Proustian anxiety about his muse Albertina, as his desire to strip her bare is a desire to control her. 'For Proust', writes Adam Phillips, 'knowing people is often very much about dealing with the anxiety that one can't control them'. Such anxiety about controlling the object of desire leads to what Phillips calls a 'fantasy of knowledge', a defence against the 'powerful effect' of the other.⁹⁰ As I will analyse in greater detail later in the chapter, what I want to call the Albertina Effect produces a similar response in Desiderio, as the intense excitement that she causes in him leads to his attempts to master both this effect and her – Desiderio desires to have her sexuality and to know her so as to control her (and his anxiety). However, this is complicated by the fact that he finds Albertina most attractive precisely when she is dressed and adorned in an elaborate manner, and when she is most ambiguous and alluring. She is thus the Baudelairean woman who 'is obliged to adorn herself in order to be adored', but also the woman as striptease artist who, like the realist narrative, promises a moment of pleasurable unveiling.⁹¹ Therefore, whilst the phantasmagoric iconography casts the feminine body in a more mutable form, thereby troubling the male gaze, it is also open to appropriation by this masculine visual economy so that the ambiguous body of woman is recuperated as an enigmatic object of desire in need of demystifying by the controlling, yet anxious, male spectator.

Sleeping-Beauty through the Peep-Show: Photography and Stereoscopy

This idea that even mutable images of femininity can become trapped within the visual economy of the male gaze is seen even more clearly in the text's other central visual device: the pornographic peep-show. The peep-show functions as both a precursor to Hoffman's desire machines and as a tool in his arsenal, for much of what Desiderio encounters appears to exist

⁸⁸ Sigmund Freud, 'Femininity', in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), pp. 139-67 (p. 140).

⁸⁹ Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence*, p. 84.

⁹⁰ Adam Phillips, 'The Art of Nonfiction No. 7', interviewed by Paul Holdengräber, *The Paris Review*, No. 208 (2014). Available at: <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6286/the-art-of-nonfiction-no-7-adam-phillips>

⁹¹ Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', p. 33.

first in nascent form in the peep-show.⁹² It is for this reason that Smith argues that each of the novel's chapters 'functions as its own seductive and terrifying peep-show "desire machine"'.⁹³ Sage's characterisation of Carter's early novels could also be applied to Desiderio's journey, as she writes that the plots of the early texts move 'from one tableau to another, "still" after "still", quickened into movement by a kind of optical illusion – as in a flicker book, or of course a film'.⁹⁴ Given Albertina's ever-changing and fantastical appearance, there is also a close relationship between femininity and space, for, as Smith puts it, Desiderio's 'veering picaresque journey [...] shifts and shimmers like Albertina'.⁹⁵ Consequently, both the places he visits and the women he meets are the emanations of his desire, objects within his own private cinema. Unlike the iconographies of the kaleidoscope and the phantasmagoria, the peep-show pictures the gendered body in what Carter refers to in *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) as the 'elementary iconography' of pornography, whereby identity is reduced to the body's 'formal elements'. Woman, for example, is reduced by pornography to the image of the 'fringed hole', signifying that she is 'open, an inert space, like a mouth waiting to be filled'. Carter concludes that '[f]rom this elementary iconography may be derived the whole metaphysic of sexual differences – man aspires; woman has no other function but to exist, waiting'.⁹⁶ Whereas the previous iconographies aligned femininity with ephemeral, enigmatic

⁹² For example, Hoffman's castle first appears in one of the peep-show exhibits. Uncannily entitled 'I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE', the exhibit displays a woman's vagina as 'a frame for a perfectly round hole through which the viewer glimpsed the moist, luxuriant landscape of the interior', including a castle (p. 44). Arriving at Hoffman's castle at the end of the text, Desiderio remembers that he has seen it before 'in the peep-show. It was the park framed by the female orifice in the first machine of all' (p. 234). Desiderio's murder of Albertina is also prefigured in the peep-show when he describes biting her throat as if he were a tiger and she was a 'trophy [...] seized in the forests of the night' (p. 259). The phrase at the end of this description appears in the title of one of the peep-show exhibits: 'TROPHY OF A HUNTER IN THE FOREST OF THE NIGHT' (p. 46). This allusion to William Blake's 'The Tyger' is just one of many throughout Carter's oeuvre. In her introduction to the *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, Carter writes that when she was a girl, she 'thought that everything Blake said was holy', but as a wiser and older woman she now treats his aphorisms with 'affectionate scepticism'. Angela Carter, 'Introduction', in *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, ed. Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1990), pp. ix-xxii (p. x). Lorna Sage also notes that Blake was 'a favourite source' of Carter's 'because of his radical irony and the parodic authority of his devil's aphorisms'. Sage continues: 'Carter believed, too, with Blake, in the power of the "mind-forg'd manacles"; hence (she would argue) the need to take such a long way round to arrive at a view of women now'. Lorna Sage, 'Introduction', in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter* (London: Virago, 2007), pp. 20-41 (pp. 30-31). See also, Harriet Kramer Linkin, 'Isn't it Romantic?: Angela Carter's Bloody Revision of the Romantic Aesthetic in "The Erl-King"', *Contemporary Literature*, 35.2 (1994), pp. 305-323.

⁹³ Smith, 'Introduction', p. x. In a related fashion, Neumeier argues that the parallels between the images in the peep-show and Desiderio's experiences in the so-called real world suggest that 'Image and experience' are 'inseparable'. Beate Neumeier, 'Postmodern Gothic: desire and reality in Angela Carter's writing', in *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 141-51 (p. 143). Neumeier also argues that the 'course of the whole novel [...] reveals the inseparability of desire from the projectionist's sample of images' (pp. 144-45).

⁹⁴ Lorna Sage, *Women in the House of Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 169.

⁹⁵ Smith, 'Introduction', p. viii.

⁹⁶ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 4.

images, the pornographic peep-show pictures woman in a more elementary manner so as better to control her within a male visual economy. Specifically, it does this by transforming woman into inert meat, thereby emphasising mutilation instead of mutability. Carter's phrase 'mutability is having a field day' could be adapted here to 'mutilation is having a field day'.

Before experiencing the peep-show for himself, Desiderio reads about an 'itinerant showman' named Mendoza who once toured the country with a 'peep-show cum cinematography' which 'offered moving views in three dimensions' (p. 24). Later, Mendoza is said to have developed his visual device into a kind of proto-time-machine in which participants 'don all manner of period costumes' and 'various newsreels and an occasional early silent comedy' are projected upon a screen (p. 24). The films are not just images held at a distance from the audience, though, but have 'slots in them in which the members of the audience could insert themselves and so become part of the shadow show they witnessed' (p. 24). Like the kaleidoscope, this optical device requires that the body of the spectator be contiguous with its operation. This stands in marked contrast with Desiderio's metaphor of his life in the city as a kind of unengaging film, for the peep-show does not allow this kind of distance between spectator and spectacle.

Desiderio's first encounter with the peep-show, and indeed the entire chapter in which this takes place, is, as Suleiman points out, an allusion to the German Expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (the film that Woolf discusses in her essay, 'The Cinema').⁹⁷ Similar to Mendoza's attraction, this model also places the body of the spectator in a close relationship to the spectacle by providing 'a pair of glass eye-pieces [which jut] out on long, hollow stalks' through which the spectator observes the individual exhibit (p. 44). In this way, the observer inserts himself into the spectacle through the stalks which connect the body to it like nodes or corporeal appendages.⁹⁸ The exhibits display a tableau of erotic and violent scenes, featuring the mutilated bodies of women. They recall Marcel Duchamp's *Etant donne* which, as Suleiman notes, not only displays a similarly mutilated female figure, but also 'requires that the viewer glue an eye to a peephole in order to see the scene'.⁹⁹ Also like Duchamp's piece, the peep-show clearly involves voyeurism, in most cases obviously for a male gaze. However, even here some ambiguity persists, for one exhibit appears to return the gaze of the spectator. Challenging Desiderio's position as sovereign and voyeuristic spectator – in this chapter,

⁹⁷ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination', p. 120. The chapter is entitled 'The Mansion of Midnight.'

⁹⁸ In Carter's 'The Merchant of Shadows', the narrator describes the eyes of Americans as 'lenses on stalks that go flicker, flicker, and give you the truth twenty-four times a second'. Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', p. 364.

⁹⁹ Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination', p. 130.

Desiderio says that he has been given the title of ‘Inspector of Veracity’ – one exhibit consists of ‘two eyes looking back’ at him (pp. 30, 45). The eyes function as mirrors, reflecting ‘[his] own eyes, very greatly magnified by the lenses of the machine’ (p. 46). This creates a *mise-en-abyme* effect as each pair of eyes reflects the other, creating ‘a model of eternal regression’ (p. 46). By returning his gaze, this exhibit problematizes the opposition between spectator and spectacle, the dizzying mirror effect undoing the stability of the subject as spectator.¹⁰⁰ As will become clear later on, the appearance of eyes in the text frequently unsettles Desiderio’s ‘I’, recalling once again the eye/I relationship in Woolf’s ‘Street Haunting’.

Despite this challenge to the male gaze, the representations of femininity are all reductive, ‘meatifying’ woman so that she resembles slabs of meat in an abattoir.¹⁰¹ One exhibit in particular, which features ‘the headless body of a mutilated woman [lying] in a pool of painted blood’, makes this abundantly clear, as ‘[t]he right breast had been partially segmented and hung open to reveal two surfaces of meat as bright and false as the plaster sirloins which hang in toy butcher’s shops’ (p. 36).¹⁰² This vivid image places woman as an enticing object within a window display but also as an inert plaything. There is thus the idea of distance between Desiderio and the woman on display as if behind glass. As Carter writes in *The Sadeian Woman*, ‘[t]he pleasure of watching the spectacle of the slaughter [...] derives from the knowledge one is dissociated from the spectacle’.¹⁰³ Albertina makes a brief appearance in another exhibit, her face appearing ‘intermittently’ on one of the wax figures engaged in perpetual sexual congress, foreshadowing Hoffman’s plan for Desiderio and his daughter (p. 47).¹⁰⁴ Once again, Albertina’s flickering quality excites Desiderio’s scopophilia and epistemophilia.

The town outside the peep-show hardly provides much contrast, as Desiderio observes that its inhabitants walk around like mechanical dolls: with ‘the yawning, vacant air of those just awakened from a deep sleep’, ‘startled, empty eyes’ and ‘mouth[s] ajar’ they walk around ‘uncertainly’, ‘sometimes, for no reason, breaking into a stumbling run and then halting just as suddenly to stare around them’ (p. 48). This image of somnambulant automata is built on when Desiderio meets Mary Anne, a Sleeping-Beauty figure whose house is surrounded by ‘dense,

¹⁰⁰ Later in the text, this effect is recreated in the gaze between Desiderio and Albertina, which threatens his sense of self.

¹⁰¹ The phrase is Watz Fruchart’s, ‘Convulsive Beauty’, p. 34.

¹⁰² This also foreshadows a later event, namely Desiderio’s encounter with the fleshy prostitutes in *The House of Anonymity*, a surreal, Sadeian brothel.

¹⁰³ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁴ This looks forward to Hoffman’s ‘love pens’, the mechanism that powers the desire machines and which uses sexual congress to generate erotic energy.

forbidding hedges' with roses that '[spray] out fanged, blossoming whips' and 'vine-like tendrils'. This 'orgiastic jungle' that makes 'every nerve in [Desiderio's] body ache and tingle' recalls also the surreal paintings of Max Ernst, such as his *La Joie de vivre* (p. 53). Reaching the house, Desiderio again adopts the role of the voyeur, 'peer[ing] through' a window in order to spy on the girl inside, noting 'her white, thin, nervous fingers' and the 'pale curve of her cheek' (p. 54). Upon meeting her, Desiderio describes her as possessing 'the waxen delicacy of a plant bred in a cupboard. She did not look as if blood flowed through her veins', which gives her a supernatural, vampiric quality (p. 55). In addition to this undead quality, he also figures her as a painted woman when he says that her mouth 'had exactly the proportions of the three cherries the artmaster piles in an inverted triangle to illustrate the classic mouth' (p. 55). This is built on as he describes her as looking 'like drowning Ophelia', likely an allusion to John Everett Millais's *Ophelia*. Already, then, Mary Anne is placed within a number of iconographies – Pre-Raphaelite, fairy tale, and the supernatural – which deny her agency and turn her into a sight for the observer's gaze: she is, variously, a painted woman, an automaton and an undead monster. Desiderio even wonders if she is another mirage: 'though I knew from the records and my own intuition she was quite real, I had never before met a woman who looked so conversant with shadows as she' (p. 57).¹⁰⁵ The housekeeper colludes in this dehumanisation when she says that the girl has a "“screw loose”" or a "“piece missing”", as if she were merely a mechanical doll (p. 57). In all of these images, woman is turned into an object of contemplation, a passive figure to be exploited, and a being without agency or autonomy. Mary Anne is like the wax-work figures in the peep-show, on display for a male gaze, and prefigures Hoffman's Sleeping Beauty-like wife later on.¹⁰⁶

This dehumanisation of Mary Anne continues when Desiderio places her within the iconography of photography, which, like his metaphorical use of the daguerreotype and the cinema, also allows him to maintain a detached position with regard to his sexual exploitation of her. Waking up late at night, he describes how the moonlight streaming through the windows turned his room into 'the negative of a photograph of outside', whilst outside the moon 'had already taken a black and white picture of the garden' (p. 58). Gazing outside, Desiderio spies a 'marble Undine' lying on its side 'in a touching attitude of provincial gracefulness' and

¹⁰⁵ This also recalls the Ambassador's definition of the body as 'substantial shadow.'

¹⁰⁶ Lorna Sage notes that this garden and its decaying house are an example of a familiar trope in Carter's fiction, where houses are 'eaten up by nature', but a nature that is 'ready-dishevelled and stylised (by Romantics and their Victorian followers).' Mary Anne is thus clearly placed within a Victorian and Romantic iconography as well as the surrealist and gothic ones. Lorna Sage, 'Angela Carter: The Fairy Tale', in *Moments of Truth: Twelve Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (London: Fourth Estate), pp. 221-48 (p. 239).

covered entirely in roses, another image of passive and romanticised femininity (p. 58). Mary Anne appears just as lifeless and inert as this undine in Desiderio's eyes, and his description of her makes clear the visual disparity between them: 'She lived on the crepuscular threshold of life' and, in contrast to the eyes in the peep-show, Mary Anne's 'eyes were open but blind', hence unthreatening to Desiderio's selfhood (p. 58). In the 'variegated shadows' of this photographic negative space, Desiderio says he 'penetrated her sighing flesh', and, in an allusion to earlier versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale, confesses that, although it was 'as if she were feeling [his] caresses through a veil', he was 'perfectly well aware she was asleep' (p. 59).¹⁰⁷ This sleeping beauty need not wake up for her necrophiliac prince, but remains as passive as a photographic image and a masturbatory prop.¹⁰⁸

The only challenge to Desiderio's position as spectator in this sleeping-beauty peep-show comes from another instance of the returning of his gaze. In the morning, Desiderio finds Mary Anne sat before a 'contraband' mirror in her bedroom and, echoing the Minister's anxiety, he notes that it is 'always disquieting to talk with a person in a mirror' (p. 60).¹⁰⁹ Seeing his own reflection 'for the first time since the beginning of the war', Desiderio pictures himself as 'a satyr in a Renaissance painting', a suggestion that he too may be an object on display (p. 60). There is also a suggestion that Mary Anne might be another of Albertina's disguises when Desiderio notes that 'for a moment, [he] saw another person glance briefly out of her eyes', his uncertainty deriving from the fact that he 'was not looking at her in the mirror, only [himself]' (p. 60).¹¹⁰ Desiderio ignores these challenges to his gaze, however, and bids farewell to his 'mistress, the beauty in the dreaming wood, who slept too deeply to be wakened by anything as gentle as a kiss' (p. 61).

Desiderio returns to the peep-show, and upon arrival finds that the poster outside now reads 'SEE A YOUNG GIRL'S MOST SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE IN LIFELIKE COLOURS', an uncanny repetition of Desiderio's encounter with Mary Anne which

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Giambattista Basile's version, 'Sun, Moon, and Talia' (1634), which suggests that the sleeping beauty figure is raped in a state of unconsciousness or sleep.

¹⁰⁸ The following day, Desiderio discovers Mary Anne's corpse on a nearby beach. After a failed attempt to resuscitate her, he observes with 'shock and horror' that there is little difference between his sexual encounter the previous night and his attempts to revive her. Dehumanising Mary Anne yet again, he says: 'I crouched over the sea-gone wet doll in an attitude I knew to be a cruel parody of my own the previous night, my lips pressed to her mouth, and it came to me there was hardly any difference between what I did now and what I had done then, for her sleep had been a death' (p. 65). As Schmidt argues, the 'emotional if not the factual truth of Desiderio's desire had been necrophily'. Schmidt, 'The journey of the subject', p. 57.

¹⁰⁹ This also recalls the scene in *New Eve* when Evelyn observes Leilah looking at herself in her mirror. In both scenes, the mirror causes anxiety for the male spectators because it forces them both to become self-conscious of their position as observers.

¹¹⁰ This comment also displays his narcissism, since he is more concerned with his own image than with Mary Anne's.

strengthens the notion that all his experiences are part of a vast and continuous spectacle (p. 62). The models inside each exhibit have been replaced by ‘actual pictures painted with luscious oils on rectangular plates in such a way that the twin eye-pieces of the machine created a stereoscopic effect’ (p. 62). One of several significant optical devices invented in the nineteenth century, the stereoscope, according to Crary, emerged from ‘research [...] on *subjective* vision’ and contributed to the transformation of the idea and function of the observer.¹¹¹ The stereoscope created the illusion of a three-dimensional image by ‘reconciling disparity, [by] making two distinct views appear as one’, for it featured the same image but seen from slightly different angles so that the combination created the illusion of depth.¹¹² Significantly, the ‘desired effect of the stereoscope was not simply likeness, but immediate, apparent *tangibility*. But it is a tangibility that has been transformed into a purely visual experience’.¹¹³ As Crary goes on to conclude, ‘[n]o other form of representation in the nineteenth century had so conflated the real with the optical’, a phrase that captures succinctly Hoffman’s manipulation of reality, where matter is simply another optical toy.¹¹⁴

The stereoscope depends upon a spectator who is simultaneously active and passive. On the one hand, the production of visual tangibility involves a disempowerment of the spectator, for the stereoscopic image cannot be seen in its totality and thus surveyed from a position of visual mastery. As Crary explains, the eyes ‘never traverse the image in a full apprehension of the three-dimensionality of the entire field, but in terms of a localized experience of separate areas’.¹¹⁵ The stereoscopic eye-stalks of the peep-show do just this, forcing Desiderio to confront the images of his desire and depriving him of his comforting distance.¹¹⁶ This is in marked contrast with Desiderio’s metaphors of the daguerreotype, the cinema, and the photograph, which capture the distance he attempts to create between himself and the objects of his gaze. On the other hand, the stereoscope spectator is also active, for the effect produced depends upon the physiology of the human eyes and brain. The apparent passivity of the stereoscope spectator is thus belied by the fact that he is, in Crary’s words, a

¹¹¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 118 (emphasis added).

¹¹² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 120.

¹¹³ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 122-24 (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁴ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 124.

¹¹⁵ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 125.

¹¹⁶ As Crary writes, the stereoscope ‘require[s] the corporeal adjacency and immobility of the observer.’ *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 129. Cavallaro also notes the importance of the stereoscope for its commentary on Desiderio’s position as a detached, controlling eye, writing that ‘in foregrounding the binocularly attendant upon her hero’s perceptions [Carter] subtly refuses to pander to the myth of unitary vision which Western ocular centrism has so often and so uncritically espoused’. Cavallaro, *The World of Angela Carter*, p. 65.

‘producer of forms of verisimilitude’.¹¹⁷ This is also true of the peep-show (and of the desire machines), for it is clear that it is Desiderio’s desires that produce the scenes on display. This combination of activity and passivity also structures his experience of Albertina, for although she is an emanation of his desire, she always ultimately eludes his control.¹¹⁸ The peep-show thus illuminates the contradiction at the heart of Hoffman’s desire machines: whilst supposedly liberating people by turning them into active producers of visual spectacles for their own enjoyment, the desire machines simultaneously imprison them in a cage of images which either elude the observer or fail to bring satisfaction.¹¹⁹

In terms of the pictures the stereoscopic peep-show features, it is not accidental that Carter links the stereoscope with pornography. As noted in the Introduction, Crary points out that ‘the stereoscope became increasingly synonymous with erotic and pornographic imagery’ because the ‘very effects of tangibility’ sought by the inventors of the stereoscope could be ‘quickly turned into a mass form of ocular possession’.¹²⁰ As well as the images he gazes at inside the peep-show exhibits, Desiderio’s exploitation of the somnambulant Mary Anne could also be described as a form of ocular possession. In presenting him with images of his desire and by bringing these images closer to his eye via the mechanism of stereoscopy, the peep-show forces Desiderio to become self-conscious about his position as an observer. By undermining his sense of distance between himself and the object of his gaze, it reflects back to him, in a sense, his desire to be a detached, controlling eye as well as his desire for ocular possession of others, especially Albertina. However, at this point Desiderio fails to recognise this, saying only that he was ‘unaccountably disturbed’ by the ‘haunting’ images in the peep-show (p. 62).

Tragic Femininity, the Cinema, and the Mirror

Desiderio’s experiences of Mary Anne and the peep-show provide a template for the chapters that follow, for each of the subsequent places he visits on his ‘picaresque adventure’ have a similar artificial and spectacular quality, as if he were moving merely between different exhibits (p. 6). In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on three of the locations that Desiderio visits on his way to find Hoffman. Each one features increasingly objectified images

¹¹⁷ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 131.

¹¹⁸ At the end of the novel, Albertina tells Desiderio that she has always been ‘maintained [...] by the power of [his] desire’ (p. 243).

¹¹⁹ Albertina is the best example of the former problem because as mirage she is always out of reach. Mary Anne is a good example of the latter problem because when Desiderio sees his desire realised before him, he recoils in shock and horror at the recognition of his necrophilia.

¹²⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 127.

of the female body as well as repeated challenges to Desiderio's position of visual mastery. Once again, various visual devices are alluded to which either strengthen or undermine Desiderio's male gaze.

The first example concerns a travelling circus that features both images of suffering femininity and a troupe of acrobats who return Desiderio's gaze.¹²¹ Beginning with the former, like Tristessa in *New Eve*, all the female performers embody images of tragic, suffering femininity, put on display for the devouring eyes of its paying audience. Madame la Barbe, the bearded lady, is said to '[expose] her difference to make her living' though she '[feels] all the pangs of defloration', for each time she displays herself she receives "'a fresh violation. One is penetrated by their eyes'" (p. 121).¹²² Desiderio notices that her eyes sometimes 'involuntarily stray to the little mirror on the wall', as if hoping to see something different (p. 122). But whilst mirrors were outlawed in Desiderio's city because they offered alternatives to existing reality, here the mirror seems unable to offer an alternative image to Madame la Barbe's picture of suffering femininity.¹²³ Mamie Buckskin is another of Carter's cinematic women, this one straight out of a Hollywood Western. She is 'a paradox – a fully phallic female with the bosom of a nursing mother and a gun, death-dealing erectile tissue, perpetually at her thigh' (p. 124). However, she too is 'a tragic woman' according to Desiderio as her life consists of crime, burlesque performances and a broken heart (p. 125). On one occasion, he catches her 'glancing at Madame la Barbe's beard with a certain envy', this tragic and phallic woman clearly wishing she was a man (p. 125). In this world, gender ambiguity is not a model of successful identity. Despite the peep-show proprietor's claims that the desire machines will eventually create 'a period of absolute mutability' and that, tellingly, '*man* will be freed in perpetuity from the tyranny of a single present', the women in the circus appear to belie this

¹²¹ The circus is described as 'its own world' and Desiderio wonders if its performers are 'nothing but the Doctor's storm troops' (pp. 112-13). There is a close relationship between the peep-show and the circus, for Desiderio uses the term 'raree-show' to characterise the latter (p. 113). A raree-show was another term for a peep-show. This link strengthens the notion that Desiderio's adventures are like peep-show exhibits. Desiderio's role in the circus is to assist the peep-show proprietor with the exhibits. As he puts it, he is to 'hide in the shadows', 'polish the lenses of the [peep-show] machines' and 'watch my master arrange each day's fresh, disquieting spectacles' (p. 110). Desiderio is thus once again positioned as a spectator, though he begins to learn about the mechanism of the peep-show and Hoffman's desire machines.

¹²² She tells Desiderio that, in contrast with this self-display, as a child she would always hide 'behind the shutters' of her home away from prying eyes (p. 121). The example of Madame la Barbe makes explicit the fact that most of the women in this text are subject to the penetrating eyes of a male gaze. By contrast, Desiderio is only on certain occasions threatened by the eyes of another. Carter would later return to the idea of the female performer in *Nights at the Circus* with her heroine Fevvers, referred to as the world's 'Greatest Aerialiste'. Towards the end of this novel, Fevvers notes her audience's eyes, 'fixed upon her with astonishment, with awe, the eyes that told her who she was'. Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 345.

¹²³ She can only see herself as others see her in her mirror. She thus appears to fit Berger's model of gendered vision outlined in *Ways of Seeing*.

(pp. 113-14; emphasis added). Indeed, in this circus only Desiderio's desires appear to have been set free as he confesses that he 'was never bored' (p. 128).

Although it is less prominent than in *New Eve*, *Desire Machines* also displays Carter's interest in the cinema. During one of several lectures to Desiderio, the peep-show proprietor talks at length about the history of visual technology, starting with the synthesis of space carried out by perspective painting and leading up to the invention of 'cinematography [which] enabled us to corral time past and thus retain it not merely in the memory [...] but in the objective preservative of a roll of film' (p. 116). He goes on:

The motion picture is usually regarded as only a kind of shadow play and few bother to probe the ontological paradoxes it presents. For it offers us nothing less than the present tense experience of time irrefutably past. So that the coil of film has, as it were, lassoed [*sic*] inert phenomena from which the present had departed, and when projected upon a screen, they are granted a temporary revivification. (pp. 116-17)¹²⁴

Despite their vivid projection of time, cinematic images ultimately 'lack autonomy', and so Hoffman's desire machines were designed, according to the proprietor, to overcome this deficiency in the cinematic apparatus by creating images that would be completely free from the constraints imposed by time and space.¹²⁵ Although the desire machines are a futuristic extension of earlier optical devices, such as the cinema, in their transformative effects they are very similar to older visual technologies. For example, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that the invention of photography effected a 'conquest over matter', a phrase that echoes with Hoffman's view of matter as an optical toy.¹²⁶ As Stuart Ewen glosses, for Holmes, with the invention of photography anything 'could now be lifted from its particular place and time, separated from the powerful grasp of the material environment, yet still remain real, visible, and permanent'. Photography created a 'new reality, shaped by the flourishing of dematerialized surfaces'.¹²⁷ At one level, Hoffman's desire machines embody the way in which Western society has increasingly become a world of autonomous, dematerialised images.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ This recalls those passages in *New Eve* which describe how the celluloid keeps Tristessa's beauty alive, preserving the past in the present. This link is strengthened when the proprietor goes on to explain that 'the action of time is actually visible in the tears, scratches and thumbprints on the substance of the film itself' (p. 117). This description of deteriorated celluloid also recalls Woolf's essay 'The Cinema', where a blemish on the film stock of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* appeared to her as if it were an intentionally created element within the film, and thus fired her imagination with a vision of the potential of cinematic expression.

¹²⁵ Perhaps Hoffman would have made the strange amorphous shape that Woolf saw leap out of the celluloid or out of the projected image and become an autonomous being.

¹²⁶ Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereography', qtd. in Stuart Ewen, *All-Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 24.

¹²⁷ Ewen, *All-Consuming Images*, p. 25.

¹²⁸ Another link with *New Eve* appears in the phrase 'persistence of vision', which makes several appearances in *Desire Machines*. Desiderio overhears the proprietor mutter the phrase one night and wonders if it refers primarily to the peep-show or to the 'phantoms in the city?' (p. 122). Observing an orgy one night between the circus horses and their riders, Desiderio doubts his own eyes: 'The swaying paraffin lamps which hung from the

Whilst Desiderio enjoys the images of suffering femininity on display in the circus and learns about the mechanism of the desire machines, one group of performers in the circus challenges his gaze in a particularly violent way. The acrobats of desire, whose act consists of juggling their dismembered body parts, invite Desiderio to join them in their trailer, and once he is inside, they brutally gang rape him. The visual dimension to this violence is striking, for, instead of windows, the walls are covered with ‘mirrors and photographs’ which reflect back the image of the acrobats (p. 134). This functions as another example of the *mise-en-abyme* effect:

The mirrors reflected not only sections of the [acrobats]; they reflected those reflections, too, so the men were infinitely repeated everywhere I looked and now eighteen and sometimes twenty-seven and, at one time, thirty-six brilliant eyes were fixed on me [...] I was surrounded by eyes. (p. 135)¹²⁹

This army of eyes ‘bind[s] [Desiderio] in invisible bonds’ as he is unable to move, and therefore he merely sits ‘filled with impotent rage as the wave of eyes [breaks] over [him]’ (p. 135). Desiderio is thus transformed from a fixated spectator to a fixed spectacle, and experiences visuality itself as painful: ‘Lightening flashed and all nine, in their Heliogabalian finery, flared briefly like magnesium, reflecting a glare so harsh and violent it wounded the retina’ (p. 133). This brief scene constitutes one of the strongest challenges to Desiderio’s position of visual mastery, for it positions him as a visual object, surrounded by mirrors as if inside a strange optical device.¹³⁰ The acrobats of desire turn Desiderio’s own violent gaze upon himself as if holding a mirror up to him so that he can see the effects of being an object of the male gaze. The circus, therefore, not only provides Desiderio with further examples of femininity styled for a masculine visual economy, but also features elements which begin to undo his position as a masculine, detached and controlling observer.

roof lent the lurid scene a dramatically *expressionist chiaroscuro* so intermittent *I began to doubt some of the things I saw*’ (p. 126; emphasis added). Staring in amazement, he remembers the proprietor muttering the phrase about the importance of persistence of vision. He also recalls a flicker book-like picture of horses trampling a young girl displayed in one of the peep-show samples, and therefore concludes that ‘the whole fair seemed only another kind of set of samples’ (p. 126). The phrase occurs a third time when Desiderio recounts watching a disturbing group of performers known as the acrobats of desire. Their act consists of nine men disassembling their bodies and then juggling with all the body parts, including arms, heads, and, their ‘*pièce de résistance*’, eyes (p. 131). Once again an agog spectator, Desiderio ‘would repeat to [himself] as [he] watched them the peep-show proprietor’s maxim: “It all depends on persistence of vision”’ (p. 131). The juggling of eyes suggests Hoffman’s playful subversion of the visual and of the gaze, whilst persistence of vision here clearly stands for Desiderio’s fixated gaze before all these spectacles, held in place and entertained.

¹²⁹ Desiderio also says that the combination of reflected and photographed images of the acrobats ‘seemed to continue, in a subtly enervated fashion, the climax of their act’, as if there was no difference between performance and so-called real life (p. 134). Desiderio also adds that he had not seen ‘so many mirrors since the war began’ (p. 134).

¹³⁰ I noted earlier the return of his gaze in one of the peep-show exhibits, which also featured a *mise-en-abyme* effect. The two are coincidentally related, for this dizzying effect unsettles Desiderio as safe and distanced observer.

Meatifying Woman in the House of Anonymity

Leaving the spectacle of the circus behind, Desiderio's next set of encounters, involving a sadistic count and a surreal brothel, become increasingly sexual and violent, thereby foregrounding even more strongly the violence of a masculine visual economy. As if in response to a change in the stage scenery, Desiderio sheds the costume of his circus identity, turning his back on 'the corpse of yet another of my selves' (p. 139). In a new landscape, one 'as sharply pointed and unnatural looking as those outlined by the brusque crayon of a child', he finds himself the travelling companion of a rapaciously sexual and brutal Count, whose character is modelled mainly on the writings of the Marquis de Sade (p. 140).¹³¹ He is a heavily stylized figure, striking postures 'as lurid as those of a bad actor', and has 'scarcely an element of realism' about him (p. 143). Albertina also accompanies them disguised as a valet named Lafleur,¹³² whom the Count frequently and violently fucks in an exhibitionist spectacle for Desiderio's gaze: "'Watch me! Watch me!" he cried as though, in order to appreciate the effect of his own actions, he had to know that he was seen' (p. 145). In response, Desiderio wonders about his position: 'Was I his observer, whose eyes, as they watched him, verified his actions? Did his narcissism demand a constant witness?' (p. 148). After his traumatic encounter with the acrobats, Desiderio returns to his position as voyeur and all violence is directed, once again, towards the object of his gaze. What is different, however, is that his voyeurism is now mediated by the figure of a second masculine observer – the Count – who acts out the violence for him. The effect of this mediation, though, also helps Desiderio to become more self-conscious about the violence of masculine visual structures.

This is developed further when the Count takes Desiderio to The House of Anonymity, a brothel in which women are 'meatified' for its paying customers. This is another distinctively surreal space, with furniture composed of living animals including monkeys that form 'living candelabra', a sofa created from a pride of lions, and armchairs made of brown bears (pp. 151-52). By contrast with the décor, 'the prostitutes, the wax mannequins of love, hardly seemed to be alive for they stood as still as statues' (p. 152). The woman-as-bird metaphor to which Clarissa Dalloway was subjected appears here in a more literal form, for the women are locked

¹³¹ The Count also has a touch of the Baudelairean dandy about him, as Desiderio describes how 'he wore his dandyism in his very bones, as if it was a colour that had seeped out of his essential skeleton to dye his clothes' (p. 141). The Count describes himself as a 'connoisseur of catastrophe' (p. 142).

¹³² Desiderio later describes Albertina's disguise as 'far too cunning and complete for me to penetrate' (p. 179).

in cages like the ‘singing birds [...] housed in Victorian drawing rooms’ (p. 152). These women represent mythological and conventionally masculine ideas of femininity:

Each was as circumscribed as a figure in rhetoric and you could not imagine they had names, for they had been reduced by the rigorous discipline of their vocation to the undifferentiated essence of the idea of the female. This ideational femaleness took amazingly different shapes though its nature was not that of Woman. [...] They were sinister, abominable, inverted mutations, part clockwork, part vegetable and part brute. (p. 154)

These ‘sexual appliances’ include a girl with multiple faces ‘hinged one on top of the other so that her head opened out like a book’, each page a picture of allure, and Desiderio describes her ‘torn and bleeding’ body as ‘the most dramatic revelation of the nature of meat’ that he had ever seen (p. 155).¹³³ In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter writes that, unlike flesh, ‘which is usually alive and, typically, human’, meat ‘is dead, inert, animal and intended for consumption’.¹³⁴ As Dimovitz explains, for Carter, ‘*flesh* becomes *meat* when the subject objectifies the other’.¹³⁵ Like the peep-show exhibit earlier, the meat-like quality of these prostitutes makes clear their function as dehumanised objects for consumption.¹³⁶ At the same time as these women are reduced to the quality of lifeless meat, they are also, paradoxically, decorporealised to become mere images without a bodily identity. Desiderio refers to them as ‘libidinous images’ who ‘all bared their sexual parts’, adding that they are illuminated in such a way that their ‘subtly spurious charms were clearly visible’ (pp. 154-55). Unlike the images of masochistic, suffering femininity in the circus, the prostitutes unsettle Desiderio’s masculine perspective and spoil his scopophilia: ‘None of the metamorphosed objects before me aroused the slightest desire in me’, for, despite the variety of figures on offer, ‘they seemed to me nothing but malicious satires upon eroticism’ (p. 158). By satirising his desire for passive femininity, the brothel’s mannequins force self-consciousness upon Desiderio so that he is unable to enjoy the libidinous images on display and must instead reflect on what it means to be a spectator of such images.¹³⁷

¹³³ Others have animal heads or ‘branches of trees sprouting out of their bland foreheads’, and one looks as if she had ‘come straight from the whipping parlour for her back was a ravelled palimpsest of wound upon wound’ (pp. 154-55).

¹³⁴ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 161.

¹³⁵ Dimovitz, ‘Angela Carter’s Narrative Chiasmus’, p. 91.

¹³⁶ This notion of turning women into meat appears in Carter’s work on de Sade. As she writes, the ‘strong abuse, exploit and meatify the weak, says Sade. They must and will devour their natural prey. The primal condition of man cannot be modified in any way; it is eat or be eaten.’ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, pp. 164-65. Emma Parker notes that Carter’s early texts ‘expose how the culturally sanctioned Sadeian philosophy of “eat or be eaten” operates to oppress women’. Emma Parker, ‘The Consumption of Angela Carter: Women, Food, and Power’, *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 31.3 (2000), 141-69 (p. 147).

¹³⁷ Robinson argues that voyeuristic pleasure is denied here, for both Desiderio and the reader, as Carter’s pornographic representation of women forces Desiderio to acknowledge his ‘complicity in the dehumanization of the objects of his desire’. Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, p. 106.

Desiderio's status as an observer is also transformed by the costume he has to wear inside the brothel, which places him within the same 'elementary iconography of pornography' as the prostitutes.¹³⁸ He and the Count are given costumes to wear which, whilst 'totally obliterating our faces' thanks to 'hood-like masks', have a hole over the groin area so that the 'genitals remained exposed' (p. 151). They are thus reduced to the abstract and formal symbol of masculinity – 'the probe' – which signifies alertness, aspiration and positivity.¹³⁹ However, Desiderio also feels that this costume dehumanises him just as the appearance of the prostitutes does for them, for 'the garb grossly emphasized our manhoods while utterly denying our humanity' (p. 151). This is further emphasised by the mirrors that, once again, line the walls, reflecting everything except their 'blank, pink faces [...] because here we had no names' (p. 153). Anonymous, Desiderio says that he wore 'a uniform that made of me only a totem of carnality myself' thus experiencing, like Orlando before him, the often confining strictures of sartorial ideology (p. 155).¹⁴⁰

Albertina appears yet again, this time disguised as the Madame of the house, 'quite naked but for her necklace of keys and a *cache-sexe* made of sequined eyes', and sitting behind a cash register 'in the *fin de siècle* style' (p. 153).¹⁴¹ She takes them both to a room called 'the Sphere of Spheres', 'a circular chamber filled with a shifting medley of colours from a lamp with a stained glass shade that turned in a slow circle in the middle of the ceiling' (p. 159). This room recalls both the womb-like chamber in which Evelyn is imprisoned in Beulah, as well as the other circular room that Carter cut from her manuscript of *New Eve*, in which an image of the vagina was projected onto the ceiling. The room in the brothel is a kaleidoscope-like chamber in which Albertina unveils herself to Desiderio, appropriately enough given his earlier association between the two, and the bed they lie on '[spins] round like the world on an axis in the middle of the room' (p. 159). Albertina is here described almost as Desiderio's twin, their bodies 'exactly the same height', their embrace almost an attempt to overcome the division between them so that 'the same blood would flow within us both and our nerves would knit and our skins melt and fuse' (p. 159). After the prostitutes' satirising of Desiderio's desire, Albertina appears as a flattering and narcissistic image of femininity which

¹³⁸ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Carter, *The Sadeian Woman*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Desiderio's standing before a series of mirrors dressed in what he describes as a 'uniform' also recalls 'Flesh and the Mirror', for the narrator of this story also describes how seeing her specular double in a mirror transforms her appearance into that of a uniform.

¹⁴¹ This overt reference to the *fin de siècle* looks back to that era of the department store, the *flâneur*, and to changing gender relations.

does not threaten his position as a spectator.¹⁴² Furthermore, whilst the lovers occupy the same room as the Count, who is seen ‘crouched slaving over the ruins of his unfortunate prostitute who was now only a bleeding moan’, the sight of this violence is observed merely with ‘indifference’ and does not appear to undermine Desiderio’s own sexual encounter (p. 160). Transfixed by the mesmerising Albertina in the kaleidoscopic room, Desiderio is able to ignore the demythologising image of sexual conduct that the Count represents.

Although Desiderio gets close to consummating his desire for Albertina, at the ‘very moment’ when the ‘eyes on her single garment [close]’, ‘a hail of machine-gun fire [crashes] through the windows’, like some violent injunction from the super-ego forbidding access to the object of desire (p. 160). Indeed, lying in bed with Albertina, Desiderio is told that the ‘police are looking for two murderers!’ (p. 160).¹⁴³ In this deferral of Desiderio’s sexual desire for Albertina, the reader’s desire for the solving of Albertina as narrative enigma and for the unveiling of her body is also delayed.¹⁴⁴ In response to this violent interruption, Albertina becomes ‘limp as a doll’, and as Desiderio attempts to carry her to safety she ‘[begins] to melt like a woman of snow’, a suggestion of his fading desire (pp. 160-61). Albertina continues to dissolve and then ‘flicker[s] a little’, before vanishing completely. ‘Her eyes vanished last of all’ in a nod to the Cheshire cat in *Through the Looking-Glass* (p. 161).¹⁴⁵ After his escape, Desiderio reflects that it was as if Albertina ‘had been only a ghost born of nothing but my longing’ (p. 163). The pattern of their relationship is also given in explicit form: ‘To have her so unexpectedly thrust into my arms and, the next minute, to have her vanish!’ (p. 163). Paradoxically, Albertina is desirable precisely insofar as she is elusive and impossible to possess. This section of the novel thus suggests that desire, contra Hoffman, is not something which can be mastered by the individual, for satisfaction is always elusive and desire is excited more by promises of future bliss than by its attainment. Furthermore, there is a suggestion here that the object of desire is itself a fake when Desiderio describes Albertina’s face as a ‘treacherous mask’ and wonders if her tears are a ‘token of deceit?’ (p. 164). With this doubt, Desiderio not only considers the notion that Albertina may be a lure sent by her father, but he also begins to question the nature of his own desire, for, if she is his own fabrication, then his

¹⁴² In a reversal of the scene with the acrobats, the ‘eyes on [Albertina’s] single garment closed one by one’ as they begin to make love, suggesting that Desiderio’s sexual enjoyment is dependent on his visual mastery (p. 160).

¹⁴³ In this passage, sex becomes interchangeable with murder, confirming the Count’s earlier behaviour with his prostitute.

¹⁴⁴ Again, see Barthes’s *The Pleasure of the Text* and Brooks’ *Body Work* for discussions of narrative deferral as comparable to striptease and the unveiling of the body.

¹⁴⁵ As Warner suggests, with the dissolving Cheshire Cat, ‘Carroll the photographer introduced cinematic techniques into storytelling’. Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, p. 153.

suspicion of her inauthenticity is his way of introducing some doubt into the certainty of his desire. Albertina's elusiveness and mutability¹⁴⁶ thus make her both alluring and unnerving: whilst Desiderio longs for her, he also suspects he is being deceived by someone, perhaps even himself. Trying to unravel the nature of his desire for Albertina is made difficult by the fact that she is 'inextricably mingled with [his] idea of her' (p. 166). The House of Anonymity thus holds up a mirror to Desiderio, making him self-conscious of his desire and of his role as an observer.

Male Fantasies of Femininity in Nebulous Time

In the last of my three examples, whilst everything become increasingly surreal and mutable, the images of femininity are still clearly fabricated from masculine desire. However, they continue to foreground the violence of Desiderio's masculine perspective alongside other challenges to his male gaze. Desiderio, the Count and Lafleur escape from the brothel and flee across the ocean aboard a ship with 'eyes painted on' (p. 175). The increasing number of references to visual devices suggests that Hoffman's revolution is continuing apace and Desiderio's world is becoming ever more spectacle-like. He likens the sky to a 'cyclorama' and says that he believed he would never see Albertina again 'unless her father cramped the world into a planisphere' (pp. 167-68). Even the sailors appear as tricks of vision, for they 'would sometimes halt, open-mouthed, in the middle of a shanty, as if they were actors who had suddenly forgotten their lines' (p. 169). Whilst these 'lapses of continuity' last no more than a moment, Desiderio occasionally observes 'a jarring effect of overlapping, as if the ship that bore us was somehow superimposed on another ship of a quite different kind' (p. 169).¹⁴⁷

After a storm shipwrecks them on the coast of Africa, they are captured by an all-female militia and taken back to their tribe, one of the most misogynistic societies in the novel and an image of European colonial fantasy.¹⁴⁸ Ruled over by a sadistic male tyrant who has been 'careful to suppress history', the women of this society are not just placed in a subordinate role,

¹⁴⁶ Albertina's 'substance was so flexible she could have worn a left glove on her right hand' (p. 166).

¹⁴⁷ There are many other examples besides these three. At one point the ship is attacked by pirates, and Desiderio describes them in similarly unreal terms, as 'two-dimensional' and 'like those strings of paper figures, hand in identical hand, that children cut out of sheets of paper' (p. 177). Practising with their 'heavy, double-bladed' swords, they 'transformed the decks into an arcade of flashing light' (p. 177). Late one night as the pirates are all drinking heavily, their behaviour described as 'Breughel-like antics' (p. 180), Desiderio observes that the 'moon fired the phosphorescence in the waters so that the black ship rocked on a bed of cold, scintillating flame', and he likens the effect to that of 'Indonesian shadow puppets' (p. 178).

¹⁴⁸ McHale notes that this space is 'derived from European fantasy. [Carter] populates its coast with cannibal tribesmen straight out of party jokes, comic-strips, and slapstick comedy'. Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 55. McHale also refers to this as 'imperialism of the imagination' and argues that Carter is foregrounding this on purpose in order to 'expose it for what it is' (p. 55).

but are subject to various mutilations and violations (p. 191). The chief's concubines bear 'the bleeding marks of gigantic bites' on their body, and many are missing fingers, toes or a nipple (p. 186). Despite such violation, Desiderio sees in them 'an exquisite pathos' and likens their stance to that of people 'posing for a group photograph' (p. 186).¹⁴⁹ The chief, with a third eye painted on his forehead, tells Desiderio that all the women of his tribe must have their clitoris removed because 'a woman's feelings' are 'directly related to her capacity for feeling during the sexual act' (p. 189). Furthermore, they are all expected to devour their 'first-born child' so that they become ruthless, the perfect 'army of women' who make a mockery of the false notion of woman as 'the gentler sex' (p. 189). Like the dehumanised women in the brothel, the women here 'have passed far beyond all human feeling' (p. 189). This is, as Robinson argues, exactly 'where Desiderio and the chieftain both want them'.¹⁵⁰ Whilst the chief explains that the image of the benevolent mother, of woman as the gentler sex, is merely a myth, it is clear that his version of femininity is just as mythological. As Robinson puts it, both are 'constructions of cultures where motherhood, whether revered or reviled, is the a priori condition of femaleness.'¹⁵¹

Amidst such violence, Desiderio adopts the position of a detached spectator once again: when the chief boils the Count alive, Desiderio, 'ever the inveterate observer', watches from the sides 'in horrified fascination' as Gamble puts it.¹⁵² In the second act of this performance, Lafleur is violently stripped before everyone, as if acting out Desiderio's fantasy of ripping off Albertina's clothes.¹⁵³ In a description that recalls Eve/lyn's characterisation of Tristessa, Desiderio says that what he saw was 'not the lean torso of a boy but the gleaming, curvilinear magnificence of a golden woman whose *flesh seemed composed of the sunlight that touched it*' (p. 193; emphasis added).¹⁵⁴ He adds that she was '[n]aked as a dream' (p. 194), recalling Berger's account of nudity: the female nude is 'not naked as she is. She is naked as the spectator

¹⁴⁹ The impression of pathos recalls not only his earlier perception of the two circus women who suffer for their living, but also Evelyn's view of Tristessa's cinematic performances of suffering femininity.

¹⁵⁰ McHale argues that the women here are 'reifications of European desire'. McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p. 55. However, Robinson takes him to task for not noting the 'continuity of violent misogyny' throughout Desiderio's adventures. Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, p. 115.

¹⁵¹ Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, p. 114.

¹⁵² Gamble, *Angela Carter*, p. 113.

¹⁵³ Desiderio's desire, mentioned earlier, is 'to rip away [Albertina's] ruffled shirt and find out whether the breasts of an authentic woman swelled beneath it' (p. 40). This also recalls *Orlando's* focus on stripping the body of its clothing, and Barthes's model of narrative as striptease once again.

¹⁵⁴ Eve/lyn says that Tristessa's 'flesh [...] seemed made of light, flesh so insubstantial only the phenomenon of persistence of vision could account for his presence here'. Carter, *The Passion of New Eve*, p. 147. This description comes as Eve/lyn and Tristessa are about to have sex. It does not seem accidental that Carter uses metaphors of light and of cinema to describe the naked (female) body in these two novels. Nakedness appears here as a sight, a light-show for a spectator.

sees her.’¹⁵⁵ In this moment of staged nudity, Desiderio turns back to clothing when he asks Albertina how she could be so many different people. Her answer is that she “‘projected herself upon the available flesh’” of the various people Desiderio met and describes the Madame, for example, as “‘a real but ephemeral show’” (p. 197). Albertina is here a kind of virtual reality woman made only of light, able to shift and change her appearance at will. However, this mutability ultimately acts in the service of exciting Desiderio’s desires rather than increasing her own powers of expression and agency. As Elisabeth Bronfen argues, despite its potential, Albertina’s mutability in reality materialises ‘the cliché that, because woman is man’s idea, existing because he imagines her, she is always and only a part of him’.¹⁵⁶ Conventional patriarchal structures persist even in a world of liberated desire and mutability.

This problematic appears at its most controversial when Desiderio and Albertina travel through Nebulous Time, the most surreal and mutable landscape yet, composed of plant-animal hybrids such as ‘flesh-eating flowers’ and a ‘buzzing, bi-partite thing, half horse, half tree’ (p. 196, p. 202). Once again, Desiderio links space and gender as he describes this country as ‘feminine’ because everything is ‘marvellous’ (p. 200).¹⁵⁷ In this strange jungle, they discover a race of centaurs who believe that women are born to suffer, and are thus ‘ritually degraded and reviled’ (p. 208). The centaurs practice a painful ritual of tattooing, and the women ‘[bear] the brunt’ of it (p. 208).¹⁵⁸ The women also do most of the physical work as well, such as ‘working the fields, bearing the children’ and ‘building the houses’ (p. 208).¹⁵⁹ Most disturbingly, the male centaurs brutally rape Albertina in front of Desiderio. Powerless to prevent it, all he can do is watch this abominable show, the tattoos on the bodies of the centaurs ‘perform[ing] *danses macabres* across their backs’ (p. 213).¹⁶⁰ Whilst Albertina claimed earlier

¹⁵⁵ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 44. Also relevant here is Carter’s description of Japanese tattooing, or *Irezumi*: ‘Now, a man who has been comprehensively tattooed – and the *irezumi* artist is nothing if not comprehensive – can hardly be said to be naked, for he may never remove this most intimate and gaily coloured of garments’. ‘People as Pictures’, in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 287-92 (p. 289).

¹⁵⁶ Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 422.

¹⁵⁷ Here it should be recalled that Desiderio characterised his beloved city before the Reality War as ‘masculine’.

¹⁵⁸ The tattooing takes place in a stable that is ‘halfway between an operating theatre and a chapel’, which recalls Beulah’s odd mixture of technology and religion and its remaking of the body (p. 223).

¹⁵⁹ Desiderio also repeats his earlier metaphor of life as fabric when he says that the centaurs were ‘engrossed in weaving and embroidering the rich fabric of the very world in which they lived’ (p. 217).

¹⁶⁰ The sight also recalls for Desiderio the peep-show sample which depicted a young girl trampled by horses – this ‘teasing image’ ‘flickered’ at the back of his mind (p. 213). Desiderio and Albertina are unable to communicate with the centaurs, for they speak different languages. After several attempts at communication, Desiderio says that one of the centaurs ‘shrugged, making a kaleidoscopic confluence of the colours on his shoulders’ (p. 209). Once again, Desiderio aligns enigmatic experiences or ones from which he fails to derive meaning with the iconography of the kaleidoscope.

that in Nebulous Time ‘desires must take whatever form *they* please’ (p. 200; emphasis added), after being raped by the centaurs she tells Desiderio that ‘the beasts were still only emanations of *her* own desires, dredged up and objectively reified from the dark abysses of the unconscious’ (p. 221; emphasis added). It is this that critics like Bronfen find most disturbing about *Desire Machines*, for Albertina’s explanation allows Desiderio to continue to adopt a position of detached voyeurism, without having to worry about his own implication in the rape. For him, Nebulous Time can remain merely a ‘dangerous wonderland’, the life of the centaurs a ‘divine theatre’ for his fascinated gaze (pp. 201, 217).

The only challenge to Desiderio’s spectatorship comes from Albertina’s ‘unprecedented eyes’, which he says ‘shone continually’ and ‘confounded all the senses’ (p. 200). This image of the female gaze opens up a space for female empowerment in the text through its challenging of the narrator’s male-centredness. Indeed, Desiderio becomes passive at such moments, confessing that he was often ‘in awe of her for sometimes her eyes held a dark, blasting lightning’ (p. 222). Her powerful gaze undermines Desiderio’s idealisation of her, and this ‘sense of her difference almost wither[s] [him]’ on occasion (p. 222). Whilst sometimes he feels as if he were ‘feeding on her eyes’, he also remarks that she ‘would gaze at [him]’ too, as if meeting and challenging his voyeurism (p. 222). Furthermore, although Albertina is referred to as ‘a doll of wax, half melted’, Desiderio also characterises himself in this way when he sees himself as ‘a misshapen doll clumsily balanced on two stunted pins’ by contrast with the giant centaurs (pp. 208-9). Lastly, Nebulous Time itself appears to challenge Desiderio’s perspective as a masculine observer, for, on one occasion he refers to it as ‘the womb of time’, and adds that his ‘conviction that [he] was a man [...] born in a certain city, the child of a certain mother, lover of a certain woman, began to waver’. As with Beulah in *New Eve*, Nebulous Time begins to problematize Desiderio’s gender: ‘If I was a man, what was a man?’ (p. 225). Thus, even in this most misogynistic society, there are still elements that challenge Desiderio’s position of visual mastery, suggesting that Hoffman’s mirages have the potential to transform even patriarchal gender structures.

Inside the Dream-Factory

After recounting his journey through a number of peep-show landscapes, the final part of Desiderio’s narrative centres on his disillusionment with the desire machines as he steps behind the mirages and into Hoffman’s dream-factory. Once inside, his experiences are like Dorothy’s at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*: ‘My disillusionment was profound. I was not in the domain of the marvellous at all. I had gone far beyond that and at last I had reached the power-house of

the marvellous, where all its clanking, dull, stage machinery was kept' (p. 240).¹⁶¹ As with the mirages at the beginning, Desiderio says that he was 'a little bored' by Hoffman's castle (p. 239).¹⁶² By extension, Desiderio wonders 'whether the fleshly possession of Albertina would not be the greatest disillusionment of all' (p. 240). In fact, before they arrive, Desiderio is again withered by her difference, for she 'put away all her romanticism' and became Generalissimo Hoffman, a 'crisp, antiseptic soldier' and the 'absolute antithesis of [his] black swan' (p. 230).¹⁶³ The sober reality of Hoffman's lair and his once enigmatic daughter thus disappoint Desiderio because they fail to incite his desire.

This disappointment is registered by Desiderio's continued use of metaphors drawn from optical devices. Escaping from the centaurs via helicopter, he notes that the crew filmed the landscape 'with a television camera' as if creating a documentary, and indeed they themselves looked like figures from 'newsreel films' (p. 229). By contrast with the fantastical imagery associated with kaleidoscopes and phantasmagorias, Desiderio draws here on the sober and mundane iconography of television to describe his experiences, suggesting also that he now views Hoffman's extraordinary spectacle with the detached gaze of the bored television viewer. This change in Desiderio's perception culminates in his discovery that Hoffman's castle, 'the house of the magician himself', is a place not of phantasmagoric wonders but of mundane 'tranquillity' and 'domestic peace' (p. 235).¹⁶⁴

Albertina's various guises here also fail to excite Desiderio's interest. At dinner she wears the evening dress of 'a Victorian romantic heroine', but he confesses that he would have preferred 'the transvestite apparel of her father's ambassador', thus displaying his preference

¹⁶¹ Intriguingly, Friedberg points out that the author of *The Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum, published in the very same year a treatise on window display entitled *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows*. Friedberg writes that in this treatise Baum 'describes a variety of techniques for catching the eyes of passing window-shoppers and turning them into absorbed spectators'. Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 66. Hoffman could also be described as turning people into absorbed spectators.

¹⁶² Desiderio notes later on that 'Dr Hoffman displayed only a faded weariness and a depressing ennui' when explaining the mechanism behind the desire machines (p. 251).

¹⁶³ Despite this, Albertina still has the power to enchant Desiderio: he describes her eyes as 'ensorcellating' (enchancing or bewitching), and when they kiss, the crew that are escorting them to the castle close their eyes 'as though we were too bright for them to bear' (p. 232).

¹⁶⁴ Desiderio's turn from describing reality in terms of fantastical and illusionistic devices, such as the phantasmagoria, to this comparison with television recalls Carter's contrast between the films of Godard and the revival of TV. As she writes, during the 1970s movies 'turned into things you watch on TV in the privacy of your own home. The little box to which we scornfully left our parents glued all those years ago gobbled up the dream factory and the reality factory, too.' Carter, 'Jean-Luc Godard', (p. 465). See also her remarks about television in her review of the film *Being There*. Angela Carter, 'Hal Ashby: *Being There*', in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, ed. Jenny Uglow (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 449-54. Carter describes the function of TV in this film as 'a metaphor for a state of dynamic non-being', which she argues is the central theme of the film (p. 449). In 'The Merchant of Shadows', cinema is associated with the sacred, as the film director is a 'priest' who 'prints the anagrams of desire upon the stock', whilst television is described as a 'secular medium'. Carter, 'The Merchant of Shadows', pp. 372, 375.

for woman as ambiguous and mutable. Desiderio also makes it clear that he prefers Albertina when she appears unreal and enigmatic rather than concrete and knowable, because ‘the real, once it becomes real, can be no more than real’ (p. 239).¹⁶⁵ Whilst he sees her as ‘sublime’ when she is unknown to him, his ‘disillusionment [becomes] profound’ as soon as she stands before him as a concrete person (p. 239).¹⁶⁶ Of course, for the most part, Desiderio meets only male-authored fantasies of femininity, for, as Robinson argues, while ‘Woman is everywhere present in the novel, women are conspicuously absent’.¹⁶⁷ Also absent in Hoffman’s castle is gender ambiguity, for whilst Albertina’s role as ambassador blurred gender-lines, here gender is split between masculine and feminine. Looking at himself in a mirror at one point, Desiderio notes that he was now ‘entirely Albertina in the male aspect’ (p. 238). This mirror-scene also reveals, once again, his narcissistic desire for a woman that conforms to his own fantasies and longings. Albertina’s otherness and autonomy must be non-existent. Hoffman appears to share this preference, for the ‘embalmed corpse of his dead wife’ lies passively on display in his study (p. 236). Recalling the somnambulant Mary Anne, Hoffman’s dead wife stands as another figure of male-authored, passive femininity.¹⁶⁸ She also appears to foreshadow Albertina’s ultimate fate at Desiderio’s murderous hands, signifying that woman must be turned into a passive object at all costs, even death.

Hoffman’s network of laboratories replicates the contrast between the marvellous mirages and the dull stage machinery of the castle. Above ground, everything is enchanting and Desiderio returns to cinematic metaphors to describe the doctor’s study: it is ‘Rottwang’s laboratory in Lang’s *Metropolis*’ and ‘also the cabinet of Dr Caligari’ (p. 244).¹⁶⁹ On a

¹⁶⁵ Desiderio refers to Albertina’s guise as the ambassador, which would appear to be his favourite of her appearances, as ‘shimmeringly unreal’ (p. 35).

¹⁶⁶ His disillusionment with Albertina is also similar to Eve/lyn’s with Tristessa. Recall, for example, Eve/lyn’s characterisation of Tristessa at the beginning of *New Eve*: ‘And all you signified was false! Your existence was only notional; you were a piece of pure mystification.’ Tristessa is ‘as beautiful as only things that don’t exist can be’ (*New Eve*, p. 6). Eve/lyn’s reaction here comes after he receives posters of Tristessa which evoke the sober reality of her existence as an actress rather than the mystifications of her filmic image in the cinema.

¹⁶⁷ Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, p. 103.

¹⁶⁸ Dimovitz points out the similarity between this image of Hoffman and his dead wife, and ‘Desiderio’s necrophilic scene with Mary Anne’. He also argues that this scene makes clear the implication of ‘psychoanalytic theory with the fetishization of a female other that exists nowhere in reality’. Dimovitz, ‘Angela Carter’s Narrative Chiasmus’, p. 92. Neumeier makes the same point when she suggests that ‘the appearance of the doctor in the novel is presented as a mock analytic situation, where the doctor is sitting on a stool holding the hand of a woman on a couch, who, however, in a Poe-like Gothic twist of the scene, turns out to be the embalmed corpse of the doctor’s dead wife’. Neumeier, ‘Postmodern Gothic’, p. 145.

¹⁶⁹ The reference to Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, in particular the laboratory in which the female automaton is created, creates an association between Albertina and the figure of the android or automaton. This also strengthens the idea that the female characters in the text are passive objects, created by and for men. For a analysis of the female automaton in Lang’s *Metropolis*, see Andreas Huyssen, ‘The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*’, in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 65-81. Crofts argues that Hoffman’s castle can be read as

workbench lie ‘a curious collection of optical toys, a thaumatrope, a Chinese pacing horse lamp and several others, all of types which worked on the principle of persistence of vision’ (p. 245).¹⁷⁰ Like a Gothic castle, this is a dual-space, for below this fantastical, cinematic room lie a number of more mundane facilities which house the desire machines. Hoffman and Desiderio take ‘a businesslike [*sic*] electric elevator’ down to a ‘sterile’ space, all ‘technological whiteness and silence’ like Beulah (pp. 250-51). Some visual enchantment is present, however, in the various vats and computers which create ‘a confusion of endlessly swelling and diminishing ectoplasmic shapes formed around central nuclei of flashing lights’ (p. 251). Behind this lies the central mechanism of the desire machines, a series of cages referred to as ‘love pens’ in which ‘a hundred of the best-matched lovers in the world’ are twined in ‘the most fervent embraces passion could devise’, producing ‘a pictorial lexicon of all the things a man and a woman might do together’ (p. 255).¹⁷¹ These ‘open coffins’ produce the erotic energy that powers the desire generators, which in turn releases the mirages (p. 255).¹⁷² In a crucial revelation, Hoffman confesses that he has actually ‘[controlled] the evolution of the phantoms’ all along, despite his ambition to create autonomous mirages and to liberate individual desire.¹⁷³ He is, therefore, less a liberator than a kind of totalitarian socialist, a ‘hypocrite’ who ‘penned desire in a cage and said: “Look! I have liberated desire!”’ (p. 248). Hoffman can also be read as standing for the figure of the advertiser or public relations expert, for whilst he claims to give people what they want, he actually shapes people’s desires in subtle but powerful ways. At the beginning of the text, Hoffman’s project might have appeared diametrically opposed to the Minister’s world of order and control, but by the conclusion it is abundantly clear that both are, in Robinson’s words, ‘complicit in the same ideological agenda:

akin to the dream factories of Hollywood, with Hoffman as a kind of tyrannical studio boss and his bombardment of the city with mirages a metaphor for Hollywood’s colonisation of the imagination. Charlotte Crofts, *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter’s Writing for Radio, Film and Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 96-97.

¹⁷⁰ As if in addition to this list of optical devices, Desiderio comments, a few pages later, that ‘Matter was an optical toy to him’ (p. 250).

¹⁷¹ Hoffman explains that the apparatus of the love pens involves large amounts of both ‘visual and audial stimuli’, for, they are arranged next to each other and the walls and floor are covered with mirrors. As Desiderio says, the ‘polished walls and floor reflected and multiplied the visible propagation of eroto-energy’ (p. 256).

¹⁷² The love pens have a similar structure to the stereoscopic peep-show exhibits which I earlier characterised as producing a spectator who is both active and passive. Whilst the love pens turn subjects into image-producers, since it is their erotic energy that creates Hoffman’s mirages, they simultaneously imprison them in perpetual sexual congress, or what Desiderio describes as a ‘pictorial lexicon of all the things a man and a woman might do together within the confines of a bed of wire six feet long by three feet wide’ (p. 255).

¹⁷³ He adds that he had always intended to ‘phase himself out’ once the mirages showed signs of autonomy and self-promulgation, but this has not taken place yet (p. 253). Compare Hoffman’s admission here with the film director Mannheim in Carter’s short story ‘The Merchant of Shadows’, who ‘prints the anagrams of desire upon the stock’. Carter, ‘The Merchant of Shadows’, p. 372. In both cases, the director of images controls the content and form of his projections.

they both position Man as an imperialist subject whose desire gives free reign to exploitation and domination'.¹⁷⁴ There are, in fact, hints of this complicity early on in the text. For example, the ambassador says that Hoffman wants 'Absolute authority to establish a regime of total liberation', the language here revealing a similar ideological stance to that of the Minister (p. 36).

What *Desire Machines* makes clear, then, is that Hoffman's project to introduce a period of absolute mutability and total liberation conceals an ideology still steeped in masculine authority and tyrannical control. As Desiderio realises at the end, Hoffman 'wanted to establish a dictatorship of [masculine] desire' (p. 253). It is clear that the desire machines fail to liberate the desires of the female characters, for Albertina never becomes more than a lure or erotic toy for Desiderio – her femininity is in most cases stylised to appeal to his male gaze. By the conclusion, even her androgynous guises are seen as a ruse: when encountering her dressed as 'a beautiful hermaphrodite in an evening dress of purple gauze with silver sequins round his eyes', Desiderio says that 'she need not have worked so hard at her disguise' because he had 'suspected her already' (p. 256). In fact, even earlier, Desiderio had dismissed Albertina's '[s]hape-shifting' as mere 'hocus-pocus' (p. 184). Desiderio's ambitions to rip off Albertina's clothes and to discover the truth behind the mirages both end in disappointment. By the conclusion, both Hoffman's mirages and his daughter's disguises are looked on by Desiderio as cheap tricks foisted onto people in the name of freedom but leading only to a new kind of servitude as desire is enslaved in the service of a world ruled by the Doctor's masculine images of desire.

The desire machines also fail to alter Desiderio's relationship to gender and the visual, despite confronting him with images that demythologise masculine conceptions of sex. Whilst some of the mirages begin to force Desiderio into a recognition of the violence of the male gaze (such as those in the House of Anonymity), this potential fails to transform his relationship to the gendered field of vision in a significant way.¹⁷⁵ One conclusion *Desire Machines* comes to, therefore, is that new technologies do not in themselves necessarily lead to social changes. The desire machines are thus like the omnibuses in *Mrs Dalloway*: whilst they open up new

¹⁷⁴ Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, p. 99.

¹⁷⁵ Both the stereoscopic peep-show and the brothel push Desiderio to acknowledge his position as spectator, and the violence it entails, but neither of these experiences fundamentally transforms the relationship between gender and the visual. Like those theorists who argue for the censoring of pornography, Desiderio fails to see that the pornographical women in the House of Anonymity can teach him not only about sex but society also. Carter's *The Sadeian Woman* makes this point more explicitly. Robinson argues that *Desire Machines* inscribes master narratives of Western culture so as to subvert them in true postmodern fashion. Robinson, *Engendering the Subject*, p. 103. My argument, however, is that Hoffman's desire machines fail to change the constitution of the gendered visual field. At best, they foreground the violence of masculine structures of looking.

spaces and perspectives for other kinds of looks and ways of being, there is no guarantee that they will produce substantial or long-term change in gender relations.¹⁷⁶ There is also a parallel with the iconography of Surrealism here, for whilst the latter celebrates ‘the capacity for seeing the world as if for the first time’, it did little to change the relations between the sexes, as Carter makes clear in her assessment.¹⁷⁷ Revolutions in technology or iconography, therefore, do not necessarily alter the deeper social structures, but often perpetuate them instead. As Suleiman concurs, Hoffman’s failed revolution results not from a failure of technology, but from a failure to change the sexual relations: ‘even the most revolutionary technological advances do not necessarily change the relations between men and women’.¹⁷⁸ Putting all of his faith in technology to alter society functions as a fetish for Hoffman, blinding him to the fact that society is not determined by technology alone. Desiderio’s ultimate rejection of Hoffman and his project can thus be read as a political gesture, a recognition that the desire machines offer the illusion of liberation but in fact create a society of the spectacle involving a new form of servitude.

‘Unbidden, she comes’: The Albertina-Effect

Whilst both Desiderio’s murder of Hoffman and Albertina and his destruction of the desire machines can be read as a political rejection of the doctor’s social vision, I want to conclude this chapter by arguing that his actions also stem from the unsettling effect that Albertina has on him. Although the majority of her guises are clearly masculine-scripted images of femininity designed to excite the male gaze, her appearance within the setting of her father’s castle troubles Desiderio’s vision and unsettles his sense of self, so much so that his murdering of her constitutes the only means of satisfaction and release from her spell.

The first example of this troubling effect appears when Albertina’s eyes take on the same mirroring effect as one of the peep-show exhibits. Before being taken to see the desire machines, Albertina leads Desiderio into a cemetery filled with clay statues ‘whose eyes were holes’, transforming the pair into ‘the cynosure of the sightless eyes of a countless pottery audience’ (p. 241). Although Desiderio gets close, once again, to actual consummation,

¹⁷⁶ Compare Elizabeth’s thoughts about her career whilst on the omnibus with her appearance at her mother’s party, where she is misrecognised as some anonymous beautiful woman by her father. The mobile omnibus is contrasted with the enclosing domestic space and the confinement of her party dress, which both place her within a patriarchal field of vision.

¹⁷⁷ Carter, ‘The Alchemy of the Word’, p. 67.

¹⁷⁸ Suleiman, ‘The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination’, p. 129. Suleiman also argues that Desiderio’s destruction of Hoffman’s technological wonder is a rejection of ‘the technological appropriation [...] of Surrealism and liberation philosophy’ (p. 125).

Albertina fends off his sexual advances, explaining that they must wait until they are in the laboratory of the desire machines. Instead, she tells him a riddle concerning desire in which two mirrors reflect each other, multiplying images to infinity. She claims that this image well describes their relationship as they are ‘two such disseminating mirrors’ (p. 241). However, when Desiderio looks into her eyes, he experiences that recurring sense of vertigo in which not only his position of visual mastery but also his very subjectivity appear under threat: ‘[i]n the looking glasses of her eyes, I saw reflected my entire being whirl apart and reassemble itself innumerable times’ (p. 241). As well as recalling earlier examples of this effect in the text, what is described here is similar to Eve/lyn’s experience of gazing into the mirror-like eyes of Tristessa in *New Eve*.¹⁷⁹ Albertina’s gaze has the power to undermine Desiderio’s subjectivity by challenging its foundation in the idea that he is an objective, detached and controlling observer. Indeed, he begins to perceive a threat towards his desire for autonomy and freedom when she explains that love tends ‘towards an ultimate state of ecstatic annihilation’ and that her father plans to harness the energy from their coupling by imprisoning him in one of the cages which power the desire machines (p. 242). In response to this, Desiderio’s desire for her withers once again, and he realises that his preference is for Albertina’s appearances – for Albertina *as* appearance – which have been ‘maintained’ by ‘the power of [his] desire’ (p. 243). The ultimate object of desire for Desiderio is thus desire itself, his ability to desire without compromising his freedom and detachment. It is Albertina’s materiality, signalled by her returning of Desiderio’s gaze, that compromises his freedom to desire.

A second example of Albertina’s troubling effect comes at the end when Desiderio comes face-to-face with the reality of the desire machines and what the consummation of his love for her will entail. Although he had stated earlier that he was ‘nourishing an ambition’ to strip Albertina of her clothes in order to see if the ‘breasts of an authentic woman swelled beneath’ them, when she herself voluntarily undresses before his gaze, tempting him to join her in becoming a cog in her father’s diabolical machine, it causes not pleasure but more anxiety: ‘She wiped the silver from her eyes and the purple dress dropped away from the goddess of the cornfields, more savagely and triumphantly beautiful than any imagining, my Platonic other, my necessary extinction, my dream made flesh’ (p. 257). Albertina’s naked body produces an ambivalent reaction from Desiderio, as she is seen in Baudelairean terms as both alluring and threatening. The latter quality is heightened by the fact that her naked body

¹⁷⁹ It also recalls Woolf’s concern with the unravelling of identity both in ‘Street Haunting’ and especially in ‘Evening Over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car.’ Both Carter and Woolf are clearly fascinated with how the visual is able to both strengthen and undermine conventional, unified forms of subjectivity.

is framed not only by the love pens in the background, but also by innumerable mirrors lining the walls and floor, recalling for Desiderio his rape by the acrobats of desire in their ‘orchid-coloured caravan’ (p. 256).¹⁸⁰ The long-awaited denuding of the beloved’s body, which plays a significant role in driving Desiderio’s narrative, leads not to the much-anticipated pleasure but to horror and rejection. He refers to this moment as the ‘grotesque denouement’ of his story and his response to Albertina’s naked body is to shout “‘No!’” so loudly that even the love slaves avert their usually transfixed gazes from each other to stare at him (p. 258).

I want to refer to this troubling of Desiderio’s vision as the Albertina-effect, which takes inspiration from Peter Brooks’ analysis of Emile Zola’s *Nana*. Brooks’ central argument is that whilst Zola strives to give a ‘scrupulous, nonjudgemental explanation of Nana’s choice of “profession”’ as a prostitute, ‘he can’t quite maintain his impassive neutrality’ because he ‘takes fright at his own creation’.¹⁸¹ Whilst the majority of the novel’s representations fit into a model of nineteenth-century realism, the sight of Nana’s naked body frightens Zola, according to Brooks, so that his ‘descriptive prose veers into the mythic’ and her body becomes veiled in fantastical images rather than seen clearly and plainly.¹⁸² The male character who observes Nana undressing, Count Muffat, responds to the sight of her naked body with a mixture of anxiety and aggression. He throws her down onto the floor in an attempt, in Brooks’ words, ‘to possess her in an act that he knows represents his “defeat” – not possession at all, but dispossession’. Brooks therefore argues that the ‘Nana-effect’ produces ‘disorientation, troubled vision, imperfect knowledge, [and] dispossession’ and that the novel suggests that woman must ‘[remain] a mystery to the men whose lives are driven by the desire she creates’.¹⁸³ Although Carter’s writing style differs significantly from Zola’s, employing a postmodern rather than classic realist approach, I want to argue that something very similar to the scene of Nana’s undressing occurs at the climax of Desiderio’s narrative.¹⁸⁴ Despite the different styles and aims of each text, they both foreground the anxiety that the female form produces in the male spectator.

First of all, in both scenes the undressing woman is framed by a mirror so that the voyeuristic looks of both Muffat and Desiderio are reflected back to them, making them conscious of their own acts of observation. However, whilst Muffat observes Nana watching

¹⁸⁰ Desiderio explains that the space is ‘roofed and walled with seamless looking-glass’ (p. 254).

¹⁸¹ Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 115.

¹⁸² Brooks, *Realist Vision*, p. 119.

¹⁸³ Brooks, *Realist Vision*, p. 119.

¹⁸⁴ Carter referred to her prose on one occasion as becoming mannerist: ‘I started off being an expressionist, but as I grew older I started treating it more frivolously and so I became a mannerist’. Haffenden, ‘Angela Carter’, p. 91.

herself undressing in a single mirror, Albertina is surrounded by countless mirrors, thereby multiplying her image to infinity. As Desiderio says, the 'polished walls and floor reflected and multiplied the visible propagation of eroto-energy', producing a *mise-en-abyme* effect once again (p. 256). Therefore, whilst Muffat appears to be more troubled by Nana's gaze as well as her naked body, Desiderio's anxiety stems from Albertina's overwhelming presence as her images surround him. Muffat and Desiderio are also similar in that they prefer the idea of woman as mystery or enigma. Just as Zola's prose moves away from his brand of realism when the woman reveals her sex, so Desiderio's descriptions of the naked Albertina veil her in mythological images: she is a 'goddess of the cornfields' and his 'Platonic other'. In both texts, at the point of what Brooks calls 'maximal seeing', there is, paradoxically, 'an avoidance of seeing what is there'.¹⁸⁵ Desiderio's 'no' is not just a rejection of the slavery Hoffman's desire machines entail but a reaction to the sight of Albertina's naked body.

Desiderio's final actions also resemble Muffat's desperate attempt to possess Nana, as the former describes how, after murdering Hoffman, he and Albertina 'wrestled on her father's flaccid corpse for possession of the knife as passionately as if for the possession of each other'. However, Carter pushes this idea further by having her protagonist murder the elusive and threatening object of desire, making explicit the associations between eroticism and death throughout the text.¹⁸⁶ Desiderio offers a wavering justification for his extreme course of action by claiming that 'I think I killed her to stop her killing me. I think that was the case. I am almost sure it was the case. Almost certain' (p. 259). Although Desiderio averts the threat of annihilation posed by Albertina and the desire machines, his extreme act of possession is, like Muffat's, in reality an act of dispossession because, by killing her, Desiderio forecloses the possibility of real possession. In one sense, he achieves a kind of victory because Albertina's enchanting but threatening eyes become 'silent forever' (p. 259). Indeed, Desiderio momentarily feels 'the uneasy sense of perfect freedom', for he was now 'free of her'. However, he quickly realises that this is an illusion, for 'how could [he] be free of her as long as [he] remained alive?' (p. 260). Whilst her body has been destroyed, Albertina's powerful image will continue to haunt him for the rest of his life. The last words of his narrative are thus 'I close my eyes. Unbidden, she comes' (p. 265). In this text, then, images can be more powerful than the objects they depict and do not necessarily liberate the individual subject.

¹⁸⁵ Brooks, *Realist Vision*, p. 118-19.

¹⁸⁶ Examples of this association include the black swan which sings a *liebested* and the numerous peep-show exhibits.

Desire Machines thus ends on an ambiguous note, for it is not clear if Desiderio gets what he wants or if his competing desires are mutually compatible. By murdering Albertina and destroying Hoffman's apparatus, he preserves his freedom to desire and to be a detached spectator. However, because his desire for her 'can never be objectified', he has in effect become a slave of his desire (p. 6). In terms of the visual, although he is now free from Hoffman's mirages, he is arguably more enslaved to one image in particular: that of Albertina. In Desiderio's introduction, he claims that, despite his heroic actions, Hoffman has 'gained a tactical victory' over him because he has been forced to apprehend 'an alternative world in which all the objects are emanations of a single desire', and of course his single desire is 'to see Albertina again' (p. 6). Desiderio's solution to the Albertina-effect thus leaves him 'consumed with [...] desire', a desire that is 'as impotent as it is desperate' (p. 6). He is unable to find a resolution (in terms of both his desire and his narrative) by the end of the text because he fails to subject woman-as-image to his controlling gaze and because woman is always more than just an image. Whilst the novel may be read as conservative because it seems to confirm the dominance of patriarchal structures of gender and the visual, Desiderio's failure reveals it as ideologically subversive because it exposes his solutions to the problem of Albertina as a sham.¹⁸⁷ Fetishising woman as image not only subjects women to violence but is also an unsatisfactory solution for the male subject, who feels threatened by the effect that woman has on the male gaze.

¹⁸⁷ This reading was, in part, inspired by Karen Hollinger's argument that the ideologically subversive film 'exposes in some way the problems involved in [the Oedipal drama] and reveals its easy resolution to be a sham and a falsity'. Karen Hollinger, "'The Look,' Narrativity, and the Female Spectator in *Vertigo*", *Journal of Film and Video*, 39.4 (1987), 18-27 (p. 20). Hollinger's analysis of the triangular relationship in *Vertigo* between Scottie, Gavin Elster and Madeleine/Judy also provides a way of reading the relationship between Desiderio, Hoffman and Albertina. Just as Madeleine ultimately eludes Scottie's desire to control her through the power of his gaze because Gavin fashions her narratively, so too Desiderio is seduced into a fetishisation of Albertina-as-image by Hoffman, who pulls the narrative strings behind the scenes.

Conclusion

[Y]ou are pointing to some very deep rhetorical tropes that cut across all of us. One of these has to do with our celebration of “alternatives” – our desire here to find other scopic regimes (is it going to be Dutch? baroque? Japanese?), to make them idyllic and to take all of the difficulty out of them.

– Norman Bryson in conversation with Jacqueline Rose and

Martin Jay¹

Getting Out of the Trap of Masculine Vision

One of the central arguments that runs through this thesis is that the writings of Woolf and Carter foreground the dominance, and explore the mechanisms of a masculine economy of vision. To a large extent, their works not only agree with but also anticipate the models of gender and the visual found in Mulvey and Berger. They too understand that within a patriarchal society, vision tends to be structured along masculine lines with the result that women are often positioned as passive visual objects for the active male gaze. However, as each of my chapters has demonstrated, both writers also explore alternatives to this masculine visual economy, be this in the form of other gendered gazes, new visual iconographies, or direct challenges to the male gaze itself. What I want to do here is to contrast the different level of emphasis each author, and each text, places on the power and reach of the masculine scopic regime, and consider the various alternatives that they create. I also want to think about some of the reasons why each text presents the gendered visual field differently and how recurrent visual devices, such as the mirror, play different roles across my primary texts.

As I showed in Chapter One, *Mrs Dalloway* presents a visual field which often tends to be dominated by the male gaze, as can be seen in examples such as that of Scrope Purvis looking at Clarissa as a bird, Richard Dalloway staring at Elizabeth as an idealised object of femininity, and Peter Walsh’s voyeuristic and fetishistic gaze as he stalks a woman through the London streets. Even Clarissa’s looking-glass appears to play a role within a masculine scopic economy, reinforcing patriarchal norms, for it makes her self-conscious about her appearance, turns her into a visible and homogeneous object, and reminds her of her role as party hostess.

¹ This comment by Norman Bryson occurs in a discussion of Jacqueline Rose’s ‘Sexuality and Vision: Some Questions’, in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), pp. 115-30 (p. 129).

In examples such as these, a woman's subjectivity is reduced to the status of an object and a stimulating sight for the male observer. However, as I also showed, the novel explores alternative angles of vision as well, such as the view from the omnibus which empowers the female gaze and mobility of Clarissa and Elizabeth, or the two windows which mirror one another and connect Clarissa with her elderly neighbour, creating a reciprocal female gaze. In these ways, *Mrs Dalloway* gestures beyond a hegemonic male scopic regime by representing women as active gazing subjects in their own right. Despite this, though, the text leaves these instances of female emancipation relatively undeveloped so that by the novel's conclusion they remain merely points of potential challenge to the dominance of masculine vision. Elizabeth's omnibus journey, for example, remains only a short-lived moment in which she imagines her future career from this commanding perspective; her mother's party calls on her to return home to the 'straight lines of personality', her independent journey a temporary deviation from a more traditional and patriarchal world.²

Despite this reservation, I have argued that *Mrs Dalloway* presents the gendered visual field as a site of contestation in which different gendered looks compete with one another. Even if the male gaze is prevalent in the text, other gazes are present and constitute a challenge to patriarchal visual structures. This contest of looks is reflected at a formal level in the frequent shifts in focalisation, as the text moves from one character's perspective to another's, and in Woolf's sentence structure and punctuation, which often reflect the dynamism of the city and its complex visual structures. Furthermore, the contrast that the text highlights between, for example, Clarissa's own perceptions and rich mental life and the way she appears to an external observer makes clear the reductive character of the male gaze because the latter reduces woman to a flat image devoid of interiority. Woolf's experiments with literary style, which constitute a challenge to nineteenth-century realism (such as the prevalence of a third-person omniscient narrator), thus work in tandem with the representation of multiple gendered perspectives, and further challenge the idea of a hegemonic male gaze. In terms of both form and content, then, the text stages a 'relay of looks' which suggests that the male gaze, though powerful, does not control the visual field completely.³

By contrast with *Mrs Dalloway*'s narrow focus on a single day in London, *Orlando* takes a longer historical and wider geographical perspective, and is thus able to plot a broader

² Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure', in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177-87 (p. 187).

³ Anne Friedberg, 'Les Flâneurs du Mal(l): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition', *PMLA*, 106.3 (1991), 419-31 (p. 422).

relay of looks. Orlando's fantastically-long life allows Woolf to emphasise some of the historical changes in the gendered field of vision, such as changing sartorial codes and restrictions on female mobility and visibility. Added to this is the equally fantastic sex-change, which makes clear the constructed character of gender because Orlando has to learn consciously how to perform her femininity as an adult. Using fantasy in these ways, then, *Orlando* is able to foreground more strongly the notion that both gender and the visual are constructed and open to change, rather than natural and unchanging. As a result, it pictures the masculine scopic regime as less dominant than the previous text, the historical sweep of the novel functioning in a similar way to Crary's genealogy of the birth of modern, subjective vision: the visual field is shown to be 'constantly shifting'.⁴

Orlando is also markedly different from *Mrs Dalloway* in its tone and approach to some of the dilemmas facing women within a patriarchal society. Instead of emphasising the difficulty of challenging patriarchal structures, *Orlando* delights in subverting masculine conventions of gender and the visual, using humour to great effect. The notion that the female body is an erotic sight, for example, is satirised by the near death of the sailor upon spying Orlando's temporarily exposed ankle. Indeed, the text explores the importance of clothing and sartorial codes for gender in many different ways: from Orlando's turn to cross-dressing in order to get around restrictions on women's mobility in the eighteenth century, to the imprisonment of the crinoline dress in the following century which curtails her mobility once again. The mutability of clothing and fashion also functions as an allegory of the performative character of sex and gender. Orlando's gender identity is as mutable as his/her clothing, and as a result of both the sex- and wardrobe-change the narrator-biographer becomes frustrated at keeping track of and making sense of Orlando's life. Indeed, the narrator's frustration is another source of humour in the text, for his pseudo-biography of the life of Orlando is frequently undercut by omissions and by acknowledgements of failure. Assuming that the narrator is male, masculine vision is thus subverted at the level of narrative too.

As I proposed at the end of Chapter Two, the line 'nothing could be seen whole' is an apt characterisation of the entire text, for the overall picture of Orlando is fragmentary, incomplete and ambiguous. This line is used to describe the impressionistic view from Orlando's speeding motor-car in the text's final section, which takes place in London in the 1920s. Like *Mrs Dalloway*, then, *Orlando* turns to the modern metropolis at the end in order

⁴ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990), p. 6.

once again to emphasise the shifting quality of the gendered visual field and put further pressure on the desire for visual mastery which characterises masculine vision. Furthermore, the text draws on one of the most influential of modern visual technologies, photography, in order to increase the ambiguity of Orlando's gender: the photographs of Vita Sackville-West posing as Orlando further complicate the image of her fictional androgyne by seemingly offering evidence of Orlando's appearance (playing on the authority vested in photographs) but in reality functioning as yet another parodic device which heightens the indeterminacy of the text's central figure. *Orlando* is, therefore, a thoroughly playful text and a serious fantasy which blurs boundaries – textual, generic, and corporeal. This in turn challenges the masculine visual economy because of its reliance on strict lines of demarcation, such as those separating male from female and the bearer of the gaze from the object of the gaze.

By contrast with *Orlando*'s playful and successful subversion of masculine vision, Carter's texts suggest that the masculine scopic regime is much more difficult to escape because of the greater role that mass-produced images play in society in the 1970s, and, more crucially, because such images tend to reinscribe patriarchal norms of gender and the visual. As I argued in Chapter Three, *The Passion of New Eve* foregrounds the way in which Hollywood cinema, in particular, has colonised the collective imagination with a highly codified masculine visual economy. Whilst Woolf's interest in film lay in what she perceived to be its potential for creating new ways of seeing and a new visual logic, inspired by her experience of early twentieth-century avant-garde film, Carter's focus lies more with Hollywood's establishment of a mainstream visual language that positions women as objects of the male gaze – a visual language which had dominated cinema for many decades by the 1970s. Hollywood's classic screen heroines and *femme fatales* became influential models of femininity in the 1930s and 40s, consumed by large audiences in their eagerness for the silver screen's seductive visions. As I showed, *New Eve* suggests that Hollywood's visual economy may even reach beyond cinematic spectatorship, as Evelyn often looks at real women outside of the movie theatre as if they were screen icons or film characters – Leilah as *femme fatale*, for example. Adapting Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal, I argued that Evelyn's experience of reality is therefore hyper-reel. *New Eve* foregrounds not only the patriarchal workings of mainstream cinema, but also its reach beyond the cinema theatre and thus the strengthening of a more general masculine scopic regime.

Another significant difference between Woolf and Carter can be found in their representations of the construction and maintenance of gender. Whilst *Mrs Dalloway* explores some of the difficulties for women in negotiating both what their femininity looks like and their

ability to be bearers as well as objects of the gaze, Carter's fiction tends to unearth and even magnify the violence involved in such processes. The clearest example of this contrast can be seen in Woolf and Carter's markedly different representations of sex-change in *Orlando* and *New Eve* respectively. Whilst Orlando's metamorphosis from man to woman is represented as painless and humorous, Evelyn's surgical transformation is represented as a violent bodily act which then throws his sense of self into confusion as well. Added to this is the fact that, again unlike Orlando, Eve is subjected to extreme physical and mental abuse after being turned into a woman, which she refers to as her 'apprenticeship in womanhood'.⁵ Carter thus emphasises the violence of gendering in a way which is either implicit or entirely absent in Woolf's texts.

New Eve not only draws attention to the violence at the heart of gender identity, but also develops the idea of gender as a masquerade, implicit in Woolf's *Orlando*. Through the figures of Tristessa and Eve/lyn, *New Eve* makes explicit the notion that femininity (or masculinity for that matter) is entirely constructed and performed, much like Riviere argued in her essay 'Womanliness as a Masquerade'. However, this notion of gender as masquerade becomes nuanced in the representation of Tristessa's performance of suffering femininity because the cinematic images offer an idealised and essentialised picture of Woman as such. The cinematic mediation of gender thus creates a much more insidious problem for women living in a late-twentieth century patriarchal society because it seduces the observer with the notion that femininity is not just another mask behind which lies the truth of woman, but that woman is essentially a mask, a performance. That Tristessa turns out to be a man in drag also suggests that the perfect woman is an image projected by a man and for a male spectator. The problem *New Eve* thus dramatizes is how to get beyond masculine and misogynist images of femininity when such images have colonised the collective imagination. It is only by becoming a woman, or trying to become one, that Evelyn is able to see and appreciate this problematic, for only then does he see the constructed character of gender and the violence involved. For Carter, then, the problem of the gendered visual field for women living in a patriarchal society is not just that they must negotiate their visibility and gain a right to look; they must also find a way of negotiating a visual culture in which femininity is a double masquerade that appears always to trap them within a masculine economy.

Despite the dominance of a masculine cinematic economy, *New Eve* does gesture at alternative ways of looking and eventually leaves behind the visual economy of Hollywood cinema altogether. There are hints of a sympathetic gaze throughout the text which substitutes

⁵ Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (London: Virago, 1982), p. 107.

identification for voyeurism and fetishism, so that Eve/lyn is able to see and to appreciate the violence behind the idealised images of femininity projected on the film screen. By the end of the text, Eve/lyn also appears to have exorcised his/her obsession with film and its violent male gaze, and turns to the body as a new source of meaning and experience. Like *Mrs Dalloway*, though, *New Eve* appears merely to gesture beyond the violence of a masculine scopic regime with the majority of the text focused squarely on the workings of masculine visual structures.

From an analysis of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, my final chapter proposed that a broader range of visual devices does not necessarily open up the gendered visual field in ways conducive to women's emancipation. Unlike *Mrs Dalloway* and *Orlando*, which both suggest that new spaces and perspectives, such as the omnibus and the motor-car, empower the female gaze and open up the gendered visual field, the plethora of optical devices in *Desire Machines*, such as the kaleidoscope, phantasmagoria and the stereoscope, are shown to reinscribe patriarchal norms of gender and ways of looking. Each device and each iconography that appears in this text produces or reproduces misogynist images of women rather than offering counter-perspectives to the male gaze. The variety and prevalence of visual images and devices throughout the text reflects the visual culture of the late-twentieth century, which Guy Debord famously referred to as a 'society of the spectacle'. In such a society, images mediate all relations and thus subjects find themselves having constantly to negotiate the various aspects of their identity in terms of visibility. The visual field that appears in *Desire Machines* is overwhelmingly masculine and therefore all of the female characters have the appearance of flat images constructed for the male spectator. On a couple of occasions, however, visual devices in fact return the male gaze to the text's protagonist, causing him momentary anxiety. Desiderio's gaze is on one occasion reflected back to him in a pair of eyes which have a mirror-quality to them, producing a dizzying *mise-en-abyme* effect that unsettles his sense of self and visual mastery. To challenge the 'eye' of the observer is therefore to threaten the mastery of the 'I'. The text does suggest, therefore, that visual devices could play different roles, challenging as well as propping up a masculine scopic economy.

Chapter Four also argued that new technological devices and iconographies may hold out the promise of change but ultimately fail to bring this about. Hoffman's desire machines promise, like Surrealism did, to liberate the imagination and so, by extension, social relations. However, just as Carter ultimately abandoned her aesthetic and political commitment to Surrealism due to its failure to treat women as equals within its supposedly revolutionary ethos, so the desire machines are shown by the end of the text as reinscribing patriarchal and misogynistic images of women despite Hoffman's grand claims. *Desire Machines* thus

suggests that transformation of the gendered visual field will not necessarily come either from technological advancement or from new aesthetic movements. Faith in alternative scopic regimes may turn out to be naïve and idealistic, leading to eventual disappointment. Whilst the new technologies of urban transport are linked with female empowerment in Woolf's texts, the futuristic desire machines disempower women by producing only misogynistic images of femininity. Like the cinema in *New Eve*, new visual technologies in *Desire Machines* are presented in a sceptical light, for although they transform the gendered visual field in significant ways – making the gaze mobile and virtual – they fail to transform patriarchal institutions in meaningful ways.

I concluded my final chapter by exploring the anxiety that the female gaze and images of woman generate in the male spectator, noting that Desiderio ultimately rids the world of Hoffman's mirages and murders Albertina because of the troubling effect she has on him. The association of female vision with male anxiety is a theme that runs throughout this thesis, but which is particularly pronounced in the chapters on Carter. In *New Eve*, Zero claims that it was Tristessa's gaze that made him impotent, whilst in *Desire Machines* Desiderio feels as if his identity is under threat when Albertina looks directly at him. Like the Medusa's gaze, the woman's look continues to be associated with male anxiety and disempowerment. Even Peter Walsh's fantasy in *Mrs Dalloway* seems to depend upon the anonymous woman not returning his voyeuristic gaze as he stalks her from behind through the city streets. When she casts a glance in his direction, this seems to signal the end of his voyeuristic adventure. Despite the enormous transformations affecting both gender and visibility from the 1920s to the 1970s, the female gaze is still represented as troubling masculine identity and visual mastery.

In my exploration of representations of the gendered visual field in writings by Woolf and Carter, I have argued that what comes across most clearly is a sense of the difficulty of finding legitimate alternatives to a masculine scopic economy. All of the texts analysed in this thesis present the relationship between gender and the visual as an ongoing negotiation, and the gendered visual field as a site of contestation. Despite the invention of new optical devices, perspectives and iconographies, the writings of Woolf and Carter ultimately show that the gendered field of vision remains a continually shifting site but one in which masculine norms of gendered subjectivity and ways of looking continue to exert a powerful influence on everyday life.

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