Postfeminism through Magic Realism in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

This thesis examines the role of postfeminist theory in Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve. The aim of this study is to evaluate the novel from a postfeminist point of view and to investigate the novel's use of the tropes of magical realism in order to track its resemblance with postfeminism as both concepts share similar critical engagements.

The study describes postfeminism in relation to other feminisms such as first-wave feminism and second-wave feminism. While first-wave feminism demands the equality of the sexes and women's suffrage, second-wave feminism focuses on sexual difference and women's superior position in relation to men due to their reproductive abilities. Postfeminism imposes a judgemental attitude towards both previous feminisms and patriarchy. Gender, according to postfeminism, is merely a performative notion and is socially constructed.

Thus, this study highlights the postfeminist standpoint against the stereotypical representation of femininity and motherhood. The section concerning postfeminism explores the theory presented in Judith Butler's Gender Trouble. Additionally, the section deals with the fluidity of gender identity, gender as a socially constructed phenomenon, and masquerade.

The section of magic realism presents several definitions of the term. It explains the tropes of the magic realist literary mode. This section also examines its consistency with postfeminism. The following chapter highlights the postfeminist message and the function of magic realism in The Passion of New Eve.

The analysis section familiarizes the reader with the novel's main plot. The aim of the thesis is to analyse Carter's deconstruction of gender archetypes. Therefore, the analysis of the characters and main issues are conducted individually. The following sections explore Eve/lyn's transformation, Tristessa's masquerade, demystification of the Mother, Leilah's submission and Lilith's role in the future of feminism, Zero as the oppressive male, and his equally violent harem.

The last section summarises the findings of the thesis. The conclusion further draws on the personal interpretation of the writer concerning the novel's ending.

Avainsanat – Keywords
postfeminism, magic realism, Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve, deconstruction, gender identity

Table of Contents

Abstract

1. Introduction ... 1

    1.1 Topic and Structure ... 1

    1.2 The Author: Angela Carter ... 7

2. Postfeminism ... 15

3. Magic Realism ... 22

4. Analysis ... 30

    4.1 Eve/lyn ... 36

    4.2 Tristessa ... 45

    4.3 The Mother ... 49

    4.4 Leilah/Lilith ... 53

    4.5 Zero ... 59

5. Conclusion ... 62

Works Cited

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic and Structure

The Passion of New Eve was the first Angela Carter novel I read. I have re-read it couple of times afterwards. Each time it has had different effect on me. The first time of reading the novel went alongside with a dictionary even though I was already at that time an English literature major. I remember finding the experience merely exhausting and irritating not only because of the rich language – both literally and metaphorically – she used but also because it was the first novel I read, after a course on the Victorian novel, regarding the feminist literary theory. During the second time, I read through the plot while trying to visualize what happened to whom. I read the novel on the surface, so I found it disturbing due to its plot. It was the third time when I finally brought myself to think about what Carter – possibly – meant. I do not feel that I am done yet. I am constantly finding new ways to explore it. In my opinion, this is the charm of her writing. There is always room for a new interpretation.

Angela Carter was one of the most well-known British female writers. She received mixed reactions – though more negative than positive – during the time period she was writing. However, when she died in 1992, at the age of 51, she suddenly became one of the most researched and debated writers. Her *oeuvre* consisted of novels, short stories, essays, translations, plays, fairy tales, etc. In spite of her rather brief writing career, she dealt with many different subjects in her works. Amongst all the most prominent subject matter appears to be the issue of gender, its fluid nature and stereotypical representations.

Carter was a feminist, but a different kind of a feminist regarding her contemporaries. The traditional feminist approach had always been women-centred. It

excluded men because according to the feminists, the patriarchy established the rules for women as well as all the other things in society. Therefore, there would be no place for men in the struggle against patriarchy. Carter, on the other hand, was engaged in dysfunctional notions of both femininity and also masculinity. She was a feminist herself too, but she was critical of the feminists' way to develop their arguments on the subjects such as the victimisation of women and the stereotypical constructions of gender.

Carter introduced powerful but destructive women in feminist writing. She wrote about women who victimize men and about mothers without any motherhood qualities. Linden Peach observes that "while Carter was still alive, there was no greater bone of contention among critics than her representation of women" (6). In this study, I intend to examine the stereotypical representations of femininity in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*. Additionally, I will explore the stereotypical representations of masculinity. Then I will shape my argument around the fluidity of gender identities because what Carter gives to us in this novel is not a factual categorical distinction between men and women; it is more than that at a more complicated level. In *The Passion of New Eve*, she creates characters in drag. She makes drag a concrete fact, and then shows us how the identity works under that drag. In this novel, old Adam becomes new Eve, and Father God becomes Mother Goddess.

While some critics pin the novel as a magic realist text, other critics heavily oppose this kind of a categorization. The aim of this study is not to categorize the novel solely as a magic realist work, either. I will only deal with the literary mode as a way of supporting my discussion because I believe the use of several tropes of magic realism can be spotted in the novel. I propose the mode is used cleverly by Carter to serve her postfeminist message. Therefore, I will not go through the magic realist literary mode in excessive

detail. I will only draw on its general characteristics in order to familiarize the reader with the term.

On the other hand, I will not cover in my analysis of the novel the entirety of feminist and postfeminist theory, either. The postfeminist theory is ever-evolving and it is an immense field of theorising. What I intend to do, instead, is to evaluate the novel from a postfeminist point of view, to investigate the tracks of magical realism in order to spot its resemblances with postfeminism because both of these concepts more or less share similar critical engagements. Brooks suggests that postfeminism "expresses the intersection of feminism with postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism, and as such represents a dynamic movement capable of challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks" (4). On the magical realist side, Bowers observes that what makes magic realism a frequently adopted narrative mode is its characteristic of being inherently transgressive and subversive. She explains that it is this particular feature "that has led many postcolonial, feminist and cross-cultural writers to embrace it as a means of expressing their ideas" (66-7). As the postfeminist approach is also based on transgression and subversion, I consider it safe to work with the idea of merging the two together in order to present my argument.

The section on postfeminism will describe the standpoint of postfeminism amongst and against other feminisms. Hence, in order to do that, I will discuss the main characteristics of both first-wave feminism and second-wave feminism. In this way, it will be easier to spot and explore the postfeminist critique in *The Passion of New Eve*. In the novel, everything that symbolizes phallocentrism is destroyed eventually. Additionally, the problematic approach of traditional feminist practice is denounced as well. I am well aware of the fact that it is going to be a challenging process because the term postfeminism has

emerged long after Carter wrote the novel I wish to explore in this study. However, each striking detail in the novel drives me back to postfeminism, especially regarding the use of drag. So I believe that the order does not have to be in chronological sequence. It seems to me that the novel ingeniously foreshadows the characteristics of what is going to be called postfeminism two decades later.

The section about magical realism will investigate the multiple – thus, conflicting – definitions of the term regarding its emergence, authenticity and worldwide usage. I use the word "conflicting" deliberately here because there has not been a consensus in the definition or in the critique of the term as a literary mode so far; and because of its playful nature, I believe there should never be a specified and clear-cut definition.

During the course of reading, it should always be kept in mind that the subject of this study, *The Passion of New Eve*, does not reflect the finalized views of Carter regarding feminism. In her early works, written mainly in the 1960s, the mode of her writing appears to be rather realistic. However, starting from *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* in 1972, a shift in her style can easily be noticed. This very year falls to the same time when Carter returned from Japan. She had already questioned her reality as a woman in the summer of 1968. In Japan she learnt what it was to be a woman and she became radicalized. *The Passion of New Eve* is important in that sense that the novel stands, what I would like to call, on the threshold of exploration stage and finalization stage. On this exploration stage, Carter creates characters and throws in ideas. It seems as if she does not intend to give an absolute message. Nevertheless, she takes feminism to its extremes and shows that it would fail in the end. She introduces any possible alternatives to arrive in the finalization stage. This very opinion is supported by Lorna Sage and by Carter herself as well. Gamble considers the novel to be "too busy working through ideas" and Carter was

always "very explicit about the fact that this was intended as a novel of ideas" (Gamble, 89).

The main discussion will be presented in the chapter titled as "Analysis". I intend to draw the very general plot summary to familiarize the reader with the novel. However, I have decided to analyse the main characters individually because each of them reflects a different critique by Carter on the issue of feminism. My main focus will be on Evelyn's transformation into Eve, and Tristessa's masquerade and demythologizing of the Mother since they all have equally important parts in the analysis of this study.

Carter deals with the process of the construction of gender through and after the sex reassignment surgery of Evelyn into Eve. Evelyn is forcefully made into a woman in the hands of the Mother. Although the result of the biological surgery is impeccable, his psycho-surgery is incomplete because he escapes. From this point on in the novel his narrative is divided between its masculine and feminine counterparts. However, his predominant masculinity starts to give way to femininity throughout the novel as a result of his/her personal experiences. She unites as a woman with his boyhood/manhood fantasy Tristessa in the end and is impregnated by Tristessa. His transformation will also be analysed in the view of masquerade. Evelyn enters the desert as a chauvinistic British man at the beginning of the story and launches herself to the ocean as a pregnant woman in the end.

A similar analysis concerns Tristessa's gender performativity. Carter additionally extends her critique to the misleading image that Hollywood creates. Tristessa is a silent movie star who happens to be the lifelong desire of Evelyn. She has made herself as the most beautiful woman in the world. However, when her greatest mystery is revealed, it is

understood that she is in reality a man. Carter's critique on the creation of femininity inaugurates at this point. She criticizes the illusion that Hollywood invents. She also subverts the gender-based determinism which claims that one's gender and "identity is inescapably dependent on one's sex" (Gamble, 92).

As Carter was in the demystifying business and one of her fiercest acts of rebellion was targeted the sacred stereotypical representation of the mother, it was inevitable to have this crazy mad female scientist character, the Mother, in the novel. I plan to approach this character in several ways. First of all, obviously, I will analyse her from a postfeminist point of view. Mother has a very special importance for the second-wave feminists due to her biological reproductive abilities and what she represents. Carter is not against the myth of the mother. She only has problems with the essentialist approach of feminism to the mother and the practice of motherhood. On the other hand, by naming this character only as "the Mother", she deliberately and explicitly attacks the stereotypical notions of femininity and motherhood. The Mother is responsible for the transformation of male Evelyn into female Eve. She has no motherly qualities whatsoever. On the contrary, she is a cruel, crazy, monstrous rapist and castrator. When she fails to achieve her goal to kill masculinity, she suffers a nervous breakdown. She is seen sitting on the beach as a blind old lady in the end.

I furthermore intend to deal with some other characters in the novel, such as Leilah/Lilith, Zero and his harem, who will also have their individual chapters. Leilah is introduced in the story as the exotic dancer who seduces Evelyn in New York. She is impregnated, and then abandoned by him. The last time we see her is after the unsuccessful abortion by the voodoo abortionist she is taken to hospital. She reappears through the end of the story, but this time as Lilith. Eve realizes that this revolutionary female guerrilla is in

fact the Mother's daughter. Lilith pushes Eve into the crevice of rock so that the metaphorical rebirth of Eve could happen; and then she disappears in the distance. I will bring my analysis back to the notion of femininity and how it is created once again in the discussion of Leilah. I will also examine the female victimization in postfeminist point of view. Feminism put the blame on men in the victimization of women, but postfeminism defies this type of a generalization.

Zero is one of the few male characters who could survive the longest – but he sure gets his doomed fate – during the story. I will examine him from both a feminist and a magic realist point of view. He is the one who unites Eve and Tristessa although quite unintentionally. Eve is captured by Zero after she escapes the Mother. Zero lives in a ranch along with his seven wives and his beloved pigs. He makes Eve his eight wife by raping her. He is cruelty incarnate. He is obsessed with Tristessa, believing that she once made him infertile through the movie screen. All he wants is to kill Tristessa so that he can regain his manhood. I will analyse Zero's wives in this section, as well.

I will also discuss briefly the town of Beulah on the desert where the Mother resides, Evelyn's room there, the glass house of Tristessa, the Women, the gaze, the metaphor of the time reversal and rebirth in the end when Eve passes through the cave to reach the Mother. The thesis will close with a conclusion. I will also draw on my interpretation regarding the ending of the novel.

1.2 The Author: Angela Carter

In this section I will familiarise the reader with Angela Carter. I will cover her biography briefly, and list her works. Her attitude to the feminist view and her feminist standpoint

will be drawn out. Moreover, I will describe her critical reputation and the different reactions her works have received. Angela Carter was born, as Angela Olive Stalker, in 1940 in Eastbourne; though she spent her childhood years escaping the war in London to live with her maternal grandmother in Yorkshire (Sage, ix). Later on when the bombings ceased she returned to London, and began to work as a journalist. In 1960 she married Paul Carter. She attended Bristol University during 1962-65 to read English literature, specializing in the medieval period. She went to Japan alone in 1969 with the money she got from the Somerset Maugham Award, and stayed there until 1972 (Peach, 1). She started writing for the weekly magazine *New Society*. The time she spent in this foreign country with its unique culture was highly influential on her personal development as a woman and intellectual development as a writer. As Gerrard points out, Carter herself believed: "In Japan, I learned what it was to be a woman, and I became radicalized" (quoted in Peach, 2). Her first marriage ended in divorce in 1972. She married Marc Pearce in 1977, and the couple's son Alexander was born in 1983.

She chose her profession to be a teacher of writing, and she also was Art Council of Great Britain Fellow in Sheffield during the years 1976-78. Carmen Callil invited Carter to Virago in 1977, so she became a member of Virago advisory board. Later on she held positions at the universities in the United States as a visiting professor and Australia as a writer in residence.

Her prolific writing career of twenty-five years started with the publication of her first novel *Shadow Dance* in 1966, which was reprinted as *Honeybuzzard* in the United States the same year. Her second novel *The Magic Toyshop* was published in 1967, with which she won John Llewellyn Rhys prize. The following year she published her third novel *Several Perceptions*, and won Somerset Maugham Award. *Heroes and Villains* was

published in 1969. *Love* was published in 1971. Upon her return from Japan, she published *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* in 1972. *The Passion of New Eve*, which is the main focus of this study, was published in 1977. *The Bloody Chamber*, a collection of short fiction based on fairy tales, and *The Sadeian Woman*, her highly influential and controversial essay about the women in Marquis de Sade's works appeared at the same year in 1979. *Nights at the Circus* was published in 1984. The following year of its publication, Carter was the joint winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Her last novel *Wise Children* was published in 1991.

In my opinion, Carter was a profound writer and had a strong pen, as she had always used excessive amount of references in her works. To name a few, in her introduction to *Flesh and the Mirror* (2007), Ali Smith lists as Carter's influences "Shakespeare, Defoe, Blake, Swift, Poe, Carroll, Melville, Dostoevsky, Mary Shelley, the French Symbolists, the Surrealists, Barthes, Borges, Foucault, Calvino" etc., which shows the range of her intellectual maturity (4). She was boldly deriving references from the world mythologies – especially the Ancient Greek mythology – as well while approaching the subject through deconstruction.

The 1960s was the most productive period for Carter in a way that out of nine complete novels in her life, she produced five of them in that decade alone. This decade was also the time when she was formed into a feminist and a socialist. In the post-war England, she came to the realisation of being the "pure product of an advanced, industrialised, post-imperialist country in decline" (quoted in Sage, 3). In her essay published in 1983 "Notes from the Front Line" Carter recalls:

> towards the end of that decade there was a brief period of public philosophical awareness that occurs only very occasionally in human history; when truly, it felt like Year One, that all that was holy was in the process of being profaned... I can date to that time and to some of the debates and to that sense of heightened awareness of the society around me in the summer of 1968, my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a *woman*. (quoted in Peach, 3, emphasis original)

It is generally accepted that she was rather a realist writer up until the next decade. The Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges's stories and brief essays were the advance guard of an invasion of the English-speaking cultures that became known as magical realism: a way of writing that placed in the same plane the fantastical and the documentary (Sage, 33). This is when Carter's first magic realist novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, came into being in 1970s. Helen Carr suggests that "Carter's novels became much more *acceptable* in Britain after the discovery of South American magic realism" (Peach, 11; emphasis mine).

Lorna Sage, a close friend of Carter and a literary critic, observes that "she [Carter] *begins* with ends" (Sage, 13, emphasis original). This very observation is also supported in *The Passion of New Eve*, the subject in this study. The last chapter opens with Eve's statement, but very much echoes its writer: "We start from our conclusions" (*PNE*, 191). The end of the story is actually the beginning of Eve's new life.

Carter was "more interested in socialist reconstruction *after* the revolution than the revolution itself" (Sage, 22-3, emphasis original). The same attitude can be applied to her ideology of feminism. She was not interested in the current feminist principles in 1960s

and 1970s. She was not pleased; on the contrary, she was highly critical about those principles. She believed that not all women were sufferers. She claimed none of the sexes was superior or equal. She maintained that "masculine and feminine are correlatives which involve one another" (*PNE*, 149). According to her, the lines between the sexes are not clear, not rigidly drawn. She also criticizes women who use men's tactics. She asks feminists indirectly: If you try to take control, why are you using men's tools instead of your power in persuasion? Negative image of women against men's superiority cannot be broken by using the same tools of men's idealism in defining it in the first place. Bowers observes that "no one writer attacks the authority of the male British ruling classes and their dominant culture more adeptly than the feminist Angela Carter" (69). It is true that Carter ruthlessly attacked every notion which the patriarchy represents.

Nevertheless, to some extent, she was also highly critical of the feminist practice during her time. As a sign of this, she was rather sceptical about the Women's Movement in the 1960s. She condemned feminists who praised the sanctity of motherhood and the maternal body in the argument against patriarchy. The methodology that these feminists applied has turned into biological essentialism. Ward Jouve observes that "in Carter's work the patriarch is repeatedly shown to be shallow, his power mechanical or not so great after all. But the fiercest rebellion is against the mother, what she stands for" (166). One of the goals in her works was to "fight these stereotypical constructions" (Gruss, 30), the notions of femininity and masculinity. According to her,

> the theory of maternal superiority is one of the most damaging of all consolatory fictions and women themselves cannot leave it alone, although it springs from the timeless, placeless, fantasy land of archetypes where all the embodiments of biological supremacy live. (quoted in Keenan, 145)

This is one of the reasons she generally discarded mother figures in her stories; or else, the mothers she invented were problematical in the sense that they do not have many – if any – maternal qualities. Or then, she was generally harsh to her female characters. They were raped, mutilated or murdered. Although some of them had some power, they did not know how to deal with it. The power they had got caused their madness, and thus, their destruction. She was not kind to her male characters, either. They were chauvinistic, brutal, sadistic and murderous. Both men and women were on the giving and the receiving side of suffering; so as to say, psychological and/or physical torture.

Carter was interested in how women constructed themselves. Right from the beginning, Carter's fiction began "to represent how women have a conflicted relationship with their production as 'feminine' subjects" (Bristow and Broughton, 10). She worked on deconstruction and recreation of religious myths and social values. She was in the "demystifying business" (Ward Jouve, 161).

Second-wave feminists held men responsible for the violence directed at women. They accused men, for example, of being the cause of rape and production of pornography. According to this group of feminists, all physical violence and mental oppression have belittled women and consequently made them submissive. The women, in all cases, no matter what, have always been given the victim role. Carter defied this conviction by claiming that not all the women, in fact, were the victims of patriarchal abuse, and some women were admittedly the source of the oppression. Therefore, she created such women characters who were as sadistic, ruthless and perverse as men. In a period when the feminist thinking focused on the issue of violence against women, Carter wrote about violence of women, too. This practice of Carter disturbed her contemporary feminist critics and the debate has not yet to cease to date. She, amongst her contemporaries, gained a

rather ill reputation because of her unorthodox treatment of feminism in her works, which, as Merja Makinen suggests, went "against the grain of the widespread contemporary feminist belief that violence emanated from an exclusively male source" (150).

She did not go with the *écriture feminine*, which is the French for *women's writing*. The French feminist practice supported the idea that women should write about women and for women without phallocentric writing. According to them, patriarchy created the language which is in use now; therefore women's writing reflects the male point of view. Thus, women should develop their own language system outside the masculine boundaries (Eagleton, 190). To Carter,

> The origin is a masculine myth... The question 'Where do children come from?' is basically a masculine, much more than a feminine, question. The quest for origins, illustrated by Oedipus, doesn't haunt a feminine unconscious. Rather it's the beginning, or beginnings ...starting on all sides at once, that makes a feminine writing... When a woman writes in nonrepression she passes on her others, her abundance of non-ego/s in a way that destroys the form of the family structure... She writes of not-writing, non-happening. (Sage, 58)

Carter was criticized with the language she used and the tone in her texts by being relatively masculine. Sage believes that Carter "adopted the supposedly male point of view because, under the mask of the 'general', it was more aggressive, more licensed, more geared to *wanting*, more *authorial*" (Sage, 25). She had to be more aggressive in order to be heard. Carter further criticized the anti-porn feminists, who position their analyses of

pornography in an ahistorical patriarchal continuum in which power relations do not change (Gruss, 29).

Angela Carter died of lung cancer in 1992 at the age of 51. Throughout her writing career she produced nine complete novels, numerous short stories and children's stories, verse, radio plays, film and television scripts, translations and non-fiction texts. Admittedly, she gained much more fame after her unexpected death in a rather young age. In my opinion, she has become more famous also because the actual theories were developed decades later, which means that she was ahead of her time.

On the issue regarding the negative reception of Carter's works and critique, according to Marina Warner, Carter would have been "astonished by the praise in her obituaries; she would certainly have had some caustic phrase for the general enthusiasm" (265). Warner continues her observation:

> For in England, where she was born and lived, she and her work were viewed askance while she was alive by some of the same media Establishment that gathered in force to praise her in death. Her work sowed discomfort among the British public, which in some ways was all to the good, as she did not seek to be cosy. Her profanity was of the unsettling variety that made it necessary to examine one's own received ideas. (265)

One example of Warner's observation considering the discomforting nature of Carter's work will be discussed in this study. In this section I have familiarised the reader with the author. I have covered her biography briefly, and have listed her various works. I have also presented an outline of her attitude to the feminist view and her own feminist standpoint. In the following chapter, I will describe postfeminist theory.

2. Postfeminism

In this section I will describe the standpoint of postfeminism amongst and against other feminisms. I will explain the main characteristics of both first-wave feminism and second-wave feminism, and then discuss the postfeminist theory as a reaction to them. Feminist theory has been one of the most debated and contradictory theories since its emergence. A theory as diverse as feminism makes it impossible to present a precise definition; and in a short time it was fragmented into different categories, so different that some categories seem to clash with each other even though they hold the name "feminism" in their titles. The fragmentation has not ceased to continue.

First-wave feminism demanded the equality of the sexes and women's suffrage, claiming that women are not inferior to men or they are different from men; hence they should "therefore be allowed to do the same jobs and have the same rights as men" (Atwood, 137). First-wave feminists were mostly dealing with the issues concerning women's place in the society. They focused on women's right to vote, inequalities in the work and marriage life.

Second-wave feminism, on the other hand, focused on the superiority of women against men, asserting that women are "more deserving than men, but because of the lamb-like nature of their superiority they also need more protection" (Atwood, 137). According to the latter group, women are sufferers and men are the cause of their suffering. Second-wave feminists draw attention to sexual difference and women's superior position due to her biological reproductive abilities, and praised the women – and the women only – as the ones who could experience motherhood, when in fact, this attitude have ultimately led to biological essentialism. On the theory of maternal superiority, Carter argues that it is "one

of the most damaging of all consolatory fictions and women themselves cannot leave it alone, although it springs from the timeless, placeless, fantasy land of archetypes where all the embodiments of biological supremacy live" (quoted in Keenan, 145). So, Carter is saying that women commit the same mistake by inventing archetypes in their struggle against patriarchal archetypes.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is known as the most influential pioneering work in feminist theory. It was originally published in French in 1949, but with its English translation in the 1950s the work became an important reference book for the second-wave feminists in the Western world. Beauvoir's main thesis here is, in Moi's words: "Throughout history, women have been reduced to objects for men; 'woman' has been constructed as man's other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions. Or, in more existentialist terms: patriarchal ideology presents woman as immanence, man as transcendence" (92).

The theory of second wave feminism is, in a sense, formed around psychoanalysis, a practice introduced by Sigmund Freud. What attracted the feminists about the concept is the fact that the Freudian theory had dealt with the sexual difference. According to Freud, the male has an obvious sex organ, which is his penis. The female does not have a penis, and thus, her difference "is perceived as an absence or negation of the male norm" (Moi, 132). Therefore, the female suffers from lack during her life and develops penis envy as a result of this lack. She is given the place against man in the binary opposition. The psychoanalytic theory is merely masculine. It is based on the male. The female only exists because of her non-existent sex organ. The French feminists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray observe that, in psychoanalysis, "femininity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness – in short, as non-Being" (Moi, 166).

Psychoanalysis also deals with Oedipus complex and castration anxiety of the male. Scott Dimovitz maintains that at the beginning of The Passion of New Eve is a suggestion that "modern Western culture develops because of the repression of the Oedipal foundations that lie beneath it, much as the Oedipus complex structures the adult male" (85). These concepts will be explained and discussed further in detail during the analysis of the novel in this study.

Second-wave feminism started to become dysfunctional because it exclusively served white Western middle-class heterosexual women. Ann Brooks suggests that "the collapse of consensus from within feminism formed around issues of theorising. Concepts such as 'oppression,' 'patriarchy,' 'sexuality, identity and difference' as used by white middle-class feminists were increasingly challenged" (Brooks, 5). Anna Yeatman relevantly cites the African-American feminist bell hooks as a critic of those white middle-class feminists concerning the status of black women against racism and sexism:

> White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women. White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people. (Brooks, 107)

The critics of the feminist theory supported men's exclusion as a must in feminism. This highly problematic negative attitude against men can be seen as a shift from man-centred tradition to woman-centred tradition. This woman-centred approach eventually led to a reductionist practice in literary criticism. All texts written by women were regarded as feminist texts because they "may always and without exception be held to embody

somehow and somewhere the author's 'female rage' against patriarchal oppression" (Moi, 62). Toril Moi, in *Sexual/Textual Politics*, remarks this kind of a reductionist approach being "reminiscent of reductionist varieties of psychoanalytic or Marxist criticism, though it is no longer the author's Oedipus complex or relation to the class struggle that counts as the only truth of the text, but her constant, never-changing *feminist rage*" (62, italics original).

Third-wave feminism, also called postmodern feminism, but for which I choose to use the term "postfeminism" in this study, reacts as a backlash against both of those waves, claiming that none of the sexes is superior, and not all women are victims of the oppressor. Postfeminism imposes a judgemental attitude towards both previous feminisms and patriarchy. It challenges, as Sylvia Walby argues, "the very basis of consensus in feminist theorising: that is, the emphasis on the commonalities shared by women" (Brooks, 36). The backlash is so harsh at times that it might seem "anti-feminist". Jana Sawicki also criticizes feminist thinking and practice not being "innocent of divisive, exclusionary and oppressive tendencies resulting in the marginalisation of groups of women" (Brooks, 55). Gender, according to postfeminists, is merely a performative notion. It is based on mimicry and masquerade, and their repetition. Nevertheless, these are not chronologically listed theories. They blend into one another through time and approach.

Brooks maintains that postfeminism "expresses the intersection of feminism with post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism, and as such represents a dynamic movement capable of challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks" (4). Postfeminists not only demystify the concept of the representation of women but also deconstruct the practices which previous feminisms have generated.

One of postfeminism's branches criticizes the heterosexuality of the feminist theory. In her highly influential *Gender Trouble*, published in 1990, Judith Butler introduced what has become the queer theory. She argues that phallic cultural conventions reinforced the naturalization of heterosexuality; hence, feminist ideology has developed through the heterosexual patriarchal norms. She believes, for this reason, the existing feminist view has not responded to and/or favoured homosexuals or transsexuals or intersexuals. She is against the sex/gender distinction. Moreover, according to her, gender is particularly performative. One's sex is not the determining factor in one's gender. Gender is solely created through performance. Paulina Palmer notes that "a focus on the construction of femininity and its links with performance is, in fact, central to Carter's writing" (24).

At the very beginning of *The Passion of New Eve*, the argument of performativity is brought forth with the statement that "our external symbols must always express the life within us with absolute precision [...] The symbols themselves have no control over their own fleshly manifestations, however paltry they may be; the nature of our life alone has determined their forms" (*PNE*, 6). So the aim of the novel is revealed already on the following sentence: "A critique of these symbols is a critique of our lives" (*PNE*, 6). Angela Carter takes these symbols, and then deconstructs them in order to show the flexible nature of gender. She suggests that our external symbols do not necessarily always express the life within.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her most famous quotation, asserts that "one is not born a woman, one becomes one" (Moi, 65). Butler agrees with her that "no one is born with a gender – gender is always acquired"; however, Butler continues her interpretation in a disapproving way by saying that

> Beauvoir was willing to affirm that one is born with a sex, as a sex, sexed, and that being sexed and being human are coextensive and simultaneous; sex is an analytic attribute of the human; there is no human who is not sexed . . . But sex does not cause gender, and gender cannot be understood to reflect or express sex; indeed, for Beauvoir, sex is immutably factic, but gender acquired, and whereas sex cannot be changed – or so she thought – gender is the variable cultural construction of sex. (Butler, 142-3)

Monique Wittig's evaluation of the same quote, on the other hand, is overcritical. She believes that one is either a male or a *sexed* female; therefore men are the norm and women are feminine because their sex determines their femininity. She continues her argument:

> The category of sex is neither invariant nor natural, but is a specifically political use of the category of nature that serves the purposes of reproductive sexuality [...] There is no distinction between sex and gender; the category of "sex" is itself a *gendered* category, fully politically invested, naturalized but not natural. (Butler, 143)

Angela Carter brought a new perspective to what Beauvoir said concerning becoming a woman. According to Carter, the construction of gender is valid for both sexes, not only for women. Thus, she claims that "to be a *man* is not a given condition but a continuous effort" (*PNE*, 63).

The term postfeminism emerged in the early 1990s, almost two decades later when Angela Carter had written the novel which is the subject of this study. However, Carter's critique of the feminism in the 1960s and 1970s adequately predicted what the

postfeminists would come to challenge years later. Heather L. Johnson, referring to *The Passion of New Eve*, takes the proposition one step further by asserting that "in her [Carter's] protagonist's declaration of his/her complex history of gender identification, Carter prefigures the provocative notion of a 'post-transsexual' identity" (167).

Zamora and Faris propose that "mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other, male and female: these are boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned in magical realist texts" (6). Although they are addressing magic realism here, the view can also be directed to what the postfeminist stance aims to achieve. The boundaries between genders ought to be erased because this type of heterosexual categorization of male and female works in itself in the same way as phallocentrism does. Feminism's erroneous practice of establishing its argument by swapping the positions of man and woman would only lead to the mirror image of patriarchy.

In this section I have described the standpoint of postfeminism amongst and against other feminisms. I have explained the main characteristics of both first-wave feminism and second-wave feminism, and then have discussed the postfeminist theory as a reaction to them in order to draw the outline of my argument regarding *The Passion of New Eve* as a postfeminist novel. In the following section I will define the characteristics of magic realism as a literary mode and how the term can be used in the postfeminist message.

3. Magic Realism

I will explain different definitions of magic realism in this chapter. Originally emerged as a new approach in painting, I will present my analysis of the term as a literary mode. I will also examine its consistency with postfeminism. Magic realism does not have a clear-cut definition. The term's very feature of its indefinable nature is seen problematic by several literary critics. I see it, on the other hand, as an advantage because what we have here is a playful mode which challenges the boundaries of the reality. The problem occurs first of all in pinpointing the inventor of the term. Some critics believe the term was first coined under the name of "Neue Sachlichkeit" (New Objectivity) / Magischer Realismus during the Weimar Republic in 1925 by the German art critic Franz Roh in order to define a new approach in painting. Luis Leal states that Roh explains the origin of the term by saying that by the word "magical" he [Roh] wished to emphasize that "the mystery does not descend to the represented world but rather hides and palpitates behind it" (120).

Some critics believe it was first invented by the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier under the name of "lo real maravilloso" (the marvellous real) in order to define the literary mode exclusive to Latin America while observing that the "improbable juxtapositions and marvellous mixtures exist by virtue of Latin America's varied history, geography, demography, and politics – not by manifesto" (Faris and Zamora, "Editors' Note," 75). According to him, the marvellous emerges when there is an unexpected alteration in reality. It happens in the form of miracle; therefore, it requires faith to be accepted. The marvellous here, however, does not have an admirable quality, but it is something strange, unfamiliar and even uncanny (Carpentier, 103).

The Venezuelan Uslar Pietri defined the term as the poetic negation of reality. The Chilean writer Isabel Allende, unlike Carpentier, rejected magic realism as a "uniquely Latin American phenomenon", claiming that magic realism can be seen all over the world (Faris, 187-88). According to Salman Rushdie, magic realism is the "commingling of the improbable and mundane" (quoted in Bowers, 3). Some critics such as Angel Flores originates the term as a "new phase of Latin American literature to the year 1935 when Jorge Luis Borges's collection *Historia universal de la infamia* (A Universal History of Infamy) made its appearance in Buenos Aires" (113). However, Luis Leal does not agree with Flores. Additionally, Amaryll Chanady opposes Flores's view on magic realism as a genuinely Latin American fiction and his originating the term to Borges by stating: "If magical realism is described as imaginative and innovative fiction that has assimilated the most modern narrative and stylistic techniques, and can be found in Kafka as well as Borges, it cannot be 'genuinely Latin American' or the 'authentic expression' of the continent" (130). Geert Lernout contributes to the debate by claiming that "what is postmodern in the rest of the world used to be called magic realist in South America" (quoted in D'Haen, 194).

The Cuban critic Roberto González Echevarría suggests two forms of magic realism: the ontological and the epistemological. Ontological magic realism can be "described as magic realism that has its source material beliefs or practices from the cultural context in which the text is set" (Bowers, 91). Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) can be cited as examples to ontological magic realism. Epistemological magic realism, on the other hand, "takes its inspiration for its magic realist elements from sources which do not necessarily coincide with the cultural context of the

fiction, or for that matter, of the writer" (Bowers, 91). Günter Grass's *The Thin Drum* (1959), Hubert Lampo's *The Coming of Joachim Stiller* (1960), and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984) are some of the well-known examples of epistemological magic realism.

Maggie Ann Bowers observes the main sources of confusion surrounding the term to be the "lack of accuracy of their application" and also the "many variations of translation of the term" (Bowers, 2). Two – or possibly more – words blend into one. The mode works in such a way that the magical appears as real, or vice versa, the real appears as the magical. Another reason for the ambiguity of the term lies in its very name. The oxymoron of the magic and the realist mirrors the concept of the mode. The subversive and transgressive qualities of the mode have also encouraged feminist writers to use it in order to manifest their ideas and critiques.

Nevertheless, the term should not be confused with the fantasy mode. "The novelty" in this mode, posits Flores, "consisted in the amalgamation of realism and fantasy" (112). In magic realism all is made to seem familiar, acceptable, and *almost* sensible. This is because of the consensus from the majority of literary critics and writers of the mode that the events are narrated as actually occurring. There is a matter-of-fact tone which presents events as commonplace. The writer does not require an explanation or proof. The reader does not need such explanation, either. Cheryl Morgan, in her review of the novel, reads it in science fiction point of view and claims that Carter "failed to research the details of transsexual surgery and thereby misses an opportunity for some quite delicious irony. As for things like people being able to get into a helicopter and fly it safely with no previous training, well, I suppose the plot required it." I think that Morgan misreads the novel in this light. This is why the novel is not to be considered as a work of

science fiction. In magical realism, the writer does not need to explain the logic; logic of a transsexual surgery or how characters are able to fly a helicopter safely without any training. The reader is not interested in knowing how they are done, either because of the matter-of-fact tone in the narration. These types of activities are not presented as miraculous but as commonplace activities.

Another aspect which distinguishes magic realism from fantasy is that the narrative of the latter is set in a "world different from any known reality... Unlike magical realism, it does not have a realistic setting that is recognizable in relation to any past or present reality" (Bowers, 30). The unfamiliarity and disbelief of fantasy are overcome by the magic realists, as Scott Simpkins observes, by presenting

> familiar things in unusual ways (flying carpets, Nabokovian butterflies, mass amnesia, and so on) to stress their innately magical properties. By doing this, magic realists use what the Russian Formalists called defamiliarization to radically emphasize common elements of reality, elements that are often present but have become virtually invisible because of their familiarity. And through a process of supplemental illusions, these textual strategies seem to produce a more realistic text. But whether this endeavour succeeds is another matter. (150)

Wendy Faris lists the characteristics of magic realist texts. First: "The text contains an 'irreducible element' of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them [...] Magic also serves the cause of satire and political commentary" (Faris, 167-68). In my opinion, this is why it is not exclusive to Latin America, but instead it features in all the world literature. The magic realist literary mode

is used by postcolonialists and feminists as well. Second: "Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world – this is the realism in magic realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory [...] Realistic descriptions create a fictional world that resembles the one we live in, in many instances by extensive use of detail" (Faris, 169-70). In *The Passion of New Eve*, for example, Carter reverses this feature. Instead of creating a fictional world, she chooses the United States as the setting for her novel. She takes a familiar place, and makes it unfamiliar by the use of civil war and adding in places such as the town of Beulah in the desert. Then she makes this setting real again by the extensive use of realistic descriptions and sharp details.

Third: "The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events" (Faris, 171-72). Nevertheless, Faris later on argues that "wonders are recounted largely without comment, in a matter-of-fact way, accepted – presumably – as a child would accept them, without undue questioning or reflection" (Faris, 176). In the aforementioned novel by Carter, before or after the sex (and gender) reassignment surgery, Eve/lyn never once asks how such an operation is possible. When she first sees herself in the mirror after the surgery as the New Eve, she describes the transformation in a matter-of-fact way.

Fourth: "We experience the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds [...] The magical realist vision exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions" (Faris, 172). I believe Evelyn's mind and Eve's body represents the idea of a double-sided mirror. When we only listen, we see Evelyn. When we only look, we see Eve. The reader cannot know where Evelyn ends and where Eve begins, or vice versa. I believe the similar aspect can be also seen in Tristessa's glass house in the desert.

Lucie Armitt suggests that "nothing in Carter's work is ever 'exactly as it seems'" (95). This comment regarding Carter's literature, I think, is as close as it gets to magic realism. Carter lays before the reader what is familiar, but just when all seems to fit the reality she adds the miraculous turn of events. Thus, resembling what Roh emphasized, she makes even the reality palpitate.

Latin American magic realism is fed by deep cultural beliefs and old traditions. However, European magic realism mostly takes myth and religion. This is what is happening in Carter's case. As a writer from Britain, Carter made a great use of the Western and religious mythology. As Gruss also suggests, Carter "uses religious myths of femininity to undermine and deconstruct them" (54). She occasionally took the things she needed in her feminist critique from the tropes deriving from magic realism. The conjoining characteristic of mythology is most supportive in my argument in this study. The myth of King Oedipus is a widely-known story, and its reference in the novel brings in the magic realist effect. Briefly, in the Ancient Greek mythology, Oedipus is the son of King Laius of Thebes and his wife Jocasta. The oracle tells that he would kill his father and marry his mother; therefore, the king sends him away. Years later the oracle's words become true. Oedipus kills his father unknowingly, marries his mother and becomes the king of Thebes. Though, at the end of the story the truth is revealed when Jocasta kills herself because of the shame, and Oedipus blinds himself.

Sigmund Freud, in psychoanalysis, on the other hand, introduced the Oedipus complex, which then became a major argument point for feminism. Oedipus complex is based on the male child's immense desire for his mother during the phallic stage. During his whole life, he unconsciously wants to return to his mother. This is a recurrent theme in *The Passion of New Eve*: "All Old Adam wants to do is, to kill his father and sleep with his

mother" (*PNE*, 16). When Evelyn is captured in Beulah, he listens to the lecture from the loudspeaker about Oedipus, how he subconsciously disobeyed historicity and ended up as a blind old man because he "wanted to live backwards" (*PNE*, 53), i.e., he unknowingly wanted to return to his mother.

In their introduction to their collection on magical realism, Zamora and Faris explain how the mode has become useful to feminist writers. This extract is also significant because it is one of the approaches which has given me the idea for this study:

> Mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other, *male and female*: these are boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned in magical realist texts.
>
> Magical realism's assault on these basic structures of rationalism and realism has inevitable ideological impact... Magical realist texts are subversive: in their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and, increasingly, to women. ("Introduction," 6, emphasis mine)

Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, on examining magic realism in literatures, suggests what also makes magic realism useful in my postfeminist analysis of the novel. She observes that "the freaks, grotesques, marginal, disguised or imaginary creatures who force their way into Carter's narrative clearly have a parodic function: they are meant to comment on the ways in which we construct our personal and cultural notions of identity, sexuality, and gender" (250). This allusion leads us directly to the characters in *The Passion of New Eve*.

Eve, Tristessa, Leilah and the Mother – and even he is on the opposite side, Zero – are characters, by force or self-made, whose identity, sexuality and gender are constructed through painstaking effort. This starting point from magic realism takes us to postfeminism and what it says about socially constructed notions of identity and femininity.

I have described several definitions of magic realism in this chapter. The term originally emerged as a new approach in painting. However, it has also been accepted as a literary mode soon after its emergence. Therefore, I have mainly discussed about its function as a literary term. I have further examined its consistency with postfeminism, and its appearance in *The Passion of New Eve*. In the next chapter, I will examine the postfeminist message and how magic realism functions in the novel.

4. Analysis

In this section, I will familiarise the reader with the novel by presenting its plot summary. To discuss the postfeminist message and the function of magic realism in the novel, I will examine each character in their individual titles. *The Passion of New Eve* is the fifth novel of Angela Carter. It was first published in 1977 by Victor Gollancz. Its reception was – and has always been – controversial. Peter Ackroyd's review in *the Spectator* was harsh, and he underestimated the power of the novel as a political commentary on the problems of gender as a socially constructed commodity and its representations in arts. The novel is not a "simple story of rape, castration and apocalypse" (88) as Ackroyd's review claimed. Lucie Armitt considers the novel as "a dark, sinister, even dangerous book in terms of the nihilistic (anti-) ideologies with which it plays. In that regard, Carter leaves us with intriguing but worrying deconstructions of gender" (105). In her interview with Olga Kenyon, Carter confessed that it was only *Gay News* that gave her a really sympathetic review during that time (Gamble, 89). Carter displays in the novel how problematic and illusory the cultural production of femininity and masculinity are; though, she does not provide solutions to these problems. Furthermore, as Ward Jouve also suggests, "the reader neither enjoys Evelyn's wickedness nor gets a kick out of Mother's castrating knife. There is no narrative safety, no cosy resolution, be it bliss or apocalypse. The very appeal of pornography, of fantasy, of dream, is being deconstructed" (166).

It is difficult and almost impossible to give a brief summary of the novel. The book is rather fairly short, comprising 191 pages. Despite its conciseness, it is filled with scenes, characters and plots. In a nutshell, the novel tells the physical and psychological odyssey of Evelyn. It is regarded as a picaresque novel by numerous literary critics because of its adventurous nature. The story is told in the first-person narrative. However, this narrative

breaks into a singular third person as can be detected in the narrator's reference to Eve. Thus, the idea that the mind of Evelyn remains in Eve's body is supported.

Carter applies the ideology of the fluid nature of gender not only to the characters such as Eve and Tristessa but also to the narrative style. Therefore, it would be wrong to pin the narration as merely masculine all the way. It consists of both masculine and feminine elements. However, Eve is also perplexed when finding herself acting out *feminine* or having feminine attributes. Then, there are also clues in the story of her behaving as a man again. The narrator is transsexual Eve; therefore it is both masculine and feminine, though slightly more prone to the masculine side. In their introduction, Bristow and Broughton call this an "astute narrative that explores how transsexuality holds the clue to the costructedness of all gendered identities" (4).

Evelyn is a British man who travels to New York due to his new teaching job. However, things do not go as planned for him. Civil war has broken out between different political, racial and gendered groups. The city is inhabited by giant rats and garbage. His only *friend* in this chaotic place is Baroslav the Czech, who is an old soldier in his sixties. Evelyn thinks of him as an alchemist and a demented person. Even though Baroslav has a brief appearance in the story (five pages after his introduction he is beaten to death), everything he utters seems to have an important meaning. Ironically, he rather appears to be one of the wisest – actually the only wise – characters in the novel.

The very first thing we hear of him is: "The age of reason is over" (*PNE*, 13). From a feminist point of view, I consider this as prophetic. Reason, knowledge, mind; these are all connected to masculinity in the feminist critique. Spirit, soul and body, on the contrary, are connected to femininity. What Baroslav foresees here is actually the fact that in the

apocalyptic age masculinity will be over. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the age of femininity will start, although this is what the Mother and her female guerrillas aim to achieve. Carter, in the end, does not provide such a resolution because she believed none of the sides would be victorious.

> Chaos, the primordial substance. Chaos, the earliest state of disorganised creation, blindly impelled towards the creation of a new order of phenomena of hidden meanings. The fructifying chaos anteriority, the state before the beginning of the beginning. (*PNE*, 14)

It seems to me that this excerpt from Baroslav bears probably the most interesting point in the novel and also in the analysis. Why is that? It is because near the end of the novel Eve echoes the same thing, regarding the current situation in the United States. When she returns to the city, back to historicity, she learns from the newspaper that a civil war within the civil war has started. I will return to the issue of historicity in the subsequent part of the analysis because it is yet another recurring theme in the novel.

After losing his job, Evelyn is seduced by Leilah, who is an African-American naked dancer. They have a short sexual affair which ends by Evelyn impregnating Leilah. Bored of her, and now also disgusted by her pregnancy, he forces her to have an abortion. Heather L. Johnson proposes that Evelyn's feeling of disgust is a "response to her differences from him as she comes to embody maternity, blackness and the feminine" (171). Instead of going to a clinic, she goes to a voodoo abortionist. However, the abortion goes wrong, and she is taken to hospital. Evelyn abandons her totally at this point, though he does not skip to send her roses to appease his conscience.

He decides to see some of America before leaving for home, and goes out to desert after receiving money from his parents. Soon after his departure he is captured by a woman from Beulah, and he is taken to encounter the Mother who is a cruel and monstrous mother goddess figure responsible for the transformation of Evelyn into Eve. She turns him into a woman, and plans to impregnate him with his own sperm taken from him before the operation when she rapes him so that Eve is supposed to give birth to new Messiah.

Henceforth I will use female personal pronouns for Eve to prevent any possible confusion so that it would specify the chronological order of the events. However, if I ever skip this practice accidentally, the reader should know that it happens due to the fluidity of gender identity. Eve escapes Beulah before her transformation is complete. His biological surgery is entirely successful. He has become fully women in his appearance. His psycho-surgery is incomplete at this point. However, she is enslaved by Zero who happens to be a "poet", but in fact he is a cruel male psychopath with only one eye and one leg. He has a harem of seven wives who are all immensely and incredibly submissive. He whips them brutally unless they *talk* in grunts or honour the pigs. Zero makes Eve his newest wife by raping her. He leads his wives on a search for Tristessa, who is a silent film star and also Evelyn's first object of desire, because he is obsessed with the idea that Tristessa has made him infertile. Zero believes that he will regain his manhood once he kills Tristessa.

The gang soon find Tristessa's secluded glass house where she lies on top of a glass coffin in a hall filled with waxwork effigies of Hollywood film stars. Zero cuts her silk robe and thong, and much to their shock, they find out that Tristessa is *in reality* male. Zero and his harem immediately improvise a dreadful wedding ceremony in which Eve is made the groom and Tristessa the bride. They force Tristessa to rape Eve. The "newly-weds" escape to the desert, and Zero and his harem are killed in the spinning glass palace.

Eve falls in love with Tristessa. It does not take long before they are found by a gang of teenage boys, whose leader is a 14-year-old boy. Tristessa is shot dead, and Eve is *rescued* by them. Eve escapes once again. This time she encounters a female rebel leader Lilith, who used to be Leilah. She takes Eve to the beach. From a distance it seems a crazy old lady sitting there. Lilith pushes Eve into a crevice of rock. In the end it is understood that Eve is pregnant. The Mother wants Eve's necklace of alchemical gold, given to her by Baroslav long time ago, in return for her boat. Eve launches herself into the ocean.

The protagonist of the story is Eve. However, in her interview with John Haffenden in 1984, Carter says that the central character in the story is, in fact, Tristessa (Gamble, 89). It might seem, on the surface, that Eve – so, too, Evelyn – is the main character because the narrative is told by Eve, and she is the one whose transformation and experience are told in excessive detail. Nevertheless, the actual discussion of femininity as a cultural construction is made in the body of Tristessa.

The doubles are given throughout the story in order to provide another perspective to the discussion. Each detail has a great importance considering not only the length of the novel but also its literary mode. Each event, each character, each speech or each object is there for a reason in Carter's works. In my opinion, this is what makes Carter's novel *marvellously real*. Just when you think that you get the real, you also get its different interpretations.

Each character in the novel should be paid special attention because they all are there for a specific reason. They all reflect what Carter has to say as a feminist on the subject of gender; how it is constructed socially through history and the complications it therefore creates. She develops her critique of the social creation of femininity through the

characters Leilah, Eve and, especially, the movie star Tristessa; and masculinity through Evelyn and Zero. She defies historicity because it is a constitution of patriarchy. This is the reason why she applies the reversal of time in the novel, which can be seen particularly in the end when Eve's passing through the caves is depicted.

The most particular reason which makes this novel an early example of postfeminism, in my opinion, is the very critique of Carter regarding biological essentialism of motherhood. Second-wave feminists focused on the difference between the sexes, and they based their argument onto the reproductive abilities of women. According to them, women ought to be considered as superior to men. The postfeminist stance claims that women cannot be given the superior position simply because they are capable of regenerating life. Furthermore, as postfeminism argues, motherhood cannot be the determining factor in feminism's argument against patriarchy. Ward Jouve observes that no other writer than Carter

> has so repeatedly and passionately jousted against what feminists call 'biological essentialism'. If Simone de Beauvoir and countless others are right, and it is woman's biology, her being the 'sex that gives life', which 'destines' her for second place, then Carter's systematic and endlessly inventive attacks on images of motherhood, her divorcing 'biology' from mothering, are so many blows for women's freedom. (170-71)

Carter thinks of Mother Goddesses as being "just as silly a notion as father gods" (quoted in Gamble, 105). Thus, she deconstructs the myth of the Mother Goddess. She takes the image of the *mother* to its extreme in order to make her point clear, which is that she criticizes what the second-wave feminists propose in their arguments. This is echoed in

the novel when the Mother says: "Because I can give life, I can accomplish miracles" (*PNE*, 63). The *miracle* of the Mother is not reproductive but rather destructive in this case. What Carter finds problematic is not the sanctity of motherhood but the way in which the feminists exploit its sanctity in their struggle against the patriarchy and the stereotypical representations of motherhood in the traditional feminist practice. She maintains that the matriarchy is not the solution because, in its core, it resembles the patriarchy for what it aims to achieve.

Carter deals with many things in this novel. She was, in fact, herself "very explicit about the fact that this was intended as a novel of ideas" (Gamble, 89). She just threw in ideas what she had found problematic concerning feminism, and then she mixed them in a story without providing any solutions in the end. What she did in this novel was to deconstruct the attributes which had created the archetypes. At this point, it would be more suitable to analyse the characters individually.

4.1 Eve/lyn

In this section, I will introduce Evelyn, and then I will examine the process of his sex reassigment surgery, which transforms him into a woman, Eve. Additionally, I will analyse the fluidity of gender identity through this character. The protagonist of the story, Evelyn, is a British man, who travels to the United States after receiving a job opportunity as a teacher. The reader is not provided with his background information or family life at any point in the story. There is only one mention of his parents back in England when he wants money from them after he loses his job. All we are told is that they are reluctant to send him money until he inherits from his uncle. However, right in the opening sentence the

reader is given a hint of Evelyn's personality. He is a self-centred person, has always been selfish either when he was the chauvinistic male Evelyn or when she is the pregnant Eve. The novel opens with a flashback of Eve: "The last night I spent in London, I took some girl or other to the movies and, through her mediation, I paid you a little tribute of spermatozoa, Tristessa" (*PNE*, 5). The same attitude continues in the rest of the chapter. On his last day in London, he goes to see a movie of his first object of desire, Tristessa. He does not have any inclination to remember his date's name. He does not have the least interest in her. She remains as "some girl or other" (*PNE*, 5), "a girl whose name I don't remember" (*PNE*, 6), "a girl whose name I forget" (*PNE*, 8), "the girl who was with me" (*PNE*, 9), "this otherwise forgotten girl" (*PNE*, 9). Even after his sex reassignment surgery, the new Eve rejects to remember the girl's name in her narration.

Evelyn embodies all the characteristics of patriarchy. He is what the feminists have struggled with all the way through their critique. He is introduced to the reader mostly through his sexual acts. He was a boy who used to go to watch the movies of Tristessa, a movie star, with his nanny. All he remembers is the ice-cream he had and the "twitching in my budding groin the spectacle of Tristessa's suffering always aroused in me" (*PNE*, 8). He is a man who takes a girl to see a movie, Tristessa in *Wuthering Heights*, on his last day in London. He is moved by Tristessa's suffering once more, so "the girl who was with him" sucks him off on her knees in order to console him.

Carter attributes Evelyn's sadistic personality in his relations with women to another woman from his past. The girl he takes to see a movie quite interestingly has "a certain air of childlike hesitancy. I always liked that particular quality in a woman for my nanny, although sentimental, had had a marked sadistic streak and I suppose I must have acquired an ambivalent attitude towards women from her" (*PNE*, 9). Apart from that, he

does not see any problem in himself. He feels superior both as a man and a European. This is why his "European sensibility" is offended when Leilah directs him voodoo threats about a chicken snapping his penis off. But this otherwise *reasonable* man finds a *sensible* explanation for her attitude. According to him, she must be acting unreasonably because she is pregnant.

His masculinity is later criticized also by the Mother on several occasions in the novel. Although it seems that the Mother directs these critiques to Evelyn, she is reflecting the general view of feminism concerning masculinity. Evelyn did make "a weapon of it [his penis]" (*PNE*, 66). When he asks Mother that whether after his transformation he will be happy or not, she replies: "When you were a man, you suffered mortality because you could only perpetuate yourself by proxy, through the mediation of a woman and that was often a forced mediation and hence no mediation at all" (*PNE*, 76). According to the Mother, Evelyn is the "most fortunate of men" (*PNE*, 67) because he will be granted *womanhood*. Therefore, I could suggest that the Mother represents second-wave feminists in her faith in the superiority of women against men. She actually puts this ideology into practice by castrating Evelyn and transforming him into a woman.

Evelyn probably comes to the realisation and acceptance of the fact that he has abused women only when he himself is subject to similar treatment: while being raped by the Mother he finally thinks "how degrading it is to be the object of pity" (*PNE*, 65). He apparently feels humiliation for the first time in his life. He experiences fear and powerlessness, which are usually attributed to femininity. The rape is the last time he performs the sexual act as a man and he does not take any pleasure from it.

He is subject to what Gruss calls a radical destabilization of masculinity (161). He shifts from the status of male object into the status of female subject. The effect of this shift on him is very strong because it happens fast and unexpectedly. He is not given any choices. He does not have any control on his body apparently for the first time in his life and he does not know how to deal with this powerlessness. As a matter of fact, he cannot yet comprehend even what is happening to him or why it has happening to him.

Irene Guenther lists some features in Neue Sachlichkeit such as "dirty cities and the alienated individual placed in a modern world he could neither fathom nor control" (43). These features can also be observed in the magic realist literary mode as well. In the novel, the Englishman Evelyn arrives in New York at a time when a civil war breaks out between different racial, ethnic and gendered groups. The city of New York is in a state of chaos. It is invaded by enormous rats, the streets are dangerous, and life is hard in any way imaginable. No matter how hard Evelyn tries to adapt himself to go with the flow, he fails. Especially after the death of his neighbour and his only friend, Baroslav, Evelyn confesses that he is now truly alone. Soon he is seduced by a black girl on the streets whom he starts to follow but in fact he has no idea why he is following her. He questions it during the seductive chase; he knows what terrible things could happen to him but nothing stops him. This is why he blames the girl when she gets pregnant. It has been all her fault because he thinks he has not had any control as she is the one who seduced him in the first place.

Angel Flores gives Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1916) as an example, considering the amalgamation of realism and fantasy in magic realism (112). Kafka, in this story, masters "the difficult art of mingling his drab reality with the phantasmal world of his nightmares" (Flores, 112). The well-known story tells the transformation of Gregor Samsa into a

monstrous vermin in just one night. In *The Passion of New Eve*, the worst nightmare of Evelyn becomes real. The fear of castration does actually become his current reality.

The sex reassignment surgery represents more to Evelyn than castration anxiety. After the surgery, it is not only his male genitalia that he loses. His whole identity, the evidences of his existence as Evelyn – as a man – (his passport, credit cards and his identification card) are all thrown away. As the novel puts it,

> All that remained to me was the last thing I needed, an elaborate female apparatus, one of exquisite detail and superb charm, constructed around the nascent seed of another person, not Evelyn, whose existence, as yet, Evelyn persisted in denying. And this unfleshed other whom I was had not the slightest idea how to utilise the gadgetry of her new appearance. (*PNE*, 83)

Now he will have to re-create his identity, but this time as a woman but he does not know how to do so. S/he is in the most confusing state at this moment of the story because his whole identity has been formed around his being a man, and now he has this female body which he does not know how to relate to. He might seem to be even sceptical about his masculine mentality at this point as he cannot refer to himself/herself as either Evelyn or Eve. This stage is also significant for it bears one of the magic realist tropes, which is the character's inability to express himself:

> I know nothing. I am tabula erasa, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman, no; both more and less than a real woman. Now I am a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself; but I cannot bring myself to think

> of that. Eve remains wilfully in the state of innocence that precedes the fall. (*PNE*, 83)

The plastic surgery which made Evelyn a woman takes two months to complete. The result is entirely successful. However, the psycho-surgery is not. At the end of this period, the first time Eve sees her body in the mirror, and she/he is turned by her own image. Eve observes that "I was the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my own head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And – how can I put it – the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself" (*PNE*, 75). So, the essence does not fit to the substance.

The postfeminist message lies in the psycho-surgery. During the recovery period, Eve is incessantly shown images related to womanhood. The programming also includes the entire selection of Tristessa's movies because according to the feminists in the novel, the Mother and the daughters, Tristessa represents the perfect form of femininity. The other parts of his psycho-surgery consist of "reproductions of every single Virgin and Child that had ever been painted in the entire history of Western European art" accompanied by the sound of the "gurgling of babies and the murmuring of contended mothers" (*PNE*, 72). Moreover, in order to instil the maternal instinct, another video shows animals with their babies, suckling and tending. And yet another video consists of non-phallic images such as "sea-anemones opening and closing; caves, with streams issuing from them; roses, opening to admit a bee; the sea, the moon" (*PNE*, 72) is played to reinforce the notion of womanhood.

What makes this psycho-surgery problematic from a postfeminist point of view is the fact that the movies of Tristessa are the very illusion that Hollywood creates in the first

place regarding the stereotypical representations of femininity. However, I will examine this illusion in detail in the section dealing with Tristessa.

Despite the heavy programming session during her recovery period, when Eve is captured by Zero and becomes his newest wife, she still continues to show hints of her previous masculinity in the ranch among the other wives:

> In spite of Sophia's training in Beulah, I would often make a gesture with my hands that was out of Eve's character or exclaim with a subtly male inflection that made them raise their eyebrows. This intensive study of feminine manners, as well as my everyday work about the homestead, kept me in a state of permanent exhaustion. I was tense and preoccupied; although I was a woman, I was now also passing for a woman, but, then, many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations. (*PNE*, 100-1)

Similar kind of a mixed behaviour can also be seen when Zero throws a wedding ring to Eve. Evelyn's identity was erased in the surgery, but it is difficult to erase the memories which have made him a male. This can be discussed in the context of the theory of gender as a constructed commodity. Evelyn's gender as a male has been socially constructed through repetition, and the mere sex reassignment surgery does not make him a female. Eve catches the ring like a cricketer catches the ball. His female flesh betrays him momentarily and brings back the retrospective memory from his boyhood. However, even his memories are not real anymore; "it was like remembering a film I'd seen once whose performances did not concern me. Even my memories no longer fitted me, they were old clothes belonging to somebody else no longer living" (*PNE*, 92). However, Eve confesses that "I only mimicked what I had been; I did not become it" (*PNE*, 132), which means that

his femininity has been merely an imitation. He has not become a woman; he has remained masculine. However, when Eve is presented with "the set of genitals which had once belonged to Evelyn" (*PNE*, 187), she does not want them any longer. She appears to be settled with her female body in the end.

These examples in the novel support the idea that if feminist practice negates the masculinity in an individual in order to fight against patriarchy, it is doomed to fail in the end. Postfeminism claims that the feminist struggle against phallocentrism cannot be achieved by the same tools patriarchy uses. If Mother's psycho-surgery were as successful as the plastic surgery, Eve would have become just another woman drawn inside the same boundaries which the patriarchy decided upon the women. Eve's physical features are re-created in the same way in which the male gaze has determined. S/he is turned on by her own image in the mirror. The psycho-surgery was going on in the same way. However, Carter does not let it be completed. All in all, Eve in the end is freed from the stereotypical representations of womanhood. It is true that she is pregnant, but she embodies both femininity and masculinity in herself.

I would like to return to the role of magic realism in the novel now. When Evelyn is captured on the desert, he is taken to Beulah which is an underground town built by the Mother. Its emblem is a broken column. At the entrance of Beulah stands a huge phallus-shaped rock. It is broken in the middle and its top half lies on the ground, giving the impression that "it did not look as if it had fallen accidentally" (*PNE*, 47). It is a profane place. It is where Evelyn will be reborn as a woman.

I suggest a magic realist reading of the room in Beulah where Evelyn is put before his sex reassignment surgery. "Everything in the room had a curiously artificial quality,

though nothing seemed unreal, far from it... It has an unimpeachable quality of realism" (*PNE*, 49). The room's womb-like status is actually familiar to both the character and the reader. So, I believe what Carter attempts here is to create an artificial setting: Beulah. If the setting remained purely on this level, it could be described as almost fantastical. However, inserting the metaphorical attribution of the womb to the setting, a familiar attribute to an unfamiliar setting, Carter plays between the boundaries of the real and unreal. Therefore, the simile of the womb supports the idea of magic realism's existence in the novel. Evelyn describes the room being round.

> Its walls were of a tough, synthetic integument with an unnatural sheen upon it that troubled me to see, it was so slick, so lifeless. [...] The floor was flat enough, although the room was round, and also covered with a shiny, plastic substance. [...] By degrees, the room had grown imperceptibly warmer. [...] A rosy light began to suffuse the room. The pinkish glow spread, seeped, leaked up the round walls of my cell until everything was lambent; the radiance intensified until it became reddish and, by degrees, crimson. The temperature increased until it was at blood heat. (*PNE*, 49-52)

There is also a transmitter in the room through which every now and then the women speak to him and laugh at him. Evelyn realizes he is in a simulacrum of the womb just when a woman's voice on the transmitter tells him that he is now at the place of birth. As I have referred previously in the chapter on magic realism to the view of Simpkins, the unfamiliarity and disbelief of fantasy are overcome by the magic realists by presenting familiar things in unusual ways to stress their innately magical properties. Thus, the familiar womb is presented in a quite unusual way and this brings forth the magic realism in the novel. This section has anaylsed the fluid nature of gender identity. I have further

offered a magic realist reading of the place where Evelyn's transformation takes place. The following chapter will introduce Tristessa and the theory of masquerade.

4.2 Tristessa

This section will introduce Tristessa and his/her masquerade. I will also analyse the sex/gender identitities through the illusion Hollywood creates. Although the protagonist of the novel is Eve(lyn), in her interview by John Haffenden in 1984, Carter herself emphasized that "the central character is a transvestite movie star" (Gamble, 89), Tristessa. She acts like the unifying figure for the characters in the novel regarding the Mother, Eve/lyn and Zero.

Butler's performativity theory, which she introduces in her seminal *Gender Trouble*, is based on the repetition of the imitation. Eventually, it becomes the norm, the *original*. She further posits that the "substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. [...] Identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (33). The biologically male Tristessa turns himself into a female Hollywood movie star through masquerading as a woman in appearance. If we look at Tristessa from Butler's point of view, his female identity is created by the results of his masquerade. He is biologically a man. In the concept of phallocentrism he was to perform as a male. The traditional feminist approach would exclude him due to his maleness. However, only with the postfeminist approach of gender as a performative notion can Tristessa be included in the argument.

Butler claims that "sex does not cause gender, and gender cannot be understood to reflect or express sex" (142). Tristessa's sex does not cause *her* gender. Denied a sex

reassignment surgery by the Mother years ago, Tristessa achieves his gender transformation through masquerade. Butler suggests that "the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated" (quoted in Reyes), and Tristessa, through repetition as a female impersonator, is regarded as a woman even though she still acquires male genitalia.

Notwithstanding her fame as the perfect woman, she somehow appears to be only a reflection, a shadow, "an anti-being that existed only by means of a massive effort of will and a huge suppression of fact" (*PNE*, 129); her corporeality is reduced to abstraction. It is as if the female Tristessa can only exist through the male gaze. Tristessa creates herself as a woman in the first place through the perspective of a man. Tristessa becomes the fantasy image of a man: "He had made himself the shrine of his own desires, had made of himself the only woman he could have loved! If a woman is indeed beautiful only in so far as she incarnates most completely the secret aspirations of man, no wonder Tristessa had been able to become the most beautiful woman in the world" (*PNE*, 128-29). As soon as Tristessa's male sexual organ is discovered by Zero and his harem, her female qualities/attributes/perceptions are erased and disregarded, and is immediately regarded as a man.

Even Eve, from this point onwards, begins to regard Tristessa as a male. Tristessa, from Eve's point of view is merely a female impersonator and Tristessa's gender identification is inauthentic, whereas Eve's gender identification is supposed to be regarded as authentic. Rachel Carroll observes that "Eve is insistent in denying the reality of Tristessa's experience, pronouncing that 'he had been she; though she has never been a woman' (*PNE*, 152). For Eve, it seems, the discovery of Tristessa's transgendered identity is equivalent to – and as irreversible as – the exposure of a falsehood" (247).

However, in the end, Eve proposes a new approach. I interpret this in two ways: Tristessa is neither a man nor a woman, or Tristessa is both a man and a woman. Reyes posits that Carter proposes "a new sexual paradigm that escapes all gender taxonomies: a new sexual hybrid, both male and female, as Eve is also seen, that needs not reject its male identity to be able to disclose and inhabit his/her female side." This embrace of both genders in one body takes us back to one of the messages Carter delivers in the novel:

> Masculine and feminine are correlatives which involve one another. I am sure of that – the quality and its negation are locked in necessity. But what the nature of masculine and the nature of feminine might be, whether they involve male and female, if they have anything to do with Tristessa's so long neglected apparatus or my own factory fresh incision and engine-turned breasts, that I do not know. (*PNE*, 149-50)

One of the fiercest critiques in the novel is made on the subject of the illusionary image that Hollywood creates. Tristessa's gender is a socially constructed commodity. Hollywood assumes the role of the male gaze and creates an illusion. Tristessa is an example of that. The waxwork effigies of Hollywood stars in Tristessa's glass house are another example. The stars whose waxworks lie in the glass coffins in Tristessa's Hall of Immortals are Hollywood stars from real life who faced a sad end:

> Jean Harlow, in a clinging gown of white satin, lay beside James Dean, both of whom had died of fame; then I found 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, boiled to death in her bath for vanity's sake; all the unfortunate dead of Hollywood lay here. (*PNE*, 117)

Even though it is voluntary, Tristessa has not created this image all by himself. Eve questions: "I don't know who else might have been in on the gross deception, what movie moguls, what make-up artists, what drama coaches – who had sealed their lips at this ironic joke played on the world?" (*PNE*, 144). Ward Jouve states that "Tristessa serves to embody media fantasies" and continues that

> Carter's divas are man-made. Her writing, its antics and self-deflating rhetoric, exposes, unpicks the fabrication process: never promotes the illusion. It shows the divas to be the ideological products of light and celluloid, issued from the mirror chambers of a narcissistic, *male* imaginary. New Eve in the mirror is ex-Evelyn's dream girl. His dream diva, Tristessa, is a man in drag. (162)

Through the character of Tristessa, Carter criticizes the feminine image created by Hollywood. Tristessa is a man in drag, but he is just a replica of the woman for whom Hollywood – and therefore, patriarchy – determines the image and the role. The postfeminist idea of femininity as a commodity is supported with Tristessa. Tristessa's sex is defined as male due to his phallus, but his gender is female due to his masquerade. His femininity is a mere act, which is applied through the male gaze. In her interview with Helen Cagney Watts, Carter explains that "Tristessa is a male projection of femininity, that's why she's doomed; her life is completely based on false premises. This character

only had the notion of his idea of a woman before he set out to become one" (quoted in Dimovitz). Thus, Tristessa cannot survive the argument of postfeminism.

Despite his voluntary choice to masquerade as a woman, Tristessa explores his masculinity during the scenes of his sexual intercourse with Eve in the desert; and at the same time Eve explores his femininity. Carter defines none of their gender identities clearly in the end because her aim is to show the double nature in an individual who embodies both masculine and feminine. This section presented Tristessa in order to examine the gender as a socially constructed commodity. The following section will deal with the demystifying of Mother.

4.3 The Mother

In this section, I will offer an analysis of postfeminism's deconstruction of the stereotypical representation of mother. I will also explore the role of the Women regarding a critic of extreme feminism in the novel. The very first mention of the Mother appears on the fifth page in the novel but at this point the mention goes rather unnoticed for the reader because it does not play a role at this point. It appears out of blue when Eve is telling about the last night he spent in London with the girl whose name she still does not remember. The reader actually learns about not only what is going to happen to Evelyn but also who is responsible for the action: "the black lady never advised me on those techniques when she fitted me up with a uterus of my own, that was not part of her intention" (*PNE*, 9). So, all we know for now is that there is one black lady who would change the sex of this man sometime in the future. Her *intention* is also revealed in this paragraph as she would not

provide Eve with any birth control aids because the basic aim is to make Evelyn to "bring forth the Messiah of the Antithesis" (*PNE*, 67).

This larger than life character is not being introduced as a whole, though I believe she deserves, until Evelyn's captivity in Beulah. Instead, right from the beginning of the story small hints are given about her and the coming events through the flashback of the narrator.

Leilah, the girl who seduces Evelyn, tells him that her mother is "somewhere in California" (*PNE*, 26). Subsequently Evelyn assumes that her mother is a "poor scrubwoman back home in the ghetto of Watts" (*PNE*, 29). However, at the end of the novel the reader learns that *that* mother of Leilah is in reality *the Mother* when the truth about Leilah is revealed as being Lilith.

I would like to begin describing the Mother by her physical appearance because there are both the magic realist effect and the postfeminist approach in her body. Mother is not responsible for the transformation of Evelyn only. Rather, she has recreated herself in the image of a mythological Goddess as she has self-willingly gone through such a metamorphosis that she made "symbolism a concrete fact" (*PNE*, 58). "She has made herself into an incarnated deity" (*PNE*, 49). This is how Evelyn describes her appearance:

> Her head, with its handsome and austere mask teetering ponderously on the bull-like pillar of her neck, was as big and as black as Marx' head in Highgate Cemetery [...] She wore a false beard of crisp, black curls like the false beard Queen Hatshepsut of the Two Kingdoms had worn. [...] She was breasted like a sow – she possessed two tiers of nipples. [...] She could suckle four babies at one time. (*PNE*, 59)

The lengthy description of Mother continues through the subsequent pages. As one may notice in the above extract, Mother resembles nothing like the image of a mother represented in the traditional feminist approach. As a previously plastic surgeon, she makes herself a goddess incarnate. Her physical appearance does not fit to the conventional representations of a mother. Moreover, she does not have any maternal qualities, either – at least from Evelyn's point of view. She is a sacred monster. She is scary to Evelyn, or any man in that sense. She announces herself as the Great Parricide and the Grand Emasculator. She is a rapist as she rapes Evelyn before surgically removing his male apparatus. Her compassion is directed only to her *daughters*, and she softens to Evelyn only after he is made into a female form. Then the Mother takes Eve to her breasts and suckles him/her for comfort.

The Mother announces herself as the Castratix of the Phallocentric Universe. This is her plan in a nutshell. According to her, time is a man and space is a woman. This is the first proposition. The second proposition is that time is a killer. So, in her third proposition, there is also the plan: "kill time and live forever" (*PNE*, 53). Mother wants to live forever and in order to do that, she has to kill time; and therefore, the man. She is "about to make a start on the feminisation of Father Time" (*PNE*, 67). She chooses Evelyn to execute her plan, rapes him, and collects his sperm. Then she puts him into a biological and psychological surgery which will transform him into a woman. The womb is the space; so she puts a womb into him. Once his/her recovery period ends, she will impregnate him with the sperm which has been collected from him. So, the new Eve will give birth to the Messiah.

Ward Jouve suggests that in the novel Carter "hunted the archetype down to extinction. Having vainly travelled through underground conduits in a parody of mythical

journeys to the Underworld, Eve finds that 'Mother is a figure of speech, and has retired to a cave beyond consciousness'" (*PNE*, 184). One cannot ever access mother's body. What one *can* invent is mothering. The next time we see the Mother at the end of the novel. She is a lonely, mad and blind old lady sitting in a wicker chair on the beach, humming a song. She has tinned food and a bottle of vodka, nothing else with her. She is waiting for the civil war to end. However, the Mother does not exist any longer.

The similar kind of extreme feminism is further supported in the novel with the Women. Although they belong to a different group in the civil war than the women in Beulah, their function of wiping out the male population remains similar. As I have mentioned earlier, when Evelyn arrives in the United States, a civil war breaks out between different ethnic, racial and gender groups. The Women are one of those militant groups. The first night Evelyn stays in a hotel after he arrives in New York, the hotel is caught on fire in the early morning. He joins the crowd in the lobby after the evacuation. It is soon understood that the Women are responsible of the arson since they have inscribed their emblem on the wall; the female circle ♀ and inside it a set of bared teeth. "Women are angry. Beware women! Goodness me!" (*PNE*, 11). It seems to me that these women represent the radicalized version of the women's movement. They are on the extreme end of the struggle. They are not constructive; instead, they are ruthless, dangerous and very much against men. As the novel describes them:

> One day, a woman in black leather trousers who wore a red armband printed with this symbol came up to me in the street, shook back her rug of brown curls, reached out a strong, gnarled hand, coarsely mouthing obscenities as she did so, handled my cock with contemptuous dexterity, sneered at the

> sight of my helpless erection, spat in my face, turned on her booted heel and stalked scornfully away. (*PNE*, 12-13)

The aim of the Women does not look like they demand equality with men. Their target is men, and all they want is to erase men from the earth. During the summer Evelyn spends in the city, they become more and more destructive. There are female snipers who shoot men who linger too long in front of the blue movie theatre posters. There is a voluntary kamikaze squad of syphilitic whores working for free to spread the disease to men. The Women blow up the wedding shops and send well-honed razors to brides as gifts. "The Women practised humiliation at random and bruised machismo takes longer to heal than a broken head" (*PNE*, 17). I believe that Carter depicts this extremity of the Women in the novel to reinforce her critique on the issue of feminist tactic in their struggle against the patriarchy. Thus, their role appears to be similar to the role of the Mother and women in Beulah. This section has explored the deconstruction of the Mother as an archetype. It has also included the Women in the civil war and has offered examples of their extreme practices. The following section will analyse Leilah as the submissive mistress of Evelyn and Lilith as the revolutionary female guerrilla.

4.4 Leilah/Lilith

In this section, I will analyse Leilah's submission and the construction of femininity. Leilah throughout the novel's end reappears as Lilith who is a revolutionary female guerrilla. I will define her role in Eve's metaphorical rebirth in the end. It is good to keep in mind what the African-American feminist bell hooks addresses the status of the black women before beginning to analyse Leilah. In her view both white women and black men

can act as oppressors or be oppressed. She has observed that "black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women. White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people" (Brooks, 107). From this observation, we can move to Leilah and figure out her status. Even though bell hooks compares the different races and sexes, I believe that a similar kind of critique can be applied to Leilah as well. In this case, the oppressor is the same person who is a white man. Leilah is, on the other hand, a black woman. Later on when Evelyn takes the way to the desert he relieves himself with the justification of her being "doubly degraded, through her race and through her sex" (*PNE*, 37). She is victimized by his racism and is exploited by his sexism.

Nonetheless, from Evelyn's point of view, she is the one who is solely responsible for what happens to herself because she is the one who has seduced Evelyn in the first place. He believes that "this affliction she has given him is twice as virulent" (*PNE*, 38) because she is not only a woman but a black woman. Therefore she is supposed to be twice the reason of Evelyn's decadence.

In my opinion, Leilah's status in the novel is very interesting. Although the story is told using first-person narration, there are examples of reported speech throughout the novel. It is true that there is a single narrator of the story, but the narrator gives room to speeches by characters, such as the Mother, Zero, Sophia, and even Zero's wives. However, Leilah does never get to say anything at all. It is like she is silenced altogether. She does not have a voice of her own. Everything about her is reported through the medium of Eve/lyn, and he does not seem to be positive about the way she speaks, let alone about what she says. "Her speech contained more expostulations than sentences for she rarely had the patience or the energy to put together subject, verb, object and extension

in an ordered and logical fashion, so sometimes she sounded more like a demented bird than a woman, warbling arias of invocation or demand" (*PNE*, 18-19). Therefore, the reader comes to have a biased approach to Leilah and learns her story only through Eve/lyn's point of view. The feminist critique of Carter in Leilah can be seen in her silences, submission and performativity.

All the descriptions about Leilah are given through male gaze. She is a seventeen-year-old exotic dancer. The first thing Evelyn notices in her – obviously physical without any surprise – is her legs. The form and the movement of her legs are appealing to him in an erotic way. He immediately arrives in a conclusion that she would not use them to run away from him. He already decides that "as soon as I saw her legs, I imagined them coiled or clasped around my neck" (*PNE*, 19).

Then he starts to describe what she wears at the time when he first sees her. She wears high heeled leather shoes, a fox fur coat on her shoulders despite the fact that it is summer, and a dress which hardly covers her body. She has bright lipstick on her lips. Here we have a young woman who is perceived solely as a fetishistic sexual object through the construction of femininity by the society. Evelyn already puts his mind to have her. She only serves him as a medium of sexual pleasure according to Evelyn. He thinks that "chaos delivered her to me for my pleasure, for my bane" (*PNE*, 27). However, soon Evelyn's pleasure turns into disgust when he impregnates her.

Now I would like to move on to Leilah's preparation ceremony for work because I think the whole ritual and its immediate aftermath carries one of the most significant messages in this study, regarding performativity and masquerade. Evelyn is the spectator of this ritual which invents the artificial Leilah in the mirror. Then the Leilah in the mirror

replaces the real Leilah. He observes that the artificial beauty of this otherwise "grubby little bud" was reached through a conscious effort.

> The finicking care she used to give to the creation of this edifice! Applying the rouge to her nether lips and the purple or peony or scarlet grease to her mouth and nipples; powders and unguents all the colours of the rainbow went on to the skin in the sockets of her eyes; with the manual dexterity of an assembler of precision instruments, she glued on the fringe of false eyelashes. The topiary of her hair she would sometimes thread with beads or dust with glinting bronze powder she also applied to her pubic mound. (*PNE*, 29)

The last time Leilah is seen in the novel is when she is taken to hospital. Evelyn impregnates her and then he wants her to have an abortion. Instead of going to a clinic, she goes to a voodoo abortionist who botches the job. Thus, Leilah is left sterile and she is totally abandoned by Evelyn. Carter overall focuses the attention to her passiveness. Evelyn considers Leilah as a perfect woman because she mimics him; "she had become the thing I wanted of her" (*PNE*, 34). She seems to Evelyn a born victim. He beats her severely if she fouls the bed when he ties her up to the bed and leaves her during the day. Sometimes he finds her just the same as he has left her; but sometimes she fouls the bed even though she knows that she is going to be beaten up by him. Moreover, she does not show the signs of pain during the beatings; instead, she gets pleasure out of them. "If she submitted to the beatings and the degradations with a curious, ironic laugh that no longer tinkled – for I'd beaten the wind-bells out of her, I'd done *that* much – then isn't irony the victim's only weapon?" (*PNE*, 28) So, all in all, Carter draws a very negative image of the woman until this point.

The next time we see Leilah, she returns as Lilith at the end of the story. Lilith is a revolutionary female guerrilla fighting in the civil war. Unlike silenced Leilah, she is fully in speech. She appears to know many things as she explains to Eve about the Mother's plan, Tristessa's secret, historicity and myth. Beyond her knowledge, she appears to be wise. She is aware of the fact why Mother's plan was supposed to fail. In my opinion, she is the other character – the other character being Eve – who provides a rather hopeful ending to the novel.

Lilith is the one who shows the way to Eve into the crevice of rock in the end so that Eve can be reborn again; so, one cannot disregard her role in the reversal of time metaphor. "But Eve negotiates with the concrete regression of this cave. Eve returns to her mother" (*PNE*, 180). The caves feel warm and soft. Just like Evelyn's room in Beulah, the caves also resemble the womb. In the first cave, Eve comes across a mirror, but its glass is broken, "cracked right across many times so it reflected nothing, was a bewilderment of splinters and I could not see myself nor any portion of myself in it" (*PNE*, 181). In my opinion, what Carter attempts to present here by using the image of the broken mirror is to show that the metaphorical mirror should be broken in order to not to reflect the stereotypical representations of femininity any longer. The caves gradually get smaller as Eve proceeds. She finds a photograph of Tristessa, a flask containing a chunk of amber and the ingot of gold which Baroslav had produced to Evelyn long time ago and which Evelyn gave to Leilah as a gift. Eve tears up the photo and melts the amber in his hand. She observes that "time is running back on itself" (*PNE*, 183). She takes the gold necklace and gives it to the Mother later in return for her boat. She arrives in the third cave. Up until that cave, she was naked and crawling through the caves; but now in the third cave she can

stand straight. However, this very cave appears to be a total replica of the womb. To quote the novel:

> The rock had softened or changed its substance; the textures under my enquiring fingers were soft and yielding. Time no longer passed. Now the dew felt like slime; this slime coated me. The walls of this passage shuddered and sighed at first almost imperceptibly, so that I mistook it for my own breathing. But their pulsations exert greater and greater pressure on me, draw me inward. Walls of meat and slimy velvet. Inward. (*PNE*, 184)

In Beulah, when Evelyn was passing through the womblike labyrinths to reach to encounter the Mother, he was very scared. He was filled with only panic and fear. However, this time Eve does not feel any fear because she has learned that "Mother is a figure of speech and has retired to a cave beyond consciousness" (*PNE*, 184). From this moment on time revolves backwards. The perfume bottles break and floral trees sprout, rivers roll up on themselves, the baby animals leap back to their mother's wombs, and evolution recedes backwards. Thus, historicity will be written anew. It will be freed from the patriarchal norms and stereotypical representation of both femininity and masculinity. This section has analysed Leilah and Lilith who are actually the same person while the former is submissive and the latter is revolutionary. The following section will explore Zero's oppression and his harem's submission to him but violence against other women such as Eve and Tristessa.

4.5 Zero

This section will introduce the ruthless patriarchal figure Zero and his harem of seven wives who are as perverse and violent as him. Zero has a very significant role in Eve's life as he is the first man she encounters after he becomes a woman. Zero is a poet with one eye and one leg. Zero the poet's misanthropy has brought him to the desert. He lives in a ranch in an abandoned city along with an animal and seven dehumanized creatures; so to say, his dog and seven wives.

He abhors anything human related and forbids his wives to use human language. If he catches them using verbal interactions, he beats them heavily: "For he did not allow them to speak in words. A rule they interpreted as a perpetual whispering; if Zero did not hear them, it was as if they had not spoken" (*PNE*, 87). So, the wives speak to each other as long as Zero does not hear them. This behaviour resembles the submissive behaviour of women before feminism emerged: If men do not notice, we are free to do what we want; but that was not freedom at all. Zero himself abandons human speech as a means of communication as well. "Once upon a time he'd written it [the poem] down but he'd grown disgusted with words and their ineradicable human content long ago and now all his poems were howled and danced" (*PNE*, 85).

Even though he has seven wives, none of them has any value whatsoever for him. He forbids them to use language. He makes them live in dirt and cold. He enjoys beating them severely. Each night, he takes one of his wives to copulate with her. Eve says of this degradation that "sometimes, to illustrate the humility he demanded of his wives, he would smear his own excrement and that of the dog upon their breasts" (*PNE*, 85).

Zero's only goal in life is to find Tristessa and kill her because he is obsessed with the idea that Tristessa has made him infertile. "She'd blasted his seed because he was Masculinity incarnate" (*PNE*, 104). When he was watching a movie of Tristessa, the actress fixed her gaze upon him through the movie screen. Then he felt a sudden, sharp pain in his groins. He immediately became certain of the fact that she sucked his shadow away and rendered him infertile. Now he believes that his sterility will vanish only if he kills Tristessa. Thus, he can reproduce with his wives and create the new population after the war ends.

At this point I would like to turn to the wives. The eldest is no more than twenty years old and the youngest is probably twelve years old. They believe everything Zero tells them unconditionally. They each have a night with him during the week and they have implicit faith that sexual intercourse with him will guarantee their health and strength. Their obedience and submission to him is sickening. "In whispers, they told me how Zero believed women were fashioned of a different soul substance from men, a more primitive, animal stuff, and so did not need the paraphernalia of civilised society such as cutlery, meat, soap, shoes, etc., though, of course, he did" (*PNE*, 87). This is why Zero treats them in this way. It might seem extreme but this is why patriarchy treats women in this way.

How do those women react to the ill-treatment by Zero? They are made to obey by Zero's oppression. The reader is driven to feel pity for them because they reflect the very many women in the world who are abused by violent patriarch. However, Carter twists the representation of the abused and submissive woman. The wives freely give the power to be controlled and oppressed to him and they accept the physical violence of Zero on them "as though they knew they must be wicked and so deserve to be inflicted with such pain" (*PNE*, 95). It is their submissiveness what makes him rule them. Eve observes that "they

loved Zero for his air of authority but only their submission had created that. By himself, he would have been nothing" (*PNE*, 99-100). Carter's commentary on the problematic subject of the women as victims can be seen clearly here that just like the wives, women give patriarchy the power to be ruled over.

The sanctity of motherhood is also attacked through the wives that motherhood is – just like gender – a socially constructed phenomenon. The wives cannot reproduce because of Zero's infertility. However, they believe that in the future when Zero regains his manhood, they will become mothers. So, when a sow litters in the ranch, the wives take one of the piglets and dress it in baby clothes and "dandle it on their knees, lullaby it and feed it with warmed goats' milk from a rubber-nippled bottle. In this way, the girls learned the disciplines of motherhood" (*PNE*, 94). Thus, motherhood is also shown as not an innate quality but a role which can be learnt through practice.

Besides, Zero's wives appear to be as ruthless as him in the novel. When they capture Eve in the desert and take her to the helicopter, they physically attack her. When Zero is raping Eve, they gather around the two in a circle to watch the rape, cheering up and applauding. Later in the glass house of Tristessa, they continue their physical violence against Tristessa. They destroy the glass house, and destruction gives them pleasure. In their delirium, they not only smash all the glass in the house but they also urinate and defecate. Carter depicts such negative images of women in order to prove the second-wave feminists to be wrong in their claim regarding the innocent nature of women. Carter's women can be as perverse and violent as men. This section has explored Zero and his harem in order to present the patriarchal oppression and the critic of stereotypical representation of women from a postfeminist point of view. The next chapter will present the conclusion of this study.

5. Conclusion

This chapter will include the structure of this thesis and summarise what this thesis has suggested. I will further draw on my own interpretation regarding the novel's ending. As I have mentioned in this study, Carter has herself emphasized that this is a book of ideas. She was not pleased with the traditional feminist practice but up to this novel she had not yet reached her own conclusions as a feminist. When seeking to shape her feminist standpoint and presenting suggestions dealing with the future of feminism, she throws in ideas of what she has found problematic concerning feminism and mixes them in the story, without providing any solution in the end. What she does in this novel is to deconstruct the attributes which have created the stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity.

Thus, I have provided a postfeminist reading of AngelaCarter's *The Passion of New Eve*. My aim in this study was to analyse the novel in the light of postfeminism. Although it is a feminist term which emerged nearly two decades later than the year Carter published the novel, I believe that the tropes of postfeminism can be tracked in the novel. One of the main concerns of postfeminism is the problem of stereotypical representations of both femininity and masculinity. I have examined the fluid nature of gender identities through the characters Eve/lyn and Tristessa. I have analysed how Carter subverts the gender-based determinism which claim one's identity is dependent on their sex. I have presented Carter's deconstruction of the mother myth.

I have further added the magic realist touch to my postfeminist reading of the novel because I believe that the magic realist literary mode serves to general message of postfeminism in this novel. However, I have abstained from announcing the novel purely

as a magic realist work as I think it is against the fluid nature of the term. To sum up, postfeminism defies the biological essentialism which the second-wave feminism created in their struggle against patriarchy; instead, postfeminism claims that the gender is a socially constructed commodity. I have supported this approach with the examples I pulled off from the novel.

At the end of the story, Eve launches herself to the ocean in a boat she took from the Mother. She will start from her conclusions; as she observes that "the destination of all journeys is their beginning" (*PNE*, 186). She will start as a pregnant woman. In conclusion, the new Eve will write historicity anew and will re-define the notions of femininity now that she embodies both masculine and feminine attributes in her body. This is where the most significant postfeminist message lies in the novel. Gamble observes that "the novel ends with a 'freeze-frame' effect which allows no way out of the contradictions set up within the text" (105). This comment supports the very idea proposed by Carter. She did not aim at any conclusions.

Aidan Day suggests that "now that myth has been exercised, reason may return. [...] Eve and her child may set out in the boat on the ocean of life firmly orientated within the rational possibilities of history rather than the irrational prejudices of myth" (107). I would like to say that I completely disagree with Day's suggestion. I do not think that reason may return as the way we know it. Even though there might be *reason* again, it is going to be different than the previously dysfunctional reason.

For a rather populated novel as this one, the multiple doomed ends add the effect of hopelessness for the future. Even though it appears to be a highly pessimistic novel, I join to the group of critics who provide a hopeful commentary concerning the novel's ending. Baroslav is beaten to death. Zero and his harem – literally – spin to death in Tristessa's

spinning glass house. Leilah is left infertile. The Children's Crusade is attacked so the fact that the Colonel is killed seems acceptable. Tristessa cannot survive, either. The Mother, though not dead yet, blindly sits on the shore for death to come and take her.

Eve and Lilith are the only survivors until this point. Gruss suggests that "although Eve's and Tristessa's transsexual relationship cannot stand the test of time, the novel's hopeful final image of a pregnant woman embarking on a new adventure is proof of its truly utopian potential" (176-77). I have examined in this study how Carter deconstructed the conventionally stereotypical representations of femininity and how this practice fits into the postfeminist point of view. The image of a pregnant woman in the end is significant not because it promotes the reproductive abilities of women as seen in the second-wave feminism, but because *this woman* is now freed from the stereotypical boundaries which have been defined for women. According to Mother's plan, Eve has failed. However, it seems to me that this new woman might not fail because she does not follow the norms which Mother tried to inflict in Eve. One thing is sure in the end that the myth of Mother is fully undone. Eve is going to be a part of the *new* historicity.

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