CHAPTER II

THE NEW EVE IN CARTER’S NOVELS

The feminist movement is clearly understood as a social movement that seeks equal rights for women. Feminists clamour for equal status with men and freedom to decide their own careers and life patterns. Right from the days when Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) appeared, to the present day, women have tried to challenge the idea that they exist merely to please men. The growing feminist movement has left no stone unturned to change society’s prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men. 'Women' as Eva Figes puts it, ‘have been largely man-made’ (*Patriarchal Attitudes* 15). In the decades following World War II, growing numbers of women became aware that society’s traditional norms and notions are detrimental to the emancipation of women.

The 60s, 70s and 80s of the twentieth century saw an unprecedented interest in feminist thoughts. Feminism’s protest was always posed in terms of women’s perceptions
of themselves and their status in relation to men. From the litany of their discontents, feminism gathered an identity for women. It formulated the demands and aspirations that would transform the social conditions in which men and women would live. The writings and campaigns of feminists during these three decades highlighted the prevailing emphasis on women as objects of sexual desire and sought to overturn laws and practices that enforced the inferior status of women. Feminists came to realise that the need of the hour is to construct a ‘New Eve’ after destroying the notion of the Eve as a ‘temptress’, ‘sinful’, ‘ugly’ and ‘inferior’.

Two of the most distinguished feminist works of the twentieth century are Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949). Beauvoir’s main thesis in her work is that 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. Feminist thoughts entered a new phase in the late 1960s and since that time feminist criticism has been developed, debated, institutionalised and diversified as never before. In the 1970s great feminist theorists like Betty Friedan, Kate Millett and Ann Oakley investigated the topic of gender-role stereotyping and drew attention to the oppressive effects of the stereotypical representation of women as sex objects. Another group of French feminists like Helene Cixous, Julia
Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, building on Beauvoir's portrayal of woman as the 'other' of man, examined the part played by the phallocratic culture to perpetuate women's subordinate position.

To participate in the movement for the emancipation of women, a number of women novelists began increased activity to explore new ways of presenting women and their problems. Their contributions to contemporary fiction are richly varied. They use a combination, in varying proportions, of what they have experienced, what they have discovered and what they have imagined. In keeping with her times, Angela Carter too joins in with her works to "provide evidence that gender does not debar women from writing about a range of experience that includes the squalid and the terrifying" (Flora Alexander 13). Her novels published during the last three decades of the twentieth century tell the truth about women's body and mind. "Angela Carter, Emma Tennant and Sara Maitland all move beyond realism and employ the power of imagination, fuelled by a rich cultural heritage to produce penetrating diagnoses of problems from a female perspective, and to point toward new possibilities"(14).

Angela Carter was one of the most vigorously imaginative novelists in English who attempted to set postmodernism as a complementary and sustaining force in feminist theory and politics. Contemporary feminism questions the concept
of rationality and the unitary definition of truth. The postmodern perception provides a radically new way of talking about femininity, masculinity and sexuality. Any text that seeks to displace the dominant discourse becomes postmodern. One of the greatest specialities of postmodernism is the decanonization of all existing mastercodes, conventions, institutions and authorities. There is a levelling of differences between the sexes. The opposition between masculine and feminine is broken down. A woman is exposed to human experiences that cannot be called purely ‘feminine’ experiences.

Feminism and postmodernism are complimentary to each other. Postmodern feminism is not simply another oxymoron or a new quagmire of contradictions. It enables theoretical development which will permit us to escape the patriarchal paradigms of western thought. Feminism is a resistance to patriarchal power. It is committed to the struggle for equality for women, a struggle which has often been seen simply as the effort to make women become like men. But logically the aim of feminism, like that of any emancipatory theory, is to abolish itself along with its opponent. In a distant future, with a non-sexist, non-patriarchal society, feminism will no longer exist. True postmodern feminism or ‘Post-feminism’ presupposes ‘postpatriarchy’. So the postmodern feminist avoids taking the male as the norm to counter the systematic devaluation of women under patriarchy. “The postmodern position reveals the futility of any attempt to
define an essential female nature or to replace the masculinist epistemology” (Jameela Begum 144).

In her novels, Angela Carter creates new women, who are capable of projecting both male and ‘female’ nature. Many of Carter’s women characters cannot be called ‘women’. They are the ‘new women’ or ‘New Eves’ created in the crucible of her imagination and in the imagination of like-minded feminists and sent into the Eden of liberal women visualised by the feminists. The multiple experiences of Evelyn in The Passion of New Eve (1977) and those of Walser and Fevvers in Nights at the Circus (1984) are telling examples. Evelyn and Walser who undergo all kinds of female experiences cannot be called ‘males’. Such breaks in the crust of conventions created in the form and content of her novels compel a postmodern reading of Carter’s novels. Though even men take advantage of such freedom in their novels, for women who have more reason to desire subversion, the opportunities offered by unconventional characters, dreams, fantasies and dissolving structures are especially significant.

Angela Carter has created situations and societies where women are not only equal to men but even better than men. They break away the fetters forged for them by patriarchal domination. Aunt Margaret in The Magic Toyshop, Fevvers in Nights at the Circus, Marianne in Heroes and Villains, Miss Anne Blossom in Several Perceptions, Lady Atlanta in Wise
Children and Emily in Shadow Dance are women who pose a challenge to the patriarchal conceptions of women. As suggested by Julia Kristeva in Women's Time, feminism today must deconstruct all identity, all binary oppositions, all phallogocentric logic. Women must "reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical" (The Feminist Reader 128). Women are of equal human value in their own way. As a part of the recent trend among feminist theoreticians in France, England and the United States to rethink feminism in the light of postmodernism, Angela Carter too in a great way has taken to postmodern strategies. The key postmodern operation here is that of interrogating, evaluating, overturning and disrupting. These strategies can be applied to forms of representations that 'naturalize' questionable forms of subordination, to presentations of apparently simple but actually corrupt examples of gender characteristics and human attributes and to the other existing theories and concepts on the human condition which conceal partiality and prejudice.

The theories promulgated by the feminists give due consideration to the question of femininity. Patriarchy wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness called femininity. Feminists on the other hand try to disentangle this confusion and insist that though women undoubtedly are female this in no way guarantees that they will be feminine. Patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all
biological women, in order to make them believe that the chosen standards of 'femininity' are natural. According to the feminists 'femininity' is a cultural concept.

Julia Kristeva considering the question of femininity, flatly refused to define 'femininity' and preferred to see it as a position. If femininity can be said to have a definition at all in Kristevan terms, it is simply as 'that which is marginalised by the patriarchal symbolic order' (*The Feminist Reader* 126). She saw femininity as marginality. To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine, is to enable the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity, but all women as marginal to the symbolic order and to society. This rational definition is as shifting as the various forms of patriarchy itself and allows to argue that men can also be constructed as marginal to the symbolic order. Kristeva's emphasis on marginality allows us to view this repression of the feminine in terms of positionality rather than of essences. It is this position which has enabled male culture to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos or ugliness and sinfulness.

Based on these theories, Angela Carter attempts to create the 'New Woman' or 'New Eve' of her own, through postmodern strategies that break down the existing constructions of 'femininity'. The question is - what is a woman? Does femininity rest in biology, gender attributes or in the marginal
position assigned to women in the dominant culture? Many women novelists have challenged the conventions in creating women characters. Women move towards a new self-discovery. "Both Doris Lessing and Angela Carter explore the fantastic and the erotic in ways that do not appeal to any realistic identification with a self discovering heroine on the way to her own personhood" (Rosalind Coward 46-47). This framing of a New Woman or the making of a New Eve by Angela Carter is a deconstruction and subversion of the myth of the creation of the New Eve in the Bible and the ideas about women derived and circulated from this myth by patriarchy. When Evelyn was transformed into Eve in Beulah, 'the place where contrarieties exist together', Carter was subverting the notion of women created as subservient to man, handed down by religions.

The Biblical version of the making of the Eve by the Almighty God has been interpreted in the religious circles as conferring unlimited powers to the already dominant men. The male chauvinists reaped the greatest of advantages through these interpretations. The Bible says that God found the need of a suitable companion to help man (Genesis 2: 18). Then God formed a woman out of man's ribs. When Adam saw Eve for the first time, he said "Woman is her name, because she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23). It is argued that God's intention of making Eve was to please man, to help him and to remove his loneliness. Moreover
she was formed from an insignificant rib of man. Therefore she is inferior to man and should be subservient to him. Femininity was constructed with this creation of Eve in the Bible. She was given a marginal position.

Later this same Eve was accused of tempting Adam and leading him into sin. Thus she became the most accursed of beings. The attempt made by Eve in the Garden of Eden to lead man into sin made her a detested being, a necessary evil. She came to be labelled the 'Ugly Eve' or the mother of all sins on earth. She became the arch temptress. The source of all her ugliness and her sufferings is the original sin. The patriarchal God pronounced judgment on her and made her subservient to man. "I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth. In spite of this, you will still have desire for your husband, yet you will be subject to him" (Genesis 3:16). From then onwards Eve became a demonic projection of man's sexual resentments and terrors. Thus it is patriarchy that created Eve and Pandora as the sources of all evil. Destructive sensual temptresses such as Delilah and Circe reflected man's fallacious construction of femininity. In novels like Heroes and Villains Carter tells us how patriarchy struggles to retain this impression of women.

It is in the interests of the patriarchal system to construct a woman or the idea of a woman as a vile temptress who
leads man to sin. From this deformed and biased attitude towards women, stem all the sufferings inflicted on her. The society holds her with all her sinfulness, in chains, to prevent her causing more havoc. Eve has been chased out of the Garden of Eden. She is an evil influence to be warded off. She is retained only for the social purpose of procreation. The scars of sin left on her when Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden is still indelible. In Carter's novel *Shadow Dance*, a very young beautiful girl called Ghislaine was knifed by Honeybuzzard, leaving a scar which made her ugly. With that scar on her face, everyone felt an aversion to her. Going to a bar, she realised that attitude towards her did not remain the same as before:

But everything had changed. The bar was full of her friends but none of them would say a word to her because they know (or thought they knew) about the scar and why she wore it. They were all staring at her but nobody greeted her. Cruel backs pushed past her and sharp elbows dug into her and when the brown glow of her regard caught a face half turned towards her, that face swung away immediately (*Shadow Dance* 6).

Who is responsible for the scar on the face of Ghislaine? Is it not the scar left on the face of all women? For Carter herself says "one woman is all women" (*Passion* 58). There is a current in feminism itself that globalises the problems of women of different milieux, ages, civilizations, or simply
of varying psychic structures, under the label 'Universal Woman' (The Feminist Reader 197). The case of Ghislaine as pictured by Carter is not an isolated one. Ever since the curse fell on Eve, the stigma of a woman as 'ugly' and 'sinful' has remained. It is the stigma left by the disgraceful act of the Eve of the Old Testament. What Time has engraved and called as 'tradition' is simply what is known as patriarchal tradition.

Much effort is put in by patriarchy to retain and sustain the concept of woman as 'ugly Eve'. Dr. Donally in Heroes and Villains who is almost the highpriest of the religion called patriarchy, had tattooed the Fall of Man on Jewel's back for Marianne to see and keep her position in the society. He wanted her to bear the brunt of the sin that Eve had once committed. Jewel, unknowingly, disseminated the idea of woman handed over to him by his tutor. Since it was on his back he was unable to see it, analyse it and find it fallacious. All the evils in the barbarian society would be attributed to Marianne. Marianne was surprised to see the people making vague, fluttering, protective gestures when they saw her. Marianne was looked upon as evil, as Eve was once looked upon. If a child died or if Jewel himself were poisoned the blame would fall on Marianne. Jewel's brothers blamed Marianne, when Donally was sent away by him. This attitude towards Marianne was kept up by the visual picture of the myth of the Fall of Man tattooed on Jewel's back.
He wore the figure of a man on the right side, a woman on the left and, tattooed the length of his spine, a tree with a snake curled round and round the trunk. The elaborate design was executed in blue, red, black and green. The woman offered the man a red apple and more red apples grew among the leaves at the top of the tree, spreading across his shoulders, and the black roots of the tree twisted and ended at the top of his buttocks. The figures were both stiff and lifelike: Eve wore a perfidious smile. The lines of colour were etched with obsessive precision on the shining, close-pored skin which rose and fell with Jewel’s breathing, so it seemed the snake’s forked tongue darted in and out and the leaves on the tree moved in a small wind, an effect the designer must have foreseen and allowed for. (Heroes and Villains 85).

This work of art on Jewel’s back increases Marianne’s humiliation and pain and keeps alive the hatred of men for women. It is indelible and imprinted for ever. Angela Carter, commenting on a character named Justine in Sade’s work Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue, says:

Always the object of punishment, she has committed only one crime and that was an involuntary one; she was born a woman, and, for that, she is ceaselessly punished. The innocent girl pays a
high price for the original, if imaginary crime of Eve, just as Saint Paul said she should, and her protracted and exemplary Calvary makes her a female Christ whom a stern and patriarchal God has by no means forsaken but takes an especial delight in tormenting (Sadeian Woman 39).

Once this concept of femininity is instilled in the mind of men it cannot be easily erased. Radical feminist theorists like Mary Daly use the term ‘patriarchal plot’ to mean this deliberate attempt of men to achieve total power. They manipulate language, myths and religions to confuse and dominate women in general. They display rituals and processions as part of their conspiracy to destroy female opposition and achieve total power (Daly 402). Jewel himself knew that Marianne would be controlled by the tattooed picture on his back. And man continues to be a man because he is able to subdue women. He too is a social and cultural construct. Marianne indirectly tells him that he is a creation of tradition. “You can never take all your clothes off”, Marianne said to Jewel, “or to be properly by yourself, with Adam and Eve there all the time” (Heroes and Villains 85). But Jewel and Marianne are victims of what feminists call ‘patriarchal plot’.

Still another example of femininity constructed according to the existing social norms based on the traditional construction of Eve is seen in The Passion of New Eve. Carter’s character called Leilah was a prostitute exploited to the full by Evelyn.
She was a model of narcissism and sexual allure. She was treated by Evelyn as a sex object and when she was found pregnant he abandoned her. Julia Kristeva, emphasising that femininity is marginality, points out that it is the marginal position assigned to women that has enabled man to view them as Lilith or the Whore of Babylon and then treat her so. (*The Feminist Reader* 127).

Zero, the poet, in *The Passion of New Eve* is a tyrant who demanded absolute subservience from his women. He is the symbol of the male hatred towards the female sex. He loved pigs, dogs and guns but not women.

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 civilized society such as cutlery, meat, soap, shoes etc., though of course he did (*Passion* 87). Besides Eve he had seven wives who were cruelly treated by him. But Carter simply reduces him to his sexual function and sexual desire. His masculinity is only a pretended one. His masculinity is just a social construct projected in his cruel and arrogant behaviour. But without that he is just a 'zero'. His impotency is the proof of his sham masculinity. Carter finds the name 'Zero' apt to describe his sex. Through him she exposes the counterfeit constructions of the males by patriarchal society. His maleness is only a myth. Speaking about his wives, Carter says:
Their obedience ruled him. All the girls had the same dreary biographies; broken homes, remand homes, parole officers, maternal deprivation, inadequate father figures, drugs, pimps, bad news. They were case histories rather than women. They loved Zero for his air of authority, but only their submission had created that. By himself, he would have been nothing (Passion 100).

Thus Carter strikes hard at the roots of pretended masculinity and calls it a 'zero'. Far greater are her female figures who possess real male attributes. As women are incited by patriarchy to don the mask of femininity, so men are meant to take on that of masculinity.

Carter's novel Several Perceptions brings before us a girl named Anne Blossom who rescued the protagonist Joseph when he attempted suicide in despair because Charlotte, his lady-love walked out on him when he needed her most. Anne Blossom had her own sad story to tell. "Miss Blossom wore a heavy veil over her personality" (Several Perceptions 46). Joseph called her an "Ugly Eve" (46). She was an orphan left in a clean carrier bag on Barnado's step. She was sad because her lover deluded her with a ring and some promises. As soon as he'd knocked her up, he beat it and left no forwarding address. There was no one in the world to turn to but the National Council for the Care of the Unmarried Mother and her child. They gave her little boy away to some
woman that couldn't have kiddies of her own and all she
had left was a lock of hair she made them give her. She
was a cripple too. She fell down a flight of stairs and became
crippled. Anne Blossom herself says “Only Catholics could
be that cruel to a woman. They’d look at her and think of
Eve and say, It serves you right, you bitch, you’ve got to
pay the price” (100). Mary Jacobus in her essay “The Difference
of View” points out that woman is often the silent bearer
of ideology and the necessary sacrifice to male secularity
and worldliness (The Feminist Reader 50).

The treatment meted out to the womenfolk in the imaginary
world of the centaurs in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor
Hoffman is a critique of the construction of women in the
phallocratic social order. They believed in the Legend of
the Bridal Mare. The legend of the Bridal Mare is a parody
or a rewriting of the myth of the Fall of Man or Fall of
Eve. There is always a myth behind the degradation of women.
And the womenfolk among the centaurs are treated accordingly.
“The females were ritually degraded and reviled. They bore
the bloody brunt of the tattooing. They dragged whole trunks
of trees to build the stables while their menfolk prayed”
(Doctor Hoffman 176). Intellectual pursuits too were the monopoly
of their menfolk. The women among the centaurs were reduced
to what Hegel called ‘Plant women’. In his work The Philosophy
of Right Hegel discusses a form of plant life which he calls
‘women’. According to him the difference between men and
women is like that between animals and plants. Men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants. Women are capable of education but they are not made for activities which demand a universal faculty such as the more advanced sciences. Women may have happy ideas, taste and elegance but they cannot attain to the ideal. Women lack the capacity of rational regulation. (Hegel 263-264). Hegel’s myth of plant-women reflects the construction of femininity among the centaurs. It is not opposed to the construction of femininity in a civilized patriarchal society also.

In this background of an unfavourable tradition, Carter sees the need of exposing the Eve to a radical change. She allows the old temptress Eve to undergo a process of change and become a New Woman or New Eve. She feels that woman in a patriarchal society is in need of a physical and psychological transformation. She makes her women break silences and overcome disabilities to turn from the ‘Ugly Eve’ or the ‘Sinful Eve’ of the past to the ‘New Eve’ of the present and the future. Carter’s New Eve has her own unique characteristics. Though she seems grotesque she poses a challenge to patriarchy. Her transformation is painful but successful. Her ‘New Eve’ rises above the usual patriarchal conceptions of femininity. She is very often seen to be bisexual. Yet being more masculine and monstrous she struggles against patriarchy with great vehemence and achieves her liberation. She is then elevated to the role of a saviour and a ruler. Thus as Mary Jacobus
says, "feminised", Carter's heroine "becomes a militant adventuress Eve, plucking the strange bright fruits that bring both knowledge and unhappiness" (The Feminist Reader 50).

Angela Carter's creation of the New Eve goes against all accepted norms of femininity. Postmodernism too seeks to undermine the established codes. By creating an unconventional New Eve she shows a tendency towards postmodernism. Carter by nature had a postmodern tendency to be a non-conformist.

Angela Carter was a thumber of noses, a defiler of sacred cows. She loved nothing so much as a cussed-but also blithe-nonconformity. Her books unshackle us, toppling the statues of the pompous, demolishing the temples and commissariats of righteousness. They draw their strength, their vitality, from all that is unrighteous, illegitimate, low. They are without equal and without rival (par. 5).

This is what Salman Rushdie had to say about her in his article "Angela Carter, 1940-42: A Very Good Wizard, a Very Dear Friend".

The feminist heroines in English fiction of the 1890s were called New Women. The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890s have heroines who aspire to the emancipation which is doomed either through personal weakness or social law. Writers like Grant Allen and Sarah Grand celebrate the New
Woman largely as a figure of purity. Very often the female emancipist or the feminist activist of the late nineteenth century was known as the 'New Woman'. The New Woman in the fiction of 1890s was characterised as some kind of sexless, undersexed, or oversexed monster. She was also known for her unfemininity. She was almost a parody of ideological biologism or the explanation of ideologically constructed social roles in biological terms especially that women are not strong enough to do male jobs or are biologically less intelligent than men. The idea of the New Woman was disruptive of the patriarchal gender ideology characteristic of the nineteenth century society. Hence the term 'New Woman' or 'New Eve' speaks volumes for Carter's woman protagonists. In fact she uses the term several times in her novels especially in The Passion of New Eve and Nights at the Circus.

In her novel The Passion of New Eve, Carter makes Mother, the Great Parricide, who rules over the profane place called Beulah, capture Evelyn, the man and make him “the first victim of her wild justice, trimmed with that knife to Eve, first child of her manufactory” (Passion 50). Her intention of creating the New Eve was not to please man or to help him but to take revenge against him for the cruelties committed by him against women. The Mother tells him: “And you've abused women, Evelyn, with this delicate instrument that should have been used for nothing but pleasure. You made a weapon of it!” (Passion 65-66).
Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* is described as "a feminist tract about the social creation of femininity" (Carter, *Notes from the Front Line* 71). She accepts the feminist perspective on gender in the early 1970s with feminine attributes like passivity, dependence, masochism and an inclination towards maternal smothering. It is then that Carter makes her female characters liberate themselves from these undesirable qualities by giving them an androgynous mode of behaviour. Evelyn, the male chauvinist, who regards women as inferior and treats them as sex objects, becomes tired of his life with Leilah and wanders in a desert. But Tristessa, the film-star who attracts him tremendously with her glamour remains unobtainable. Leilah, in her new role as the faithful acolyte of Mother, the queen of matriarchs, captures him and takes him to be used as raw material in an experiment to create the perfect woman. Thus Evelyn who is transformed into Eve undergoes a process of psychological conditioning. Later in her attempt to escape from Beulah, she falls into the hands of Zero who exploits her sexually along with other women. Zero makes her marry Tristessa who is discovered to be a man and not a woman. While trying to escape with Tristessa, Eve is arrested by the Colonel and Tristessa is killed. Towards the end, the New Eve returns once again to Mother who makes her understand herself.

Carter erases the femininity from the text by revealing female characters like Eve and Tristessa to be either biologically
male or to possess masculine attributes. Besides presenting the trans-sexual Evelyn/Eve to us as the ideal New Woman/New Eve or the perfect woman constructed according to an androgynous blueprint, she gives us a second example in the character called Tristessa. Evelyn was infatuated with the film star Tristessa both for her beauty and for her manner of presenting romantic female suffering. But Tristessa who was considered the best of women, is discovered to be not a woman at all, but a male impersonator. It was Tristessa's desire clubbed with the desires of the male audience that made her appear feminine. Femininity was forced upon a male character by desire.

Leilah who was a prostitute fully exploited as a woman later joined Mother, the leader of the feminist fighters and revealed herself to be full of the masculine attributes of action and aggression. All the acolytes of Mother possess qualities which are stereotypically male and yet they are all biologically female. It is futile to define an essentially female nature. Read in a postmodern way, Eve, Tristessa and Leilah are clear evidences of the non-existence of what is called femininity.

Many critics and reviewers have seen the portrayal of Fevvers "as a prototype of the New Woman whose wings help her to escape from the nets of a patriarchal nineteenth century culture into a twentieth century feminist haven of
freedom” (Brian Finney, *Tall Tales* par.i). Carter’s women are women in process. They oscillate between passivity and action. They are women on their way to becoming New Eves. These symbolic beings, symbolic transformations and symbolic trans-sexualisms are nothing more than vital images conveyed to the women undergoing changes in the wake of the strengthened feminist movements. As Carter herself says in her novel, *The Passion of New Eve*, the function of symbolic beings is “to interpret and convey messages to the gods from men and to men from the gods, prayers and sacrifices from the one and commands and rewards from the other” (175).

A revolutionary attempt at constructing a New Eve is made in Carter’s novel *Love* (1971), where Annabel who suffers at the hands of Lee returns to torment Lee mentally and physically, forcing a role reversal phenomenon in their relationship, claiming him as one of her worldly possessions and starving him emotionally. So far the construction of femininity has been the monopoly of man. His desire has constructed her according to his whims and fancies. In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) Carter pictures Albertina in various disguises. Towards the end of the novel when Desiderio, who is the personification of male desire itself recognises Albertina, she tells him, “I’ve been maintained in my various appearances only by the power of your desire” (204). And when Desiderio sees her as she really is, he has no other option but to kill her. Carter’s Women can
be called New Eves only when they cease to be the creations of man's desire. Albertina was simply Desiderio's dream made flesh. The New Eve will not be the incarnation of male desire.

Carter also draws attention to the problematic aspects of masculinity. Carter's masculine character, Zero is a typical example. So is the Count in Black in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman. She criticizes the undesirable traits found in Joseph, figuring in her novel Several Perceptions and through him makes men understand the extent of harm done by being cruel to women. Honeybuzzard in Shadow Dance and Lee in Love are Carter's detested masculine figures. But Carter does not detest masculinity altogether. She does not consider it downright harmful. That is why she prescribes the desirable masculine traits for her New Eve. However feminists like Rich and Daly take a more radical line. Celebrating feminine values they regard masculine ones as not simply deficient but downright harmful. Daly identifies masculinity with a paradoxical fear and envy of the feminine which leads men to prey parasitically and destructively on women's energies. The French feminist theorist Irigaray also, of course depicts masculinity as parasitical (Palmer, Contemporary Women's Fiction 20).

The juxtaposition of weak male figures with masculine women is another excellent method adopted by Carter in her construction of femininity. Placed by the side of the
Mother of Beulah who has prominent masculine traits, Zero whose impotency is highlighted, dips to a 'zero' in *The Passion of New Eve*. In *Nights at the Circus*, Fevvers is given masculine qualities, whereas Walser is deprived of them. Walser, the American reporter, who follows Fevvers in her tours as an aerialiste is wholly in her powers. He is so passive that he is forced to play the Clown, the Human Chicken and tigress' gigolo. And the worst of it all is that the strong Man beat Walser to a pulp and only the timely intervention of the aerialiste saved him. Moreover Walser is fooled to such an extent by Fevvers that no masculinity can ever be attributed to him. Fevvers chooses Walser as her "New Man, fitting mate for the New Woman" (281). Walser is in a state of 'redefined masculinity' It is a masculinity characterised by passivity and weakness and deprived of the tendency to dominate.

When women are on the road to liberation, men are determined to retain the past and thereby perpetuate patriarchy. So a woman's path of transformation from the old sinful Eve to the New Eve does not run smooth. In *Wise Children* (1991), Melchior Hazard's excessive attachment to Ranulph Hazard and his crown and to the past glories of that Shakespearean actor is a conservative yearning for the past and its patriarchal norms. It is to be noted that this longing for the past is an important aspect of postmodernism. Melchior's glorification and imitation of his father shows his eagerness to perpetuate
patriarchy. But *Wise Children* is a novel that focuses on the fictionality of paternity. Dora who is wiser than her father, realizes that the cultural icons and the paternity that she venerates are only disappointing illusions. In a postmodern way Carter seeks to demystify traditional and patriarchal authority.

Carter's novel *Heroes and Villains* gives us the ideal example of the construction of femininity in a post-apocalyptic world. Marianne, the daughter of a professor rescues a barbarian named Jewel, inspite of the fact that he is her brother's murderer. Eventhough she rescues him and is kind to him, he rapes her and takes her hostage and brings her forcibly to live among a tribe of barbarians. Among the barbarians lives a man called Dr. Donally, an intellectual who rakes through history books and finds out rules and rituals that keep the tribe in awe and reverence. Though Dr. Donally's presence imparts some sort of culture to the barbarians, he inculcates in Jewel and his community a peculiar outlook on Marianne. She is looked upon as an evil influence. They make protective gestures against her. Dr. Donally toils to keep up this impression about Marianne among the barbarians. It is he who sets the standard for a woman's behaviour and the attitude of the society towards her. He had to create a power structure and fortify it by all the means at his disposal. He was sustained by ritual and tradition. He had to improvise his own ways of conducting a marriage ceremony.
Postmodernist and feminist theorists assert that any attempt to formulate a universalist concept of woman is futile. In the postmodernist episteme, there are no essential subjects, but only individuals caught in a network of historical and psychological power relationships. The people's attitude to Marianne and the manner of marriage were all invented by Dr. Donally in keeping with the set-up of the barbarian society and yet befitting a patriarchal system. But Marianne's burning of the wedding dress immediately after the ceremony is to show that she was not a woman to be dominated over.

Carter's Marianne is a New Eve. She recognizes that she is not as bad as what Dr. Donally has designed her to be. She feels that she is equal to Jewel or even better than him intellectually. She asserts that she has come along with Jewel on her own. All the masculinity of Jewel is only what she has attributed to him. She says he is her own invention.

You are the most remarkable thing I ever saw in all my life. Not even in pictures had I seen anything like you, nor read your description in books, you with your jewels, paints, furs, knives, and guns, like a phallic and diabolic version of female beauties of former periods. What I'd like best would be to keep you in preserving fluid in a huge jar on the mantelpiece of my peaceful room, where I could look at you, you
walking masterpiece of art, since the good Doctor educated you so far above your station, you as well be an exhibit for intellectuals to marvel at as anything else. You, you're nothing but the furious invention of my virgin nights (137).

It goes without saying that Jewel's masculinity is just the invention of Marianne, the New Eve. Just as masculinity is a cultural construct, 'femininity' is also a cultural construct. One isn't born a woman, one becomes one as Simone de Beauvoir puts it (The Second Sex 295). Patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, and making them believe that the chosen standards of femininity are natural.

Carter questions this femininity, by making Marianne, her New Eve rise above the usual standards of femininity. It is she who rescues Jewel from the Professors and later saves him from the outcast who is about to kill him. The role of a saviour is a masculine role appropriated by Carter to construct her own femininity. In his masculine role, Jewel repays her by making her a hostage, raping her, marrying her and making her pregnant and thus trapped. Still Jewel is called a hero by patriarchy when heroes are in fact villains. And Marianne is forced to trust appearances.

Jewel who knows that Marianne is intelligent and masculine, tries to keep her subjugated and tells her, "Have
a bit of dignity, girl, pull yourself together. Embrace your
destiny with style, that’s the important thing. Pretend that
you’re Eve at the end of the world” (124). Marianne is trapped
and the age-old pattern recurs. “Jewel dies, becomes a hero
and fulfils the destiny which Donally insisted would be his,
that of the new Arthur, ‘the messiah of the Yahoos’. Marianne
survives, becomes a mother and the ‘Tiger Lady’ ‘Eve at
the end of the world” (Meaney 90). But she is a New Eve
with a great determination. When Donally’s son, the half-
wit tells her that Jewel’s brothers are going to leave her
behind, she says, “Oh, no... They won’t get rid of me as
easily as that. I shall stay here and frighten them so much
they’ll do every single thing I say... I’ll be the tiger lady
and rule them with a rod of iron” (150).

Marianne is a determined woman. Jewel had gone to
bring back Dr. Donally. Marianne did not like him coming
back with the self-styled guru, Dr. Donally who personified
patriarchy. Instead she is resolved to begin her own matriarchy.
It is a postmodern tendency to undermine the master narratives
with a view to developing a new culture. It is an ideological
and political subversion. “The substitution of matriarchy
is no more than an inversion, according to Irigaray, but
this potential matriarch is no earth mother. She is closer
to ‘the goddess in her antithesis—the New Eve” (Meaney
119). Her potential reign of terror is an image of an anti-
society. As ‘Eve at the end of the world’ she has tasted
knowledge” (Meaney 120).
Carter's New Eve is characterised by bisexuality. The postmodern condition is potentially a liberating one with a possibility of creating a space where the sexual opposition masculine/feminine is undone. Sexual identity is released and exposed as unfixed, always in the process and always incomplete. To be woman is to be automatically at a disadvantage in a man's world. Both men and women are complex beings, mobile and open. Cixous points out:

Accepting the other sex as a component makes them richer, more various, stronger and - to the extent that they are mobile - very fragile. It is only in this condition that we invent. Thinkers, artists, those who create new values, 'philosophers' in the mad Nietzschean manner, inventors and wreckers of concepts and forms, those who change life cannot help but be stirred by anomalies - complimentary or contradictory (The Feminist reader 102-3).

The feminist dream of 'wholeness' is expressed by Angela Carter through creations of bisexuality in her novels. One of the reasons why Cixous is so keen to get rid of the old opposition between masculine and feminine and even of the terms like male and female is her strong belief in the inherently bisexual nature of all human beings. Carter herself pointed out Mary Wollstonecraft's remark that she had been led to imagine that the few extraordinary women who have rushed in eccentrical directions out of the orbit prescribed to their
sex were male spirits confined by mistake in female frames. (Sadeian Woman 104)

The postmodern feminist utilises 'bisexuality' to counter the oppression of women by patriarchy. The postmodern imagination devices a way of relating to unfulfilled promises and thwarted hopes of the modern age. The postmodern mentality helps the feminist to restructure women as a whole being - having the qualities of both male and female. Postmodernism highlights 'in-betweenness' and 'indeterminacy'. There is blurring of boundaries between male and female. The woman in Angela Carter is a deconstruction of the appropriation of reproduction by the male gender in a patriarchal society. The deformity of the creative, its quasi-human status can be read as emblematic of the women produced by patriarchal gender ideology. The woman is the expression of the 'feminine' a masculinist construct which has little to do with the experiential world of women. The feminine women is the 'other' the defining opposite of male, which in turn defines the human, humanity, mankind. The feminine woman is therefore not quite human, less than human, a deformed and disabled version of woman. Woman can only understand contemporary formulations of the real by adopting a masculine persona. To bring about a compromise Carter frames 'bisexual' beings and sets them as New Eves challenging the masculinist concept of women.

'Bisexuality' in its biological sense means 'having characteristics of both sexes'. Feminists like Cixous are not
satisfied with the unity of two halves but they want a 'bisexuality' which is the unity of two wholes. For them bisexuality means an individual made up of two genders. It is the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes. (The Feminist Reader 104). Angela Carter has presented several characters who can be termed 'bisexual' not only because of the presence of both male and female sexual organs, but also other characteristics which are masculine or feminine combined in a single individual. In Carter's Novels, woman is considered 'bisexual'. For several historico-cultural reasons, it is woman who really benefits from bisexuality. Man is always determined to retain his glorious phallic monosexuality. There is a longing in woman to achieve manhood which finds expression in beings like female men or male women.

In The Passion of New Eve, Carter says that Tristessa "had been the perfect man's woman" (128). By the end of the novel Carter makes of him a perfect woman's woman. Tristessa's maleness had to be suppressed because of social pressure. Carter herself reveals that "he had become a woman because he abhorred his most female part- that is, his instrument of mediation between himself and the other" (128). In order to remain a woman in the eyes of men, women are forced to suppress their essential maleness. The very name 'Tristessa' is probably a twist of the name 'Tiresias' in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses'. Ovid tells of Tiresias's change of sex. Two great serpents that were coupling in a forest were struck violently with
his staff and he was immediately transformed into a woman. Eight years later, on repeating the blow, he recovered his masculinity. T.S. Eliot, in his 'The Wasteland (1922) says:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives

Old man with wrinkled female breasts (218-19)

Carter's women too, like Tiresias are throbbing between two lives— that of male and female. When Eve sees the maleness of Tristessa, she is wonder-struck and exclaims, "How could a real woman ever have been so much a woman as you?"

Before this revelation, Tristessa as a 'perfect man's woman' had incarnated most completely the secret aspirations of man. As a young man Evelyn was a great admirer of Tristessa de St Ange who was billed as 'the most beautiful woman in the world'. He was attracted towards her because "Tristessa's speciality had been suffering. Suffering was her vocation. She suffered exquisitely until suffering became demoded" (Passion 8). The whispering sibilants in his name has all the pregnancy of helplessness. The dictionary meaning of the adjective 'triste' is 'sad' or 'melancholy'. 'Solitude and melancholy, that is a woman's life' (Passion 144) She was admired and considered beautiful because she kept herself within the limits of the male conception of woman. Even though Tristessa was beautiful, Zero hated the maleness that was hidden within her. The name 'Evelyn that Carter
gives to a man incorporates the name 'Eve' within it. It probably signifies the female aspects suppressed by a male. Evelyn was confused seeing the maleness of Tristessa.

I could not think of him as a man, my confusion was perfect as perfect as the exemplary confusion of the proud, solitary heroine who now underwent the unimaginable ordeal of a confrontation with the essential aspect of its being it had so grandly abandoned, the implicit maleness it had never been able to assimilate into itself (128).

Thus Carter constructs her New Eve through her character called Tristessa confusing the male chauvinists who try to deprive women of their maleness.

It is worth asking whether Angela Carter was so radical a feminist as to say that men should undertake the responsibility of conceiving in an artificially created womb as is very clearly pictured in the case of Evelyn who was surgically transformed into a female with a womb. The question that Carter wants to ask is - Are these the responsibilities of women alone? The value of virginity and the travails of child-bearing and child-birth can as well be experienced by men. So she creates Tristessa and Evelyn in whom no gender distinctions exist. They are bisexual. They have tasted the experiences of being male and female. Carter is radical and adventurous enough to stake out new territories and to say new and shocking things.
The grotesqueness of Carter's New eve is evident in her phallic women. The Mother of Beulah in *The Passion of New Eve* is a phallic Mother who wears a false beard of crisp black curls. She is presented as an overwhelming woman of gigantic size before whom Evelyn, the man is rendered insignificant. Albertina in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* can relate to us what it means to suffer as a woman and what a privilege it is to be Lafleur, the boy. Marianne dressed like a boy and Albertina disguised as Lafleur are subversions used, conforming to the postmodern style. The womenfolk among the river people with whom Desiderio lived for sometime had the practice of coaxing the clitoris until it attained a considerable length. The travelling fair of the peep show proprietor gives Desiderio the unique experience for making friendship with a number of bisexual beings. The first among them is Madame la Barbe, the Bearded Bride whose beard appeared with her breasts when she was thirteen. Yet Carter says, "She was a perfect lady" (*Doctor Hoffman* 106). Then comes Mamie Buckskin who lives alone in a rifle range. "She was a paradox - a fully phallic female with the bosom of a nursing mother and a gun, death-dealing erectile tissue perpetually at her thigh" (*Doctor Hoffman* 108). Sexually she preferred women. She had a great desire to become more male-like because she was occasionally caught glancing at Madame La Barbe's beard with a certain envy.

Then there were the Moroccan acrobats who were men and yet had "almost female sinuosity of spine and marked
development of the pectorals" (112). The acrobats of desire had the special gift of transcending their own bodies and juggling with their head, eyes and limbs. This falling apart or juggling with the various limbs of their body can be given a postmodern reading. It is a way of telling that taken apart they evidence no gender distinctions. But it is only their attitudes that make them either a male or a female. Once their attitude of superiority is made to fall apart, they are genderless as the limbs and heads that are juggled with. It is the same with the Bearded-Bride, the Alligator-man and even with the centaurs in the nebulous time. If we can think of an animal-man combination, why not an imaginary flight towards a world of human beings who are both male and female. If such a world materializes the equality that feminists clamour for can also be materialized. The numerous examples of bisexuals figuring in her novels give us an idea of the New women or the New Eve that she desires to construct. Thus a postmodern destabilization of sexual identity is brought about in her novels through her bisexuals.

"A free woman in an unfree society will be a monster" says Angela Carter (Sadeian Woman 27). Carter creates a ‘museum of women-monsters’ who are just imaginative emanations of the women who reject the submissive role patriarchy has assigned to them. Postmodernism opposes essentialism and decanonicalizes master codes. Postmodern textual strategies are used to problematize the notions of selfhood and to
foreground doubts regarding the identity of a female self. Feminists too write protest literature, challenging the established value systems of patriarchy. It is clearly a manifestation of the subversion of metanarratives. The presentation of woman-monsters is a postmodern representational technique that attempts to subvert the traditional representations of women. The truth that we believe in are produced and controlled by given positions within specific network of power structures and hence are positional rather than absolute truths. Challenging the acceptability of the truths about women by presenting them as monsters is indeed a new and effective method. Using the space provided by the postmodern fictional strategies, Carter fantasises women's concept of themselves through the monster-women. It is part of the de-naturalizing trend in postmodernism.

Women denied the right to create their own images of femaleness, had to conform to the patriarchal standards and women were thus attributed angelic beauty and sweetness. From Dante's Beatrice to Coventry Patmore's 'Angel in the House' the ideal women is considered a passive, docile and selfless creature. Pointing out the other face of women in the work Sexual /Textual Politics : Feminist Literary Theory, Toril Moi says:

But behind the angel lurks the monster : the obverse of the male idealization of women is the male fear of femininity. The monster-woman
is the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, who has a story to tell - in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her (58). Many monster-women have been already arrayed in literature paving the way for Carter’s monster-woman who are far - removed from reality. Characters like Goneril and Regan, Thackeray’s Becky Sharp and Charles Dickens’ Madame Defarge have played a major role in shaping the monster - women of Angela Carter. But more than these, the monster-women in classical mythologies possessing super human powers have found their parodies in Carter’s novels and stories. Sphinx, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, Salome and Lilith have taken the shape of Fewvers, Mother of Beulah, Leilah, Marianne, the tiger lady, Mamie Buckskin and other prodigies like Fanny Four eyes, the Sleeping Beauty, the Wiltshire Wonder and Cobwebs in Madame Schreck’s house.

Fewvers, the aerialiste in Nights at the Circus who was hatched and not born was an aliferous woman. She was bred in a brothel. Being a fabulous bird-woman with wings as well as forearms, she was taken to the museum of woman monsters kept by Madame Shreck. She was half-mythical and had a hypnotic attraction with potential destructiveness. In Ma Nelson’s brothel she made her first attempt at flight from a mantelpiece. The flight of this bird -woman has been interpreted as “predominantly an image of liberation” (Palmer,
From Coded Mannequin 199). From the humble position of an adornment in Ma Nelson's drawing room, she rose to a world-renowned trapeze artist who could dictate her terms to her employers. She created a 'fevvermania' in London. Not only Walser but also the readers of Carter look at this goddess with great awe and wonder. Ma Nelson bequeathed Fevvers her ceremonial sword that was used by her as her wand. Towards the end of the novel, Fevvers loses her sword and breaks her wings in a train explosion. Fevvers herself says "pity the New Woman if she turns out to be as easily demolished as me" (273). But as long as Fevvers had her wings intact she reigned supreme and fooled Walser too. Fevvers tells, "If I hadn't bust a wing in the train-wreck, I could fly us all to Vladivostock in two shakes" (244). Through Fevvers, Carter envisages the liberation of women. Her wings and her powers of flight were acquired through steady effort. So too the New Eve constructed by Angela Carter can repudiate debilitating patriarchal prescriptions, rise to glorious heights of power and see that her wings are not easily broken by male oppression.

Concentrating on the problems of the ethnic minority or the marginalised groups like women is a significant element of postmodernism. Carter takes us to a remote barbarian society where a woman assumes monstrous personality to withstand dehumanisation of women. In Heroes and Villains, Marianne was not a monster-woman when she lived in the
steel and concrete villages of the professors. Since she was docile and sweet, she was locked up in a high room like a bird in a cage. That made her long for freedom which landed her in the remote land of Jewel and his barbarian tribe. She was looked askance at, by all in the tribe. Even Jewel and his brothers were always suspicious of her. She felt that the land of the barbarians was a kind of 'cacotopia' or 'place where all is evil'. Paying no heed to her, Jewel went out to bring Donally back and was killed by the soldiers. She was then left at the mercy of his cruel brothers. But Marianne did not cow down to the circumstances. She suddenly acquired great mental strength and decided to become a tiger lady to rule over them all with a rod of iron. Marianne, the New Eve was ‘a little Lilith’ as Donally called her (124). “Among, the ever shifting names in Heroes and Villains, however, Marianne is also called ‘a Little Lilith, Lilith who absolutely refused to be party to the contract and whom the law of the Father turned into a most Medusa-like monster instead. Lilith with a little knowledge would be a dangerous woman indeed” (Meaney 120). Lilith, in Babylonian legend was a female demon who inhabited ruins or deserted places and attacked children. In Jewish or Hebrew Folklore, Lilith was Adam’s first wife, before Eve was created and in Medieval folklore, she was a famous witch.

Leilah in The Passion of New Eve was the daughter of a poor black scrubwoman, whom Evelyn happened to
meet in the city. She was a slave to style. Evelyn abused her sexually and then abandoned her. She is pictured as a temptress. Leilah who suffered at the hands of Evelyn, the man took revenge by becoming an acolyte of the Mother of Beulah. It was she who took Evelyn a captive and brought about his castration and his transformation into a woman to suffer like a woman. At the end of all his wanderings, Evelyn once again met Leilah and recognised her as that very same Leilah whom he had ill-treated. When Evelyn called her Leilah she said:

Lilith is my name .... I called myself Leilah in the city in order to conceal the nature of my symbolism. If the temptress displays her nature, the seducee is put on his guard. Lilith, if you remember, was Adam's first wife, on whom he begot the entire race of the djini. All my wounds will magically heal. Rape only refreshes my virginity. I am ageless, I will outlive the rocks (174).

Leilah who turned into Lilith is undoubtedly the temptress Eve who was transformed into a militant feminist, the New Eve and took the form of a monster-woman in Carter's hands. Annabel in Love, after having suffered for long at the hands of Lee, the male impersonator, turns into a monster to take revenge on him. Carter says:

In the folklore of Haiti, there exist female demons named 'diablesses', who are so avid for pleasure
they seduce the living only to abandon them at the end of the lascivious night among the white graves of a cemetery. So in the dark a changeling Annabel attacked Lee with gross, morbid passion and such a barrage of teeth and nails, he struck her on the side of the head to stop her inflicting more damage (96-97).

To lead all the monster-women, Carter has given immense power and strength to the Mother of Beulah in the Passion of New Eve. She is a great scientist and has made herself into an incarnated deity. She is there to take revenge on men. Evelyn is her first victim. She trimmed him with a knife and made him Eve. Carter describes her monstrous figure thus:

Her head, with its handsome and austere mask teetering ponderously on the bull like pillar of her neck, was as big and black as Marx' head in Highgate Cemetery, her face had the stern, democratic beauty of a figure on a pediment in the provincial square of a people's republic and she wore a false beard queen Hatshepsut of Two Kingdom had worn. She was fully clothed in obscene nakedness. She was breasted like a sow- she possessed two tiers of nipples, the result (Sophia would tell me, to my squeamish horror) of a strenuous programme of grafting,
so that in theory, she could suckle four babies at one time. And how gigantic her limbs were! Her ponderous feet were heavy enough to serve as illustrations of gravity, her hands, the shape of giant fig leaves, lay at rest on the bolsters of her knees. Her skin, wrinkled like the skin of a black olive, racked like a Greek peasant's goatskin bottle, looked as though it might contain within itself the source of a marvellous dark, revivifying river, as if she herself were the only oasis in this desert and her crack the source of all the life giving water in the world (59).

She is a parodic portrait of a matriarchal superwoman. She is the grotesque parody of the maternal modelled on Freud's and Laing's chauvinistic paradigms. Such postmodern parodic strategies allow feminist writers to suggest female positions of great mental and physical power to overthrow patriarchy and wreak revenge on them for their persistence in women's oppression.

It is to be noted that it is a tendency among prejudiced male chauvinists to attribute all that is undesirable to woman. That itself will make a woman a 'moster-woman' in male imagination. Women are very often turned in to 'unnatural' or 'prodigies' of nature. Angela Carter presents monster-women. Male chauvinists also picture males as angels and females as monsters. But Cater's intention is to instil in
them, the power and strength to liberate themselves. Male chauvinists want to label them ugly and subjugate them. Women are thus marginalised and treated as insignificant. The sufferings imposed on them too make them unnatural and monstrous. Feminists cannot maintain their distance from postmodernism that embrace marginality and difference. Carter maintains that by becoming marginalised or being considered ‘prodigies of nature’, women actually become significant and worthy of notice. Such beings have their proper place in a museum where they become the centre of attraction. Paying attention to this unnaturalness, all received notions of femininity are undermined.

The museum of monsters kept by Madame Schreck accommodated prodigies of nature like Fevvers, the bird-woman, Fanny Four eyes, the Sleeping Beauty, Wiltshire Wonder, Albert/Albertina and the girl called Cobwebs. Fevvers with her wings hovered between fact and fiction. The Sleeping Beauty was a country curate’s daughter who started sleeping on the very day her menses started. She could not keep her eyes open. She always woke at sunset, ate and slept again. She was not “beyond all pain” (Nights 64) because fat tears oozed out from beneath her eyelids. The Wiltshire Wonder was a girl, diminutive in stature, born when her mother Meg had sexual intercourse with the king of the Fairies inside a tomb. Her mother sold her to a French pastry cook for fifty golden guineas. She was made to hide herself in birthday cakes and suffer from claustrophobia.
Fanny was a hearty lass from Yorkshire who had mamillary eyes, for where she should have had nipples, she had eyes. With these eyes "she saw too much of the world altogether and that is why she'd come to rest with all us other dispossessed creatures, for whom there was no earthly use, in this lumber room of femininity, this rag-and-bone shop of the heart" (69). Fanny did not marry because she could not nourish a baby on salt-tears. They girl cobwebs was a melancholy creature who sat by herself a good deal, playing patience. Albert/Albertina was a "bipartite, that is to say, half and half and neither of either" (59). Sufferings have made monsters of these women. These monster-women have their own pathetic stories of sufferings to tell. "Their mind will not let itself be penetrated by the phallic probings of masculine thought" (Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics 58). So they seem mysterious and monstrous to men. There is a distinctive female power in the New Woman/Eve that Carter constructs by deconstructing and reconstructing the images of women inherited from male literature especially the paradigmatic polarities of angel and monster.

Postmodernism's initial concern is to denaturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life, to point out that those entities, that we unthinkingly experience as natural are in fact cultural. They are made by us and not given to us. Patriarchy falls in this category of entities. It is a dominant belief in patriarchal system that women are invariably attached to a family unit where paternal authority is unquestioned.
Women cannot be thought of as living independently, without husbands and free from fathers. Patriarchy is a system in which the father enjoys actual or symbolic power and women are relegated to the subordinate roles of property and object of exchange. Carter takes into account the already existing idea of a woman in a family unit and how the father or the husband dominates over her and the manner in which she reacts at the end. Very often women take their position as natural and submit themselves to the oppression. She proves through her novel that concepts of an all-powerful father and subjugating husband are not natural but only cultural concepts. "The textualization of femininity can only produce emancipatory effects if they are placed in an anti-patriarchal context. If they are not they will simply coincide with traditional sexism" (Toril Moi, *Feminism and Postmodernism* 373). Feminist intention is to confront dominant representation of women as misrepresentation.

Kate Millet describes family as "a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole" (*Sexual Politics* 33). Radical feminists have chosen it for their initial analysis of women's oppression. The structures of male domination which are ubiquitous and all-encompassing, pervade sexual, psychological, social and economic areas of life. The problematic position of the female protagonist trapped in their grasp, losing her identity and the efforts she makes to struggle free and reconstruct her femininity is focused by many feminists especially Carter.
To illustrate the ramifying structures of patriarchal power, Carter focuses on the family unit. Since family is a patriarchal unit, it is "the site of women's unpaid domestic labour and child care services, the place where the law of the father is inculcated and the positions of masculinity and femininity learnt; and the arena where acts of male violence, including battery, rape and incest, are perpetrated" (Palmer, Contemporary Women's Fiction 71). Carter chooses it because the central issue of most of her novels and short stories is power. This power is monopolised by men and they use it to subjugate women. If at all women have power, it can only be a reflection of that of her husband or father. A woman loses her identity when she is not attached to her husband or father. This traditional view is challenged in Carter's novels like The Magic Toyshop, Wise Children, Shadow Dance etc. Shakespeare had said that a woman became distinguished or powerful only when she is looked at in her relationship to a man. So he made Portia in Julius Caesar say:

I grant I am a woman, but withal
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife:
I grant I am a woman, but withal
A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter.
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
Being so father'd and so husbanded?
(Act II. Sc.i. 292-297).
Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* loses her identity when her father dies in an aircrash. The adolescent Melanie is forced to take up her residence in Uncle Philip's household where the law of the Father reigns supreme. But there she is turned into a puppet by the tyrannical male figure called Uncle Philip. Melanie is just one of the toys in his collection. After looking at the various dolls kept by Uncle Philip, Melanie feels that "she was in the night again, and the doll was herself" (68). Marianne in *Heroes and Villains* too gets herself attached to Jewel, a symbol of patriarchal authority when her father dies. Probably the existing system prompts her to do it and is even forced to marry him inspite of her dislike for marriage. As a husband he is tyrannous too.

Edna in *Shadow Dance* too experiences the same tyranny and lack of love in the company of her husband Morris. In *Shadow Dance* Carter says:

Husbands were a force of nature or an act of God, like an earthquake or the dreaded consumption, to be borne with, to be meekly acquiesced to, to be impregnated by as frequently as nature would allow. It took the mindless persistence, the dogged imbecility of the greytides, to love a husband (45-46).

The wives of Zero in *The Passion of New Eve*, could not think of their existence without Zero, 'the Masculinity Incarnate'. They all loved him blindly eventhough he "allowed his pigs a liberty he denied his wives" (95). He let his pigs do as
they pleased, but he demanded absolute subservience from his women. They gave in to him freely as though they knew they must be wicked and so deserve to be inflicted with pain. Zero's matrimonial rota was very strict and regulated their lives. His wives believed it predicated their very existence. They believed that sexual intercourse with him guaranteed their continuing health and strength. In *Wise Children* Dora and Nora feel that they are illegitimate just because their father is not known. There is always an insatiable longing in them to see their father and love him. These examples illustrate the traditional construction of women and femininity as always attached to a male with authority.

As a fitting reply to these traditional representations of women, Carter proves that many women are detached from conjugal or paternal relationships. Many are single, childless, widowed, live independently, collectively, without husbands and free from fathers. These become models for her construction of the New Eve. Fevvers, the heroine of Carter's *Nights at the Circus* does not have a father. She was not born like other women, "but, just like Helen of Troy was hatched" (7). This is a subversion with the intention of freeing Fevvers from paternal authority. She was bred in places where only women stayed together. Ma Nelson's Academy was a place where no male tyranny was possible. And when she joined men, it was she who dominated over them. Fevvers was born free and Carter's other women characters
made themselves free. Grandma Chance in *Wise Children* was a single woman and Dora Chance says:

All that I know about her is: she'd arrived at 49 Bard Road on New Year's Day, 1900, with a banker's draft for the first year's rent and the air of a woman making a new start in a new place, a new century and, or so the evidence points, a new name. If she decided to call herself 'Mrs', it was part and parcel of that shaky swipe after respectability I have mentioned, because I never caught one whiff of husband and, to tell the truth, she never lost a rakish air (26-27). Grandma Chance is indeed a challenge to the traditional concept of a woman as dependent on men. The secret of liberation that lies behind these unconventional presentations of women are ably handled by Carter only through postmodern strategies.

Carter's women who suffer under the tyranny do not just succumb to it but at one point of time are seen to overcome the tyranny to enter a world of freedom. This is achieved by her in an anti-realist style, making inventive use of the elements of fantasy. Femininity is represented by her as a problematic, disruptive presence within the phallocratic social order. The phaliocratic social order is maintained by the strict subordination of women. In *The Magic Toyshop*, Uncle Philip's household is the microcosm of patriarchal
relations. Not only Melanie, but also Aunt Margaret represent women suffering under male tyranny. Uncle Philip is a toymaker and puppet master. His house is a veritable ‘doll’s house’ where women are merely dolls and puppets in his hands. He has imposed several restrictions on his women. “He can’t abide a woman in trousers” (62). There is a dreadful silence in the house when he is there. Finn tells Melanie about certain things she ought to know about him. “No make-up, mind. And only speak when you’re spoken to. He likes you know, silent women” (63).

Aunt Margaret is pictured as a dumb woman. Uncle Philip’s tyranny is the real cause of her dumbness. The authority of Uncle Philip in the household is stifling. “Aunt Margaret, frail as a pressed flower, seemed too cowed by his presence even to look at him” (73). She always wears a collar of dull silver which was Philip’s wedding present to her. “He made it himself. To his own design” (114). This collar worn by her is not only crippling but symbolic of his authority on her. She cannot eat properly wearing that collar.

Uncle Philip’s tyranny over Melanie goes to the extent of forcing her to play the role of Leda during a puppet-show in which an artificially made, wild, phallic bird, rapes her. As if to counter this tyranny Melanie’s lover, Finn destroys the swan and challenges Philip’s authority. Aunt Margaret
too falls in love with Francie, committing incest. Challenged by these actions Uncle Philip sets fire to his house. But Melanie and Finn escape the fire and the catastrophe and emerge free from tyranny. They begin a new life like Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the garden. Carter reworks the Christian myth of the Fall of Man, making Melanie and Finn parallel Adam and Eve in a subversive sense. The Bible says that God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden as a punishment. Unlike the old Eve of the Old Testament, the New Eve represented by Melanie does not want to remain in her degraded state. She turns her punishment to her advantage. Finn and Melanie quarrel with a patriarchal figure like God the father and escape from him. Here the 'temptress Eve' or the 'sinful Eve' is transformed into a fortunate Eve because expulsion from the Garden of Eden only brought her freedom from patriarchy. The old Eve becomes a defiant 'New Eve' in the character of Melanie.

Carter's New Eve is a strong woman capable of challenging and defying patriarchy. In The Passion of New Eve, Zero is a symbol of patriarchal authority in his ranch house. Going against all norms of a civilized society he kept seven wives and added the New Eve too among his wives to make the number rise to eight. Zero had a terrible hatred for the female sex. “Of all the women in the world, Zero had chosen Tristessa as the prime focus of his hatred of the sex” (91) His ill-treatment of women is intentional and blatant. “Sometimes
to illustrate the humility he demanded of his wives, he would smear his own excrement and that of the dog upon their breasts" (85). He did not allow them to speak in words. He allowed his pigs and dogs a great degree of liberty than that was allowed to his wives. After all these intolerable sufferings under Zero's tyranny, the New Eve shows the way by escaping along with Tristessa to freedom, leaving Zero and the rest of his wives to be eliminated by the catastrophe devised by Tristessa.

Carter creates a new role for women by undermining paternity in her novels especially Wise Children. Carter foresees the increase in the number of 'father-absent' households. New family structures are not now uncommon in British society. Research on 'father-absence' has concentrated on comparing children who live alone with their mothers, with children who live with both parents. Carter speaks not only of 'absent father' but also of absent-husbands'. "Father is a hypothesis, while mother is a fact" says Dora Chance in Wise Children (223). Carter proves this by lining up before her readers, several characters with disputed paternity. The notion that you have a 'name' or a 'family' only if you can point out who your father is', is undermined. Dora Chance and Nora Chance derive their name from their foster mother, Grandma Chance. Dora's putative father, Melchior hero-worships old Ranulph his father. But Melchior's daughter, Dora is wiser than her father because she realises that fathers
are just 'cultural icons' venerated in the present patriarchal set-up. Carter thus creates a New Eve who does not give undue importance to the father because he is fiction.

Fathers in Carter's novels are often compared to old clocks keeping time. The New Eve's struggle against patriarchy is represented by the defying of Time that limits all freedom. In *Wise Children* she describes the grandfather clock in Grandma Chance's house: "This clock has got a lot of sentimental value for Nora and me. It came to us from our father. His only gift and even then it came by accident" (4). It is very often the clock that maintains the presence of the father in the house. In *Heroes and Villains* Marianne's father too had a clock.

Marianne thought of this clock as her father's pet, something like her own pet rabbit, but the rabbit soon died and was handed over to the professor of Biology to be eviscerated while the clock continued to tick inscrutably on. She therefore concluded the clock must be immortal but this did not impress her (1).

When Marianne understood that her father had died, "she took this clock out to a piece of swamp and drowned it" (15). The implications of the drowning of the clock in *Heroes and Villains* and the neglect shown to the old grandfather clock in *Wise Children* are clear indeed. It is a symbolic freeing of a woman from the tyranny of Father Time.
Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* is stunned by the intricate mechanism of the cuckoo clock carved by Uncle Philip. She did not like it. In the revolt against Uncle Philip, Finn is seen destroying the cuckoo clock.

Melanie did not think it was very funny although she was glad to see the death throes of the cuckoo clock. The stuffed cuckoo belted out thirty-one calls and then jerked back into the clock. The door slammed behind it with a dithering shudder. The ticking stopped.

Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* had to remove the French gilt clock, “the figure of Father Time’ that stood on the mantelpiece of Ma Nelson’s room in order to learn to fly” (29). Kay in *Several Perceptions* seizes the photograph of his father and pitches it bodily into the fire. Carter too exhorts her New Women to do away with Father Time as the Mother of Beulah in *The Passion of New Eve* calls upon the New Eve “to kill time and live forever” (53).

Woman is no more the property or the commodity of a father or a husband. She is not bound by any patriarchal rules or regulations. Carter wants to form a New Eve who is independent. She shows the way of retaliating against absent husbands. It is by becoming independent of them. When Morris in *Shadow Dance* acts the role of an absent husband to Edna, she too tries to keep aloof from him. A similar reaction comes from Annabel in *Love* towards Lee
whose absence and unfaithfulness incites her to revenge. In *Wise Children* absent fathers and absent husbands are rebuked in the strongest terms by lady Atlanta Hazard who reared up in her chair with the bright eyes like Medusa and said:

You left me at home hugging the empty womb you couldn’t fill, Melchior!... You left me lonely, Melchior, while you pursued that restless thirsty quest for fame, while you engaged in that titanic conquest with your dead father (215).

In the postmodern age, the erotic is indeed a part of the general problematizing of body and its sexuality. Desire is a vital force behind the construction of femininity. Feminism has focused attention on the politics of representation and knowledge—and therefore also on power. Postmodernism is concerned “not just about the body, but about the female body; not just about the female body, but about its desires—and about both as socially and historically constructed” (Hutcheon 143). Both feminist and postmodern theory and practice have worked to ‘de-doxify’ any notion of desire as simply individual fulfillment. Desire is clearly problematic. It foregrounds the political economy of the image in a patriarchal and capitalistic society. Carter’s verbal text attempts to code and then recode the ‘colonized territory’ of the female body, it is coded as erotic masculine fantasy and then recoded in terms of female experience. What is coded as male erotic
fantasy/male desire is what constructs femininity in the present set-up. Women try to conform to the desires of men. Male desire determines the conduct of women. She is moulded according to his desire.

Desiderio, the protagonist of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, represents male desire. The word 'Desiderio' means 'Desire'. "Desire is also the source of the greatest source of radiant energy in the entire universe" (203). Doctor Hoffman became diabolical when he actualized male desire. Desiderio had a great desire for Albertina. Albertina, who was passive and beautiful till the last part of the story was simply a creation of Desiderio's desire. When Desiderio looked at himself in a mirror in Dr. Hoffman's castle, he found that he was entirely Albertina in the male aspect. Men do not know women as they really are but only as they desire them to be. Albertina herself told Desiderio, "You have never yet made love to me because, all the time you have known me, I have been maintained in my various appearances only by the power of your desire" (204). When he really came to know Albertina and her desires, he had no option but to kill her. Carter is only trying to tell us that men want women to be found according to their desire, but they cannot tolerate women's desires.

In *The Magic Toyshop* women are made puppets by Uncle Philip. Pulled only by the strings of lust they are
reduced to this puppet status. "What Carter’s text reveals is that women (as prostitutes in particular) are never real, they are but representations of male erotic fantasies and male desire, ‘a metaphysical abstraction of the female’" (Hutcheon 32). Carter wants to construct femininity taking into account female desires too. But male desire is very often diabolical and a man does not wish to admit that a man’s actions are emanations of desire. There is yet another deconstruction of the myth of Adam’s fall. Actually Adam had a great desire in him to eat the forbidden fruit. He desired in his heart of hearts that Eve should pluck and offer him the forbidden fruit. But as soon as Eve materialized his desire by expressing her own desire to please him, she was immediately dumped as ‘bad’ or ‘Evil’ and punished. This is exactly what happened to Albertina in The Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman. Carter asserts that the construction of femininity will become perfect only when female desire can find expression.

By using the postmodern subverting conventions, the traditional representation of women can be de-doxified. This is what Carter does when she gives us elaborate descriptions of marriage ceremonies and married life on the one side and the reluctance of women to undergo the ordeal of an official marriage on the other. The belief that only marriage can give woman an identity is a mistaken notion. Grandma Chance in Wise Children calls herself Mrs. Chance, without having had a husband. A marriage ceremony is parodied
in The Passion of New Eve with Zero conducting the marriage of Tristessa and the New Eve. It is an ecstatic travesty in which both play both the bride and both the groom in the ceremony. This change of positions is a way telling that women can very well be granted man's position in the wedlock. The existing notion that man is superior to women and that wives should subject themselves to their husband is subverted. It can be the other way round too.

The existing notion of a marriage as far as a woman is concerned is a kind of sacrifice of her identity. It is not altogether an act of love. Marianne in Heroes and Villains shows her reluctance to marry Jewel even though she loved him. Once married it would not be love that binds but social norms that bind them together. The sentiments of women are unequivocally expressed by Fevvers in Nights at the Circus when she is asked whether she is going to marry the young American named Walser or not.

But it is not possible that I should give myself .... My being, my me-ness, is unique and indivisible. To sell the use of myself for the enjoyment of another is one thing, I might even offer freely, out of gratitude or in the expectation of pleasure - and pleasure alone is my expectation from the young American. But the essence of myself may not be given or taken or what would there be left of me (280-81).
Edna in *Shadow Dance* thought “that marriage was for submission and procreation” (46). Anne Blossom in *Several Perceptions* says that a wedding ring is simply.

A bottomless tin

To put flesh and blood in (99).

Marianne in *Heroes and Villains* was forcibly married to Jewel by Donally who wanted to perpetuate patriarchy. “You have no choice at all, you know. It’s marry or burn” (63). Donally incorporated pieces of ritual of his own invention and solemnized the event. Marriage secularized Marianne. But even after marriage Marianne preserved her identity, her being as unique and indivisible. Annabel’s experiences narrated in the novel *Love* prove beyond doubt that the institution of marriage is quite inadequate in preserving the love relationship between a man and a woman. So Annabel tattoos Lee and makes him her possession. She knows that marriage makes a man’s position safe but not a woman’s. Carter’s New Eve registers her opposition to the institution of marriage that does not make a woman’s position or identity secure.

Sisterhood and women’s community, according to feminists, provide the best refuge from the oppressive facets of a patriarchal society. It is a way of achieving political solidarity by focusing on the common aspects of female experience. Female friendships and women’s communities are accorded positive representations. She presents not only ‘social and ‘erotic’ friendships. Besides providing personal fulfillment, these have also public import
since they constitute a challenge to patriarchal attitudes. Above all as radical feminists say:

Only women can give to each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men... For this we must be available and supportive to one another, give our commitment and our love, give the emotional support necessary to sustain this Movement. Our energies must flow toward our sisters, not backward toward our oppressors (Koedt 245).

Women's communities are therefore seen as sites of the development of femininity with reference to women themselves and not in relation to men. This is a deviation from the patriarchal paradigm. The notion of "woman-identification" and the primacy of "women bonding with women" are highlighted by radical feminists. (Zimmerman 120). They advocate a bonding between women that is both emotional and political.

The two important women's communities seen in The Passion of New Eve stand in opposition to each other. On the one had there is the community of the wives of Zero who follow the rules set down by Zero. They had no identity of their own. Their behaviour and mode of dressing were decided by Zero's passions. The New Eve says that she always experienced a crucial lack of self in her sexual relationship with Zero. In contrast to this losing of self experienced by
women in a community set up by patriarchy, there is the community of the Mother of Beulah, actively engaged in militancy against patriarchal tyranny. They are busy constructing a new femininity. During the psycho-surgery on Eve the curtains swished open to reveal the audience:

[They were] seated in banked seats around the little stage like spectators of a chamber opera, rows of silent, seated women, more women than I could ever have imagined lived in this underground town—my fevered imagination thought that all the women in the world were seated there (69).

The women were given military training. They had “a look in their eyes of the satisfied Calvinist who knows he has achieved grace “ (79). This contrast between the two communities shows the ideal one that Carter wants her New Eve to join.

_The Nights at the Circus_ has three communities of women which are beautiful illustrations of feminist approaches to sisterhood. The first two communities inscribe the conventions of feminine representation as is hated by patriarchy. It provokes our conditioned response and then the third community subverts that response, revealing to us why the two previously mentioned communities were really formed. Then towards the end Carter shocks us by suggesting a new way of forming a women’s community. It documents the reasons which prompt women to cease making men the focus of their lives and instead transfer their allegiance to women. The first two
communities are not fully women's communities because men were the focus of the women as prostitutes and therefore their codes and conduct were to a certain extent decided by men. But Carter advocates a total switch-over to a woman-centered women's community where women love women and not men. It can be read as an effective postmodern subversion of conventions with a precise feminist objective. Women say an emphatic 'no' to sex without love. Women loving women is part of a politics of women-centered resistance.

The first community is that of Ma Nelson who keeps an 'Academy' in Whitechapel for women. It was a house full of whores. Fewvers gives a description of this house to Walser:

Let me tell you that it was a wholly female world within Ma Nelson's door. Even the dog who guarded it was a bitch and all the cats were females, one or the other of 'em always in kitten, or newly given birth, so that as sub-text of fertility under wrote the glittering sterility of the pleasures of flesh available within the academy. Life within those walls was governed by a sweet and loving reason (Nights 39).

The second women's community is the one established by Madame Schreck and called the museum of woman monsters. "Nelson's Academy accommodated those who were perturbed in their bodies and wished to verify that, however equivocal,
however much they cost, the pleasures of the flesh were at bottom splendid. But as for Madame Schreck, she catered for those who were troubled in their souls” (57). There were several prodigies in the 'museum of monsters' who earned their living through prostitution.

The third community, and the one through which Carter strikes her ideal, is the House of Correction run by Countess P. Of course, the House of Correction is almost a prison for those who have murdered their husbands. It is a penitentiary for female criminals:

With the aid of a french criminologist who dabbled in phrenology, she selected from the prisons of the great Russian cities, women who had been found guilty of killing their husbands and whose bumps indicated the possibility of salvation. She established a community on the most scientific lines available and had the female convicts build it for themselves out of the same kind of logic that persuaded the Mexican federales to have those they were about to shoot dig their own graves (210).

Even the wardresses were trapped women who lived barrack-style among those they policed. This community is so severely and conservatively making reparations for their sins against patriarchy that the readers feel the purpose of women’s communities has been destroyed. But soon Carter goes on to say that the House of Correction did not last long. Lesbianism
caught on like wild fire. The inmates woke up to the knowledge that on either side of their own wedge-shaped cubes of space, lived other women just as vividly alive as themselves. So an army of lovers finally rose up against the Countess and "found a primitive Utopia in the vastness around them, where none might find them" (218). It shows that the assumption that there is a fixty in the construction of feminine is false and outmoded.

Thus it is seen that almost all the novels of Angela Carter right from Shadow Dance to the Wise Children are at the service of the feminists addressing various feminist issues of vital importance. She wants to place before her readers the concept of a new woman or 'New Eve' who is free from the stigma attached to the Eve of the Old Testament. She is no longer a 'temptress' cursed by God to live subservient to the male descendants of Adam, but a free women who achieves a certain standard of life with a femininity of her own. It is a femininity constructed incorporating all the desirable aspects of males and females, shedding all the restrictions on femininity imposed on it by the phallocratic society. This is achieved by introducing bisexual women and monster-women who challenge the masculine notions of femininity. She also suggests through postmodern ways how feminists can sound the death-knell of paternal hegemony in a family and allow the New Eve to go out free from the Garden of Eden to begin a New Life. The absence of the
father or the husband is not going to trouble her anymore. Instead anything that maintains the patriarchal domination even in his absence will be removed and a femininity triggered by female desires will be constructed. In a postmodern way Carter contradicts and subverts the traditional institutions of marriage and family where femininity is in danger and gives the clarion call as a feminist to think of a New Eve or a New woman, free from the tyranny of these male institutions, living in a woman's world led by female desires and not by male desire. “Eve is on the run again” (Passion 164) in search of a new freedom and identity.