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The Artifice that Endures the Burden of the Past¹: Analysing Memory in Angela Carter's

Fictional Works

"It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition that it must be lived forwards" – Soren Kierkegaard, *The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard*

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyse the treatment and function of memory in Angela Carter's early short fiction "A Very Great Lady and her Son at Home" and "A Souvenir of Japan" – ostensibly autobiographical works – before progressing on to a rhetorical employment of memory in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and "The Bloody Chamber". By moving from a more conspicuously defined model of memory to a more indeterminate one, this essay works towards finding a continuum within Carter's general line of writing which situates destabilisation and demystification at its nexus. It can be argued that the immaterial and imaginal plane of the mind works with Carter's cause – of deconstructing that which have become ingrained in the narratives we tell. "The opposition between past and present [on which the] activit[ies] of memory and history is founded on" provides an

¹ "He was still too young to know that the heart's memory eliminates the bad and magnifies the good, and that thanks to this artifice we manage to endure the burden of the past."
Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *Love in the Time of Cholera*. New York: Vintage International, 2007. Print.

adequately confrontational and cogitative space for Angela Carter to write within (Le Goff xii). Most criticism of Angela Carter's writing begins by studying Carter's works from their written words. This essay hopes to prove that memory is integral to Carter's cause and that her texts show her subtle but significant involvement with the process of memory. By analysing memory in Carter's works this paper seeks to inspect the mental process that comes before writing. If Carter is concerned with re-writing socio-cultural myths, then this essay is interested in the re-visioning which compels a re-writing of those myths.

In the process of writing her semi-autobiographical short stories, Carter interlaces both the personal and the collective, encouraging the self-reflexive looking into both one's self and one's personal and cultural development. Her premise in re-writing of fairy tales however, is to further distance the patterns of recognition rather than re-employ them. For Carter then, "[t]he whole miracle of recognition, is to coat with presence the otherness of that which is over and gone. In this, memory is re-presentation, in the twofold sense of re-turning back, anew" (Ricoeur 39). For Carter, her writing of memory invokes the notion of memory as representation. Peter Middleton's and Tim Wood's *Literatures of Memory* asseverates that "not only is the text a form of memory [but] memories are also textual" especially in light of poststructuralist² notions of language and its influence on thought (6). The very formation of memory is considered to be contingent on the dictates of language and subsequently, on more overt narrative strategies, when it is to be inscribed on paper. Carter, too, employs memory as text, using history and the past "as no more than debris to be picked over and eclectically assembled according to the whim of the individual" and an analysis of

² Peter Middleton and Tim Wood draw their assertion from Jacques Derrida who states that "writing actually 'founds memory'; it is not, as it deceptively appears, simply a 'supplement' to it" (Derrida qtd. in Middleton and Wood 6).
Middleton, Peter, and Tim Woods. *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. Print.

memory in her texts provides an introduction to the larger issues of fiction, reality, identity and notion of self which always remain central to Carter's concerns (Gamble 8).

2. Overview

Modern science and medicine have developed definitive theories of the function of memory and its relation to the biological hardware of the brain. These theories mean that amnesia is prognosticated as a failure to remember. Contemporary literary and philosophical studies on the other hand, have re-examined scientific conceptions of memory, rendering the photographic nature of the brain as suspect. This founding doubt of the concrete corporeality of memory has allowed for more plural views of memory to be adopted. This acknowledgement of plural models of memory allows the inevitability of forgetting to be included in memory, as an intrinsic quality of memory itself. This paper seeks to study contemporary models of memory as representation, as opposed to earlier models of memory as historical reality, in the realm of Angela Carter's writing and to show how plural conceptions of memory then allow us to re-think the stories we tell to and of ourselves.

In speaking of memory as representation, inevitable comparisons are made between memory and storytelling – itself a representative form. The relationship between memory and storytelling is profoundly intertwined, a notion supported by the legend that the Greek goddess Mnemosyne is the mother of all other Muses. This figuration of memory as Mnemosyne – as the faculty which begets all other artistic forms like history and poetry – is emphatically a “*story* [that] places memory at the beginning, as the matrix of invention of all human arts” (Radstone and Schwarz 15; emphasis added). Drawing from the example of the Ancient Greek system of learning, Edward S. Casey proposes that memory shares its origins with the birth of language itself³. Casey notes that “[s]torytelling is itself a special form of recounting, but one that is not confined to the relating of actual incidents [and that] [s]tories

³ Citing Plato, Edward Casey contends that “[m]emory was a thematic even an obsessive, concern of the early Greeks. The very survival of the rich oral culture of the Archaic Period, depended on concerted, disciplined remembering: ‘Language and thought for the early Greeks grew out of memory’” (*Remembering* 106). Casey, Edward S. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. Print.

bear not only on the real but on the imaginary, which they help to create” (*Remembering* 106). Mark Robson’s analysis of Jacques Derrida’s memory makes plain the relationship between memory and writing urging that “[t]he image of the object to be remembered becomes a form of script, perhaps even a hieroglyph, which is allocated a place in a collocation of backgrounds” (Robson 16). Besides this conspicuous connection between memory and writing, all narratives are based on the need to ‘recount’, regardless of whether the narrative itself is born out of a need to ‘remember’. The narrative subject therefore, often considers the legitimacy of his memories and more importantly, the mode through which he can translate the mental images of his memory into words. A notion of memory as and in fiction, which differs from the biological and medical precepts of remembering and forgetting, is presented in Walter Benjamin’s depiction of his physical and psychical meandering through the streets of Berlin in *Reflections*. Benjamin’s works remain central to any discussion “within philosophy, literary criticism, art history or cultural studies” and his meditation on memory enables memory to be introduced in this paper not only as a biological faculty but also a faculty that remains significant to cultural and artistic discourses (Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin* 1). The artist, “for whose sake [memory] has been unfurled and dissected”, and for whom “remembrance advances from small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal” considers a more literary and imaginative model of memory that is relevant to this essay in two ways (Benjamin, *Reflections* 6). By likening memory to a fan, Benjamin contemplates that firstly, memory unfolds at the call of its keeper and secondly, that traversing the hallways of one’s own memory allows one to access both his own world and that of a greater imaginative realm. Benjamin also invokes the idea of memory as a plane which “preserves in [one] the imprint of the collision between a larger collective and [oneself]” (*Reflections* 14). Benjamin’s allusion of memory as a dialectic between the perceived and the imagined, and the personal and the culturally collective provides an apt

introduction to a literary and philosophical model of memory. It is also pertinent to an analysis of memory in Angela Carter's works, many of which exhibit, to a greater extent, Carter's adherence to and divergence from this paper's primary model and assessment of memory.

Within the field of memory studies, various types of memory are often taken into consideration. This paper, however, will focus only on episodic memory – responsible for recollecting the unique experiences of our past. Within episodic memory, only Carter's engagement with voluntary memory will be addressed as this paradigm is primarily of the storyteller's interest. In all of Carter's work to be analysed by this paper, a conscious desire to remember, and thereby write, is explicated. Three of the four tales involve a first person narrator creating a fictive reality that is exclusive to the narrator's own subjectivities. In the fairy tale "The Bloody Chamber", however, memory is more implicitly employed by the narrator and I will argue that Carter's de-construction of the fairy tale has its foundation in the familiarity of mental patterns – referred to as schemas in psychology. These schemas are also analogous to what Carter refers to as 'myths' – patterns of familiar images that are instated by a cultural conditioning. Carter herself refers to these memories and cultural myths as "ideas, images, stories that we tend to take on trust without thinking what they really mean" (Katsavos 12). In addition to the dissection of voluntary episodic memory, the modes of personal and collective memory also altercate in Carter, particularly in "The Bloody Chamber". The impression that social and historical forces make on the individual are in constant flux and dialogue with one another reinforcing the fact that "no one ever remembers alone" (Ricoeur qtd. in Whitehead 129). More specifically, the instruments of memory involve words incorporated from one's social environment⁴ and "individuals always rely on

⁴ Myrian Sepulveda Santos refers to sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in claiming that "the functioning of individual memory require[s] instruments such as words and ideas, which individuals d[o] not invent by themselves, but rather [borrow] from their milieu" (165).

other people's memories to confirm their own recollections and for them to endure over time" (Santos 165). The act of narration thereby, calls upon a repository of a specific memory and a specific past, but in Carter's fiction the absolute accuracy and entirety of a reconstructed past is questioned.

Adopting Angela Carter's "belie[f] in a continuum" across the multitude of her works, this analysis attempts to demarcate this progression beginning with "A Very, Very Great Lady and her Son at Home" where the eponymous son of the protagonist dispels the workings of memory as absolute and textually apprehensible (Katsavos 15). The logic of memory is transformed as not-absolute and Angela Carter's treatment of memory in "A Very, Very Great Lady and her Son at Home" is positioned as the start of Carter's foray into what this paper deems to be a transformative model of memory – one that considers memory as oriented by change. The Great Lady's attempt to pass down memory as a traditionally stable text is challenged by her son's misapplication of her narrative. In "A Souvenir of Japan", Carter delves deeper into autobiographical memory and the memory of place as unique and stable expressions of the self through the narrator's recollection of her experience in Japan. The textuality of memory introduced in "A Very, Very Great Lady and her Son at Home" is here transformed into a creation that constantly shuttles through the self and the other as the narrator endeavours to articulate it as the Great Lady does. Where memory is marked by change, as Richard Terdiman suggests, the overturning of the Great Lady's ownership of her memory is furthered by the interconnection of stability and the self with disparity and the other in "A Souvenir of Japan".

The transformative effects of dislocation and entry into a foreign space in the two stories described are further diverged in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

where memory meets its ineluctable opponent – imagination. Memory and Imagination are given allegorical presence in the novel in the form of Desiderio (as sent out by the minister) and Doctor Hoffman, although Carter eventually contends with the possibility of both faculties being as similar as they are disparate. Such externalisation of memory seen in both “A Souvenir of Japan” and *Doctor Hoffman* is eventually handled in “The Bloody Chamber” where personal memory is juxtaposed with cultural memory that is posed specifically in the form of myth and fairy tale. The imaginative faculty first developed in Doctor Hoffman is used in the “Bloody Chamber” to re-imagine, what Carter deigns to be, the restrictive pattern of cultural memory. It can be contended that Carter works out her demythologising project throughout the course of the fairy tale in her re-writing of “Bluebeard” as an informed recollection dictated by a heroine wisened by her experience. “The Bloody Chamber” here, negates the convention of a fairy tale, whose activity progresses at the expense of its innocent and oblivious heroine.

2.1 Angela Carter’s Background and Work

“I don’t on the whole remember my own dreams, but I quite often use the formal structure of my dreams” – “Angela Carter’s Narrative Chiasmus”, Scott Dimovitz

Writing for Carter, is a markedly novel expression and Carter’s historically embedded settings and concepts are often meant to reinstate the comfort and familiarity of her materialist world. But the maintenance of imaginative and surrealist themes in her works also serves to challenge the reader’s careless attachment to inherited perspectives. Harriet Gilbert notes that the reader’s problem in reading Carter is also the critic’s when she asserts that “the problem facing anyone who attempts to assess Carter’s oeuvre is that she has usually got there first” (qtd. Gamble 4 – 5). Sarah Gamble also propounds that “Angela Carter’s career as a whole can be viewed as an extended exercise in conscious redefinition”

adding that Carter redefines not only her own cultural environment but also her own response to it⁵. Gamble's description of Carter's methodology underscores the fact that Carter, in working to demystify and deconstruct rather than reconstruct and reinstate, holds her literature in dialogue with what is perceived and what she perceives, taking care to give neither precedence at the expense of the other. Although the words mythic, surrealist and imaginative are primarily used to define her writing, Carter was also cautionary about the mythic realm, "reject[ing] out of hand attempts by interviewers and critics alike to situate her work in mythic realm, identifying myth with the rhetoric of oppression" (Gass 7). One's individual mind is constantly being formed relative to one's culturally formulated identity. It is evident that Carter is very much a materialist, as her works understand the socially constructed bases of individual thought and articulation, but for her the material was not a limiting base for inspiration. In seeking transcendence from the materially and historically self-enclosed and hence isolated self, Carter's work often effectuates the transference of self to the other, "cultivating the viewpoint of an alien in order to defamiliarize the landscape of habit" (Sage 2). The perspective of alterity afforded by the imagination proves all cultural truisms as relative. Carter maintains her indeterminate position with writing that shows a yearning to transcend material reality, yet is aware of the categories and definitions which continue to keep the mind in shackles.

With respect to the analysis of contemporary models of memory, Carter problematizes the distinction between history/reality and fiction; memory is integral to her cause and her writing often contains an attempt to either textually or meta-textually look back towards childhood and the impressions of the past. History is, for Carter and this essay, the tangible result of identifying the collectiveness of a community's cultural memory as its past. Linda

⁵ For Sarah Gamble, "Angela Carter's career as a whole can be viewed as an extended exercise in conscious redefinition, not only of her own cultural environment, but also of her own response to it" (4 – 5). Gamble, Sarah. *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

Hutcheon's composition of the term 'historiographic metafiction' has been used by Sarah Gamble to explain Carter's work. Gamble theorises that the term is useful in its "assert[ion] that that the world is resolutely fictive and yet undeniably historical" (Gamble 5). Hutcheon's phrase is perhaps more applicable in this essay in its suggestion that "both history and fiction are themselves historical terms" and in its interrogation of the very possibility of establishing a reconciliatory and dialectical knowledge of history⁶ (McKeon 830). Richard Terdiman's self-reflexive model of memory can be most aptly used to define memory in Carter's writing. Terdiman's model of memory is analogous to Carter's fictional realm in its dualistic position – in opposing history and fiction and in demarcating truth and construction. There is at once, reliance on the past but no necessity of justification from the knowledge of the past⁷ and memory holds its own as a valid construction.

2.2 Richard Terdiman's Memory and Angela Carter

Abdelmajid Hannoum, in his article "Paul Ricoeur on Memory", and influenced by Ricoeur, advocates the position that, as a process of envisioning, "memory is not a thing, it is not an object, it is an act and an action" (Hannoum 125). The proposition that memory is an action and an event that traces exertion, foregrounds the model of memory that Terdiman espouses. Memory according to Richard Terdiman, is engendered from its transformation – starting as an artefact of the past and coming to fruition as a dynamic of the present. "The

⁶ Linda Hutcheon's essay "Historiographic Metafiction" in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* notes that historiographic metafiction "keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in so doing problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction" (831).

McKeon, Michael, ed. *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Print.

⁷ "Unlike knowledge, memory doesn't entail justification (however construed). It is not necessary for propositional memory that the proposition be justifiably believed when it was originally acquired or that it be justifiably believed when it is recalled. Not only can you remember something you didn't justifiably believe in the past but also you may acquire in the meantime some convincing yet misleading evidence that destroys the epistemic status of the once-genuine justified belief that one still remembers. What passes into memory may be merely a representation or belief, not knowledge" (Bernecker 62).

Bernecker, Sven. "Précis of Memory: A Philosophical Study." *Philosophical Studies* 153.1 (2011): 61-64, *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 7 Sept. 2012.

purpose of conserving – of remembering – what is overcome in the process of the dialectic is to prevent either of [memory's] terms from being transformed into the only term” (Terdiman 61). Memory is prevented from becoming absolute by its dialectic form which prevents the remembered from conforming to either the fictionally structured ‘text’ of the present or the ‘referent’ of the past⁸. Terdiman reasons that the presentness of memory instates it as representation rather than a lucid reproduction – “[b]ecause our reality exists only in the present, we are obliged to represent our experiences” (59). What is more interesting for Terdiman is “the more fundamental process by which – that which is to be conserved is itself given being”; “th[is] moment of representation by which outward reality becomes figurable” is also arguably more pertinent to Carter’s narrative project of embodying lived experiences in her texts (59; 59).

Richard Terdiman’s contemporary model of memory is adapted from the Aristotelian notion of the self-reflexivity of memory – the latter itself is a modification of earlier conceptions of memory by thinkers like Plato, who proposed that the faculty of human memory could be envisioned as a ‘wax tablet’ which could potentially capture entirely and accurately, the body’s experiences. Terdiman does not neglect this potential for memory to capture but rather, suggests that memory is more important to a writer and artist as a faculty that that permits and preserves the quality of change. Two main qualities can be adapted from Richard Terdiman’s approach to memory – that memory is “a paradigm [where] nothing happened by itself[,] everything is made, and making is as endless as the flow of time itself” and that memory as a “place of struggle” does not value any perceived progression or development of consciousness; instead, it thrives on alterity and change (61; 67).

⁸ Richard Terdiman maintains that the dialectic of the figuration of memory prevents “[a]ny slippage into self-identity produces one of two polar hypostatizations: either of the present, of the “text” (in an abstracting and self-referential idealism), or of the past, of the “referent” (in a detached and inert materialism)” (61).
Terdiman, Richard. *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.

Memory's contingency and instability means that writing about or from memory is an intricate task. Writing then, may not be adequately able to circumscribe memory. Richard Terdiman references Jack Goody's *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* to note that writing does not simply manifest what is already present⁹, and therefore, "the form produced in the text is inevitably new" (59). Terdiman's reading of memory is particularly significant to this study of Angela Carter's writing as Terdiman presents a direct correlation between memory and its preservation of alterity, change and difference as the very foundation of demystification and deconstruction. "Such demystification is fundamentally the task of remembering" is the gist of Terdiman's exposition in *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (69). This rupture and change that memory affords expression of, is also "[t]he content of Angela Carter's fiction, too, [as it] tends to be similarly predicated on tension, [which] she consistently uses to celebrate borderline states and conditions of being" (Gamble 6). Lorna Sage also suggests that Carter's inclination to write historically stems from the fact that "[f]or Carter, talking about the self as socially determined is liberating; it means that you are part of history, [and more consequentially], caught up in the change" (Sage 44; brackets added). What is essential to Carter's writing is change and the following assessments of her four stories will attempt to present the ways in which the concept of memory is transformative for Carter and to also analyse both the characters' and Carter's responses to the elusory impressions of memory.

⁹ "[Jack Goody] makes the point that when you 'write something down', you do not simply codify what is already there" (Terdiman 59).
Terdiman, Richard. *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.

3. Considering Memory in Carter's Early Work: Conflicting Narratives of Memory in "A Very, Very Great Lady at Home"

"A Very, Very Great Lady and her Son at Home" presents a vignette of a mother's story as told to her young son. The story is emphatically, that of the lady's recount of her past and she uses memory to construct herself as an exemplary figure for (and an authoritarian one to) her son. The title of the tale posits the lady to be a woman of high repute and status. Her tale and her moral adage however, eventually inform the reader of the title's incongruence with its tale. The result is nominally facetious although it provides us with an inkling of the difference between appearance and actuality especially with regards to memory – as a representation of the past that is coded as the past itself.

What the Great Lady terms as a 'memory' of the 'past' is truly her re-writing of the past. The tale struggles to retain a coherent concept of the Lady's past, and arguably of the concept of recollection itself, and ultimately, her narrative consistently undermines the validity of remembering. The tale is replete with attempts and eventual failures of remembering accurately – the Great Lady remarks that "one forgets, one forgets" and her father fails to remember the names of his children keeping instead, "a list of all [their] names (together with brief descriptive notes) sewn to the inside of his black greasy hat" (Carter, "A Very, Very Great Lady" 13). It then comes to figure that the narrative that she constructs is falsely cloaked as the past and her conversation with her son becomes representative of a mental re-visioning that unfolds. The Great Lady's implicit disjunction from her past and from the memory of her family is later carried out by her son, who explicitly wrenches himself away from her by overturning her narrative and applying it to her.

The Great Lady wishes to impart a lesson to her son. Perhaps, more accurately though, she wishes to impart the "brutal, yet withal, vital wisdom" of her own mother to him

(Carter, “A Very, Very Great Lady” 12). Her lecture is based on logic – etymologically, on the very words of her mother’s maxim: “THE BOWELS ARE GREAT LEVELLERS” – and it is this logic that is disobeyed by her son and, appropriating Richard Terdiman, disobeyed by the very course of her narrative as a recollection itself. Terdiman perceives “the crystalline abstraction of logic” to be the very antithesis of memory (60). Terdiman’s theory makes clear the dissonance between the attempts made to remember and their eventual failures. If “[t]he certainty of the postulates of logic is paid for at the cost of their disconnection from the mode in which our lives are lived”, then it can also be proposed that, in the Great Lady’s tale, logic is pursued at the expense of memory (Terdiman 60).

The Great Lady’s recollection attempts to institute the logic of her mother’s “key of the world” through the reification of her constant forgetting¹⁰ (Carter, “A Very, Very Great Lady” 12). While memory stands in direct opposition to the logic the Great Lady strives to promulgate, her very invocation of memory opens the possibility of maintaining the dialectic of past and present, and occurrence and its reversibility for her son. French historian Jacques Le Goff maintains that the “past/present opposition is essential to the acquisition of a consciousness of time” (Le Goff xx). The “understanding [of] time” that an invocation of memory implicates, enables a child to “[free] himself from the present”¹¹ and this is exactly what young Jason does when he overturns her narrative and employs its intended use disparagingly on herself (Le Goff xx). The final act is therefore the child’s, and ultimately, the narrative’s condemnation of and triumph over a regressing time and the reification of

¹⁰ Citing Theodor W. Adorno, Richard Terdiman makes an association between reification and forgetting, decreeing that “[a]ll reification is forgetting” (Terdiman 65). Terdiman goes on to expound that any failure to remember is to conversely lose “the crucial tension between the [memory] dialectic’s paired dynamics of conservation and overcoming” (65).
Terdiman, Richard. *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.

¹¹ Le Goff in turn, adapts his depiction of the child’s recognition of memory and time from psychologist Jean Piaget’s socio-psychological model of a child’s cognitive development.
Le Goff, Jacques. *History and Memory*. Trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Print.

logic – both of which the Great Lady represents. In light of this analysis, the way in which she “crash[es] forward onto the carpet, and [lies] there, a tree felled, motionless” is particularly poignant in what is conceivably the Great Lady’s final reification (Carter, “A Very, Very Great Lady” 17).

Memory’s defiance of reification can also be seen in figuring the concept of memory as representation. The Great Lady occupies the position as storyteller in the tale, and she usurps the position of writer in dictating the words of her text. Her memory of the past and her tale are indubitably intertwined but the suggestion that memory may function linguistically as the “fundamental mnemonic act to be the ‘conduct of the story’”¹² is undermined by its avoidance of circumscription – and reification by language (Janet qtd. in Le Goff 53). If memory is the source of language, it is unreliable – a notion that the Great Lady accedes to as “she pause[s] for a moment’s recollection” as if her narrative depended on the details of her memory, then “resume[s] her narrative” without any perturbation of having had forgotten (Carter, “A Very, Very Great Lady” 13). In this paper’s reading of memory in Angela Carter – as a dialectic informed by transformation, memory cannot be affixed as a language. However, memory as the source of a myth, a tale and an unequivocal construction, is reliable.

Forgetting is then as significant to the storyteller as remembering is. It serves as a reminder that “[r]emembering is never real, in the sense of making present again the former present of the past” (Currie 64). Forgetting as a reification and differentiation from memory

¹² Jacques Le Goff quotes Pierre Janet’s *L’evolution de la memoire et la notion du temps* to define memory as a social function and that in its “it is the communication of information from one person to another in the absence of the actual event or object concerned; we encounter “language as a product of society”” (Janet qtd. in Goff 53)

Le Goff, Jacques. *History and Memory*. Trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Print.

is eventually overcome by being¹³ - making itself present by becoming the continuation of the narrative. In being forgotten, memory cannot be brought back as it was¹⁴ and has to be acknowledged as narrative, an inexact representation.

¹³ Mark Currie's *About Time – Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* deliberates that the transformation of the present that occurs in remembering is absent in the realisation that one has forgotten, which conversely is negatively identified by inertia and inexactitude – “by becoming what it was not” (Currie 64).

Currie, Mark. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. Print.

¹⁴ Currie substantiates his point above by stating that “[t]o remember it as forgetting is to fail to remember it as it was, since it only becomes forgetting after [one has] remembered [it]” (Currie 64).

Currie, Mark. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. Print.

4. Memory of Place: Preserving the Alterity of Memory in “A Souvenir of Japan”

Unlike the Great Lady’s narration of a distinctly introspective familial history in “A Very, Very Great Lady and her Son at Home”, the memory of place in “A Souvenir of Japan” is derived eminently from the outside. Despite the apparent differences in both texts, “A Souvenir of Japan” is perhaps more autobiographical in nature and Carter exhibits the same contention with memory as a construction as she does in the former text. In “A Souvenir of Japan” though, the differences that incite the workings of memory become more discernible as Carter’s narrator re-figures her impression of a different country, and purportedly, of a different person as well. The vacillation that occurs within the narrator’s revelation of her experiences in Japan marks memory more pronouncedly as a psychical faculty that warrants a re-visioning.

Carter’s narrator begins her recollection from a place of historical and cultural dissimilarity and what is initially noted as simply a tourist’s experience of objective onlooking, becomes a more intimate participation for her, especially with respect to her relationship with Taro. Rather than simply summoning the memory of her specific and hence, wholly accessible, past like the Great Lady does, Carter’s narrator in “A Souvenir of Japan” displaces herself and the perspectives intrinsic to her in order to own the memories inspired from displacement. What the narrator seeks from her memory of Japan is a ‘souvenir’ – definitively and etymologically, of an object that brings to mind¹⁵ fragments of the past. The narrator’s souvenir is the land of Japan itself as “[t]he site [which] not only gives access to the past; [but which] also confers a sense of authenticity to the memorial through its material authority, [thereby giving] the past a tangible presence” (Rosenberg 131). Besides being repositories of new experiences, places are also ambiguously different in the new way of

¹⁵ The word *souvenir* has its etymological roots in the Latin *subvenire* meaning “to come to mind” “Souvenir”. *Etymonline.com*. Online Etymology Dictionary, 2012. Web. 5 October 2012.

living they allow us access to. A new locality therefore, provides one with a new “‘way of seeing’, a set of assumptions, attachments and connections that we employ to create meaning in the world” (Cresswell qtd. in Demo and Vivian 57). To produce a souvenir of another land, and to prove that one has “be[en] there at all, [requires] mediat[ion] through a commentary that would serve to reveal truth of the experience” (Demo and Vivian 55). Therefore, Carter, through her narrator, had to displace herself from the familiar and the comfortable and discard a prior ‘way of seeing’. In essence, Carter’s narrator had to adopt a different lens which would depict memory as transfigurable and capable of being possessed. To invoke Richard Terdiman again, the “representation as remembrance foregrounds the fact that experience *is* always *other* than it *was*: inevitably and constitutively historical” (Terdiman 70). Carter’s own explication of her experiences in Japan, on the other hand, not only acknowledges the explicit otherness of a specific historical (and in Carter’s case, cultural) past, but also supplements Terdiman’s theory by questioning the notion of a self as definite. Memory in “A Souvenir of Japan” is transfigurable and transformative in its re-figuring of the impressions of place which effectively enables and is enabled by the instatement of her ‘self’ as ‘other’.

Richard Terdiman makes an association between memory and exchange, stating their initial relation to ‘facts’ but later noting the “epochal reconfiguration” they have eventually undergone (Terdiman 11). He elucidates that just as “[g]oods move and are transformed in their circulation[,] memories are [also] displaced and transformed with the passage of time or in the course of an increasingly dense and highly organized process of information exchange” (Terdiman 11). Terdiman’s identification of memory as a process of exchange augments his overarching perception of memory as transformative and fostered by change. In her function as Carter’s mouthpiece, the narrator finds herself straddling the position of a knowing and understanding subject, and a spectator who cannot access the delicate subtleties of Japanese

culture. It can be advanced that the imperviousness that seeps into the narrator's transcription of her time in Japan evidences the unknowability of the other that can be read as a manifestation of the unknowability of the self. The narrator looks into Japanese culture, but she also attempts to participate in it – arguably through her relationship with Taro. These two interchanging positions relativise her self as both self and other and it is this dynamic of conflict and dependence that founds her entire narrativisation of memory in “A Souvenir of Japan”.

The narrator's recollections contain multiple references to darkness, shadows and reflections all of which insidiously vitiate a complete characterisation of the Japanese culture. She introduces her anecdote by with a description of the Japanese landscape, where “[t]he “dark water [which] multiplies the reflections” depicts instead, the murkiness of depth and the inability of the narrator to access unmediated representations (without the aid of self-reflection) (Carter, “A Souvenir” 31). The narrator reads the Japanese's view of her as that of contempt – “the entire street politely disapproved of me” but the use of the moderating adverb “politely” suggests an ambivalence in her understanding of others' opinions of her (Carter, “A Souvenir” 33). Perhaps the only lady who remains rigid and constant enough to be read is the old lady who is deposited daily outside the corner shop as one who remains unmoving like “a somnolent plant life” (Carter, “A Souvenir” 33). She however, defies reading, keeping her eyes abstruse “always with the same, vague, disinterested wonder, like that of an Eskimo watching a train” (Carter, “A Souvenir” 33).

Conversely, it is linguistic signifiers which provide the narrator with an adequate comprehension of Japanese society. The narrator uses Japanese words, translating them literally to glean meaning out of them and to decipher the manner in which the culture functions. Fireworks are read within the Japanese context, as *hannabi* “means ‘flower fire’” (Carter, “A Souvenir” 31). The concept of being a wife in “a man's country” is only

accessible to her as a woman, in its meaning as “the person who occupies the inner room and rarely, if ever, comes out of it” (Carter, “A Souvenir” 35; 33). Taro is portrayed in terms which both familiarise and de-familiarise him. His grotesque asymmetry is explained by the fact that “he might have borrowed another person’s head, as Japanese goblins do” and the attempt by the narrator to write Taro using Japanese myths is an ostensible attempt to place him within a familiar mental schema (Carter, “A Souvenir” 35). This schema however, is culturally specific and is exclusionary to those unfamiliar to it. The narrator, hence, grapples with assessing the culture she encounters in Japan, although this mystification of the Japanese culture is more significant for Carter in its transference from other to self – where the narrator’s autonomous self is destabilised and ‘othered’ in her recollection of her travels in Japan.

Memory in “A Souvenir of Japan” is not the reading of a place that has been re-figured purely through the autonomous, subjective self. It is transformed in its constant shuttling between self and other, between attempting to grasp and failing to do so – the latter of which, is also the inability to understand what the Japanese think of her. As a semi-autobiographical tale, “A Souvenir of Japan” is founded on the way in which “her size – and her colour – made her utterly foreign” in Japan (Sage 26). Lorna Sage emphasises that Carter “compound[s] her oddity when she step[s] back into the looking glass world of culture that reflect[s] her back to herself as an alien” (26). Based on Angela Carter’s own personal account of Japan, rather than depicting the narrator’s self as monolithic and in static opposition to the difference of the Japanese way, she displaces the self, taking care to maintain the polarity between mediated and unmediated access and presenting the narrator as a self that is mediated by the others. In one of the most telling scenes, an intimate moment between the narrator and Taro is detailed only to record the interceptions of the Japanese maid. Her narration (and memory) of their intimacy is jarringly interjected by the narrator’s

need to reference all three of the maid's sudden and unwelcome interruptions. The narrator's stops her narrative to recollect the maid's "bowing and apologising" while the narrator herself is "stripped stark naked when she return[s] a third time" (Carter, "A Souvenir" 34). The narrator neglects her own embarrassment to focus on the impression of the maid which is paramount to the detailing of the entire passage. As she puzzles over the possibility that the maid may have just concealed her mortification without "a single word or gesture", the maid's indecipherability resolves the passage inconclusively (Carter, "A Souvenir" 34). The narrator ends her reminiscence by painting the land to be "the intangible reflections of ourselves we saw in one another's eyes" words which underscore the difficulty of capturing and remembering other societies particularly, with the fact that impressions are "dedicated to seeming" – in their eternal recurrence as reflections in different eyes rather than as objects in themselves (Carter, "A Souvenir" 39; 39).

The narrator's memory, as her souvenir of Japan, comes to destabilise any memory of herself in Japan. Her identity, rather than being strengthened by her experience, is made feeble by her understanding that if Japan is other to her, she is other to it too. The narrator declares that even if they tried to "possess each other's otherness, [they] would inevitably fail" but the transformative effect of Carter's memory in "A Souvenir of Japan" can be decried from the impracticality of representing the self – which becomes as elusive as representing another (Carter, "A Souvenir" 39). However, the impossibility of such representation, rather than being a narrative failure, is the focus of the story. Rather than being a static recount of memory, "A Souvenir of Japan" adapts Terdiman's understanding of memory as a fluid construction and one that embodies change, difference and otherness rather than absolute recognition and understanding.

5. Memory and Imagination: Transforming Reality in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

The dislocation of self and other seen in “A Souvenir of Japan” is aggrandised in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. Written as a memoir, *Doctor Hoffman* enacts the struggle between reason and surrealist chaos as a war that can be seen to involve the visionary processes of memory and imagination themselves. While this essay has thus far attempted to explain Angela Carter’s works involving memory against Richard Terdiman’s model of memory as a transforming and transformative dialectic, Terdiman himself suggests that memory is often perceived as a stabilising force. While this paper’s reading of memory considers largely the perspective that memory is pieced together subjectively in order to maintain the dialectic of the past and the present, it is undeniable that memory is at least thought of as a single unifying narrative. Memory is thereby, “the name we give to the faculty that sustains continuity in collective and individual experience”, regardless of whether or not one’s constructed memory sustains this continuity in actuality (Terdiman 8). This reading argues that Desiderio, as the allegory of reason in *Doctor Hoffman*, upholds overtly the notion that memory is rational, progressive and easily sustained. The world in which Desiderio inhabits is one in which memory is held as rational, progressive and unitary in its maintenance of fidelity with the past, in which “stasis is normalized, and in which change is noise, derogation or a fault in transcription” (Terdiman 58). Summarily, Desiderio represents the reasoning and rationalising perspective, and in seeking to write out the memoirs of his youth, memory is for him, a pragmatic tool that enables his writing of an eventful and heroic past.

Desiderio is instantaneously established as someone who has a perfect memory – especially with his attestation – “I remember everything perfectly” (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 3). In wanting to unravel the thread of his self and past, Desiderio decides to start from the

beginning and his impeccable memory is a sign of what he purports to be an ability to capture the past in its entirety. If memory entails the depiction of change, as has been contended by this paper, memory for Desiderio is clearly the representation of a progressive change. This is unlike Terdiman's model which while emphasising a move beyond a reproduction of the past which "tends toward defeat of the transformative effects of social time" also depends on the past, on whose "referentiality" from which it is projected (Terdiman 59; 61). Rather than attempting to configure memory as a dialectic, Desiderio's writing aims to capture the binary forms of youth and old age (experience) and beginning and end, to which he tends. The writing down of his past is what he classifies to be a "picaresque adventure or even [a] heroic adventure" – and his inclusion of these two genres suggests that he wishes the manifestation of his picaresque story, traditionally written for a rogue character, to ultimately delineate the process by which he becomes a hero (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 6). Desiderio is most tangibly affected by the way in which Doctor Hoffman's machines confer disorder and confusion on the city, literally changing the city by disintegrating the visible progress the city had seen through its history. This is carried out by abolishing the containment of the city as a "vast repository of time, the discarded times of all the men and women who have lived, worked, dreamed and died in the streets" (Carter, *Dr Hoffman* 12). The city's change from the tangible, historically developing "conscious production of humanity; [into] the arbitrary realm of dream" impels Desiderio's participation in saving his city, and later, in recollecting his actions through the writing of a memoir (Carter, *Dr Hoffman* 13).

5.1 Memory and Time in *Doctor Hoffman*

Doctor Hoffman's machines destroy the history of the city through their destruction of a chronologically divisible space. Desiderio recalls how "[t]ricks with watches and clocks were pet devices of [Doctor Hoffman's], for so he rubbed home to [them] how [they] no longer held a structure of time in common", leading the Doctor to create instead, what he

later terms the landscape of ‘Nebulous Time’ (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 16). Understanding Doctor Hoffman’s scheme for the city’s ruin allows Desiderio’s project of writing out his past, sequentially and coherently, to be read as his continuing battle against the chaos of Doctor Hoffman’s world. However, at the loss of any concrete landmarks of time and space, Desiderio himself is forced to arbitrarily reconstruct the world he inhabits and consequently, remembers. Ensuingly, it can be proposed that the ongoing war between Desiderio and Doctor Hoffman and allegorically, remembering (or the desire to remember) and forgetting, moves the narrative that is *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*.

Desiderio’s endeavour to write a history based on the memory of his past inevitably involves a desire to “presentif[y] the past” – an action he has to literally undertake to as he falters along “the streets of a hundred years before [that are] superimposed on nowadays streets”, relying only on his memory of the present to guide him (Currie 5; Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 16). Such an action immediately downplays the concrete accuracy of his memoirs although Desiderio himself testifies to having a perfect memory. The reason, heroism and teleological aims to which Desiderio tends to is undone in the first chapter when he subtly concedes that he “cannot remember exactly how [the War] began” and it is with this uncertainty of forgetting that the tumult of Doctor Hoffman transudes into the text (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 9).

The fact that the past Desiderio wishes to make present is contingent on his memory of the way things were, suggests a deferral of a ‘true’ past (which in turn, cannot be accessed) and instates a simple desire for an imagined construct of the past instead. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz analyse Jacques Derrida’s argument that “memory is not a form of recuperation or restoration of a past that once was assumed to be present or even of a past, imagined or not, that claims our attention for its own sake” (158). Anne Whitehead substantiates this argument in her comprehensive study, *Memory*, explicating that the

linearity of archaic models of memory has instead, been replaced with a multidimensional model of transfer¹⁶ where “[m]eaning is constituted retroactively and repeatedly, and forgetting is embedded as an integral principle” (49). Whitehead conclusively announces that “[m]emory, in this instance, is no longer related to the past as a form of truth, but as a form of desire” (Whitehead 49). Anne Whitehead also goes on to cite John Frow’s ‘textual’ model of memory, which like Terdiman’s model, involves the changing and dialectical aspects of prolepsis and analepsis, arguing that forgetting is imperative to adequately remembering. Within the context of *Doctor Hoffman*, it can be proposed that, as opponent to the dominant logical voice of Desiderio (and subsequently, the Minister), Dr Hoffman’s Reality War engenders this forgetting. It can therefore be contended that the phenomenon of forgetting, in turn gives rise to the possibility of imagining rather than recalling and allows a figurative war to be waged against monolithic knowledge and linear progression.

5.2 Imagination as Opponent to Memory in *Doctor Hoffman*

If memory in its earliest and strictest sense, has been established as the impression the past creates on the individual, imagination is often considered to be its antithesis. It is that “which is taken to refer to what is unreal and fictitious” (Hannoum 125). However, a deeper study into memory and imagination reveals their uneasy relationship¹⁷ which has polarised scholars. Paul Ricoeur argues for their similarity, positing that “imagination and memory are alike in one important aspect: they both contain the presence of something absent” and his

¹⁶ Kwon Teckyoung alludes to Henri Bergson in attempting to explain a non-linear model of memory. Terming this new model as “circuitous”, Kwon evaluates this circuitous model of memory to contain a “past [that] exists only in the present, for past memories are sensed only when they are refracted through the perception of the present” (Kwon 215).

Teckyoung, Kwon. “The Materiality of Remembering: Freud’s Wolf Man and the Biological Dimensions of Memory.” *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 41.1 (2010): 213-32. *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*. Web. 3 Sept. 2012.

¹⁷ Anne Whitehead terms the relationship between memory and imagination as “uneasy” (60). She goes on to implicate them “in certain circumstances, [inferring that] they [also] merge into and supplant one another” (Whitehead 60).
Whitehead, Anne. *Memory*. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.

position can be attested to, especially with this essay's proposition that memory is representation (Hannoum 125). However, even when keeping in mind that memory is a more complex representation, imagination can still be held as the freer and more fantastical side of memory, and especially one that is not incidental to a vision of the past. Seppo Knuuttila argues on the other hand, for two diversely different faculties – quoting Barbara Misztal in saying that “[m]emory is crucial to our ability to sustain a continuity of experience, while our imaginative thinking is based on our ability to make the world intelligible and meaningful” (qtd. in Knuuttila 264). It is perhaps useful to interrogate both these claims and retain an intermediate stance. Angela Carter herself sums up the position fittingly in *Doctor Hoffman*, situating memory and imagination merely as two sides of the same coin – “we are two such disseminating mirrors”, Doctor Hoffman says of himself and Desiderio (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 241). Pertinently, for Carter, Desiderio and Doctor Hoffman are established as the two mental faculties of memory's reason and imagination's fantasy only in order to divulge their sameness. This sameness cannot be explained using Paul Ricoeur's innocuous suggestion that memory and imagination are alike in their attempt to represent that which is truly absent, but rather that as faculties, both memory and imagination vie for sovereignty (rather than an interdependency towards) from each other. Such a quest for sovereignty reifies both modes and impedes on what Carter deems to be their true essence.

Despite establishing his difference from Doctor Hoffman's regime, Desiderio's intermittently unreliable memory means that he inevitably imagines, or creates certain portions of his autobiography. In this same manner, Doctor Hoffman depends on the structures already established by the Minister in order to simply destroy them or render them valueless. The Ambassador when confronted by the Minister rationalises that the city contains “emanations only of the asymmetric, the asymmetric [he] denies” (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 36). Doctor Hoffman plans to make more arbitrary the directing structures the city

(and Desiderio) holds in regard. For Edward S. Casey, imagination is free from the burden of the past but “[i]maginative experience is inherently circular in this regard, [in] that in imagining we cannot claim to confront anything radically new” (*Imagining* 8). Casey adopts the perspective that imagination may be freer than memory with regards to its necessity of being faithful to the past, but it is not entirely free. He demonstrates his theory further by stating that imagining is, for the child, “[a]t first purely imitative (‘reproductive’) and it becomes progressively more self-sustaining and wide-ranging (‘anticipatory’)” (*Imagining* 13). Casey’s envisioning of imagination in terms of a child’s developmental process is particularly useful in examining Desiderio’s lapses in memory. After encountering Mary Anne the somnambulist and the peep-show operator, Desiderio provides a recount of how he flees on an abandoned bicycle, precluding his recollection by mentioning that he “do[es] not possess a very clear memory of this part of [his] journey” (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 71). He intersperses this tenebrous encounter with the certainty of “remember[ing] his [saviour’s] lean dark face” despite it also being ambiguously seen in Mary Anne’s mirror (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 71). He ends the chapter by lapsing into the time of his childhood, only by vague association of the “liquid and melodious language” of the River People (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 72). This passage here, in its vacillation between certainty and obscurity, as enabled or disabled by his ailing senses and thereby, between memory and imagined associations, reinforces the idea that Carter has set up the two men and their reigning ideologies as mirror-images whose “primary difference is a philosophical one” and whose “roles are interchangeable” (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 33; 37). Whilst imagining is an anticipatory act, remembering on the other hand, is a faculty founded on materiality, depending on the “materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image” (Nora qtd. in Ben-Amos and Weissberg 137). This is probably also why the Minister, a materialist of the strictest sense, has destroyed all the mirrors in the city – “to stop them [from] begetting

images” (Carter, *Dr Hoffman* 37). This is incidentally, the same quality for which Doctor Hoffman encourages mirrors – “two mirrors reflect each other and images may be multiplied to no end” (Carter, *Dr Hoffman* 241).

The apparent liberation from the rigidity and “tyranny of directions” instated by the Minister and the Board of Determination is eventually revealed to be as illusory as a reflection however, when the Ambassador admits that Doctor Hoffman wishes “absolute authority to establish a regime of total liberation” just as the Minister has done (Carter, *Dr Hoffman* 31; 36). As the “grand totality of the city’s resistance”, Doctor Hoffman becomes the Minister’s doppelganger, and the novel conflates the Minister and Doctor Hoffman – allowing Angela Carter to critique the total control and division of either faculty. Carter’s encapsulation of ‘Nebulous Time’ as a time of “absolute mutability” is a phrase which captures literally and starkly, the reality of attempting to achieve totality through the chaos and non-reality of imagination (Carter, *Doctor Hoffman* 113). It is in this manner that Carter modifies and enhances Terdiman’s model of a dialectic and transformative memory, by re-figuring the excluded domain of imagination. The dialectical model of memory involves its participation with imagination in order to prevent the inert state of reification.

6. Angela Carter's Fairy Tales: Re-imagining the Patterns of Cultural Memory in "The Bloody Chamber"

"The fairy tale tells of the earliest arrangements that mankind made to shake off the nightmare which the myth had placed upon its chest" – Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*

Through *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, Angela Carter proves that an unreified mode of imagination is just as essential to her demythologising project as a re-thinking of memory is. In charting a continuum within Angela Carter's writings with regards to her treatment of fairy tales, this essay regards her fairy tales as the culmination of her mythological (and mnemonic) re-visioning. This essay concerns itself with three main aspects of fairy tales which are relevant to this discussion of memory in Angela Carter's works. Firstly, fairy tales are of interest to Carter as a result of their relationship to the past and the narrativisation of the past, or a history – which is defined distinctly, as a form of cultural memory in this essay. Fairy tales are decisively cultural memories whose value is found precisely in their relativisation of time. Jack Zipes concludes that "the best of folk and fairy tales chart ways for us to become master of history...they transform time into relative elements" (qtd. in Sage 39). Fairy tales remain unique to specific communities as they often arise in reaction to the values and principles which are closely regarded by its people. Secondly, this essay is interested in the way in which fairy tales are transmitted across generations. Fairy tales were earlier transmitted as oral storytelling of memories rather than as literary writing. Anne Whitehead corroborates that for non-literate cultures, "inexact evocation or reconstruction of memory" is more pertinent than a "word-for-word, mechanical memorization" (Whitehead 39; 39). Thirdly, in studying Carter's demythologising project, this essay is interested in the ways in which the perpetuation of fairy tales condition and dictate the actions of people once they become closely held myths.

Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" provides a plane for both the individual or personal memory of the tale's heroine and the cultural memory of her story as a fairy tale, to intersect. Anne Whitehead notes that in being concerned with the past, beyond that of living memory, cultural memory is "either retained through cultural formation (*texts*, rites, or monuments) or through institutional commemoration (*recitation*, practice, observance)" (132, emphasis added). As gathered earlier, Whitehead also illustrates that cultural memory, in the form of histories, folk or fairy tales, are passed on through generations through a "specialised practice [of] transmission, so that there are designated bearers of memory" (132). A study of both individual and collective memory is perhaps most useful to understanding identity formation, as neither personal nor collective memory are ingrained in the individual without the presence of the other.

Formally, Carter's "Bloody Chamber" reflects this dualism by intertwining the history of its heroine with the histories of her mother and those of the Marquis' grandmother and former wives. As she recounts her tales, the image and position that she self-constructs become conflated with the other figures of tragedy in the narrative. The heroine's (equivocally re-imagined) reminiscence of the Marquis' grandmother is prefaced with a short notation of the latter's culture and their epitomisation of ritualising and embodying memory. She recalls how the ravaging of the Terror provided "the aristos who'd escaped the guillotine [with] an ironic fad of tying a red ribbon round their necks at just the point where the blade would have sliced through it, like the memory of a wound" (Carter, "Bloody Chamber" 135). It is by continuing this same embodiment of the memory of tragedy, as practised by her antecedents, that the heroine continues her ill-fated tale.

The heroine's jewels have a principal role to play in the accruing of the past and the relative present as well as of the collective and individual. The jewels that are handed down to her are situated within a specific history, and thereby imply a certain affinity with the

women's proclivity for tragic misadventure. The opal ring handed down by Catherine de Medici and worn by the Marquis' other wives, and the ruby necklace that the narrator both imagines and remembers to have been worn by her husband's grandmother during the Reign of Terror in "luxurious defiance" of her beheading acknowledge the history within which the heroine is entrapped in and make her fortuitous escape miraculous (Carter, "Bloody Chamber" 136). Within the context of the fairy tale, it can also be argued that the heroine, in her eagerness to grasp forbidden knowledge is herself compared to the first woman, and archetypal mother when the Marquis hisses at her in rage that she is "like Eve", (Carter, "Bloody Chamber" 166). The singular and the multiple are also thoroughly amalgamated in the heroine's image of herself as "[t]he young bride, who had become that multitude of girls [she] saw in the mirrors identical in their chic navy tailor-mades" and the titular bloody chamber is also set up as a museum which encapsulates within it the memories of all of the Marquis' wives past (Carter, "Bloody Chamber" 139 – 140). It can thereby be distinguished that Carter's tale thematically works with all of the formal elements of a fairy tale – specifically, recognition of a shared past and the narrator's identification of the tradition within which he or she is working. However, Carter denies the conditioning that such tradition and mythologising can inculcate, choosing instead to juxtapose the familiarity of the tales often heard in childhood with a re-writing of diversely extrinsic plot and narrative strategies.

Fairy tales function as patterns of recognition which are later disrupted by Carter's re-writing of them. For Paul Ricoeur, this dialectic of familiarity and extraneousness is at least partially intrinsic to the system of recognition just as the dialectic of transformation and change is intrinsic to the faculty of memory. The fact that "we are referred back by the phenomenon of recognition to the enigma of memory as presence of the absent encountered previously" others the act of recognising and Carter simply magnifies such alterity with the

complementary dialectic of imposing the foreign onto the familiar (Ricoeur 39). In invoking Terdiman's overarching theory of memory again, "we need to recall that the production and reproduction of such alterity is the most characteristic and continuous product of the dialectical process itself" (Terdiman 67). Danielle Roemer and Cristina Bacchilega acknowledge that "the term 'fairy tale' for Carter is primarily a convenience of familiarity" (9). Carter's fairy tales can only be nominally be described as fairy tales, and she uses the term as a label of recognition to explore her "own space of referential potentiality" (Roemer and Bacchilega 9). In turn, this deconstruction of the mnemonically familiar, and hence, significant, inducts memory as that whose "potentiality is the silent obverse of every [determining] act of language, and thus of every social act" (Terdiman 70, brackets added). As a result, in order to enable any demystification and demythologising effort from simply slipping into re-mythologising, Carter substitutes the monolithic moral of the tale with an inconclusive end in her fairy tales. Her fairy tales are consequently produced as "counterdiscourse[s] to enclosure, [and she is] always mindful that a recognition of boundaries must precede their modification and dissolution" (Roemer and Bacchilega 12).

"The Bloody Chamber" starts off with a call to remember, as *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* does and the tale is recounted in its narration. Carter hence, instantaneously abolishes the central convention of fairy tales, in their predisposition towards activity and action. D. L. Ashliman's *Folk and Fairy Tales: A Handbook* emphasises that fairy tales "contain few descriptive passages, very sparse dialogue, and virtually no deliberation or reflection[; the] adventure itself is the message" (44). "The Bloody Chamber", on the other hand, refutes this by working as a passive recount – with the narrator's experience of the past working as fore-knowledge. It is apparent that "[Carter's] version of 'Bluebeard' relates an individual woman's initiatory experience that changes her irrevocably" and this change can only be articulated through the recount of her memory as

Terdiman asserts (Roemer and Bacchilega 96). The tale starts off with the “the protagonist’s journey outward...” (Roemer and Bacchilega 95) but unlike the typically innocent heroines of fairy tales, the narrator is aware that she is also figuratively moving away from childhood. The heroine, wisened by experience, speaks with the benefit of hindsight and with recollection, the Marquis’ wedding gift of a ruby necklace takes on a deathly foreboding as “an extraordinarily precious throat slit” (Carter, “Bloody Chamber” 135). The tale as a passive recount means that unlike in traditional fairy tales, the focus of the tale no longer lies in the actions of the heroines and more importantly, the moral consequences of her actions – but rather, in her memory, the act of narrating and the textuality of her narrative.

While Kathleen E. B. Manley, through the words of Robin Ann Sheet, argues that the Marquis “has arranged the setting, written the script, and set the plot in motion”, I contend instead that the heroine’s constructions of the Marquis figure are conscious, provisional and, as is the rest of the tale, tainted by her knowledge of her story’s end (Sheet qtd. in Roemer and Bacchilega 85). For example, her portrayal of the Marquis as a surreptitiously leonine figure – with “the dark, leonine shape of his head” and the “streaks of pure silver in his dark mane” – is visibly contrived to create a predatorial figure out of her husband (Carter, “Bloody Chamber” 132; 133). The notion of her memory as representation is illuminated in the way she ruminates and re-figures her impression of him. The heroine’s conscious and autonomous remembrance is continuously re-imagined and re-figured as she grapples with the difficulty of representing her past innocently and independently of its end. She is tentative in concocting a just portrayal of the Marquis and her words are provisional as she relates his reaction to her acceptance of his proposal. She questions the “curious analogy, [of equating] a man with a flower” but resoundingly urges that he “sometimes seemed to [her] like a lily. Yes. A lily” (Carter, “Bloody Chamber” 133). As the heroine recollects on her experience with the Marquis, she conjures up new ways in which she can articulate his appearance and

demeanour – her memory of him is not just that of the simple past, but a more complex re-figuring and re-presenting of that past. While the heroine does recount what has been done to her, explicit hints of remorse, her recognition of a sort of fore-knowledge in telling her story and ostensible regret show that she has at least learnt a lesson and gained wisdom – and the tale does not end as a simple tale of morality that is attained at the expense of her misadventure.

The heroine's re-figurations of her story and her re-imagining of the Marquis' grandmother's backstory ("That night at the opera comes back to me even now...") are subtle in their preservation of a mother-daughter identification and the fairy tale tradition of "Bluebeard", but invasive in their disjunction from an adherence to the past and complete recollection (Carter, "Bloody Chamber" 136). The strength of the heroine's "eagle-featured indomitable mother[']s]" past is perhaps the most overt thematic counter-discourse that is contained within the tale, embedded within the ruinous pasts of all of the women associated with the Marquis. Her own mother's story "helps give the protagonist courage" and thematically engenders the tale's encouraging end as well as formally bestowing it with its subversive power (Roemer and Bacchilega 87). The "multiplying ambiguities of an extended narrative" are here achieved with its commingling of the personal and the collective and the imaginative 'presentifying' of a mnemonic past (Katsavos 15). The texts of personal and cultural memories as well as dominant and counter-discourses are implemented in "The Bloody Chamber" to both relativise the notion of a time past and the concrete moral it proffers, allowing Carter's fairy tales to remain as positive readings of society for daughters all over.

7. Conclusion

This paper has thus far aimed to delineate a continuity within Angela Carter's treatment of memory. The arguments discussed maintain a method through which Carter charts her demythologising efforts and Soman Chainani's assessment of Angela Carter's re-visioning of fairy tales in "Sadeian Tragedy: The Politics of Content Revision in Angela Carter's 'Snow Child'" can perhaps be applied to all of Carter's works themselves. Noting what she deems to be Carter's "trap for the complacent reader", Chainani quotes Christina Bacchilega in Carter's criticism of the "effort [of writing] to conceal its work systematically – to naturalise its artifice, to make everything so clear that it works magic, no questions asked" (qtd. in 212). It is this concealment of the construction of writing as natural that Carter attempts to dismantle through her discussion of memory in "A Very, Very Great Lady and Her Son at Home", "A Souvenir of Japan", *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and "The Bloody Chamber". The inclination of narrative to totalise and reify is revised through Carter's interrogation of the 'text' of memory. In order to define a continuum in Carter's treatment of memory within the four texts studied, Richard Terdiman's model of memory as transformative and as informed dialectically was appropriated. In particular, it was noted that Carter amplified and modified Terdiman's philosophical model by narratively enacting memory against and along with imagination and as that which is not only an intrinsic dialectic alternating within the person but also as an extrinsic motion between the self and the 'other' of a distinct cultural society and past. All of the narratives studied entail a dialectic form which is upheld throughout the mnemonic pasts that are recited.

In "A Very, Very Great Lady and Her Son at Home", the dominant personal past of the Great Lady is sustained through her dialogue with her son even though her position as teller of the tale is usurped by her son's refractory questioning of her. "A Souvenir of Japan" continues with this dialectical model with Carter's displacement of her narrator in Japan and

the narrator's eventual attempt to recollect her experiences in Japan. The fluidity between self and other means that the stable, coherent characterisation of the self is questioned in the narrator's dialogue between herself and her cultural others. Terdiman's model of alterity and the dialectical form is literalised and heightened in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* which portrays a Reality War between the faculties of memory and imagination. "The Bloody Chamber" is situated at the apex of this essay's argument and depicts the narrating heroine's maintenance of a dialogue with both her specific and her society's cultural past. This paper has thereby, proposed to show how Angela Carter has both thematically and formally treated memory as Terdiman reads it – as a dialectic fuelled by change.

While this paper has attempted to be comprehensive within its analysis, there are some areas in the context of memory in Angela Carter which can be further studied. This paper has taken a look at Carter's overtly fictional works but a more concrete continuum of memory in Carter's work can be sought by studying her other fictional novels as well as poems and non-fictional essays. In studying the re-visioning process that grounds Carter's re-writing, this paper has also not broached the problems which arise within the writing process. Language itself can be thought to reify vision but perhaps in consideration of Carter's pursuit of demythification, writing in response to can be acknowledged as an improvement over widely accepted metanarratives. What we have come to define as memory is no more a model of simple reproduction of the past, "because memory does not only consist in recalling the past. It is something more, because it is linked with anticipation of the future in the present" (Giddeon qtd. in Halas 312). A writing of memory is hence, anticipatory not only in its dismissal of the past but also in its instatement within a dialogue. Written in response to another text, it also inevitably calls into being a response to it. Walter Benjamin, whose aesthetic ruminations of memory began this essay, can be employed to sum it up. The

storyteller is involved in “weaving and spinning”, as storytelling is “the art of repeating stories” (*Illuminations* 90; 91). However, the “more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory” and it is only with the remembrance of and adherence to a previously regarded narrative that a new one can unfold in another new direction (*Illuminations* 91).

(11, 768 words)

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