

Leonora Carrington

Living Legacies

Edited by

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Series in Art



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Claire Dean's short stories have been widely published and are included in *Best British Short Stories* 2011, 2014 & 2017 (Salt). *Bremen*, *The Unwish*, *Marionettes* and *Into the Penny Arcade* are published as chapbooks by Nightjar Press. Her first collection, *The Museum of Shadows and Reflections*, was published by Unsettling Wonder in 2016. Claire is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at Edge Hill University where her research explores material practice, writing technologies and ecological story-making.

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Jon Lee is an academic and theatre-maker. As Artistic Co-Director of *Dirty Market*, a company he co-founded with Georgina Sowerby, he has been developing theatre performances and participatory theatre events that champion a do-it-yourself ethos by actively seeking ways of empowering participants and offering creative ways to engage with classic texts. Jon is Senior Lecturer in Drama and Performance at London South Bank University, currently teaching modernist performance and contemporary theatre-making.

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Catriona McAra is University Curator at Leeds Arts University. She has published extensively on Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning with a particular interest in feminist aesthetics and Surrealist legacies in contemporary practice. She is author of *A Surrealist Stratigraphy of Dorothea Tanning's Chasm*

(Routledge, 2017), and co-editor with Jonathan P. Eburne of *Leonora Carrington and the International Avant-Garde* (MUP, 2017). Recent articles on Carrington include “Dollhouse Architecture” in *Gramarye* (2017) and “Wild Card” in *The Space Between* (2018). Catriona’s current book project explores Carrington in contemporary practice, including the novels and curatorial work of Heidi Sopinka and Chloe Aridjis

Tara Plunkett is a Lecturer in Spanish at University College Dublin. Her work focuses on Spanish and Latin American artists’ use of the Surrealist aesthetic in works of self-fashioning. She has published book chapters and articles on the works of Federico García Lorca, Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo. As co-editor of *Preservation, Radicalism and the Avant-Garde Canon* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) she has also been investigating the ways in which avant-garde cultural production is canonised, classified and curated. In 2014 she curated “Out of the Ordinary: Contemporary Visions of the Avant-Garde” at the Naughton Gallery, Belfast.

Julia Salmerón (Lic. UCM, MA and PhD, Hull) has been a Senior Lecturer at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid since 1998. She lectures in English and American literature, and gender and women’s studies both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She has organised numerous seminars, workshops and conferences on the topic of women and literature. Julia has published widely on Leonora Carrington, Dorothy Strachey, Remedios Varo, Julia Kristeva, Virginia Woolf, Suzan-Lori Parks, Adrienne Kennedy, Vera Brittain, Marilyn Chin, Hélène Cixous, Gabriela Mistral, and on lesbian women and their blogs. She has been a board member of the *Journal of Gender Studies* since 1999. She is Co-founder of the Permanent Gender Studies seminar within the English department at the UAM (1998).

Roger Shannon is Professor of Film and Television at Edge Hill University. Prior to taking up a post in Higher Education, he worked in the UK’s film industry as an executive producer at the Birmingham Film/Video Workshop; at the Moving Image Development Agency in Liverpool; at the British Film Institute; and the UK Film Council in London; and at Scottish Screen in Glasgow, Scotland. He has also been a Film Festival Director at the Birmingham International Film and Television Festival. At Edge Hill University he has pursued research into the life and work of Leonora Carrington, instigating the 2015 Tate Liverpool exhibition for which he was Special Projects Advisor.

Penny Sharman is a poet, artist, photographer and complementary therapist. She has had many poems published in magazines and anthologies such as *The Interpreter’s House*, *Strix* and *Obsessed with Pipework*. Penny has an MA in Creative Writing from Edge Hill University. Penny is inspired by art and

natural landscapes and has a Surreal approach to her work. Penny's debut poetry pamphlet *Fair Ground* was published by Yaffle Press in Spring 2019. Penny's first collection, *Fair Ground*, was published in Autumn 2019 by Cerasus Press.

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Alessia Zinnari received her BA in Modern Languages and Literatures from the University of Calabria and completed her MLitt in Modern Cultures and Translation Studies at the University of Turin. She completed an MLitt in Comparative Literature at the University of Glasgow, where she is currently working on her PhD, entitled "Mental Illness, Autobiography and Female Creativity in the 20th century: a comparative study of Leonora Carrington and Alda Merini". Her project is grounded in feminist theory and focuses on two female creators and the works they produced as a result of their experiences of hospitalisation in psychiatric institutions.

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The editors are most grateful to Gabriel Weisz Carrington, the Leonora Carrington Estate, Paul de Angelis and Edge Hill University for their generous support in this project. We thank Tate Liverpool, Joanna Moorhead and Daniel Weisz for their collaboration. Roger Shannon would especially like to thank Josh Appignanesi, Teresa Griffiths, Helen Carrington, Francesco Manacorda and Dr Lora Markova. James Hewison and Michelle Man wish to thank the staff at Crookhey Hall.

Foreword: *Leonora's Dépaysement*

Gabriel Weisz Carrington

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico

When my son Danny and I went to Lancashire, we were both very excited at the prospect of another of Leonora's celebrations, so near to Crookhey Hall and Hazelwood where she spent most of her childhood. The event organized by Roger Shannon had an incredible thematic span which considered Leonora's diversity of artistic manifestations and explored by different scholars. It was like traveling into different minds and discovering new narratives.

However, I would like to survey a different constellation, that of *dépaysement*. The term is associated with an emotion motivated by changing habitudes or environments. Leonora went through various *dépaysements*, from the strictly barren bourgeois English upbringing, to the intrusion of the fairy stories and Irish legends, that were so much a part of her imaginal mind; a conventional entourage broken by the fantastic. Another change of habitudes occurred when she found the Surrealists and initiated a relationship with Max Ernst, this of course had great influence on how she created and from where she created.

Another upheaval took place when a brusque change of atmosphere materialized as she had to make sense of Mexico. Often, she was confronted with the meaning of being a stranger. As she walked through ruins of a completely foreign nature and the Mexican markets with unknown fruits and animals, Leonora is confronted with a deep feeling of the exotic and an encounter with a magical exoticism. The real is turned into an undefined and perplexing place where she lacks footing.

In contrast, her English surroundings have to change, so she undertakes a critique of place and habits, because what is considered as comfortably disposed must undergo a *dépaysement* of her nature in order to inhabit the foreignness of self. In Mexico, Leonora strives to find the opposite of the exotic as a quest for that sentiment of authenticity that comes with real habitation. Through the years, I have found certain touristic appreciations of Leonora, but what is left out is the reverse of these concerns. If tourism implies an external gathering of mementoes, an inner journey deconstructs this attitude. Leonora rejected this external search, since her aim was to unearth her own subtle reflection, that is a self, found in a visionary dimension.

Coyoacán Mexico City. May 11, 2019.

Introduction

Michelle Man with Ailsa Cox

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This volume is the fruit of the *Leonora Carrington Centenary Symposium* (LCCS) held at Edge Hill University, Lancashire, England on 30th June 2017. The initial impulse for this event was to offer a space for discussion and celebration in the centenary year of the artist, who was born just fifteen miles from the university campus. The stellar reputation that Carrington had gained in her adopted country of Mexico, had not been reciprocated with the same widespread enthusiasm in England, and we felt a sense of responsibility to put right what British poet and patron of the Surrealist movement Edward James (1907-1984) had been known to remark, that Carrington had remained arguably one of Britain's finest – and most neglected – Surrealists. The LCCS also emerged from the research and creative practice that was being developed in response to Carrington's work in different departments across Edge Hill University, including Film Scholarship, Creative Writing, Dance Performance and Choreography, and that had in turn contributed to the institution's support for the *Leonora Carrington: Transgressing Discipline* exhibition at the Tate, Liverpool (2015).¹

¹ This included: screen showings of Josh Appiganesi's film *Female Human Animal* (2018) and Teresa Griffiths's *Leonora Carrington: the Lost Surrealist* (2017); *The Speaking Trumpet*, a reading of new Surrealist and fantastical writing at the Tate, from authors including Ailsa Cox and Claire Dean; ICE event "In Conversation about Leonora Carrington" (2015) with the then Artistic Director of Tate Liverpool Francesco Manacorda, and the journalist and writer Joanna Moorhead.

Driven by the celebratory energy of her birth-centenary, 2017 saw the release of new editions of Carrington's *Down Below* (NYRB), *The Complete Stories of Leonora Carrington* (The Dorothy Project) and *The Debutante and Other Stories* (Silver Press). This posthumous surge in the availability of her literary work, accompanied by much journalistic inquiry and biographical and fictional texts (Moorhead, 2017; Poniatowska, 2015), has undoubtedly triggered a broader readership. Recent important scholarly publications by established Carrington researchers (Eburne and McAra, 2017; Chadwick, 2017) have also brought further historical and contemporary significance to the artist's legacy.

As conveners of the LCCS, we wished to expand on new and existing writings on Carrington; at the same time, we were conscious of Carrington's reluctance to engage in critical analysis of her artwork and the perhaps somewhat paradoxical and provocative nature of organising a symposium to do precisely that. Our call, therefore, proposed to approach this task through a lens of *give and return* that the artist herself musingly articulates in her 1965 mock-manifesto "Jezzamatathics": "I was decubing the root of a Hyperbollick Symposium...when the latent metamorphosis blurted the great unexpected shriek into something between a squeak and a smile. IT GAVE, so to speak, in order to return" (in Aberth, 2010:149). In adopting her playful conjecture, our invitation aimed to generate a forum through which to bring Carrington and her work to further prominence as catalytic and legacy bearing. We encouraged a wide range of formats from scholars, early career researchers and artists, that included unpublished papers, interviews, creative provocations, and practice-led and performative interventions that would explore, question and enable new ways of thinking with Carrington's legacy. Whilst the contents of this volume are a selection and extension of those papers, we would like to acknowledge the contribution made by all the presenters and delegates who, through their shared passion, insight and energy have shaped our on-going discussions, and supported our framing of *Leonora Carrington: Living Legacies*.

We are indebted to Gabriel Weisz for his support and stimulating dialogue that continues to revivify Carrington's legacy. In the prologue dedicated to this volume, he highlights his mother's capacity to inhabit the abrupt changes of environment that she encountered as she journeyed away from Lancashire. This coming to terms with situations of *déspaysement* would become intrinsic to her artwork. Our wish is that *Leonora Carrington: Living Legacies* will contribute to further reflection on those displacements, adaptations and unearthings of self, as well as bringing new readings into her art of transgressing borders, disciplines and cultures. The following chapters constitute a range of artistic, scholarly and creative responses to the realm of

Carrington where her work becomes a medium, a milieu, and a provocation for new thinking, being and imagining in the world.

From her curatorial and scholarly perspective **Catriona McAra**'s opening chapter "A Feminist Marvellous: Chloe Aridjis and the Female Human Animal" leads us through what she identifies as recent new approaches to the legacies of Carrington's multifaceted oeuvre, revealing how the artist and her work permeate the cultural imagination of many contemporary writers, artists and scholars. Central to this chapter's focus on intertextuality is an exquisite unravelling of the work by Mexican, London-based novelist Chloe Aridjis (b.1971), a family friend of Carrington in Mexico City and co-curator to the landmark exhibition of Carrington's work, *Transgressing Discipline* (2015), with Tate Liverpool. Using the ekphrastic thinking of Aridjis in order to re-explore Carrington's feminist marvellous, McAra offers a fresh and nuanced assessment of her cult status.

In this volume, much space has been given to different contributors' detailed analysis of the text *Down Below* and its significance from their multifarious perspectives. Within the current socio-political climate, where a surge in prominence of *Fourth Wave Feminism* is being driven by the *Me Too Movement*, Carrington's memoir reads as an advocacy warning and testimony of survival. In Chapter Two "I was in another place': The Liminal Journey in Leonora Carrington's *Down Below*", Glasgow based scholar **Alessia Zinnari** underlines the artist's capacity for symbolisation, and the process of renegotiation of her experience through the reconstruction of her journey, showing how the ambiguities of *Down Below* can be resolved in reading this space as both heterotopia and liminality. In Chapter Five, German scholar **Andrea Gremels** proposes "Lucid Madness as Method? Surrealist style in Leonora Carrington's *Down Below*", drawing attention to writing strategies and Carrington's own particular Surrealist method that inscribes irrationality and the unconscious into the realistic account of her traumatic experience. From a historical perspective Spanish scholar **Julia Salmerón** presents in Chapter Seven a very detailed political speculation around events leading up to Carrington's incarceration. Taking as the focal point the climate and manoeuvres of a post-civil war Francoist Spain, and the threat of fascism across Europe, her chapter presents the notion of "Leonora, the Battlefield" and is informed by her doctoral research undertaken in Santander, where Carrington was held.

Weaving throughout this volume of *Leonora Carrington: Living Legacies* are contributions that have been developed from artistic responses that carefully play with the subversive and poetical found in the artist's work. In Chapter Four, "*Imaginarium: Dancing with Carrington*", **James Hewison** and **Michelle Man** discuss the processes of their practice-led choreographic research on embodied

absorption and translation of what they define as the morphological potential of Carrington's literary and painted imagery. Making reference to the affective experiences of their artistic residency at Crookhey Hall, Carrington's influential early-childhood home in Lancashire, they draw on Bracha Ettinger's notion of *carriance* as a means of defining their gathering of and dancing with Carringtonesque sensibilities.

Chapter Six, **Jon Lee** and **Georgina Sowerby's** "Alchemical Adaptations: Performing Leonora Carrington's *Hearing Trumpet*", recounts their creative process of transforming Carrington's novel into a full-scale piece of site-responsive theatre. Charting the complexities and challenges encountered during that theatre adaptation, they lay out their collective shift in consciousness throughout that period of experimentation, making, devising, rehearsing and finally performing. In doing so, they explore ideas of ownership and artistic control, weaving connections between Rosi Braidotti's Posthumanism and Carrington's radical new world order as presented in *The Hearing Trumpet*.

Chapter Eight is presented as a collection of poems by **Penny Sharman**, written in situ at Tate Liverpool; her writing comes directly from being immersed in the exhibition *Leonora Carrington: Transgressing Discipline* (2015). Skeletal in form, rich in content, the author's live reading of her work at the LCCS, echoed as an inquisitive conversation across time with Carrington. In a similar vein, yet from a distinct writing discipline, **Claire Dean's** Chapter Eleven "Leonora, Fly!" is a tale of the fantastic, bizarre and mundane rooted in the Lancashire landscape of Carrington's childhood, and branching towards other worlds inspired by her art. In an *afterstory*, Dean considers the process of responding to the imaginative materials that Carrington shared, from which new writing may emerge.

Whilst Carrington herself resisted certain forms of analysis of her artwork and literary texts, many of our contributors have offered critical thinking that places Carrington's idiosyncratic and textured manners of acting artistically within theoretical frameworks where her "worldings" inform sensibilities found in feminist phenomenology, the feminist marvellous, theories of abjection, New Materialisms and the Posthuman.

In Chapter Three "Riding Along the Edge: The Shifting Subjectivities of Leonora Carrington's Hybrids", **Tara Plunkett** reflects on the multifaceted, shifting and permeable nature of subjectivity as depicted by Carrington through the motif of the human/animal hybrid body. It considers politicised, deliberately female, and often grotesque hybrid bodies in the artist's oeuvre in comparison with gender-neutral hybrids and their association with a secular metamorphic unity between all things. Through the analysis of the physical

functions of the female body such as nourishment and procreation, Plunkett argues that the grotesque, monstrous form of the female human/animal hybrid body provides the perfect vessel through which to question the limits of subjectivity, the boundaries between the self and the other, and those between the self and the outside world.

In Chapter Nine, “Creativity and Women’s Time in the Work of Leonora Carrington”, **Alicia Kent** explores what she identifies as an anxiety persisting in Carrington’s political contribution as an artist. She proposes that the artist offers an atomic redistribution of the self, unpicking fixed nodes of identity, and reconfiguring subjectivity through new points of consensus, which are held together in a circular network of meaning. Kent bases her analysis on Jacques Lacan’s schema of the “*points de capiton*” or “quilting points”, arguing that these mark Carrington’s redrafting of the girl-woman artist and writer as a political subject.

Felicity Gee’s Chapter Ten, “If These Walls Could Talk: Leonora Carrington’s psycho-spatial rooms”, focuses on how Carrington’s oeuvre engages the reader, or viewer, in a creative dialogue with intricate and oft-repeating spatial configurations of “the room”. Explored through philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s theory of spatial phenomenology in conversation with Carrington’s creative responses to the potentiality of space, both negatively and positively imagined, Gee considers the ways in which a particularly female encounter with space questions the rigidity of architectural form. Taking Bachelard’s concept of a “fabric of relations”, Carrington’s work is examined through its polymorphous rhythms, its multiple chambers and garrets, in order to better understand the ways in which re-configured spaces allow for transformation that is both personal and political.

The final chapter to this volume is a transcription of the open conversation that **Gabriel Weisz Carrington** most generously offered at the LCCS. Chaired by **Roger Shannon** and accompanied by a stream of family album photographs and images of Leonora Carrington’s work, Gabriel’s spirited frankness to a wide range of searching questions were a testimony of desire to pay homage to the artist’s significance.

In a late interview with Carrington, the art critic and writer Edward Gómez asked her if she “had thought about her legacy and the unique contribution she had made to the development of modern art” (2011:71), noting “that she had achieved a rare honor: in her lifetime, she had earned an indelible place in the canon of Mexico’s own modern-art history” (ibid). In that moment, he observed “ [g]enuinely or not, she seemed uninterested in the subject and silently brushed it off” (ibid). This edited volume picks up the threads of that unanswered question to celebrate Carrington’s vibrant and on-going legacy.

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