CHAPTER III

FEMINISM THROUGH FANTASY IN CARTER'S NOVELS

A woman's power is her power to fantasize. It is her power to imagine that keeps her going. Women's writing is the locus of compensating fantasies and the site of protest. Feminism deals with female power in the first place and her subversion of traditional power relations. Power is the ability to impose one's self on another or to defend one's self from imposition. Angela Carter's novels are mainly fantasies of power. Some of them deal with fantasies that liberate women from the power of patriarchy. Some are fantasies that augment the power of women. Carter's fantasies show very clearly that the unequal power divisions between men and women have become a matter of great concern to feminists.

While feminists focused their attention on the achievement of political power, they also tried to struggle against patriarchal literary authority and their conventional way of telling the truths of life. They understood that female powerlessness
could be expressed only in a totally different way. So also their aspirations demanded of them unmistakable boldness in the art of writing. Angela Carter's feminist preoccupations have forced her to take to dreams and fantasies. The very covertness of male power and the nature and degree of its disguise demand subversion, indirection and disguise which are natural tactics of the resisting weak. This is made possible to a great degree through fantasies.

In his essay *Postmodernism: A Preface* Hal Foster refers to a 'Postmodernism of resistance' which seeks to question the cultural codes. As a theory of resistance postmodernism is closely related to feminist theory. Feminist theory is interested in creating and transforming history. Such transformation requires a language that expresses the necessary point of departure from the conventional and the real. Postmodern representational techniques are capable of proving that there is nothing 'natural' about the real. Postmodernist fiction functions as "a case against realism" (Cristopher Nash 32). It denies the real world out there and reckons factual narrative as a misnomer. What passes for natural truth is a semiological construction. Facts are mere interpretations. The so-called factual narratives and historical narratives are also fictional in the sense of being 'made up' and 'imagined' out of ideological imperatives. The ideology that reigns supreme is that of patriarchy against which feminists have declared war. A major objective of postmodernist fiction is to expose the
myth of facts and the bluff of the official record and affirm the indeterminacy of history by mixing facts and fantasies. Having well-defined feminist objectives, Carter too wants to expose the myth of facts and say that the distinction that history handles real events and that fiction handles the imaginary is false.

Carter's feminist lines of thought require new ways of expression. In her essay, "Canadian Paradigms of Postmodern Feminism", Jancy James writes that "the female literary discourse addresses itself to the need for fencing in the marginal space of female identity into arbitrarily chosen private world" (102). Womenfolk attempt to meaningfully disinherit themselves from certain inhibitive legacies that had colonized them down the years. This urge to transform, manipulate and even subvert the acquired legacies, both in theory and language, characteristically reflects the Postmodernist response to reality. The deceptive surface realism of the traditional mode of fiction has led writers like Carter into the world of fantasies thereby turning her novels into open-ended, split-level discourses which sustain the indeterminacies and ambiguities faced by the female self living in the domineering male world of power.

Carter attempts to write what cannot be written. She explores the extent to which patriarchal representation, by contrast 'silences' women and the extent to which she becomes
the site of both contradiction and repression. Flora Alexander says:

There are substantial areas of experience that are not best approached using the method of social realism, and that require that the illusion of everyday reality should either be suspended, or never attempted at all. Fantasy, or magic realism or contemporary Gothic, often overlapping within the work of the same author, allow writers to explore such ideas (*Contemporary Women Novelists* 61).

While the traditional realist fiction creates worlds that the readers recognize, using language as a mediating agent, the postmodernist fiction defamiliarizes the world in language that draws attention to itself. Postmodernist texts pose questions about the nature of reality, while modernist texts tell us how we can know a reality whose existence is not ultimately in doubt. The psychoanalytical theories have suggested that all statements, narratives and dreams carry meaning, though they don't necessarily relate to external reality directly. It is a part of postmodern strategy to make use of dreams, fables, fantasy and metaphors to say something about social, historical or psychological realities. Postmodernism is preoccupied with the manner of comprehending and communicating reality and at the same time it is conscious of the chaotic nature of reality. It exposes the incongruities and contradictions between the social surfaces and the underlying reality. It
gives much importance therefore to fantasies, dreams and myths. Carter too finds in them the best means of expressing the realities in the life of a woman. The extensive use of fantasies is part of her narrative style.

Marguerite Alexander in her work *Flights from Realism* says that there are several areas of life that necessitate flights from realism. So various postmodern texts slip away from realism through fantasies. According to Marguerite Alexander in many recent novels by women about specifically female areas of experience, realist writing has been revitalized. But she says that Angela Carter's approach to this question is a non-realistic one (*Flights from Realism* 143). She uses the term 'non-realistic' in preference to 'Postmodernist'. Postmodernism's anti-realist revolt is intended to function as a dissenting art that exposes the unreliability and even deceit of 'realism'. It confounds the monologic closure of realistic epistemology through dialogic representations in a variety of ways by using the fabulous, the marvellous, the magical and the fantastic (*Flights from Realism* 143).

Postmodern theory and practice have forced us to reconsider many of the assumptions that we derive from the classical realist novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Katheryn Hume too says that the postmodern writers qualify for the name in that they go beyond realism and enjoy an extraordinary success in creating a new, positive and mythic
universe. But it does not mean rejecting science and realism, but postmodernists juxtapose the absurd, the fantastic and the homely human behaviour with physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics of the developing universe and create a new sense of wonder, a new human scale for measuring and admiring the infinite. Katheryn Hume gives us the example of Doris Lessing who "seems to be looking at her world from a supernatural perspective - mythology from the god's point of view, as it were" (*Fantasy and Mimesis* 49).

In a fantasy, events are deliberately designed by the author to leave the reader in a state of uncertainty whether the events are to be explained by reference to the natural or to the supernatural causes. Fantasy is true but it is not factual. Truth challenges and even threatens all that is false, phony, unnecessary and trivial. This is the reason why Angela Carter thought of it as the best weapon against the false notions of patriarchy. Realists on the other hand reject fantasy as a worthless, escapist pastime. Fantasy is not bound by the conventions of realism. It does not adhere to a faithful reproduction of the contemporary 'real'. It explores areas of life that realist literature tends to deny or repress, concepts and ideas which fall outside the ideological compass of the contemporary real.

Fantasy is what the real is not and hence the fantasy text necessarily traces the limits of the real. Realism and
its conventions construct texts which encode the categories constitutive of the contemporary, bourgeois real. Fantasy texts expose those categories as arbitrary constructs, not philosophical absolutes or commonsense inevitability and so reveal them as ideologically determined. Speaking about feminist fantasy, Anne Cranny Francis says:

Fantasy shows the fragmentation of the real, revealing the real as a negotiation of conflicting discourse engendered by specific socio-economic conditions and denying the definition of the real commonly proposed in realist texts as an essentially unchanging products of an essentially unchanging human nature (Feminist Fiction 76).

Angela Carter's speciality in the use of fantasy is her intermingling of fantasy and realism to create special effects. Magic realism is a critique of the possibility of representation in that it blurs the boundaries between what is 'magic' and what is 'real' and thus calls into question accepted definitions of either. The magic realists interweave a sharply etched realism and descriptive details in representing ordinary events together with fantastic and dreamlike elements. Magic realistic novels experiment with subject matter, form, style, temporal sequence and fusions of the everyday, the fantastic, the mythical and the nightmarish. One of the most significant characteristic of magic realism is the tendency to depict the magical or boundary-breaking events as part of the texture
of everyday experience. Magic realist novels exhibit a tension between the lure of fantasy or abstraction and a pull towards realism.

Fantasy in the hands of Angela Carter is also a very powerful means of subversion. Rosemary Jackson gives an accurate account of the way in which fantasy proceeds. "They assert that what they are telling is real—relying on the conventions of realistic fiction to do so and then they proceed to break the assumption of realism by introducing what, within these terms, is manifestly unreal" (Fantasy the Literature of subversion 34). Fantasy is anti-rational. It reveals reason and reality to the inverse side of reason's orthodoxy. Contradictions surface and are held antinomically in the fantastic text. As Rosemary Jackson says fantasy "exist in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real" (Fantasy: the Literatures of subversion 20) Fantasy gives Carter the opportunity to develop a critical understanding of the nature of patriarchal society and to break down the hegemony established in such societies. The real is no less arbitrary than the fantastic. It is the product of socio-economic conditions the nature of which is determined by the males who are politically motivated. If women are prepared to use their imaginations, to see beyond the real as it is ideologically represented, to 'listen to the dragons' then they can easily be freed from the tyranny of the real.
First of all, the most prominent aspect of Carter's use of fantasies, namely that of her intermingling of the fantastic and the real, can easily be traced in her novels. Some of the very titles given to her novels suggest a position between fantasy and reality. The titles like *Shadow Dance*, *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* indicate the blending of the magical and the real. *Shadow Dance* which is the first novel by Angela Carter proves itself to be a very successful experiment in magic realism. The very idea of 'shadow dance' suggests something unreal. Morris, the protagonist was haunted by the shadows of Ghislaine who was knifed by Honeybuzzard. Morris too was an accomplice. Mrs. Henry Glass who killed herself, did so, because Morris refused to take Ghislaine home with him. Morris felt sorry for the women who suffered because of his callousness. But Honeybuzzard considered women as mere shadows and shunned them. He said "They are all shadows. How can you be sorry for shadows?" (*Shadow Dance* 87). When Edna showed love to Henry Glass out of compassion, Morris decided to go away thinking "should he go to Israel and work on a kibbutz? But this idea had the smack of one of his fantasies and he was determined that he would, in future, put such fantasies behind him- he would become a citizen of the real world, a world where there was black and there was white but no shadows" (162) Shadows of women wronged by him danced before him menacingly, pricking his conscience. Now and then he realised that they
were not mere shadows but real women seeking either revenge or pity. Carter's fantasies too are powerful enough to make shadows dance before the guilty conscience of her male readers.

*The Magic Toyshop* is replete with images of toyshops and puppet-shows and the women in this novel are merely toys, puppets and dreamers made so by the tyranny of Uncle Philip. What feminists like Kate Millet call 'sexual politics' is vivid in the manner in which Philip spreads his tentacles of power over every thing and individual present in the household. 'Sexual Politics' is the process whereby the ruling sex seeks to maintain and extend its power over the subordinate sex. Uncle Philip's tyranny is so overpowering and all-encompassing that Melanie finds herself lost in a world of toys and puppets Carter speaks of her situation thus:

This crazy world whirled about her, men and women dwarfed by toys and puppets, where even the birds were mechanical and the few human figures went masked and played musical instruments in the small and terrible hours of the night into which again she had been thrust. She was in the night again, and the doll was herself (*Magic Toyshop* 68).

The novel unveils before us the different kinds of magical effects produced by the toyshop and the puppets, both on the characters and the readers. The readers feel more conscious of the real. Melanie was "not interested in the puppets because
Uncle Philip made them” (125). The ‘magic toyshop’ also performs the magic of turning the inmates of the house into mere puppets. Readers too become aware of the presence of the puppeteers in the male-dominated society. Feminist theorists see this family as a site of female oppression. The conventional ‘femininity’ constructed by patriarchy gives women the role of a puppet. The fact that women in the family have a puppet-feeling shows that Philip’s sexual politics is successful. The readers can very well understand that the puppet world in The Magic Toyshop represents the real world and that man’s resentment towards women will only increase if she refuses to be a puppet.

*Nights at the Circus* is a novel based on the strong assumption that dreams, fantasies and imaginings are a legitimate part of our consciousness and therefore ‘real’. It narrates the story of an enigmatic bird-woman whose greatest gift “is not her ability to fly off the solid ground, but to retell the story of her flights of fancy that leave the ground of fact to which Walser is bound by his scepticism” (Brian Finney, *Tall Tales and Brief Lives* 1998). Fevvers is so freedom-loving that she takes off from the cruel world to the wholly invented and unimaginable world and yet manages to retain or even better her position in the real world. Carter believes that fiction constitutes not a “timeless, placeless, dream world” but a form of “heightened reality” (Carter, *Shaking a Leg* 459). The title *Nights at the Circus* hints that
a woman in her orphaned condition, amidst patriarchal settings has to invent a time and place that is quite unreal to undergo the travails of the real. Night is the time set apart to be wafted into the world of dreams where the New Woman represented by Fevvers can chalk out her plans for the future. The dreams of unreal nature and the reality of women's future life in the world are brought together. Fevvers says that it is perpetual midnight on Ma Nelson's clock. Revealing more about this clock she says:

This clock was, you might say, the sign or signifier of Ma Nelson's private realm. It was a figure of Father Time with a scythe in one hand and a skull in the other above a face on which the hands stood always at either midnight or noon, the minute hand and the hour hand folded perpetually together as if in prayer, for Ma Nelson said the clock in her reception room must show the dead centre of the day or night, the shadowless hour, the hour of vision and revelation, the still hour in the centre of the storm of time (Nights 29). It is a time with a magical effect because the New Woman sees visions and revelations at this time.

Carter herself says that "a circus is always a microcosm" (John Haffenden, Novelist in Interview 89). The Circus ring with its hierarchy of male performers is an effective symbol of the patriarchal social order. Women, like Fevvers, have
to perform great feats stunning the present generation, to reach the dizzy heights of total liberation. The circus is the site specified for unnatural happenings. It gives an opportunity to achieve the unreal in the midst of the grim realities of life. Feminism is trying to explore areas where women can inaugurate new ways of thinking, writing and speaking. *Nights at the Circus* clearly specifies the time and space most convenient to challenge the prevailing power structure in patriarchy.

*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is certainly the best of the titles, faithfully conjoining the magical and the real. The centre of Carter's preoccupations is well summarised in the title, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, where three worlds are inextricably entangled. As David Punter points out, there is first of all the world of desire, which is beyond human control and which rarely leads to any fulfillment. Desire is fleeting and violent. In it we detect the inner sign of a world which is no longer within our grasp, which instead rushes out and grasps us. Then it leaves us at the mercy of less than conscious forces and mocks our attempts at rational explanation. Secondly, there is the world of the machine represented by the toyshop and the puppet show. These machines threatens to dehumanise us. Lastly, there is the world of the infernal, for all the scenes in the novel from one point of view are visions of hell since they proffer a determinist bondage from which there is no escape (*Essential Imaginings* 147). Thus the world
of desire, the world of the machine and the world of the infernal are dexterously brought together to escape the predicament created by the limitations of reality.

It is interesting to note that this novel was published by Harcourt Brace in New York under a new title The War of Dreams in 1974. This title was given because it tells us the story of the rollicking adventures of Desiderio who wants to hunt down a man who has declared war on reality. The weapons in this war are imagination, dream, desire and the most powerful radiant power in the universe, erotic energy. Thus the human mind and the human heart are chosen as the battleground. Imagination, dream and desire are the weapons used by feminists in their war against patriarchy. And feminists are well aware that unless human mind is transformed feminism is not going to be effective at all.

Feminists use magic realism often as a commentary on the inexplicability of the world. The physical, cultural, political and interpersonal relationships in patriarchal society seem to be quite unreasonable. Women's position in the society too is open to question. Women are living in a society in which reality is slipping away. The magic of magic realism adds to an accepted reality. It also works to replace what is missing. Carter too complements the reality of women's world with whatever is needed to increase her power through the use of fantasies along with realism.
Gerardine Meaney says that three of Carter's novels can be described as speculative fiction: *Heroes and Villains* (1969), *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). According to her these are novels "situated in the border area between science fiction and fantasy" (*Un*)Like Subjects 85. Speculative fiction is a fiction of a visionary nature in which the author creates a speculative representation of the future or of a fantasy world. Utopian fiction, science fiction and fantasies are examples. The novel *Heroes and Villains* which is set in a post-nuclear world has a plot woven out of the fantasies of the heroine, Marianne. Advanced technology is harnessed to change fantasies into reality using erotic energy in the fantastic world created by Carter in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. In *The Passion of New Eve* Carter weaves the intricate fantasy of the metamorphosis of Evelyn, the man into Eve, the woman through a psycho-surgery performed by a female scientist.

In all these novels reality is contravened by fantasy in order to subvert and not to reinstitute reality. Carter makes the fantasy reactionary. The world of fantasy sounds so much like the real that we begin to question and negate the reality. Only in fantasies do we realize the awkwardness of our social constructs. The reader is forced to reassess the concept of reality and to read freshly. In the language of narration in these texts of fantasy, a battle between two oppositional systems take place, each working towards the
creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. There is a binary opposition between the represented code of realism and that of fantasy. Stephen Slemon in his article *Magic Realism As Postcolonial Discourse* says that “since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the other, a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rendering them with gaps, absences and silences” (10-11). Even though the factual and the fabulous, the ordinary and the extraordinary are treated on the same level always as co-present and inseparable, realism and fantasy can never manage to arrange themselves into any kind of hierarchy. So the readers have to form a new concept of reality.

The induction of fantasy into Carter’s novels have actually feminised her texts. The woman in the text converts the text into a woman. Dreams and fantasies are typically feminine features. By reading novels that are replete with fantasies, the woman reader is strongly affected. It is totally different from the experience when a reader encounters with androcentric literature. According to Judith Fetterley who gives us the most explicit theory about the dynamics of woman reader’s encounter with androcentric literature:

The cultural reality is not the emasculation of men by women, but the *immasculation* of women by men. As readers and teachers and scholars,
women are taught to think as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values, one of whose central principles is misogyny (The Resisting Reader 20).

Fantasies challenge the cultural realities. It gives a woman freedom to think from the female point of view. The cultural relatives, the androcentric literature and the process of immasculination do not impart virile power to the woman reader. On the contrary it doubles her oppression.

Feminist fantasists have used three different kinds of fantasy to write about the experiences of women in patriarchal society, namely 'secondary' or 'other world fantasy', fairy tale and horror. These are not specific to feminist fantasy. But these have the propagandist virtue of being popular literary forms affording the feminist fantasist the opportunity to reach a wide and varied audience. The form of fantasy that Carter has used to achieve her feminist objectives in the novel is the 'Secondary world fantasy' or the 'other world fantasy'. She has used fairy-tales mostly in her short-stories and horror element is also incorporated into some of her novels.

In a secondary world fantasy the writer textually constructs another world which is implicitly and sometimes explicitly a comment on the writer's own society. It is an estrangement
The technique used by Carter to position the reader in such a way that he can examine his society from a different, other world perspective. While the alien worlds in Science fiction are often given a rational and scientific explanation, fantasists are bound by no such demand for rationalization. The fictional world of fantasy may seem extremely strange to the reader, far removed from the representation of the real to which he is familiar. Thus the readers will become aware of the constructedness of his own society and the hegemonic bloc constituted therein.

Carter's novel *Heroes and Villains* takes her readers to the remote land of barbarians where wild customs, superstitious beliefs and mysterious rituals abound. Marianne is in search of her identity in a land where patriarchy is in its barbarous extremes. But placed in a totally alien world far removed from the centres of civilization, Carter is free to call a spade a spade. *The Passion of New Eve* too pictures women's community in the underground world called 'Beulah' where the monstrous Mother has her sway. It is an ideal place where Carter can fantasise the construction of femininity. Though construction of femininity has been a haunting problem faced by the feminists for a long time, no feminist has handled it as beautifully and tactfully as Carter has done it. It has been facilitated by the remoteness and the fantastic nature of places like the Arizona desert, the land of the sophisticated Amazons and the ranch house of Zero, the poet. In *The
Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman the readers find themselves lost in the land of the Nebulous Time, where Centaurs and strange animals and plants are given human powers. Reading the descriptions about the human behaviour of beasts, the realization dawns upon us that bestiality is more a feature of the humans and that beasts are more human than human beings. This is more so in the case of the treatment of women.

The induction of fabulous creatures among ordinary men and women of flesh and blood is an important method of projecting women's imaginations and expressing the viewpoints of feminism. The animal stories serve to expose the incongruities and contradictions between the social surfaces and the underlying reality. Feminists create these fabulous creatures because the real is often more artificial than the fantastic. The real is arbitrarily created by the socio-economic conditions, the nature of which is determined by male chauvinists. To free themselves from the power of the real, women should be prepared to use their imaginations and listen to the dragons. In fables, animals talk and act like the human types they represent. Fables are used by feminists with a satiric purpose. According to Lorna Sage, “her early novels are fables about fake freedom” (Women in the House of Fiction 169).

Fevvers, the heroine of Nights at the Circus is herself a fabulous bird-woman whose wings help her to escape from
the snares of the patriarchal culture. She is a prototype of the New Woman. She has wings as well as arms. Her wings began to sprout when she achieved physical maturity. Speaking about the significance of her wings, Paulina Palmer notes:

Though it is predominantly an image of liberation, the male protagonists impose on it stereotypical interpretations of femininity, invented by a patriarchal culture. ‘Angel of death’, ‘queen of ambiguities’, ‘spectacle’ and ‘freak’ are some of the conventional feminine roles which they attribute to Fevvers in the novel. The egg from which she claims to have been hatched is an image which is similarly ambiguous. On the one hand it represents psychic rebirth. On the other it provides a vehicle for Lizzie to theorize about the oppressive nature of reproduction and child-care under patriarchy (From Coded Mannequin 199).

Suspecting Fevvers of becoming interested in marriage and domesticity, Lizzie rebukes her saying “I’ve raised you to fly up to the heavens, not to brood over a clutch of eggs” (Nights 282).

Still another fabulous creature is the Fanny-Four Eyes, who has four eyes including two mamillary eyes. With these four eyes, “she saw too much of the world altogether” (69) and did not wish to see anymore. The Sleeping Beauty is
lucky enough to enjoy the peace of sleep throughout day and night. Fevvers says: “How I envy that poor being—except for one thing: she dreams” (68). The most wonderful and meaningful among these fabulous creatures is the Wiltshire Wonder who is so diminutive in stature that she can easily stand under her brother’s arm. The Wiltshire Wonder is Carter’s expression of protest against patriarchy that reduces women to an insignificant thing or a puppet. Feminist theorists speak of ‘anorexia’ as an unconscious protest. Anorexia is an obsessive desire in young women to lose weight by refusing to eat. The Feminist Kim Chernin uses the word ‘Female hunger artist’ for the term ‘anorexic’. Denied power in the public world, the ‘female hunger artist’ retaliates by exterting control and practising creativity in the one arena where she does possess it—her own body. Kim Chernin, in the work *Womansize: the tyranny of slenderness*, says that female anorexia is a tempestuous warfare against the body, which the anorexic wages in an attempt to erase her sex while simultaneously representing a protest against women’s lack of power (65). So too the diminutive size of Wiltshire Wonder is Carter’s protest against the patriarchy that deprives women of power and importance. It can also be interpreted as a woman’s attempt to hide herself from the ‘monstrous ugliness of mankind’. Wiltshire Wonder herself says that her small size and her decision to remain in museum of monsters have saved her from the foul throng of the world in which she suffered and adds “Amongst the monsters, I am well hidden; who looks for a leaf in a forest?” (*Nights* 65).
Colonel Kearney in *Nights at the Circus*, kept a pig called Sibyl, having human abilities to speak and to take decisions. Carter speaks of this fabulous pig thus:

[It] travelled to Petersburg for fun and profit between silk sheets in a first class wagon lit. This lucky one, the very good friend of the great impresario, was particularly accomplished; she could spell out your fate and fortune with the aid of the alphabet written out on cards—yes indeed! could truffle the future out of four-and-twenty Roman capitals if they were laid out in order before her and that wasn't the half of her talents (98).

It was the pig that decided whether Walser should be hired for the circus or not. The pig assigned him the role of a clown. Carter gives the pig human abilities thus erasing the boundaries between man and beast.

The *Nights at the Circus* also speaks of the bear kept by the Shaman. It was part pet and part familiar. “He was both a real, furry and beloved bear and at the same time a transcendental kind of meta-bear, a minor deity and also a partial ancestor” (257). The Ape-man and the educated apes who attended biology classes and the tigress who was jealous are all meant to enhance the fabulous nature of her story. The apes, although lacking in power of speech, have the capacity to negotiate their contract in writing. The
female tiger attacks a human performer and has to be shot because she suffers intolerable jealousy seeing her mate dance with the woman. In Carter’s novels tigers are animals which waltzed and felt an all-too-human jealousy. When the train carrying the circus is blown up, the tigers are all turned into broken shards of mirror (205). David Punter explains the phenomenon thus:

The tigers after all, stand for the barbaric; but if we subject the tigers to a mirroring of our own invention, will they survive-or, more importantly, do we want them to survive-or, is all creativity, an exercise in bringing the untameable under control? *Essential Imaginings* 145).

The tigers are meant only to mirror the beastly and barbaric nature of men.

In her collection of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter has written three wolf stories—‘The Werewolf’, The Company of Wolves’ and ‘Wolf-Alice’. The wolves in these stories are endowed with human characteristics. The wolf mirrors patriarchy with its assertiveness and power. Wolf is also an image of active sexuality. Angela Carter depicts women who outwolf the wolf and take the weapons of patriarchy into their own hands. According to David Punter, “perhaps the creatures of the dark and the night, the wolves of so many of Carter’s stories who are nevertheless the creative imaginings of human sorrow, will appear to rise up against us” (*Essential Imaginings* 145).
Fabulous beings abound in the novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. The most conspicuous of them all are the centaurs. Albertina and Desiderio who were lost in the ‘terra-nebulosa’ were surprised to see that they were “surrounded by a throng of the fabulous creatures, inquisitively snuffing the air that blew about us, arching their necks and blowing thoughtfully through their nostrils for, though they were men, they had all the mannerisms of horses”(174). Since they were far more magnificent than man, they did not know what a man was. Though they were religious and civilized, their treatment of women was prejudiced. Only the men held the secrets of their religious mysteries. Describing the degraded status of women there Carter says:

The women were the rank and file of all the devotees and had so much to do, working in the fields, bearing the children, milking the cacti, making the cheese, grinding the corn, building the houses, they could spare time only to pray, beating staccato patterns of hoof beats and uttering the shrieking neigh that meant: ‘Hallelujah’.

The females were ritually degraded and reviled. They bore the bloody brunt of the tattooing (176). The treatment of women by these fabulous creatures in such a fantastic world is intended to become an eye-opener to men who mete out a similar treatment to women in reality. The order that should really exist in contrast to both this fantastical and the real, is automatically suggested to the reader. The reader is forced to form a concept of that new
society in his mind, where women would be treated better. The interaction of the familiar and the alien is, in truly speculative fiction, a mutual putting into question. The authorization of future possibility as an equal rival and sustained interruption of the present reality is the strategy used by the author. Thus the secondary world fantasy or the other world fantasy of Carter becomes most effective with the introduction of fabulous creatures.

The world of circus and fairground is being exploited by Carter to create a kind of magical background to her plot. That too facilitates the critical examination of our society from an 'other-world perspective'. In fact the world of circus and fairground is a compromise between the extreme strangeness of the Amazonian world and the grim reality of the patriarchal society. Carter's circus world often tends toward the gaudy. Her women characters long in their heart of hearts to run away and join in a circus. The circus image is a commanding one in Carter's repertoire. David Punter says:

This circus is not though worshipped as a place of escape, instead it is treated as a kind of laboratory where aspects of the fragmented self can be allowed free play. By running away to join the circus, we may try to celebrate our own unavoidable freakishness, but there is always a subdued but strenuous note in Carter's music, an insistence that the freedom of the circus is also a place
of curious learning, a kind of test or rite which we must survive in order to take our place in the jungle that surrounds us (Essential Imaginings 144). Circus also represents the realm of the subconscious. What cannot be achieved in the real world is being achieved in the circus world and the fairground.

When a woman like Fevvers is raised to the noble profession of an aerialiste, Walser is condemned by the pig, Sibyl to wallow among inferior beings as a clown. It is certainly a role reversal. It is the reversal of the role given to women in the land of the centaurs in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman. While Fevvers in Nights at the Circus soars up towards glory and fame, Walser, a man becomes a mere clown. “The mirth the clown creates grows in proportion to the humiliation he is forced to endure” (Nights 119). Buffo the great reminds Walser of his position in the circus thus:

You must know that the word ‘clown’ derives from the old Norse, ‘Klunni’ meaning ‘loutish’. ‘Klunni’, cognate with the Danish ‘kluntet’, clumsy, maladroit, and the Yorkshire dialect ‘gormless’. You must know what you have become young man, how the word defines you, now you have opted to lose your wits in the profession of the clown (120).

Lizzie draws attention self-reflexively to the notion that the circus people could be viewed as “a microcosm of human
society.... an emblematic company" (279). This is a site where the play of fancy is anchored firmly in the awareness of the realities of circus life. By picturing man as a mere clown, Carter is toeing the line of certain radical feminists who celebrate feminine values and regard masculine ones as not simply deficient but downright harmful. Theorists like Rich and Daly take a radical line. Daly identifies masculinity with a paradoxical fear and envy of the feminine which leads men to prey parasitically and destructively on women's energies. To oppose this fear and envy of the males, Carter places woman in the safe position of a very successful aerialiste and the males in the most degraded position of clowns. Carter too celebrates the qualities of a woman and thinks of man's fear and envy as downright harmful.

The peep-show proprietor in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman and the several exhibits that he kept allows us a peep into the realm of the subconscious. They exhibit woman as a mere object of man's desire. When Desiderio looked at his machines he found his own desires in the subconscious represented through various images. The peepshow proprietor is later seen moving with a travelling fair. "The travelling fair was its own world, which acknowledged no geographical location or temporal situation for everywhere we halted was exactly the same as where we had stopped last...." (98) It consisted of Mexican comedians, intrepid equestriennes from Nebraska, Kansas or Ohio, Japanese
dwarfs who wrestled together in areas of mud; Norwegian motorcyclists roaring vertically around portable walls of death, a team of dancing Albinos, the bearded lady and the alligator man. All the people in the fair were hiding from a real world which they did not understand well. But in the circus or the fairground they could allow freeplay to their desires. The Moroccan acrobats called ‘acrobats of desire’ were representations of desire. “Their biographies, however tragic or bizarre were all alike in singularity and many of them, like myself, were permanently in hiding from a real world which they understood so badly…” (99).

The circus and the fairground is used by Carter here to point out that there is a space and time where female sexuality and desire can have its freedom. In the circus world the ‘acrobats of desire’ could express themselves freely “for they were inexhaustible fountains of desire” (177). Woman too who are inexhaustible fountains of female desire want to express themselves free from the restrictions of patriarchy. Irigaray referring to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis claims that female sexuality has always been theorised within masculine parameters (This Sex which is Not One 350). Patriarchy posits women as the site of a lack. She does not possess the phallus which is the symbol of virility, activity and sexual potency. Caught on the underside of the equation to have/have not, continually the reflection of the masculine libido and fated to act as the blank space within and against which
masculinity can erect itself, woman can experience only a vicarious pleasure. It is this state of dependency that Carter wants to erase in her circus world where female desire can perform its acrobatics at its pleasure.

To focus on the fictionality of paternity in *Wise Children*, Carter makes use of a travelling theatrical troupe that moves from England to New York and from there to Hollywood staging the plays of Shakespeare. In the course of their journey, women are loved and lost, families are formed and broken, children are begotten and forgotten. Sir Melchior Hazard, the greatest Shakespearean actor of the day and the most famous member of the impressive theatrical dynasty is over-anxious to retain the crown of Old Ranulph, his father, the great Shakespearean manager-actor. Melchior Hazard wanted to be like his father Ranulph Hazard, a legitimate pillar of Shakespearean theatre. He was after power and glory like his father. But he hardly cared for his wives or his children, both legitimate and illegitimate.

On his hundredth birthday too he donned the costume of his father. Carter says:

Here was the source of all that regal, tragic fancy dress-the purple robe, the rings, the pendant. On his hundredth birthday, a man may indulge in any whim he chooses; Melchior had donned the costume of his father. The slandered, the
abused, the cuckolded Ranulph. Ranulph, wife-murderer, friend-murderer self-murderer, ‘a little more than kin and less than kind’. The son put on the lost father’s clothes ... (224).

Carter thus criticizes the tendency to hero-worship the father-figure. The blind imitation of the father and the paternal authority leads to the perpetuation of women’s oppression. The wives and children are uncared for. To make her ideas strike home, Carter finds the travelling theatrical troupe and the staging of Shakespearean plays her apt background. These intensify the effect of her secondary world fantasy.

Dreams and reveries are used by Carter to such a wide extent that a dream-like atmosphere pervades almost all her novels from Shadow Dance to Wise Children. The dreams experienced by her characters, interweave a grotesque form of ‘collective unconscious’. Through these dreams and reveries, Angela Carter is “waging a massive campaign against human reason itself” (Doctor Hoffman 11) to establish a regime of total liberation for women. Freud maintained that women’s dreams are chiefly ‘erotic’ in his essay, The Relation of the poet to Day Dreaming (1908). But Carter says that women have dreams of power. Women too are ambitious and hence their dreams are mainly political dreams. Carter is so optimistic about the dreams of women that she believes and asserts that dreams will come true. It can be rightly said that her novels “buzzed with dreams” (Several Perceptions 138). They
buzzed with dreams of liberation and new life just as Kay's house buzzed with dreams in *Several Perceptions*.

Medieval poets often used dreams to challenge the sense of reality. Dreams create new models of reality. According to Carter dreams dissolve the slender margin between the real and the unreal (*Nights* 260). When the reality around us is not satisfactory, dreams express the new and exciting view of social relationships we would aspire for. When women are made silent by patriarchy, only dreams can express their silent aspirations. When men too are faced with a similar situation, they too attempt to challenge the reality they face through the medium of dreams. To make men understand how valuable and meaningful women's dreams are, Carter makes her protagonist Joseph in *Several Perceptions*, the greatest of her dreamers, experience dreams of liberation and remorse.

Joseph in *Several Perceptions* is a replica of Joseph, the interpreter of dreams in the Old Testament (*Genesis* 40-41). By giving him the name Joseph, Carter suggests that his dreams also can be interpreted. Joseph was in despair because his girl Charlotte deserted him. He worked in a hospital cleaning up shit and amputations. When Charlotte went away he was constantly troubled by dreams which caused his waking mind to scream. "Joseph was entirely surrounded by the banal apparatus of despair" (16). In his fantasies
Charlotte became a ‘Witch woman’. Incubus. Carter here brings about a kind of role reversal. This is a feeling common among deserted wives. Joseph paid the penalty for being cruel to his girl. “He rarely had a full night’s sleep since he was tormented with dreams” (3).

Once he dreamt that he was walking in a garden where tulips and children’s heads were arranged in neat rows. But a man in heavy boots trampled on them making blood and sap spurt on all sides. When this murderer turned his face to Joseph, Joseph realized that he was looking at his own face (3). It was a dream that arose out of a prick of conscience felt by him, who trampled on women and children. Yet another dream of his was that he was followed by a maniac with a knife when he was a child walking home from the Wolf Cubs. The child scurried and panted, but the pursuer was relentless. When the blade flashed, Joseph saw that the maniac's face was his own. (5) Joseph wanted to brave these dreams and prove himself innocent, but he could not. So he attempted suicide and was rescued by Anne Blossom. Miss Anne Blossom was the quietest of woman who lived in complete obscurity and moved in a fog of anonymity. She too had a modest history of love and betrayal. Her lover jilted her and left her at the mercy of charitable institutions. Miss Blossom too took refuge in dreams, like Alice in Wonderland. Through her dreams the male-world is made to understand the consolation that reveries, dreams and sleep can bring to women trampled by the male-dominated society. Carter
uses dreams to make men realise their inhumanity to women and gives them an opportunity for an examination of conscience.

Before being restored as the New Man, Walser in *Nights at the Circus* was exposed to the dream world of the Shaman. Carter knows that dreams are means to know the real. Suffering from amnesia, after the train accident, Walser accepted without question the value systems of shaman whose task “was the interpretation of the visible world about him via the information he acquired through dreaming” (253). The Shaman existed entirely in a world of dream and fantasy. He was the dream-reader of the village. He welcomed Walser into their midst as another dreamer. The Shaman’s attitude towards dreams is expressed thus:

The Shaman listened the most attentively to what Walser said after a dream because it dissolved the slender margin the Shaman apprehended between the real and the unreal, although the Shaman himself would not have put it that way since he noticed only the margin, shallow as a step, between one reality and another. He made no categorical distinction between seeing and believing. It could be said that, for all the peoples of this region, there existed no difference between fact and fiction, instead a sort of magic realism (260).

It was only after sinking into much troubled introspection that Walser acquired the ‘inner life’ that transformed him
into the New Man fitting for the New Women. This is what Carter wishes to achieve through her magic realism and her dreams.

The Sleeping Beauty whom Fevvers met in Madame Schreck’s house, did not do anything else but sleep and dream. Her dreams were painful dreams for she wept fat tears (64). Women’s dreams are fraught with thought-provoking and meaningful images of oppression suffered in their past. This makes their dreams painful. In the course of his interpretation of dreams and their structure Freud speaks of ‘condensation’ (Complete works of Sigmund Freud 277-304). As Freud saw it ‘dream-thoughts’ are few by comparison to the great body of meaning these represent. The translation of extensive material into concise images requires ‘condensation’ and produces a metaphoric relation between the body of material and its representative images. The analysis of dreams is made complicated by the fact that the remembered images take the place of material that is repressed. Thus it is argued that all the sufferings and pains experienced by the women under patriarchy are ‘condensed’ into meaningful images and reproduced as dreams by Carter in her novels. These sufferings include what is learnt from history and those experienced in a woman’s lifetime. The dreams of Annabel, Ghislaine and Anne Blossom are all ‘condensed’ images of their past oppression remembered in moments of solitude.
Like Joseph in *Several Perceptions* Morris in *Shadow Dance* too was haunted by dreams because he had inflicted sufferings on Ghislaine and his wife Edna. He always dreamt that Ghislaine was following him. He had knifed her face. He dreamed he was cutting her face with a jagged shard of broken glass and blood was running on her breasts not only from her but from himself, from his cut head. There was a gallery of people watching them, and applauding sporadically, like the audience at a cricket match (*Shadow Dance* 18).

Lee in *Love* deprived Annabel of love and affection and left her alone to dream. “Sometimes she hardly seems alive at all, at the best of times. Annabel, she’s like a shadow that sits and remembers and probably the things it remembers never happened” (58). Annabel took refuge in dreams and fantasies. She dreamt of becoming an invisible being.

Marianne in *Heroes and Villains* and Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* dreamt of freedom when they were young. But when they were weaned away from the secure lives that they led with their parents, they understood that they had dreamt of ‘fake freedom’. They had to struggle in order to achieve the real freedom. Melanie struggled against Uncle Philip and Marianne against Jewel and his patriarchal tribe. They succeeded in realizing their dreams. Thus Carter makes a political use of dreams. It is a weapon in women’s struggle
against patriarchy. Through dreams she makes men become aware of their attitudes to women and women are strengthened by their dreams to fight and escape the tyranny of men.

David Punter comments on the Gothic novels thus: "Gothic writer insists, realism is not the whole story: the world, at least in some aspects, is very much more inexplicable— or mysterious, or terrifying, or violent— than that" (The Literature of Terror 407) It is also interesting to note that many of the most important Gothic writers have been women. So it is quite natural that Angela Carter's novels also employ this gothic element for a special purpose. As David Punter has suggested the Gothic is a mode of writing which essentially questions in varying degrees the notion of the real. Gothic writers may agree that in general the world is as realists perceive it to be. But at certain significant moments it is quite different, or they may question the whole notion of a real world, or adopt any of a variety of positions in between (Flora Alexander 62). Carter's novels have some of the restless, questioning impulses that characterise Gothic fiction.

The conventional gothic novels have stories set in the medieval period, often in a gloomy castle furnished with dungeons, subterranean passages and sliding panels, focused on the sufferings imposed on an innocent heroine by a cruel and lustful villain and made bountiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances and other supernatural occurrences. These
evoke chilling terror. They exploit mystery and a variety of horrors. The realm of the irrational and of the perverse impulses and nightmarish terrors that are hidden beneath the calm surface of the civilized mind is exposed. Hence the variations on Gothic have provided Carter with the medium for disturbing explorations of sexual violence in her novels like Heroes and Villains, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman and The Passion of New Eve. The fantastic or supernatural elements of the narrative contribute much to the sense of menace that pervades the texts and dramatize effectively the invidious position of women under patriarchy. Rape, incest, murder, diabolism, necromancy and coprophilia and other arcane things and events are pictured by Carter as a gothic writer.

Melanie, the fifteen year old orphan whose parents were scattered in fragments over the Nevada desert, is found moving through the forlorn passages of a magic toyshop with the terrifying portrait of a white bull terrier and the carved cuckoo clock from which a bird emerged with a whirring sound and cuckooed several times. The walls are hung with jumping-jacks, dancing bears and leaping Arlecchinos. Puppets of all sizes, blind-eyed puppets, some armless, some legless, some naked, some clothed—all with a strange liveliness are seen dangling unfinished from their hooks. Above all these, the imposing presence of Uncle Philip instils a kind of graveyard silence in the house. Aunt Margaret, who is dumb is involved
in an incestuous relationship with her brother Francie behind the closed doors of their mysterious room. On a mysterious stage, puppet-shows are staged involving life-sized puppets that rape the innocent heroine. The horror increases to the highest degree when tension brews between Uncle Philip and the other inmates of the house. He sets fire to the whole building and from a great conflagration we find Finn and Melanie emerging unscathed. Thus Carter's novel, The Magic Toyshop has a very clear Gothic pattern to present the sufferings of women under the tyranny of male authority and the ordeal they have to undergo to achieve their freedom.

The novel Heroes and Villains present Marianne, yet another adolescent girl who rescues a savage named Jewel from the soldiers, only to be made hostage and raped in the forest so that she may not escape from him. She is then taken to the forest to live among painted and superstitious, nomadic barbarians who make signs against the Evil Eye to protect themselves. The barbarians are kept in control by an educated Shaman called Dr. Donally who practices necromancy and instils fear in the people through tortures, mutilations, tattooing and displays of magic. Marianne is forced to undergo the long and fearful rituals of marriage by Donally. Even after marriage she faces the threat of being attacked by Jewel's brothers. Then there is a bloody war with the outlaws who attack them and the cruel punishment meted out to Precious who fails to do his duty. The gruesome
murder of Jewel who goes out to call Donally back and the growing tension that necessitates Marianne's taking a strong stand as a Tiger Lady to rule them all with a rod of iron, are all gothic in every respect.

The *Passion of New Eve* too is replete with gothic elements. It tells the story of Evelyn who goes to New York from London and from there to California to be turned into a woman or New Eve by a woman-scientist, an emblematic Phallic Mother. Throughout his wanderings through the desert Evelyn meets with the horrific and the supernatural, especially in the land of Beulah, where the Mother has her sway. The Mother is a monster-woman who performs a magical surgery on him to change him into a woman. Both the appearance of the Mother and the setting of her mysterious mansion strike terror into the readers. Evelyn describes the labyrinthine corridors of the underground castle through which Sophia led her to the monster-like Mother:

The corridor wound round and round in descending spirals, I soon knew for certain we were bound down. The light here was also pinkish, like an artificial evening. We often passed the mouths of subsidiary corridors, winding off into the depths of the earth, these corridors were identical with the one down which we progressed. There was a faint, humming sound which seemed to come from the walls themselves, a buzzy buzz that
had nothing human in it, interspersed occasionally with a metallic twang emanating from god knows where (56).

The ranch-house of Zero, the poet and the rape and unnatural practices resorted to by Zero, enhance the gothic atmosphere in the novel. At the peak of it all, there is the mysterious mausoleum in which Tristessa lived and how she let herself lie like a corpse among ingenious simulacra of corpses in The Hall of the Immortals. Besides the murders and the strange marriage that take place in the palace, the mysterious and the supernatural reach their heights when the mansion spins at a great speed and brings about a great catastrophe.

Even Wise Children is not deprived of a Gothic touch. There is a mysterious and destructive fire in Lynde Court when Melchior invites all to attend the 'Lynde Court Twelfth Night Costume Ball' (96). Lynde Court itself with its ancient lawns, statues in capes, choked fountains, ancient turrets and pediments, swagged cornices and fairy-tale lattices has a gothic appearance. During the ball, Mr. Pianoman makes love to Dora thinking that she is Nora. Soon tongues of flame engulf the whole building and people struggle out of it on to the lawn outside. There is also an orgiastic aspect to this night of disaster. Still another incident is the mysterious fall of Lady A. who tumbles down the shiny and uncarpeted stairs, snags or dislocates her spine and never walks again. "Did she fall or was she pushed?. That was the question" (179)
In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, the Gothic is centered around three great castles - The House of Anonymity, The Castle/Cave of the Chief of the Cannibals and The Castle of Doctor Hoffman. In fact, the novel is more than faintly Gothic. The House of Anonymity "was a massive, sprawling edifice in the Gothic style that poked innumerable turrets like so many groping tentacles" (129). The bestial Room contains sofas with flamboyantly gothic arm-rests-sofas, armchairs and tables were living lions, bears and hyenas. It had a circular chamber called the 'sphere of spheres' with a spinning bed. Prostitutes were kept in cages like wax mannequins of love. The prostitutes kept in cages are described thus:

All the figures presented a dream-like fusion of diverse states of being, blind, speechless beings from a nocturnal forest where trees had eyes and dragons rolled about on wheels. And one girl must have come straight from the whipping parlour for her back was a ravelled palimpsest of wound upon wound - she was neither animal nor vegetable nor technological; this torn and bleeding she was the most dramatic revelation of the nature of meat that I have ever seen (133).

The village chief or the Cannibal Chief whom the Count was forced to see lived in a cave before which the soldiers prostrated themselves. When the Chief stood up, everyone
else crouched with their faces in the grass. His wives and concubines bore the bleeding marks of gigantic bites in their breasts and buttocks. Some had a nipple missing, most were minus one or several toes and fingers. The Chief sat on a throne of bones on a dias of bones which rolled on wheels that crushed the hands of concubines. The Chief himself "was far, far blacker than the darkest night. He was very sacred and very monstrous idol" (158). The customs of his country were barbarous. He was a man-eating hierophant. He ordered that the Count should be boiled up for a soup in a cauldron. When Albertina too was taken to be skinned live, a fight and bloodshed ensued.

The last castle of all is that of Dr. Hoffman. Hidden among mountains beyond a beautiful park stood Hoffman's castle which hinted at the Teutonic heritage. There were several pictures on the wall. The Great Dane followed Desiderio up a stair case and along a gallery. The Doctor sat holding the hand of a dimunitive dark-haired woman in a long, black dress. There was a strong smell of incense in the room. When he let go the woman's hand, it fell with a lifeless thud. It was the embalmed corpse of his dead wife. Descending to the underground levels of the castle, where the dungeons should have been, there was a distilling plant and the reality modifying machines. The desire generators were a hundred of the best-matched lovers in the world, twined in a hundred of the most fervent embraces passion could devise. They
were all in separate cubicles. When Desiderio refused to enter the cubicle set apart for him, there was a fight and bloodshed. Both the Doctor and his daughter were killed by Desiderio. They are all intensely horrifying incidents shown by Carter as taking place in the gothic surroundings. Horror conventions effectively deconstruct the nature of the contemporary gender relations and subvert the dominant ideology.

Myths have played a great role in the colonization of the minds of women. Sexist views about female beauty, the fragmented image of the female body as a collection of the fetishized parts like breasts, legs and hips, the concept of women as petite, demure, passive, receptive, submissive and attractive are all creations of various mythologies down the ages. These myths have been promoted by the phallocratic culture. Myths are traditional narratives usually involving supernatural or imaginary persons and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena. In order to create an atmosphere of the supernatural and unreal, Carter frames her own myths in her stories. Commenting on myths Carter says:

[They deal] in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances. In no area is this more true than in that of relations between the sexes.... All the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are
consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth anyway (Sadeian woman 5-6).

All the accepted notions about women have been mainly created by myths and are therefore cultural constructs. Carter considers it imperative to subvert these notions by creating myths that focus on the real situation. That a woman should submit herself to a man or should be economically dependent on men are all rules constructed by myths. A mythic schema has been created about the relations between men and women. Carter challenges these by her myths that are placed in a magical word. After depriving women of their freedom, it is a nonsense to create myths of women as Mother goddesses. So Carter creates phallic women and demonic women to challenge the myth of Mother goddesses. She deploys material from the myths of Oedipus, Tiresius, Eve, Lilith and many more sources.

Angela Carter herself asserts that “myth is more instructive than history” (Passion 68). She is sure that all the false ideas about women have been constructed by myths and not history. She says that “myth is a made thing, not a found thing” (Passion 56). All the myths about women have been purposefully framed with a political intention. So Carter proceeds to challenge these false universals with vigour. In Lorna Sage’s phrase she attempts to “turn myths inside out” (The Savage Sideshow 294). In order to prove to men
that their concept of women is only a myth, she frames her own myths in magical and unreal worlds.

Her method of turning myths inside out is glaringly seen in her turning the myth of the Creation of Eve to her own advantage. She turns it into an intentional, revengeful and sophisticated surgical transformation of men into women allowing them to suffer all the pains of being a woman. Through this new myth of the construction of Eve she makes it plain that femininity is a made thing and not a found thing. The second instance is her reworking of the myth of the Fall of Man in The Magic Toyshop. Melanie and Finn parallel Adam and Eve in the subversive sense that they have purposely quarrelled with a patriarchal figure like God the father and turns their expulsion from Eden into an escape from God to lead a free life.

A typical example of Carter's own myths being framed to expose the anti-woman ideology coded in the traditional myths is seen in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman where Carter gives us a beautiful description about the unreal and imaginary world of centaurs. The females among the centaurs were considered ritually degraded and reviled. They had to bear the bloody brunt of tattooing. This degradation of women among the centaurs is evidently based on a myth that Carter describes. It is the myth of the Bridal Mare. The Bridal Mare marries the Sacred Stallion, who instantly impregnates her but while in foal,
she deceives him with a former suitor, the Dark Archer. Spurred by jealousy, the Dark Archer shoots the Sacred Stallion in the eye with an arrow. As he dies, the Sacred Stallion tells the Dark Archer, his children will be born in degenerate forms. The Dark Archer and the Bridal Mare cook and eat the Sacred Stallion to hide their crime, but a desolation immediately comes upon the country and repentant, they whip themselves forcibly for thirty-nine days. On the fortieth day, the Mare, in uroboric parturition, gives birth, with extra-ordinary suffering, to none other than the Sacred stallion himself, who ascends into the Celestial Stable in the shape of his own foal. And then matured, the Sacred Stallion descends from the sky and once again marries the Bridal Mare. So that was why they held women in such low esteem (185).

Through this myth which though unreal sounds real, Carter is able to impress upon the readers the foolishness of all the similar myths existing in the society.

In opposition to this myth that weakened the position of women in the society, Carter frames another myth that made women equal to men. When Desiderio lived among the River People as the guest of Nao Kurai, he found to his astonishment that women had clitoris as long as his
little finger. It is a myth that brought about the empowerment of women.

It was the custom for mothers of young girls to manipulate their daughters' private parts for a regulation hour a day from babyhood upwards, coaxing the sensitive little projection until it attained lengths the river people considered both aesthetically and sexually desirable. The origins of this elongatory practice was lost in the mists of myth and ritual (84).

In *Heroes and Villains*, Donally is the maker of myths. When Marianne came to stay among the barbarians for the first time she noticed them making protective gestures and drawing away from her. Donally secretly made this myth about Marianne persist in the community so that young men would keep a safe distance from her. He made them believe that she practised some kind of a dubious magic that made people sick. So whenever somebody fell sick in the community they blamed Marianne. It was only through the ritual of marriage she could be secularized. After the long ritual of marriage, “the tribe no longer protected itself against Marianne with signs, for marriage had secularized her” (87). Jewel married her with a signet ring and also by the mixing of their bloods. It is a satire on the society's insistence on marriage which Carter considers meaningless. Myths have been created to make marriage necessary in
order to secularize women. Women remaining unmarried is considered undesirable.

Donally kept Marianne in control by tattooing the legend of the Fall of Man on Jewel's back. It gave the impression that women are prone to evil - the evil of tempting man to sin. This was a myth already believed by the barbarians. When Jewel committed a mistake they immediately attributed it to Marianne. Jewel's brothers told him when he made the mistake, the mistake of sending Donally away: "she's bewitched you, it's her that made you turn him out. You can't keep your hands off her, can you, she's eating you. You aren't the men you were" (144). All these myths that proved detrimental to the emancipation of women were kept alive by the patriarchal society and those myths that would have been of any advantage to women were suppressed. Donally had intentions of creating a myth of a Tiger Lady. "He tattooed some little girl over with tiger stripes, once and said she'd be the Tiger Lady. But she died, it was a failure" (86). But at a critical moment, when Marianne found herself helpless in the society, she revived the myth of the Tiger Lady and proclaimed that she would be the Tiger Lady and would rule over them all with a rod of iron (150).

Carter's creation of the demonic women to challenge existing gender relations and sexual power politics is akin to the vampire protagonist that feature in the feminist fantasy that uses horror convention. The demonic women serve as
“cunning subversives” according to Lorna Sage (Women in the House of Fiction 168). Carter points out that fantasizing can affect women’s concepts of themselves and their relations with other men and women. The deconstructive projects of postmodernism accommodates feminism that challenges the authority of traditional discourses of power. The demonic women are projections of women’s imaginations and at the same time existing as real characters in the novels. “The voice of reason, always subversive, must issue from a monster” says Angela Carter (Sadeian Woman 82).

The Mother of Beulah in The Passion of New Eve calls herself the Great parricide and Grand Emasculator. Her daughters call her Mother. She is a great scientist who performs extraordinary experiments. She is a sacred monster big and black as Marx’ head in Highgate Cemetery. She wears false beard and is breasted like a sow. Her limbs are gigantic. She punishes men by making them women and then forcing them to undergo all the sufferings that women undergo. She is the Castratrix of the Phallocentric Universe. She is a demonic woman. But who made her?. Carter answers the question :

She had made herself! She was her own mythological artefact, she had reconstructed her flesh painfully, with knives and with needles, into a transcendental form as an emblem, as an example, and flung a patchwork quilt stitched from her daughter’s
breasts over the cathedral of her interior, the cave within the cave (60).
Toni Morrison also uses grotesque and wild mothers in her novels. Such women are emanations of a suffering woman’s desire for revenge against patriarchy. In Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, we find a wild mother named Sethe killing her child by cutting its throat. Such mothers in Carter and Toni Morrison are challenges to the conventional notion of nurturing, self-effacing and suffering mother.

Leilah, who was a naked model ill-treated by Evelyn in the city, later assumes the form of a demonic woman in Beulah. She becomes Evelyn’s captress, and faithful acolyte of the Mother of Beulah. She too in her desire for revenge becomes a seductress and a demon who leads Evelyn to his punishment. The more we examine the ambivalent nature of this terrifying woman, the more unreal she becomes. She is a reformulation of the goddess. In Beulah, she is not Leilah but Lilith.

The character called Mamie Buckskin in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is another demonic woman who is born out of the feminist’s desire to take to militancy. Her rifles were fire-spitting extensions of her arms and her tongue also spat fire. She practised the art of shooting and always carried a gun. Carter does not limit her demonic women to her novels alone. The bride’s ‘eagle-featured, indomitable
mother' who comes to rescue her from her husband in The Bloody Chamber is a demonic woman created in the imagination of the bride herself when she is in danger. To the wicked husband she is like Medusa. In The Loves of Lady Purple Carter tells us about a marionette which took revenge on the Professor by becoming a demonic woman who “sank her teeth into his throat and drained him” (Fireworks 36) Thus subverting all the established notions of a woman as a loving and docile mother or wife, Carter presents women as terrorists and demons. Women as militants struggling for political power is an unpalatable social reality. Demonic women, as literary horrors, are crucial to the disruption of realist conventions. They are representations of the voice of reason.

Angela Carter makes use of fantastic images to represent the oppressed women in patriarchal society. The most prominent image used by her was the image of the puppet. When placed among the puppets the boundaries of identity between the puppet and the woman is blurred. Characters like Melanie are even forced to play the role of a puppet as seen in The Magic Toyshop. The males identify themselves with the puppeteer. But feminists are determined to usher in an age when the boundary lines between the puppet and the puppeteer will be blurred. In Angela Carter's short story The Loves of Lady Purple, Lady Purple is a puppet or a marionette (a puppet worked by strings) that is life-like.
According to Paulina Palmer, the image that Carter frequently adopts to represent women's role in society is that of the puppet. Paulina Palmer says:

As well as carrying Hoffmannesque associations of the fantastic, the image has connotations of the 'coded mannequin', the metaphor employed by Helene Cixous to represent the robotic state to which human beings are reduced by a process of psychic repression (From Coded Mannequin 180).

Mannequin is a model usually employed by a dressmaker to show clothes to the customers. Fevvers the heroine of Nights at the Circus was brought up in a brothel. In Ma Nelson's brothel Fevvers was given the role of Cupid. She was given the job of sitting in the alcove of the drawing room in which the ladies introduced themselves to the gentlemen. Later on Ma Nelson gave her the role of standing as 'Winged Victory' in the parlour.

The image of mannequin to represent woman is also seen in The Infernal Desire machines of Doctor Hoffman. The Count in Black took Desiderio to the House of Anonymity. When they entered the bestial room, Desiderio found that the furniture consisted of living animals. "In all the room, only the prostitutes, the wax mannequins of love, hardly seemed to be alive for they stood as still as statues" (131). Mannequins like puppets are symbols of the degradation of women. In the House of Anonymity, mannequin-like women were kept in cages:
There were perhaps a dozen girls in the cages in the reception room and posed inside, the girls towered above us like the goddesses of some forgotten theogeny locked up because they were too holy to be touched. Each was as circumscribed as a figure in rhetoric and you could not imagine they had names, for they had been reduced by the rigorous discipline of their vocation to the undifferentiated essence of the idea of the female. This ideational femaleness took amazingly different shapes that its nature was not that of woman, when I examined them more closely, I saw that none of them were any longer, or might have been woman. All without exception, passed beyond or did not enter the realm of simple humanity. They were sinister, abominable, inverted mutations, part clockwork, part vegetable and part brute (132).

The House of Anonymity represents the world where male fantasies and male desires turn women into puppets and mannequins. Carter also provides space for the emergence of a female counter - culture where winged-women and revengeful women bring in liberation and rebirth as we find in her novels like Nights at the Circus and Heroes and Villains.

Fantasy as a psychological concept is intimately bound up with desire. The individual and his or her desire are the only tangible reality. So a need of narcissistic form of
self-assertion is felt by the individual. This is achieved through fantasy. In contemporary feminist fiction the tendency is overwhelmingly towards the fantastic. Though fantasy is often regarded as self-indulgent, wish-fulfilling and escapist, the propagandists for experimental modes of literary fantasy especially the postmodern feminists use it with a political intention. There is a complexity and subtlety in the postmodernist writings as against the fully-presented unreal worlds of the romances. It is complex because it contains multiple meanings and also subtle since it can express the subtlest of attitudes and feelings about a particular problem. A return to fantasy in order to revitalize feminist fiction is very much a part of the international canon of postmodernist fiction.

Carter’s fantasy vary from ‘wish-fulfilling’ fantasies ‘egoistic’ and ‘erotic’ fantasies to those of fear and revenge. The most compelling of the female desires expressed by Carter is the desire for liberation. Fevvers the aerialiste depicted as a young woman with wings and twice as large as life in Nights at the Circus is surely a wish-fulfilling fantasy. The wish for total liberation from patriarchy takes the fantastical shape of a woman with power to fly. If she is a fabulous bird-woman, then by all the laws of evolution and human reason, she ought to possess no arms at all, for it is her arms that ought to be her wings. “Now wings without arms is one impossible thing; but wings with arms is the impossible made doubly unlikely— the impossible squared” (Nights 15).
Fantasy is the faculty of inventing images which are extravagant and visionary. It is a fantastic invention or composition. Fevvers, invented by Carter did defy the laws of projectiles. A projectile cannot slacken speed in the mid-air. But Fevvers could slacken her speed and proceed as she liked. The unbridled longings in the hearts of every woman suffering under patriarchy is expressed through this fantasy. To explore areas of life that realist literature tends to deny or repress, fantasy comes handy. A woman who loves liberation from the gravitational pull of patriarchy can best be presented as a Fevvers shooting up like a rocket.

Wish-fulfilling fantasy is vividly used in *The Magic Toyshop* where Melanie, Victoria and Jonathan are found to be building up their own world of fantasy to escape cruel reality. At the age of fifteen, Melanie imagined herself posing for Lautrec.

She made up fantasies in which she lived in his time (she had been a chorus girl or a model and fed a sparrow with crumbs from her Paris attic window). In these fantasies, she helped him and loved him because she was sorry for him, since he was a dwarf and a genius (*Magic Toyshop* 2).

Moreover, she used the net curtains as raw material for a series of nightgowns suitable for her wedding night which she designed upon herself. “She gift-wrapped herself for a
phantom bridegroom taking a shower and cleaning his teeth in an extra-dimensional bathroom of the future in honeymoon Cannes or Venice. Or Miami Beach* (Magic Toyshop 2). It was fantasy far removed from reality.

They had not confronted the grim realities of life at that time. Jonathan was not mature enough to understand reality at all. In the things of this world, he was extremely short-sighted. Carter says:

His eyes had a far away stare in them as if he so not the real world, but the blue seas and coconut islands where his boats, once launched imaginatively and forever iled. A mental Flying Dutchman, Jonathan roved uncharted seas under a swan-spread of canvas, his feet on swaying salt-drenched boards, never treading dry land at all (Magic Toyshop 4)

But when Melanie, Victoria and Jonathan moved from this innocent life to the grim realities of life in Uncle Philip's household, their fantasies changed their nature. They began to have fantasies of fear and revenge. Melanie could not distinguish her fantasy from the reality. While moving amidst the wooden puppets of Uncle Philip, she thought herself a puppet. She was frightened of some of the puppets he made, especially the cuckoo clock. It is her real experience in the patriarchal set-up that twined itself into a fantasy. "Melanie
felt a shudder of dread as she went by every door, in case it opened and something, some clock work horror rolling hugely on small wheels some terrifying joke or hideous novelty, emerged to put her courage to the test" (Magic Toyshop 82). In fact Philip wanted her to be a puppet frightened of the other puppets and the puppet master.

Finn too joined with Melanie to take revenge on Uncle Philip. He too could not distinguish between the cuckoo clock and Uncle Philip. To take revenge on Uncle Philip he destroyed the cuckoo clock. Melanie's fear of the Swan took the shape of a fantasy. She felt that the Swan's side might open and an armed host of pigmy Uncle Philips might rush out and rape her. So while the show 'Leda and the Swan' was being staged Melanie was uncertain whether she was confronting the real swan or just a puppet. In fact, both Finn and Melanie in their fantasies imagined the swan to be a potential threat and decided to destroy it. Finn's chopping up of the swan and burying it becomes a revenge fantasy.

In Carter's story The Loves of Lady Purple, Lady Purple, the marionette is treated as a living thing. As a living prostitute she was cruelly exploited by her master. After that she is turned into a puppet. Lady Purple later returns to life and sucks her master's breath and drinks his blood. She finds freedom and new life. Such revenge fantasies in contemporary
women's fiction are feminist constructs to counter patriarchal oppression.

Annabel, like Melanie, in Carter's novel Love is a woman of fantasies. She too indulges in both wish-fulfilling fantasies and fantasies of fear and revenge. Annabel loved Lee intimately and did not want him to leave her alone. But he existed for her only intermittently. In her fantasies she thought of him as something magical, or a herbivorous lion or even a unicorn. He grew necessary to her and she even played with the idea of bearing his children. Carter speaks of certain explicit fantasies she had:

[It was the fantasy] of totally engulfing him which she occasionally experienced with extraordinary intensity when he penetrated her as if drawing him through her hairy portals, he could be forever locked up inviolably inside her, reduced himself to the condition of an embryo and by dissolving in his own sperm, become himself his own child. So by impregnating her, he would cease to exist (Love 35).

She wished gently to reduce him to not-being. These fantasies entered her mind evidently because of her fear of losing him.

Annabel's fantasy of the sun and the moon appearing together is nothing but her fear of Lee being drawn to the Lady named Carolyn fantasized (Love 1). Annabel could not
incorporate the existence of Carolyn in her mythology and therefore she felt a grieving jealousy. She took to fantasy in order to escape the pain of it. She asked Buzz to give her the skullring, wearing which she could make herself invisible. She attempted suicide by cutting open both her wrists. Later she recovered in the hospital only to slip into another fantasy.

[When] Annabel found she remained alive, she did not know at first, how to reconcile herself to it until she hit upon the device of believing herself invisible as long as she wore the skullring, though she constantly wondered why, if this were so, so many people seemed to be able to see her (Love 54).

She had by that time reached a stage where she could not separate the real from the fantastical. The author suggests the direct social tension inherent to the role of women in a modern patriarchal society. Carter provokes the reader to reconsider societal constructs and their profound effects on the life of a woman searching for purpose and expressive outlets. Even forcing Lee to bear his heart externally as a tattoo on his breast, Annabel was just acting out a fantasy. Carter wanted to emphasize that a woman repressed will naturally act subconsciously to change her life. Hence this fantasy has a reactionary and subversive effect.

Angela Carter’s fantasies are both egoistic and erotic. In his essay, The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming (1908),
Freud maintained that the unsatisfied dreams and desires of women are chiefly erotic. In contrast the dominant fantasies behind men’s plot are egoistic and ambitious as well as erotic. Women’s plots have been granted or denied credibility in terms of their conformity to this phallocentric model and that a gynocentric reading reveals a repressed egoistic/ambitious fantasy in women’s writing as well as in men’s. Women’s novels which are centrally concerned with fantasies of romantic love belong to the category disdained by George Eliot and other serious women writers as ‘silly novels’ (Elaine Showalter 175). Angela Carter’s novels are not silly novels that end in wedding bells but discuss serious issues of power politics. The choice of her themes urges her to choose an anti-realist mode incorporating dreams and fantasies.

Being a feminist she inscribes fantasies of power, because feminists have their own political ends. The erotic is also inscribed because by picturing the female desires conforming to the patriarchal modes she has portrayed how much they are bounded by the laws of patriarchy. Novels like The Magic Toyshop with its puppet show of ‘Leda and the Swan’ are both egoistic and erotic. The political purpose of this show and the intention behind the destruction of the Swan by Finn are very evident. The implications and the power of desire are made explicit in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman. The sexual relationships between various characters in novels like Shadow Dance and Love are not