

## ***The Passion of New Eve as a Postmodern and Feminist Novel: An Assessment***

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It is seen, how, in *The Infernal Desire Machines* of Doctor Hoffman, Angela Carter creates surrealistic landscapes and characters and examines the chaotic world created by the freedom granted to the unconscious desires, by Dr. Hoffman, through his desire machines. In her novel *The Passion of New Eve* also, she represents the same kind of mythic, surrealistic atmosphere beginning with very lurid description of New York in turmoil, the Blacks in revolt, the gangs of women liberationists blowing up wedding shops, the most arid desert inhabited by matriarchal kingdom of Mother, a science-fictional character like Dr. Hoffman, Zero, the male-monster and finally the exquisite glass-house of the beautiful transvestite Tristessa, the screen-goddess of Hollywood. Like *Heroes and Villains* and *The Infernal Desire Machines* of Doctor Hoffman, *The Passion of New Eve* also is a picaresque novel, with a difference that it is a psychological excursion of the protagonist through the most weird experience of sex change. Like the novels mentioned earlier, *Passion of New Eve* is a speculative fiction, which examines the issue of femininity and at the same time, subverts patriarchal assumptions about woman as a negative term of white male guaranteeing his identity.

It is interesting to see how Angela Carter encodes her feministic thought in this novel. The story of *The Passion of New Eve*, in brief, is as follows:

Evelyn, the British national, arrives in New York to teach in a university, but finds himself in a virtual civil war going on in America. Evelyn, since his adolescent days, has a fascination for the Hollywood heroine Tristessa, a glamorous actress, whose specialty is sadness and suffering. Before coming to New York, Evelyn happens to see one of the old films of Tristessa and recalls the sexual arousal he used to feel at the spectacle of her intense suffering. He finds New York in turbulent disorder and violence. There is a militant black movement, which has mounted attack on the city with tanks and other weapons. To add to it, there is a militant women's movement as well. Evelyn lives in a block of flats where he meets Boroslov, an alchemist, who presents Evelyn an ingot of gold, which he made in his domestic lab. Boroslov tells Evelyn that 'the age of reason is over' (Carter: 1972, p. 13) which refers to the chaotic state of New York, a city founded on reason but now in the hands of forces of unreason. One may recall the war between reason and unreason in *The Infernal Desire Machines* of Doctor Hoffman. However, according to Boroslov's principles of Alchemy, something positive will emerge out of this turmoil. Evelyn meets a Black American girl, Leilah, who seduces him but whom he treats very harshly. Leilah, presented here as a male sexual fantasy, purposefully presents herself as desirable from the masculine point of view. She becomes pregnant and Evelyn already tired of her, leaves her to her fate. Evelyn then wanders off to the desert of the state, in his car, which breaks down for want of fuel. He is captured by the women-soldiers of 'Mother' a matriarch, who rules a futuristic city of Beulah. Mother has made herself artificially a many-breasted goddess like Greek Artemis. Mother rapes Evelyn and preserves his sperm. Evelyn learns that he was to be castrated and turned into a woman, who will give birth to a child fertilized by his own

seed. He is then turned into New Eve by an elaborate surgical operation. New Eve is constructed as an ideal woman drawn from the image of such woman in the media. Evelyn (now Eve) then escapes from Beulah, to fall in the hands of Zero, a woman hater, who has a harem of seven wives, and New Eve becomes the eighth one. Zero repeatedly rapes New Eve while his other wives teach New Eve the feminine ways of behaviour. New Eve, thus, becomes a woman in mind and body. Zero is obsessed by the idea of revenge against Tristessa, who, he believes, caused him to be sterile, as he watched her on the silver screen. When he and his women discover Tristessa, they are surprised to see that Tristessa is actually a man masquerading as a woman. Zero dresses New Eve as a man and marries Tristessa with her. Tristessa is able to destroy Zero and his harem making use of the mechanism of the glass-house. And Tristessa and New Eve escape in Zero's helicopter. They consummate their marriage in the helicopter, are captured by the boy-soldiers, who kill Tristessa but release New Eve. New Eve then goes back to the city, where she meets Leilah, then Lilith, acting as a part of the militia. She has no grudge against Evelyn or New Eve. On the contrary, it transpires that she was part of the whole plan of migrating Evelyn to the desert, to Beulah and his transformation. Lilith tells New Eve that Mother has given up Beulah and her mythic plan, and she then takes New Eve to meet Mother on the seashore. New Eve, who is now pregnant, takes a boat from there and goes back to start a new life.

The story is, thus, education of Evelyn, a typical patriarchal character who believes woman to be a commodity of pleasure and has to learn a lesson by his experience of femininity. There are a number of issues packed into this story and they are related to sexuality, sex and gender, radical feminism, transvestitism and femininity, patriarchy and others.

#### Angela Carter's Feminist Approach in The Passion of New Eve:

The Passion of New Eve is looked at as Carter's critical response to the essentializing and universalizing tendencies in the feminism of 1970s. There was a tendency to assume female experience to be white, middle-class and heterosexual. In The Passion of New Eve, Carter presents a model of gender acquisition, which is closer in relation to the earlier approach of Simone de Beauvoir, who focused on social construction of gender identity. In her *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir says, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. (Beauvoir: 1997, p. 273). Angela Carter, like Simone de Beauvoir rejects the idea of an essential and natural gender identity and stresses that masculinity and femininity are the acts, which are performed. Gender identity is real to the extent that it is performed. It may be said that Angela Carter makes distinction between bodily sex and gender. According to Carter, gender acquisition is like an actor playing a role. In The Passion of New Eve, Evelyn is surgically turned into the New Eve. In other words, Evelyn acquires female sex. However, psychologically, he is still Evelyn, the man, who is quite aware of the change in the body but the mindset of a male being is still retained. The 'Mother' also knows that the transformation of Evelyn into Eve cannot be complete by just bringing about a change in sex. Mother cuts off his genitals and left him 'with a wound that would, in future, bleed once a month, at the bidding of the moon'. (Carter: 1977, p. 71). But, this New Eve was yet to be 'gendered' female. Her programming begins by making her listen to old Hollywood nursery tales. She is exposed to all the pain that woman has to experience. This psychosurgery continues with the playing of three videotapes consisting reproduction of a virgin and child theme. There is a sound track of 'gurgling of babies and the murmuring of contented mothers', (Carter: 1977, p. 72), thus, preparing the mind-set of New Eve to accept womanhood. She is shown cats with kittens, vixen with cubs and all kinds of non-

phallic imagery. She is made aware of the horrors perpetrated on woman in the ancient Chinese and Indian communities. It is a programme to educate old Evelyn making him realize the injustice done to woman. However, all this, was not sufficient to bring out gender-change, a social construct. The body was that of New Eve, but the mind remained of the male-being, former Evelyn. He/She says, 'when I looked in the mirror, I saw Eve; I did not see myself'. (Carter: 1977, p. 75). He could not acknowledge this new existence. He had become his own 'masturbatory fantasy', but 'the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself'. (Carter: 1977, p. 75).

The programme of Mother is to create a female space without the mortal intervention of male time. She plans to achieve this by 'fertilizing Eve with the preserved seed of Evelyn, without any mediation of a male Being'. She would have a sperm bank like this to make women self-sufficient, without any dependence on man. Angela Carter is actually satirizing the radical feminist thinking of the 1970s. However, the programme of the monster Mother ultimately fails. Education of New Eve into femininity is reached only through her experiences in the harem of Zero where the wives of Zero teach the ways of women and Zero's consistent raping of her ultimately convert Eve to femininity. She really becomes Eve, a feminine self only when she experiences love for the male Tristessa and becomes pregnant. Her conversion to femininity is complete with the male intervention after all. This is, in a way, Carter's criticism of the essentialism and exclusivity of the feministic thinking of 1970s. The process by which New Eve learns to perform as a woman confirms de Beauvoir's theory that one is not born but rather becomes a woman. Biological sex and culturally determined gendered one are two different things. In her *The Sadeian Woman*, Angela Carter says:

'... there is the unarguable fact of sexual differentiation; but separate from it and only partially derived from it, are the behavioural modes of masculine and feminine, which are culturally defined variables translated in the language of common usage to the status of universals'. (Carter: 1979, p. 6).

Gender is, thus, a social/cultural construct, which Carter illustrates by showing how Eve acquires womanhood through the socio-cultural situation in Zero's establishment and also in Eve's love relationship with Tristessa.

Secondly, through the characterization of Tristessa as a Transvestite, Angela Carter shows how femininity is a contrived illusion. Tristessa, as a Hollywood heroine specializes in suffering as a victimized woman. This is a stereotype image of woman, which Carter satirizes. Tristessa is not a woman at all and so her suffering cannot be feminine identity. Her femininity has no ontological status. Tristessa is the example of theatrical presentation of how gender (a socio-cultural construct) is acquired. Tristessa's femininity is performed rather than acquired.

Use of Grotesque as a Carnavalesque Element in *The Passion of New Eve*:

Angela Carter uses the Rabelaisian grotesque element, especially, in characterizing Mother in *Beulah*. Grotesque is a set of images that describes a transgressive body, especially the lower parts of the body and indulges in the functions of these parts. Such a body can be rather an ugly, protruding stomach, oversize buttocks, its function of secreting and others. Such grotesque element can induce laughter. This element can also be repulsive. Mother's hermaphrodite body has been used in *The Passion of New Eve* as a grotesque and Carnavalesque element. Mother is characterized as 'a huge woman, more than six feet tall, Negroid and has multiple breasts artificially constructed'. Evelyn describes Mother to be:

‘a self- designed goddess and ‘she was so big she seemed, almost, to fill the round, red-painted, over-heated, red-lit cell ...’. (Carter: 1977, p. 2).

Beulah itself is constructed like a womb. Evelyn describes it in the following manner:

I lay on a pallet on the floor of a dim, white room lit only by a fringe of pinkish luminescence at the foot of the wall. This room was quite round, as if it had been blown out, like bubble gum, inflated under the earth. (Carter: 1977, p. 49)

It was a simulacrum of the womb, where New Eve was to be born. Evelyn’s body is also made grotesque and carnivalized by turning him into New Eve through surgical operation. Male body is deconstructed, metamorphosed and fragmented, which is nothing but carnivalizing it. Even though Evelyn becomes New Eve, his mind refuses to admit himself to be feminine.

Grotesque in *The Passion of New Eve* relates to the human body as well as to the body of the city. The city of New York appears to Evelyn to be a grotesque place, ‘with open sewers, excrement on the pavements, very big rats running about’. Evelyn describes the scene:

‘At the end of July, the sewage system had broken down and the lavatories ceased to flush. Respectable citizens hurled the contents of the freshly purchased chamber pots into the street below out of the windows of their apartments and the bright, rich smell of shit added a final discord to the cacophony of the city’s multiple odours. (Carter: 1977, p. 17)

This grotesque atmosphere of the city is heightened by the civil war-like conditions created by the militant Blacks and women. It is a decaying city and it is on the way of disintegration. Utter loss of rationality marks this postmodern metropolis, which is a contrast to London that is Evelyn’s original place.

Another grotesque creation in *The Passion of New Eve* is Zero, the patriarchal monster, who styles himself as a poet and a magician and keeps a harem of women, which he rules like a tyrant. He is ‘one-legged and one-eyed, a male grotesque body, and loves pigs better than his women’. Zero’s place itself is like a big sty of pigs and other animals.

These images are humorous as well as repulsive and raise carnivalesque laughter. Evelyn, who feels horror at the physical excesses of the figure of Mother and expresses revulsion at the sight, himself is turned into a mythic and monstrous Being, with the body of a female but the mind of a man. Zero, who wants to revenge himself on Tristessa by raping her, finds her to be a man. His wives and he himself are aghast. The whole scene is a comic-horror scene. Tristessa is subjected to torture and ridicule because of his/her nature:

‘They made ropes from twisted strips of his own negligee and tied him by his wrists from a steel beam, so there he dangled, naked, revealed.’ (Carter: 1977, p. 129).

Angela Carter’s use of grotesque realism in this novel is postmodernistic in the sense that it subverts the patriarchal myths of femininity and masculinity.

**The Passion of New Eve as a Speculative Science Fiction:**

Speculative fiction and science fiction are two different modes. Speculative fiction poses a question such as – suppose there were such a state of affairs or such characters and situations? This is purely speculative. It is already seen how in *Heroes and Villains* a post-apocalyptic world is created by Carter and the realistic characters are presented in this world to examine a number of issues. Similarly, the besieged city in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and Dr. Hoffman’s war on reality are speculative elements. Science fictional mode is characterized by the use of an imaginative device, a novum, which may not be in the realm of possibility but it hints at a new technology and uses terminology very akin to science, as one can note in the description of Dr. Hoffman’s laboratory. In *The Passion of New Eve* also, there is a surgical

laboratory of the Mother in Beulah where Evelyn is to be operated on, removing his genitalia and implanting uterus and female sex in him. There is a reference to plastic surgery. Evelyn, sprawled on the operating table, notes:

‘a perfectly twentieth century enameled trolley stood beside Mother, containing a covered tray which, hopefully, held syringes with anesthetics inside them’. (Carter: 1977, p. 70)

In the late twentieth century plastic surgery, transplanting organs, operations of sex change had become a common knowledge. However, the main point of Carter, as already pointed out, is to illustrate how sex and gender are two different things. Evelyn undergoes sex change but he feels his gender to be male. After this operation, he looks in the mirror and says:

‘I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman, who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me ...’ (Carter: 1977, p. 74).

In this way, *The Passion of New Eve* apparently ‘explores the question what it means to be born a woman’. (Zirange: 2002, p. 74). Angela Carter is disputing male or female essentialism. She would like to show that ‘Things are interchangeable in nature, because in evolution there are many possibilities of combination. This point of view supports the female model of reconciliation and synthesis proposed by Carter’. (Zirange: 2002, p. 75). Angela Carter makes use of science fictional mode to give plausibility to the speculative question posed by her. The future possibility projected by her in the fiction is juxtaposed with present reality. The quasi-science fictional narration or the fantasy in her fiction is not just an escapist device. It confronts the basic issues. Angela Carter, in *The Passion of New Eve*, satirizes not only masculine arrogance of Evelyn, a typical patriarchal male but also the Mother in Beulah, who poses to be omniscient. She interrogates the reality and our deeply held beliefs and myths about femininity and masculinity. The science fictional Beulah, its lab and the figure of Mother posing as a surgeon may appear unreal but there are elements of cognition – the operating table, the trolley, the instruments, the nurses and the doctor in their gowns, the instruments for administering anesthesia and others – which are quite familiar to us. One can find the same combination of unreal and familiar in the futuristic communities in *Heroes and Villains*.

In her fiction, Angela Carter seems to be interested in examining social fictions which regulate the lives of people. These fictions are the manacles on the minds. So, she states:

‘I am in the demythologizing business. I am interested in myths – though I’m much more interested in folklore – just because they are extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree.’ (Carter: 1983, p. 38).

As a result the main characters in *The Passion of New Eve* are made up of the myths: the beautiful heroine Tristessa (an amalgam of the Hollywood stars like Greta Garbo, Louise Brooks and others), Leilah, a striptease dancer, Evelyn, a male-prototype and a misogynist who becomes transformed as Eve modeled on the images of the idea of woman as projected in the media, and Mother, the fantastic many-breasted fertility goddess, who is also guerilla leader of women. Mother is the extreme example of the Greek myth of Tiresias, a Hermaphrodite. In *The Passion of New Eve*, these myths are demythologized. Leilah, a myth of male sexual fantasy turns to history and becomes a partisan in the civil war. She is Mother’s daughter and her role of Leilah is only part of an elaborate plan to draw Evelyn to the desert and to Beulah. Her real name is Lilith. She tells Eve that mother has given up all her mythic pretensions. ‘History overtook myth’ she says, ‘and rendered it obsolete’. (Carter: 1977, p. 172). Tristessa, a man in drag, constructed as mythic representation of ideal woman from the masculine point of view, has been stripped of that mythic image by Angela Carter. Eve tears off the photograph of Tristessa dispensing with

this image of womanhood in masculine terms. In the last scene of the novel, Eve finds a glass flask in the cave, which contains chunk of amber. The amber becomes viscous; Eve gets a vision of the various stages of evolution in it, as the time runs backward to show her history and prehistory. This is followed by Eve's understanding, through this vision, that there is absence in nature of differentiating characteristics of masculine and feminine which patriarchy has constructed making woman inferior to man. In evolution, there are many possible combinations of things, according to Carter and they are also interchangeable. This is what Carter establishes in *Tristessa*, the man in feminine role and Evelyn transformed into New Eve.

Angela Carter uses in *The Passion of New Eve*, a metaphor of Alchemy, a pre-scientific chemistry. In New York, Evelyn comes across Boroslav, an old Czech soldier, in a neighbouring flat. He dabbles in Alchemy, producing gold and presents a gold ingot to Evelyn. In alchemical process of making gold mercury was the key ingredient. Mercury in the alchemical thinking was personified as hermaphrodite, a union of opposites that is 'male' and 'female'. This primary oneness of this figure leads to resolving all differences. New York, which is being disintegrated, which is a 'chaos', where 'the age of reason is over', will return to 'reason'. The novel ends on an optimistic note by presenting Eve, with her child, setting out in a boat to discover rational shore of Europe.

#### Intertextual Weavings in *The Passion of New Eve*:

From the novels discussed so far, it is already stated that Angela Carter's fiction abounds in intertextual references, appropriation of ideas or subverting them. She makes use of the 18th century picaresque form of novel and also of gothic fiction also. The title of the novel invites our attention to the myth of Eve in the biblical story of Genesis. Woman is made out to be inferior to man, as she is created out of a bone of Adam's ribcage. She is also presented to be a temptress, who tempts Adam to eat the fruit of knowledge tree and consequently get expelled from the Garden of Eden. Carter tries to explore the consequences of this myth which has vitiated the life of women since ages.

Linden peach, in his study of Carter's fiction has noted the influence of Leslie Fiedler's analysis of American gothic in her fiction. He says 'the Gothic mode is essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés to the limit of grotesqueness'. (Peach: 1998, p. 27). Gothic mode uses extreme representations of gender which is already noted in the figures of Mother goddess in Beulah and Zero. Mother is also 'a new incarnation of Tiresias' (Carter: 1977, p. 186) the bisexual figure in Greek mythology.

The matriarchal city of Beulah is partially drawn from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the poetry of William Blake. As David Punter points out, 'Blake used the term Beulah for his land of restfulness, stasis, a retreat from the hard labour of political and interpersonal progress'. (Punter: 1991, p. 147). Whereas, Carter rewrites Beulah as the land 'where contrarities are equally true ... where contrarities exist together'. (Carter: 1977, p. 48). There are in Beulah extremes of matriarchal magic, as well as modern surgical technology. In Blake's Beulah, there is a spirit of sacrifice and forgiveness, but Carter's Beulah is out to establish the matriarchal world where male intervention will not be necessary. Mother in Beulah refers to the myth of the Greek goddess of fertility, Artemis, which Mother would live to perpetuate as a cult of femaleness.

Besides this, there are also references to the myth of Oedipus. Nevertheless, Mother in Beulah has her own interpretation of this myth, which favours her point of view of matriarchy. She asserts:

Oedipus wanted to live backwards. He had a sensible desire to murder his father, who dragged him from the womb in complicity with historicity. His father wanted to send little Oedipus forward on a phallic projecting ...

But Oedipus botched the job. In complicity with phallocentricity, he concludes his trajectory a blind man, wandering by the sea shore in search for reconciliation. (Carter: 1977, p. 53)

Yet she is not the one to seek reconciliation.

Greek mythological references abound in the novel. Evelyn being taken through winding corridors of Beulah, deep into the earth, he feels like 'Ariadne in the maze-mazes, spider-webs, but all progressing downwards ...'. (Carter: 1977, p. 56).

The chorus of women's voices singing 'a strange kind of litany in the praise of the Mother-goddess' (Carter: 1977, p. 61) includes mythical characters such as Danae, Alphito, Demeter and also inter-religious references ending with Indian Hindu goddess Kali, Christian Maria, ancient Greek Aphrodite and even Jocasta. Jocasta seems to be a strange addition to the list of deities. Sophia's dialogue with Evelyn presents a rapid reference to the Oedipus and also sudden possibility of transgression from the myth and thereby marking Angela Carter's identity as a postmodernist.

Angela Carter refers to films and the characters in the films. Evelyn, for example, recalls various images of Tristessa in the Hollywood films. A celluloid version of Little Woman, in which Tristessa played a role of a lady of sorrow, John Gilbert's role of Faust in Marguerite and various others. The expression 'milk and kindness' in the sentence like 'Oedipus had lived in a land of milk and kindness' (Carter: 1977, p. 75) recalls well known Shakespearean phrase 'milk of human kindness'. Zero claims that 'Tristessa had magicked away his reproductive capacity via the medium of the cinema screen', (Carter: 1977, p. 104) while he was watching her in Emma Bovary. In this way, in this novel also, Angela Carter employs media as a tool to suit her purpose to denounce the various fixed images of human Beings. She purposefully does so as to bring out how the world around is invaded by these images.

When Zero and his wives invade the secret abode of Tristessa, they find there waxworks of famous film stars put in the coffins:

'Jean Harlow, in a clinging gown of white satin lay beside James Dean, both died of fame ... . Marilyn Monroe, stark naked, just as they found her on her death bed; and Sharon Tate, in a tide of golden hair, she, poor girl, stabbed to death by mad people; Ramon Navarro, beaten to death by intruders in his own home; Lupe Velez, died by her own hand; Valentino, consumption and loneliness; Maria Montez, bailed to death in her bath for vanity's sake'. (Carter: 1977, p. 117)

However, it must be noted that though remote, the stories of these stars are reflected directly or indirectly in the lives of Angela Carter's characters. All these unfortunate dead of Hollywood and their tragic stories heighten fictive Tristessa's own tragic story. In Tristessa's drapery Zero finds Tristessa's male drapery in the role of George Sand, a Hollywood hero, which they use to dress Eve (Evelyn) as a bridegroom. Evelyn recalls Shakespeare's play As You Like It in which Rosalind, a girl is disguised as a boy but, Evelyn was a boy transformed as a girl and now disguised as a boy again. Repercussions of the Biblical myth Samson and also Milton's Samson Agonist are discernible in the encounter between Tristessa and Eve and the boy soldiers. The colonel asserts that he is 'the scourge of Christ', when he discovers Tristessa and Eve in

sexual embrace and cries out 'Lechery'! (Carter: 1977, p. 155). Tristessa's response to cutting long hair is a reflection of the Biblical myth of Samson, as well as Milton's Samson Agonists: 'I am not Samson ... I have no strength to lose'. (Carter: 1977, p. 155).

The echoes of the scientific experiments in Jonathan Swift's Laputa can be noticed in the incident when Sophia shows Evelyn 'the laboratories where they manufacture synthetic milk and wafers chemicals, spun their protein from petro-chemicals ... their water was their own recycled urine'.

These intertextual references and sometimes, rewriting the myths contribute to Angela Carter's purpose of subverting patriarchal assumptions about masculinity as well as femininity.

#### Subversion of Patriarchy and of Radical Feminist View:

While talking to John Haffenden, Carter states that in the creation of the character of Tristessa, a transvestite, her intention was to say something about 'the cultural production of feminity'. (Haffenden: 1985, p. 86). Tristessa was created from the masculine point of view – the image of a suffering woman. In the fiction of Angela Carter, patriarchal assumptions and patriarchal point of view about women are presented in a garish light, using fantasy, wherever necessary. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Evelyn is presented in the beginning as an example of male power derived from typical patriarchal assumptions about woman. Zero also representative of the same assumptions who points at extreme patriarchy, who enslaves women and treats them worse than animals. However, Carter ridicules him as a disfigured monster, which is destroyed by his own fears.

Evelyn's pursuit of Leilah is an evidence of how patriarchal males perceive a woman not as a human Being but only an animal and an object of pleasure. Evelyn abandons Leilah when she is pregnant. Though apparently he is presented as a hunter, it finally transpires that he was the one really hunted. The Mother-goddess exposes the reversal of the role of the 'hunter and the hunted' and her statements pronouncedly confirm the possibility of the superiority of the 'feminine' by killing time and resultantly 'man'. Later, Mother-goddess in Beulah reminds him, 'And you've abused woman, Evelyn, with this delicate instrument that should have been used for nothing but pleasure. You made a weapon of it'! (Carter: 1977, pp. 65-66). Mother describes herself, 'I am the Castratrix of the phallogocentric universe, I am Mama, Mama, Mama'! (Carter: 1977, p. 67). The maxims of Beulah say:

'... time is a man, space is a woman.

... time is a killer.

... kill time and live forever'. (Carter: 1977, p. 53)

Mother-goddess further claims, 'Man lives in historicity; his phallic projectory takes him onward and upwards ... but to where? Where but to the barren sea of infertility, the craters of the moon'! She continues (Carter: 1977, p. 53). Through the character of Mother-goddess Carter exposes the malpractices of patriarchy and brings out how Patriarchy has always considered woman to be the negative of man as Mother-goddess declares: 'woman has been the antithesis in the dialectic of creation quite long enough ... I am about to make a start on the feminization of Father Time'. Beulah, the matriarchal city seems to be the reaction to the world of patriarchy which since ages has been oppressing women. She plans to fertilize New Eve with the preserved sperm of Evelyn. Carter's character attempts at nullification of the necessity of man for creation and therefore longs for building a sperm bank.



However, the plan fails and no possibility of any such thing is established. Carter, thus, subverts extreme point of view of the radical feminists as well as extreme patriarchy. Carter seeks a synthesis between the feminine and masculine and seems to value the necessity of both the aspects of human life and therefore, at the end of the novel the readers see Eve embarking on new world as Beulah is no more remains significant. The attitudinal change is remarkable in the statement: 'The vengeance of the sex is love'. (Carter: 1977, p. 191).

Militant Mother-goddess of the matriarchal city has voluntarily resigned from the god-head, because she could not make time stand still. Leilah, who is now Sophia has returned to history, fighting a civil war. In the later part of the novel, Carter appears to suggest that 'gendered identity', in terms of masculinity and femininity, is 'socio-culturally constructed', gender is not 'natural', it is 'performed'.

Other Postmodernist Elements in The Passion of New Eve:

The city of New York in The Passion of New Eve is presented by Carter as a postmodern urban entity, disrupted and also in the process of disintegration. The modern metropolitan cities are fragmented and express isolation and exclusion. Carter uses the metaphor of alchemy to describe New York. Boroslav, the alchemist describes the condition of New York to be 'the end of reason'. This is the world without any homogeneous structure. It represents chaos, which, according to Boroslav 'embraces all opposing forms in a state of undifferentiated dissolution' and there is always a hope that out of this chaos a new order of phenomena might result. Evelyn also describes New York in the similar manner. This postmodern view of dystopian picture of New York informs the whole story.

In The Passion of New Eve, Angela Carter's intention is to deconstruct 'the social fiction which regulates our lives'. (Carter: 1983, p. 70). She satirizes the feminist gynocentric essentialism making use of exaggeration and elements of grotesque. The construction of the city of Beulah is also unnatural, false and slippery. The author shows how reality is misinterpreted and distorted through media, through Hollywood screen and fiction and this distortion leads to ambiguity. For example, Evelyn is not able to distinguish between reality and delusion. There also seems to be a lot of fluidity about reality. Leilah, who is apparently a victim, turns out to be the hunter. Since, there is always a difference between appearance and reality, there is always possibility of their getting mixed up.

Carter denounces the traditional notion of the figure of Mother. Mother is parodied, portrayed to be absurd in the eyes of Evelyn, who describes her as 'breasted like a sow', (Carter: 1977, p. 59) and 'baying like a bloodhound bitch in heat'. (Carter: 1977, p. 64). However, he does remain a detached spectator after his transformation which leads him to describe Mother as 'a piece of pure nature' and at the same time an 'artefact', because Mother has 'constructed' herself into what 'she appears'. Carter, thus, bases the whole the whole system of Beulah on illogicality and unreason. Mother's matriarchal programme of turning Evelyn into an ideal woman is also deconstructed. It is based upon exposing New Eve to the Hollywood films and also making her listen to the nursery songs from the films. Mother's attempts at Eve's complete transformation underlines the culture of simulation. The reality appears to depend upon what is fake, or what is just simulated.

Carter's New Eve becomes an agent to deconstruct gender distinctions. Eve escapes from Beulah and falls into the hands of Zero, who rapes her and she becomes part of his harem. It is under the savage masculine rule of Zero that the education of Eve in womanly role takes place. Zero's city is complete antithesis of Beulah. When Zero forces marriage on Tristessa and Eve,

Tristessa brings out disparity in such a forced marriage: 'So he made us man and wife although it was a double wedding ... both were the bride, both the groom in this ceremony.' (Carter: 1977, p. 135). This is Carter's renunciation of binary essentialism in *Beulah* and in the city of Zero. Tristessa had voluntarily become a woman and was both 'he' and 'she'. Evelyn was officially sexed as a woman but inside he/she was conscious of being man once and still recalls past life as a man. Carter, thus, in this novel, does away with the claim of naturalness of heterosexuality.

Apart from subversion of male and female sexuality, it is also noticeable how Carter subverts realism making use of grotesque and carnivalesque elements in the narration. As a postmodern fiction, *The Passion of New Eve* does not assume any particular central point of view, but rather tries to take into account the debates of 1960s and 70s, such as Freudian psychoanalysis, feminist movements, celluloid and media dominated reality and others.

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