

The Hearing Trumpet:

Leonora Carrington's Feminist Magical Realism

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In the last two decades Leonora Carrington's novel *The Hearing Trumpet* (henceforth referred to as *THT*) has received more attention within academic circles than it ever did at the time of its publication in 1974. Natalya Lusty, Susan Suleiman, and Gloria Feman Orenstein have discussed in much detail the novel's strong feminist ethos, as well as its subversion of Surrealist tropes. There is a tendency within scholarship and criticism of *THT* toward classifying Carrington's text as "Surrealist"¹; in most cases it is referred to as a novel that is subversive of Surrealist tenets,² but one that remains nonetheless an instance of Surrealist literature. The influence that the Surrealist movement had on Carrington's work is undeniable and, in the case of *THT*, a prominent, most interesting feature of the novel. But by classifying *THT* solely as a Surrealist work, it is easy to disregard a number of equally important metaphysical, psychoanalytical and philosophical influences present in Carrington's novel. Therefore, here I would like to take a different approach and argue that *THT* can be considered an early example of feminist magical realism. By adopting this nomenclature, I intend to acknowledge the presence in Carrington's text of hitherto unexplored elements of what would contemporarily be referred to as magic realist literature, but without ignoring the strong influence of Surrealism in the novel. Regarding the latter, I will draw attention to the ways in which Carrington

adapts important elements of Surrealist thought to express her strong feminist ethos, in particular the Surrealist tradition of female objectification, and the archetypal figure of the *femme enfant*. I will also trace the origins of magic realism in relation to the Surrealist movement, examining how the Surrealist marvellous is adapted in Carrington's novel, and how this adaptation resembles Alejo Carpentier's own. Moreover, using Wendy Faris's research on the constituent features of magic realist literature, I shall identify such magic realist elements in *THT*. To finalise, I will discuss elements of Jungian psychology in *THT*, in particular allusions to the alchemical imagery employed by Jung in two of his works – *Alchemical Studies* and *Psychology and Alchemy* – with the intention of further evidencing some of the multiple influences that permeate Carrington's work. The analysis of Jung's alchemical imagery in Carrington's novel will be of particular importance for it will draw attention to an element of *THT* that has until now remained unexplored, as well as demonstrating how Carrington's use of Jungian psychology further strengthens the magical realist inclinations of her text. It is in this manner that I will argue that *THT* can be considered an early example of feminist magical realism.

Surrealist elements might be expected in *THT* given Carrington's close association with the movement. I will argue that the most prominent amongst these is Carrington's penchant for subversion. As André Breton expressly mentions in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, one of the Surrealist's primary aims was "to lay waste to the ideas of family, country, [and] religion,"³ to subvert as many social structures as the movement possibly could. In *THT* Carrington evidences this Surrealist penchant for subversion, but she does so in an unusual manner. Much of the interest of *THT* lies in the way in which Carrington adapts this subversive stance of Surrealism to express her own feminist views, and in doing so ironically subverts a number of Surrealist tenets, namely, the Surrealist tradition of female objectification and the archetype of the *femme enfant*.

Surrealism aimed to undermine patriarchal structures, but in doing so it created patriarchal structures of its own. In her book *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett discusses how male Surrealist artists often objectified women in their creative work.⁴ Her arguments are supported by Suleiman, who stresses that "the founding Surrealist[s] ... are writing from an exclusively male subject position,"⁵ and Xavière Gauthier, who asserts that the Surrealists were always "ready to reduce women to an object of contemplation and consumption."⁶ The "*femme enfant* or woman-child" was one of the Surrealists' primary archetypes of female objectification.⁷ The idea of the *femme enfant* was conceived early in the movement, appearing first in *L'Écriture automatique*,⁸ where it described a muse figure that acted as an intermediary

between the male artist and creativity. She was represented as a young woman in the adolescent stage between childhood and womanhood, who due to her youth and inexperience had “a pure and direct connection with her own unconscious, that allow[ed] her to serve as a guide for man” in his search for inspiration.⁹ In *THT* Carrington actively subverts the figure of the *femme enfant* through direct references to arguably the most famous *femme enfant* of all: Nadja.

In Breton's *Nadja*,¹⁰ the author gives an account of his amorous relationship with a schizophrenic woman. The Surrealists considered madness, along with the beauty and innocence of the *femme enfant*, a positive attribute, a nexus of creativity and the divine due to the “transformative power of [such an] ecstatic state.”¹¹ Breton referred to this as *l'amour fou*, mad love.¹² As a consequence of her mental instability and youth, Nadja embodied the beauty, purity and naivety of the *femme enfant* as well as the Surrealist praise for mad love. According to Bonnie Lander, this concept, places the female as a “mediatrix” between the male figure and divinity – the Surrealist idea of the muse.¹³ Breton uses Nadja as a vehicle of inspiration by playing the role of “scribe” to her mad love,¹⁴ with an absolute disregard for Nadja as a person. As Walter Benjamin argues, “The Lady, in esoteric love, matters least. So too for Breton. He is closer to the things that Nadja is close to than to her.”¹⁵ *Nadja* was a very influential text within the Surrealist movement, described by Teresa del Conde as “el texto instaurador de la narrativa surreal”¹⁶ (the text that established Surrealist narrative), and it presents an accurate example of how Surrealism objectified women through the tropes of the vision romance and the figure of the *femme enfant*. As Katharine Conley states, it is “the most powerful and the most negative representative of Woman in Surrealism.”¹⁷

In her novella *Down Below*,¹⁸ Carrington had already begun a re-inscription of the Surrealist tradition of female objectification, adopting a position of female subjectivity by writing from the perspective of the Goddess, the mediatrix, and the “mad woman.” According to Whitney Chadwick, Carrington, as Max Ernst's young partner, had also personified the figure of the *femme enfant*, thus bringing together both of these Surrealist archetypes – mad woman and *femme enfant* – similar to the way in which Nadja did, but from a perspective of female emancipation.¹⁹ René Riese Hubert describes *Down Below* as “a re-writing of [Breton's] *Nadja*” from a feminist perspective,²⁰ one in which Carrington subverts the Surrealists' notion of female objectification by becoming both the subject of her visionary quest and portraying “Woman as a seeker after spiritual enlightenment.”²¹ Lander states that *Down Below* “challenges Breton's *Nadja* by engaging the same tropes [as him] ... in order to show how those tropes

serve Surrealism's masculinist agenda."²² A continuation of Carrington's feminist ideology and her adaptation of such tropes can be clearly perceived in *THT*.

It is women in *THT* who in pursuit of self-knowledge endure the "dark night of the soul"²³ typical of the vision romance, not men. Orenstein refers to *THT* as a feminist recasting of the Grail Quest²⁴; she is supported by Lusty in this view, who asserts that the novel is about women who "steal the Grail from a male hierarchical Christian tradition and restore it ... to a female pagan tradition."²⁵ By turning women into the subjects of her story, Carrington subverts the Surrealist tradition of feminine objectification, thus continuing the critique on the Surrealist movement that she had commenced in *Down Below*. The Abbess's entrance into the "dreaded Vault ... of the Arcanum"²⁶ to retrieve the Grail, and Marian's descent into "Hell" (136-7) to encounter "herself" are perfect examples of this. As Lusty argues, a further adaptation of Surrealist ideology is Carrington's satire of the *femme enfant*, who is replaced in the novel by the image of the crone.²⁷ In *THT* it is not only women but elderly women who undergo a visionary quest and establish a link with divinity – not adolescent *ingénues*. Unlike Nadja, the elderly women of *THT* have nothing in common with the *femme enfant* who mediates between creativity and the male figure's search for knowledge; instead, they become both the seeking subject and the "mediatrix"²⁸ to the divine, much like Carrington herself in *Down Below*. But not all the crones in *THT* are heroines: an additional way in which Carrington's novel undermines the figure of the *femme enfant*, and the Surrealist idea of mad love, is through the relationship between the characters of Natacha Gonzalez and Dr Gambit, which is clearly reminiscent of that between Nadja and Breton.

Natacha is one of the inmates at Lightsome Hall. She is Dr Gambit's most esteemed disciple in his teachings of The Work, for she is a "visionary ... the Pure Vessel through which powers are made manifest" (38), and the only one amongst the elderly ladies who "gives the Messages from the great unseen" (39). The character of Natacha is a clear satire of Breton's Nadja, and consequently the Surrealist tropes of both the *femme enfant* and mad love. There is an obvious similarity between the characters' names, and both women seem to serve as a nexus between men (Breton/Dr Gambit) and the divine. But Natacha, unlike Nadja, is represented by Carrington as a fraud:

Natacha Gonzalez stinks ... I call her Saint Rasputina ... Rasputina would sell her mother to the white slave traders to get a bit of publicity. She has a power complex like Hitler ... she invents cosy chats

with saints as tall as telegraph poles ... It is a jolly good thing for humanity that she is shut up in a home for senile females. (63)

Throughout the novel Carrington continues to ridicule Natacha's supposed connection with the divine: "She hears voices ... When she does that she thinks she is getting a stigmata and starts fattening up for Easter" (35). Moreover, far from being illuminated, Natacha is a murderess, albeit an inefficient one, for she accidentally kills Maude Summers with a poisoned cake intended for Georgina Sykes:

The little reconciliation feast that Natacha had offered Georgina near the kitchen had been a deliberately planned murder. "Suffering co-bras!" said Georgina ... "The fudge must have been meant for me." (106)

In this way, Carrington's use of humour to ridicule Natacha, what is referred to in the novel as "Marian's manic laughter" (37), is similar to Hélène Cixous's "Laughter of the Medusa" in that it "break[s] up the 'truth'" of the Surrealist tradition of female objectification.²⁹ Thus, as she did in *Down Below*, Carrington is able to once more demonstrate her feminist ethos by undermining the Surrealist notion of the *femme enfant*, portraying Natacha as a negative female figure, and representing other women in her novel as active subjects who are able to recover the Goddess's Holy Grail.

Equally important to the feminist undertones present in *THT* are certain elements in the novel that could contemporarily be associated with the literary style of magic realism. The historical, cultural and geographical contexts in which Carrington's novel was written can provide some insight as to why such magic realist elements can be found in Carrington's text. Although *THT* was first published in 1974, as Lusty points out, the exact date of its writing has not been accurately pinpointed.³⁰ Helen Byatt suggests that it was written in the late 1940s,³¹ Suleiman claims that it was written in the early 1950s,³² and Carrington herself appears unsure of the date.³³ It is certain that the book was written after Carrington settled in Mexico City (c1942), and quite possibly between the dates suggested by Suleiman and Byatt. It is interesting to note that by this time numerous events were unfolding, both in Latin America and abroad, that would lead to the development of what is known as magic realist literature: After Franz Roh coined the term in "Magical Realism: Post Expressionism" in 1925,³⁴ it was once again used by Angel Flores in his influential 1955 essay "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction."³⁵ By the 1950s Jorge Luis Borges had written "El Arte Narrativo y la Magia" (Narrative Art and Magic),³⁶ and was being referred to as a "magic realist" writer.³⁷ In 1951 Julio Cortázar, considered by scholars such as Faris to be an important precursor of Latin American

magical realism,³⁸ published his famous short story “Axolotl.”³⁹ This was followed by Juan Rulfo’s equally influential *El Llano en Llamas* in 1953, and *Pedro Páramo* in 1955.⁴⁰ Additionally, the growing need to define a Latin American and Caribbean identity, which had become apparent in texts such as Léon Damas, Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire’s *L’Étudiant noir* of 1934,⁴¹ had reached its cusp by 1949 with Alejo Carpentier’s formulation of the notion of “the marvellous real.”⁴² In “The Marvellous Real in America,” the essay-like prologue to his novel *The Kingdom of this World*, Carpentier described Latin America as a continent where events considered “marvellous” in the eyes of Europe take place on a daily basis.⁴³ In order to describe this inherently “marvellous” characteristic of Latin America, Carpentier coined the term “the marvellous real.”⁴⁴ Janet Kaplan makes reference to the strong influence that Mexican mythology and this “magical” Latin American culture had on Carrington’s work, stating that she “found [in] Mexico a fertile atmosphere where magic was part of daily reality ... Mexico proved a vibrant influence on ... Carrington.”⁴⁵ Marina Warner even states in regard to Carrington’s work that after she settled in Mexico, “her witchcraft ... entered another phase in the surroundings of *lo real maravilloso* (the marvellous real).”⁴⁶ But it is interesting to note that despite the evident impact that these “marvellous real” or “magic realist” influences had on Carrington’s work, they have received little attention in previous analyses of *THT*.

There are certain elements of “magic” in Carrington’s *THT* that are very similar in style to what Carpentier refers to as the marvellous real and as a consequence of this, magic realism. This is due to the fact that the origins of magic realism itself can be traced to Surrealism through Carpentier’s works, in particular his notion of the marvellous real. Carpentier’s dissociation from the Surrealist movement was a gradual process that spanned nearly two decades. It began with the movement’s first schism in 1930, when Carpentier sided with Robert Desnos against Breton; and came to full fruition in 1949, when the famous prologue to *The Kingdom of this World* was published.⁴⁷ The prologue is regarded by many as one of the crucial influences of Latin American magic realist literature, to the extent that Emir Rodríguez Monegal describes it as the “prologue to the Latin American novel” itself.⁴⁸ Prominent amongst the many devices that Carpentier uses in the prologue to undermine the Surrealist movement, is his formulation of the notion of the marvellous real. Carpentier aimed to propose a new perception of Latin America, seeking to modify the view that the Surrealists had adopted, which portrayed the continent as an antithesis to Europe, an exotic land that could serve as an example of alterity, and an alternative to Western culture. According to Carpentier, Latin America was an

emerging civilisation capable of standing on its own, with a cultural and mythological richness that could not be matched by Europe. His notion of the marvellous real seeks to portray these ideas. But it is interesting to note that the marvellous real of Carpentier is directly based on Breton's own conception of the marvellous as described in the *First Manifesto of Surrealism*. In regards to the marvellous, Breton states the following:

Let us not mince words: the marvellous is always beautiful, anything marvellous is beautiful, in fact only the marvellous is beautiful ... The marvellous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us.⁴⁹

Carpentier's definition of the marvellous is very similar to Breton's, but it contains certain important variations:

The marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state. To begin with, the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith. Those who do not believe in saints cannot cure themselves with miracles.⁵⁰

Rodríguez Monegal rightly argues that the main difference between Breton and Carpentier's definitions is that Carpentier circumscribes the marvellous within the sphere of reality, of the phenomenal world as conceived by Western empirical thought, whilst Breton does not impose any limitations upon it.⁵¹ Carpentier's particular brand of the marvellous, limited by the real world, can also be found in magic realist texts. Other characteristics differentiate such magic realist texts from marvellous realist ones, but Carpentier's idea of magic as a constituent element of reality can be found in both. As the following analysis will show, the magical elements evidenced in *THT* are very similar in style to Carpentier's notion of the marvellous real, and consequently, magic realism, for they present a seamless union with reality. Given magic realism's filiation with Surrealism and the literary, cultural contexts in which *THT* was written, it is not hard to perceive how Carrington's adaptations of Surrealist motifs in her novel could easily result in a writing style that evidences elements of magic realist literature.

In *Ordinary Enchantments, Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, Faris speaks of five distinct elements that constitute magic realist

literature. The first of these elements is an “irreducible element of magic.”⁵² According to Faris, the irreducible element of magic is “something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in Western empirically based discourse.”⁵³ This is the “magical” aspect of magical realism, which Faris suggests “grows almost imperceptibly from the real.”⁵⁴ The gradual growth of the magical element generally does not appear to be noticed by the narrator, and contributes to the normalisation of magic within the text.

THT offers a clear example of the gradual development of the irreducible element of magic, which commences with the hearing trumpet itself. The inordinate improvement of Marian’s hearing through the use of her trumpet can be taken as nothing more than an exaggeration of the device’s properties – improbable, but not impossible – but I would suggest it is not; this could be seen as the first instance of the irreducible element of magic in the novel. Marian goes from quasi-deafness, “Georgina nudged me and said something but I could not hear as I had forgotten my trumpet” (34), to being able to hear “Anna Wertz talking in the distance, [and] a cricket chirp[ing]” (59). The trumpet is the first in a series of unusual events, the uncanniness of which continues to grow and develop throughout the novel. The improvement of Marian’s hearing is followed by increasingly fantastical scenarios, such as Marian’s description of Lightsome Hall’s architecture:

The main building was ... a castle, surrounded by various pavilions with incongruous shapes. Pixie-like dwellings shaped like toadstools, Swiss chalets, railway carriages, one or two ordinary bungalows, something shaped like a boot, another like what I took to be an out-sized Egyptian mummy. It was all so very strange that I for one doubted the accuracy of my observation. (24)

Once Marian has settled in the institution, other fantastical occurrences take place, such as the uncanny coincidences between Marian and the Abbess’s portrait (43, 52). This is followed by the unfolding of magical events in the Abbess’s story:

[The nuns] saw Rosalinda and the Bishop inhaling Musc de Madeleine and by some process of *effleurage* becoming so saturated with the vapours of the ointment that they were surrounded by a pale blue cloud ... and were suspended, levitating over the open crate of Turkish delight with which they gorged. (79)

There is also the elderly ladies’ organisation of a coven in which they summon the mystical presence of the Queen Bee:

We were dancing round and around the pond, waving our arms ... Christabel began to chant ... a cloud gathered over the round pond and we all shrieked in unison ... Then it seemed that the cloud formed itself into an enormous bumble bee as big as a sheep. She wore a tall iron crown studded with rock crystals, the stars of the Underworld. (117)

From this point onwards the magical events in the story develop exponentially. The creature Sephira, who has “the body of a human being entirely covered with glittering feathers and armless,” in addition to “six great wings sprout[ing] from its body” (133-4), is released from a tower when Marian finds the answer to one of Christabel’s riddles. This is followed by Marian’s descent into “Hell” (137), where she meets herself, and turns into a “three faced female” (138). Finally, the novel ends with the relocation of the Earth’s poles, which sets Lightsome Hall “somewhere in the region where Lapland used to be” (158). As it can be clearly seen, Carrington’s novel displays Faris’s irreducible magical element, through a gradual, progressive development. In this regard it resembles other magic realist texts, such as Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where the novel’s magical elements increase gradually, from nails that appear to have a life of their own as they are moved by Melquíades’s magnet, to the cataclysmic destruction of the town of Macondo, brought about by a hurricane and a swarm of flying ants.⁵⁵ This is also similar to Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World*, where Mackendal’s surreptitious poisonings are followed by his apparent ability to metamorphose, and the “green wind” at the end of the novel that destroys everything in its wake.⁵⁶

The second constituent element of magic realist texts suggested by Faris relates to the “phenomenal world.”⁵⁷ What distinguishes magical realism from fantasy is its detailed descriptions of such a world, an attribute that imbues the text with a sense of the real. This relates closely to Carpentier’s notion of the marvellous real, in the sense that the magical elements of the text must be grounded and circumscribed by the natural limits of reality. Faris argues that in addition to the gradual growth of the irreducible magical elements in the text, minute descriptions which attempt to effect a mimesis of the real world, when applied to magical events, render such events in a “traditionally realistic ... manner,”⁵⁸ which results in their normalisation – the opposite of Victor Shklovsky’s idea of defamiliarisation.⁵⁹ Moreover, these descriptions tend to be located within a historical context. As Hubert states, in *THT* “realistic details occur with ... frequency.”⁶⁰ The validity of this statement is demonstrated through Marian’s initial descriptions of herself and her home:

My sight is still excellent although I use spectacles for reading, when I read, which I practically never do. True, rheumatics have bent my skeleton somewhat ... The fact that I have no teeth and never could wear dentures does not in any way discomfort me, I don't have to bite anybody and there are all sorts of soft edible foods easy to procure and digestible to the stomach ... Our house is situated in a residential district and would be described in England as a semi-detached villa with small garden ... there is a fine back yard which I share with my two cats, a hen, the maid and her two children, some flies and a cactus plant called maguey. (1-2)

Marian's detailed description of Georgina Sykes is a further example of the novel's realist approach:

Her hair was cut in a long bob and although no longer abundant was cleverly arranged over a small bald patch to give the impression of a casual pageboy coiffure. Her eyes must have been large and beautiful before the pendulous mauve flesh had gathered underneath. (32)

Realist renderings of a similar nature continue once Marian settles as an inmate at Lightsome Hall, where magic elements mingle with "the mundane and petty domestic world of the institution."⁶¹ But at Lightsome Hall such minute descriptions are also applied to magical occurrences, in a way that normalises these events within the text. This normalisation locates the magical events within the realm of the real, in a style that resembles that of Carpentier's marvellous realist prose. This becomes evident in the text in Marian's description of her bungalow, which is unfurnished with the exception of "a wicker chair and a small table" (24), but displays an impossibly detailed *trompe l'oeil*:

The walls were painted with the furniture that wasn't there ... I tried to open the painted wardrobe, a book-case with books and their titles. An open window with a curtain fluttering in the breeze ... A painted door and a shelf with all sorts of ornaments. All this one-dimensional furniture had a strangely depressing effect, like banging one's nose against a glass door. (24)

A similar situation takes place when Marian describes the fantastic buildings that surround her bungalow:

The Marquise lived in a red toadstool with yellow spots. She had to climb a small ladder to get inside and this must have been very uncomfortable ... Maude ... [lived] in a double bungalow which must have once been a birthday cake ... it had been painted pink and

white although these colours had not been able to resist the summer rains. (31)

As these examples indicate, the magical elements in *THT* are described in such minute detail that the realist rendering of such elements normalises them. The Marquise does live in a toadstool, but it is “uncomfortable” to climb a ladder to get inside it; the fantastic trompe l’oeil of Marian’s bungalow is not rare and exciting, it is “depressing”; and Maude’s cake-shaped bungalow, for all its exoticism, is not impervious to mundane summer rains.

The second aspect of Faris’s “presence of the phenomenal world” corresponds to the text’s grounding within a historical context.⁶² In the case of *THT*, as Lusty asserts, “autobiographical and historical material” constitutes an important part of the novel.⁶³ *THT* “immortalized” Carrington’s friendship with the Spanish painter Remedios Varo, upon whom the character of Carmella is based.⁶⁴ In the same manner, according to Lusty, “Many of the characters in the text are recognizable from Carrington’s own life in Mexico,” like Edward James, Carrington’s friend and patron, who is portrayed through the character of Marlborough.⁶⁵ Additionally, events in Carrington’s life, such as her dispute with her family over becoming a painter, and her initial interest in the Surrealist movement – which can be corroborated in Susan Aberth’s biographical notes of the artist⁶⁶ – are mentioned in the novel: “Back in Lancashire I got an attack of claustrophobia and tried to convince mother to let me go and study painting in London. She thought it was a very idle and silly idea ... Art in London didn’t seem quite modern enough and I began to want to study in Paris where the Surrealists were in full cry” (65-6). The inclusion of such historical and autobiographical material grounds *THT* within a historical context.

Faris argues that as a result of the detailed descriptions of both magical and realist aspects, before the irreducible magical element can be defined as such, “the reader may hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events, and hence experience unsettling doubts.”⁶⁷ According to Faris, such doubts are the third characteristic of magic realist texts. Tzvetan Todorov defines this as “the fantastic,” a liminal point in the text where the nature of the events taking place is still unknown to the reader.⁶⁸ Such events can be defined as either logically based on the phenomena of the real world, or as marvellous occurrences.⁶⁹ Faris provides as an example of this the character of Pilar Ternera in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, who is meant to have lived over the age of one hundred and forty-five.⁷⁰ Although this is improbable, it is not impossible, and the reader hesitates between these two interpretations of the text. A similar situation takes place in *THT* when Christabel Burns tells Marian her age, “Christabel claimed to be one hundred and eighty-four. This hardly seemed probable but I didn’t like

to contradict her" (71). Another instance of such "unsettling doubts" occurs when the women at the institution summon the Queen Bee during their coven. Marian states, after seeing the figure materialise, "All this may have been a collective hallucination although nobody has yet explained to me what a collective hallucination actually means" (117); and similarly, after Marian descends into hell and sees herself as part of the Three-faced Goddess, she states, "This of course might have been an optical illusion" (138). Nevertheless, I would argue that the strongest instance of doubt within the text takes place at the commencement of the novel, when Marian's daughter-in-law, Muriel, asserts that Marian is "aged, infirm, ... [and] senile" (9-10). This fact appears to be corroborated when Marian, lost in remembrance, forgets where she is, to the extent that she confuses her son Galahad with an old lover, Simon (15-18). Given her age and condition, the possibility of Marian's senility causes hesitation in the reader: are the magical events in the text really happening, or are they the product of a wandering mind? In *THT*, such questions are never fully resolved.

The reader's hesitation in magic realist literature, according to Faris, leads to a merging of realms.⁷¹ As in Todorov's notion of the fantastic, Faris argues that in magical realism both visions coexist at the same time; the reader must accept the juxtaposition of magical elements and realism in the text. This is Faris's fourth characteristic of magic realist literature.

In *THT* an evident convergence of realms takes place. Faris suggests that an example of the merging of different worlds is portrayed through the magic realist tendency to establish "fluid boundaries... between the living and the dead."⁷² This nexus between the worlds of the living and the dead is exemplified in various magic realist texts, such as Isabel Allende's *The House of Spirits*⁷³ and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*⁷⁴; in *THT* it becomes apparent through Marian's connection with the winking portrait of the dead Abbess: "Really, it was strange how often the leering abbess occupied my thoughts" (43), which leads to a further union of realms. Faris argues that "magical realism [also] merges ancient or traditional ... and modern worlds."⁷⁵ The connection that is established between the dead Abbess and Marian through the Abbess's portrait and the retelling of her story mingles the medieval world of the Grail Quest with Marian's contemporary, twentieth-century setting. The Abbess's Grail Quest becomes Marian's own. But where the Abbess, disguised as a Knight Templar, failed to achieve her goal – "Sir Pheneton held his ground and obliged Don Rosalendo to return the cup to the vault under pain of death" (98) – Marian succeeds: "This is how the Goddess reclaimed her Holy Cup with an army of ... six old women" (157). The convergence of these realms becomes nearly irrefutable with Marian's descent into "hell," where she states that

"Holding the mirror at arm's length I seemed to see a three-faced female ... the faces ... belonged to the Abbess, the Queen Bee, and myself" (137-8). Marian has clearly become one with the Abbess and the Goddess as represented by the Queen Bee, and by this stage of the novel their disparate worlds have also converged into one.

The merging of realms leads to "disruptions of time, space, and identity,"⁷⁶ which is Faris's final characteristic of magic realist texts. According to Faris, "Magic realist fictions delineate near-sacred or ritual enclosures [that] leak the magical narrative waters over the rest of the text."⁷⁷ I would suggest that in *THT* the "ritual enclosure" Faris mentions is depicted through Lightsome Hall. It is within this institution that fantastical elements first appear in the uncanny shapes of the old women's bungalows, and the painted furniture of Marian's room (24). These magical elements progressively grow within the novel until they eventually leak when the creature Sephira is released onto the world, "escap[ing] to sow panic amongst the nations" (134).

As a consequence of the merging of different realms, including "traditional – sometimes indigenous – and modern worlds,"⁷⁸ Faris argues that magical realism also "reorients ... our sense of identity."⁷⁹ She presents the example of Cortázar's short story, "Axolotl," where the denouement consists of the narrator's transformation into the axolotl he has admired and observed throughout the text: "I am an axolotl ... and if I think like a man it's only because every axolotl thinks like a man inside his rosy stone semblance."⁸⁰ Marian's encounter with herself in *THT* is akin to that of Cortázar's narrator with the axolotl, and as I will later argue, it establishes a direct connection between magic realist literature, and Carrington's use of Jung's alchemical imagery. When Marian descends into hell she comes across a woman who looks exactly like herself. This other self eventually eats Marian. At this point in the text, it is interesting to note that the narrative voice changes from Marian's description of her other self in the third person to the first person. She becomes, like Cortázar's narrator upon encountering the axolotl, the other that she was observing:

When we faced each other I felt my heart give a convulsive leap and stop. The woman who stood before me was myself ... A mighty rumbling followed by crashes and there I was standing outside the pot stirring the soup in which I could see my own meat ... boiling away as merrily as any joint of beef. I added a pinch of salt and some peppercorns then ladled out a measure into my granite dish. (136-8)

This passage elucidates the transition of identity that takes place from one Marian to the other. In this way, the last element of Faris's fifth and final characteristic of magic realist literature can be perceived in *THT*.

Thus far, most of the elements that justify referring to *THT* as an example of feminist magical realism have been examined. But it is important to note that in addition to these, Carrington's novel provides numerous instances of the alchemical imagery of Jungian psychoanalysis. The presence of Jungian imagery in *THT* is of particular importance, for it stands as evidence of yet another influence present in Carrington's text, demonstrating the novel's complexity and richness of sources, and further demonstrates its magic realist inclinations. In her book, *Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*, Aberth has extensively analysed the use of alchemical imagery in Carrington's paintings, but such analysis has not extended with equal minutiae to Carrington's writing.⁸¹ Almost parallel to Aberth's analysis, Chadwick acknowledged the influence that Jungian psychology had on Carrington's work, explaining that it "became particularly important to Carrington during her years in Mexico,"⁸² and adds that in *Down Below* Carrington began a "psychic quest for autonomy in the language of the alchemist's journey."⁸³ Chadwick's argument is supported by Lusty, who also states that Carrington's work was strongly "influenced by Jung after the war."⁸⁴ It is interesting to note that although the influence of alchemical lore and Jungian psychology in Carrington's work has been independently acknowledged by scholars on previous occasions, these aspects have never been jointly analysed, and never in relation to *THT*.

In *Magic Realism Rediscovered 1918–1981*, Seymour Menton argues that whilst Surrealism is deeply immersed in Freudian psychology, magical realism has a stronger tendency to follow Jungian thought.⁸⁵ Menton explains that, "the juxtaposition of magic and realism is clearly an artistic reflection of [Jung's] ... ideas ... which attribute modern neuroses and Western society's crisis to an over dependence on the rational and the scientific to the detriment of the irrational and the unconscious."⁸⁶ John Burton Foster, in his essay "Magical Realism, Compensatory Vision, and Felt History," supports Menton's view, asserting that magic realist writers have strong Jungian affinities.⁸⁷ Other academics such as Faris also share Menton's argument, stating that "a Jungian ... perspective is common in magical realist texts."⁸⁸

Alchemical symbolism was a pivotal part of Jung's theoretical framework. According to Jung, the alchemical transformation is akin to what he terms the process of individuation.⁸⁹ As a person undergoes the process of individuation, he/she learns to negotiate the opposing elements within his/her psyche, which Jung refers to as the *anima* and *animus*; once the

“contents of anima and animus can be integrated,”⁹⁰ the process of individuation is complete. The opposing aspects of a person’s psyche come into balance and an individual can attain psychic wholeness, what Jung denominates “the Self.”⁹¹ A study of Jung’s writings reveals the myriad names and symbols by which the Self can be referred to: the “*coniunctio* or chymical marriage,”⁹² the “*cauda pavonis*” (peacock), “Uroboros” (the mythical snake that forever bites its own tail), and “Mercurius,” amongst others.⁹³ In *THT* Carrington makes use of three specific alchemical symbols typically employed by Jung to denote his concept of the Self: the Hermaphrodite, the Horn, and the Holy Grail.

According to Jung, the image of the hermaphrodite or the androgyne can be seen as representative of the Self because of its dual nature. The androgyne brings into balance the opposing energies of masculine and feminine principles, the *anima* and the *animus*, and can thus be regarded as a symbol of the balanced psyche – the Self – emerging as a result of the process of individuation.⁹⁴ The hermaphrodite motif is used consistently throughout *THT*. The first instance of this is Marian’s self-description, “I do have a short grey beard which conventional people would find repulsive” (3). The image of the bearded woman appears again in the Abbess’s story when Doña Rosalinda disguises herself as “a bearded nobleman” (80) to encounter Prince Zosimus, and when the Abbess takes “nocturnal rides ... under her usual disguise, a gentleman of nobility ... with a short reddish beard” (87). A further example of the androgyne is portrayed through the Goddess who guards the fallen Grail, “who was known to be bearded and a hermaphrodite ... her name was Barbarus ... and her priests were generally known to be chosen hermaphrodites” (91). The Goddess’s name (Barbarus) also stands for the masculine equivalent of a part of the Abbess’s title, “of the Convent of Saint Barbara” (73), a fact which once more brings together the masculine and the feminine aspects of the androgyne in the text. Moreover, Saint Barbara is described by Marian as “the bearded patroness of Limbo” (43). The final image of the androgyne in the novel is that of the creature Sephira “the Feathered Hermaphrodite” (94), who is unleashed upon the world when Marian resolves Christabel’s riddle (134).

The image of the horn is also regarded by Jung as a representation of the Self. Like the hermaphrodite, the horn presents the balanced interaction of feminine and masculine attributes: “as an emblem of vigour and strength [it] has a masculine character, but at the same time it is a cup, which, as a receptacle, is feminine.”⁹⁵ There are several occasions in Carrington’s novel when Marian compares her hearing trumpet to a horn. At the beginning of the text, after Marian has received the hearing trumpet from Carmella, she describes it as “grandly curved like a buffalo’s horn” (1). The

comparison is repeated shortly after when the ladies remark on the artefact's size, "It must be a buffalo's horn, buffalos are very large animals" (6). In her analysis of the feminine imagery present in *THT*, Orenstein compares the hearing trumpet to a horn, asserting that it stands as a clear representation of "a cornucopia, a horn of plenty," reminiscent of the feminine principle of abundance.⁹⁶ Orenstein also states that *THT* is a feminist re-inscription of the Grail Quest, one in which women "wrestle the grail from the hands of patriarchy."⁹⁷ In this regard, it is interesting to note that in *The Grail Legend* Emma Jung argues that the Holy Grail, and the journey of spiritual purification involved in attaining it, can be respectively seen as allegories of the Self and the individuation process.⁹⁸ In addition to this, she suggests that a "*Tischleindeckdich*, a horn of plenty"⁹⁹ is commonly used to represent the Holy Grail. Therefore, throughout Carrington's novel, from two different perspectives the hearing trumpet can be seen as a prevalent symbol of Jung's notion of the Self: if perceived as a horn it embodies feminine and masculine attributes in a balanced state, standing as a representation of the individuated psyche; and as a cornucopia it is equated to the Holy Grail, which according to Emma Jung also stands as a symbol of the Self.

There are other symbols of alchemical lore used by Jung to illustrate concepts such as the individuation process; among these are the visions of Zosimos of Panopolis, a third-century alchemist who described a series of visions he experienced while involved with alchemical work.¹⁰⁰ According to Jung, these visions "revealed the nature of the psychic processes in the background"¹⁰¹ and act as symbols or allegories of the process of individuation. The visions describe "[an] altar ... in the shape of a bowl" next to which stands a priest called Ion. Ion describes undergoing a sacrifice of unendurable pain in which he was dismembered and skinned, before his mutilated body was thrown into the fire to be purified as spirit. As Ion is conversing, Zosimos describes how "his eyes became as blood. And he spewed forth all his own flesh. And ... he changed into the opposite of himself, into a mutilated anthroparion, and he tore his flesh with his own teeth, and sank into himself."¹⁰² According to Jung, the figure of the anthroparion is a homunculus, a representation of the stages of transformation that the inner man undergoes through the alchemical process in order to be purified from matter to spirit.¹⁰³ This is the essence of alchemy, and also might be seen as the psychic purification involved in the process of individuation, where a person becomes "distinct from inner compulsions and voices that operate on one unconsciously."¹⁰⁴ The vision continues with the anthroparion telling Zosimos, "Those who wish to obtain the art enter here, and become spirits by escaping the body"; and Zosimos then observes "A

fiery spirit ... [who] tended the fire for the seething and the boiling and the burning of the men who rose up from it ... burning and yet alive!"¹⁰⁵

There are various elements in *THT* that closely resemble Jung's account of Zosimos's visions. The most obvious is the character of Prince Theutus Zosimus, the rightful owner of the "Musc de Madelaine" that Abbess Rosalinda steals in the novel (79). The name of the "black stallion, Homunculus" (87), ridden by the Abbess on her nightly escapades is also reminiscent of the homunculus of Zosimos's revelation. But the closest connection between the visions of Zosimos as described by Jung and *THT* lies in Marian's descent into hell (137):

As I reached the bottom of the steps I could smell sulphur and brimstone ... Beside the flames sat a woman stirring a great iron cauldron ... The woman who stood before me was myself ... She nodded gravely and pointed into the soup with the long wooden spoon ... "Jump into the broth, meat is scarce this season" ... she suddenly jabbed the pointed knife into my back side and ... I leapt into the boiling soup and stiffened in a moment of intense agony ... and there I was standing outside the pot stirring the soup in which I could see my own meat ... boiling away ... The soup was not as good as a bouillabaisse but it was a good ordinary stew. (136-39)

The cauldron in Marian's hell echoes the "altar in the shape of a bowl"¹⁰⁶ of Zosimos's account: like the priest Ion, Marian is mutilated, boiled and eaten by none other than herself. Furthermore, once Marian has eaten herself, in a similar way to Ion, she is purified "in spirit by escaping the body,"¹⁰⁷ for she is no longer limited by her elderly physique:

The darkness was no longer a hideous death trap ... I could see through the dark like a cat. I was part of the night like any shadow ... Although I was still in need of my trumpet I had recently developed a premonition of sound which I could translate afterwards through the trumpet (140, 148).

It is important to note that Marian's process of "alchemical purification" also establishes a direct link between Jungian psychoanalysis and magic realist literature. As noted in my previous examination of the elements of magical realism in *THT*, it is at this point in Carrington's text that Marian undergoes what Faris refers to as a "disruption of identity."¹⁰⁸ This re-orientation of identity is one of Faris's constituent elements of magic realist literature. Marian's literal descent into hell prior to her spiritual purification also illustrates another element of Jungian psychology: according to Emma Jung, as part of the process of individuation a person must undergo a "dark

night of the soul,”¹⁰⁹ what C G Jung himself refers to as the “night sea journey,”¹¹⁰ which denotes a trial that must come before the Self is attained, and involves a descent into some representation of the underworld. Once Marian has undergone her “dark night of the soul” and the process of purification is complete, she looks at her reflection in a mirror and sees “a three faced female whose eyes winked alternatively. One of the faces was black, one red, one white, and they belonged to the Abbess, the Queen Bee, and myself” (138).¹¹¹ According to Jung these three different colours, black, white and red, represent stages in the process of alchemical transformation.¹¹² Black stands for the body, white for the spirit, and red for perfection attained through balance.¹¹³ Marian’s vision after she has been purified in the cauldron makes an evident reference to the completion of the alchemical process – and the Jungian process of individuation and attainment of the Self.

Along with Surrealist thought and the Latin American cultural context in which *THT* was written, Jung’s alchemical imagery stands as evidence of yet an additional influence informing Carrington’s novel. As the previous analysis has demonstrated, these influences converge in *THT* through Carrington’s *sui generis* vision, producing a complex, whimsical text, capable of commenting on a range of ideas and elaborating new ones, with a creative, revolutionary stance. Jung’s alchemical imagery also presents further evidence of the magical realist inclinations present in the novel, which in conjunction with Carrington’s adaptations of Surrealist tropes, and her ubiquitous feminist ethos, make it reasonable to refer to *THT* as an instance of feminist magical realism.

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NOTES

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