CHAPTER IV
RAMBLING DOWN THE PSYCHIC LANE—CARTER'S NOVELS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Juliet Mitchell, in exploring the relevance of psychoanalysis for feminist theory has assumed that since the subordination of women is so heavily mediated through and in the private realm of marriage and other sexual relationships, in the family, in the reduction of women to sexual stereotypes and in the threat of rape and generalized sexual violence, the overriding political imperative for feminists must be the immediate struggle against these practices. Psychoanalysis explores the terrain of female sexuality, the construction of femininity and masculinity, patriarchal relations, bisexuality, lesbianism, rape, dreams, fantasies and male gaze which are some of the main feminist concerns. Carter's novels too closely analyse some of the important psychological realities and the processes through which women came to be in the present psychological condition. Emphasis is placed on the entrenched and almost immutable nature of the female psyche. In Carter's novels there is a mixture of sex, sadism, masochism, homosexuality, coprophilia and necrophilia. Carter's deep interest in psychoanalysis
is revealed through her work *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979). In her novels too she delves into the viscera of distorted feminine sexuality and reveals a vision of femininity conquering masculinity and erasing differences.

Feminism in its central attacks on the phallocratic idiom of much psychoanalytic thought has always asked the question whether sexual difference is indelibly inscribed in nature or not. Freud in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) has said that sexuality is a combined cultural process and product. It is argued by feminists sympathetic to psychoanalysis that psychoanalysis is the theory of the construction of sexual identity and gender relations. Women are in general successfully constructed as 'feminine' in our society. Psychoanalysis tries to explain how women internalize this femininity. It is accepted as a theory of how women are physically induced into femininity by a patriarchal culture.

In many of her texts, Angela Carter constructs a new femininity full of masculine attributes after liberating it from undesirable feminine attributes. She attempts to erase 'femininity' as it is constructed according to existing social norms. Thus she makes an attempt to break down the boundaries between sexes and erase sexual differences. Thus the question of sexual difference which is central to psychoanalysis is dealt with in a novel manner. She is of the opinion that an essentially female nature does not exist. The goal of the feminist struggle
according to Toril Moi “must precisely be to deconstruct the death dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity” (Sexual/Textual Politics 13). Carter intends to minimize sexual difference or the distinction between masculinity and femininity.

In Freud’s opinion there is no sexual difference in the pre-Oedipal stage. The little girl is no different from the little boy at this stage. But at the moment of Oedipal crisis, the crucial change in the little girl’s orientation occurs. When the little boy continues to take his mother as his object, the little girl turns from her pre-oedipal attachment to the mother and takes her father as love-object instead. It is a misogynist theory of femininity. It is doubtful whether most women really manage wholly to relinquish their pre-oedipal attachment and develop a fully ‘mature femininity’, Describing Freud’s ideas about sexual difference, Toril Moi says:

The Freudian theory of sexual difference is based on the visibility of difference: it is the eye that decides what is clearly true and what isn’t. Thus the basic fact of sexual difference for Freud is that the male has an obvious sex organ, the penis, and the female has not; when he looks at the woman, Freud apparently sees nothing. The female difference is perceived as an absence or negation of the male norm (Sexual/Textual Politics 132).
The difference between the masculine and the feminine emerges on the resolution of the Oedipus complex. In patriarchal culture the feminine as such is repressed and woman is presented in her acceptable form as man's specularized other. The masculine traits of the feminine are repressed by the patriarchal society and it is specified that a woman to be called a woman must not have anything 'masculine' about her.

In Freudian psychoanalysis 'woman' is defined in terms of a 'lack'. The lack arises from the absence of the penis. The biological fact of a male having a penis constitutes the way in which the male's own identity as a male is constructed. He is always anxious about losing it. There is always the fear of castration. The female is constructed as the female, by virtue of being always already castrated. Lacan moves the emphasis from the penis as biological determinator to the 'phallus'. The phallus is the signifier of presence. Lacan says that none in fact has this mythical phallus which well excludes lack. That on the contrary, man has a penis, an organ which has been elected to the function of a "phallic" symbol of non-lack makes all the difference between the male and the female (Ecrits: A Selection 59).

Man's fear of castration makes him subjugate women. He is always anxious to maintain woman in her condition of lack. Once he has attained what he desires, he does not want the woman to acquire it. He is afraid that the
woman will castrate him out of envy or in order to make him her equal. It is this fear that makes him oppress women. Moreover, the presence of a penis is projected by him as the ideal and desirable and therefore called masculine and the lack of it considered undesirable and therefore feminine. In order to keep her suppressed he has constructed femininity in such a way that it is deprived of all masculine traits. An attempt from the part of a woman to acquire any of the masculine traits monopolised by those having the penis, makes her 'unfeminine' and detested in the eyes of men.

Carter, on the other hand, in order to minimize sexual difference portrays some of her female characters like males. Some are even physically dressed in man's garb. Marianne in *Heroes and Villains* refused to play the feminine roles prescribed by the patriarchal society in which she lived. She wore a boy's dress and chopped off all her long hair. "So she looked like a demented boy" (*Heroes and Villains* 15). Jewel himself admitted that he had taken her for a boy. "Thought you was a boy at first", he told her (23). Even her actions and attitudes were not feminine. But patriarchy had her locked up in a room. She freed herself. Even as a child in her games, she did not conform to the feminine: Marianne tripped up the son of the Professor of Mathematics and left him sprawling and yowling in the dust, which was not in the rules. The other children soon left her out of their games but she did not care (*Heroes and Villains* 3).
It was not expected of a girl to trip up boys. Her act of rescuing Jewel and escaping into the forest was far from being feminine. Even though she lived in a society which prescribed certain feminine roles to a woman, there is a resistance to that identity as a woman. Women are necessarily at odds with their own physically-acquired gender identities.

In *Shadow Dance*, Emily when compared with Honeybuzzard is more a boy than a girl:

> With her height and her strong face and her heavy tread, one might almost have taken her for a boy dressed up as a girl in the Elizabethan theatre, when transvestism was an art form; what a foil she made for Honey’s golden softness. They made a confusing and picturesque couple embracing (*Shadow Dance* 67-68).

There is a resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic life. Psychoanalysis recognises as more than a fact of individual pathology “that most women do not painlessly step into their role as women” (*J. Rose* 91).

Albertina, the heroine of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* was beyond recognition when Desiderio, the personification of male desire, failed to accept the positive masculine attributes which were the essential features of Albertina. She was an extraordinary ambassador, a handsome Lafleur and an able “Generalissimo’. These masculine roles
deprived her of all the femininity that Desiderio's imagination attributed to her. It was simply because the existing notions of femininity in a patriarchal society did not include masculine traits. For a woman it is degrading to be treated as a woman stripped of all her masculinity. Slipping into the role of a woman is painful. This pain was experienced by Lafleur when he was stripped by the Cannibal chief and put back into her role as Albertina. Desiderio says:

Two privates seized Lafleur's shoulders and dragged him away from me. They cut off his robe, although he struggled, and I saw, not the lean torso of a boy but the gleaming, curvilinear magnificence of a golden woman whose flesh seemed composed of the sunlight that touched it far more kindly than the black hands of the fiendish infantry did (Doctor Hoffman 164).

Cruelty is generally considered a masculine trait and women are called the gentler sex. Feminist theorists such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Elizabeth Janeway and Ann Oakley spoke of 'gender-role stereotyping'. It is a sociological concept related to the topic of femininity and its construction. They drew attention to the oppressive effects of the stereotypical representation of women as sex-object, wife and mother. The concept of woman as 'gentler sex' is a part of this gender-role stereotyping'. To conform to this patriarchal role prescription women have to be gentle and submissive even in the face
of stark oppression. These roles had the effect of relegating women to the private sphere of sexual relations and family life, while debarring their entry into the public one of professional work and political struggle. Carter breaks down the notions that have come to stay on account of this gender-role stereotyping. Carter portrays a totally different woman who cannot be easily distinguished from men.

The Cannibal Chief who took the Count and Lafleur captives in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, had an army of women. He gave reasons for maintaining such an army of women:

Why, you may ask have I built an army out of women since they are often held to be the gentler sex? Gentlemen, if you rid your hearts of prejudice and examine the bases of the traditional notions of the figure of female, you will find you have founded them all on the remote figure you thought you glimpsed once, in your earliest childhood, bending over you with an offering of warm, sugared milk, crooning a soft lullaby while, by her haloed presence, she kept away the snakes that writhed beneath the bed. Tear this notion of the mother from your hearts. Vengeful as nature herself, she loves her children only in order to devour them better and if she herself rips her own veils of self-deceit, Mother perceives in herself untold abysses of cruelty as subtle as it is refined (Doctor Hoffman, 160).
The woman's task of acquiring femininity is the greatest psychic difficulty when traditional notions of the figure of the female prejudice the hearts of men. It is difficult for a woman to sustain a feminine identity. Carter understood that a mere transformation of the physical aspects does not make a person fully 'Feminine'. The dress worn by a woman cannot sustain the femininity that is greatly problematic. That is why Carter performs what she calls 'psycho-surgery' on Evelyn in order to transform him into Eve, in her novel *The Passion of New Eve*. The requirements for the construction of a complete woman are described by Carter thus:

A complete woman, yes, Sophia assured me, tits, clit, ovaries, labia major, labia minor.... But, Sophia, does a change in the coloration of the rind alter the taste of a fruit? A change in the appearance will restructure the essence, Sophia assured me coolly. Psycho-surgery, Mother calls it (*Passion* 68).

Carter as a feminist strives to resolve the problem of sexual difference and struggles to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic and revels in the pleasures of open-ended textuality. To get rid of the old opposition between 'masculine' and 'feminine' and even of terms like 'male' and 'female', she expresses her strong belief in the inherently bisexual nature of all human beings. Teresa Brennan says that "feminists influenced by Lacan have stressed that both
sexes can take up the masculine and feminine places, these shift and slide — no one has the phallus" (*Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis* 4). The phallus is the mark of lack and difference in general and sexual difference in particular. But Phallus has its visual tie to the penis. Hence the ideally neutral phallus is represented in a one-sided masculine way. Teresa Brennan says that “Lacan’s explanation of the phallic dominance partakes of the logic of presence, indeed it is a prime exemplar of it. The fact that one sex appears more visible than the other will confer privilege in a world where presence itself is privilege" (*Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis* 6). In patriarchy, masculinity dominates by presence and rationality is established through the exclusion of the feminine.

In order to become a ‘perfect man’s woman’, Tristessa in *The Passion of New Eve* had to conceal the insignia of maleness. But Carter cunningly effects a revelation of her maleness and thereby the bisexuality of the perfect woman. Toril Moi says : “In a way, ‘woman’ is bisexual : man it’s a secret to no one — being poised to keep glorious phallic monosexuality in view” (*Sexual/Textual Politics* 109). Femininity is very often thrust upon her through an assumed castration. It is the removal of her maleness. It is a mental castration and not a physical one. The pain of this castration is brought to the notice of men through Carter’s creation of Eve by the castration performed on Evelyn. Evelyn is shown “all
the pain of womanhood" (Passion 71). The Mother castrated Evelyn with a knife which is a dreadful phallic symbol. The social process through which a woman is castrated and made 'feminine' can be applied to feminize men too. As Elizabeth Wilson explains:

Juliet Mitchell effected the rehabilitation of Freud by presenting him as a theorist of the way in which the infant, "a small human animal", achieves entry into culture. A social, not a biological process, occurs. This process is the social construction of gender, whereby the infant internalizes the characteristics of 'masculinity' or 'femininity'. This gender identity has no one-to-one relation to biological sex differences, and so - to take an extreme example - it is possible for transsexual men to experience a fundamental conviction of their femininity (Psychoanalysis: Psychic Law and Order 218).

Freud, taking into account scientific facts explains:

Portions of male sexual apparatus also appear in women's bodies, though in an atrophied state, and vice versa in the alternative case. It regards their occurrence as indicators of bisexuality, as though an individual is not a man or a woman but always both - merely a certain amount more the one than the other (New Introductory Lectures 147).
Rachel Bowlby asserts that “it is the female genitals, in their lack by comparison with those of the man, which figure as the ultimate cause in Freud for the disparagement of femininity” *(Still Crazy* 52). Carter does not want her women to be lesser beings because of the lack of a penis and therefore she attempts to create phallic women like Mamie Buckskin and the women of Nao-Kurai’s tribe. The Mother of Beulah too can be termed a phallic mother because she is omnipotent and has several masculine characteristics. Psychoanalytic theorists have formulated the concept of the phallic mother to denote the fantasy image of the omnipotent mother, which the infant projects. The term signifies, to quote Ruth Mack Brunswick, the image of “the all-powerful mother, the mother who is capable of everything and who possesses every valuable attribute” *(Return of the Amazon Mother* 67).

Sexual indeterminacy of a kind familiar in works of art where angels and urchins are pictured was raised to the level of theory by psychoanalysis. An obscure middle zone is found coming between the once clearly counterposed notions of ‘male’ and ‘female’. Freud speaking of bisexuality in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) points out what is called hermaphroditism. According to him a certain degree of anatomical hermaphroditism occurs normally. In every normal male or female individual, traces are found of the apparatus of the opposite sex. An originally bisexual physical disposition has, in the course of evolution, become
modified into a unisexual one, leaving behind only a few traces of the sex that has become atrophied. Angela Carter exploits this theory and introduces several hermaphrodites in her novels to minimise sexual differences. The technicians in Doctor Hoffman’s laboratories of desire in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* were beautiful hermaphrodites. The first technician whom Desiderio meets tells him:

> I am a harmonious concatenation of male and female and so the Doctor gave me sole charge of the generators .... I was the most beautiful transvestite in all Greenwich Village before the Doctor gave me the post of intermediary. I represent the inherent symmetry of divergent asymmetry (*Doctor Hoffman* 213).

Among the prodigies of nature kept by Madame Schreck in *Nights at the Circus*, there was a person who could be called either Albert or Albertina. Albert/Albertina “was a bipartite, that is to say, half and half and neither of either” (*Doctor Hoffman* 59).

Besides minimising sexual difference, to counter the tyranny of patriarchy that has constructed ‘woman’ and ‘femininity’ on the foundation of ‘male desire’, Carter gives utmost importance to female desire and the energy contained in it. ‘Desire’ is a major conceptual nostrum of the age, a terminological tribute paid by the bourgeoisie to its own purportedly new and self-aware sexuality. Malcolm Bowie speaks of desire thus:
Desire as it is now often described is the cosmological principle of our secular age. It is our natura naturans: it moves the stars in their courses, plumps the hazel shells, causes tumescence in mammalian sexual organs, and, thanks to its inexhaustible capacity for displacement and sublimation, is the vitalising agent in art, science, religion, business, economics, politics and international relations. Under earlier metaphysical dispensations, desire had many names: it was eros and agape; it was love, lust, appetite, gluttony, cupidity, concupiscence, covetousness, ambition; it was need, wish, urge, impulse; it was hankering, longing, yearning, yen (Freud, Proust and Lacan 3). Carolyn Steedman in her work Landscape for a Good Woman (1986) speaks of desire as a psychosocial construct.

Desire is like Freud’s notion of Eros, a force including sexual desire. Desire is the central concern of psychoanalysis. Freud offers an explanation of the creation of individual identity based on the child’s changing relationship to its own body and particularly its sexual impulses or drives. According to him at the beginning of its life the infant is dominated by the pleasure principle and has virtually no Ego or conscious self. The Id incorporates the libidinal and other desires. Although the Ego or the conscious self is the organising and rationalising part of the psyche, and
although it is the most integrated part of the self, it remains the site of struggle between the pleasure demands of the Id or unconscious and the reality demands of the external world. When the little boy renounces his sexual love for his mother and identifies with his father, the authority of the father is introjected into the ego and there it forms the nucleus of the super-ego. The little boy retains the same love object—a woman—throughout his life and his primary sexual organ remains the penis. But the little girl must transfer her affections from the mother to her father or men. The only sexual organ of which she is aware of is the clitoris. The little girl is a little man. Yet she must transfer her sexual excitability from clitoris to vagina. The little boy who internalizes the father and his paternal authority in order to avoid the dreaded retaliation of castration for loving his mother, develops a desire that subjugates women, like that of his father. This internalization of standards of morality and propriety is termed as Superego.

The influence and dominance of male sexual desire is very often expressed through the male gaze.¹ The male gaze has a great controlling effect. Scopophilia in men has proliferated visual representations of femininity. A significant illustration of the power it wields is the circulation of images of women by the media and the advertising industry. It is indeed exploitative and oppressive. When it encourages men to feel secure, it makes women feel anxious. It pressures
women into narcissistic preoccupation with self-image and imposes indirect control on their behaviour. Elizabeth Wright says:

The postmodern has surrendered the belief in vision as a privileged mode of access to reality. Psychoanalysis has here enabled feminists to launch a critique on vision as sexually biased: in the Freudian scenario it is the look which determines the child's discovery of sexual difference and establishes the phallus as the privileged signifier of sexual identity (Thoroughly Postmodern Feminist Criticism 147).

Angela Carter tells us how women prepare themselves for the male gaze, suffers the male gaze and retaliates against the male gaze. In The Magic Toyshop, Carter describes how Finn constructs a peephole in the wall of his room in order to spy on Melanie while she is undressing. It draws attention to the power exerted by the male gaze. It is a symbol of sexual domination. But Melanie is indignant at the intrusion on her privacy and retaliates by using the peephole to spy back on Finn. She sees him walking on his hands. She achieves a kind of role-reversal by becoming the observer and he, the observed.

The novel Heroes and Villains gives us a description of Marianne being subjected to a concerted male-gaze when Jewel's brothers come together in the kitchen. Carter says:

Eyes like dead wood and grinning mouths equipped
with the whitest teeth, everywhere Marianne looked she saw eyes like dead wood fixed on her face and cruel mouths. She glanced towards the inner door to ascertain perhaps another means of escape and there saw the sixth, or the seventh, counting the one who was dead (Heroes and Villains 48).

Thus the power of male gaze here assumes disastrous proportions and threatens even rape and murder.

Carter’s novel Nights at the Circus speaks of Fevvers in Ma Nelson’s brothel given the job of sitting in the alcove of the drawing room in which the ladies introduced themselves to the gentlemen. It is an apprenticeship in being looked at. Fevvers says:

And for seven long years, sir, I was nought but the painted, gilded sign of love, and you might say, that so it was I served my apprenticeship in being looked at — at being the object of the eye of the beholder (Nights 23).

From the apprenticeship Fevvers graduates to be the real object of male gaze when she is sold to Mr. Christian Rosencreutz for fifty guineas by Madame Schreck. After subjecting her to his gaze for hours he contemplates harming her with a blade. But Fevvers attacks him with her own sword and escapes using her wings.

In the novel Wise Children Dora speaking about the time when she was in her thirties, says that women became
mere objects to be looked at and therefore it was a kind of degeneration of women. She says:

There was a law that said, a girl could show her all provided she didn't move, nor twitch a muscle, stir an inch-just stand there, starkers letting herself to be looked at (Wise Children 165). Such were the nude shows conducted at that time. Male gaze, it is true, exerts much control over the woman. But in the novel Love it is Annabel’s gaze that controls and restricts Lee who tends to be unfaithful to her. When Annabel realises that Lee has been with the wife of his philosophy teacher, she looked at him. “Her huge, grey eyes were fixed on his face; his own eyes began to scald again as if burned by her metaphysical fire” (Love 23). Annabel always found that Lee was interesting to look at. “So she gazed at him with wonder, as if he might be magic, and he looked at her nervously, as if she might not be fully human” (Love 34). Thus Carter counters the male gaze with a role reversal.

Throughout her novels, Carter presents women who pose themselves before mirrors. This is not merely female narcissism. Women are driven to looking at themselves in the mirror, by force of the male gaze. The importance given to clothing and make-up is meant to create elaborate surfaces for the male gaze to penetrate. That this ‘narcissism’ is neither self-love nor self-knowledge is proved by the fact that none of the women are ever satisfied with what they
see in the mirror. The beauty by which women are desired is that which presents them as the other’s mirror. A woman’s knowledge and desire are constrained by her function as mirror. She just mirrors the desires of a man. Desiderio in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* desired Albertina to be conforming to his desires. That is why when he looked at the mirror in Hoffman’s castle, he found that he “was entirely Albertina in the male aspect” (199). Women are shocked when they find that their reflections in the mirror fall far below the standards set by male desire. In *Wise Children* as Dora and Nora ascend the staircase in the Hazard Residence, they catch sight of their own reflection in a mirror. Dora expresses the shock that she experienced thus:

I suffered the customary nasty shock when I spotted us both in the big gift mirror at the top — two funny old girls, paint an inch thick, clothes sixty years too young, stars on their stockings and little wee skirts skimming their buttocks. Parodies (*Wise Children* 197).

For Leilah in *The Passion of New Eve*, her sole preoccupation was to decorate her other in the mirror. “She acquired an absent-minded dignity through the mirror” (*Passion* 29). Evelyn watching her dressing herself before the mirror says:

The cracked mirror jaggedly reciprocated her bisected reflection and that of my watching self
with the mauve exhalations of a joint curling round my head. To watch her dressing herself, putting on her public face, was to witness an inversion of the ritual of disrobing to which she would later submit her body, for, the more clothed she became, the more vivid became my memory of her nakedness and, as she watched me watching the assemblage of all the paraphernalia that only emphasised the black plush flanks and crimson slit beneath it, so she, too seemed to abandon herself in the mirror, to abandon herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream into which the mirror cast me. (Passion 30).

However Carter is for breaking down such mirrors. Carter herself says that looking into the mirror lures a woman into a narcissistic loss of being, when the face leaks into the looking-glass like water into sand. Mirrors offer women the possibility of making themselves perfect strangers to satisfy male desires. Annabel in Love discovered this possibility by looking at the mirror. She dyed her hair and painted her face but preferred death to the satisfaction offered to an unfaithful husband (Love 102). When Melanie in The Magic Toyshop heard about the death of her parents and understood that she would not be able to preserve herself any more, she broke the mirror. Carter wanted her ideal woman to be like Sophia, the captress of Evelyn in The Passion of New Eve. Sophia never exposed herself to the
mirror. “She looked like a woman who has never seen a mirror in all her life, not once exposed herself to those looking glasses that betray women into nakedness” (Passion 54).

Angela Carter's novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is indeed a treatise on the importance and power of desire and a critique of the snares laid by the male desire. With Doctor Hoffman, Carter attempts to liberate desire. Desire has been penned in the cage of patriarchy. It has been manipulated by men to fulfill their clandestine designs on women. Desire however remains in the unconscious. “In the unconscious, nothing can be treated or destroyed” says Carter quoting Sigmund Freud from his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Doctor Hoffman 186). Doctor Hoffman gives reality status to desire and attempts to liberate it. “By the liberation of the unconscious we shall, of course, liberate man” (Doctor Hoffman 208).

Carter was well aware of the power of Desire. So she makes Albertina lecture on Desire. Carter who discovered that the magnetic field formed by the reciprocal desires of man and woman is quite unique in its intensity, makes Albertina say:

Such desire must be the strongest force in the world and, if it could be crystallized, would show itself as a deposit which is the definitive residuum of the most powerful inherited associations. And desire is also the source of the greatest source
of the radiant energy in the entire universe (Doctor Hoffman 203).

Doctor Hoffman generates energy from desire. He calls it 'eroto-energy' (Doctor Hoffman 206). The source of eroto-energy is inexhaustible. In Doctor Hoffman's laboratory the secretions of fulfilled desires are processed. His desire generators are hundreds of the best-matched lovers in the world, twined in a hundred of the most fervent embraces passion could devise.

Desiderio, the protagonist of the novel represents male desire. He is so badly prejudiced by the male city in which he lives, that he believes only the desire in the male unconscious should be expressed according to certain patriarchal norms. He does not wish to give his desires a reality status. His desire for Albertina is great but it is limited by patriarchal norms. He only desires her, but does not love her. Albertina in all her femininity is actually "maintained in her various appearances only by the power of his desire" (Doctor Hoffman 204). The moment Albertina appears before him with all her desire, Desiderio is shocked and kills her. Female desire is not allowed to assert itself.

The Count pictured by Carter in this novel, was a man of excessive male desire. The Count himself says:

I ride the whirlwind of my desires and I would give this whirlwind, which has driven me to all the four-rounded corners of the globe, the emblematic
form of a tiger, the most ferocious of beasts, whose pelt yet bears the marks of a flagellation which must have taken place before the dawn of time (Doctor Hoffman 124).

He was a man of great power and the real world fell far short of his desire. His fatal error was to mistake his will for his desires. His desires gradually became his master and took the monstrous shape of the black pimp. The black pimp or the Cannibal Chief “was brought into being only because of the Count’s desire for self-destruction” (Doctor Hoffman 212). He became the victim of his own desire which went to the monstrous extent of strangling a prostitute in the city of New Orleans solely to augment his own erotic ecstasy. “And besides, his lust always blinded him completely to anything but his own sensations” (Doctor Hoffman 168). So he failed to realise that Lafleur was a woman. His desire or the Cannibal Chief or his own ‘projective other’ became his master and put an end to his life. This is the retributive justice prophesied by Carter to male desire assuming disastrous proportions in a male-dominated society.

Desiderio was looking for a master. The Count in black had already chosen his desire as his master and met his fate. Desiderio’s unwillingness to give up his desire made him think of choosing the centaurs as his masters. The centaurs were representations of desire. The beasts were emanations of desires, dredged up and objectively reified
from the dark abysses of the unconscious. Desiderio says:

According to her father's theory all the subjects and objects we had encountered in the loose grammar of Nebulous Time were derived from a similar source—my desires, or hers, or the Count's. At first especially the Count's, for he had lived on closer terms with his own unconscious than we (Doctor Hoffman 186).

In fact the novel is the story of "Desiderio in search of a Master" (Doctor Hoffman 190). He refused to choose the Count or the centaurs as his masters. He knew that desire in all its forms including Albertina, or Albertina's desires would become his master and lead him to his death. So he chose 'reason' represented by the Minister of determination as his master.

Human desire seems to be based on a stereo-typically male pattern of sexual response. Within this stereotypical pattern, the place of the female or feminine is to be the seduced, the subjugated. Carter too as a part of her attempt to inscribe the present system, first codes the female body as erotic masculine fantasy and then recodes it as female experience. But she is not satisfied with this masculinism of desire mechanism. Heterosexuality is the key mechanism of male domination. In the feminine heterosexual position, the woman finds the signifier of her desire in the body of the man. But Lacan talks of a specifically feminine 'jouissance':
In all the moves that women make Lacan sees a jouissance that tries to but of course cannot realize itself within the phallic domain and it is posited as a jouissance beyond the phallus (Parveen Adams 249).

‘Jouissance’ is an untranslatable term. English lacks a word able to carry the range of meaning in the term ‘jouissance’ which includes enjoyment in the sense of a legal or social possession, pleasure, and crucially the pleasure of sexual climax.

Feminist theorists have given much importance to female ‘jouissance’. Toril Moi says:

Irigaray’s theory of ‘woman’ takes as its starting point a basic assumption of analogy between woman’s psychology and her morphology, which she rather obscurely takes to be different from her anatomy. Women’s form is repressed by patriarchal phallocentrism, which systematically denies woman access to her own pleasure; female jouissance cannot even be thought by specular logic. Male pleasure, she claims, is seen as monolithically unified, represented as analogous with the phallus, and it is this mode that is forcibly imposed upon women (Sexual/Textual Politics 143).

Irigaray also argues that women’s sex is not one: her sexual organs are composed of many different elements like lips, vagina, clitoris, cervix, uterus and breasts. Her ‘jouissance’
is therefore multiple, non-unified, endless. Woman gives privilege not to the visual, but to the touch. The prevalence of the gaze and the discrimination of form is foreign to female eroticism. That is why Carter finds for her women who are fed up with the male gaze and the oppression that goes with it a new era where she can get access to her own pleasure or female jouissance. It is the lesbian area of sexual involvement between women.

Feminists have welcomed lesbianism as a vital tool of feminist strategy. They affirm the political value of lesbianism, acknowledging it as "part of a politics of woman-centred resistance" (Jacquelyn N.Zita 170). There is a strong body of opinion that heterosexual women can decide to stop their sexual involvement with men and become, if not lesbian, at least more woman-identified. Lesbianism is appropriated by feminists with a political motive. Rich formulated the term 'lesbian continuum' to emphasise the political aspects of lesbianism rather than the erotic. It appeared first in Rich's essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. Rich makes the point that heterosexuality rather than being 'natural' and 'innate' is a construct or an institution. Women are coerced and recruited into it by a variety of different men. The effect of the pressure of 'compulsory heterosexuality' is, she illustrates, to marginalize lesbian experience and make it appear deviant. Rich deliberately uses the term 'lesbian continuum' as opposed to 'lesbian', to avoid the
clinical and narrowly sexual associations of the latter. She seeks to signify by the term ideas of female friendship and political comradeship, as well as sexual involvement between women.

But there is a strong opposition from men and this is expressed by Carter in her novel, *The Passion of New Eve*, where Evelyn who is turned into Eve, the woman, comes to stay among the wives of Zero, the poet. During her apprenticeship as a woman, Eve becomes a little too emphatically feminine and shows lesbian tendencies. But Zero's presence in the house prevented her:

I roused Zero's suspicions because I began to behave too much like a woman and he started to watch me warily for signs of the tribade. If he had spied any, or surprised me fingering any of his girls, he would have shot me. His hatred of female homosexuality was inflexible, it was obsessional (*Passion* 101).

This hatred of female homosexuality pervades the whole of patriarchal domain.

Certain psychoanalytic accounts do not see a girl's pathway to heterosexuality as either straightforward or inevitable. Heterosexuality is never established without considerable pain and ambivalence, conscious and unconscious. Rich speaks of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. In her work *Compulsory*
*Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* she describes heterosexuality as compulsory, ignoring the pleasurable aspects of relations with men. She describes it as the key mechanism of male domination. Joanna Ryan says:

Girls have to effect a change of object in order to become heterosexual, given that their first and most powerful experience of love and physical care is with a woman, that is homosexual. To become heterosexual as an adult a girl has to transfer her primary affections to someone of a different sex, a boy only to a member of the same sex. There are many different psychoanalytic versions of this transfer, but what is widely recognized is its problematic nature (*Psychoanalysis and Women Loving Women* 250).

Though women's communities like those of Ma Nelson's Academy and Madame Schreck's household are mentioned in *Nights at the Circus*, they are communities of women who cater to the desires of men. Women are still used as mere objects. Though they are humming with feminist activity, the women there, are much troubled. The House of Correction run by Countess P. was manned exclusively by women. They were women who reacted violently against men when the bitterness of relationship with them was too great for them to bear. It was a private prison designed to promote penitence. But women like Olga Alexandrovna and Vera Andreyevna
developed lesbian tendencies. Hands touched eyes met and love-words were exchanged. What followed is described by Carter thus:

Desire, that electricity transmitted by the charged touch of Olga Alexandrovna and Vera Andreyevna, leapt across the great divide between the guards and the guarded. Or, it was as if a wild seed took root in the cold soil of the prison and, when it bloomed, it scattered seeds around in its turn. The stale air of the House of Correction lifted and stirred, was moved by currents of anticipation, of expectation, that blew the ripened seeds of love from cell to cell (*Nights* 216-217). And the female inmates and warders of Countess P's horrific asylum joined together to form an army of lesbian lovers. Then they escaped and committed themselves to the project of creating a female Utopia in the taiga:

These women planned to found a female Utopia in the taiga and asked a favour of the Escapee; that he should deliver 'em up a pint or two of sperm, which speedily freezing at the inhospitable temperature of the region, could be stored away in a patent ice-bucket like an enormous thermos flask they carried with them, so they could use it when they got settled, to impregnate such of them as were of child-bearing age and so ensure the survival of this republic of free women (*Nights* 240).
It is a lesbianism that goes beyond the mere satisfaction of feminine desire to a political struggle against the male gaze and male dominance. Similar plots are seen in novels like Suniti Namjoshi’s *The Mothers of Mayadiip*.

Still another lesbian relationship is exemplified in the very same novel through women like Mignon and the Princess of Abyssinia. Mignon's miserable past and the intolerable sufferings meted out to her by her husband, the Ape-man and the pain of being the cause of discord between men, when she loved Samson, the strong-man, made her look for a companion whom she could love without much problem. She found this companion in the Princess of Abyssinia. Both of them were engaged in taming the tigers. The tigers actually represent desire. “They drowsed like unawakened desire, like unlit fire” (*Nights* 154). Soon desire for each other was awakened in Mignon and the Princess and “they smiled at one another and one white hand and one brown reached out and clasped together” (168). Seeing the lesbian relationship between Mignon and the Princess, Fevvers and Lizzie too express their love for each other. Once while Mignon and the Princess were rehearsing a waltz with the tigers, they forgot themselves and kissed each other. Seeing this “Fevvers and Lizzie let out great breaths of relief and likewise kissed each other” (155). The reason why Mignon took to lesbianism is explained by Fevvers thus: “The cruel sex threw her away like a soiled glove”. Lizzie who heard this immediately
added, "-but us girls 've gone and sent her to the cleaner's" (155). In a lesbian community women need not fear the cruel sex who throws women away like a soiled glove.

Lesbianism is being suggested by Carter as a means of creating women who are sexually independent of men. Heterosexuality is a cultural construct. The assumption promoted by sexologists that heterosexuality is natural and that the most natural form of heterosexual activity is coitus, i.e., penetration of the vagina by the penis, is challenged. Angela Carter herself wittily remarks:

Our flesh arrives to us out of history, like everything else does. We may believe we fuck stripped of social artifice, in bed, we even feel we touch the bedrock of human nature itself. But we are deceived. Flesh is not an irreducible human universal (Sadeian Woman 9).

The success of lesbianism proves that there is no natural sexuality and that the codes within which women and men operate are in fact male sexual ideologies masquerading as natural law.

Carter's fiction replete with dreams and fantasies is a replica of an adult female psyche. This adult psyche consists of an Id of which a large part consists of childish, repressed feminine desires:

[These remain infantile because they have not been modified by demands of reality, but have]
been dealt with in early life by being repressed - made unconscious and thus placed beyond the reach of reality. Parts of the unconscious may however 'return' in certain circumstances. Thus notion of an unconscious hinterland to 'personality' (for want of a better word), that somehow contains unresolved conflicts and wishes, explains our often irrational behaviour as adults, our own internal sense of conflict and contradiction, inappropriate feeling states and indeed neurotic symptoms and dreams (Elizabeth Wilson 212).

The dreams and fantasies of Carter's characters are pointers to the expectations of women that remain unsatisfied and unfulfilled because of the obstructions laid by patriarchy.

Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* had fantasies of her own when she realised that she was no longer a girl but an adult. Her expectations of womanhood are expressed in fantasies in which she posed for Lautrec and helped him and loved him because she was sorry for him since he was a dwarf and a genius (*Magic Toyshop* 1-2). Marianne's repressed fears of marriage, rape and childbirth were expressed in her fantasy of barbarians catching hold of her, raping her and sewing up cats inside her. Evelyne Keitel says that our conscious and unconscious reactions are always discontinuous, they lack coherence. The unconscious, although it contains material which is repressed by the conscious mind, cannot
be simply equated with whatever is repressed. The unconscious is not an objective entity, but a battlefield of tensions, of opposing and conflicting drives, which can be perceived only through their effects like dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes, unconscious repetition compulsion, symptoms etc. These effects form certain patterns which allow us to draw certain conclusions about the nature of the very conflicts on which they are based (Reading Psychosis 13).

There is a pattern in the dreams and fantasies in the novels of Angela Carter. Dreams create new models of reality. All the dreams and fantasies of Morris in Shadow Dance were creations of his pricking conscience after his knifing of Ghislaine. In fact her shadow always danced before him in dreams and fantasies. The manner in which dreams about Ghislaine haunted him is described thus:

  All the spring she went about with him, weighing him down, although he never saw her in the real world. In the night, she laid her wet, invisible mouth on his and he woke up, choking. She sat invisibly at the supper table between Morris and Edna, poisoning the food with her breath (Shadow Dance 37).

His eagerness to escape from her led him often to another fantasy. "He imagined himself going down to the station and buying a single ticket and getting on a train and going far away" (Shadow Dance 36) Once when his friend Honeybuzzard crushed him in a fierce embrace, he thought he was living
in a dream and it was Ghislaine come leaping on him. In the grip of a panic terror, he exerted all his strength and again and again tried to fling the golden nightmare away from him (95). These dreams attributed to the male character called Morris are the ones a woman desires a woman-oppressor to be afflicted with. The various dreams of Joseph in Several Perceptions too serve the same purpose.

The dreams and fantasies of Annabel in Love arose out of her anguish in seeing her husband unfaithful. Her fears of seeing him in the company of Carolyn took the form of an apparition of the sun and the moon together. The fantastical creations of Carter like the winged-women, the circus, the monster-women, the hermaphrodites, the world of the centaurs and transexualisms are projections of the unconscious of women who suffer under male oppression and wish to liberate themselves. The imaginary world of the Mother of Beulah and the castration effected on Evelyn, give expression to the revengeful feelings of women.

The peep-show kept by the peep-show proprietor in The Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman affords a peep into the realm of the subconscious. It gives various representations of the picture of woman in the minds of men (Doctor Hoffman 44-47). All the seven exhibits in the peep-show demonstrate that women have been relegated to mere objects of male desire. The fantasies, daydreams and myths brought in by Carter introduces
new realities. They cannot be termed as 'escapisms'. Robert Scholes says:

Sleep and dreaming are aspects of life which are important because they are necessary for our functioning as waking beings. A healthy person sleeps and dreams in order to awake refreshed. As sublimation, fiction takes our worst fears and tames them by organizing them in a form charged with meaning and value (Structural Fabulation 5)

Carter's introduction of dreams, fantasies and fairytales and the presentation of Utopian lesbian communities together with her virulent criticism of male gaze and male desire have been necessitated by the increasing rate of male violence in patriarchal societies. Carter herself explains the psychology behind male-violence in her work, The Sadeian Woman : An Exercise in Cultural History (1979). She says:

Violence, the convulsive form of the active, male principle, is a matter for men, whose sex gives them the right to inflict pain as a sign of mastery and the masters have the right to wound one another because that only makes us fear them more, that they can give and receive pain like the lords of creation (Sadeian Woman 22).

Violence has always been the method by which individuals and institutions demonstrate their superiority. Moreover male
political dominance is less a matter of moral superiority than of crude brute force. Going deep into the matter, Carter says:

The whippings, the beatings, the gougings, the stabbings of erotic violence reawaken the memory of the social fiction of the female wound, the bleeding scar left by her castration, which is a psychic fiction as deeply at the heart of western culture as the myth of Oedipus, to which it is related in the complex dialectic of imagination and reality that produces culture. Female Castration is an imaginary fact that pervades the whole of men's attitude towards women and our attitude to ourselves, that transforms women from human beings into wounded creatures who were born to bleed (Sadeian Woman 23).

Women are afraid of men because they make themselves frightening through purposeful violence. Speaking about woman's fear of man, Margaret Atwood says, "she's afraid of men and it's simple, it's rational, she's afraid of men because men are frightening" (Bodily Harm 290). It is to instil this fear in women that he perpetrates violence on them as the Cannibal Chief does in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman or the Centaurs upon their unfaithful wives. Zero's persecution of his wives in The Passion of New Eve is meant to terrorize them into subjugation. In Heroes and Villains.
the men who painted themselves in a fearful manner and smeared themselves with the blood of the animals made women afraid of them. They fought bloody wars and inflicted pain on the weak, like the punishment given to Precious by Jewel. The methods used by Jewel to make Marianne stand in dread of him are described thus:

He also began to attack the slaughtered carcasses with remarkable ferocity and, another evening, silently approached her during the butchery hour and daubed her face with his bloody hands, an action she construed immediately and immediately desperate, as if he were helplessly trying to prove his autonomy to her (Heroes and Villains 89).

Violence, thus came to be considered indispensable in a patriarchal set-up to preserve male authority.

Violence against women very often takes place in a privacy beyond the reach of official censorship. Angela Carter says, "it is also in private that the unacknowledged psychological mutilations performed in the name of love take place" (Sadeian Woman 23). This male violence is very often manifested in the form of rape. Rape is the first form of male violence to receive theorization by contemporary feminists. "Feminist regard rape as crime which rather than illustrating the imperative of the male sex drive, has its origin in the male urge to control and dominate women" (Contemporary Women's Fiction 84). Men are not violent by nature. But in a phallocratic
culture male sexual behaviour is constructed so as to be violent. From the feminist perspective, the crime of rape illustrates the inequalities between the sexes, while at the same time helping to perpetuate them. It cements bonds between men and at the same time subjugates women by keeping them in a state of constant fear. Thus rape functions as a “male protection racket” (Griffin 24-39). Rape also assumes significance as a proof of male virility. In a patriarchal Society, “the norm of masculinity is phallic aggression” (Andrea Dworkin 46).

But Carter’s women characters respond to rape not with tears or masochistic pleasure but with anger and indignation. Jewel’s act of violence against Marianne when he raped her was intentional. He wanted to dominate Marianne. He raped her first when she tried to wrest herself free of his control and that of his tribe and escaped into the forest. But Jewel found her, raped her and brought her back with him (Heroes and Villains 52). Evidently the rape was meant to deter her from escaping again and to keep her under control. When he raped her again, she said, “It hurt far worse than the snakebite, because it was intentional. Why did you do it to me?” (55). His answer was thus: “There’s the matter of our traditional hatred. And besides, I’m very frightened of you” (56). Rape and violence arise out of fear in men. So he went on to say, “I’ve nailed you on necessity, you poor bitch” (56).
There is another social psychology too behind Jewel’s rape of Marianne. He wanted to take her back to the tribe because he had to marry her. He also wanted her to conceive. “Dynastically”, he said at last, “it’s a patriarchal system. I need a son, don’t I, to dig my grave when I’m gone. A son to ensure my status” (90). And politically, by marrying Marianne he wanted to maintain his status. But Marianne asked him with anger whether he should do it “by submitting me to the most irretrievable humiliation. By making me give birth to monsters?.” (90) It is very interesting to note how Marianne reacts against these intentional rapes by Jewel. She allowed Dr. Donally’s son, the idiot boy, to rape her. Carter says:

She could have pushed him away may be with one finger, even have thrown him into the stream had she wished to defend herself but she realized this was the first opportunity she had had to betray her husband and instantly she took advantage of it (115).

Violence against women often pressurises a woman in a patriarchal society, to seek refuge from one man in the arms of another. In The Magic Toyshop, Melanie is always under the threat of violence by Uncle Philip. He subjugates her symbolically by allowing her to be raped by a toy swan. She reacts by giving herself up to Finn, eventhough she resents Finn’s insolence and familiarity. When Lee in Love
subjects Annabel to sexual violence without love, she too reacts by submitting herself to Buzz, his brother. Similar cruelties suffered by Edna in the hands of her unfaithful husband Morris, in *Shadow Dance* led her to have sexual relationship with Henry Glass. Mignon, in *Nights at the Circus*, who suffers much violence from Ape-man, her husband takes revenge by having relationship with Strong-man. Probably that is the only way women find themselves in a position to take revenge in a patriarchal society. Mrs. Green in the novel *Heroes and Villains* was often beaten by her old husband. He demanded unnatural practices in bed. So she took revenge by asking the very same horseman who shot her husband to take her with him (38). As if in answer to all the humiliating rapes perpetrated on women, Evelyn in *The Passion of New Eve* was unceremoniously raped by the Mother of Beulah and watched his exemplary humiliation with perfect impassivity (65). The male chauvinistic cliche that female pleasure is dependent on submission and victimisation is also challenged.

The impact of rape and violence against women is not just physical but has great mental implications too. When many of Carter's characters put up strong resistance, certain others succumb to dumbness, lameness and even madness. Shoshana Felman says:

> Madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-assertion. Far from being
a form of contestation, mental-illness is a request for help, a manifestation both of cultural impotence and of political castration. This socially defined help-needing and help-seeking behaviour is itself part of female conditioning, ideologically inherent in the behavioural pattern and in the dependent and helpless role assigned to the woman as such (*Woman and Madness* 134).

Dumbness and madness are womanish features. They are struck dumb or forced to go mad by the stunning blows of patriarchal authority and the laws framed by them. The term 'hysteria' too is significantly derived from the Greek word for uterus, 'hystera'. This condition was thought to affect women more than men. It is a psychoneurotic condition characterised by violent emotional paroxysms, anxiety and morbid effects as of the sensory and motor functions. The dumbness and madness of women in Carter's novels are not everlasting. They are only temporary and brought about by male oppression. Most of the women who are dumb and lame and mad, overcome these debilitating weaknesses and become stronger than the ordinary women. A change from their weakness to strength empowers them to resuscitate several others along with them.

A typical victim of dumbness in Carter is Aunt Margaret, the wife of Uncle Philip, who likes only "silent women" (*Magic Toyshop* 63). It is surely her terror of Philip that struck
her dumb. She communicated with others by means of written words. Carter says:

Uncle Philip never talked to his wife except to bark brusque commands. He gave her a necklace that choked her. He beat her younger brother. He chilled the air through which he moved. His towering, blank-eyed presence at the head of the table drew the savour from the good food she cooked. He suppressed the idea of laughter (Magic Toyshop 124)

Melanie could not think coherently because of the terrible sound of Aunt Margaret's silence. But Aunt Margaret "throbbed with the effort of containing words she could not speak" (121). Wearing Melanie's dress and in love with Francie, she joined the others in their struggle against patriarchy. When she understood that Philip was gathering wood to set the house on fire, she came out with strong voiced commands that rescued the family. "She could speak. Catastrophe had freed her tongue" (197). Her dumbness was just a temporary illness created by Uncle Philip's imposition of patriarchal authority. "Struck dumb on her wedding day, she found her old voice again the day she was freed" (197)

In Uncle Philip's house, not only Margaret but even Melanie was on the verge of madness. The atmosphere of tyranny that loomed large in the house horrified her. Her mental condition is clear in the description given by Carter:

In this crazy house, as Finn said he would, she
too was going mad. She wrapped up her head in curtains so as not to hear Francie playing and not see the room darken as it approached tomorrow. She felt the round world spinning towards the new day and carrying her, infinitely small, furious reluctant with it. She saw herself, minute standing on the school room globe of the world and it turning in vast, silent space and once again felt she was teetering on the edge of sanity. But did people have nervous breakdowns at fifteen going on sixteen? Well she must be the first, unique. There was a swan over her head, dangling there like the sword of Damocles, following her wherever, insignificant as dust, she was blown by cross currents of fearful winds (Magic Toyshop 162).

Both Finn and Melanie joined together to fight patriarchy and saved themselves from this madness.

Miss. Anne Blossom with whom Joseph in Several Perceptions became acquainted tells us how she was crippled. She was deluded by her lover and was left with a little boy. She had to take refuge at the National Council for the Care of the Unmarried Mother and Her Child. Then her little boy was given away to some women that couldn’t have kiddies of her own. Anne Blossom tells Joseph:

What upset me most was not having to give up my little boy, nor bearing him nor being deserted.
nor being shamed, but being lied to and sponged off all that time. I thought I'd found somebody who cared about me but it was all lies and self-deceit. And now I'm a cripple too which I wasn't before, though I suppose I was never anybody's dream girl or pin-up, like (Several Perceptions 100). She said that she had fallen down a flight of stairs. She wanted to kill herself. But it only crippled her. She became lame and could not walk by herself. She felt that she was crippled by God for attempting suicide. But Kay said that she was not lame at all. She only had 'hysterical paralysis' (Several Perceptions 145).

The term 'hysterical paralysis' has been appropriately used to denote the crippled condition of a woman as a result of male oppression. Her 'hysterical paralysis' is a psychoneurotic condition that affected the motor functions of her body. Hysteria can affect the nerves controlling the muscles of the body. Kay said that Anne Blossom was not lame at all because she could easily overcome this temporary phenomenon. He asked her during the ball in his house to walk straight. She tried and very soon she walked by herself. And she gained more confidence and was even walking with a certain grace. Her lameness was merely a mental condition. "Anybody could have cured her, anybody who said to her in a firm enough, voice, "Nonsense, you don't really limp at all" (145).
Every woman must inevitably find that she has no home, nowhere to go. There is a sense of metaphysical alienation felt by a woman according to Cixous and Clement. All women are dispossessed and some women are more dispossessed than others. These alienations and dispossessions account for women's madness. It is this feeling of being dispossessed that made Lady A. in Wise Children another silent woman. It is this very same feeling that made Daisy Duck a mad woman. She went mad fearing that Melchior Hazard would not possess her and make her his wife (Wise Children 147). Genghis Khan's first wife, 'the Brooklyn wife', too went mad because he dispossessed her. She became a phantom caller. “Just heavy breathing and sometimes a sob, sometimes as if she’d started saying something and then choked it back, not knowing what to say" (150). She haunted Daisy Duck for a very long time. This feeling of being dispossessed is felt in a higher degree by prostitutes. Lee’s mother in Love figures as a mad woman who became dumb and never communicated to anyone. Lee told Carolyn that “the last time my mother communicated to anyone, it was to say she knew she was the whore of Babylon” (46).

When Lee thought of his mad mother, the face of Annabel on the verge of madness too was found superimposed on one another in his mind (47). Lee’s uncaring attitude towards her and his going after Carolyn, not only drives her mad but makes her commit suicide. In her madness, Annabel
was "the very image of mad Ophelia" (72). Lee's hypocrisy, impersonation and callous infidelity made Annabel irredeemably mad. Lee's relationship with Annabel was indeed a catastrophe. Annabel closed the room, turned the gas taps on and committed suicide in the peak of her madness. In her afterword to the novel *Love*, Carter herself says:

I can't resurrect Annabel, of course, even the women's movement would have been no help to her and alternative psychiatry would have only made things, if possibly worse (*Love* 113).

Unlike other women in Carter's novels, Annabel alone succumbs to her madness. Not all women can succeed in their resistance to patriarchal tyranny. Arabella Clauson in her article "Contradictions in Love and Angela Carter" says:

Suffering complete emotional breakdown in the face of the vagueness of male and female relationships, Annabel demonstrates an inability to offer reactionary political convictions. Her mind transforms into a hellish pit of emotional despair and confusion, dependent on both an ineptitude to enjoy happiness in relationships with Lee or Buzz, the sources of her only social interaction, and a visceral desire preventing suitors from deriving pleasure through any feelings of love (Clauson part 1 par. 4).

Reading through Carter's novels one becomes aware of the fact that there is a high rate of mental problems
among women. Carter herself asserts that it is indeed true when she makes a nurse in her novel *Love* ask with great distaste: “you do have a high casualty rate among your womenfolk, don’t you?” (52). Besides Annabel who goes mad, there is Joanne pictured as an unhappy adolescent. Giving reasons why she fell in love with Lee, Carter says:

An unhappy adolescent will clutch at any straw. Joanne, who was dissatisfied, incorporated her school teacher in her own illusory web where, quite unknown to himself and entirely without his consent, he led a busy, active life of high adventure and almost continuous sexual intercourse (*Love* 73)

She was an enthusiastic competitor in minor beauty contests out of a poignant, though unconscious, desire to be publically acknowledged a pretty girl. There is personal despair and chaos and fragmentation of self rampant among Carter’s women. Women are forcibly subjected to monstrous excesses of fear, pain and feelings. Besides Annabel, we are told of Mrs. Glass in *Shadow Dance* who killed herself because her husband Henry Glass was unloving and unfaithful. Her very name Mrs. Glass is significant because she reflects the condition of several other women in similar circumstances. Honeybuzzard speaking about her said: "you could hardly have picked out the unfortunate Mrs Glass in an identity parade among twelve other women of her size and type and state of pregnancy...." (*Shadow Dance* 86).
The mental sufferings that Ghislaine had to undergo after she was knifed and then left with a big scar which created an aversion for her, are unspeakable.

In the novel *Wise Children* when men are after money, power, glory and fame in the name of Shakespeare, many unfortunate women like lady Atlanta and the Brooklyn wife of Genghis Khan are mercilessly trampled upon. Melchior would readily acknowledge many Shakespearean plays as his legitimate creations, but his biological daughters Dora and Nora, remained illegitimate for seventy five years. He was accused by Lady Atlanta of being unfaithful to her, of seducing an innocent girl and abandoning her daughters after her death (*Wise Children* 214). All the women in the museum of monsters kept by Madame Schreck in *Nights at the Circus* are case histories. From beneath the closed eyelids of the Sleeping Beauty there oozed out fat tears. The Wiltshire Wonder was not beyond all pain. They were all dispossessed creatures, dumbed in “the lumber room of femininity” (*Nights* 69). Trying to trace out the cause of all these suicides and despair among women, Carter finds the main culprits to be the unfeeling, impersonating males moulded by the patriarchal culture. Carter goes to the extent of making her male characters explore their own villainy. Opening himself out to a psychiatrist, Lee in *Love* says, “I've a brother who tried to kill me and a wife who tried to kill herself and I was searching, you know? For the causal link and so I found myself” (*Love* 60).
Carter makes a thorough study of the psychology of three women-oppressors in her novels and makes them experience some of the very same experiences that women undergo under their oppression. Lee in *Love*, Morris in *Shadow Dance* and Joseph in *Several Perceptions* are Carter's protagonists specially chosen for this purpose. All these three characters suffer from psychosis. Psychosis is a severe mental derangement resulting in delusions and loss of contact with external reality. In psychotic attacks, the controlling and ordering mechanisms of the ego collapse. Mental images from the unconscious overwhelm and paralyse the conscious mind. The throbbing impulses from the unconscious give rise to pleasure and anxiety, to oceanic feelings and hallucinations. In psychotic attacks the mental images from the unconscious flood the ego. Freud's ideas about psychosis is described by Keitel thus:

[He conceptualizes] the psyche as a spatial entity, and at the same time presents it as a constellation of several systems or ‘mental localities’. The individual structural systems - the id, ego and super ego and the topographical agencies of the unconscious, preconscious and conscious have divergent functions. During psychotic states the boundaries between the mental localities implode and subsequently the consciousness is flooded with unconscious material which surfaces in the form of primary processes (*Reading Psychois* 29).
The primary process characterizes all unconscious activities. It is unstructured and free-floating. Psychic energy pulsates in undirected streams. Carter's characters like Annabel showed symptoms of psychosis. She had hallucinations. She tried to make herself invisible wearing Buzz's ring. She attempted suicide by cutting both her wrists. The people at the hospital told Lee:

We're going to move her to a very pleasant psychiatric hospital as soon as it's possible, Mr. Collins. You must realize your wife is a very disturbed girl, very sick. Your wife is a girl in need of care, of loving care (Love 52).

This lack of loving care turned women like Ghislaine and Edna too in Shadow Dance psychotics. The feeling of guilt perpetually gnawing at the hearts of characters like Lee, Morris and Joseph, makes them psychotics too. In Shadow Dance the guilt feeling created by the attack on Ghislaine that rendered her ugly and unloved, followed Morris like a shadow. His constant neglect of Edna and the death of Mrs Glass pricked his conscience. Morris himself realised that he was becoming psychotic. In the days after the little seige by Bruno and his gang, he became involved in fantasies. He thought how nice it would be to be invisible. He associated invisibility with a lightness and airiness of body, so that he floated above the streets. Sometimes he would do happy child like things and at other times he would do perverse
things. So “he wondered anxiously if he was becoming a psychotic” (124). Carter is actually trying to impress upon men the depth and intensity of the mental agony and derangement created in women by male oppression, neglect and infidelity.

After Annabel’s unsuccessful attempt at suicide, Buzz led Lee to Annabel’s psychiatrist. Lee was in great distress drank heavily and suffered from photophobia. Since he consumed drugs, he had hallucinations (Love 56). Lee admitted to the psychiatrist that he had been sleeping with Carolyn and that he felt rather guilty about it. After making a study of the conditions of Buzz, his mad brother and Annabel, his mad wife, the psychiatrist said, “there is a condition of shared, or rather, mutually stimulated psychotic disorder known as “folie a deux”. Your brother and your wife would appear excellent candidates for it” (Love 60). She also discovered that Lee’s Photophobia was only a false excuse for his tears which were actually caused by his “heart, eating itself out” (Love 61). Carter uses the psychiatrist as an instrument to point out to Lee that he has not been what a husband should have been. The psychiatrist was “like some kind of inexorable angel, directing him to where his duty lay” (Love 62).

Carter makes Joseph in Several Perceptions experience for himself the despair and the mental tensions that a woman would experience on being deprived of love and mercilessly deserted. By making use of the role reversal technique, she
makes him perceive the mind of a woman. Joseph is made to experience an acute sense of guilt for having been unkind to Charlotte when she was with him. At the same time he undergoes the pangs of despair, as a woman usually experiences, when he is deserted by Charlotte. Carter believes that the mind is a kind of theatre where several perceptions successively make their appearance, pass, repass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. The mind is a kaleidoscope. Joseph has the perceptions of both a guilty man and a deserted woman. Both these perceptions turn him into a psychotic. He seeks the aid of a psychiatrist called Ramsome. He was surrounded by despair and "Shadows pursued him, they forced him to practise bibliomancy or divination by the book" (Several Perceptions 39). He saw dreadful dreams and had hallucinations. He freed a badger from the local zoo; sent a turd airmail to the President of America. "He wanted to vanish, sleep, fade" (9). He too like Annabel attempted suicide. But he was saved by Anne Blossom. When a wind rose up and blustered against his window, he identified that as a gunfire in the distance. He was in the grip of mindless fears. His actions could "be translated from ironic moves in a black farce to ideas of real madness" (84). He tried to explain to the psychiatrist, his disastrous sense of anti-climax. The psychiatrist encouraged him to "ramble down Memory Lane" (26). Mr. Ransome understood that his problems were merely because he could not adjust himself in a world where women asserted their independence. He
said, "a good deal of your sickness is merely a failure to adjust to the twentieth century" (63). He understood that he had to reconcile himself to the fact that Charlotte had deserted him when he needed her most.

Several novelists are accused of perpetuating the traditional view of women as an irrational, emotional creature who finds fulfillment solely in the private sphere of feeling and sexuality. But Carter focuses her attention on women in the grip of claustrophobia, trying to come out of the enclosures built around them by patriarchy. Claustrophobia is an abnormal fear of confined places. The claustrophobic intensity faced by women in patriarchal society has forced women to go in search of new pastures where there is ample space and freedom for their emotional, mental and social development. Many of Carter's women characters show their aversion for closed spaces and their resentment towards men for docketing them in such areas.

Annabel in Love was confined to her room while Lee moved around with his girl friends like Carolyn and Joanne. But Annabel manages to make herself financially independent by securing a job as an assistant in the shop-window of a draper's. And then she takes her revenge by docketing him securely amongst her things by tattooing him. "She began subtly to evacuate herself from the room which had been her whole world, leaving Lee marooned there in miserable isolation" (Love 71).
In the novel *The Magic Toyshop* confinement to limited spaces is seen to be one of the worst fears of Melanie. "Melanie thought of death as a room like a cellar in which one was locked up and no light at all" (6). Her fear of closed places was so intense that she equated it to death. In *Nights at the Circus*, Wiltshire Wonder was so small that the French pastry cook used to hide her in cakes. But she was never happy within the cakes. She says, "possibly due to the circumstances of my conception, I had always suffered from claustrophobia. I found I could scarcely bear the close confinement of those hollowed cakes" (66). Carter is indirectly hinting at the tendency of men to confine women to the sweetness of the security provided by the male-dominated society without providing her sufficient freedom.

Fevvers too tried to develop her faculty to fly, owing to a kind of claustrophobia. She did not want to "be bound down to the ground" (*Nights* 25). Lizzie her foster mother tells her, "I raised you up to fly to the heavens, not to brood over a clutch of eggs" (282). The inmates of the House of Correction were imprisoned in "wedge-shaped cubes of space" (217). They were "trapped women" who lived in barracks. Their detestation of such closed spaces was expressed by forming an army of lesbians who wanted to "found a primitive Utopia in the vastness around them, where none might find them" (218). The feminist critic Julia Kristeva speaks of 'counter society' in her essay 'Women's Time'. The 'counter
society' is a female society constituted as a sort of alter ego of the official society, in which all real or fantasised possibilities of jouissance take refuge. The counter society is imagined as harmonious, without prohibitions, free and fulfilling (The Feminist Reader 206). The counter society is the only refuge for fulfilment since it is precisely an 'atopia' or a place outside the law. The primitive Utopia founded by the women in the House of Correction is a counter society that helped them rid themselves of claustrophobia.

The appalling sense of claustrophobia is very often felt by women when they are surrounded by dominating males, restricting patriarchal norms and mistaken notions of femininity. When Evelyn in The Passion of New Eve lands up in the women-dominated society of Beulah, he too experiences claustrophobia. He understands that he is lost in the world of women and the very sight of the Mother became frightening:

She was so big she seemed, almost to fill the round, red-painted, overheated, red-lit cell in which she chose to manifest herself and I became aware of an appalling sense of claustrophobia. I'd never suffered from the condition before but now I wanted to scream, I gagged, I choked (Passion 63).

Joseph's symbolic freeing of the badger from the cage can be interpreted variously. It is symbolic of his eagerness
to set his 'desire' free. But it is to be noted that Carter's presentation of Joseph is very much with the intention of a kind of role reversal. Women's feeling of being confined to a society where there cannot be a free expression or satisfaction of their desires causes claustrophobia. Joseph who undergoes the usual women's experiences suffers the condition of claustrophobia. He tries to relieve himself by setting the badger free. Joseph very often identified himself with the badger which went round and round in its cage.

Carter also discusses the psychology behind the struggle against patriarchy. She is of the opinion that the iron law of the phallus can be overthrown. Juliet Mitchell "asserts that a cultural revolution is just round the corner—patriarchy like capitalism is in its death-throes" (Elizabeth Wilson 218). Like capitalism there is also a disintegration of the family. Juliet Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* "argues that patriarchy is disintegrating because the exchange of women and the old kinship relations are no longer needed and her political conclusion is that therefore the time is ripe for their overthrow in an autonomous struggle of women against ideology" (Elizabeth Wilson 219). Theories in psychoanalysis do not confront the problem of what happens to the individual psyche when family patterns change. From psychoanalysis we learn that kinship rules become inscribed on the unconscious psyche of the female child via the traumatic re-orientation of sexual desire within the oedipal phase away from the
mother and towards the father. This 'law of the father' is very often considered inescapable. But since the subordination of women occurs in a privatized way it has often been assumed that the struggle against it necessarily consists of for the most part private struggles-to change men, to change relationships with men or to abandon all relationships with men and sexualize relationships with other women.

A close look at Carter's novels will show that families are disintegrating. She keeps on reiterating that fathers have no place in the families any more. Not only in her novel Wise Children but also in Several Perceptions, she points out that 'father' is a misnomer. "Father is only a word at the best of times but mother is a fact" (Several Perceptions 116). Father is only a hypothesis and a kind of wishful thinking. There is no figure like a father figure with an unquestionable authority over a family any more. Even where a dominating male figure tries to establish his authority, Carter nullifies his exertions of power by making us realize that there is no family at all, as in the novel The Magic Toyshop. The relationship between Uncle Philip and Margaret is not the one that should be there between a husband and a wife. It is interesting to note that Carter does not speak of their having any children. Moreover there is an incestuous relationship between Aunt Margaret and Francie challenging Philip's authority. After the dismissal of the threatening father figure, Carter does not give us any indication
of Aunt Margaret's and Melanie's intentions to start new families. Angela Carter deprives man of the most vital site of domination.

Her women characters like Mrs. Rundle and Mrs. Chance who prefer to remain single rather than married pose a great challenge to patriarchal authority. Even without a marriage, Grandma Chance in *Wise Children* invented her own family. Grandma invented this family by putting it together with a stray pair of orphaned babes. She created it by sheer force of personality (35). The absent father is a notable feature of this family. Though she liked children she did not like men. Dora says:

She took to children like a duck to water, enough to make you wonder why she'd not had any of her own. I asked her about that, once, years later, she said she'd never, not until she picked us up and cuddled us that very first morning, known what men were for (*Wise Children* 28).

The absence of the father, the death of the father and the dismissal of fathers are given much prominence in Carter's novels. Sending away Dr. Donally from the tribe in *Heroes and Villains* is a symbolic dismissal of the father from the family. After achieving this removal of the father, women go in for new relationships. Fevvers, women in the House of Correction, Mignon and The Princess of Abyssinia are excellent examples. The notion that the father and his authority
are indispensable for the survival of women is a mistaken one and struggle against such an authority is proved feasible.

Carter has designed her characters on the basis of psychoanalytic principles. She gives us adequate explanations how women have painfully internalized femininity and are striving after masculinity. Psychoanalysis gives Carter every reason to believe that bisexuality is more feasible than what patriarchy calls an essentially female nature. How the male power forces women to maintain the femininity that is thrust upon them by psychologically moulding them into the gentler sex is also studied. The roles of male desire and male gaze in the construction of femininity and their controlling nature much resented by the female world are all depicted through her characters. Carter explores areas like lesbianism where female desire can also find its expression and proves that there is no natural sexuality like heterosexuality. The dreams and fantasies which are part and parcel of female psyche are explained as creations of new models of reality. In men they are the emanations from guilt and regret. Rape and male violence are presented as means of preserving male authority. Carter in her novels, delves deep into the psychological problems created by male oppression like dumbness, madness, lameness, claustrophobia, personal despair, sense of alienation and a feeling of being dispossessed. Psychosis too tightens its grip on both the oppressor and the oppressed. She then turns the attention of her readers to the present state of
affairs in family relationships, where the role of the father is minimised or is totally absent and reminds them that the time is ripe for a struggle and the establishment of a new order.
NOTES

1 In his essay *The Uncanny*, Freud first theorized the operation of the male gaze as a phallic activity linked to a desire for sadistic mastery of the object which is cast as the passive, masochistic, feminine victim of the gaze.