

CFP: Ludics & Laughter as Feminist Aesthetic: Angela Carter at Play

Feminist writer, Angela Carter, has been read as a demythologizer, as a deconstructionist *avant la lettre*, as the doyenne of postmodernism, and a polemicist. She was a great lover of art and film, commemorated at the 2017 festival in Bristol (Mulvey Roberts & Croft). She has been revered as the major revisionist of the fairytale and fable, especially in terms of their gendered presuppositions; and her name is invariably associated with the carnivalesque. Carter's engagement with European philosophy has been expertly assessed (Yeandle). She is a superb stylist, especially of the gothic, and a Borgesian encyclopaedia of intertextual references. Most recently, her affinities with decadence (Tonkin) and surrealism have been expertly unearthed (Watz and Dimovitz). And, importantly, a biography has finally been published (Gordon). However, there is still a key component of Carter's work and technique that needs focussed attention. Rummaging about in the diverse literary and cultural histories of Europe, as she said, was like being in a giant rumpus room. To miss this fact, her pleasure in the rumpus room, is to miss another fundamental aspect of Carter's work that has not yet been fully elaborated: its humour and its play.

Feminism is rarely seen as playful, and certainly not as fun or funny, at least not in a positive sense--and not from outside its borders. Feminism from the outside is often personified as dour, perhaps perverse, bloody-minded and, even (oh, my!) hysterical. Yet we have the perfect example of a feminist writer who played her heart out, whose ludic sensibilities reframe the way in which we perceive the world. A writer whose bloody-mindedness was anything but dour; whose perversity performed the "double somersault of love" before our eyes; who confidently played up the histrionics and laughed them out of earshot: Angela Carter.

Carter once wrote that *The Order of Things* "grew out of the uncontrollable laughter that shook Foucault as he read a page [of Borges] that, simply, overturned all the ways in which he had been taught to think" (*Burning Your Boats* 42). He was, she continues, "enchanted by the possibilities of wholly other systems of thought, systems that revealed the limitations of our own" (42). This enchantment in other-worldly, playful and liminal systems of thought certainly applies to Carter, and it is this aspect of Carter's feminist strategy that we seek to evaluate in this volume. We seek to reclaim "play" as a feminist language.

Salman Rushdie famously called Carter a "one-off." In this international collection of essays, we will consider that ludics and laughter contribute to this originality and to her unique feminist aesthetic. We seek research on Carter's *oeuvre* which foregrounds "play," and "humour" as key components of her work and of her significance to readers and feminists nearly 30 years after her death. Possible topics are various and certainly not restricted to the following possibilities: aspects of play in surrealism; linguistic play; the play of performance and the performance of play; gendered subjectivity; the comedic aspects of the carnivalesque; tropes at play; comedy and humour as strategies. In the ludic spirit, essays may choose to "play" themselves in ways that reveal the possibilities for a critical feminist ludics. Similarly, essays that wish to play foul with our contention are equally welcome.

Proposals:

We seek proposals of no more than 500 words. Proposals should be accompanied by a brief biography and must be submitted by May 1, 2018, to be considered for acceptance. A decision will be made by May 20th, when we will notify of acceptance.

Complete essays of @ 7,000 words will be expected by September 1, 2018, with a goal for publication by early 2019. Submit inquiries to any of the co-editors:

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Initial proposals should be sent to jennifer.gustar@ubc.ca by May 1, 2018.