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| Institution: University of the West of England, Bristol | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 27 | | |
| Title of case study: Angela Carter in Bristol: How a Writer's Work can Enhance a City's Cultural Heritage | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009-2019 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Names(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Professor Marie Mulvey-Roberts | Professor of English Literature | 1988 – present |
| Dr Zoe Brennan | Senior Lecturer in English | 1997 – present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 – 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact | | |
| <p>Research by Professor Mulvey-Roberts and Dr Zoe Brennan has significantly expanded and developed knowledge and critical appreciation of previously neglected aspects of Angela Carter's life and work relating in particular to connections with the city of Bristol. This has impacted multiple audiences and the literary community on a national and international scale through a range of media. Impact has been generated through published outputs and an extensive series of events, productions, media appearances and collaborations based on Mulvey-Roberts' work, for multiple audiences. These included a co-curated major art exhibition, production of artworks, musical compositions and performances, educational tools and heritage experiences, and the unveiling of a plaque on a former Bristol residence of Carter.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research | | |
| <p>The underpinning research for this case study has two strands: identifying and establishing the connection between Angela Carter and Bristol, previously little known or recognised; and establishing the reciprocal importance of the visual to Angela Carter's work and the influence of Angela Carter on the arts and the visual.</p> | | |
| Angela Carter and Bristol Culture | | |
| <p>Research led by Mulvey-Roberts identified Angela Carter's cultural attachment to Bristol and its representation in her written works (contrary to the perception of Carter as a primarily London writer). Mulvey-Roberts' edited book, <i>Literary Bristol: Writers and the City</i> (2015), included a chapter by her UWE collaborator Zoe Brennan on Carter's Bristol trilogy, three novels set in the city during the 1960s (R1). Brennan points out that Carter insisted that the novels' locations were authentic, despite transforming them into a Gothic cityscape. She discusses how Carter portrayed characters haunted by Bristol's past, depicting the deterioration of the city due to heavy bombing in the Blitz. Significantly, Brennan's analysis reveals how Carter challenged the London-centric bias of urban Gothic.</p> | | |
| <p>Mulvey-Roberts' 'Introduction' (R2) and 'Gothic Bristol' chapter (R3) in <i>Literary Bristol</i> highlight several other local locations that Carter draws on for her fiction, making the case, for instance, that the city in Carter's dystopia, <i>The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman</i> (1972), is based not just on Tokyo (as commonly assumed) but also on Bristol (R2).</p> | | |

Angela Carter and the Visual

Mulvey-Roberts' interest in Angela Carter and the visual was inspired by Charlotte Crofts' influential book, *Anagrams of Desire* (2003), specifically her analysis of religious painting in Carter's TV documentary *The Holy Family Album* (directed by Jo Ann Kaplan, 1991). Crofts joined UWE in 2007 and, with Mulvey-Roberts, created the <http://getangelacarter.com> website in 2016, which assembled wide-ranging works, events and network links. This was followed in 2018 by the Angela Carter Society (<http://angelacartersociety.com>), with an international Advisory Board, a website curated by Mulvey-Roberts and Crofts, and an annual international conference and annual prize run by the Society. Mulvey-Roberts co-curated the major exhibition 'Strange Worlds: The Vision of Angela Carter' (December 2016-March 2017) at the Royal West of England Academy (RWA), Bristol, which brought paintings from Kaplan's documentary together in a gallery for the first time.

The RWA exhibition was timed to commemorate twenty-five years since the author's death. As co-curator, Mulvey-Roberts exhaustively researched Carter's life and work for further artworks to exhibit in the show. Exhibits were chosen that reflected or were inspired by Carter's writing, the original artworks for her books, and several personal artefacts including the only known recording of Carter singing and playing folk music. Selecting such materials involved Mulvey-Roberts interviewing artists who had known Carter and researching nearly a hundred artworks for loan applications to be sent to galleries and private collections, and for the show's panels and exhibition catalogue (R4).

Mulvey-Roberts' research for her book chapter on Carter's Bluebeard adaptation for the title story of her most well-known collection of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) (R5) led her to interpret the exhibition's powerful installation *The Banquet* (1985) by Ana Maria Pacheco as a recreation of Carter's bloody chamber. Mulvey-Roberts proposes this new interpretation in her introductory chapter to *The Arts of Angela Carter* (2019) (R6, which also discusses how the artist Tessa Falmer responded to Carter's work).



Mulvey-Roberts with Eileen Cooper's Tail of the Tiger, exhibited at RWA

3. References to the research

R1 Brennan, Z. (2015) Angela Carter's "Bristol Trilogy": A Gothic perspective on Bristol's 1960s counterculture. In: Mulvey-Roberts, M., ed., (2015) *Literary Bristol: Writers and the City*. Bristol: Redcliffe Press, pp. 162-182. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/805574/>

R2 Mulvey-Roberts, M. (2015) Introduction: Literary Bristol. In: Mulvey-Roberts, M., ed., *Literary Bristol: Writers and the City*. Bristol: Redcliffe Press, pp. 7-28. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/843600/>

R3 Mulvey-Roberts, M. (2015) Gothic Bristol: City of Darkness and Light. In: Mulvey-Roberts, M., ed., *Literary Bristol: Writers and the City*. Bristol: Redcliffe Press, pp. 29-58. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/843584/>

R4 Mulvey-Roberts, M. and Robinson, F. (2016) *Strange Worlds: The Vision of Angela Carter*. Bristol: Redcliffe Press. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/6830105>

R5 Mulvey-Roberts, M. (2009) From Bluebeard's Bloody Chamber to Demonic Stigmatic. In: Wallace, D. and Smith, A., eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions*. London: Palgrave, pp. 98-114. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230245457_7

R6 Mulvey-Roberts, M. (2019) Introduction: Angela Carter's Curious Rooms. In: Mulvey-Roberts, M., ed., *The Arts of Angela Carter: A Cabinet of Curiosities*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526136787.00007>

4. Details of the impact

The Angela Carter Exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy, Bristol

Mulvey-Roberts used Carter's connections to Bristol to enhance the city's cultural heritage. The most far-reaching impact was that of the RWA exhibition. The show was their first exhibition devoted to a writer and their first major exhibition to focus on an individual woman. It brought in 11,202 visitors (**S1** p3). This represented 'a dramatic increase in audiences for the RWA' and diversified their traditional audience base (**S2**). According to the RWA's Head of Programmes, the exhibition:

'marked a significant departure by focusing on a literary figure' and 'Curatorially...created a lasting impact in terms of the RWA's programming policy' (S2).

The exhibition's wide-ranging impact upon the RWA included creating new long-term lender relationships with the Scottish National Gallery and with acclaimed contemporary artists, most notably Ana Maria Pacheco (**S2**). For the first time, this exhibition gave the RWA editorials in literary presses and access to new marketing channels, including Mulvey-Roberts' peak-time interview for Radio 4's *Front Row* (23 December 2016) (**S1** p3, p2). The exhibition's impact permeated throughout the RWA, increasing shop expenditure, including catalogue sales, and increasing the numbers for associated engagement activities (**S2**).

More than 90% of visitors agreed that the exhibition had enriched their understanding of Bristol's literary culture and almost 75% reported that it changed how they perceived Carter (**S3** p3). The exhibition also altered visitors' perception of the RWA by emphasising its long-standing recognition of women artists (**S3** p3). New readers were introduced to Carter's work (**S1** p31, p32, p37, p52), while others were stimulated to revisit it (**S1** p37, p41, p42, p54). Several reading groups focused on her novels following a free visit arranged by Bristol Libraries, involving participants from across the city, most of whom were not regular Carter readers, and who were inspired by the exhibition to read more of her work (**S4**).

Creation of New Writing, Art, and Musical Performances

The uncovering of Carter's Bristol connection and the research into her links to visual arts inspired writers, artists, and musicians to create new work in response.

The RWA exhibition gave local and national artists opportunities to create new work (including four pieces commissioned using Arts Council funding (GBP10,000)), present existing work in a new Carteresque context, and sell their originals, prints and postcards (**S2**, **S6**).

Impact case study (REF3)

Approximately 100 primary school children created art-logbooks, collages and creative writing inspired by the show, followed by a parents' evening where their work was displayed alongside the artworks. Writing, art and craft workshops, a poetry competition and a film-making call facilitated further creative work drawing on exhibition themes (S1 pp19-26).

Three composers were commissioned to create new musical works in response to individual artworks, premiered in the main gallery of the RWA in a public concert (S5 p14). The link between music and art drew in a new audience unfamiliar with contemporary classical music and resulted in *'a very high level of engagement'* (S5 p16). Mulvey-Roberts co-organised a folk concert for the public there in March 2017, bringing singers and musicians together for the first time in 50 years since playing and singing with Carter; *'a profoundly moving event'* (S6). The concert's co-organiser describes how the event illuminated *'the significance of Angela's role in the British folk music revival, which had national importance'* (S6).

Renato's theatre company was founded as a result of Mulvey-Roberts' commissioning and co-producing musical adaptations of Carter's *'Puss-in Boots'* and *'The Bloody Chamber'* at two Bristol theatres to sell-out audiences (10-13 October 2017 and 26-29 January 2019). The librettist A.C.H. Smith, who had worked with Carter on a Bristol newspaper and read Mulvey-Roberts' work (R5), said:

'Professor Mulvey-Roberts's promotion of Carter's work through books and articles, exhibitions and teaching, as well as at performances, is all the more welcome in her insistence on recognising Carter's deep imaginative roots in Bristol before the acclaim she earned later in London' (S7).

Subsequent Events

Mulvey-Roberts made a 60-minute film for schools on *The Bloody Chamber*, which has had 72,396 downloads and is the 18th most popular course from over 450 hosted on the MASSOLIT online educational platform (S8).

Through its relocating of Carter's work in Bristol and the *'revelation'* of her involvement with the 1960s folk revival, *Strange Worlds* was an important influence on Stephen E. Hunt's book *Angela Carter's 'Provincial Bohemia': The Counterculture in 1960s and 1970s Bristol and Bath* (published May 2020) (S9). The book became the basis for an online guided tour of Angela Carter's Bristol, co-organised with Crofts and Mulvey-Roberts for November 2020's *Being Human Festival*, which attracted 242 participants from across the world (S9). Audience feedback shows that 63% of respondents were encouraged to find out more, 67% found their awareness of research in the subject increased by the event, and 91% changed their perceptions of the subject as a result of attending. One participant described how the event *'captured an essence of Angela Carter's Bristol'*, while another reported, *'I learnt SO much from it'* (S10).



Map showing locations of guided tour participants

Mulvey-Roberts' work was instrumental in the installation of a plaque on Carter's former Bristol house in what would have been the year of her 80th birthday, establishing a place of permanent recognition and expanding public understanding and appreciation of these hitherto neglected Bristol connections (**S11**).



Angela Carter plaque on the Ground Floor Flat of 38 Royal York Crescent, Clifton, Bristol

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1 Report by Royal West of England Academy: *Strange Worlds: The Vision of Angela Carter Exhibition Report*, 10 December 2016-19 March 2017

S2 Testimonial from Head of Programmes and Exhibitions Curator, Royal West of England Academy, contact details provided with source submitted to the REF Team

S3 Audience feedback for *Strange Worlds* exhibition plus scanned questionnaires

S4 Participant feedback questionnaire data provided by Bristol Libraries for Angela Carter/*Strange Worlds* Reading Group

S5 *Strange Worlds* concerts publicity and Spring 2017 overview report produced by New Music in the South West and collected from www.nmsw.org.uk

S6 Testimonial by Christine Molan, painter, illustrator and folk-singer, contact details provided with source submitted to the REF Team

S7 Testimonial from ACH Smith, librettist and co-founder of Renato's theatre company, contact details provided with source submitted to the REF Team

S8 Email dated 19 November 2020 from the Founder of MASSOLIT online educational platform, contact details provided with source submitted to the REF Team

S9 Testimonial from Stephen E. Hunt, author of *Angela Carter's 'Provincial Bohemia': The Counterculture in 1960s and 1970s Bristol and Bath*, contact details provided with source submitted to the REF Team

S10 *Being Human Festival 2020* feedback: audience survey conducted by Free Thought Research, plus summary of key questions compiled by UWE

S11 Testimonial from Committee Member of the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society, Bristol