Jacques-Laurent Agasse,
'Tiger in a Cave' (*c.*1814).

'We Played at Heroes and Villains': Mythmaking and Patriarchal Post-Apocalyptic Dystopia in *Heroes and Villains*

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The post-apocalyptic genre inevitably orients itself around the question: is it possible to start over after the end of the world? Our post-apocalyptic imaginings never truly depict the *end* of the world, however. Although apocalyptic landscapes and societies may appear markedly different from contemporary societies, real-world social codes regularly frame the narrative exploration of these fictional environments. Through such framing, the apocalypse genre's ability to stimulate contemplation on how we may 'start over' is often narrowed to a starting over of material circumstances, in worlds which still play by contemporary social rules (as related to gender, sexuality, race, age and ability). Angela Carter's post-apocalyptic dystopian novel *Heroes and Villains* (1969) is set many years after a nuclear apocalypse, and follows characters born into a post-catastrophe haunted by familiar oppressive patriarchal social structures. In Carter's narrative, the world may have ended, but patriarchy has not.

Patriarchal ideology is as embedded in Carter's speculative world as it was in the real world at the time of Carter's writing and, arguably, as it remains in our contemporary world today. Prior critics have explored Carter's feminist commentary in her demythologising of patriarchy and gender binaries in *Heroes and Villains*, both in the context of the time at which she wrote,[1] and in the context of later gender theory, including Judith Butler's work on fantasy and gender identity and Donna Haraway's cyborg and its feminist potential to challenge hegemonic gender roles.[2] Such examinations reveal how 'Carter uses science fiction literary conventions to talk about gender as performance'.[3] In dialogue with these observations of Carter's work, this paper provides a critical feminist reading of *Heroes and Villains* in the context of patriarchal relations in the early 2020s. Carter's feminist subversion of patriarchal mythology, as written in the 1960s, remains radical today in that it problematises and makes visible patriarchal control mechanics still dominant in contemporary society.

This paper additionally argues for a reinterpretation of the conclusion of *Heroes and Villains*, which has often been read as an empowerment of the novel's female protagonist, Marianne, and as pointing towards a feminist (potentially utopic) future beyond patriarchy.[4] As previous work highlights, however, at the end of the novel Marianne remains 'ensnared in a history of phallocentricism' which 'keeps relationships between the sexes locked at an impasse', in that she makes a play at 'tyrannically ruling … while enclosed in a system of violence'.[5] In concluding her novel this way, Carter critiques the legitimacy of female empowerment achieved through adoption of patriarchal notions of privilege and power – notions which likewise destroy Marianne's male foils, Jewel (her Barbarian lover) and Donally (an academic turned tribal shaman).

Carter's exploration into patriarchy does not allow her characters to play 'at heroes and villains',[6] in which a heroic triumph over patriarchal oppression may be obtained. Instead, Carter digs into the raw and entangled power dynamics that keep men and women alike complicit in fear-based, combative patriarchal relations. Through her evocation of post-apocalyptic dystopia, Carter suggests these relations are inevitably self-destructive and other-destroying and are additionally so embedded in society that – despite the many things and people future catastrophes may destroy – 'both patriarchy and cockroaches will survive the apocalypse'.[7]

Dystopian and post-apocalyptic environments afford creators the chance to engage in ideological critique. As Joe Trotta and Houman Sadri assert, dystopian fiction 'explores social or political struggle' through speculative societies in which 'a controlling power, ordinarily a government but it could also be a global corporation, a shadowy cabal, a religion, among other possible manifestations of powerful groups, oppresses, overregulates or unduly interferes in the lives of the characters'.[8] Apocalyptic fiction, on the other hand, is more occupied with cataclysmic events and survival leading up to, during, or following these events.[9] While the former genre focuses on how humanity chooses to live in society, the latter genre focuses on how humanity chooses to survive and what it may have to survive against. Yet as Trotta and Sadri illustrate, these genres are 'often lumped together' or even treated as interchangeable by certain creators and audiences.[10] These genres cohere so well because dystopian narratives and post-apocalyptic narratives offer complementary avenues for ideological critique. Both are, essentially, warning stories about society and the ideologies that have, can, or do construct how we see ourselves, each other, and the world.

According to Tom Moylan, the dystopian genre specifically is critically concerned with 'the impact of an unseen and unexamined social system on the everyday lives of everyday people'.[11] As Moylan explores, such dystopian storylines often feature an alienated protagonist who uncovers the truth behind the power systems in their society and subsequently attempts to resist such control. These storylines can either end in the dissenter's defeat and/or re-subsumption into the dystopian society, or with a victorious

overhaul of the dystopic order. Carter's *Heroes and Villains*, in part through its dual function as dystopia and post-apocalyptic narrative, is a subdued representation of the former plot arc, in that Carter's main characters experience defeat (both physical and psychological) and are reassimilated into the oppressive fear mechanics of their patriarchal society. Yet Carter approaches this tragic dystopian plot arc in a fashion still rarely addressed by dystopian narratives, in that in her characters' downfalls she exposes the myth of 'heroes and villains' for the ideological control mechanic that it is.

While many post-apocalyptic dystopian narratives ostensibly investigate the moral grey of humanity – its capacity for atrocity, oppression, and ignorance – dystopian titles often boil down to tales of heroes and their villains. Dystopian heroes may be flawed but still they (try to) save the day, be it in the form of saving their families, their survivor groups, their districts/nations, or the world itself.[12] Consider ill-fated dystopian narratives such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), in which the troubled dystopian hero attempts to escape and make a stand against societal structures which are exposed as 'authoritarian, totalitarian or repressive (political) regimes, where every portion of life is under control'.[13] Compared to *Heroes and Villains*, what is notably different in these narratives is that creators insinuate a preferable ideological worldview in how their protagonist 'breaks out of' or wakes up from complicity with dominant oppressive regimes.[14] The protagonist's new view on the world is presented as a superior, clear, and reasonable alternative to the dystopian society's worldview.

Carter radically subverts the dystopian hero by presenting characters who never 'wake up', who indeed never attain access to a 'superior' worldview which would allow them a clear perspective on the ideology that traps them in their dystopia. Carter's main characters each grapple with patriarchy, each show moments of longing to break free from its control, and each ultimately capitulate to its hegemony, in both life and death. What is most radical here is that Carter's characters never explicitly clarify for the reader what makes their world a dystopia; the patriarchal regime is inferred but never overtly addressed. By refusing her characters and by virtue the readers a clear definition of her speculative world's dystopian terms of existence, Carter exercises the dystopian genre's full potential to 'transgress … imposed boundaries'[15] and 'sensitize us to the ills, flaws and contradictions that afflict our contemporary world', while presenting a space for hopeful speculation on how 'we can learn from fictional futures in order to make changes in the present and create a different, more humane world'.[16] Carter refuses the unactionable utopian promise of a clear opposing worldview to oppressive ideologies, a promise of which many dystopian works are guilty. Instead, Carter exposes the tangled web of ideological complicity that keeps her characters and real-world societies beyond her novel embedded in patriarchy. Carter additionally calls on the united affordances of both post-apocalyptic and dystopian genres in their capacity to highlight and exacerbate survival scenarios, to explore and destabilise the 'fear-based "us versus them" binaries' that ground

speculative-fiction renditions of patriarchal society.[17] Prior to delving into this exploration, however, it is necessary to introduce Carter's main characters and briefly review the novel's plot.

Heroes and Villains takes place following an implied nuclear apocalypse and invokes both post-apocalyptic and dystopian genre conventions. A new world order has formed in this post-catastrophe landscape, as humanity has divided itself into two rival groups, the Professors and the Barbarians, and a third peripheral group of mutated humans, the Out People. The Professors represent elites who survived the nuclear holocaust in protective bunkers and now live in fortified enclaves, primarily run by the scholarly Professors themselves – bastions of lost societal order and history-keeping – and the Soldiers, their militant and conservative protectors. The Barbarians, by contrast, are composed of those who survived the nuclear fallout directly, and who now live a brutal and nomadic life in the post-apocalyptic wilds and ruins. The Professors and Barbarians demonise each other, casting each other as villains within their own societal mythos to legitimise their respective patriarchal social orders.[18] Such villainising includes the Professor's myth that Barbarians sew cats into the bellies of Professor women and the Barbarian's myth that Professor women possess the dreaded *vagina dentata*.[19]

Carter's novel follows Marianne, daughter of the Professor of History, from her early life with the Professors to her later life as a young woman with the Barbarians. As a child, Marianne witnesses the death of her older brother at the hands of a Barbarian boy (later revealed to be Jewel), an event which occupies her psyche throughout the rest of the novel.[20] Following the deaths of both of her parents, the increasingly discontent Marianne takes the first chance to flee her 'terribly boring' life with the Professors by freeing a captured Barbarian boy.[21] While Marianne's life becomes more exciting at first, it also becomes overtly physically violent, as juxtaposed by the violent psychological suppression imposed in Professor society, which forced 'maladjusted' individuals to either run away or kill themselves.[22]

The Barbarian boy, Jewel, takes Marianne captive and brings her to his tribe, over which he is the leader, seemingly by patriarchal birth rite as the eldest of his late parents' swarm of sons. This swarm attempts to 'rape and possibly murder' Marianne, while Jewel watches and laughs.[23] As a Professor's daughter, Marianne is a mysterious, threatening, and reviled figure to the Barbarians. Dr Donally, an exiled Professor who now lives among the Barbarian tribe as their 'Shaman' and Jewel's tutor, sums up Marianne's mythic function to the Barbarians as 'a gift from the unknown' who provides them 'with a focus for the fear and resentment they feel against their arbitrary destiny'.[24]

Donally stops Jewel's brothers in their attempted assault, but only to preserve Marianne for later use in his plan to establish a new religion among the Barbarians, in which he intends to install both Marianne and Jewel in mythic roles. Donally goes so far as to jokingly call Marianne the 'virgin of the swamp' and tells her it is for the best Jewel's

brothers did not rape her because '[f]amiliarity breeds contempt. You'll have to remain terrifying, you know; otherwise, what hope is there for you?'[25] Donally's words prove prophetic not only for Marianne but for himself and Jewel. As Carter illustrates through each character's respective journey and fate, leading positions in patriarchy grow increasingly precarious when they lose claim to fear-induced power. These power dynamics are drawn to the fore when Marianne escapes the Barbarians and, in response, Jewel pursues her, rapes her, and drags her back. Donally then carries out his mythic plans by marrying the two in a ceremony orchestrated as a 'celebration of [Jewel's] marriage to the queen of the midden, a pale-eyed and pale-skinned mysteriously alien girl attired in the ruins of a wedding dress' intended to establish 'the religious authority of Jewel among the Yahoos'.[26]

After Marianne becomes pregnant, Jewel and Donally's rivalry for power over the tribe comes to a head. Jewel, now with an heir on the way, has access to additional patriarchal authority and begins to aggressively question the control Donally holds over him. When Donally refuses to cleave to Jewel's newfound authority and instead attempts to murder his rebellious puppet, Jewel violently casts his tutor out of the tribe. Jewel cannot move beyond his parasitic reliance on Donally, however, and ultimately launches a suicidal rescue mission when his tutor is captured by the Professors. Jewel and Donally are both killed, and Marianne is left pregnant in a tribe that hates and fears her, yet she claims she will use this fear to 'rule them with a rod of iron'.[27] Whether or not Marianne may be effective in this endeavour, and what it means that she makes such a claim at that point in her character arc, will be discussed later. First it is essential to analyse the patriarchal societal foundations Carter reproduces and exposes in the world and characters of *Heroes and Villains*.

As evidenced by their myths and by Marianne's experiences with the Professors and later the Barbarians, both societies are patriarchal and 'pervaded by misogyny and sexual politics of inequality that cut across class hierarchies. Women's inferiority … is reflected in the division of labor which confines both Professor and Barbarian women to the sphere of domesticity. Early marriage, frequent child bearing, even wife beating are common practices' in both societies.[28] These gendered practices subjugate women in subservience to patriarchally constructed male sexuality, whether that sexuality is presented as controlled male desire, as among the Professors, or presented as feral male desire, as among the Barbarians. As Yutaka Okuhata observes, 'it is not only in the "rational" society of the Professors, which represses sexual expressions and desires to an extreme extent, but also in the nomadic society of the Barbarians, which blindly justifies bare sexual desire, that most women, living at the bottom of male-dominated world, have lost both psychological and physical freedom'.[29] Neither the Professors' nor the Barbarians' male-oriented relationship with desire is natural, but instead constructed around mechanics of patriarchal control. Carter especially reveals these control mechanics in Jewel's rape of

Marianne, which is 'nothing but Jewel's expression of his masculine superiority'.[30] Jewel himself admits that he has assaulted Marianne not out of an uncontrollable, sexual, male urge, but to control her. Jewel is 'very frightened of [Marianne]' and attacks her out of hatred, an attack which likewise feeds into Donally's intention to control Marianne by marrying her to Jewel to 'swallow [her] up and incorporate' her into the tribe to expand his and Jewel's influence.[31]

Carter's depictions of the Professors and Barbarians as conflicting yet parasitic social groups, as well as Donally and Jewel as conflicting yet parasitic individuals, emphasises how patriarchal oppression always serves a dual controlling purpose over both women *and* men. The oppression of women under patriarchy involves convincing women of their inferior subject position within the patriarchal order via a social mythos that encourages women to silence, minimise and brutalise themselves to fit restrictive patriarchal definitions of femininity and womanhood.[32] Yet the oppression of women under patriarchy also requires men to control and inspire fear in other men. As Johnson explores, '*under patriarchy, control is both the source of fear and the only solution offered for it*', meaning that '[a]s each man pursues control as a way to defend and advance himself, he fuels the very same response in *other* men'.[33] Men police each other under patriarchy to comply with the oppression of women and the perpetuation of patriarchal gender roles, through both the promise of societal privilege for men who are complicit and the promise of societal punishment and ostracisation for men who are not.[34] Such patriarchal policing occurs both when men pressure other men to participate directly in patriarchy (e.g., cat-calling or slut-shaming) and when they take 'paths of least resistance' to gendered oppression, by either going with the patriarchal flow or simply not speaking up against it.[35] Many men are therefore incentivised by the threat posed by other men to take these patriarchy-paved pathways that sustain male domination.[36]

Such paths of least resistance include perpetuating rather than debunking patriarchal myths, such as those which Carter sets up between the Professors and the Barbarians. The Professor's myth, that Barbarian men sew cats into women, frames Barbarian men as uncontrollable, lustful, and violent in their supposed brutalisation of the female body and their perversion of women's 'natural' maternal function.[37] By raping women and additionally implanting cats into their bellies, the Barbarians of Professor mythos simultaneously mimic and brutally destroy the potential for pregnancy, all standing against the Professor's established adherence to reason and natural order, two claims on which patriarchy as an ideology is built.[38] This myth not only manipulates fear of the Barbarians to control Professor women but serves to control Professor men; it insinuates that Professor men are superior to Barbarian men in that, in order to control women, Barbarian men must attack and mutilate them, whereas Professor women are naturally subservient to the males of their community. For a Professor man to sympathise with or even consider joining the Barbarians would,

therefore, not only lose him his superiority among the Professors, but insinuate he is even inferior to women, over whom he can only assert control as the Barbarians do, by forcing and destroying them. This myth is therefore a mechanic by which Professor society not only coerces women into consent with the Professors' version of patriarchal society, but men as well.

The Barbarian myth regarding the Professors performs the same function, in that it suggests the superiority of Barbarian men over all women and over other men who do not control women like Barbarian men do. As Jane Caputi asserts, the *vagina dentata* is frequently utilised in the mythos of patriarchal civilisation to instil fear of castration and demarcate the powerful woman as monstrous.[39] The toothed vaginas of Professor women, with whom the Professor men live, therefore confer – in Barbarian lore – a castrated, impotent, non-threatening masculinity onto male Professors. Donally exploits this belief in his attempt to control the Barbarians. By marrying the mysterious and threatening Professor woman to Jewel, he elevates Jewel's status within the tribe. Jewel is exceptional among Barbarian leaders in that he is the Barbarian man who tamed the Professor woman and her toothed genitals, a feat not unlike many mythic heroes who 'domesticated' monstrous, powerful women by means that infer sexual domination.[40] Within this patriarchal mythos, Marianne's pregnancy following their marriage reaffirms Jewel's male potency and power, via his simultaneous survival and conquering of the *vagina dentata*.

Marianne's participation in this mythopoeic patriarchal rhetoric is initially unwitting, first in her tedium among the Professors and later in her attempts to flee and fight back against the Barbarians. Ultimately, however, Marianne complies with, rather than subverts, conventional patriarchal power structures in how she attempts to empower herself in the latter half of the novel. This complicity renders her earlier critical resistance of patriarchal structures as part of the overarching patriarchal myth of woman-taming. Yet the patriarchal mythos, evoked by Donally and Jewel for their own sense of control and identity affirmation, ultimately devours not just Marianne's potential for life outside patriarchy, but both men's lives as well.

Carter reveals the most intimate complexities of patriarchal domination mechanics through the contentious, manipulative relationships between Marianne, Jewel, and Donally. Speaking specifically to the patriarchal dimensions of the relationship between Marianne and Jewel, Eva C. Karpinski concludes that the 'fact that [they] have internalized the values of patriarchal culture dooms their relationship and puts Marianne's autonomy in question. Through their relationship, Carter shows the damage inflicted on men and women alike by dominant constructions of sexual difference.'[41] The adherence to such sexual differences not only undermines connections between men and women but connections between members of the same gender, who, under threat of devaluation of their place in the patriarchal order, must define those connections by terms of control.

Such control and subsequent fear-based relationships lead to fractured identities, as can be seen in Jewel, in his manipulative relationships with Marianne and Donally. Chiharu Yoshioka accurately describes Jewel as a 'surreal character, whose identity is an exhibitive representation demarcated by the gaze of others', caught between the archetypes of 'scary Other Barbarian from the Professors' side, or as … Prince and Messiah from the Barbarians' side'.[42] Ultimately, Carter reveals how this split identity leads not to Jewel's 'waking up' from patriarchal terms of existence, but to his doomed desperation to find stability within those terms.

To analyse Jewel's complicity with the patriarchal structures that fracture him, I focus not on his relationship with Marianne (which is covered elsewhere in depth),[43] but the culmination of his relationship with Donally. In the penultimate exchange between the two men, Carter's representation of toxic, fear-based male relationships comes to the fore as these male characters attempt to police and dominate each other in the patriarchal order. Following the revelation of Marianne's pregnancy, Jewel becomes contemplative about his position not only within the tribe, but in the dystopian world order. He considers joining the Professors, an idea which Donally shuts down with Marianne's assistance, in order to keep Jewel where he needs him in his new mythos. In response, Jewel attacks Donally's authority by demanding Donally either leave the tribe or free Donally's frail 13-year-old son, who is 'labelled as a half-wit' and '[c]rudely treated like a monstrous creature' by his father, who has spent the whole novel restraining and abusing him.[44] Under pressure from Jewel to free the boy, Donally admits he is afraid of his own son and so would rather be banished than let his son roam free. Donally, here, exposes the fear-based control that operates as patriarchy's foundation.

Donally is afraid of his son because this is the one character that Donally cannot control via his manipulation tactics. Even Marianne is coerced into complicity with Donally's manipulative plans, from her marriage to Jewel to her assistance in convincing Jewel not to attempt to join the Professors. Donally's inability to shape and control his son within and to patriarchal standards compromises Donally's own sense of power and identity within the patriarchal structure; Donally can act as powerful father figure to Jewel, but he is an ineffective father figure to his biological son. The familial relations operating between Donally, his son, and Jewel bear Freudian and Lacanian connotations.[45] Donally's perceived patriarchal failure as father troubles his identification with the concept of the Symbolic Father, the ultimate power position within patriarchy in its capacity to 'represent law, order, and authority'.[46] Jewel, therefore, as complicit pseudo-son to Donally, helps re-establish Donally's identity as it is attached to patriarchal authority. Donally, as pseudo-father, performs the same function to the orphaned Jewel, connecting Jewel back to patriarchal power and giving him the tools by which to define his identity within that power structure.

The Symbolic Father, however, is intended to inspire fear,[47] not to be fearful. When Jewel, now with a claim to the Father himself through Marianne's pregnancy, challenges Donally and uncovers Donally's fear of his own son, Jewel responds, 'How can I possibly trust you if you're frightened of something? Take your spells and prayers elsewhere and take away that bloody snake which signifies nothing. I don't want you anymore.'[48] Here, Jewel refutes not only Donally's claim to wield patriarchal power, but the patriarchal religion Donally has been building in the tribe, with Jewel at its centre. By rejecting the rituals and 'prayers' to which Donally has accustomed the tribe, as well as Donally's serpentine religious symbol, Jewel questions both patriarchal power itself as well as the identity that has been prescribed to him within it. This is especially evident in Jewel's dismissal of the snake; Donally's obsession with snakes, from his pet to the Garden of Eden iconography he tattooed onto Jewel's back, draws on both the inherently patriarchal myth of the Fall and its 'destructive image of women',[49] as well as the phallic imagery of the snake itself.[50] In refuting these representations of Donally's patriarchy, Jewel rejects Donally's authority over his identity, but in doing so also rejects his very sense of self as it has been moulded by Donally.

Jewel may seek emancipation from restricting patriarchal standards on one level but, on another, Donally's (and patriarchy's) influence remains imprinted into his very flesh. As Yoshioka observes, 'Jewel enjoys acting the role of the captain of the Barbarians … only until he realizes that his self is the conceptual product manufactured and manipulated by the ideological strings of both Donally and the Professors.'[51] Within these tangled patriarchal relations between Jewel, Donally, and the patriarchal social and mythic forces of their societies, Carter exposes patriarchy's dependence on intergenerational complicity and dominance.[52] Carter likewise exposes the cost to identity when one attempts to break free from this dependency.

Jewel struggles to establish a new identity for himself after banishing his Symbolic Father, ultimately choosing to abort his struggle – rather than broach ideological alternatives – in his attempted suicide by drowning. Marianne saves Jewel, against his will, and he hits her for her interference; Carter here evokes a staple of patriarchal oppression. Jewel resorts to domestic abuse to try and access a sense of control over Marianne which he now lacks in life. As Gwen Hunnicutt explores, '[m]en use violence to maintain their advantage in the most *disadvantaged* situations. The more disenfranchised men are from legitimate positions of dominance, the more they may use violence to reinforce quite possibly the only position of domination available.'[53] Disenfranchised by his patriarchal lot, Jewel nonetheless employs patriarchal mechanisms of control here to attempt to stabilise himself (at Marianne's expense), which further cements – rather than moves away from – his dependence on patriarchy. This dependency later sees Jewel take on a suicide mission to save Donally and by extension perpetuate Jewel's reliance on the Symbolic Father, even if it means the end of his life.

Whether Jewel attempts to save Donally to return to the patriarchal hero role for which he has been groomed, or out of his toxic yet seductive bond with the patriarchal identity Donally's presence provides, Jewel's choice insinuates it is easier to throw one's life away pursuing the unstable myth of the Father than to redefine one's terms of existence beyond patriarchy. Carter's writing probes the idea that, from a patriarchal perspective, death of the body is both preferable and more attainable than death of patriarchal selfhood. Unfortunately, the complicity with this patriarchal message is evident not only in the physical destruction of Jewel and Donally, but in the destruction of the pursuit of a feminist alternative to patriarchy, as manifested by Marianne.

At the end of the novel, after Jewel's death, Marianne claims she will not be 'Queen' of the Barbarians but instead 'the tiger lady and rule them with a rod of iron'.[54] This claim of Marianne's is often repeated and analysed in scholarship on *Heroes and Villains*, typically as an example of Marianne's empowerment. Critics claim that in her assumption of authority, following the demise of the tribe's two key male power figures, Marianne will rewrite the tribe's dystopian society through feminist terms and female autonomy.[55] Central to this argument, and any analysis of Marianne's claim to power, is Carter's symbolic use of the tiger. Speaking to Carter's use of the tiger throughout her literary canon, Scott A. Dimovitz claims Carter's tiger symbolised 'the properties of a bestial manliness that could not be tamed' and that through the tiger Carter instils in her characters' an 'identification with the aggressor as a tactic for survival'.[56]

It is Donally in *Heroes and Villains* who is initially obsessed with the tiger's symbolic potential for the mythos of the tribe. He attempts to turn a Barbarian child into a symbolic tiger through tattoos, much as he tattooed symbolic significance into Jewel's flesh; however, the child dies, signalling not only Donally's inability to harness and weaponise the mythic potential of the tiger, but the inability for anyone to completely control myth. Despite this failure, Jewel later wishes to be made a tiger himself, while Donally wishes to try again on Jewel's future heir. Marianne, too, learns to desire the power afforded the tiger identity. Throughout *Heroes and Villains*, Carter emphasises the tiger as representative of that which has achieved dominance given that, in her dystopian setting, '[a]fter the apocalypse carnivorous cats once again become the king of beasts; they are the only ones that gained power instead of losing it. Predators could survive and rule.'[57] Marianne, like Jewel and Donally before her, cleaves to the patriarchal injunction to claim power through predation.

While Marianne's self-association with the tiger is empowering, it is therefore empowering on patriarchal terms. Marianne seeks to confer upon herself the tiger's mythic potential for fear and control, an inherently patriarchal tactic. In this way, the 'novel ends with one form of tyranny replacing another, as Marianne adopts a masculine positioning in relation to the law by transforming herself from victim to predator'.[58] This ending is in keeping with Marianne's troubled yet increasingly complicit relationship with

the patriarchal structures that bind her identity. Marianne learns to resist control by adopting and redeploying the same patriarchally generated violence and oppression that Jewel, Donally, and their societies have deployed against her. By operating in such a way, Marianne does not destabilise patriarchal power dynamics but instead attempts to renegotiate them in a way that betters her individual power position.

Carter orchestrates Marianne's character arc to reveal how female desires to subvert patriarchy can, in such complex, coercive dynamics, end up subverting intersectional feminism instead. Carter does so not only in Marianne's adoption of Jewel and Donally's power tactics to mythopoeticise herself through the tiger lady, but in many of Marianne's choices throughout the novel. Consider, as Hope Jennings highlights, Marianne's shift in attitude following her pregnancy, at which time she:

> is seduced by the allure of a mythic version of herself, accepting somewhat apathetically and then wholeheartedly the reproductive function into which Jewel trapped her. She comes to believe a child might provide her with some form of dynastic power, ensuring her place among the Barbarians, just as Jewel had desired a son to ensure his own status.[59]

Elsewhere, Karpinski's analysis of Marianne and Jewel's romance reveals that Marianne's ostensibly feminist exploration of her desire and sexuality through Jewel also reabsorb her into patriarchal gender relations.[60] Marianne can enjoy Jewel but only conditionally, as his captive wife who will provide him with an heir to reaffirm his own power within the tribe.

Marianne's ostensibly rebellious yet ultimately patriarchally complicit desires also manifest in her sexual encounter with Donally's son. She 'seizes the chance to dominate another' when the opportunity presents itself through the disabled boy, indicating that Marianne has learned to react 'to the repression of her desires and identity by in turn inflicting similar acts of repression on others'.[61] Instead of exploring her sexuality beyond patriarchal gender relations and power dynamics, Marianne attempts to reverse – not break – these power dynamics, by asserting power over the boy as Jewel did her, and by taking revenge on Jewel's dominance of her by cuckolding him. Cuckoldry, in this context, is a form of revenge that only functions *as* revenge when both the cuckolded husband and the cheating wife prescribe to patriarchal terms of existence, which treat wives as property over which husbands prove their effectiveness at domination and control.[62] Through such acts, Marianne routinely attempts to override her own personal oppression under patriarchy *through* rather than *by subverting* patriarchy's terms. Marianne's ultimate claiming of the tiger lady therefore manifests not as a radical departure from patriarchy, but as her final attempt to claim patriarchal power for herself.

While the reader never sees what becomes of Marianne in her pursuit of the tiger lady, Carter has positioned Marianne's final patriarchal power grab to be just as ineffective as those that came before. Marianne only makes her tiger lady claim after Donally's son has informed her that Jewel's brother Johnny – who has routinely attempted to oust Marianne – intends to move the tribe and leave Marianne behind, to be captured by the Soldiers who killed Jewel and Donally. Although Marianne has had instances of fear-induced power in the tribe, these moments were both outnumbered by moments in which the tribe expressed contempt for her or a desire to harm her, and only occurred while her chief male protectors, Donally and Jewel, were alive. Despite Marianne's bravado, Carter has therefore left her protagonist in a precarious position, with a people who showed her resentful respect only when under pressure from male authorities, who were themselves using Marianne to cement their own power. Even if Marianne were to stay with the tribe, Carter has set up this possibility through two patriarchal relations; either Marianne is allowed to stay because she carries Jewel's child (evoking patriarchal concepts of male heredity and inheritance), or Marianne effectively wields her tiger lady/iron rod fear mechanics, which themselves find their origin in and effectiveness through patriarchy. Whatever Marianne's fate, it is therefore defined – like the fates of Jewel, Donally, and the Barbarians and Professors as social orders – by oppressive patriarchal terms.

In their contested yet ultimate complicity with patriarchy, Carter's characters may not themselves respond radically to patriarchal dystopia within their fictional worlds, but it is this very approach which renders *Heroes and Villains* itself a radical post-apocalyptic dystopian work. Carter eschews fictitious radicalism for the radical potential inherent in exposing oppressive power relations for the intoxicating, complex, rewarding, but ultimately destructive and constructed forces that they are. Carter is radical in that she does not present patriarchal complicity nor the urge to subvert it as heroic. Instead, she presents both as coming at severe, self-destructive costs, which Carter additionally insinuates not even the people most fractured by patriarchy are willing to pay – not when some shred of patriarchal power remains within their grasp. Patriarchy's greatest coercion tactic, Carter reveals, is convincing its would-be radical dissenters that there are no viable identities beyond its mythos; that whether one is empowered, disenfranchised, or overtly oppressed, the only choice is to keep playing at heroes and villains until one either becomes the tiger or is devoured by it.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Çelik Ekmekçi, 'Marianne's Body Politics in Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*', *Folklor/edebiyat* 27, no. 106 (2021): 272-90; and Scott A. Dimovitz, *Angela Carter: Surrealist, Psychologist, Moral Pornographer* (London: Routledge, 2016).
2. See Dominika Oramus, 'Woman as Alien: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*', *The AnaChronist* 15 (2010): 117-34; and Elisabeth Mahoney, '"But Elsewhere?": The Future of Fantasy in *Heroes and Villains*', in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London: Routledge, 1997), 85-99.
3. Oramus, 'Woman as Alien', 122.
4. Ekmekçi, 'Body Politics', 282-3.
5. Hope Jennings, 'Dystopian Matriarchies: Deconstructing the Womb in Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* and *The Passion of New Eve*', *Michigan Feminist Studies*, no. 21 (2008): 63-84 (73).
6. Angela Carter, *Heroes and Villains* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 139.
7. Jen Rinaldi, 'What Feminism has to say about *World War Z*', in *Braaaiiinnnsss!: From Academics to Zombies*, ed. Robert Smith (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2011), 9-19 (9).
8. Joe Trotta and Houman Sadri, 'Introduction: Welcome to the Beginning of the End of Everything', in *Broken Mirrors: Representations of Apocalypses and Dystopias in Popular Culture*, ed. Joe Trotta, Zlatan Filipovic and Houman Sadri (UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 1-14 (4).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Trotta and Sadri, 'Introduction', 5.
11. Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder: Routledge, 2000), xiii.
12. Examples include: *Battle Royale* (1999), *The Children of Men* (1992), *The City of Ember* (2003), the *Divergent* series (2011-13), *Edge of Tomorrow* (2014), *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), *The Fifth Wave* series (2013-16), *The Hunger Games* (2008-10), *I Am Legend* (2007), *Looper* (2012), *The Maze Runner* series (2009-11), *Parable of the Sower* (1993), *A Quiet Place* (2018), *The Stand* (1978), *Snowpiercer* (2013), *V for Vendetta* (1982-9) and *The Walking Dead* (2003-19).
13. Maja Sekulovi , 'Orwell's *1984* in Peki 's *1999*: Intertextual Relations', *Primerjalna Književnost* 42, no. 3 (2019): 223-45 (229).
14. As seen quite literally in the dystopian science-fiction film *The Matrix* (1999), in which hero Neo wakes up from his oppressive virtual reality; see Peter Fitting, 'Unmasking the Real? Critique and Utopia in Recent SF Films', in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 155-66 (161).
15. Andrei Simut, 'Dystopian Geographies in *The Year of the Flood* and *Hunger Games*', *Caietele Echinox* 27, no. 27 (2014): 297-306 (297).
16. Isabel Santaularia, '"Typescript of the Second Origin" and Current YA Dystopian and Post-Apocalypse Fiction in English: Prefiguring the Female Hero', *Alambique* 4, no. 2 (2017): 1-20 (1).
17. Melissa Ames, 'Engaging "Apolitical" Adolescents: Analyzing the Popularity and Educational Potential of Dystopian Literature Post-9/11', *The High School Journal* 97, no. 1 (2013): 3-20 (5).
18. Rajaram Sitaram Zirange, 'Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*: A Dystopian Romance', *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* 19, no. 2 (2013): 89-98 (96).
19. Zirange, 'Dystopian Romance', 94.
20. Zirange, 'Dystopian Romance', 96.
21. Carter, *Heroes*, 14.
22. Carter, *Heroes*, 8, 12, 21.
23. Carter, *Heroes*, 68.
24. Carter, *Heroes*, 72.
25. Carter, *Heroes*, 71.
26. Chiharu Yoshioka, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment in the 1960s Gothic Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*', *Gothic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2006): 68-79 (74).
27. Carter, *Heroes*, 212.

28. Eva C. Karpinski, 'Signifying Passion: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* as a Dystopian Romance', *Utopian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2000): 137-51 (141).
29. Yutaka Okuhata, 'Rousseau in a Post-Apocalyptic Context: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* and Science Fiction', *Humanities* 8 (2019): 1-18 (12).
30. Zirange, 'Dystopian Romance', 95.
31. Carter, *Heroes*, 79.
32. Tracy M. Hallstead, *Pygmalion's Chisel: For Women Who Are 'Never Good Enough'* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 4-5.
33. Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling our Patriarchal Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 51 (italics *sic*).
34. *Ibid.*
35. Johnson, *The Gender Knot*, 30-1.
36. Celina Proch and Michael Kleu, 'Models of Masculinities in *Troy*: Achilles, Hector and their Female Partners', in *Ancient Worlds in Film and Television: Gender and Politics*, ed. Almut-Barbara Renger and Jon Solomon (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 175-93 (177).
37. See Jennings, 'Dystopian Matriarchies', for more on how Carter's dystopian writing exposes and problematises the patriarchal elevation of motherhood and women's destiny as 'natural-born mothers' (66).
38. Hallstead, *Pygmalion's Chisel*, 16.
39. Jane Caputi, *Goddesses and Monsters: Women, Myth, Power, and Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press/Popular Press, 2004), 28.
40. Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 106.
41. Karpinski, 'Signifying Passion', 145.
42. Yoshioka, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment', 75-6.
43. Ekmekçi, 'Body Politics'; Karpinski, 'Signifying Passion'; Oramus, 'Woman as Alien'; Yoshioka, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment'; Zirange, 'Dystopian Romance'.
44. Yoshioka, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment', 71.
45. Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990), 68-9.
46. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan,* 67.
47. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 68.
48. Carter, *Heroes*, 178.
49. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1974), 45.
50. Carter, *Heroes*, 41.
51. Yoshioka, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment', 75.
52. Ekmekçi, 'Body Politics', 280.
53. Gwen Hunnicutt, 'Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women: Resurrecting "Patriarchy" as a Theoretical Tool', *Violence Against Women* 15, no. 5 (2009): 553-73 (560).
54. Carter, *Heroes*, 212.
55. Mahoney, '"But Elsewhere?"', 83; Oramus, 'Woman as Alien', 124; Zirange, 'Dystopian Romance', 97.
56. Dimovitz, *Angela Carter*, 120.
57. Oramus, 'Woman as Alien', 132-3.
58. Jennings, 'Dystopian Matriarchies', 72.
59. Jennings, 'Dystopian Matriarchies', 69.
60. Karpinski, 'Signifying Passion', 145.
61. Jennings, 'Dystopian Matriarchies', 70.
62. Samuel Fullerton, 'Fatal Adulteries: Sexual Politics in the English Revolution', *The Journal of British Studies* 60, no. 4 (2021): 793-821 (800).