



A Study Of Postmodern In The Infernal Desire Machines Of Dr. Hoffman By Angela Carter

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INTRODUCTION

Angela Carter returns to the imagined terrain and strange kinds of societies in her novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman*, following up on her novel *Heroes and Villains*. Her goal in this work is to undermine positive scientific rules or the metanarrative of reason, which she does by establishing Dr. Hoffman, a poet-physicist whose mission is to liberate wants by releasing the unconscious. An American metropolis is once again under attack in this novel by the absurdity principle of Dr. Hoffman, who has penetrated the city's reality with weird unreal pictures that emerge from mirrors and mingle with the inhabitants looking to be quite real, like in Angela Carter's previous novel, *Heroes and Villains*. As one can see, this conflict is waged between two philosophical hypotheses, reason and desire. Though the book seems to settle this issue in favor of reason in the end, emotion dominates the narrative for most of the story.

Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman*, and *Passion of New Eve* are speculative fictions that question the Enlightenment characteristics of binarism, reason, patriarchy, time and truth, and identity. As she develops imagined towns and communities, she strives to defamiliarize herself with the world around her. Angela Carter turns to postmodernism to challenge Enlightenment ideology by presenting potential universes in these works.

In her letter to Lorna Sage, Angela Carter discusses Hoffman as a "dialectic between reason and passion, which it resolves in favor of reason" (Palmer 197). This work is filled with philosophical disputes about the truth principle and pleasure principle, reason and emotion, or imagination, as it is alternatively named in the novel, due to its dialectical character. Dr. Hoffman, who embodies the pleasure principle, is hell-bent on building a society dominated by want and emotion and destroying the rational world. "The pleasure principle met the reality principle like an unstoppable force colliding with an immovable object, and the reverberations of that collision are still reverberating about us," Angela Carter writes in her 'Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style' (republished in *Nothing Sacred*). (Carter 84) This pleasure principle is already evident in her early writings, depictions of people like Honeybuzzard, Joseph, and Lee on the surface level of existence.

In these works, Angela Carter examines reality through the lens of science fiction. To ask the hypothetical question, "What if?" Carter uses a mix of quasi-scientific style and conjecture in this work. While her work is now in the domain of fantasy, which directly opposes reality, it is also in direct opposition to the reality that is being erased. This author subverts reality via the use of fantasy in her stories by incorporating recognizable components into a future or quasi-scientific setting.

Throughout this work, Angela Carter employs language and expressions that are appropriate for science fiction and a writing style that is appropriate for the genre. Dr. Hoffman's 'desire for machines' serve as the scientific novum that helps to classify this work as science fiction. As a result, the epistemological argument against the strength and authority of the master narratives is the focus of this work. Reason and unreason are examined, and the link between light and darkness. Because "no one should share the structure of time with others," Dr. Hoffman manipulates watches and clocks to annihilate the concept of time. He makes pictures 'along the obscure and problematic boundary between the thinkable and the inconceivable.' (Carter 26). A battle between rationality and irrationality is the focus of this story. Minister of Determination, a significant character, claims that the book usually seeks to undermine reality by allowing "the cells of imagination to run wild," resulting in "the cancer of the mind." (Carter 26).

In this novel, the plot goes like this. Dr. Hoffman, a professor of metaphysics, has released the powers of unreason in an unnamed South American city to free wants by using modern technology to leverage sexual energy to create a realistic representation of individual dreams. The Minister of Determination, the city's de facto ruler and "a man of calm and reason," stands in opposition to Dr. Hoffman's chaotic plan. The novel's protagonist, Desiderio, describes him as "not a man but a theorem, clear, hard, unified and harmonious." Desiderio is hired by the minister to locate and eliminate Dr. Hoffman and his equipment to restore order to the city. When Dr. Hoffman creates an illusion, Desiderio stands out because he is unaffected by it. Desiderio, the half-Indian, half-European half-breed who takes on the quest to discover and destroy Dr. Hoffman's desired machines, is a half-breed.

Many years have passed since the events depicted in the story, and Desiderio, now an elderly man, recounts them in the book. This is the story of his quest, filled with unusual situations, surrealist landscapes, bizarre communities, and sensual experiences. While meeting with the Minister of Determination to demand a form of unconditional capitulation to Dr. Hoffman's demands, Reason agent Desiderio is already smitten with his daughter Albertina, who is her father's ambassador in disguise.

Dr. Hoffman's former professor, a peep show entrepreneur, introduces Desiderio on the first day of his tour. To control and steer libidinal visions in the struggle against reality, his peep-show features small examples of Hoffman's creations depicting sexual humiliation and mutilation scenes. Desiderio, who is wanted for the death of a little girl, gets to flee to the land of the River People, a people who talk in a sing-song dialect. The cannibals, however, think that if they eat Desiderio's head, they will absorb his wisdom. Desperately escaping, Desiderio is forced to join up with his old peep show, which was wiped out in an earthquake. It is currently in Nebulous Time, a state of chaos in time and space after the avalanche wiped all Dr. Hoffman's peep-show samples. Desires and fantasies blend with reality in this manner. Desiderio meets a Dracula-like erotic traveler, the count, and his slave, Lafleur, who is Albertina dressed as a child again. In the style of Marquis de Sade, the count carries Desiderio through an ordeal of savage sex. The Count and Desiderio encounter a race of people known as Centaurs who are half-human, half-horse on the planet of Nebulous Time. Lafleur (Albertina), the Count, and Desiderio are all sentenced to death, but Dr. Hoffman sends a helicopter to rescue them. Desiderio and Dr. Hoffman, together with Hoffman's daughter, face off towards the end of the story. Desiderio and Albertina will be placed in one of the cages by Dr. Hoffman so that their erotic energy will flood the planet and allow Dr. Hoffman to attack the city to free it from reason. After realizing that everything is at risk, Desiderio kills both Dr. Hoffman and his daughter, sparing the world from the turmoil of desire and irrationality that would otherwise destroy it.

Meets the peep-show entrepreneur, almost a spokesman for Dr. Hoffman, Desiderio's friend. He can't see, so he's always altering the images he displays in his presentation. These modifications are not predetermined and occur at any time. No set of rules governs it. Desiderio makes the following observation:

'I often watched the roundabouts circulate upon their static journeys. 'Nothing,' said the peep-show proprietor, 'is ever completed; it only changes.' As he pleased, he altered the displays he had never seen, murmuring: 'No hidden unity.' ... The fairground was a moving toyshop, an ambulant raree-show coming to life in convulsive fits and starts whenever the procession stopped, regulated by the implicit awareness of a lack of rules'. (Carter 99)

There are no regulations in the peep-show world, yet rules are vital to telling real life from make-believe in the minister's world. Dr. Hoffman sees no point in making this difference. As he sees it, the human mind creates reality, and it cannot tell the difference between the actual and the imagined. This is a common symptom of a postmodern mindset. Reality is constructed, not reflected, by the media, including movies, television, and even commercials. As the owner of the peep show reveals to Desiderio, Hoffman's second instructor, Mendoza, claims and does:

'Mendoza ... claimed that if a thing were sufficiently artificial, it becomes equivalent to the genuine Hoffman refined Mendoza's initially crude hypothesis of fissile time and synthetic authenticity and wove them together to form another mode of consciousness altogether'. (Carter 102-03).

This is a postmodern world where the borders between the artificial and the real seem to have been erased. Dr. Hoffman claims to be able to influence people's perceptions of thoughts and desires via their physical senses. In other words, 'anything that can be imagined exists' is based on (Carter 97). When Dr. Hoffman unleashes the erotic energy from his desire machines, the city is in danger of being overrun. As the worlds of 'awake and sleeping' are mixed, the metropolis in flux is confused. The following is the official notation:

Dead children came calling in nightgowns, rubbing the sleep and grave dust from their eyes ... pigeons lolloped from illusory pediment to window ledges like volatile, feathered madmen, chattering vile rhymes and laughing in hoarse, throaty voices or perched upon chimney stacks shouting quotations from Hegel I often glanced at my watch only to find its hands had been replaced by a healthy growth of ivy or honeysuckle, which, while I looked, writhed impudently all over its face, concealing it. (Carter 97)

Shows what type of revolution Dr. Hoffman aims to bring about with this surrealistic presentation. It's an uprising against the constraints of space and time and reality and the rational world order. Dr. Hoffman's goal is to sabotage the "traditional" and "mundane" existence and bring out "a riot of desires" concealed in the unconscious. Minister initially created Determining Radar Apparatus to identify and then destroy these phantom components to battle them. Doctor Hoffman's desire for machines is combated by Angela Carter's "reality testing laboratory C" gadgetry. On the other hand, Dr. Hoffman can get around it. His computer network and programming of names and functions of the objects in the world respond to this question.

According to Desiderio, Dr. Hoffman's war with the Minister of Determination was "a battle between an encyclopedist and a poet because Hoffman, scientist as he was, utilized his formidable knowledge only to render the invisible visible." (Carter 29) says And the Minister has a notion of 'names and functions' that he wants to apply to everything. He built a massive computer center to devise a method for determining "the verified self-consistency of every given entity. An information retrieval system and factual data collection are part of his reality principle. However, the illusion of non-existence persists. It is said that the symmetry of the Cathedral "expressed the symmetry of society" before a man-made fire destroyed it. Dr. Hoffman's envoy, on the other hand, says that 'the world exists merely as a

medium in which we execute our goals' in his philosophy. Physically, (and) the real universe... is constructed of flexible clay...'. (Carter 43).

Imagination and reality are placed side by side in this work by Angela Carter, highlighting their fundamental differences. An envoy for Dr. Hoffman accuses the minister of denying the inevitability of asymmetrical relationships that cannot be eliminated. The ambassador argues that the minister's endeavor to ensnare reality (into symmetry) is akin to suffocating one's creativity.

To completely appreciate Angela Carter's work, it is necessary to consider several allusions to other works. Numerous connections and similarities to other literary and philosophical works are found throughout this narrative. Dr. Hoffman is guilty of ruining Desiderio's city, the cradle of reason, and Desiderio sets out to find him to save his city. As a result, this work might be seen as a retelling of Oedipus Rex's tale. In the same way that Oedipus sought out and eradicated the source of contamination, Desiderio must also endure the consequences of his actions. Albertina's memories bother him, and he regrets the loss of the dream world he had with her, which he was able to create with her.

As a picaresque novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines* of Dr. Hoffman follows a roaming hero who is always looking for new experiences and adventures. This work, however, makes more reference to Plato's *Republic* than anything else. Like Plato, the Minister of Determination stands for logic, order, structure, and constraint, while Dr. Hoffman represents creativity, individuality, and the consequent disorder or chaos. Poets, according to Plato, are a threat to the ideal republic because they encourage people to indulge in their irrational desires by subverting reason and reality. The Minister of Determination wants to keep Dr. Hoffman out of his city because he plans to unleash his needs and passions.

According to 20th-century philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure, the linguistic signals and their signifieds may be arbitrarily linked. This is a reference to his thesis. A similar arbitrary link exists between signs and is signified in Dr. Hoffman's reality. In the minister's universe, the term and the item it refers to are clear. Boundaries, regulations, and power structures are all well defined. Nevertheless, there are no clear limits in Dr. Hoffman's universe. There are ethereal, hazy perceptions that may be interpreted in various ways.

Desiderio's time with the River People is an exquisite interlude with a Rousseauistic tribe that becomes a little less pure than first thought. Also, Desiderio and the count's experience with the African Tribe is a parody of the concept of a 'noble savage' culture, as depicted by Rousseau. As a result of the avalanche that destroys the peep show, Desiderio is forced to go with the Count and Lafleur, Albertina's male servant dressed as a servant. The count's persona is shown in the film, based on Marquis de Sade, the French libertine, and his valet Latour. We're reminded of Dracula by the Marquis de Sade. While trying to flee their Cannibalistic African tribe, Desiderio and Lafleur (Albertina) narrowly escape into the Centaur realm. Despite their resemblance to the Houyhnhnms from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the Centaurs in this tale are significantly superior to the Centaurs in Swift's novel.

Desiderio runs upon ladies who look to have a manly demeanor throughout his travels. So, in the circus, his Mammie Buckskin character is a strange lady who dresses up like 'Hollywood western heroes,' like gun-slinging figures like Billy the Kid and Doc Holliday. At all times, she carries a pistol between her knees. She is accused of murdering a guy and is now being held in a jail in the West.

Other than that, there are several allusions to musicians and authors from Europe and Africa and the places in which they live. According to Freudian theory, dreams and hallucinations of Desiderio allude to suppressed urges. River People and African Tribe remind us of Levi-anthropological Straus's well-known works.

Angela Carter's intertextuality is more than just a reference to other works. When she mentions other literature and tales, she provides alternate interpretations. Her use of Rousseau subverts the concept of the 'noble savage.' *Gulliver's Travels* is not the only comparison that can be drawn between the Centaurs and the region they inhabit. Carter uses the cliché to critique the community's male-

dominated culture. Some of the characters, such as the Count and Mamie Buckskin, are reminiscent of surrealist paintings.

According to Angela Carter, gender is a power connection. She makes a distinction between biological and social sex for her arguments. According to the concept of gender roles and power, to be a woman is to play a subsidiary part, whereas to be a man is to play a primary one. To play a primary position, one must be an official or biologically male. This relationship of power may shift. It's conceivable to have the feminine and masculine inverted. When it comes to gender relations, Angela Carter's books seem to dismantle society's conventional expectations. Men's depictions of women are referred to as 'women,' whereas female representations are 'woman,' with a capital letter.

From his masculinist metropolis in a wealthy middle-class class, Desiderio, the story's male protagonist, sets out on an epic journey to eliminate his opponent. Dr. Hoffman's imagination and awakened suppressed impulses might easily ensnare his civilization, oblivious of its boundaries. "Woman," in this male-centric narrative, is just the object of a man's desire. The hero needs her, she is governed and used by the male characters, and she is confronted with violence. Angela Carter claims in her nonfiction book, *The Sadeian Woman*, that acts of violence:

‘reawaken the memory of the social fiction of the female wound, the bleeding scar left by her castration, which is a psychic fiction as deeply at the heart of western culture as the myth of Oedipus ... Female castration is an imaginary fact that pervades the whole of men's attitude to ourselves, that transforms women from a human being into wounded creatures who were born to bleed’. (Carter 43).

Erotically motivated violence towards women is shown in this work to maintain the male subject's position of authority. Angela Carter employs the legacy of pornographic literature in depicting sexual exploitation and brutality. Carter intentionally employs the male narrator's point of view, adopting men's subjectivity to depict male sexuality, a departure from the usual pornographic books written with female protagonists. This tactic prevents women from assuming the lead role in the discussion. Although the seeming masculine narrative perspective serves neither the male nor the female reader of this novel, Desiderio's sexual adventures include several rapes, female mutilations, and even sodomizing of the hero and Albertina, and the sought lady in his life. Because the hero is a man, it is hard for a male reader to enjoy the story because he cannot empathize with him. According to Desiderio, the House of Anonymity's female representations are, as Desiderio puts it:

‘... when I examined them closely, I saw that none of them were any longer, or might never have been, woman. All, without exception, passed beyond or did not enter the realm of simple humanity. They were sinister, abominable, inverted mutations, part clockwork, part vegetable, and part brute’. (Carter 44)

Desiderio's contacts with the women he meets are so dehumanized. By influencing girls' private parts, males may make women appealing in the River People's basic and naive culture. Clitoridectomy also dehumanizes the Amazonian Chief's army of female soldiers, removing their ability to experience human emotions. The Amazons are the mothers of masculine imagination, destroying everything in their path. As a result, the African Chief dispels the illusion of the good mother and replaces it with a polar opposite narrative. As a result, both myths are products of their societies. Women might be respected or degraded in the patriarchal system depending on the masculinist agenda. Through the lens of masculine sexual desire, Angela Carter challenges the dominant narrative about women. It is required that the Count and Desiderio wear clothing that covers them completely save for their genitals when they visit the brothel in *The House of Anonymity's Bestial Room*, where dehumanized women are kept in cages. Centaurs, on the other hand, held the belief that women were "ritually degraded and reviled" because they were "born to suffer." (Carter, 1972, 176). There are several episodes of violent sexism in this work. Angela Carter's goal is to disrupt oppressive depictions of femininity and unattractive masculine sexuality that men dominate. Carter deconstructs this paradigm by emphasizing the

exploitation and objectification of women since the woman is the 'other' through whom man represents himself.

Laughter and playfulness are introduced into Angela Carter's stories via Rabelaisian characters and occurrences. With his desire for machines and mirrors, the Doctor can produce hallucinations that look genuine to the citizens of the city. Thus grotesqueries and Rabelaisian characters as carnival components find expression in the course of the narrative in this work. This is the first time in the opera that Desiderio notices that there are "peacocks in the full spread" screaming in intolerably loud voices, completely drowning out the music as it is being performed as a stylized version of *The Magic Flute*. (Carter, 1972, 19). Everyone in the gallery wears a peacock green skull with a feathered fan behind it. Desiderio recounts how other people's dreams infiltrate your bedroom, how memories of the past wait 'to welcome us at the foot of the bed,' and deceased children came 'called in nightgowns, removing the sleep and cemetery dust from their eyes.' (Carter 22). 'To vast proportions, ladies in states of gleaming heroic nudity may be seen strolling under their parasols...' the buildings and townscapes grow. (Carter, 1972, pp. 23-24) Desiderio, too, remembers this:

'The pigeons lolloped from illusory pediment to window ledge like volatile, feathered madmen, chattering vile rhymes and laughing in hoarse, throaty voices or perched upon chimney stacks shouting slogans from Hegel. The river ran backward, and crazy fish jumped out to flop upon the sidewalks or sprang out of the river, turning into white rabbits'. (Carter 23).

A carnivalesque atmosphere may be found in the peep show, the fairground with its roundabouts, a moving toy store, the filthy faces of the youngsters, Mammie Buckskin's sharp-shooting act, and the everyday lives of the fairground workers. After living with the River People, Desiderio ended himself living with a peep show entrepreneur, which was an amusing break in his search for adventure.

A veiled boy plays an odd flute in the arena of the nine acrobats, creating an eerie atmosphere with his performance. An abstract, mathematical dissection of the human body is what the acrobats produce. Mohammed, one of the performers, removes his head from his neck and the acrobats begin to juggle it until, "one by one, all their heads came off and went into play," as the narrator puts it. Even their hands, feet, forearms, and thighs are dismembered. The peep-show owner attributes this carnivalesque impression to the persistence of eyesight.

More shocking and disgusting peep-show clips may be found in addition to the nine Arab acrobats' bizarre feats of strength. Her distinctive method of defamiliarization includes the utilization of carnivalesque motifs and picturesque sceneries.

Angela Carter uses gothic aspects in her writings because of her magical realism writing style. The Count and Desiderio meet in the House of Anonymity, which is:

'a sprawling edifice in the gothic style of the late nineteenth century that poked innumerable turrets like so many upward groping tentacles towards the dull, cloudy sky and was all built-in flouting, red brick'. (Carter 166).

To conceal "their bodies except for their genitals," the Count and Desiderio were handed two pairs of black tights. A young Negro virgin had her skin browned for the plush waistcoats they received. The way they're dressed draws attention to their masculinity while dehumanizing them. There are 'live Candelabra' monkeys, who are appropriately attired. There are lion couches, brown bear recliners, and tables formed of hyenas "running around and yelping and carrying glasses, decanters, or bowls of salted nuts," according to the description.

He is the gothic hero of the story: the count. He has a Count Dracula-like appearance with his "black cloak and craggy, arrogant profile." According to him, the entire purpose of his life is to annihilate all else in it. Learned the torture technique from a Chinese imperial executioner who was exceptionally brutal and bloodthirsty. The caged ladies are horrific representations of the concept of femininity. The House of Anonymity is a surreal erotica horror movie set in the future.

To complicate matters, the ship's captain finds that the three men are criminals and detains them until the Determination Police can take them into custody. It is just a little respite from the pirates, but a cyclone carries them to Africa, where they are met by the African Tribe and the infamous African Pimp, who is enraged by the loss of the count. In this gloomy episode, we meet the cannibal tribesmen. After being dumped into the cauldron of a boiling pot for the last time, the count shows a diabolical joy in his horrific demise.

In the globe of Nebulous Time, in the kingdom of the Centaurs, there is another gothic spectacle:

‘Strange vegetation like pain trees, tall cactus plants with snow-white bosses and red knobs giving out sweet milk, and strangest of all, a tree firmly rooted with four legs above which there is a skeleton of a horse with its entrails visible, which is a mythical tree of the land of Centaurs, and a place of worship. (Carter 171).

As a Teutonic Heritage site, Dr. Hoffman's Castle sits high above the surrounding landscape and is accessible only through an overhanging wooden bridge. Trotsky creating the *Erotica Symphony* as Van Gogh is working on *Wuthering Heights* is shown in equally odd artworks. In the speculative fiction genre, the author could use their imagination to the fullest extent possible. Hoffman's magical universe forces the reader to suspend disbelief, even if the narrative style is realistic and provides minute descriptions of the setting and individuals.

Angela Carter has drawn on genres like fairy tales and gothic romance in her realistic form of depiction, which she considers vital to her themes and purpose. This is a postmodern literary method for challenging the central narrative. Porn, gothic fairy tales, horror flicks, and even anthropological tribes based on Rousseau and Levi-Strauss are all included in this story. She uses her writing to challenge both the patriarchal society and modernist Enlightenment and Rationality. Apart from that, she rejects utopian stories and subverts them in her stories to make them questionable. Unlike Jewel's Barbarian tribe in *Heroes and Villians*, there are utopian societies like that of the River People or the Centaurs in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman*, where the social institutions do not allow for independent thought. Their religious systems, rituals, and social practices reveal a closed society. The author employs a picaresque style that leads her protagonist on a series of adventures and misadventures. Even if her stories are episodic and loose due to the picaresque structure, this is exactly what she wants to convey a wide range of emotions and experiences.

Angela Carter uses pornography to depict the dehumanization of women. On the other hand, her detractors don't seem to realize that her erotic descriptions elicit revulsion and dread rather than titillation. A disguised Desiderio is shocked and appalled as he looks at the cages of objectified and dehumanized women. They become monsters because they are kept in cages.

Desiderio's quest is filled with magical exploits and fairy tale creatures. It's a gothic fantasy with elements of horror, romance, and sensuality for the mature audience. As a counterpoint to social realism, Angela Carter turns to fairy tales. As a result, she can successfully critique the beliefs and behaviors of today's society.

Unlike Oedipus, Desiderio's search becomes meaningless as he is swayed by his impulses and enticed by Dr. Hoffman's daughter, Albertina, in the novel's framework. Because of this, he is not like Oedipus in that he is not completely on the side of reason, even though he is following the orders of the minister's father figure. There are instructions scribbled in lipstick on his window pane: 'BE AMOROUS!' Be mysterious! INVESTIGATE, DON'T JUDGE. (Carter 31). As a result, his search has become more diverse, and Dr. Hoffman's delusions have influenced him. On the other hand, digressions are a device used by authors to weave in elements of horror and folklore. A wide range of topics, including the objectification of women in a patriarchal society, are woven throughout.

Scientific Novum used in the book by Carter is Dr. Hoffman's *Desire Machines*, which emit seismic vibrations to disturb the standard time and space equations upon which the rational city is founded. Desiderio's trip brings him to a new country and new people. Like the Martians in other science

fiction stories, the Centaurs are an extraterrestrial race. River People are a primitive, secluded society with a significantly distinct socio-cultural set-up from the rest of the population. The owner of the Peep-show describes the scientific procedure used by Dr. Hoffman:

‘First theory of Phenomenal Dynamics the universe has no fixed substances, and its only reality lies in its phenomena Second theory of Phenomenal Dynamics: the only change is variable The third theory of Phenomenal Dynamics: the difference between a symbol and an object is quantitative, not qualitative. (Carter 117).

The Doctor’s methodology contains a weapon of images. Besides, he has invented a virus that causes cancer of the mind so that the imagination cells run wild. The Minister of Determination also has his own pseudo-scientific and technical devices to counter the Doctor’s unreal substances. He has a huge computer center.

However, Angela Carter’s fiction rises above the science-fictional trope because it has, at its center, a metaphysical question, a theme related to two contending forces of reason and imagination, a question of how to order the human society. She does not take a definite stand but tries to show the weaknesses of the present system.

Postmodernist feminism is often associated with the work of Angela Carter. She takes advantage of every chance to defy Enlightenment philosophy and philosophical tradition. On the other hand, she doesn't seem to take sides in the conflict between positivist scientific rules and the postmodernist liberatory resistance to positivism in Dr. Hoffman's *Infernal Desire Machines*. Desiderio, the main character at the center of this conflict, is cognizant of both sides. Marxist claims to be scientific, which sprang historically out of positivism, are represented by his minister. Dr. Hoffman embodies both as a symbol of free expression and capitalist control of desire. Unlike the minister, who wants to make the city more male via the use of "serge-clad" bureaucracy, Dr. Hoffman wants to make it more feminine through "irrational, riotous imagination." Dr. Hoffman's fantasy, backed by the media, stands in the way of rationality. While Desiderio is a male protagonist, he is drawn to Albertina, the daughter of Dr. Hoffman, who is on a crusade to defy logic. Even though Albertina seems to be a man, she is a woman, the dream or alter-ego of the rational actor. He is subject to the allure of Albertina's imagination and desire, but Desiderio is in the middle of it all.

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