Litera: Dil, Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi
Litera: Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies

İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

Litera 2022; 32(1): 41-64
DOI: 10.26650/LITERA2021-876183

Research Article

Dismissed Possibilities: Thingness, Posthumanism and Corporeal Feminism in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*

Özge ÖZ[1]

[1]Research Assistant, Istanbul Bilgi University, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, Istanbul, Turkiye

ORCID: Ö.Ö. 0000-0002-0074-374X

Corresponding author:
Özge ÖZ,
İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, İstanbul, Türkiye
E-mail: ozge.oz@bilgi.edu.tr

Submitted: 07.02.2021
Revision Requested: 05.07.2021
Last Revision Received: 15.07.2021
Accepted: 17.09.2021

Citation: Oz, O. (2022). Dismissed possibilities: Thingness, posthumanism and corporeal feminism in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*. *Litera, 32*(1), 41-64. https://doi.org/10.26650/LITERA2021-876183

ABSTRACT

In Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984), the protagonist Fevvers is a character with an overwhelming bodily presence, whose identity is mediated through her bodily performances and via the viewership of the spectacle that is her "self". Always facing the question "Is she fact or is she a fiction?", the real identity and being of Fevvers seems to escape the reader through her magnified corporeality and performativity. Yet, as the episodes in which Fevvers performs as inanimate objects or is juxtaposed next to them show, the corporeal existence of Fevvers harbors many posthuman possibilities for subjectivity, even though Fevvers is also discovered to be severely marked by her human identity and femininity. Using a theoretical framework informed by writings on thing theory, posthumanism, and posthuman feminism, this paper explores the hybrid bodily existence of Fevvers from a post humanist angle to point out that despite demonstrating a general intuition towards a posthuman understanding of subjectivity and feminism as also claimed by former critics, *Nights at the Circus* finally dismisses such possibilities for a "corporeal feminism" as manifestoed by Elizabeth Grozs. Staying loyal to her human nature, the novel's protagonist Fevvers turns down possibilities offered by her animal, thing, and machine beings and subsumes her hybridity under corporeal feminism.

Keywords: Posthumanism, thing theory, Angela Carter, feminism, *Nights at the Circus*

Introduction

The focus of Angela Carter's 1984 novel *Nights at the Circus* is no doubt its main character Fevvers, whose career as an *aerialiste* at the turn of the century reads as an exploration of the limits of female experience. Growing up in a London brothel and rising to fame and fortune from the slums with the merit of her winged body, Fevvers defies all binaries and categories that can contain her with a performativity that situates her as being masculine, feminine, human, animal, and inanimate all at the same time. However, this paper aims to explain that although the protagonist of *Nights at the Circus* is widely recognized as having a Bakhtinian "grotesque body" in the novel's scholarship and the novel's narrative is read in "carnivalesque" terms along with similar evaluations of its relationship with alternating forms of corporeal existence, the different embodiments of Fevvers in conjunction with human, animal, and inanimate forms are nonetheless possibilities for a posthuman subjectivity dismissed for corporeal feminism. Despite the narrative's extraordinary proclivity for approximating the human realm to others and its potential to prelude a post humanist and post gender feminism, which will be heralded by Donna Haraway only a year later in "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985/2001), the novel's ending prevails a corporeal understanding of feminism as notably explained in the writings of Elizabeth Grozs (1987,1994) but also shared by earlier feminists such as Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. Grozs' (1987,1994) conceptualization of corporeal feminism displays influences of the ontological and epistemological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (also an influence for Irigaray), whose emphasis on the importance of the body and the bodily senses on the formation of subjectivity is reflected in corporeal feminism's keenness to overwrite the boundaries between the female body and the female mind/subjectivity. The importance of studying Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* within this locus comes from the fact that while the novel allows for a reading of Fevvers' subjectivity under the lens of theories of new-materialistic speculative philosophy such as posthumanism and thing theory (which also owe, among others, much to the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty[1] and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Heidegger for their conception and development) the ending of the novel establishes Fevvers' corporeality within corporeal feminism and essential female subjectivity at the cost of her "thingness" and her implied potential for posthuman and postgender subjectivity. As a result, this paper evaluates Carter's *Nights at the Circus* as a work that offers readings from a posthuman angle, but

1 "For Merleau-Ponty, subjects and objects constitute one another in a relationship characterized by 'reversibility' and 'intertwining' " (Boehm, 2012, p.5)

also restrains its central narrative interest to corporeal feminism. While the following first section will examine the earlier analyses of Fevvers' corporeality and interpretations of Angela Carter's literature in relation to posthumanism and posthuman femininity, the later sections of this text will look at Fevvers in relation to "thingness" and thing theory and also evaluate the novel's other strains of "posthuman" narrative, before finally explaining that these instances are characterized by reductions to objectification and anthropomorphism, and finally in Fevvers' case, a turn towards female essentialism and corporeal feminism.

Beyond the carnivalesque readings of *Nights at the Circus*

The reader of *Nights at the Circus* meets Fevvers through the lens of the American journalist Walser, whose portrayal of Fevvers captures her daring desire to cross the boundaries of gender-specific behavior. During their lengthy interview, Fevvers drinks champagne with the thirst of a stranded sailor, stuffs herself with "gargantuan enthusiasm" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 22) while spilling gravy around, and lets a "ripping fart ring round the room" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 11) so that Walser knows she has the upper hand in this interview. Fevvers' excessive bodily presence and behavior during this interview is a measure to ensure that Walser, as the temporary narrator of this young woman, is faced with the "excess" in her which resists the reductionisms of his pen. Though Walser as a journalist may have the narrative power to define or transform Fevvers' identity in the eyes of his readers, the way Fevvers dominates the interview with her bodily presence and her choreography of "masculine" bodily behavior suggests that she, after all, understands that there must be more than just words and concepts to define her identity.

Former critics of the novel approached the immense bodily presence of Fevvers from a Bakhtinian point of view and defined Fevvers as having a "grotesque body". In "Feminine Freakishness: Carnivalesque Bodies in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*", Wendy O'Brien (2006) builds on the concepts derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1965/1984) and explains Fevvers' "corporeal excess" (para. 2) as an outcome of her "grotesque body", which also marks her carnivalesque identity and existence. O'Brien (2006) explains that for Fevvers, "the excess of the carnivalesque prompts a crisis of subjectivity that signals both the redundancy of restrictive ideologies of demarcation and hierarchy" and "the playful possibilities of corporeal fluidity" (para. 2). Like others, O'Brien (2006) refers to the "ambiguity" of Fevvers' performativity "as a

destabilization of the assumed causality between corporeality and ontology" (para. 2). Similarly, in "Grotesque Bodies and Spaces in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*", P.A Genca (2018) surveys yet another transgressive Carter protagonist (Eve/lyn) and proposes to view Eve/lyn' s grotesqueness in *The Passion of New Eve* as "a critique of binaries such as normal/abnormal, sane/insane, beautiful/ugly" etc., and deems it as being "significant for the relationship between the human and the environment in the sense that the grotesque offers an alternative to the conventional and monolithic perception of this relationship"(p. 121). As these comments from reading Carter's works and characters with the help of Bakhtinian concepts of "carnivalesque" and "grotesque" demonstrate, it is not only possible but also common to evaluate *Nights at the Circus* as a subversive novel in which the liminal ground between binaries, categories, and bodies is threaded.

The fact that Carter's protagonists are commonly associated with Bakhtinian concepts of grotesque and carnivalesque is hardly surprising. With a central character that gorges, belches, and farts in the narrative, the concepts jump at the reader rather than imply themselves in *Nights at the Circus*. If the wonder of Fevvers' feathered wings hints an unlikely ethereality, the unusual commonness of her mouth and bum, in turn, elucidates a carnality and bestiality that cancels any differentiation between the inside and out, the dead and the alive, the man and the animal, and the reason and unreason, which also "facilitates a celebratory reading of the amorphous, leaking, and engulfing body, as a means by which the boundaries of the body are rendered permeable and slippery" (O'Brien, 2006, para. 27). Yet, several objections and additions to a *carnivalesque* and *grotesque* reading of Fevvers' body emerge just in the moment where "a celebratory reading" feels imminent. While Genca (2018) pins down the grotesque as an important alternative to the "conventional" and "monolithic" relationship between the human and the environment, and O'Brien (2006) further nominates it as a "destabilization" of the "causality between corporeality and ontology," the corporeality and corporeal performativity of Fevvers is seen to shield a subjectivity that is decidedly human and feminine in *Nights at the Circus*, however ambiguous and leaky. Thus, while O'Brien (2006) reminds her reader of Bakhtin's assertion that a grotesque *open body* "is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects" (qtd. in O'Brien, para. 28) and adds that

> In a further Rabelaisian gesture Carter codes those aspects of Fevvers' performance that do not align with conventional femininity not simply

> as masculine, but through a disparate range of metaphors both animal, human, animate, and inanimate. Fevvers frustrates more than conventional binaries of masculine/feminine as her metaphorical presence challenges the discretion of the corporeal form as human. (O'Brien, 2006, para. 7)

O'Brien's (2006) assertion as to the "discretion of the corporeal form as human" taking place in *Nights at the Circus* calls for the attention to the fact that despite defying certain gender-related boundaries and binaries as well as the male-dominated stasis of the "rationalism" of subjectivities, the grotesque corporeality of Fevvers comes short of extending the project to new posthuman possibilities and posthuman feminisms. Throughout the book, Fevvers evaluates both her corporeal and social presence in decidedly human terms, and the novel's narrative, overall, turns down the new possibilities of a posthuman subjectivity that Fevvers' hybrid identity as a bird-woman might offer. Indeed, despite the critical consensus that postwar British novelists "such as Angela Carter ... discover in the posthuman spectacular body the possibility of a new kind of feminist or postfeminist politics" (Boxall, 2015, p. 188) and that novels including Carter's, have "discovered the possibility of a new feminist politics in the junction between posthumanism" (Boxall, 2015, p. 139), there are still voices that mark the limits of Carter's work which could be integrated into the posthuman feminist project. Karin Sellberg (2015) writes that although Angela Carter, among others, "developed a style of writing about embodiment that directly engaged with the philosophical and theoretical discourses of the time", and her novels including *Nights at the Circus* "preempt the theories of gender, sexuality and becoming that were going to shape academic discussions of embodiment ... in works such as those of Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari" ("*Monsters*", p. 48), there is a recognizable limit to the malleability of Carter's posthuman feminism. Sellberg (2015) reminds us that Carter is "particularly criticized for invoking the mythical Platonic hermaphrodite" in her works and that "queer, third-wave feminist, posthuman, and transgender critics like Jordy Jones, Aidan Day and Ricarda Schmidt thus find the presence of the Platonic hermaphrodite in Carter's ... texts a fatal flaw to an otherwise beautifully queer and gender transgressive narrative,"[2] since "the myth is said to adhere to essentializing ideals of gender and sexuality, thus forming a heteronormative and cisgendered trope" ("*Embodied Platonisms*", p. 95-6). Even though *Nights at the Circus* does not make direct use of the Platonic hermaphrodite myth like *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), Fevvers' androgynous attitudes in *Nights*, as well as the narrative's posthuman tendencies to

2 See, Day (1998), Jones (2006) and Schmidt (1990).

approximate the human realm to others, are similarly seen to be cut short with essentializing ideals of feminine subjectivity and corporeality. Thus despite, in Sellberg's (2015) words, Carter's "preemption" ("*Monsters*", p. 48) of the posthuman and post gender theories in her works, the rest of this paper strive to show that *Nights at the Circus* is finally a novel in which its protagonist Fevvers' implied thingness and posthumanism are exchanged for corporeal feminism and feminine essentialism.

Fevvers as non-human: A thing among things

The very first line of *The Nights at the Circus* is where the posthuman possibilities of Fevvers' subjectivity and performativity first surface: "'Lor' love you, sir!' Fevvers sang out in a voice that clanged like dustbin lids" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.7). Although Fevvers' career is full of moments where she is treated or positioned as an object willingly or objectified against her will, this first sentence already implies that her "thingness" exceeds these particular experiences. Such quality of "thingness" resides within Fevvers also quite outside her project of "demanding" to be looked at as an object of attention as an aerialist to facilitate her mischievous empowerment against and through the male gaze. Fevvers, who at first sounds like "dustbin lids", is later discovered by Walser to be having, specifically, an "extraordinarily raucous and metallic voice; clanging of contralto or even baritone dustbins" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.13), looking "like a dray mare", and having a face "broad and oval as a meat dish" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 12). These extraordinary juxtapositions of Fevvers' physical qualities (which locate her as an object or as part of an object) do not imply that Walser finds her repulsive or unattractive. On the contrary, it is this undefinable look and aura of thingness that makes Fevvers truly an object of interest for Walser and others. Mixing masculinity and femininity in her awkwardly colossal yet still female body, Fevvers nonetheless owes her allure not to her playful attitude around the concept of gender, but to the fascinating ambiguity of her entire being: "She was twice as large as life and as succinctly finite as any object that is intended to be seen, not handled. Look' Hands off!" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 15). In *Guerilla Metaphysics*, Graham Harman (2005) explains this quirky kind of allure as a form of beauty occurring in the moment of "cutting … the bond between an agent and its traits", during which "a thing or creature is gifted with qualities of such overwhelming force that we do not pass directly through the sensual material into the unified thing, but … see the beautiful entity lying beneath…commanding them like puppets" (p. 142). Thus, in accordance with this caveat, Fevvers in these instances owe her allure for Walser and others to the very thingness of her body and entity. Being

"twice as large as life" yet still as "finite as any object", Fevvers' body is an overwhelming material presence that does not necessarily suggest a unified subject beneath, which also explains the alarm it causes: Just "look, hands off!" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 15). Being contradictorily large as life yet still as finite as a lifeless object, Fevvers dwells in a midway between the animate and inanimate, and the alive and the lifeless according to her viewer, and as such, causes them to think that she is far too "unreal" to be handled and brought into the human realm of the living. Such misregard and fear of "thingness" and non-human being, along with its queer desirability by others, is felt in the episodes that take place in Madam Schreck's bizarre establishment, the "museum" of female monsters, where Fevvers as a *tombstone angel* that unites an ultimate ethereality with an ultimate objectness, feels subjugated to and objectified by the gaze of customers.

The feelings of subjugation and objectification that permeate Fevvers' experience as a tombstone angel in Madam Schreck's museum constitutes the heart of the mutual yet contradictory qualities of fearfulness and allure that characterize things and thingness in the narrative. Aligned with Angela Carter's politics, in *Nights at the Circus* the politics of characters such as Fevvers and Liz visibly tend toward the Marxist. While Fevvers displays a keen Marxist/materialist understanding of the importance of having a full bank account, a cheeky Liz uses Walser as a letter mule whilst in Russia to ensure that "the comrades in London got hot news of the struggle" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 234). Yet, as concepts such as commodity fetishism and alienation[3] evidence, neither does Marxist economic and social philosophy have a very high appreciation of things as commodities, nor does it appreciate an "excessive" attribution of meaning to them. Moreover, Isobel Armstrong (2012) writes that with the concept of commodity fetishism Marx "instantiated" or "perhaps perpetuated a hostile subject-object world in which each stands over and against the other" and she also adds that "commodity fetishism is built on a struggle between subject and object for ownership of consciousness and body" (p. 23). According to Bill Brown (2006), such Marxist fears of the colonization of the subject by the object took place in a crooked manner after the industrial revolution and especially in the case of slavery,[4] when subjects and objects changed places since "the spectral completion of commodity fetishism [where things appear to have lives of their own] is human reification [where people appear to be no more than things]" (p. 180). Such process of

3 "Marx understands alienation as the domination of a subject by an estranged object of its own creation", since through work the subject "objectifies … consciousness" and "duplicates himself in the world of objects, into material creations" (Thompson, 1979, p. 25).

4 Brown (2006) reminds that Harriet Beecher Stove's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) was originally subtitled "The Man Who Was a Thing" (p. 179).

"human reification" and objectification Brown (2006) mentions in the case of slavery also explains the preoccupation with alienation, objecthood, and their invasion of the subject in post-colonial criticism. The Marxist problematization of the troublesome relationship between the subject and the object as in commodity fetishism and alienation is reflected in the post-colonial theories of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon who, also like the feminists, apply the concept of objectification to understand the self-alienation of the (colonial) subject under the gaze of the oppressor. In *Discourse on Colonialism* Aimé Césaire (1950/2000) writes that the "relations of domination and submission … turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard … and the indigenous man into an instrument of production", and asserts that colonization is, finally, "thingification" (p.42). Treading similar ground, Frantz Fanon (1952/1986) explains his experience as a "negro" by writing "I was an object in the midst of other objects" (p. 109). "Sealed into that crushing objecthood" (Fanon, 1952/1986, p. 109) under the gaze of the white colonialists, "the negro" is also "a toy in the white man's hands" according to Fanon (1952/1986, p.140).

Yet one thing that the new materialism and the ensuing stands of speculative philosophy such as actor-network theory, thing theory, and posthumanism promise to do is to view the object beyond its commodity status[5] while also rescuing it from its eternal binary opposition against the subject. In thing theory objects are differentiated from things. Things, Breitbach (2011) writes, "precede and exceed objects, and objects are what the human intellect makes of things" (p. 33). Jane Bennet further (2004) defines things as "entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which [human] subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics" (p. 351). Things, as such, cannot be reduced to commodities within their epistemologies, nor are they bound by the traditional subject-object dichotomy. Thus, even though Fevvers' experience of thing-being as a tombstone angel at Madam Schrecks' museum of female monsters is akin to the process of commodification and objectification experienced by colonial subjects and by similarly colonized (this time based on their gender) female subjects, Fevvers' experiences of thingness (animate or inanimate) in the novel always carry the marks of the "inexhaustible semiotics" that Bennett (2004) attributes to things. As a result, even though *Nights at the Circus* makes overt use of the concepts such as the male gaze

5 Jennifer Sattaur (2012) explains this change by writing the following: "Critics have moved away from Marxist explorations of objects as commodities, to explore the possibilities of the object in contexts other than those generated by discourses of exchange value, production, and consumption, adopting cultural materialist and new historicist approaches to the objects of Victorian culture and literature. This movement has become known as 'Thing Theory'" (p.347).

and women's objectification, Fevvers' relationships to objects can also be studied in relation to things and thingness, and in turn can be used to question the relationship between the subject and the object, and thus encounter the problems of Fevvers' corporeality and subjectivity. In "Thing Theory", Bill Brown (2001) reminds that Rilke once wrote "Only things speak to me" (qtd. in Brown, 2001, p. 2). Like Rilke and also like Walser and Madam Schreck's customers in the novel, Brown is drawn into things and opines that "things" may have an overwhelming potential to discover new epistemologies, as well as the potential to discover new subjectivities by existing and calling attention to their existence: "The story of objects asserting themselves as things … is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation" (Brown, 2001, p. 4). The fruitfulness of the interrogation of the subject-object relation relies on the possibility of viewing the thing divorced from the meaning it is associated with. Quoting Leo Stein, Brown writes "things are what we encounter, ideas are what we project," before adding that we are all "caught up in things" and the "body is a thing among things" (qtd. in Brown, 2001, p. 4). What then, should Fevvers do about the thingness of herself and her body? While watching one of her performances as an aerialiste, Walser remarks that Fevvers does not just move agile enough, which could cause the audience finally to believe that she is, truly, a biological bird-woman. The slowness of Fevvers' movements and the ungainliness of her gait is interpreted as a defense mechanism by Walser. By inhabiting a speculative space between a winged woman and a female hoax, Fevvers supposedly shields herself from being recognized as a natural freak. Yet, the reader is supplemented with enough information to discern that what Walser interprets as premeditated sluggishness may in fact be the very thingness of Fevvers' body reasserting itself. Fevvers as a young girl struggles to make use of her wings and worries that though a bird-girl she might be, flying might not be her specialty- chickens are birds that hardly have use for wings. Without the capacity to fly, her wings are just feathered lumps that emphasize the thingness of her body, (which is also ill-suited to walk or run) since we, after all, "begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us" (Brown, 2002, p. 4). Throughout the narrative, Fevvers faces the thingness of her body repeatedly through her failures at flying with her wings, especially in Siberia where she breaks one of her wings after a train crash and unsuccessfully tries to reach an amnesiac Walser by flying to him. It gets her nowhere.

What causes Fevvers' bodily thingness in these instances of dysfunction is her bodily hybridity. Hybridity is a concept that has been used and celebrated (especially in post-

colonial studies) alongside concepts such as multiculturalism after being given a new definition by Homi Bhabha (1994/2004), who sees it as the "displacement of value from symbol to sign" and "that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification" (p. 162). Although Fevvers fits this semiotic definition of hybridity perfectly through her decided ambivalence between "fact" and "fiction" in terms of her identity, *Nights at the Circus* also renders this term applicable to Fevvers the bird-woman in its earlier biological significations, which also makes the term crucial for posthuman and object-oriented studies. Reviewing the term in its broad history, John Hutnyk (2005) writes that although it has "its origins in biology and botany" (p. 80), currently "hybridity is an evocative term for the formation of identity" as "it is used to describe innovations of language" and "is a code for creativity and translation" (p. 81). However, Hutnyk (2005) also reminds that the term continues evolving and for others, as for Donna Haraway, "hybridity is the key organizing feature of the Cyborg, the wo-man/machine interface" and it "invokes mixed technological innovation" and "multiple trackings of influence" (p. 81). Evident from the new technological and machinic attributions to it, the term hybridity reacquires its biological and corporeal functions with the onset of posthumanist thought, but this is far from signifying that posthuman understandings of hybridity deflate the importance of the term in terms of subjectivity. Juliette Kitchens (2016) emphasizes that "posthumanism is grounded in the concept of hybridity ... environmentally, physically, and arguably metaphysically" and that "posthumanism's hybridity demands that empowerments such as agency... and autonomy belong both to human and non-human actants" (p. 3). What follows this simultaneous posthuman and object-oriented distribution of agency amongst the humans and non-humans (which hybridizes the human and non-human bodies) is that "object-oriented philosophy doesn't erase the subject or subjectivity" but it instead "situates all potential subjects as objects" (Kitchens, 2016, p. 4) and vice versa.

Remarkably, Fevvers' hybridity in *Nights at the Circus* is versatile enough to fit into all the different takes on the term hybridity specified above. While the ambivalent state of her identity as sloganized with the question "Is she fact or is she fiction?" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 7) links her visibly to the subjective and culturally destabilizing form of hybridity as formulated by Bhabha, her corporeal hybridity as a bird-woman renders her an ideal cyborg and a "wo-man/machine interface" in the posthuman understandings of the word. Last yet not least, Fevvers' hybridity also allows her to cross the line between the subject/object dichotomy in her thingness and through her thing-becomings while

performing as statues throughout her career. The fact that her performed (yet also naturally ingrained) thingness by no means signifies the evacuation of her agency and subjectivity is perhaps best explained by contrasting her thingness and posthuman subjectivity to that of Walser. As one of the critics of the novel, Dilek Çalışkan (2020) comments that in the novel Walser is initially likened to an empty house because of his lack of subjectivity, yet in the end, he too achieves a fluid identity and is transformed into "becoming" an animal since "now he can speak bird-language and is ready to understand the eco-wisdom embodied in Sophie Fevvers's hybrid body" (p. 382). Walser's initial objectness reminiscent of Fevvers' comparison to objects in the text, and his similar bird-becoming as part of the circus during the Russia episodes are indeed useful opportunities to compare Fevvers' posthuman identity to that of Walser, and determine whether he, too, might be counted a part of the experience of thingness and posthuman identity that Fevvers so ideally examplifies.

The narrative's first hint of the subdued parallelisms between Walser and Fevvers occurs when it indicates that there is "something a little unfurnished about him" and that he "is like a handsome house that has been let" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 10). Although this comparison between Walser and an inanimate entity such as a house immediately suggests that Walser has a potential for thingness like Fevvers, this reference to an object in relation to his identity is aimed at showing his lack of a meaningful subjectivity as an American journalist, who is embedded in the consumer culture of his country and continues to be the same shallow California man despite traveling all the way from "Frisco to Shanghai" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 9). For Walser, it is "see all and believe nothing" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 10). The lack of belief and meaning in the case of Walser's subjectivity and his possible posthuman identity is the most important reason why, unlike Fevvers, Walser cannot symbolize thingness or a true posthuman subjectivity. While Fevvers, in all her posthuman beings (in the case of performing as a statue of Cupid, a statue of Winged Victory, or a bird-woman) retain an abundance of meaning and likewise generate meaning for her subjectivity through the symbolic value of her beings, Walser is defined as the lack of meaning and belief throughout the novel. The prop sword Fevvers carries while performing as the Winged Victory in Ma Nelson's house, for example, becomes an important part of her story and becomes an object of value to her as part of the construction of her subjectivity. Similarly pointing out that thingness does not cancel out the vibrancy of her being, Fevvers explains her experience of being a living statue by saying "I was as if closed up in a shell, for the wet white would harden on my face and torso like a death mask … yet inside this appearance of marble, nothing could have

been more vibrant with potentiality than I" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 39). Thus, while "Miss Fevvers is asking us to suspend disbelief" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.15) in her posthuman performances, Walser in contrast is in the "habit of suspending belief" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.10), both in others and in himself. Furthermore, Walser's later performances in the circus as a "Human Chicken" consisting of the single line of "cock-a-doodle-a-dooski" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 152) neither suggests a posthuman subjectivity, nor authentic hybridity. Although it is true that "one of the characteristics typical of the thing is that it does not have language that is capable of symbolic and imaginative production" (Bartoloni, 2011, p.143) and that Walser's adoption of the bird language both during circus performances and later during his amnesia suggests a transformation into this realm of non-vocal posthuman thingness,[6] he carries the residue of his original meaninglessness in these instances, too. Although it is described that while training as a "human" chicken Walser delivers his line "entering into to the spirit of the thing" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 152), the comic effect of his performance comes directly from the fact that this "thing" is not actually a thing. Rather, by playing the human chicken Walser strictly symbolizes the objectified human being who is forced into the world of objects for the pleasure of others, yet one who still lacks the multiple meanings and possibilities that differentiate objects from the things. The nature of the performance of other clowns is no different than that of Walser, since during his performance Buffo the clown, too, becomes "a giant" that is "the victim of material objects," as "things are against him" and "they wage war on him" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.116). The foremost quality of a thing, as mentioned earlier, is that it resides with other things around it while still retaining the inexhaustible possibility of forming new and multiple relations with them without succumbing to the war between the subject and the object. Yet, Buffo's performance characterizes him as a subject forced into becoming an object in the world of things, where he is so dissonant with this world that "things fall apart at the very shiver of his thread on the ground" and he, as a person trapped between the subject and the object positions, "is himself the center that does not hold" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 117). The ineffectiveness of Walser's posthuman identity as a bird/man/thing, on the other hand, is also evident from the way he is objectified by everyone around him including the circus managers, the female escapees of the Panopticon-prison Olga and Vera, as well as the Shaman who finally claims him and turns into a Shaman himself. While Fevvers' objectification of Walser is quite evident in her desire to "hatch" him as a new man and make him her own "amanuensis," his objectification in the other instances, too, arise

6 Bartoloni (2011) further reminds that "It is well known that for Heidegger the 'house of being', the abode which distinguishes humans from animals and things, is the 'house of language'"(p. 147).

from the fact that Walser is ever an entity of non-meaning, and a lack of subjectivity which makes him into an object that gains meaning through use. On finding him in the train-wreck as a cuckooing amnesiac, Olga says, "I hate to leave the poor thing" and thinks "there *must* be something useful this young man could do" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 223). Even though Olga and Vera soon leave Walser in their hurry towards their new lives, Olga could indeed find a use for Walser if she tried hard enough since it is Walser's fate to be approached as a useful object by others through his sheer lack of subjectivity and through his lack of the quality of "thingness" that characterizes Fevvers. Moreover, even if Walser's turning into a Shaman himself at the end of the narrative at first belies this and suggests that he finally acquires, as Çalışkan also (2020) claims, a posthuman and fluid identity, his state of being as a Shamanistic idol proves otherwise. Not only does Fevvers find Walser turned into an idol by the Shaman through the finale of the novel, but also, she sees that the idol Walser is even more evacuated than before. Although there is "a vatic glare in his grey eyes … a vatic glare and no skepticism at all", these eyes "seemed to have lost the power to reflect" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.289). Thus, even though Walser finally defeats his skepticism in his new Shamanistic surroundings, his newfound belief and subjectivity are also imposed on him by others, and he is once again a colonized and colonizable figure.

The account of how Walser's story marginally parallels Fevvers' story as a bird-woman through yet another type of performative birdness explains that Fevvers occupies a special place in the narrative as a figure displaying posthuman possibilities. Indeed, even though the narrative offers some other glimpses into other posthuman beings inhabiting the line between human and animal, these glimpses are characterized by anthropomorphism. The Colonel's pig Sybil understands human speech and advises the Colonel on the managerial aspects of the circus, and Sybil is treated strictly as a human by the Colonel to the extent that he accuses the troupe of cannibalism after they attempt to cook Sybil. Similarly, the encounter between Walser and Lamarck's Educated Apes is characterized by the humanness of the apes, who dress, study, read, and write like intelligent humans and whose "hirsute studies" Walser finds "irresistibly comic" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 108) because of their thoroughness. Thus, although Walser realizes, through his contact with the apes, that there is something exceedingly human in the apes and something undeniably animal in the man, the narrative's prioritization of the human qualities in its depiction of Sybil and the apes implies anthropomorphism, which reinstates the primacy and the desirability of the human that posthumanism counters in the first place.

Yet, in contrast to all the other such actants in the narrative, Fevvers is a figure who strikes the perfect balance of ambivalence and hybridity, which locates her as *the thing* that cannot be stabilized into subjective or objective stability as a human, an object, or an animal. In yet another instance where the thingness of her body reasserts itself despite her glamorous attempts to make a performative meaning out of it, Fevvers faces the possibility of falling in front of her audience. The answer as to whether she really was in the danger of falling or pretended to fall is left ambivalent in the narrative, yet Walser similarly remains persuaded that this, too, is a part of the show that is Fevvers. If able to fly perfectly

> She would no longer be an extraordinary woman, no more the *Greatest Aerialiste* in the world- but a freak. Marvelous, indeed, but a marvelous monster, an exemplary being denied the human privilege of flesh and blood, always the object of the observer, never the subject of sympathy, an alien creature forever estranged.
> She owes it to herself to remain a woman, he thought. It is her human duty. As a symbolic woman, she has a meaning, as an anomaly, none.
> As an anomaly, she would become again, as she once had been, an exhibit in a museum of curiosities. But what would she become, if continued to be a woman? (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 161)

Walser's reasoning here demonstrates that to be human is indeed thought to be a "privilege" in the narrative. Even as a bird-woman who passes for a human with difficulty, however, Fevvers herself is unnerved by the possibility of being distanced from the human realm. As she acknowledges to Mr. Rozencreutz after a flight on her wings, Fevvers does "hate and fear the open country" as she does not "like to be where Man is not"; Fevvers loves "the sight and stinks and bustle of humanity" as she loves her "life" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 81). As Walser thinks, by staying in the human realm and retaining her human identity as a "woman", Fevvers escapes recognition as a freak and a monster, which would then blur the line between her being a subject or an object. Yet, in the case of opting thus for female humanity, Fevvers' womanhood is also declared by Walser to be symbolic: "As a symbolic woman, she has a meaning, as an anomaly, she has none" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 161). The fact that Walser deems Fevvers' potential femininity "symbolic" against her corporeal "monstrosity" shows that for Walser she can only "adopt" her sex on the cultural and symbolical level, while her body will always drag her to the sphere of the unfeminine and the monstrous. Such preconditioned meaning-

making out of hybrid corporeality as well as a conceptualized subjectivity is perhaps the most important reason why Fevvers needs to hold on to a posthuman identity, in which subjectivity ceases to be determined in between the lines of the contest between the subject and the object, and the mind and the body. Although Walser thinks that Fevvers as a "woman" will have symbolic meaning and as a so-called "monster" she will have no meaning at all, Fevvers' experiences in both spectrums show that this is far from being true. At the end of the narrative, Fevvers is seen to finally recover from the identity crisis she experienced as a broken-winged superstar of yesteryear. Unable to dye her feathers and stuck with a body that shouts "cripple!", Fevvers feels that she cannot truly recognize who she is. Her body can lend her a female identity only through alteration. Yet, it is also after going through this crisis and later finding Walser (finding love) again does Fevvers rediscover herself. Her body, which formerly looked alien and broken, miraculously recovers itself and Fevvers declares "My being, my me-ness, is unique and indivisible" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 280). Only after deciding that she will love Walser and be a woman may Fevvers regain her bodily femininity and be sure of her indivisible subjectivity as a woman, yet even this "symbolic" femininity (one that is acquired through conscious decision) is not stable enough not to need Walser as an "amanuensis": "Think of him not as a lover, but as a scribe, as an amanuensis" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 285), she says to Liz. Thus, while the novel's ending locates Fevvers as a complete woman -body and soul- with the laugh of Medusa, it is also conversely crucial for her to become the object of Walser's narrative. The novel ends with Fevvers laughing an infectious laughter that spills "out of the window" and makes "the tin ornaments of the tree outside ... shake and tinkle", a laughter "so loud that the baby in the Shaman's cousin's house heard her ... and laughed delightedly too" and the villagers also "stirred in their beds, chuckling at the enormous joke" (Carter, 1984/1993, pp. 294-5). Yet this laughter, which Helene Cixous (1976) designates as the winged mythological figure Medusa's defiance of the patriarchal discourses on women, still does not quite align Fevvers to the feminism of Cixous's Medusa. While the novel seems to take Cixous's (1976) comments that "flying is woman's gesture" and that "women take after birds" (p. 887) very seriously (and literally), the reliance Fevvers ultimately shows on her corporeal femininity whilst reaching her true subjectivity in accordance with Cixous's corporeal approach towards female subjectivity is at odds with the way she contradicts Cixous's ideals on female writing and history. Diverging from Cixous's (1976) account of *ecriture feminine* in which women will write their histories themselves through their bodies and their self(s) and by "flying in language and making it fly" (p.887), Fevvers leaves the responsibility of her textuality and history into the hands of Walser as an "amanuensis".

Opting for a corporeal as well as symbolic femininity since her corporeal existence is marked as feminine only through a disregard of its thingness, Fevvers nonetheless is a process of incompletion without Walser's writing and symbolic investment in the end.

The lack of essentiality even in such a case of implied essentiality is countered by an excess of symbolism and "essence" in the episodes which should most evoke the objectness of Fevvers' corporeality yet ends up evoking her thingness. Marked as an angel of death in Madame Schreck's exhibit of *tableu vivant* women by one Mr. Rozencreutz, Fevvers is hailed as the "lady of the hub of the celestial wheel, creature half of earth and half of air, virgin and whore, reconciler of fundament and firmament, reconciler of opposite states through the mediation of your ambivalent body" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 81) as Mr. Rozencreutz readies himself to sacrifice her as part of an immortality rite. As such, just as Fevvers and the readers think that her time in Madame Schreck's house marks a low point in her life for being reduced to no*thingness*, Fevvers finds herself laden with meaning and symbolism, which transforms her into some*thing* with an excess of purpose and meaning. Brown (2001) writes that a thing is "what is excessive in objects… what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects- their sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which object become values, fetishes, idols, totems" (p. 5). Again, foregrounding the semiotic richness of things, Bartoloni (2012) writes that a thing "can evoke fullness and emptiness, presence and absence" (p. 401). Thus, the exact dilemma of thingness surfaces here: the thingness of Fevvers' body asserts itself by losing its functions (a broken wing), yet her thingness also asserts itself by taking on (or reclaiming) an aura of multiplicity and excess of meaning and purpose by freezing as a stone angel, or as in the Grand Duke's house, an ice statute. Yet in both cases, Fevvers is repelled by the posthuman becomings she faces[7]. As with her bodily thingness, her being as a tombstone angel, too, bears the mark "look, don't touch" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 62), which places her out of touch with humanity as a "human creature" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 66). In the Grand Duke's house, Fevvers views the possibility of shrinking like the miniature bird that escapes from the Duke's Faberge egg as a "hideous possibility" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 192), even though it is this hideous possibility that saves her life. After her close escape, Liz chides Fevvers by saying that the Duke "broke your mascot and could have broken you" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 198). Fevvers' difficulty in such moments, it seems,

7 During her visit to the Grand Duke's house, Fevvers feels anxious and faint on observing Duke's collection automated toys and musicians as well as her own ice-statue (in Carter, 1984/1993, pp. 186-190).

is that she fails to recognize the very thingness of herself and her body, which she explains to Walser in London by asking "What is 'natural' and 'unnatural', sir?" and herself answering "the mold in which the human form is cast is exceedingly fragile. Give it the slightest tap with your fingers and it breaks" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 61). But while the human body is indeed a breakable mechanism sustaining, or better, determining an all too susceptible consciousness, its naturally broken form (as in the case of Fevvers) is deemed monstrous and crippled by the human standards that Fevvers seems all too ready to uphold. Without agreeing to view her body as a "thing" that has no paramount meaning or purpose, Fevvers is doomed to be the cripple others make her, and also miss the possibility of reaching beyond an "indivisible" female subjectivity into a posthuman subjective multiplicity.

Nights at the Circus and corporeal feminism

The subjective/objective multiplicity that Fevvers harbors in her body yet shrinks from embracing is best explained by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, a foundational text for later posthumanist writings like other works from their mutual oeuvre, Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983) write:

> What a mistake to have ever said *the* id. Everywhere it is machines-real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections… The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it. (p.1)

By denoting subjects and objects similarly as "machines", both metaphorically and unmetaphorically, Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983) here aim at turning from the much-venerated human *id* to a common "it." Their project in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is schizoanalysis, which ultimately shows that "the self and the non-self, outside and inside no longer have any meaning" as "everything is a machine" (Deleuze and Guattari,1972/1983, p.2). The center of this project lies in rescuing psychoanalysis and indeed, consciousness itself, from the predetermination of Freudian Oedipalism. The book is an attempt, as Mark Seem (1983) suggests, to arrive at ego-loss and a multiplicity of subjectivities that "flee in all directions": it imagines "orphans [no daddy-mommy-me], atheists [no-beliefs] and nomads [no-habits, no territories]" (p. xxı), and, as such, urges "mankind to strip itself of all anthropomorphic and anthropological armoring,

all myth and tragedy, and all existentialism in order to perceive what is nonhuman in man" (p. xx). How fitting, then, that Fevvers is a hybrid being who hatches out of an egg and grows up with the company of women, without ever being caught up in an Oedipal family structure. Coupling her mechanical mouth to Liz's milk-machine breasts, Fevvers exemplifies the perfect desire-machine through whose human and non-human forms desire flows alike.

The consistency between Fevvers' thingness and the project of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy can also be understood by applying a term used by Jane Bennett (2004), namely *thing-power*, to Fevvers. In "The Force of Things", Bennett (2004) explains that her conceptualization of thing-power is indebted, among others, to ideas such as the "Lucretian figuration of materiality as capable of free or aleatory movements", the " non-Newtonian picture of nature as matter-flow ... as ... developed in the thought of Gilles Deleuze" and finally, "the Spinozist idea that bodies have a propensity to form collectives" (p. 348-9). Bennett (2004) further defines the concept of thing-power as an "attempt to depict nonhumanity that flows around but also through humans" (p. 349). Combining thing theory's attribution of value and agency to things with Deleuze and Guattari's notions of becoming and flow, the thing-power defines Fevvers' being. Yet at the end of the novel, where Fevvers declares her being and she-ness is "unique and indivisible" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 280) and solidifies it through the colonization of a Walser that is strictly marked as a *tabula rasa*, Fevvers abandons her thingness and thing-power to be a woman. Such a process of woman being is, similar to that of Fevvers, also read in the story of Mignon, the quality of whose voice and singing (as indicative of her whole being since Mignon communicates thorough singing) changes after she transforms into a woman. On hearing her sing, Fevvers realizes that while Mignon "sounded as if the song sang itself" and as if Mignon "was only a kind of fleshly photography made to transmit the music ...before she became a woman", her current singing is transformed and mated "with her newfound soul" although "its essence" does "not change" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.247). The transformation Mignon goes through in her woman being is parallel to Fevvers' in that it signifies the unification of the subjective/spiritual with the corporeal while insisting that the change taking place is also a return to essence in both spiritual and corporeal terms. The fact that Mignon's transformation into a woman parallels and foreshadows a similar change for Fevvers is made manifest at the end of the same passage, where Fevvers deplores the state of her being and asks "And what of my own journey, what of that? Bereft of my sword, as I am; crippled, as I am" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.247). Fevvers' labeling of her hybrid body with the word

"crippled" (as deemed by humanist and skeptic minds like Walser's) hints that she finally turns down the thingness that this "crippled" corporeality offers her, while her lamentation over the fact that she has lost her prop sword explains Fevvers is ultimately rid of the most important heritage of her thing-being and released from the subjectivity that is founded upon its significations. By "losing her weapon to the Grand Duke in his frozen place", she loses "that sense of her own magnificence" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 273) along with losing her thingness metaphorically. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this ending drags Fevvers into that same dilemma between womanhood and monstrosity that Walser mentions at the beginning of the narrative. After finding a newly delivered young woman and her baby in the tundra (which further accentuates the bodily functions of femininity Fevvers cannot fulfill) Liz comments to Fevvers that perhaps "this tableau of a woman in bondage to her reproductive system, a woman tied hand and foot to that Nature which your physiology denies … has been set here on purpose to make you think twice about turning from a freak into a woman" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 283). But as the finale of Fevvers' journey demonstrates, despite regaining the physical glory of her giant body and the color of her wings, Fevvers indeed chooses to become a woman body and soul by marrying Walser, in order also to become "all the female paradigm, no longer an imagined fiction, but a plain fact" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 286).

The long-expected transformation of Fevvers, as such, sees her "swim into definition" in Walser's eyes and get "trapped forever in the reflection" (Carter, 1984/1993, p.290) in them. The corporeality of Fevvers, too,[8] is made into a human whole in these moments. Despite observing that Fevvers "looked the size of a house" and "appeared to possess no navel", Walser finally thinks that "nature had equipped her only for the 'woman on top' position" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 292). Fevvers' non-human qualities are waved away now– Walser is "no longer in the mood to draw any definite conclusions" (Carter, 1984/1993, p. 292) from these facts and she is finally pinned down as a Lilith, the ur-woman and ur-feminist who wanted to topple Adam by adopting the on-top position. Such an ending of *Nights at the Circus* and Fevvers' hybrid bodily existence is only possible through a "corporeal feminism", which designates "women's carnal existence" and "their corporeal commonness" as a "universal 'raw material'" taken for granted, albeit one that is "pliable enough to account for cultural, historical, class and racial specificities distinguishing ... women" (Grozs, 1987, p. 2). This type of corporeal feminism as manifestoed in Elizabeth Grozs'"Notes Toward a Corporeal Feminism" (1987), as such,

8 Which was presented in its many broken down forms so far, as "desiring-machines work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1983, p. 8).

takes advantage of Fevvers' hybrid body in order still to affirm its femininity, disregarding the posthuman possibilities it might offer. As Grozs (1987) writes, though humanism reduced the importance of bodies through a perpetual mind/body dualism, corporeal feminism still holds that

> The corporeality of a subject must differ from the corporeality of a stone or of an animal insofar as the human body is capable of thinking and talking, is subjected to meanings, values, and decisions arising from within, while the latter are animated or subjected to meanings only externally. (p.5)

And that despite "clearly sharing many features in common with animal bodies," human bodies "should also be seen in fundamentally or qualitatively different terms:" "Only human bodies create culture, and, in the process, transform themselves corporeally (as well as conceptually)" (Grozs, 1987, p.7). Thus, from the perspective of corporeal feminism, Fevvers' final bodily transformation into *real* Fevvers even without the aid of peroxide, which makes her from a crippled brunette into a blonde giant once again, symbolizes the individually willed cultural inscription of the biological body. This culturally inscribed biological female body retains a fleshly womanliness and symbolical menstruation in the face of Deleuze and Guattari's menstrual blood, which is a "continuous flow" but only a "partial object" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/1983, p. 5) which does not define an identity or subjectivity.

Conclusion

The ending of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, in which Fevvers chooses to transform into a woman and enacts essentially feminine characters such as Lilith and the femme-fatale Carmen from Bizet's opera[9] shows that although Carter's writing is, as claimed by former critics, indicative of the posthuman understandings of subjectivity and feminism that increasingly pervaded the philosophical and theoretical ground after the publishing of seminal *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) and later borne new speculative realism theories, the novel and its protagonist Fevvers are by no means wholly integrated into the posthuman feminist literary project. The compelling posthuman reading of Fevvers as a hybrid female and as a thing-being

9 A final image of Fevvers in the bathtub shows her washing "color into her cheeks" and singing "Habanera" from *Carmen* opera (in Carter, 1985/2001, p.293).

Nights at the Circus affords is finally seen to be exchanged for corporeal feminism as best understood through Elizabeth Grozs' manifesto under the same title, despite the fact that Fevvers indeed emerges as a true *body without organs,* i.e., a body without a paramount image, meaning or purpose, and a true *thing* in the novel, who could become the exemplar cyborg female that imagines "a world without gender", "a world without genesis" (without Lilith, either) and "maybe also a world without end" (Haraway, 1985/2001, p. 2270). By giving Fevvers an ending in which Walser and his narration become exigencies rather than contingencies for Fevvers' feminine existence, *Nights at the Circus* may only boast intuition towards a different kind of genderless and posthuman feminism. Published only a year after *Nights at the Circus*, Donna Haraway's (1985/2001) feminism in "A Cyborg Manifesto" materializes the "kind of disassembled and reassembled post-modern collective and personal" (p. 2284) feminist self that Fevvers inspires the readers with in *Nights at the Circus*. By subsuming her hybridity under corporeal feminism, Fevvers in the end turns down a "monstrous world without gender" and bodily limitations, where one would "rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (Haraway, 1985/2001, p. 2299), even if it is a feminist one like Lilith.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.
Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.
Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

References

Armstrong, I. (2012). Bodily things and thingly bodies: Circumventing the subject–object binary. In Katharina Boehm (Ed.), *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (pp. 17-45). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and his world*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. (Original work published in 1965)

Bartoloni, P. (2011). Thinking thingness: Agamben and Perniola. *Annali d'Italianistica*, 29, 141–162.

Bartoloni, P. (2012). Zeno's thingness: on fetishism and bodies in Svevo's La coscienza di Zeno. *The Italianist*, 32(3), 399-414.

Bennett, J. (2004). The force of things: Steps toward an ecology of matter. *Political Theory*, 32(3), 347–372.

Bhabha, H. (2004). *The location of culture*. London & New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1994)

Boehm, K. (2012). Introduction: Bodies and things. In Katharina Boehm (Ed.), *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (pp. 1-17). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boxall, P. (2015). Science, technology, and the posthuman. In David James (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to British fiction since 1945* (pp. 127-142). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Breitbach, J. (2011). The photo-as-thing. *European Journal of English Studies*, 15(1), 31–43.

Brown, B. (2001). Thing theory. *Critical Inquiry*, 28(1), 1–22.

Brown, B. (2006). Reification, reanimation, and the American uncanny. *Critical Inquiry*, 32(2), 175–207.

Carter, A. (1993). *Nights at the circus*. London: Penguin Books. (Original work published in 1984)

Cesaire, A. (2000). *Discourse on colonialism*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press. (Original work published in 1950)

Cixous, H. (1976). The laugh of the Medusa. *Signs*, 1(4), 875–893.

Çalışkan, D. (2020). The hybrid other in Angela Carter's novel Nights at the circus. *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(2), 367–384.

Day, A. (1998). *Angela Carter: The rational glass*. Manchester & New York, NY: Manchester University Press.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published in 1972)

Fanon, F. (1986). *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto Press. (Original work published in 1952)

Genca, P. A. (2018). Grotesque bodies and spaces in Angela Carter's The passion of new eve. *Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 16(1.2), 119–128. doi: 10.18026/cbayarsos.424070

Grosz, E. (1987). Notes towards a corporeal feminism. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 2(5), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1987.9961562

Grosz. E. (1994). *Volatile bodies*: Toward a corporeal feminism. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press

Haraway D. (2001). A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the late 20th Century. In Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (pp. 2269-99). London & New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. (Original work published in 1985)

Harman, G. (2005). *Guerrilla metaphysics: Phenomenology and the carpentry of things*. Chicago& La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Hutnyk, J. (2005). Hybridity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(1), 79–102.

Jones, J. (2006). Gender without genitals: Hedwig's six inches. In Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (Eds.), *The Transgender Studies Reader* (pp. 449-67). London & New York, NY: Routledge.

Kitchens, J. (2016). Object entanglements: From postmodern subjectivity to posthuman thingness in Joss Whedon's "Dollhouse". *Studies in Popular Culture*, 38(2), 1–22.

O'Brien, W. (2006). Feminine freakishness: Carnivalesque bodies in Angela Carter's Nights at the circus. *Genders*, 44. Retrieved from https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2006/11/01/feminine-freakishness-carnivalesque-bodies-angela-carters-nights-circus.

Sattaur, J. (2012). Thinking objectively: An overview of "thing theory" in Victorian studies. *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40(1), 347–357.

Seem, M. (1983). Introduction. In Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari*, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (pp. xv-xxiv). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The journey of the subject in Angela Carter's fiction. *Textual Practice*, 3, 56–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502368908582049

Sellberg, K. (2015a). Monsters, margins and corporealizing choreographies. In Karin Sellberg, Lena Wanggren & Kamillea Again (Eds.), *Corporeality and Culture: Bodies in Movement* (pp. 47-53). Surrey: Ashgate.

Sellberg, K. (2015b). Embodied Platonisms: The erotic choreographies of Angela Carter and John Cameron Mitchell. In Karin Sellberg, Lena Wanggren & Kamillea Again (Eds.), *Corporeality and Culture: Bodies in Movement* (pp. 95-109). Surrey: Ashgate.

Thompson. L. A. (1979). The development of Marx's concept of alienation: an introduction. *Mid-American Review of Sociology*, 4(1), 23–38.