CHAPTER 1

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Angela Carter is a female British writer, best known for innovatively using the lore, myth, and eroticism to examine feminist concerns and other social and political issues. The lore played a central and significant role in her writings, and was the major source of her works.

As she developed through 70s and into 80s, Angela Carter continued her efforts to find ways of writing about a greater variety of experience, and to say things that no language previously said. For here it is the greatest importance that women should write fiction as women. For her writings she takes the ideas and images from all kinds of sources, saying that she regards the whole of Western culture as a kind of folk-lore and conversely folk-lore as the fiction of the poor, and requiring to be taken seriously.¹ She sees herself as being 'in the demythologizing business', and expresses that myths are product of the human mind designed to make people unfree. In her words:

I believe that all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I’m in the demythologizing business. I’m interested in myths – though I’m much more interested in folklore – just because they are
extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree. (Whereas, in fact, folklore is a much more straightforward set of devices for making real life more exciting and is much easier to infiltrate with different kinds of consciousness).²

She made use of lore in her rewritings fairy tales from a feminist point of view that made her work best reading as a feminist rewritings. Her fiction identifies her as a feminist. Her novels, which are the matter of study of this thesis, offer woman-centered postmodernist retailing of those old stories from an explicitly feminist point of view.

Carter is concerned with the study of lore and myths; she is thoroughly familiar with the culture of the past. She makes use of that study in order to find issues relevant to her as a woman. In Her words,

"...my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a woman. How that social fiction of my "feminity" was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing."³

Angela Carter is a feminist writer, her fiction refers to that, and she accepted that designation. Carter likens her activity to the 18th century making of fictional societies that reflect on real society, and in her best work; Carter creates a rich concentrated exploration of human experience. She sees her intellectual progress as being a kind of de-colonization through which she has re-examined the version of reality presented to her by a patriarchal society, and rejected it. In her words,
The Women's Movement has been of immense importance to me personally and I would regard myself as a feminist writer, because I'm a feminist in everything else and one can't compartmentalize these things in one's life. My work has changed a good deal in the last ten or fifteen years; it would have been rather shocking if it hadn't, since, during that time, I've progressed from youth to middle age, and, for me, growing into feminism was part of the process of maturing. But when I look at the novels I wrote in my twenties, when I was a girl, I don't see a difference in the emotional content, or even in the basic themes.4

She further says,

My life has been most significantly shaped by my gender...... I spent a good many years being told what I ought to think, and how I ought to behave, and how I ought to write, even, because I was a woman and men thought they had the right to tell me how to feel, but then I stopped listening to them and tried to figure it out for myself but they didn't stop talking, oh, dear no. So I started answering back.5

According to Tucker6 "Carter's work is as political and materialist as it is feminist, but Carter as an artist is always in a state of transformation and growth. To some readers and critics, her textual practices have suggested a failure to find the right form, but as Elaine Jordan has rightly observed, "Angela Carter's fictions are a series of essays:
attempts, trials, processes”⁷ that should be understood as a demonstration that her art is not separated from her politics.

The availability of the picaresque in her stories is a meaning of her interest in open forms, she says, it is “where people have adventures in order to find themselves in places where they can discuss philosophical concepts without distractions,”⁸ she adds “And you can always get out of places very quickly”.⁹

Carter is also best known for her stories, which are reworkings of lore, but they have variety, which makes it difficult to categorize. Sometimes through reading her novels, a reader forms an idea that she is a fantasist, a realist and a science fiction writer. Sometimes, her fiction tends to be speculative.

According to Tucker¹⁰ “Most recent criticism seems to regard Carter’s work on postmodernist, even though she did not seem happy with the term and tended to regard as “mannerist” the reflexivity of writers who write books about books¹¹. Nonetheless, her opposition to humanism and bourgeois individualism, her use of intertextual frames, her critique of western and patriarchal representational practices, and her view of her own fictions as “a kind of literary criticism” place her work with the postmodernists.¹² Linda Hutcheon, one critic who argues for Carter as a postmodern writer, cites in particular Carter’s interest in “ex-centric” subjects and her engagement in a “complicitous critique,” that is, a way of writing that exposes its own position within the cultural hegemony at the same time that it undermines it. It is perhaps this difficult practice that has given some of Carter’s readers so much
trouble. Hutcheon also links Carter with such writers as Christa Wolf, Susan, Daitch, Audrey Thomas, and Maxine Hong Kingston as practitioners of "de-doxification" a term she uses to describe western and capitalist practices that strive to normalize signs and images.  

Carter's work is important for responding to the concerns of people and for examining culture from a materialist view, while her narrative strategies can be identified with postmodernist practices, especially those dealing with representation as political.  

Tucker argues, that it is Carter's fondness for parody that most strongly places her among the postmodernists. Early critics made note of the parodic element in her work but at the same time saw that quality as a mark of her failure, possibly because parody is often viewed as more of an eighteenth century phenomenon and involves notions of satire and ridicule, which practiced in the late twentieth century, have come to be seen as pastiche, a play with empty forms. Postmodern parody, however, is seriously political and critical, even if it possesses the characteristics of play.  

CARTER'S EARLY NOVELS  

Carter's early novels written in the sixties, these novels have some similarity of the texture, several stylistic and thematic concerns that noticed in her later work; they based on the imaginative directions that her later work had. Those novels are Shadow Dance, The Magic Toyshop, Heroes and Villains, and Love. They demonstrate Carter's
wish in the realm of surface, in the gathering of strong relations centered on making love, and in the hippie culture that has effected on appearance, art, and love affairs. Each novel goes in different direction; all share closeness to realism. All are set in South London and Bristol neighborhood. They depict the bottom of the bohemian culture of the sixties decade with its full exhibited making love liberty, violence and selfishness.

A reader notices that these novels didn’t get out much far from the sixties reality, they reflect imagery, helpless, weak, defenseless, virginal women, and male prier, predators. Themes in these novels emphasize on love affairs, rape, violence, and incest and focused on the male villain.

We notice that the two novels *The Magic Toyshop* and *Heroes and Villains* have female heroes. In fact, both Melanie the female protagonist of the *Magic Toyshop* and Marianne the female protagonist of *Heroes and Villains* are from wealthy middle-class backgrounds. Melanie becomes an orphan at the age of 15, bad circumstances of her parents airplane crash forced her to move from her comfortable country location to an apartment in South London of her severe, abusive and rude uncle; she receives the worst treatment by her uncle, he forces her to live in most horrible conditions. She forced to live in “melancholy, down-on-its-luck South London” in a seedy apartment over the puppet master’s shop, is more threatened by the “ferocious, unwashed animal reek” of her cousin Finn and the “poverty-stricken slum smell” of the household than by the truly dangerous uncle who terrorizes it (p.36).
Heroes and Villains, is the second novel, which has a female protagonist, Marianne who is a daughter of a Professor. Professors live in a state of siege while the world around them is full of Barbarians and Out People who stay temporarily in abandoned and ruined houses of the rich people. Marianne as a Professor’s child spends her girlhood looking down from the window on the violence with “sharp cold eyes” (p.1). Her later experience among them involves an interest in the materiality and violence of survival. She leaves her own home and goes with the Barbarians; she suffers from nastiest conditions and receives worst and most evil treatment due to her femininity. It appears that Carter here finds the writing in behalf of female is useful for critiquing bourgeois culture.

The other two novels Shadow Dance and love are of male protagonists but Carter here present women as victims. Both of them are similar, according to Tucker¹⁴ “they center on erotic triangles that suggest Carter’s ambivalence toward female characters, thus the male protagonists in these novels appear sensitive and torment, involved only secondarily and unsuccessfully with women but tied to showy, dandified, manic masculine change characters whose desire for violence cover their own sexually indefinite desires. In these words Carter seems aiming at discovering male linking, gender irregularity and its links to violence against women within an exchange of women framework.'

In Shadow Dance, violence and eroticism are available between the three-grouped characters. Morris, Honeybuzzard and Ghislaine. Morris, strongly admires Honeybuzzard’s beauty. Through reading the
novel a reader notices the suffered Morris' experiences over his girlfriend Ghislaine, who brutally disfigured and got a bad scar on her face by Honeybuzzard's knife, Moris' friend. Morris doesn't feel real complicity regarding Ghislaine's disfigure than he does a terror of Ghislaine when Honeybuzzard playfully bites him in the throat one night and Morris imagines him to be Ghislaine. In this respect Carter writes a lot about women and about their suffering, "the memory of the social fiction of the female wound, the bleeding scar left by her castration, which is psychic fiction ... deeply at the heart of Western culture". (p. 23).

In both Love and Shadow Dance, the reader notices the essential exchange of women. Ghislaine is not the only woman whom the two men share; later in the novel Morris sleeps with another of Honeybuzzard's girlfriends and considers the act "something of an achievement" (p.150). The erotic three-grouped in love, includes two brothers, Lee, and Buzz. They share Annabel, this sharing has an additional element of incest and in addition, the homosexuality relation between the two male brothers is available. For example, Lee decides to sleep with Annabel only after he mistakes her for Buzz. Annabel suffers a lot due that relation between the two male brothers.

Later Novels

Carter's later novels, The Infernal Desire Machine of Dr.Hoffman, The Passion of New Eve, Nights at the Circus and Wise Children. Through reading these novels a reader finds that the
feminism in Carter's writing has grown-up. Feminism here seems to be developed over time "Growing into feminism" was a part of the process of maturing."\(^{16}\) It sounds a more complicated and refined feminism and it attracts attention and deserves to be considered.

**Desire Machines** was the beginning of a new stage of writing and leaving the style of early novels. It is the first of her picaresque works, an elaborate, strange and unusual journey done by Desiderio, the events of the novel narrated by him. It has been read as an allegory and dreamlike, there is a battle between pleasure and reality principles. Tucker\(^ {17}\) argues, "Some critics objected to Carter's tendency to sexual violence and were puzzled by her use of a male narrator. Other, more recent discussions have perhaps better understood Carter's purposes as having to do with a non-essentialized and constructed subject. *Desire Machines* reflects Carter's developing interest in gender issues. Sally Robinson argues that 'Carter's use of a male narrator is a function of mimicry deployed by Carter to politicize desire in order to expose its complicitous relationship with dominance; thus the "overt" masculinity of the narrative serves to undermine rather than enhance reader identification."\(^ {16}\)

In *The Passion of New Eve*, through reading the novel we notice the internal wishes of Carter on behalf of female; she jumps above all barriers and obstacles of logic, reason and human being's abilities. The novel is considered as a feminist track about the social creation of femininity. The lore here played its role in giving the primitive idea to Carter. "She deployed material from myths of Odeipous, Terisias, Eve, Lilith, and many more sources". Here Carter tells us how much female.
is a victim. Carter uses the picaresque Evelyn the male protagonist to portray the adventures of the hero in an active and confused journey through America. Evelyn is also the narrator, most of the events centered on him. He goes through the desert he finds himself in Beulah, (feminist society) under the domination of the Mother who governs this feminist society. Carter offers up a Great Mother Evelyn's description of Mother as having a head "as big and as black as Marx's head in Highgate Cemetery," a beard "like Queen Hatsheput," and "breasted like a sow" (p.59). Women in this feminist society don't except any males among them. Mother castrates Evelyn; she transforms him into a female by a surgery operation and injecting him with feminine hormones. There is a full detailed description of his castration and the period of time it takes. While doing the operation Mother feels a big victory in her depth, the victory of female against male. "I am the Great Parricide, I am the Castratrix of the Phallocentric Universe, I am Mama, Mama, Mama!" (p.67). Evelyn becomes Eve, a totally female. He/she manages to flee from the Mother's hand and once again is put in Zero's, a bohemian man who dominates over Eve, rapes him/her and considers her/him as one of his several wives. Here Carter describes the suffering and torturing that Eve receives by Zero. She implies to the suffering and persecution that women receive by men.

*Nights at the Circus* has a picaresque like *The Passion of New Eve*. It is similar to *The Passion of New Eve* in the feminist ideas. It tells the story of a female acrobat who is known as 'Fewers'. She has wings and she is an image of female capacity, resourcefulness and wit. She joins the circus in London in the closing months of 19th century and
travels with it to Petersburg where she escapes the rapacious advance of a Grand Duke. The circus proceeds on the transcontinental journey towards Japan, but on the way through Siberia the train is exploded by outlaws who believe mistakenly that Fevvers is to marry the Prince of Wales, and wish to hold her hostage hoping by these means to exert pressure politically on the Tsar. Within this extravagant framework Fevvers functions as a focus for improbabilities and impossibilities of several of sorts. She may have been hatched not born in parody of the origin of Helen of Troy, she escapes from deadly situations by means that are not specified and that would not be available to a woman with normal powers. Fevvers builds her own legend, using the birth of Helen of Troy as her own original narrative. Articulates herself "hatched". Fevers has based her own legend of foundation on a Titian representing of Leda and the Swan that hangs above the brothel fireplace. This and other "classical" artworks are owned by Ma Nelson, the whorehouse madam, and although they are shown on her walls as expense for services delivered, their representations have, in effect, been undermined, becoming unreadable over time "so crusted with age that the painted scenes within the heavy golden frames seemed full of the honey of ancient sunlight" that has been "crystallized to form a sweet scab" (p.28). Proclaiming that father time's "invisible hand must be respected at all costs," Ma Nelson undermines the power of the abstracting fictions of western art by giving "father time" his literal due and subordinating him to process. Fevvers imagines time runs out and herself moves back until she "hatched". Walser in making love on the Shaman's brass bed just at the midnight hour that indicates the beginning of the new century, their coming together seems to initiate time, to start a new round. Fever's carnivalesque laughter seems to be
the prevailing force in this case, first causing the "tin ornaments of the tree outside the god-hut to shake and tinkle," and finally becoming a "spiralling tornado that covers the globe, as if in spontaneous response to the giant comedy that endlessly unfolded beneath it, until everything that lived and breathed, everywhere, was laughing" (p.295).

_Wise Children_, shows a notable family, consists of two branches the Hazards and the Chances. Melchoir and Peregrine Hazard the eldest of several sets of twins. They reproduce, and have each other's sexual partners. The relationship between Melchior and an unknown Brixton girl results the birth of Dora and Nora, who are denied by their true father, Melchoir, have another father Peregrine instead. Lady A, Melchior's first wife, gives birth to another set of twins named Saskia and Imogen, whose true father is not Melchior but Peregrine. Nora and Dora grow up obsessed with their missing but well-known father, while Saskia continues having an affair with the son of Melchior's third wife. Saskia is Tristram's half-sister and at his age too, although, Tristram is Melchior's true son and Saskia is the true daughter of Peregrine, she is not really responsible of the incestuous affair. Time goes, until the last, occasion of the gathering of the 75 year-old Dora with her beloved uncle Peregrine on the evening of his and Melchior's 100th Birthday.

Here lore played its role in creating this novel and providing Carter with the ideas and themes of it. According to Alison Lee in Carter's preface to _The Virago Book of Fairy Tales_, she writes about recurring themes in the fairy tale, many of which are apparent in _Wise Children_. Carter edited, translated, and rewrote versions of classic fairy tales, and her interest in them drives from the feminist critique of Western culture
and civilization'. This novel rewritten and criticized, but this time from a different feminist point of view and became a part of the feminine lore as Carter's other works. Linden Peach\textsuperscript{20} says that 'Merja Makinen pointed out about the two later novels \textit{Nights at The Circus} and \textit{Wise Children}, that 'This is not to argue that the later novels are not also feminist, but their strategy is different. The violence in the events depicted in the earlier novels (the rapes, the physical and mental abuse of women) and the aggression implicit in the representations, are no longer foregrounded. While similar events may occur in these last two texts, the focus is on mocking and exploding the constrictive cultural stereotypes and in celebrating the sheer ability of the female protagonists to survive, unscathed by the sexist ideologies'.\textsuperscript{21}

According to Cristina Britzolakis\textsuperscript{22} that to assimilate Carter's work, through the mediation of post-structuralist semiology, to a revisionary feminist aesthetic, runs the risk of hypostatizing, indeed of 'fetishizing', a complex trajectory. For these formations of spectacular feminity trace Carter's ambiguous relation to the literary climate of 1960s and 1970s Britain, and her self-conscious invention of herself as a professional woman writer and woman of letters within it. In \textit{'Notes from the Front Line'}, where Carter attempts to summarize of feminism to her as a writer, she writes of her sense of herself as 'a new kind of being, unburdened with a past'. This new woman, Carter argues, has been freed by contraception to combine a career as a professional writer with a life as a sexually active woman'. At the same time, running through the essay is an autobiographical reflection on the difficulty of acquiring this affirmative (not to say Utopian) political self-consciousness. Carter returns more than once to her early propensity to use charm as a
defensive strategy, 'especially when however unconsciously, in her words, 'I was going straight for the testicles'.23 One might note that the audience is gendered as male.

The founding text of 'gender performance', Joan Riviere's argues that the woman with professional ambitions often uses an exaggerated femininity in order to mask her identification with a supposedly masculine intellectual or creative power. Exaggeratedly feminine behaviour is a display of guiltlessness, an act of restitution to the father whose phallic power the woman desires, and a defense against the threat of symbolic castration. The transgressive wish or fantasy enacted behind the screen of placatory womanliness is the theft of the paternal phallus; thus the masquerade is a strategy for survival in a man's world. The specter of this regressive tactic haunts even Carter's most avowedly and joyfully affirmative feminist texts.24

Christina25 adds that if Carter's texts seem to lend themselves in an exemplary manner to the ongoing dialogue between psychoanalysis and feminism, this is in part because they increasingly and self-consciously engage with a wide range of post-1968 theoretical debates, and with a distinctively semiological conception of culture. Carter describes herself, as 'in the entertainment business'.26 She sees herself, moreover, as an allegorist 'I do put everything in a novel to be read the way allegory was intended to be read, the way you are supposed to read Sir Gawayne and the Grene-Knight on as many levels as you can comfortably cope with at the time'.27 Political enlightenment and entertainment to bring these two roles together in fiction is a difficult act to pull off, and Carter's claims have not always met with a sympathetic reception. For a certain
purist tradition of Marxism, as much as for liberal humanist criticism, Carter is a deeply embarrassing figure, adopting as she, does a postmodern aesthetic, which it has been argued, privileges style over substance, eroticizes the fragment and parasitically colludes with consumer capitalism. Feminist criticism has, however, with few exceptions, embraced Carter’s postmodern aesthetics as inseparable from her commitment to socialism and to feminism. A rift between politics and pleasure, between allegory and fantasy, thus comes to inhabit Carter criticism.

Carter’s lasting fascination with femininity as vision has until then been understood mainly in terms of a feminist critical project which identifies and rejects male-constructed images of women as a form of false consciousness. The early novels represent women who are in danger of being turned into fetishized, puppet-like objects by a male master what Carter calls the mad scientist/shaman/toymaker figure. These women tend to seek out or actively embrace the role of the spectacularly suffering victim of male nastiness. The earliest example is Ghislaine in Shadow Dance, who is mutilated and finally murdered by Honeybuzzard. In the later novels, the seductions of self-immolating femininity are rejected, or at least qualified. Paulina Palmer notes the shift from ‘coded mannequin’ to ‘bird-woman’ as marking a shift from a determinist to a more utopian, celebratory vision of femininity. Fewvers in Nights at the Circus and the Chances in Wise Children are exemplary postmodern heroines who take control of their own performances. But the celebration of femininity remains, in both cases, linked to what Lizzie in Nights at the Circus calls ‘the discipline of an audience’ (p. 280).
Easton points out that behind the texts are the inequalities of patriarchal capitalism, what Carter calls an 'advanced, industrialized, post-imperialist country in decline.' The long period of Conservative rule in Britain through the 1980s and much of the 1990s was very hard for those with politics like Carter's, and it continues to be a matter of critical debate. Carter could balance her skepticism with hope, and her fantastical writings with history's determinations.

Easton adds that feminist readers should therefore beware of turning her stories into anything comfortably resembling the 'consolatory fictions' she so deplored in certain form of feminism. Identifying cosily with her characters will only land the reader in difficulty, contradiction or irresolution. Instead, Carter's texts make considerable demands on us. Her readers can argue back; you don't have to share all her views (I don't) to appreciate them. It is the speculative thrust of her work, her daring, often mischievous 'what if...?' which is paramount. This speculative fiction has other consequences for writer and reader. Each fiction was a new project: in her words,

I feel myself challenged by the world. I enjoy writing fiction, and I set myself a number of tasks each time I write a story or start to plan a long piece of fiction. I also ask myself a number of questions, but it's like answering questions in an exam: there are no right answers. There is a selection of answers which could all be adequate to some degree, there are no answers which are unequivocally correct.
So there can be no one paradigm for all her work, no ready-made key. Asked in interviews about the meaning of her 1960s works, this is not to say that her works should be read in isolation from one another. Quite the contrary the reader gains immensely from reading more than a single Carter's fiction.

Carter's explorations of gender must, however, be understood in the context of the many different, contested positions that feminism has taken over the past thirty years. Her writings exist in 'contrapuntal relationship' with feminism's constantly evolving and internally conflicted history, never simply representing any one position and never quite in step with anyone. True, we can say that she was typical of one strand of British feminism in her concern for the material conditions of women's lives. She remained all her life a socialist, aware of class and rejecting capitalism but unlike many writers with similar views she chose forms of the fantastical rather than realism as the medium for most of her explorations. Furthermore, she was heterosexual and deeply concerned with understanding sexual conflict between men and women a difficult perspective to adopt.

Easton adds that, in consequence, while it was mostly feminist critics who first identified Carter as one of Britain's most significant contemporary writers, they did not always find in her works what they wanted politically, or arguably they sometimes found what they liked and needed only by rather simplifying the meaning of her texts. Feminists have been Carter's best and most engaged readers. ³⁴
REFERENCES


3. Ibid.


12. Ibid.


17. Tucker, Critical Essays on Angela Carter, 'Introduction' p. 10


27. Ibid., p. 86.

28. Ibid., p. 88.


