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Rousseau in a Post-Apocalyptic Context: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* and Science Fiction

Yutaka Okuhata

English and Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London, University of London, London WC1E 7HX, UK;
yokuha01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

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Abstract: The present paper discusses Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* (1969), which parodies both "post-apocalyptic" novels in the Cold War era and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory on civilisation. By analysing this novel in comparison, not only to Rousseau's *On the Origin of Inequality* (1755), but also to the works of various science fiction writers in the 1950s and 1960s, the paper aims to examine Carter's reinterpretation of Rousseau in a post-apocalyptic context. As I will argue, *Heroes and Villains* criticises Rousseau from a feminist point of view to not only represent the dystopian society as full of inequality and violence, but also to show that human beings, having forgotten the nuclear war as their great "sin" in the past, can no longer create a bright future. Observing the underlying motifs in the novel, the paper will reveal how Carter attempts to portray a world where human history has totally ended, or where people cannot make "history" in spite of the fact that they biologically survived the holocaust. From this perspective, I will clarify the way in which Carter reinterprets Rousseau's notion of "fallen" civilisation in the new context as a critique of the nuclear issues in the late twentieth century.

Keywords: Angela Carter; *Heroes and Villains*; Science Fiction; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Nuclear War; the Cold War

1. Introduction

In a newly discovered interview with David Pringle in 1979 in which she spoke about her dystopian novels between the late 1960s and the 1970s—*Heroes and Villains* (1969), *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972), and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977)—Angela Carter remarked that she had been highly influenced by science fiction since her childhood, from John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) to the works of "new wave" writers such as J. G. Ballard, William S. Burroughs, Michael Moorcock, Thomas M. Disch, and Brian Aldiss. Carter, nonetheless, states in the same conversation that *Heroes and Villains*, which is the first of her novels to reflect her own profound interest in this genre, should be defined not as pure SF but rather as a "science fiction *romance*" (*italics in original*; Pringle 2017). Indeed, according to Gregory J. Robinson, the "romantic" quality expressed in this novel mainly derives from the genre of gothic romance (Robinson 2005, p. 178). As Brian Stableford reveals in his article, moreover, it is also certain that there are multiple differences between the English tradition of science fiction and what is called "scientific romance", originating from nineteenth-century French authors represented by Jules Verne (Stableford 2012). Even though *Heroes and Villains* seems to have echoes of both English and French legacies, one should not underestimate Carter's artistic response to post-war science fiction trends, since it is undeniable that her dystopian portrayal of the world after nuclear war is under the apparent effect of this genre.

From this perspective, the present paper focuses on Carter's neglected relationship with science fiction, reconsidering *Heroes and Villains*, which has been interpreted in various ways since its publication, in a political or cultural context. Importantly, although critics such as Jack G. Shaheen says that the

period between 1946 and 1965 was the heyday of low-budget science fiction movies “that exaggerated nuclear catastrophes” (Shaheen 1978, p. xiii), in Carter’s dystopian writings including *Heroes and Villains*, the influence of SF novels seems much greater than that of SF films. When talking about this novel with John Haffenden in a 1985 interview, therefore, Carter herself retrospectively noted that “there was a real vogue for post-catastrophe novels” in the fifties and sixties (Haffenden 1985, p. 95). In a word, to borrow Roz Kaveney’s words, the early Cold War era was “a golden age for novels about the aftermath of atomic war and other collapses, both inside and outside the SF world” (Kaveney 2007, p. 189). For example, many of the famous science fiction novels that portray the terror of nuclear disaster—such as Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), Judith Merrill’s *Shadow on the Hearth* (1950), Andre Norton’s *Star Man’s Son* (1952), Wilson Tucker’s *The Long Loud Silence* (1952), Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach* (1957), Mordecai Roshwald’s *Level 7* (1959), and Pat Frank’s *Alas, Babylon* (1959)—were actually written in this decade. Also, in the 1960s, a number of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic novels—such as Walter M. Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960), L. P. Hartley’s *Facial Justice* (1960), Philip Wylie’s *Triumph* (1963), Edgar Pangborn’s *Davy* (1964), Robert A. Heinlein’s *Farnham’s Freehold* (1964), Philip K. Dick’s *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb* (1965), and Anna Kavan’s *Ice* (1967)—were published in both Britain and the United States.

Although several critics who examine (post-)apocalyptic literature in the Cold War era, including Paul Brians, Adam Piette, and David Caute, completely ignore Carter’s dystopian novels, there are some studies that seek to situate *Heroes and Villains* in the genealogy of this literary genre.¹ Roger Luckhurst, for example, views this novel as a theoretical reading of “the post-holocaust disaster tradition” in fictional form (Luckhurst 2005, p. 184). From this perspective, despite the fact that there is no direct use of the term “nuclear” in the text, we can interpret *Heroes and Villains* not simply as a parody of the post-apocalyptic fiction of the 1950s and 1960s that imagined the world after a catastrophic nuclear war, but also as a work that reflects the author’s own awareness of political tensions in the Cold War era.

On the other hand, however, Carter also stated in her conversation with Haffenden that “*Heroes and Villains* [wa]s a discussion of the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and strangely enough it f[ound] them wanting” (Haffenden 1985, p. 95). This dystopian novel, therefore, can also be seen as a critical parody of Rousseau’s work—or a text that critically recreates and re-examines his *On the Origin of Inequality* (*Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*, 1755) in the peculiar context of human society after a nuclear war. In this sense, the main focus of this essay is not merely on the intertextual relation between *Heroes and Villains* and *On the Origin of Inequality*; rather, it is on Carter’s experimental reconsideration of Rousseau in a post-apocalyptic context.

As is apparent from her unpublished journals owned by the British Library², Carter was actually a keen reader of Rousseau. In addition to *On the Origin of Inequality*, she read many of his philosophical writings before completing *Heroes and Villains*. As a matter of fact, her private notebook written between 1968 and 1969 indicates that she particularly had a strong interest in Rousseau’s critique of civilization and the problems of slavery and inequality observed in his other major works such as *The Confessions* (*Les Confessions*, 1782–1789) and *The Social Contract* (*Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique*, 1762) (1968–1969). In this notebook, Carter also quotes a number of passages from Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) and John W. N. Watkins’s scholarly volume entitled *Hobbes’s System of Ideas* (1965). In addition, her earlier journal clearly shows that she read John Locke for the first time in 1963 (1962–1963). From these facts, it may be possible to claim that Carter attempted to understand Rousseau’s social theories in comparison with those of Hobbes and Locke, both of whom had a great influence on his works.

¹ See (Dowling 1987, p. 101; Luckhurst 2005, p. 184; Hammond 2013, p. 68; 2017, pp. 114–16).

² See (Carter 1962–1963, Carter 1968–1969).

Among those who have pointed out the affinities between Carter's *Heroes and Villains* and Rousseau's theories, Heidi Yeandle, the author of *Angela Carter and Western Philosophy* (2017), is one of the few critics who has closely examined the way in which this post-apocalyptic text deals with Rousseau's philosophical topics. Although the main focus of Yeandle's analysis is on Carter's literary responses to Rousseau and Hobbsean discussions on the issue of education and the relationship between the "civil state" and the "state of nature", she also comments here that Carter's dystopian novel can be read as a kind of "survival guide, a fictional and political response to the context of the Cold War, and the simultaneous popularity of survivalism" that emerged in the United States in the 1960s (Yeandle 2017, p. 46).

Historically speaking, Rousseau, as a critic of Western civilization and associated with the "return to nature" movement, "was a forerunner of the hippies" in the same decade "who turn[ed] their backs on straight society and tr[ie]d to survive in their own way on its fringes" (Marshall 1995, p. 243). According to Claire P. Curtis, moreover, the issues hypothetically brought up by so-called "social contract theorists" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau were speculatively explored in post-apocalyptic fiction written after World War II. Defining the genre as "any account that takes up how humans start over after the end of life on earth", Curtis notes that "[t]he apocalyptic events create the social contrast thinker's state of nature" (Curtis 2012, pp. 2, 5). In such works of fiction that pose "what if" questions by imagining ends based on nuclear war and other types of disasters, the authors provide "a window into life absent central authority" (pp. 7, 10). Although Curtis overlooks Carter and other important science fiction writers in the early Cold War era, her volume at least highlights that many post-apocalyptic writings, from Frank's *Alas Babylon* to the works of Octavia E. Butler, have sought to offer "the fantasy of starting over" (p. 5).

It is certain that, like these post-war authors, Carter seems to respond to Rousseau's social theory in *Heroes and Villains*. However, in significant contrast to their texts, which mainly depict "new beginnings", what is centrally portrayed in her novel is a world where human history has ended. Even though critics, including Yeandle, have viewed Carter's portrayal of the post-nuclear war world in relation to Rousseau's descriptions of "fallen" civilization and human society in a state of nature in *On the Origin of Inequality*, not only do they fail to clarify that her novel portrays the nuclear war as the great sin in oblivion, but they also underestimate the important fact that she attempted to represent "the end of human history" by parodying other post-apocalyptic writings in the 1950s and 1960s, in addition to Rousseau's critique of civilization.

As Linda Hutcheon puts it, parody can be seen as repetition with "critical" distance that seeks "differentiation in its relationship to its model" (Hutcheon 1985, p. 38). Therefore, in her science fictionalisation of Rousseau's notion of civilization, or her representation of the end of human history in a post-nuclear war world, Carter does not simply imitate his view of modern society as a "fallen" place. Instead, parodically reconsidering Rousseau's utopian portrayal of the state of nature in this new context, Carter's rather dystopian (or anti-utopian) novel makes full use of some methodologies of science fiction, especially what Darko Suvin terms the "novum", which functions to "estrangle" Rousseau and offers her an alternative, "imaginative framework" that enables her to overcome her own "empirical environment" (Suvin 2016, p. 20). Because the novum thus "generate[s] distance and fresh view of an author's reality that rejects narrowly empirical, commonsensical accounts [...]" (Moylan 2000, p. 44), Carter's use of this methodology contributes to her critical parody of Rousseau from a post-apocalyptic perspective, as well as to her literary response to the nuclear age.

"To contemplate nuclear disaster", as Dowling comments in *Fictions of Nuclear Disaster*, "one must have a sense of the pattern of human history and future destiny" (Dowling 1987, p. 85). As a political writer who was seriously conscious of the condition of human lives in the real world under the constant threat of atomic and hydrogen bombs, on the other hand, Carter completely denies the immortality of human history in *Heroes and Villains*, by imagining the "frozen" world after a nuclear war, where civilization has collapsed and people can no longer "make" new history in spite of the fact that they could biologically survive the holocaust. The people described in this novel are mortal creatures

always threatened by the possibility of a cruel death; most of them are still living as what biologists call “homo sapiens”, but they can no longer live as “human beings” in a real sense because there will be no positive growth or evolution for their societies in the future. From this point of view, the present essay will examine the way in which Carter problematises the issue of nuclear weapons in the Cold War era and imagines “the end of human history”, investigating her depictions of human life in the world after nuclear war, in comparison to both Rousseau’s critique of “fallen” civilization and the science fiction novels of her time.

2. The Nuclear War as the “Original Sin” in Oblivion

As J. G. Ballard beautifully represents the surrealistic worlds of destruction in his famous trilogy of disaster narratives in the 1960s—*The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1964), and *The Crystal World* (1966)—, Carter, in *Heroes and Villains*, imagines the dystopian landscapes of post-apocalyptic societies in the future. Although this appears to have nothing to do with actual British society in her time, as Sarah Gamble puts it, Carter’s novel nonetheless enables her “to reflect on the political context of the sixties; in particular, the Cold War and the growing fear of nuclear conflict it generated” (Gamble 2006, p. 84). As Jeff Nuttall’s *Bomb Culture* (1968) claims that those who had not yet reached puberty at the time of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki “were incapable of conceiving of life *with* a future” (italics in original; Nuttall 1968, p. 20), it was not easy for Carter’s generation to have a positive vision for the future. In the early Cold War era, as Ken Ruthven likewise argues, “nobody doubted that a third world war dominated by nuclear weaponry would be a vastly more destructive affair than the recently terminated World War II” (Ruthven 1993, p. 11). Moreover, according to Daniel Cordle’s article on Cold War literature, nuclear anxiety is often expressed in terms of the awareness that what people experience as normal “might suddenly flip over to be replaced by an entirely different mode of reality” (Cordle 2006, p. 71).

In British literature, as Martin Amis said in *Einstein’s Monsters* (1987), it was, strictly speaking, not the senior generation of “mainstream” authors but the genre of science fiction that had eloquently spoken about the real threat of nuclear catastrophe (Amis 1987, p. 23). David Seed explains this point in his volume, pointing out that “[t]he unique urgencies of the Cold War, and particularly fear of nuclear war”, even “affected writers’ perceptions of the changed status of science fiction” (Seed 1999, p. 8). In this context, so as to figure out Carter’s critical attitudes toward (post-)apocalyptic fiction in the early Cold War era and to discern her pessimistic portrayal of human life in the world after an atomic war, it is necessary to draw sufficient attention to her later essay “Anger in a Black Landscape” (1983), which discusses the issues of nuclear weapons and the arms race in the latter half of the twentieth century. Here, Carter remarks as follows:

[A]s if nuclear weapons themselves—symbolized by the Bomb—were the very, transcendental essence of war, and, more than that, an externalization of all our notions of the ultimate evil. The Bomb has become a very potent, perhaps *the* most potent, symbol of Original Sin. (italics in original; Carter 1997, p. 45)

What is significant in this short passage is the fact that Carter regards the Bomb—or a nuclear weapon—as a symbol of humankind’s “Original Sin”. Of course, because she had “always thought the [Christian] notion of [O]riginal [S]in was pretty silly” and believed that it certainly got “horribly in the way of any attempts to persuade human beings to behave better than they generally do” (p. 45), Carter’s usage of this religious term should not be interpreted literally but rather metaphorically; the invention of “the Bomb”, which may indicate humanity’s blasphemous act of supplanting God’s power, is ambiguously connected to the mythical images of the “fall” of Adam and Eve, who sinfully betrayed God’s trust by eating the forbidden fruit. As well as an irreparable fault that epitomises the fall of all humanity, in Carter’s metaphorical view, the production—and use—of nuclear weapons can also be seen as a great sin of modern civilization, whose responsibilities towards, and negative influences on, future generations will continue to exist.

From this perspective, we should take Carter's comment above as the starting point for viewing the relationship between "the story of the fall" in the Old Testament and the texts of both Carter and Rousseau. Importantly, in *Heroes and Villains*, there are a number of allusions to a serpent, the animal that tempts Eve in the book of Genesis. In the first chapter, for instance, Carter writes that "there were all kinds of snakes in the forest, several of them venomous, which was not so before" (Carter 2011, p. 5). Then, Marianne "saw a variegated snake twined round the bough of a tree but it did not harm her, did not even stick its forked tongue out at her" (p. 14). Because she is bitten in her leg by a venomous snake when running away from the Professors with Jewel, a young leader of the Barbarian tribe, in the second chapter (p. 32), Marianne becomes mentally deranged at a riverside house in which he and his family are temporarily living (p. 42). In addition, according to Jewel's statement in the same chapter, his mentor Dr. Donally seems to worship his serpent called *viperus berus* (p. 34), and in the fourth chapter, which depicts the wedding ceremony of Jewel and Marianne, she finds Donally's snake sleeping silently inside a cage (pp. 79–81). Moreover, as Carter notes in the last part of this chapter, Jewel "wore the figure of a man on the right side, a woman on the left and, tattooed the length of his spine, a tree with a snake curled round and round the trunk" (p. 93).

From these examples, it is at least possible to argue that Carter, who views the nuclear bomb as a symbol of the "Original Sin" of all humanity, is strongly aware of the myth of "paradise lost"—or "the story of the fall"—in her post-apocalyptic novel. On the other hand, in *On the Origin of Inequality*, upon which Carter modelled her novel, Rousseau clearly states:

Religion commands us to believe that, God Himself having taken men out of a state of nature immediately after the creation, they are unequal only because it is His will they should be so: but it does not forbid us to form conjectures based solely on the nature of man, and the beings around him, concerning what might have become of the human race, if it had been left to itself. (Rousseau 1952, p. 334)

Unlike Locke, who concludes that human beings in the state of nature are all equal under the will of God,³ Rousseau, in the first part of this text, declares that he comes to the discussion "without having recourse to the supernatural information given us on this head" (Rousseau 1952, p. 334). At the end of the second part, moreover, he seeks to justify his speculative attitude: "I have endeavored to trace the origin and progress of inequality, and the institution and abuse of political societies, as far as these are capable of being deduced from the nature of man merely by the light of reason, and independently of those sacred dogmas which give the sanction of divine right to sovereign authority" (p. 362). In this way, Rousseau's arguments, which explore the origin of human inequality are, in his own words, "conditional and hypothetical reasonings", which are, to some extent, independent from the religious doctrine of the Bible (p. 334). In other words, while liberating humankind from the Christian doctrine of Original Sin, he defines the civilized people of the eighteenth century as human beings who have "fallen" from their "original state", in which they would have spent their days "insensibly in peace and innocence" (p. 338).

Carter's *Heroes and Villains* is a parodic text that projects the "fall" of human civilization that Rousseau presented in his work onto three fictitious groups of human beings in the world of post-nuclear war: The Professors, the Barbarians, and the Out People. Here, Carter not only stresses the existence of humankind's Original Sin but also intends to link it with the catastrophic war of the past. Just as every human being after Adam and Eve is inexorably linked to their sin and punishment in Christian doctrine, the nuclear war in Carter's novel, which drastically changes the lives of human beings, is represented as a kind of "Original Sin", i.e., a native guilt that every generation in the post-war world has to bear. However, strangely enough, even though the "present-day" world is a product of

³ Unlike Rousseau and Hobbes, Locke, in *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), defines the state of nature as equality under the law of God. Whereas he strongly criticises the doctrine of the divine right of kings, it can be said that his notion of natural law is inseparably connected with the existence of God. See (Locke 1988, p. 271).

this “sin” in the past, the characters in the novel speak neither about the fall of humanity nor about the war itself. Although some of them often refer to the “shelters” and imply the existence of religious sects that radically consider the war to have been the product of “the wrath of the Lord” (Carter 2011, pp. 29, 45), Carter deliberately makes her characters silent about the war—or the origin of the fall of humankind—and never uses the word “nuclear” in the text. As I will discuss later, this probably means that, for the generation born after the catastrophe, the nuclear war is nothing but the absent—or forgotten—past. Carter thus presents her imaginary groups of human beings as creatures far distant from what Rousseau once defined as human beings in an ideal state of nature. Therefore, in significant contrast to Rousseau who sees the development of human civilization as a “fall”, her dystopian novel critically represents human beings who are unaware of their “Original Sin” in spite of their fall after the nuclear war in the past. In this way, throughout the novel, Carter does not simply borrow Rousseau’s framework. Rather, as I will reveal later, Carter’s parodies of his notions can be regarded as her critical rereading of this thinker. For instance, while Rousseau views civilization as post-fall and depicts the human beings who have fallen into it, the fall is out of civilization in *Heroes and Villains*. Moreover, as opposed to Rousseau’s idealized description of the noble savages in the state of nature, Carter’s representation of the Out People, whose characterization implies her critical attitude towards his model, is rather dystopian than utopian.

As represented in the works of L.P. Hartley, Edgar Pangborn, Ray Bradbury, and Walter M. Miller, the survivors’ relationship with the past was one of the central topics of post-apocalyptic fiction written in the early Cold War era. As Seed explains in his scholarly book on American science fiction, “if nuclear holocaust is imagined as the ultimate rupture to human life and history, survivors’ attempts to reconstitute some form of civic order involve the problem of how to access the past” (Seed 1999, p. 157). In Hartley’s *Facial Justice*, for instance, those who survived a devastating nuclear disaster and have been forced to live in underground caverns ruled by the invisible “Dictator” still remember “the horrors of the Third World War and the lesser but still considerable horrors that proceeded the exodus from the Underworld”. According to Hartley’s description, it seems “as though this time humanity ha[s] learned a lesson from experience” (Hartley 2014, p. 27). Moreover, in Pangborn’s novel *Davy*, the titular protagonist, living in a world after a massive nuclear war, pessimistically notes that the world of “Old Time”, or of the pre-war period, “cannot live again as it was”, believing that it is impossible for people even to dream of it. However, at the same time, Davy also says: “Fragments we may reclaim, memory holds more than we know, there’s a resonance of ancient times in any talk of father to son” (Pangborn 2015, p. 101). In Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*, on the other hand, those who had emigrated from Earth to Mars in order “to get away from wars and censorship and statism and conscription and government control of this and that, of art and science” decide, at first, to return to their planet so as to participate in the nuclear war that intensified after their departure (Bradbury 1977, p. 47). Then, because the earth is completely destroyed, the family who survive the longstanding war and escape to Mars are positively determined to live as “Martians” (p. 221). In this way, the characters in Bradbury’s novel finally seem to learn from the great sin of humankind in the past. In the middle of the story, moreover, the Episcopal Fathers, who are about to escape to Mars, seriously question themselves: “Shouldn’t we solve our own sins on Earth? Aren’t we running from our lives here?” (p. 112)

As opposed to the works of Hartley, Pangborn, and Bradbury, Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, published nine years prior to Carter’s *Heroes and Villains*, portrays human beings repeating the same sin. The civilization rebuilt after the nuclear war, known as the “Flame Deluge”, which once ruined the entire planet, rediscovers the surviving remnants of scientific knowledge. Over one thousand years after the Flame Deluge, in spite of the permanent prohibition on manufacturing atomic and hydrogen bombs, “a nuclear explosion occurred recently somewhere across the pacific” (Miller 1975, p. 201). Like Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, which describes those who finally restart the nuclear war, Carter’s novel pessimistically stresses the characters’ inability to face their great “sin” in the past. However, unlike the science fiction novels of Hartley, Pangborn, Bradbury, and Miller, which seek to depict

people after a nuclear holocaust trying to create a “new history”, whether positively or negatively, what is mainly portrayed in Carter’s text is the human species still living in a perpetually stagnant world where “human history” has ended. From this perspective, and focusing on the connection between the individual groups of human beings in *Heroes and Villains* and Rousseau’s philosophical notion of the “fall” of civilization, the next four sections will scrutinise Carter’s representation of her characters.

3. The Frozen Time: The Professors

In the post-apocalyptic world, the Professors, who live in a village surrounded by walls, are portrayed not only as an embodiment of the “fallen” civilization that Rousseau severely denounced in *On the Origin of Inequality*, but also as intellectuals who barely maintain their traditional culture or the value of academism. Unlike the Barbarians living outside the walls, the Professors, who once occupied privileged positions in universities and survived inside shelters during the war, are, so to speak, the relics of modern civilization (Carter 2011, p. 10). Though he sees this novel as a kind of postmodern fiction, Gregory J. Robinson clearly explains that their small society is more or less “characterized by a predominance of academic discourses that preach restraint, repression, and Enlightenment rationality”. He goes on to write:

The Professors, who appear to be exclusively men, possess an abundance of discourses to taxonomize and analyze information, but they are themselves drab, lifeless, cold, and clinical. Typical of postmodern literature, this novel negatively portrays the Enlightenment ideals embraced by their overly rationalistic society. The Professors have lost any connection they once may have had with the living world. They have sunk into stasis and become mere museum keepers for ideas and branches of study no longer applicable in the post-apocalyptic world. (Robinson 2005, p. 177)

As is briefly summarised by Robinson, it is possible to view the Professors as an isolated group that has completely lost its connection to the “living world”. In fact, as can be seen in the text, their small community “was self-supporting at the simplest level and exposed its agricultural surplus in return for drug and other medical supplies, books, ammunition, spare parts for machinery, weapons and tools” (Carter 2011, p. 4). In addition, even Marianne, the daughter of a professor, was not allowed to go outside the village (p. 4). According to Robinson’s account, “[i]n erecting walls around their community and employing a Soldier class to protect those boundaries [. . .], the Professors of *Heroes and Villains* have shut themselves off from the possibility of directly interacting with the world and having new experiences”, and “[a]s a result, they stagnate, grow old and die, or go insane and commit suicide” (Robinson 2005, p. 178).

Living only in the past, this exclusive group does not have any connection with the contemporary “living world” or any prospects for the future. In other words, what they are doing in their everyday life is nothing but protecting—or engaging in the meaningless reproduction—of the traditional knowledge of the Western world. Indeed, Marianne’s father, a history professor, “had read more books than any other Professor in the community”. To use the author’s words in the novel, “[h]e reconstructed the past; that was his profession” (Carter 2011, p. 10). Carter, however, attempts to imply that his reconstruction of the past and reproduction of old-fashioned knowledge are entirely useless: “He was writing a book on the archaeology of social theory but maybe nobody in the community would want to read it, except Marianne, and she might not understand it” (p. 11).

Although critics such as Heidi Yeandle insist that this expression can be read as the author’s “critique of the Professors being stuck in the past and not surviving in the present climate” (Yeandle 2017, p. 50), what is more ironic here is the fact that even those who are living in the past never look back at the great war, a historical event that corrupted the whole of humanity. As is apparent from the absence of the word “nuclear” in the text, they are unaware of their great “sin” in the old days; in addition, from Carter’s point of view, for those who never learn from history and are only engaging in the useless reconstruction of the past, even the concept of the future does not exist.

Hence, there is no development in their society, and there will only be slow decline in their future. Symbolically, at the very beginning of the novel (Carter 2011, p. 3), Carter portrays the strange sense of time in their community. Marianne feels the following about her father's clock:

Marianne thought of the clock as her father's pet, something like her own pet rabbit, but the rabbit soon died and was handed over to the Professor of Biology to be eviscerated while the clock continued to tick inscrutably on. She therefore concluded that the clock must be immortal but this did not impress her. Marianne sat at table, eating; she watched dispassionately as the hands of the clock went round but she never felt that time was passing for time was frozen around her in this secluded place where a pastoral quiet possessed everything and the busy clock carved the hours into sculptures of ice. (p. 3)

In Marianne's view, the time of the Professors is nothing other than "frozen time". For the Professors who engage in reproducing useless knowledge without reflecting on past events, both the "living world" in the present time and its development in the future have no importance. Although Marianne's father severely criticises the Barbarians, saying that "Rousseau spoke of a noble savage but this is a time of ignoble savages" (p. 12), this history professor, living in frozen time, fails to notice that he himself is actually "ignoble" and that his "dying" community is now full of discontent with regard to inequality. Ironically enough, in spite of his profound knowledge of history, he, like his colleagues, will never be able to make "new" history.

In order to discern the Professors' attitude toward the concept of history, before exploring the relationship between Carter and Rousseau, we should now compare *Heroes and Villains* with post-war science fiction novels that deal with the horror of nuclear holocaust, such as Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, and Edgar Pangborn's *Davy*. As skilfully expressed in the conversation quoted below, in Shute's famous novel, whose film adaptation in 1959 is also widely known, the characters perceive the concept of history as an ongoing process, even though they fully realise that everyone who survived the war is destined to die of radiation sickness in the end:

"There should be something written, all the time", said the American [Peter Homes]. "Even if it's only going to be read in the next few months". He paused. "I'd like to read a history of this last war", he said. "I was in it for a little while, but I don't know a thing about it. Hasn't anybody written anything?"

"Not as a history", John Osborne said. "Not that I know of, anyway. The information that we've got is all available, of course, but not as a coherent story. I think there'd be too many gaps—the things we just don't know".

"I'd settle for the things we *do* know", the captain remarked.

"What sort of things, sir?"

"Well, as a start, how many bombs were dropped? Nuclear bombs, I mean". (italics in original; Shute 2009, p. 81)

Indeed, as David Dowling puts it, "[t]he trouble with Shute's world is that everyone seems to be as sensible and stiff-lipped as his military heroes" (Dowling 1987, p. 68). As the "last witnesses" of human history, nonetheless, Peter Homes and other protagonists are at least conscious of "ongoing" history even in the extremely desperate situation where it is slowly ending. In Carter's novel, on the other hand, the Professors neither reflect on their "Original Sin" nor attempt to explore their own history in relation to their contemporary world because, for them, the word "history" is merely synonymous with a record of the past, or an event of remote antiquity that has nothing to do with their daily lives. Hence, it is possible to suggest that, unlike Shute's characters always thinking about their destiny from historical perspective, the Professors, living only in the past, are absolutely blind not only to the

development of technology or science but also to the reformation of society, since they never figure out the persistence of history, or the relation of the present to the past.

Furthermore, whereas Carter's *Heroes and Villains* thus emphasises the Professors' inability to learn from the past, in other post-apocalyptic novels, such as Miller's *Canticle for Leibowitz* and Pangborn's *Davy*, historical or scientific knowledge in the past is totally prohibited by the survivors, who learned lessons from tragedies, for both political and religious reasons. In the former, whose first part is a story about the "rediscovery" of the scientific knowledge that has been hidden since the nuclear war, the believers of the movement called "Simplification", during the period of radical backlash, murdered "rulers, scientists, leaders, technicians, teachers, and whatever persons the leaders of the maddened mobs said deserved death for having helped to make the Earth what it had become" (Miller 1975, p. 52). In the latter, the religion of "Abraham" bans books, since they are "all somewhat dangerous and had much to do with the Sin of Man in Old Time" (Pangborn 2015, p. 16). More than that, according to Pangborn's narrative, even "[g]unpowder is forbidden by law and religion, and this may be just as well, since guns to make use of it are forbidden also by lack of steel, lack of technology capable of designing and making them, and nowadays by a lack of belief that such instruments ever existed" (p. 115).

Unlike the novels of Miller and Pangborn, the governmental or religious concealment of tragic history is never implied in Carter's *Heroes and Villains*. Instead, what she stresses are the blindness of the Professors, who can no longer change the world since they neither learn from the past nor have any vision for the future, and their complete ignorance of the present problems in their own small community. In this context, it is possible to argue that Carter, by linking the lives of the Professors with the civilized society criticised in *On the Origin of Inequality*, appears to sympathise with Rousseau, who suggests that "[i]f we look at human society with a calm and disinterested eye, it seems, at first, to show us only the violence of the powerful and the oppression of the weak" (Rousseau 1952, p. 331). Indeed, Carter's novel overtly stresses the social hierarchy between the Professors, as the upper elite, the Soldiers, as the military class, and the Workers, as the poor working class. Furthermore, the complicated characterisation of Dr. Donally, who lives in exile with the Barbarians, reveals the shocking fact that the Professors approve of inequality and violence directed towards the weak. This man, with broad knowledge of literature, sociology, and history, reminds Marianne of her dead father (Carter 2011, p. 59) and makes her feel a sense of affinity with him (p. 56). As well as a prominent intellectual, however, he is actually a violent, paternalistic father figure. In fact, Donally frequently chains and chastises his "idiot" son, disdainfully calling him a "dog" (pp. 54, 101).

Because time has been "frozen" since the devastating nuclear war, the Professors, having forgotten their "Original Sin", can neither think about their future nor change the status quo. In this dystopian novel, in which Carter attempts to imagine the lives of people in the "fallen" world after the war through reconsidering Rousseau's work in a completely new context, the Professors, who have been blind to the negative legacies of Western civilization, likewise keep silent about the great catastrophe in the past. Although the author never depicts their reflections on the nuclear war itself, their complete indifference to other contemporary problems implies that their society will no longer develop nor have a bright future. In their "dying" community, full of violence, inequality, and oppression, the very concept of "ongoing" history has been frozen, and human life has lost its precious meaning and value. After the deaths of her brother and parents, therefore, Marianne has no choice but to escape from the village in order to explore new possibilities for her life.

4. Living in the Present: The Barbarians

In complete contrast to the Professors, who live in a "frozen" time without being aware of the present or future, the Barbarians—descendants of the people who were fortunate to survive the war outside the shelters (Carter 2011, p. 13)—are illiterate and have no historical archives or documented records of the past, even though they share old customs, rituals, and oral traditions in their small communities. In the middle of the story, Dr. Donally contemptuously talks about the peculiar sense

of time in their society: “[T]ime is going backwards and coiling up; who let the spring go, I wonder, so that history would back on itself?” (p. 103). Among the Barbarian tribe living in such a harsh environment, there is no one who can reflect on the historical events of the past or speculate about technological or social developments in the future. To use Marianne’s words, they are “Yahoos” (p. 68) living only in the present, or the “perfect illusion[s] of the breakdown of social interaction and the death of social system” (p. 28). Therefore, the only thing that they are interested in is how to live through the current situation. In other words, according to Alison Lee, “[w]hereas the Professors are little more than museum pieces living protected and comfortable lives, the Barbarians have had to learn to survive in a chaotic, contaminated landscape” (Lee 1997, p. 52).

Throughout the novel, Carter thus describes the negative aspects of the Barbarians’ nomadic life. Though it is apparent that they are the antithesis of the Professors, we should also bear in mind that both the Barbarians and the Professors are the “fallen” people that have never reflected on their “Original Sin”—the catastrophic nuclear war in the past. Perpetually trapped in the present time, therefore, the Barbarians, who are not aware of the concept of “history”, can neither look back over the past nor predict the future. In fact, Marianne perceives that even the sense of time itself has been lost in the community of the Barbarians living only in the present moment: “If time was frozen among the Professors, here she [Marianne] lost the very idea of time, for the Barbarians did not segment their existence into hours nor even morning, afternoon and evening but left it raw in original shapes of light and darkness so the day was a featureless block of action and night of oblivion” (Carter 2011, p. 46).

In the first place, Carter’s portrayal of the Barbarians can be regarded as a parody of the savages that Rousseau outlined as representing the initial phase of civilization.⁴ Gerardine Meaney observes that to talk of the Barbarians in terms of *On the Origin of Inequality* is “to talk of them as already poised on the threshold of civilization” (Meaney 1993, p. 110). According to Rousseau himself, unlike the savages in the state of nature who live isolated from each other without any private property, the half-civilized savages constructed so-called “small societies”:

The first expansions of the human heart were the effects of a novel situation, which united husbands and wives, fathers and children, under one roof. The habit of living together soon gave rise to the finest feelings known to humanity, conjugal love and paternal affection. Every family became a little society, the more united because liberty and reciprocal attachment were the only bonds of its union. The sexes, whose manner of life had been hitherto the same, began now to adopt different ways of living. The women became more sedentary, and accustomed themselves to mind the hut and their children, while the men went abroad in search of their common subsistence. (Rousseau 1952, p. 350)

To some extent, the features of the savages quoted above resemble those of the Barbarians, though Carter never depicts “liberty and reciprocal attachment” as the origin of their unity. In *Heroes and Villains*, Carter actually illustrates the division of labour by gender roles in the Barbarian community, parodying Rousseau’s depiction of the savages during the first phase of civilization:

The households are at work. Women prepared furs by various primitive methods, scraping away the flesh from the pelts with small knives. Others embroidered cloth with designs of cocks, roses, suns, cakes, knives, snakes and acorns. [. . .] Some old men were engaged in carving cups and platters from wood. Others had their hands up to the elbows in clay, for pottery. All the activity in the house was conducted in silence for there was little need to talk and very little to talk about, anyway. The adult men either worked outside with the horses or had gone to the woods, hunting. (Carter 2011, p. 50)

⁴ According to Yeandle, Marianne is aware that “the Barbarians are not in ‘the natural state’ in the sense of Rousseau’s first stage, as she regards there to be a less advanced state than the one she inhabits with the Barbarians”. This means that they are represented not simply as savages but as savages whose culture and lifestyle are, to some extent, advanced. See (Yeandle 2017, p. 66).

The life of the Barbarians is thus similar to that of Rousseau's tribes. However, while Rousseau's portrayal of semi-civilized human beings in *On the Origin of Inequality* is so romanticised that they "are troubled with hardly any disorders, save wounds and old age" (Rousseau 1952, p. 336), Carter intentionally emphasises that the Barbarians after the nuclear war, who frequently are "prey to disease, malnutrition, and early death" (Carter 1997, p. 52), are extremely short-lived due to serious plagues as well as battles and lynching amongst members of the tribe.

In the historical context of the Cold War era, like Carter's *Heroes and Villains*, a countless number of science fiction novels that express the terror of sudden and violent death during a war also tend to highlight the possibility of slow and cruel death in an imaginary "post-nuclear war world", describing the spread of fatal diseases, global environmental changes, and social chaos. In a word, as Pat Frank writes in *Alas, Babylon*, which presents a story of the survivors of "World War III" in a small town in Florida, the real struggle for "those who survived The Day [the first day of the nuclear war]" is "to survive the next" (Frank 2005, p. 124). While most of those who were killed in North America "died in bed, in a millisecond slipping from sleep into deeper darkness", according to the author, these survivors are destined to live through hardship in a ruined world even after the catastrophe (p. 123). In addition to this work, Wilson Tucker's *The Long Loud Silence* tells a story about the horror of a plague that kills the survivors of the nuclear holocaust, and Edgar Pangborn's *Davy* represents the world's destruction as the result not only of massive nuclear explosions but also of "the plagues that followed the war" (Pangborn 2015, p. 124). Both Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* and Philip Wylie's *Triumph*, besides, express the fear of radiation sickness that will finally wipe out the civilization. On the other hand, in Anna Kavan's novella entitled *Ice*, depicting the serious climate change that occurs in the aftermath of atomic war, people start to barricade themselves in their houses when there is "utter chaos" in society: "Hand to hand fighting in the narrow streets; savage meaningless cries like the cries of wild animals resounding between the walls. The strangers raced through the town like madman, pouring wine down their throats, slaughtering all they met, every man, woman, child, animal" (Kavan 1967, p. 52).

Likewise, in Carter's dystopian novel, the Barbarians do not have any hope for the future because their unstable lives are always threatened by a hostile natural environment, disease, plague, social instability, and unpredictable attacks by wild animals or other groups of human beings. Many of the Barbarians are actually murdered by the Soldiers during battles (Carter 2011, pp. 8, 19–20), and Jewel's younger brother dies of illness quite young (pp. 30–43). Moreover, his mother dies in childbirth, and the children in the tribe die of diseases, such as beriberi or pellagra (p. 51), and the baby of a woman called Annie ends up dying of a fatal disease (pp. 111–15). In this way, what Carter intends to imply through these references is that the Barbarians are ceaselessly forced to be aware of their own mortality and the possibility of death in this chaotic situation after the nuclear holocaust. In this sense, the Barbarian tribe is nothing but a dystopian society. As well as the Professors living in the past, therefore, the Barbarians living in the present can never have any vision for the future, because of their extreme vulnerability to the outer world surrounding them.

5. Feminist Critique: The Professors and the Barbarians

As we have already seen, the Professors and the Barbarians are the antithesis of each other. Nevertheless, as Marianne's father says in the early part of the story, both groups establish an interdependent relationship: "When they [Barbarians] finally destroy us [Professors], if they finally destroy us, they'll destroy their own means of living so I do not think they will destroy us. I think an equilibrium will be maintained" (Carter 2011, p. 14). The existences of Dr. Donally and Marianne, both of whom are refugees from their own communities, indicate that the Barbarians and the Professors are two sides of the same coin. Aidan Day analyses this point in the following way:

Marianne refuses the dead, patriarchal discipline of the Professors' rationalism. But she also comes to resist the irrational, patriarchal oppressiveness of the Barbarians. Most important, she grasps that, for all the apparent contrast between reason and unreason, the Professors

and the Barbarians should not be divided into absolute opposites. They imply each other. The foreigner lives within each other. (Day 1998, p. 48)

Significantly, as is obvious from the fact that both the Professors and the Barbarians are described as “patriarchal” in the excerpt above, their societies are ruled by an androcentric doctrine that more or less deprives women of their right to live in freedom. Marianne, who has lived in the communities of both groups, discovers that the Professors’ “rational” society, which oppresses sexual desire, and the Barbarians’ nomadic society, which lays bare sexual desire, are essentially homogeneous.

In this particular context, Carter’s intention to parody Rousseau’s discussion on civilization can also be understood as a feminist criticism of his theories. In spite of her deep interest in his work, Carter was also conscious of what Rousseau completely ignores in analysing the issues of inequality. As is clearly shown in Book V of *Émile* (*Émile, ou De l’éducation*, 1762), which was famously denounced by the English feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Rousseau thinks that “woman is specially made for man’s delight”, sticking to the biological differences between male and female. He also notes here that “[i]f woman is made to please and to be in subjection to man, she ought to make herself pleasing in his eyes and not provoke him to anger” (Rousseau 1921, p. 322). From his androcentric point of view, “[w]omen do wrong to complain of the inequality of man-made laws” because “[t]he mutual duties of the two sexes are not, and cannot be, equally binding on both”. Rousseau even asserts here that the proper business of women is to be a mother or to give birth to children (p. 325). What Carter seeks to attack, as a feminist, is the very fact that Rousseau, who intended to explore the origin of human inequality, not only ignored the social hardship of women, but also trivialised the causes of such oppression by reducing it to a reflection of biological differences between two sexes.

Critically parodying Rousseau in a post-apocalyptic context, in this novel that presents Marianne’s survival story, Carter imagines the hard life of women in the world after the nuclear catastrophe. The female characters in the Professors’ village, for example, have to live permanently as sexual objects of men’s rule, without taking part in the ruling class, because the Professors, living only in “frozen time” in their isolated community, have blindly maintained not just their traditional culture and knowledge but also the negative legacies of Western civilization, such as patriarchy, the class system, and violence against women and the weak. As can be found in the scene where Marianne is forced to marry a man in the community (Carter 2011, p. 13), the values of their subjective lives are always denied. Moreover, in the middle of the Barbarian raid, the women from the Worker class secretly help and finally disappear with them in order to be free from a life of oppression under the Professors (pp. 7–8, 12). Running away from her violent husband, Mrs. Green, in fact, takes refuge in the Barbarian tribe led by Jewel (p. 44).

In contrast to the Professors’ “rational” society, which psychologically controls women by repressing their desires and subjectivity, the Barbarian community is filled with overt sexual desire. In other words, due to the collapse of civilization after the great war, men’s sexual desires have been entirely set free and have become uncontrollable in the Barbarian community. As is overtly expressed in the scene where Marianne is violently raped by Jewel, who once killed her brother, and is deprived of her virginity, the male Barbarians are extremely true to their present desire and lack the ability to think about the consequences (pp. 61–62). Because of the traumatic experience of violent rape and defloration, of course, Marianne’s pride and identity as a woman is almost shattered: “As its inflictor predicted, her [Marianne’s] pain went away quite soon but her vindictiveness increased for she was more cruelly wounded in her pride than in her body and, besides, she felt herself quite trapped and entirely without hope” (p. 66). She is forced to marry Jewel after being raped by him, according to the tribe’s rules, and no one around her tries to oppose to it (p. 66).

What is important in *Heroes and Villains* is the fact that it is not only in the “rational” society of the Professors, which represses sexual expressions and desires to an extreme extent, but also in the nomadic society of the Barbarians, which blindly justifies bare sexual desire, that most women, living at the bottom of male-dominated world, have lost both psychological and physical freedom. Depicting the female characters whose lives are completely devalued in these dystopian societies,

Carter, critically parodying Rousseau's discussion on inequality from a feminist perspective, visualises the stagnant world where no one can continue creating "new history" and attempt to change the status quo. In this male-dominated world without growth or development, in a word, serious problems concerning women's life are never taken into consideration.

As we have observed, oppression, inequality, and violence exist among both the Professors and the Barbarians. Because, according to Sarah Sceats, "[t]he principle of 'eat or to be eaten' is central to this novel" (Sceats 2004, p. 45), the characters are also compelled to be conscious of their own mortality in this chaotic world after the nuclear war where people's lives are threatened by the possibility of cruel death. In such a situation, women are always victimised by men, and there is no refuge for them; wherever they go, they cannot be free from the oppressive and violent rule of men. Nevertheless, for Marianne and other female characters, the only possible choices in this world are the Professors' community, which excessively represses sexual desire, or the Barbarians' tribe, which violently justifies sexual desire. Yet, as I have already pointed out, both of them are dystopian societies that devalue the lives of women. What is worse, if they refuse to live in such societies, they have no choice but to fall prey to the Out People, the third group, which are no longer human beings.

6. The Out People

The Out People are undoubtedly a parody of what Rousseau defines in *On the Origin of Inequality* as noble savages in a state of nature. However, whereas Rousseau highlights that he has "proved that the inequality of mankind is hardly felt, and that its influence is next to nothing in a state of nature" (Rousseau 1952, p. 347), Carter's novel refutes the discussion illustrated in the following excerpt:

Let us conclude then that man in a state of nature, wandering up and down the forests, without industry, without speech, and without home, an equal stranger to war and to all ties, neither standing in need of his fellow-creatures nor having any desire to hurt them, and perhaps even not distinguishing them one from another; let us conclude that, being self-sufficient and subject to so few passions, he could have no feelings or knowledge but such as befitted his situation; that he felt only his actual necessities, and disregarded everything he did not think himself immediately concerned to notice, and that his understanding made no greater progress than his vanity. If by accident he made any discovery, he was the less able to communicate it to others, as he did not know even his own children. Every art would necessarily perish with its inventor, where there was no kind of education among men, and generations succeeded generations without the least advance; when, all setting out from the same point, centuries must have elapsed in the barbarism of the first ages; when the race was already old, and man remained a child. (pp. 346–47)

Like Rousseau's savages in a state of nature, the Out People are, of course, portrayed as creatures devoid of intelligence, simply acting on wild instinct. As Heidi Yeandle explains, however, the Out People "contradict and parody Rousseau's idea of the initial stage of the natural state" (Yeandle 2017, p. 68). In this sense, while Rousseau's noble savages are idealised and romanticised as models of innocent human beings in the pre-civilization period, the Out People here are simply represented as a brutal species feared by both the Barbarians and the Professors. According to Jewel's explanation, "Out People [...] have poison arrows, leprosy, pox and no sense of pride, which is terrible" (Carter 2011, p. 33). He also warns Marianne, who is escaping from the Barbarians' tribe, of their danger and horror: "Where will you escape, though? Where will you go in this unknown desert, only wild beasts live here but for Out People, wilder than beasts" (p. 60).

As several critics have already discussed, the Out People can also be regarded as radiation mutants. Of course, as Philip Wylie accurately describes in his 1963 novel *Triumph*, radiation can be powerful enough to destroy "all life and all semblance of livingness in all creatures within the closest miles" (Wylie 2007, p. 40). On the other hand, it goes without saying that "mutation" caused by radioactive pollution has also been one of the most popular subjects of post-war science fiction. From J. G. Ballard's

“The Voices of Time” (1960), which illustrates the scientific production of surrealistic mutant creatures, to Edgar Pangborn’s *Davy*, which portrays the interaction between the protagonist and the “Mues”, a countless number of literary texts written in the Cold War era represented plant, animal, and human mutants as products of radioactive contamination. In John Wyndham’s *The Day of the Triffids* published in 1951, for instance, the monstrous mutant plants called “triffids”, like the Out People in Carter’s text, attack and kill human beings. Despite that this novel not overtly referring to nuclear issues, the triffids are, at least, expressed as the outcome of gene manipulation, or “a series of ingenious biological meddlings”, during the political conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union (Wyndham 2008, p. 27). Then, in the middle of the story, one of the characters notes in his speech that, “[f]rom 6 August 1945 [the date when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima], the margin of survival has narrowed appallingly” (p. 115). Furthermore, in *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb*, Philip K. Dick describes the “freak” girl who has a twin brother called Bill inside her small body. In addition, he also depicts various kinds of mutant creatures, such as the dog “with alleged ability to speak” human language (Dick 2014, p. 116) and the “brilliant rats—[. . .] mutations that are higher on the evolutionary scale—that know how to lame a [. . .] Vermin Trap” (p. 170).

In spite of the fact that the origin of the Out People is not mentioned in detail in *Heroes and Villains*, it is at least clear that Carter, playing with such images of mutants in science fiction novels in the early Cold War era, portrays them as “non-human” creatures (Carter 2011, p. 124) that are biologically far apart from all humankind on the planet, including the Professors and the Barbarians. In this respect, the Out People are quite different not only from what Rousseau and Locke defined as human beings in the ideal state of nature, but also from Thomas Hobbes’s paradoxical model of people in the state of nature unavoidably coming into conflict with each other because of their equality. In the scene where Jewel and the members of his tribe are suddenly assaulted by the Out People in the latter part of the novel, Carter describes one of them in detail:

His [Jewel’s] attacker this time was naked, but for a loincloth of animal skin, and covered with festering sores. His arms were very short because they lacked elbows and were unnaturally hinged too low down on a body curiously warped and out of true. His face was marked with a gigantic cicatrice and the nose had been omitted; his nostrils were twin pits between his eyes. His canine teeth had grown into fangs. (p. 119)

The grotesque, ugly appearance of the Out People is thus entirely different from those of other human species. The following quotation is from the scene where Marianne observes their dead bodies lying on the ground after battle:

Those killed lay in undignified heaps. Amongst the Out People, the human form acquired fantastic shapes. One man had furled ears as pale, delicate and extensive as Arum lilies. Another was scaled all over, with webbed hands and feet. Few had the conventional complement of limbs of features and most bore marks of nameless diseases. Some were ludicrously attenuated, with arms and legs twice as long as those of natural men, but one was perfect in all things but a perfect miniature, scarcely two feet long from tip to tip. (p. 120)

As is evident in these descriptions, the Out People are represented as the very product of the nuclear war in oblivion, or the “Original Sin” of humankind in the past. Marianne’s important line in this scene—“Perhaps we should seriously reconsider as to whether form makes the man” (p. 120)—overtly indicates that they deviate from the general definition of “the human”. The Out People are, so to speak, absolute others to the Barbarians as well as to the Professors, even though they are not immortal creatures. From this point of view, it is possible to conclude that what they symbolise in *Heroes and Villains* is the end of “the human”, or the end of human history. The Out People produced by the catastrophic nuclear war are no longer human in the general sense of the term, and they have neither a sense of history nor a sense of present, past, or future. Because these grotesque creatures have nothing except natural instincts, like Rousseau’s noble savages in the state of nature, they cannot rationally

perceive the world in which they live. Furthermore, they can never reflect on the past nor think about the future as human beings usually do. The Out People are, in short, creatures that were once called “human beings” that have completely lost the very concept of “history”.

7. The End of “Human History”

It is certain that Carter, in many of her writings, always tried to respond not only to the literary works of her contemporary authors but also to the real world in which she was born and lived. According to Sarah Gamble, *Heroes and Villains* is “the book in which she [Carter] imaginatively explores how life would have been had the brinkmanship practiced by Russia and America in 1962 actually toppled the world over the edge into nuclear catastrophe”. Therefore, Gamble continues, “[d]rawing on the kind of concerns that motivated her participation in CND, she refuses to cast this post-apocalyptic future in a heroic mode” (Gamble 2006, p. 86). In the fictitious world depicted in this dystopian novel, human beings can no longer create “new” history, because they can no longer view themselves as part of ongoing history. Although they have survived on Earth from a biological point of view, there will be no technological or social growth in their communities in the future. Whereas Rousseau, unlike Hobbes and Locke, defines the chronological development of civilization as the process of the fall of humanity, what Carter presents in *Heroes and Villains* is rather eternal stagnation after “the fall”—a world where human history has ended.

In her view, human beings who cannot confront their “Original Sin” of the past can neither have the concept of the future nor create it by themselves. Moreover, we can even see this fall of civilization after the war as a fall backward to the state of nature, even though it is never as virtuous place as it is for Rousseau. In other words, even if people returned to the state of nature, they would not be able to live again like Rousseau’s noble savages. Pessimistically, Carter seeks to show here that they cannot get back to the utopian state of nature, denying the existence of some golden age to which they could return. In this manner, critically rereading Rousseau in a post-apocalyptic context, she depicts all three groups of human beings in this text as “living corpses”. They are biologically living, but can no longer live as “human beings” in a real sense. In this respect, it is possible to claim that Carter’s definition of “the end of human history” shown in *Heroes and Villains* is not just different from the “human extinction” expressed in various science fiction novels, such as *The Martian Chronicles*, *On the Beach*, and *Triumph*, but also far more radical and pessimistic than, for instance, those in Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (*La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, 1979), which sees postmodern society after World War II as “the end of the grand narrative”, and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), which analyses the world after the Cold War, where ideological conflicts have already ended as a result of the economical triumph of capitalism.

This desperate situation is, in Carter’s text, emphasised by the metaphoric description of the sea in the later part of the novel. Jewel explains what it is like to Marianne as “[a] whole of empty water, shaping up and down twice a day” (Carter 2011, p. 146). Further, the restless waves illustrated in the scene where they visit the beach (p. 148) implicitly symbolise the magnificent, “immortal” time of nature, opposed to “mortal” human time, “frozen” or “lost” after the nuclear war. In the following scene, Marianne realises that every creature and object in the sea or on the beach has lost the “names” that they once had: “Before them and around them were all the wonders of the seashore, to which Marianne could scarcely put a single name, though everything had once been scrupulously named” (pp. 148–49). Here, after enumerating the objects and creatures that have lost their names, Carter writes that, “[l]osing their names, these things underwent a process of uncreation and reverted to chaos, existing only to themselves in an unstructured world where they were not formally acknowledged [. . .]” (p. 149). This sentence indicates that human civilization has completely lost its dominion over nature. Carter also implies here that Jewel and Marianne may not be able to survive as “humans” in nature: “If he and she left the tribe, they would become Out People and surrendered to namelessness, if the worst came to the worst [. . .]” (p. 149).

In the climax to this dystopian novel, in which Carter parodies both Rousseau and post-apocalyptic texts created in the period of East-West confrontation, Marianne and Jewel accidentally discover the symbol of destroyed civilization: the ruins of the old city submerged under the water. In this elaborate description, which may remind readers of J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*, Carter, who denies the immortality of human civilization, seeks to indicate that mortal human time, frozen after a global-scale catastrophe, will now become swamped by the immortal time of nature, symbolised by the sea:

Here was a time-eaten city up to its ears in the sea, its towers, domes and roofs so mingled with their own shadows and reflections that all seemed to hang in mid-air, among clouds of night and waning stars. Long ago the sea wrenched apart the massive blocks of an esplanade, though these were tons in weight and clasped together; then the sea swirled through the abandoned thoroughfares nibbling, gobbling, gulping and digesting stone, brick, stucco, metal and concrete. Now incurious fish swam in bedrooms where submerged mirrors reflected faces no more, only the mazy dance of wrack and wreckage; fish swam through ocean-gone ovens and out again, uncooked; fish in their native element went gaping through ballroom, store and hotel in this town which had once been a resort built for purposes of pleasure. Since the wind had dropped during the night, the waves made no more noise than their own breathing. (p. 150)

More importantly, Marianne also finds a huge, old clock hidden in the submerged city, which has already turned into a fish reef:

Prominent among the minarets, spires and helmets of wrought iron which protruded from the waters was an enormous clock where hands stood still at the hour of ten though it was, of course, no longer possible to tell whether this signified ten in the morning or ten at night. (italics in original; p. 150)

Of course, the image of this enormous clock in the sunken city is associated with the clock owned by Marianne's father, which appeared at the very beginning of the novel. However, while the Professor's clock is still marking the passage of time inorganically, the existence of the decayed clock in this scene, which will no longer work, pessimistically clarifies that human time/history has already reached its end and that civilization no longer has any future. For Carter, as is implied in her depiction of a ruined, "functionless" lighthouse in the same scene (p. 151), the end of "human history" does not mean the extinction of the species but the end of the "development" of human civilization. In discovering the old lighthouse that will never radiate "a useful light", Marianne recalls a memory of the tower in the Professors' village in which she was born and lived with her family (p. 151). By strategically contrasting both these images, Carter intends to predict that even the civilization that has been protected by the Professors, as well as the Barbarians and the Out People, will never again construct a bright future.

8. The Tragic Ending

According to her essay "Fools Are My Theme" (1982), having read John Wyndham's post-apocalyptic novel *The Day of the Triffids* for the first time in her childhood, Carter was gripped by the idea that "the literal truth might not be the whole truth". Asserting that "one of the functions of fiction is to ask questions that can't be asked in any other way", she goes on to elucidate that this idea finally "turned into a conviction that one way of asking questions [...] is through constructing imaginary worlds in which ideas can be discussed" (SL, pp. 34–35). Making full use of such literary methodology that she initially learned from her experiences of reading science fiction, Carter, in *Heroes and Villains*, not only denies the immortality of human civilization, but also seeks to represent an imaginary world where human history has ended after the "fall", or a world where humankind can no longer create any future. It is certain that "history", to some extent, can remain in the written texts or records protected in the archives in the Professors' village, and the three groups might survive as "living corpses", even after the extinction of civilization. However, there will be no evolution or development for the people who have forgotten the nuclear war, or their "Original Sin" in the past.

In the final part of the novel, growing haggard because of Marianne's pregnancy, the conflict among the members of the tribe, and the expulsion of Dr. Donally, Jewel, in such a desperate situation, is fettered by an intense death wish. This young man, "looking for something to kill [him]" (HV, p. 158), walks to the water's edge as if he were beckoned by the phantoms of the sunken city. In order to commit suicide, Jewel abruptly goes into the sea after taking off his rings, chains, and amulets (p. 154). Although Marianne temporarily saves his life—"She precipitated herself across the beach, threw off her jacket, leapt into the freezing water and caught hold of him" (pp. 154–55)—Jewel's insane act of going into the seawater shows that he is haunted by the death drive. Becoming extremely distracted due to a high fever and a mental breakdown, however, Jewel starts on a new journey to rescue Dr. Donally, his ex-mentor, ignoring Marianne's strong objection, and he is finally murdered by armed Soldiers on his way.

This tragic ending to the novel is suggestive of the destiny of human beings who have never confronted their responsibilities for the nuclear conflagration. Unless people seriously reflect on their own past, their "history" will never restart and their devalued lives will never recover their preciousness. Even Jewel, who was expected to be "the Messiah of the Yahoos" by Dr. Donally, eventually dies without changing the status quo. Stressing the mortality of both human history and this "heroic" character in such a tragic ending, Carter pessimistically implies that he can never be a mythical, immortal superhuman who has the power to save this perpetually stagnant world. In addition, as if she were "Eve at the end of the world" who has lost her Adam (p. 136),⁵ Marianne, pregnant with Jewel's baby, is left behind in this hopeless place full of oppression, horror, violence, and inequality. To sum up, in *Heroes and Villains* that parodically reconsiders Rousseau in a post-apocalyptic context, Carter's critical recycling of his theories on the fall of human/civilization functions as her literary response to the Cold War era, wherein various science fiction writers problematised the threat of nuclear weapons in their own works. But more than that, by implying the forgetting of the great sin in the past—through the absence of the word "nuclear"—she also sends out a paradoxical, silent warning to the real world after Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

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⁵ This phrase anticipates Carter's 1977 novel *The Passion of New Eve*, which was also influenced by the genre of science fiction. In this dystopian novel, Eve says that she and Tristessa "were at the beginning or end of the world" (Carter 2014, p. 142).

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