CHAPTER FIVE

LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY AND NARRATIVE

According to Sara Mills, “language is literally man-made and women cannot fit their ideas and expressions into a language which has been constructed according to the needs of males” (47). Language, a powerful tool is one of the instruments of domination and expresses a reality experienced by the oppressors. It only represents their world and their point of view. Therefore, “a revolutionary movement has to break the hold of the dominant group over theory, it has to structure its own connections” (Keohane 128), to evolve a new era for women, an era attempting to forge a new idiom, a new medium and novel modes of address, constituting a total rejection of the conventional malist culture. Women writers have particularly favoured genres like science fiction, Utopias Detective fiction and romance. Such genre traits are also seen in the short stories written by women. Certain narrative techniques have been largely employed by women writers both in their novels as well as short fiction; techniques like fantasy, intertextuality, subversion, writing the body and autobiography to tell stories from their
point of view. Jean Bethke Elshtain in “Feminist Discourse and Its Discontents: Language, Power and Meaning” is of the opinion that “language is part of the political and ideological powers of rulers... We can’t just occupy existing words. We have to change the meanings of words even before we take them over.”(Koehane 128)

Women not only write about different things but they write about them in a different way. Michicle Barrett in Women and Writing opines:

Some feminists argue that since men and women are differently constructed as individuals through the learning of language the relationship of men and women to language is necessarily different, there is also difference between men and women writers; Not only in the images, which are used in literature, but in the actual use of language itself. (24-25)

Moreover. Virginia Woolf is of the opinion that it is the subject matter of women’s novels and short stories, which is different from that of men’s. The essential difference lies in the fact not that men describe battles and women childbirth, but that each sex describes itself. The first words in which either a man or a woman is described are generally enough to determine the sex of the writer. In feminist writing we are made conscious of a woman’s presence- of someone resenting the ill treatment of women and pleading on behalf of women.
Women writers generally encounter certain difficulties before they can write exactly as they wish. First of all there is the technical difficulty that the very form of the sentence is unsuitable to her. As Barrett points out in *Women and Fiction*:

It is a sentence made by men: it is too loose, too heavy, and too pompous for a woman’s use...And this woman must make for herself altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it (48).

Moreover, the values that are important to a woman are not the ones of importance to a man. As such women writers have a tendency to alter the established values in a phallocratic set-up and “to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important” (Barret, 49).

The subject matter of women's novels and short stories also begin to show certain changes as women are coming to be more independent of opinion. They seem less interested in themselves and more interested in other women and attempt to represent common experiences. In the short stories of Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi, common feminist issues have been taken up rather than individual
experiences and they have adopted a distinct moral language, one that emphasizes concern for others, responsibility, care and obligation.

Earlier, particularly in the nineteenth century, women’s novels were largely autobiographical as the motives that led them to write was the desire to expose their own sufferings and plead their own cause. Autobiographical writing attracts women writers, as it is “the attempt to write the self or give the self a narrative (that) is deeply bound with questions of identity.” (Ramamoorthy 7) But now women writers employ autobiographical writing for a political purpose as well to record not only individual experiences but also collective ones as well. Simone de Beauvoir’s Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter is a landmark in women’s autobiography. As Barrett points out in this context, “women are beginning to explore their own sex, to write of women as women have never been written before; for of course, until very lately, women in literature were the creations of men.” (49)

Now her attention is being directed away from the personal centre, which engaged it exclusively in the past, to the impersonal and this change is clearly reflected in her novels, which have naturally become more critical of society and less analytical of individual lives. They deal with social evils and remedies. This greater impersonality in women’s lives instils the poetic spirit in women, which will inevitably result in fine literary creations.
Narrative in general is a version of, or expression of ideology; the representations by which we construct and accept values and institutions. Any fiction is an expression of ideology like Romance plots and the fate of female characters that are expressive of attitudes to family, sexuality and gender. The attempt to call into question political and legal forms related to women and gender, characteristic of the women’s liberation of the late 19th and 20th centuries, is accompanied by the attempt by women writers to call narrative forms into question. Rachel Blau Du Plessis in her Preface to *Writing beyond the Ending* uses a new term to refer to this practice - “the invention of strategies that sever the narrative from “Writing beyond the ending” - formerly conventional structures of fiction and consciousness about women” (x).

Virginia Woolf proposes two critical acts for modern women writers namely breaking the sentence and breaking the sequence - which are both ruptures with conventional literary practice. According to Du Plessis, “breaking the sentence severs dominant authority and ideology. Breaking the sequence is a critique of narrative, restructuring its orders and priorities precisely by attention to specific issues of female identity and its characteristic oscillations” (x). Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their short stories have reflected these two critical acts of modern women writers.
Innumerable narrative strategies like re-parenting, fraternal ties temporarily reducing romance and emotional attachment to women in bisexual love plots, female bonding and lesbianism, are invented or deployed by female writers of the twentieth century explicitly to delegitimate romance plots and related narratives. At the same time these writers undertake a reassessment of the mechanisms of social insertion of women through the family, the private sphere, and patriarchal hierarchies, inventing narratives that offer in the multiple individual and the collective protagonist, an alternative to individual quests.

Originally the rightful end, of women in novels was social-successful courtship, marriage or death as a consequence of sexual and social failure. At times the endings were inspirational, sublimating the desire for achievement into a future generation, an end for the female quest that was not fully limited to marriage or death. Such were the dominant endings; related to real practices of sexuality, gender relations, kin and family and work for middle-class women. However, twentieth century women writers primarily attempt to solve the contradiction between love and quest by inventing a complex of narrative acts with psychosocial meanings. They replace the alternate endings in marriage and death that are their cultural legacy from nineteenth century life and writings by offering a different set of choices. Du Plessis in Writing Beyond the Ending aptly points out:
When women as a social group question, and have the economic, political and legal power to sustain and return to questions of marriage, law, divorce, the 'Couverture' status, and their access to vocation, then the relation of narrative middles to resolutions will de-stabilize culturally, and novelists will begin to 'write beyond' the romantic ending. (4)

What she means by “writing beyond the ending” is “the transgressive invention of narrative strategies, strategies that express critical dissent from dominant narrative”. (5) Writing beyond the ending, is “finding new words and creating new methods that produces a narrative that denies or reconstructs seductive patterns of feeling that are culturally mandated, internally policed, hegemonically poised” (5).

The questions that are to be generally dealt with in composing a work—what stories can be told? How can plots be resolved? What is felt to be narratable by both literary and social conventions? — are generally issues that are very important to women writers, with their senses of the untold story, the other side of a popular tale and areas of women's existence that have never been revealed. The quest narrative is a linear narrative in which temporal sequence is taken to signify material causation. Though other narrative structures do exist, the narrative in which “the mainspring of the narrative activity is to be traced to that very confusion between constructiveness and consequence” (Rabinowitz 108) is the dominant structure in the 19th and 20th centuries' western writing. When narrative
represents events in linear (temporal) sequence as a causal process then it follows that we will read that causal process as we read temporal sequence, as 'natural'. That causal process in turn, inevitably encodes ideological discourses and these discourses too are read as 'natural'. When the discourses involved are dominant in a society, this naturalization is particularly easy. But otherwise it becomes problematic.

One major strategy of contemporary women writers is the interrogation of conventional narrative, which Du Plessis designates "a version of, or a special expression of ideology" (x). Conventional narrative encodes gender discourses which women writers, particularly feminist writers, find disruptive and unusable. These discourses may subvert the oppositional gender discourse also coded into the text, so that feminist writers using narrative must explore and expose its conservative and conservatizing function in order to avoid the appropriation of their work by the dominant discursive formation, the gender ideology of which is patriarchal.

To change the story or to represent the other side of the story signals, a dissent from social norms as well as narrative forms, "because people are relatively more comfortable with stories whose elements are renewed, recreated, defended and modified" and they are naturally attracted to those "events.
emotions, and endings which are recognized apparently corresponding to experience.” (20)

In the twentieth century women writing, the marriage plot with its high status and the quest plot of punishment for female aspirations were displaced from the central position in novels as in their short stories. Olive Schreiner like other women writers in Du Plessis’ opinion “breaks the sentence, so that alternative and oppositional stories about women, men and community can be constructed beyond the teleological formulations of quest and romance” (30). To break the sentence does not particularly reject grammar but rhythm, pace, flow, expression, the structuring of the female voice against the male voice, and female writing by existing conventions of gender or any way in which dominant structures mould muted ones. For “a woman to write she must experiment with altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it” (32). Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their stories have altered the current sentence to express the exclusive female experiences of menstruation, pregnancy and child-birth. In Carter’s “Wolf-Alice” (BC 119-126) the onset of menstruation that evokes mixed feeling of anxiety and embarrassment in young girls’ is well depicted in Alice’s response to “her first blood” (122) which trickled down “between her thighs”. She analyses the reason for it; may be wolves “must have nibbled her” (122) while she was asleep. She soon learns to “expect these bleedings, to prepare her rags against them”. (123).
But in Namjoshi's “Blood” (FF 33) it is the hymnal blood that is referred to. The Prince marries the maiden, “there is a ritual, but there isn’t any blood” (33). The Prince forsakes her (33). Atwood’s “Giving Birth” (DG 228-45) highlights how women experience pregnancy and childbirth. Jeannine has a positive outlook about her pregnancy, while the other women’s is negative because it is an unwanted pregnancy. The process of childbirth is vividly described, “her bones unlock” and “she opens like a bird cage turning slowly inside out” (243) while “a wet kitten slithers between her legs” (243). The unbearable pain of the contraction when she “grits her teeth, face, her whole body together, a snarl, a fierce smile” (243) is followed by the instant relief. Jeannie was “already forgetting what it was like” (243).

The woman writer produces a woman’s sentence- the psychological sentence of the feminine gender- which is used to describe a woman’s mind by a fearless writer who is neither proud nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex. The sentence is psychological in the sense that it deepens external realism with a picture of consciousness at work as well as a critique of her own consciousness, saturated with the dominant discourses. Though the psychological sentence has been liberally used by both men and women writers, it is more of a woman’s sentence because of the cultural and situational function that indicate a dissension stating women’s mind and concerns have neither completely nor accurately been produced in literature as we know it.
Breaking the sentence “is a way of rupturing language and tradition sufficiently to invite a female slant, emphasis or approach” (32). A woman’s sentence in Woolf’s opinion is a term for a writing “unafraid of gender as an issue undeferrential to male judgement while not unaware of the complex relations between male and female” (33).

Women writers in their works express dissent from an ideological formation by attacking elements of narrative that emphasize, uphold, or represent the values in question. Therefore, after breaking the sentence, a rupture with the internalization of the authorities and a voice of dominance, the woman writer creates a further rupture, mainly breaking the sequence- the expected order. To be more precise it can mean delegitimating the specific narrative and cultural orders of the 19th century fiction with its emphasis on successful or failed romance, the subordination of quest to love, the death of the questing female, the insertion into family life and so on. In their writings they also, “leave a trail of unspoken and unarticulated thoughts, which bear a meaning for the interested reader” (Kaur 55). Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi have amply illustrated this in their stories where they have adopted open-endings. These narrative strategies are the expression of two systematic elements of female identity namely a psychosexual script and a socio-cultural situation both that are structured by major oscillations. Plessis is of the view that women writers as women have to compromise with divided loyalties and doubled consciousness, both within and without a social and cultural
limit, which along with the psychosexual oscillation "has an implication for sentence and sequence- for language, ideology and narrative." (40)

Two major features in feminist poetics are giving voice to the voiceless and making visible the invisible. As Edwin Ardener in *Perceiving Woman* points out that "the muted structures are there but cannot be realized in the language of the dominant structure" (22). As a result of their oscillations, between a main and muted position, women writers are faced with a double consciousness, which offers, "a way of seeing the identity of any group that is at least partially excluded from or marginal to the historically current system of meaning, value and power" (42). Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi have with varying degrees of success experimented this technique in their short stories. They have in their writings given voice to the voiceless and highlighted the muted position by bringing their women characters to the forefront.

Like the novel, the short story too employs the chief narrative modes—description, report, speech and comment., which according to Helmut Bonheim, form "the staple diet of the short story and the novel." (2) Some modes are more popular in one age than another. In our age speech is preferred, "description is thought boring except in small doses; comment of a particular kind, namely moralistic taboo." (8) In *The Narrative Modes: Techniques of the Short Story*, Helmut Bonheim says:
In many a modern story speech and report may be easy to sort out, while description and comment tend to crop up only piecemeal and in imbedded forms. This tendency to fuse the modes is an essential quality of modern narrative technique, just as it has become increasingly difficult to separate the narrator's perceptions and comment from those of the characters. (10-11)

Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi's stories illustrate the modern narrative technique as there is a tendency to fuse the modes in such an intricate manner that it becomes increasingly difficult to separate them. In accordance with the modern age, these writers in their stories prefer speech to the other modes. These writers have revealed certain distinctive narrative techniques in their stories.

Angela Carter's short stories seem to be a laboratory where she has experimented and remade herself over and over again. In each tale there is a sense of risk-taking, of playing with damnation and the loss of self. The best of her stories are interesting both for themselves and for what she learned she could do by writing them. Carter's stories never appear to be new versions of old tales, but are unique. Salmon Rushdie in his introduction to Angela Carter Collected Short Stories: Burning Your Boats sums up Carter's technique:
Baudelaire, Poe, Dream-Shakespeare, Hollywood panto, fairy tale, Carter wears her influences openly for she is their deconstructionist, their Saboteur. She takes what we know and having broken it puts it together in her own spiking courteous way; her words are new and not new like one own. In her hands Cinderella, given back original name of Ashputtle, is the fire-scarred heroine of a tale of horrid mutilations wrought by mother-love. "John Ford's It's a Pity She's a Whore" becomes a movie directed by a very different Ford; and the hidden meaning perhaps one should say the hidden natures of pantomimic characters are revealed. She opens an old story for us, like an egg, and we find the new story, the now story, we want to hear within. (xiv)

Many of the features of the classic fairy tale are evident in the stories from the collection *Bloody Chambers and Other Stories*, confirming her belief that each century creates fairy tales after its own taste. These stories display in a unique way the perfect craftsmanship and genial cynicism characteristic of Perrault, whose 17th century versions of ancient tales became the standard ones and entered the oral tradition of most European countries particularly England. Perrault's influence on Carter is manifest in her style, which is equally marked by concision of narrative, precision of language; irony and realism and characteristic of the 18th century Enlightenment.
Carter's re-telling of fairy tales is not meant for children but for adults who are attuned to savagery and wonder. They became increasingly adult and literary forms unlike those of Perrault. As Valerie Shaw in her *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* aptly remarks:

It is the word 'literary' that needs emphasis here: there is not 'question of a Carter's story like 'The Tiger's Bride' entering back into the oral tradition from which it derives some of its strength. There is a well-educated literary awareness and rich imagination stocked with images drawn from western culture behind Angela Carter's work and although like Perrault's her tales are told with the kind of art that conceals art, retaining the simplicity of form and the narrative directness of a country-story tale. They depend for full appreciation or responsiveness to a range of allusions far wider than any country-story-tale could contain. (262)

Besides the re-telling of fairy tales and folk tales, Carter's stories display an abundance of allusions. The eclecticism of Carter's allusions lends her work a complex yet apparently simple texture by an intermixture of sumptuousness and sparsity in her style. Characters are both animated and stilled by the precision of her language, as Carter had language at her fingertips. Resolute attention to banal details as well as immediacy of sensory experience play a significant role in her
stories, creating a mood of calm, irradiated with humour. Many of her tales close with this mood leaving the readers contemplating an image toward which the whole narrative has been moving. In the concluding part of “The Tiger’s Bride”, a wonderful transformation occurs, but the girl who undergoes and describes the process retains an unexpected sprightliness of language, “he dragged himself closer and closer to me, until I felt the harsh velvet of his head against my hand, then a tongue abrasive as sand paper. He will lick the skin off me.” (BC 67) Because the girl’s alarm is so robustly expressed, there is all the more grandeur about the image with which the tale ends. “My earrings turned to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur.” (67)

There is a similar modulation from realism to subdued lyricism at the end of “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” where Beauty’s tears offer a “soft transformation” of the dying Beast:

...And then it was no longer a lion in her arms but a man, a man with an unkempt mane of hair and how strange, a broken nose, such as the noses of retired boxers, that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts. Do you know’ said Mr. Lyon. ‘I think I might be able to manage a little breakfast today, Beauty, if you would eat something with me. Mr. and Mrs. Lyon walk in the garden; the old spaniel drowses on the grass, in a drift of fallen petals. (BC 51)
Carter’s stories fascinate the readers but at the same time it may also produce wincing from the fascination. A characteristic feature of her writing is the yoking together of different objects and effects within the same syntax—a comic and explosive device. Fascination and recoil are parts of the enticements of pornography. As Elaine Jordan in ‘The Dangers of Angela Carter’ has observed:

Angela Carter is a writer of contradictions. Her style yokes disparate effects—the banal and the extraordinary, the prim and the offensive, the baroque and the off-hand. The unmistakable boldness of this style is produced by its collisions, its very active dependency on previous texts, which is a readers rewriting and the rewriting of readers. (124)

Surprises and reversals are found in abundance in the stories of Carter. In “The Tiger’s Bride” for instance, the hero does not become a handsome Prince. Instead, Beauty is transformed into a tigress by his passionate kisses. In “The Bloody Chamber” it is the mother who kills the Marquis. In “The Erl-King” the clever girl decides to strangle him before he can transform her into a bird. In “The Company of Wolves” the young man whom Red Riding Hood meets in the forest is transformed into a wolf when he reaches her grandmother’s house. Similarly in her “The Loves of Lady Purple” the puppet kills the puppeteer. In “Master” the slave girl shoots her master and in “Reflections” the macho Anna rapes the male narrator. Even in the realistic stories Carter’s world is strange, dangerous and
beautiful. Ordinary and even sordid things are transfigured by the intensity of her vision. In “A Souvenir of Japan” the traditional fireworks show is described as “the brilliant but ephemeral display which “opens out like variegated parasols” over the dark water of a river. In the “The Smile of Winter” “the beach is full of the garbage of the ocean. The waves leave torn, translucent furls of polythene wrappings too tough for even this sea’s iron stomach.” (40). In “A Souvenir of Japan” the narrator meditates on the impermanence in Japan and also the undependable devotion of her lover, which Carter describes:

Even buildings one had taken for substantial has a trick of disappearing overnight. One morning, we woke up to find the house next door reduced to nothing but a heap of sticks and a pile of newspapers neatly tied with strings left out for the garbage collector. (9)

There is quite a lot of drama in Carter’s stories and many passionate as well as perverse relationships. As she herself has stated she had a special appeal for gothic tales, cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal with the imagery of the unconscious. In her stories we find that women turn into wolves, incest and murder are committed, the dead walk and people pass through mirrors into other worlds. Sometimes Carter’s love of elaborate language and extreme situations become oppressive. But like the old folk tales her stories
are not meant to be consumed all at once, should be read or even better, read aloud— one at a time and ideally in front of a fire on a dark winter’s night.

Margaret Atwood in her short stories has displayed that she has a remarkable ability to present the ordinary in an extraordinary light, revealing new perspectives and suggesting to the reader new alternatives for revaluing matters previously taken for granted. The techniques that Atwood adopts for dissecting the human personality and exploring the inner landscape of people’s minds are highly commendable. As Elspeth Cameron points out:

[T] he detached point of view, the clinical precision of language, and the scientific imagery all are reminiscent of the scientist or medical expert...... frequently the effectiveness of her narrator’s point of view comes from the tension that arises when highly charged emotional situations are observed with the cool detachment is especially suitable when the narrator is insane as in ‘When It Happens’ a device that Atwood may have gleaned from Agatha Christie’s most famous mystery, ‘The Murder of Roger Ackroyd.’ (CLC.13 - 46)

Related to this scientific point of view, the other techniques that Atwood employs are the journal form, the splitting of point of view and scientific analogy. In “The War in the Bathroom” (DG 1-12) one of her short stories, the journal form
is effectively employed to give day to day record of observations which enable the narrator to retaliate. The same technique is adopted in a subtler way in both her novels and in a few short stories in the collection, *Dancing Girls*. Cameron further notes:

Atwood's narrators are often seen to keep a close watch on everything around them, as if, like people stranded in the bush, their lives depended on it. In cases where a real self, such as we have seen in *Lady Oracle* hides behind one or more personae, Atwood frequently splits the point of view, using first person for the persona. This device is the organizing principle in *The Edible Woman* as it is in such stories as 'Giving Birth' and 'The War in the Bathroom'. (CLC.3: 46)

Analogy with scientific situations, especially from the area of biology offers her ample symbols suitable for her themes as seen in the story, "Under Glass" (DG 65-78) which views the breakdown of a relationship in the same manner as the narrator watches the animals in the moonlight pavilion of the zoo. Atwood's language brims with images and descriptions drawn from the world of science, and it is this adaptation of the scientific imagery for literary purposes that lend her prose the cool, tense tone. As Cameron observes:
For her it is a way of seeing clearly, of getting close to the truth, since it allows a rational penetration through superficial appearance to an underlying truth. Though some readers will feel that the ‘expert surgeon’ Atwood murders to dissect, there is no denying the powerful impact of the tension between her emotional subject matter and her emotionless tone. ‘Natural’ then in Atwood’s view is true and authentic ‘artificial’ is misleading or distorted...Atwood often seems like an anthropologist from another world, accurately recording the thing people do in our society as if she herself had never done them. (CLC 13, 46)

Atwood presents men and women stripped of their social masks so that they may be viewed as a species in nature and as such the real issues are those which man holds in common with all living creatures- survival of the fittest as in the novel Lady Oracle, territorial aggression in the story “The War in the Bathroom” (DG 1-12), the finding of a mate as in “The Man From Mars” (DG 13-37) anger and jealousy in “The Lives of the Poets” (DG 196-209) and reproduction in “Giving Birth” (DG 228-245). Cameron says, “Atwood shows that through the “artifice” of social behaviour which represses real feelings and hides or distorts the real self, man has created for himself dense and chaotic mazes which are surely hideous were they not so funny.” (CLC 13: 46) A technique that Atwood adopts in her writing is to juxtapose and compare two internal worlds- the world of the male principle characterized by rationality as well as cruelty, and the world of the
female principle that according to Atwood implies an existence beyond reason. A failure to recognize this results in the splitting of the self.

In Atwood's short stories, we find that her narrators are constantly interpreting themselves, their pasts and their diverse relationships. Neither the underlying idea nor Atwood's treatment of it is something that is new and entirely original. But the subject is very significant for her as is evident from her asides that frequently come up in her stories for instance in “Hurricane Hazel” (BE 31-59) when Buddy gives an identification bracelet to his girl friend, he misnamed it as an identity bracelet. She ponders a possible reason for the error and comes to the conclusion that another interpretation has since become possible that “Buddy was putting his name on (her) like a ‘Reserved sign’ or an ownership label or a tattoo on a cow’s ear, or a brand.” (51). Though, it is generally accepted that “getting a boy’s ID bracelet was a privilege not a degradation” (51), to Atwood it was not a privilege. Such asides indicate the way in which feminism has empowered her to take familiar materials and present them in a new light. Atwood’s stories are neatly constructed present-tense narratives that unfolds backwards and forwards over several decades and the characters define themselves or fail to do so in terms of the way they and the world have changed over the years. Atwood in her tiny pieces in the collection Good Bones and Simple Murders adopts a unique style in presenting the essence of a subject in an unusual way. They are like an author’s sketchbook of miniature pieces of cartoons.
caricatures, quick little exercises that enlighten and delight. In “Gertrude Talls Back” (BAM 18-21) Gertrude tells Hamlet that she had killed his father. “It wasn’t Claudius”. “It was me”(21). In “Making a Man” (BAM 41-45) different methods of making a man are suggested – traditional method, the gingerbread method, clothes method and Marzipan method. In “Let us now praise stupid women” (BAM 63-70) “even stupid women are not so stupid as they pretend: They pretend for love” (65). Further the “eternal stupid women” eats ‘the free sample of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge” thus giving birth to theology’ (67). In “The Female Body” (BAM 77-84) the female body has many uses as ‘a door-knocker’, ‘bottle-opener’ and ‘nut cracker’ (80-81) and in ‘My Life as a Bat’ (BAM 117-124) bats “kill without mercy, but without hate. They are immune from the curse of pity. They never gloat”. (118)

Suniti Namjoshi has adopted the fable form as a convenient vehicle to explore feminist issues in a precise epigrammatic manner. Namjoshi in a number of fables included in Feminist Fables and The Blue Donkey Fables position her readers as active readers seen in re-tellings, where they present “not one authoritarian narrative, but two narratives – the revised version of the traditional narrative and its discursive referent, the traditional narrative.” (Cranny-Francis 89) and makes use of the direct reader address. The fables “The Oyster-child” (FF 78), “The Dower” (FF 88) and “Dazzler” (BDF 54) are fine specimens of this technique. In the fable “The Oyster-child” (FF 78) people come from far and wide
to admire the most beautiful pearl, but the oyster remains silent; she says nothing. The author ends the fable with the direct-reader address: she leaves it to the readers to decide the reason why the Oyster said nothing by giving multiple choice answers whether it was from habit, or because she was dead or out of modesty. Namjoshi in her fable “The Dower” (FF 88) also makes use of the direct-reader address. The fable is an attack on the preference for male children in a patriarchal society. This is illustrated through a King’s disappointment in having three daughters. He is to a certain extent consoled by the fact that the two elder daughters have been endowed with the natural gift of producing flowers and pearls respectively. But the youngest daughter has no natural gift and the king was rather upset about that until one day she cut her foot and the drop of blood was transformed into a beautiful ruby. The king was delighted and as for the princess, “her feet were in ribbons and her path was strewn with glass and stones,” (89) so that she would continually cut her foot and produce infinite rubies. Namjoshi offers two other endings to the fable for the reader’s choice. An alternative ending was that before the miracle took place she was married off to a poor swineherd. Owing to utter poverty, she could not replace her worn out shoes. But fortunately, one day, she cut her foot and the blood turned to ruby. The sensible swineherd sold the ruby and bought her a pair of new shoes. Another ending suggested was that the first became a florist, the second a dealer in pearls and the third produced a ruby only when it suited her. In the fable “Dazzler” (54) the question posed is
"If you were a duck what would you do?" The suggested answers are various activities like practicing patience moving, starting a campaign against "sunbirds" asking sunbirds for flying lessons. These suggested endings given by this innovative writer deliberately makes it clear that she intends to make her readers active participants rather than the customary passive readers. Angela Carter also supports this kind of reader participation, "I try, when I write fiction to think on my feet- to present a number of propositions in a variety of different ways and leave the reader to construct her own fiction for herself from the elements of my Fictions." (qtd. Warner 25)

The fables in the collection The Blue Donkey Fables are quite different from the traditional fables; they are not compact stories and invariably the concluding parts are enigmatic or thought provoking. "The Jacana’s Tale" (26), "The Disciple" (28-29), "A Love Story" (65), "Dazzler" (51) may be categorized under this type. In "The Jacana’s Tale" the Blue Donkey gives an enigmatic reply to the Disciple’s question "Which Creature was the most modest?" "I can’t tell you that. But consider there are at least three creatures in the fable." (27). The concluding line of "The Disciple" is "the tiger went. What she achieved is still unknown". (29): In "A Love story" the last line “The tale is after all a fanciful invention, a playful variation on a species of love.” (65)
Some fables are in the form of dialogues like “The Disciple” (28-29), “The Three Piglets” (30), “The Vulgar Streak” (37-38) “Lesson Number three” (39) “Olive Branch” (46-47), “Magpie” (58) “Transit Gloria” (85-86) and “In the Garden” (87-88). Namjoshi also makes use of the technique of narrating dreams like “A Tale of Triumph” (41) and “Serious Danger” (83-84). In the “Solidarity Fables”, which are more compact, there are a few fables like “Pelican” (68-70), “Higher Education” (71-72) “Beauty Incarnate and the Supreme Singer” (84-85), “One of Us” (87-88) that are in the form of dialogues. Namjoshi’s fables are very unusual, modern fables, very different from the traditional Aesop’s fables. Though the majority of fables have feministic overtones, they are rarely didactic. On the contrary they are enjoyable, stimulating and thought-provoking.

Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their short stories have used certain common narrative techniques like fantasy, inter-textuality, subversion, writing the body and open-endings, apart from the distinctive ones. Fantasy has been employed to explore the inner mind of characters and to re-interpret reality as it is “never the same once it is touched by the fantastic; it emerges as a new realization of some inner truth bringing about a change of perspective” (Dhawan 78). Fantasy is condemned by hostile critics as “escapist literature” that “aims at no higher purpose than amusement” (Rabkin 44). But in the literature of the fantastic, “escape is the means of exploration of an unknown land, a land which is the underside of the mind of man” (45). This accounts for its appeal to women writers.
who find this an ideal technique to explore freely the interiors of a woman’s mind that remains fettered in a phallocratic world. Rabkin further states that “…escape literature always presents the reader with a world secretly yearned for…” (73). As for instance Suniti Namjoshi in her novella *The Mothers of Maya Diip*, envisages a matriarchal utopia- an all-female society where the woman reigns supreme. By subverting and attacking patriarchal values, Namjoshi presents in the Mayan society a perfect picture of “a female utopia” – a world secretly longed for by feminists.

Fantasy allows the writer greater liberty to give free play to the imagination and this explains the extensive use made by feminists who consider this an ideal technique to explore their feminist ideals. In their writings there exists a constant interaction between the real and the fantastic, which provides the writer with the facility of highlighting two or more different perspectives. Fantasy is also used as an important narrative technique to explore the interior world of the female characters. Here the conflict between the fantastic and the real is expressed in their ability to find consolation in past memories but their strange discomfort is in the presence of reality. As Marina Warner in ‘Obituaries- Angela Carter’ in *the Independent* opines, ‘for a fantasist, Carter, kept her feet on the ground…she had the true writing gift of remaking the world for her readers. For her fantasy always
turns back its eyes to stare hard at reality, never losing sight of material conditions. (25)

In Carter’s work the supernatural is generally employed in a derisive manner. For Rosemary Jackson fantastic literature seeks to articulate what has been repressed and hence it articulates the conscious. Moreover, it is a politically subversive form to the extent that it challenges institutional orders. Carter finds this function of fantasy very useful to explore aspects of sexuality that is not generally permitted in the dominant patriarchal ideology. Carter’s use of fantasy has a great similarity with Jacqueline Rose’s concept of fantasy, where she too draws on Freud, but is more concerned to analyze the constitutive relation between fantasy and the construction of national identities in the real world. As Aiden Day in *The Rational Glass* rightly notes, “Politics is not fantasy, but fantasy is politics. The elements of fantasy in Carter’s fictional writing possess a feminist political vocabulary that connects them directly and positively with the real world.” (29)

In her collection *Fireworks*, the stories “The Loves of Lady Purple” (23-38) and “Reflections” (81-102) are tales of fantasy. In “The Loves of Lady Purple” a marionette, Lady Purple based on the notorious Lady Purple, the shameless oriental Venus, who springs to life in “the form of a fantasy generated in her wooden skull by the mere repetition so many times of the same invariable actions.” (37) With a kiss the Asiatic Professor is killed by his puppet who sinks.
“her teeth into his throat and drain(s) him.” (36) “Reflections” (81-102) is again another tale of fantasy where the narrator, who picks up a magical shell, falls under the spell of a macho girl Anna. He is taken to a dilapidated house, where he is forced to pass through a mirror. In “Reflections” Carter’s specular vision offers a greater inversion than that of Lewis Carroll. Here “light” is black, “air” is solid, sound is seen and gravity is “not a property of the ground but of the atmosphere” (95) Flowers have “inexpressible colours whose names only exist in an inverted language you could never understand” (96). Finally there is the ultimate test of gender inversion, which is the rape of the by now feminized male narrator by the masculine, Anna.

Carter’s collection *Blood: Chamber and Other Stories* contains stories that are fantastical in nature. In “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” (BC 41-50) and “The Tiger’s Bride” (51-67) we find Beauty staying comfortably with the Beast. In “Puss-in-Boots” (68-83) the cat helps his master Furioso in his courtship of the wife of Signor Panteleone. In “The Lady of the House of Love” (93-107) the beautiful queen of vampires feeds on young men. In “Werewolf” (108-110) and “The Company of Wolves” (110-119) Red Riding Hood is not afraid of wolves and sleeps comfortably “between the paws of the tender wolf” (118). In “Wolf-Alice” a girl Alice, is brought up by wolves. In “Ashputtle or the Mother’s Ghost” (110-120), the Mother’s Ghost, in the form of a turtle dove, helps Ashputtle in finding her fortune in the first variant, “Mutilated girls”. In the other two
variants 'The Burned child' and 'Travelling Clothes' too it is the Mother's ghost that helps her escape from her step-mother's ill-treatment and seek her fortune.

In the collection Black Venus the story "Overture and Incidental Music for A Midsummer Night's Dream" (65-76) is a tale of fantasy. Here, Carter's linguistic exoticism is at its height. The breezes are "juicy as mangoes, that mythopoeically caress the coast of Coromandel far away, on the porphyry and lapis lazuli Indian shore" (65). But as usual her sarcastic common sense restores the story back to earth before it disappears in an exquisite puff of smoke. This dream world "nowhere near Athens...is really located somewhere in the English Midlands, possibly near Bletchley" (67) is damp and waterlogged and the fairies have colds. Also it has been chopped down to make space for a motor way. Here Carter exposes the difference between the dream woods and the dark necromantic forest of the Grimm's. The forest she finally reminds us is a scary place; to be lost in it is to fall a prey to monsters and witches:

The English wood is nothing like the dark necromantic forest in which the Northern European imagination begins and ends, where it's dead and the witches live, and Baba-yaga stalks about in her house with chicken's feet looking for children in order to eat them. No...There is a qualitative, not a quantitative difference between this wood and that forest. (67)
But in a wood you purposely ‘mislay your way’ there are no wolves and the wood is kind to lovers. Here is the difference between the English and European fairy tale precisely defined:

...(A)n English wood, however marvellous however metamorphic, cannot by definition be trackless, although it might well be formidably labyrinthine. Yet there is always a way out of a maze, and, even if you cannot find it for a while, you know that it is there. (68)

“Peter and the wolf” is also another fantastical tale in this collection. Here Peter’s cousin is taken away when she was a baby and brought up by wolves. Though she is forcibly brought to Peter’s house, the wolves come and take her away. She “walked on all fours, as they did, but hairless as regards the body although hair grew around its head.” (80) Peter once again sees his cousin suckling the little cubs on the banks of the river.

Carter’s “The Donkey Prince” (Don’t Bet on the Prince 62-72) is a fantasy tale for children. In this tale Daisy a young working girl, who knows a trick or two, enables Bruno the enchanted donkey Prince, to recover the lost magic apple in the savage mountains and transform them into human beings. The entire quest in Carter’s tale is a humanising one, the beast becomes human and humane in more ways than one, and the hard work of the working girl is recognized and duly
rewarded. What happened long ago in another country becomes a utopian model, which Carter presents as a goal for which one should strive.

Margaret Atwood does not make use of fantasy in her short stories to the extent that Namjoshi and Carter do. But Atwood’s stories do bear evidence of the fantastical elements in her writings. “Rape Fantasies” (DG 93-104) and “When It Happens” (125-137) have elements of fantasy in them and also in a few pieces in the collection Good Bones and Simple Murders. In “When it Happens” (125-137) Mrs. Burridge, a neurotic woman gives vent to her repressed fears and anxieties and indulges in fantasizing about something imminent that is to take place or happen, though she is rather vague about it. She frequently looks out through the back door and window as if expecting something to happen. She also expresses her insecurity as she watches Frank “as he walks slower than he used to” (121) She thinks to herself. “He can’t protect me… and it isn’t only him, its all of them, they’ve lost the power” (129). In her fantasy, she imagines that “they are all waiting just as (she) is, for whatever it is to happen” (129). She has noticed this at the Dominion store where she has seen the look on the faces of the women, “an anxious, closed look, as if they are frightened of something but won’t talk about it.” (129) Perhaps, “they’re wondering what they will do, perhaps they think there’s nothing they can do.” (129) The very fact that she does not know what exactly is about to happen, implies the fantastical element. In “Rape fantasies” (93-104) the very title implies the element of fantasy that pervades the story.
Women in a patriarchal society experience certain apprehensions regarding becoming the victims of rape; they always have the fear of someone pouncing on them, in short, “women have rape fantasies” in which they express these fears. In the story four girls- Chrissy, Darlene, Greta and Estella relate their rape fantasies. Atwood here employs fantasy to give women free expression to the rape fantasies that they experience and also the ways in which they would confront them.

In a few of the miniature pieces in *Good Bones and Simple Murders*, Atwood indulges in flights of fantasy that give into buoyant humour as in “Making a Man” (41-45), where the narrator gives fantastic recipes for making a man in one’s own kitchen in different ways- the “traditional method” (42), “Ginger bread method” (42-43), “Clothes method” (43-44), “Marzipan method” (44) and “Folk art method” (45). In “The Victory Burlesk” (71-73), the skillful girls performing the striptease act seem to float in “pools of coloured light, moving as if they were swimming mermaids behind glass” (72). In “Alien Territory” (102-116), the narrator finds himself in “alien territory”, where he sees “the rushing of red rivers”, rustling of “fresh leaves in the dusk”, the sound of waves like “the beating of drums” and surrounded by animals “Stuffed” and “castrated” (105). In “My Life as a Bat” (117-124), the red-faced man in pursuit of the bat has blue eyes and a mouth “emitting furious noise, rising up like a marine float” (119) and again the sun rises like “a balloon on fire” (120). In “Bread” (129-133), the husband of the rich sister cuts himself a piece of bread and “out flowed blood”
and a loaf of bread “Floats about a foot above” the kitchen table” (132). “An Angel” (153-155), the angel of suicide appears “dense, heavy with antimatter, a dark star” and has a face “of a grey egg” (154). And in “Dance of the Lepers” (167-169), the dancers seem like “animated mummies from an old horror film” or “living bed sheets” (168).

Like Atwood and Carter, Namjoshi, in her fable collections, The Blue Donkey Fables and “The Solidarity Fables” makes use of fantasy, particularly animal fantasy to explore feminist issues and present an alternative system to the prevailing patriarchal ideology. The fact that man’s relationship with the rest of the animal kingdom strikes a deep chord of imaginative recognition in the human consciousness may account for the continued popularity for these beast tales. As Swinfen says in Defence of Fantasy, “animal fantasy is not only a popular form amongst modern writers, but it also has one of the longest and strongest traditions of all types of fantasy.” (12)

Although men may seem to differ ‘superficially from animals, they are physically animals and basically feel a deep affinity towards them. Namjoshi in her The Blue Donkey Fables has made ample use of animal characters endowed with human capabilities. A variety of animals are presented- cat, swan, jacana, tiger, piglets, frog, bluejay, crow, starling, jackal, owl, deer, duck sunbird, magpie, robin, rabbit, white unicorn and pandas. Invariably the female of the species is
presented in these fables. The major character who plays a pivotal role in these fables is the female Blue Donkey. Another notable character is the One-Eyed Monkey.

In animal tales usually the animals are presented as symbols of certain human characteristics and certain animals are traditionally associated with certain human characteristics – the cunning fox, the greedy crow, the conceited rooster, the foolish donkey. But Namjoshi’s animal characters in her fable collections are not generally symbols of human virtues or vices, but are depicted as individual animals endowed with human capabilities. In *The Blue Donkey Fables* the Blue Donkey is presented as a very wise donkey reversing the general notion that a donkey is essentially foolish or stupid. In the first fable “The Blue donkey” (1) the Blue Donkey exhibits the wisdom and strength by not giving in to the people but rather making them accept her ‘blue colour’ In fables like ‘Jacana’s tale’ (26-27), ‘The Disciple’ (28-29) ‘The Three Piglets’ (30-31), ‘The Sinner’ (36), ‘Lesson Number three’ (39-40) the Blue Donkey plays the role of a very wise person whose judgements are valued. In the fable ‘Crow and the Starling’ (44) the crow is presented as a foolish ‘idiot crow’ contrary to the traditional notion that crows are clever.

Namjoshi in her ‘Solidarity Fables’ has also made extensive use of the female species of animals- hedgehog, fish, duck, tortoise, mare, wolf, blue
Donkey, sow, pelican, penguin, owl, blackbird, bluebird, butterfly, Iris Wren, crab and goose- with the exception of a few like ‘The Promise of King Hillar’ (57-59), ‘The Guitar -Player’ (74-75), ‘Australian Notebook’ (81), ‘Blood and Water’ (89-90) ‘The function of friendship’ (91-92) and ‘Bluebeard’s Way’ (98-101). “Wolf” and ‘Horror Story’ are purely animal tales in this collection. In ‘Wolf’ Namjoshi presents a very amiable picture of a wolf who befriends the virgin. This is contrary to the traditional notion where wolves generally symbolize terror and violence. “there was once a young woman who made friends with a wolf” and “frequently went for walks together” (62). In ‘Horror Story’ Namjoshi presents a tale of a barn owl who led a solitary existence. Gossip spreads around the neighbourhood “She lives alone, she sleeps alone, She’s out all night”. (76) The owl symbolizes everything that is wicked and glamorous. Attempts to break her solitary existence proved futile. Finally when the owl left for good “they invaded her stronghold and found dozens and dozens of skeletal remains- not hidden discreetly, not stashed away neatly, but just lying about.”(77)

In her collection, Feminist Fables too Namjoshi has made use of animal fantasy in the fables “Legend” (31), “The cloak” (66) and “The Dragon Slayers.” (75) In “Legend” Namjoshi’s fantasy heroine is a she-monster who finally becomes a legend. The skeleton of this she-monster is placed in the national museum. It bears the legend “The dreaded she-monster. The fumes of this
creature are noxious to men. Inscribed underneath are the names of the scientist who gave their lives to find this out” (31). In “The Cloak”, a magic cloak that protects the enchanted human being from harm is the subject. “Lions roared, looking for blood, but they did nothing. Rhinoceroses charged, looking for sex, but they rode past rapidly and didn’t bother the human being,” (66). In “Dragon Slayers” Namjoshi presents an enchanting animal tale of a secret friendship between a child and a dragon. The child hides the dragon under her bed during the daytime:

In the daytime, she hid it under her bed where it would sleep quietly, but late at night, she would step on its leash and take it for a walk...But as she grew older the dragon grew stronger. (she could no longer hide the dragon)....it seemed very correct that the dragon had to sleep through the brilliant daytime, and so early one morning they decided to fly in broad daylight. (75)

The practice of retelling or to use Moria Monteith’s words, “the practice of rewriting or pulling a text out of a previous text, of fighting for a location on ground already occupied by other ‘jargons’ or varieties of language, of creating a place in language where different voices could be heard”, (5) is a technique widely practised by women writers and technically termed as the concept of inter-textuality. This term “inter-textuality” coined by Julia Kristeva, is based on the
proposition that "every text is absorption and transformation of another text" (qtd. Andersen 113). In its narrow sense, the term is applied to parody, mere allusion, source criticism and casual generic resemblances, but in a wider sense, "the inter-text of a given story may be defined as the set of plots, characters, images and conventions which it calls to mind for a given reader". (Andersen 113) Therefore, it is not merely another text to which a work alludes but to a totality that suggests that the relationship between the texts as structural wholes.

According to the theory of inter-textuality a text "cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (Still 1); for two reasons. The primary reason being "the writer is a reader of texts before she is a creator of texts," (1) and as such the text will inevitably contain references, quotations and influences of all sorts. Secondly, "a text is available only through some process in reading;" (1) what is produced at the moment of reading is due to "the cross-fertilization of the packaged textual material by all the texts that the reader brings to it." (1-2) Though the term "inter-textuality" was coined in the 1960s, the phenomenon is as old as recorded human society. Therefore, we may find "theories of inter-textuality where ever there has been discourse about texts." (2)

Inter-textuality is a very significant concern in women's writing today as "it seeks a feminine literary space while Still acknowledging (however grudgingly)
the power of the male space in which it cannot avoid, to some extent, operating". (Hutcheon 110) Women writers in general, and 20th century women writers in particular reveal a peculiar tendency to re-write, re-interpret or revision classical myths and other culturally resonant materials such as biblical stories, folk or fairy tales for which they have a peculiar charm. In their attempts at re-interpretation they reformulate a special kind of persistent narrative that is the repository of many dimensions of representations. Roland Barthes has historicized the question of myth and its related question of an eternal essence for woman in his *Mythologies* where he points out:

Are there objects that are inevitably a source of suggestiveness, as Baudelaire suggested about woman? Certainly not: one can conceive of very ancient myths, but there are no eternals ones; for it is human history that converts reality into speech and it alone rules the life and death of mythical language. Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history, it cannot possibly evolve from the nature of things. (Barthes 110)

But a historicized sense of myth is now normally lost. As Du Plessis in *Writing Beyond The End* points out:

*Beyond The End*
Of all our stories, myths are considered the most universal, describing deep structures of human need and evincing the most cunning knowledge of mankind. Likewise, myths are held to offer exclusive narrative coverage, saying every vital thing that could be imagined about a character or an event, providing a repertoire of causes or effects, stimuli and responses, that is not only paradigmatic but also time-less. (106)

When a woman writer attempts to re-write myth, she is faced with material that is hostile to historical considerations of gender. She is put in a very difficult situation. "at the impact point of a strong system of interpretation masked as representation" (106), and is expected "to rehearse one's own colonization or iconization through the materials one's culture considers powerful and primary" (106). Myths state cultural agreement and coherence. Therefore, when a writer dissents from that agreement, she may turn to a myth because "she can thereby attain a maximum tension with and maximum seduction by dominant stories". (106) A writer who 're-writes', in Alicia Ostriker's words "deconstructs a prior 'myth' or 'story and constructs a new one which includes, instead of excluding herself". (Signs 8:72) The whole re-visionary project, critical of existing cultural agreement has been beautifully summed up by Adrienne Rich in When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision:
Revision- the act of looking back of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves...We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (Rich 35)

Hence, the re-writing of myth is a re-visionary process that is critical of existing culture and values. The woman writer through this re-visionary process effects a narrative displacement, and offering the possibility of speech to the female, thereby giving voice to the muted or voiceless, as well as a narrative delegitimation thus effecting a re-alignment that reverses the established order by putting the last first and the first last that “always ruptured conventional morality, politics and narrative.” (Du Plessis 108). Making use of this technique the woman writer is able to evolve the new sentence that comes from the “other side” of everything and thereby articulate things “not...noticed before or if noticed...guiltily suppressed” (108). At times with the narrative displacement, the “other side” of the story seems the right side and the writer claims to have found the absolute truth at the remote bottom of fiction, like for instance Edna St.Vincent Millay in ‘an ancient gesture’ insists that Penelope’s act is authentic as she really cried while Ulysses is only a gesture for he only pretended to cry. In
this context Du Plessis argues that, “the convention of authenticity or truth finally unburied helps give power to the retold tale and authority to the teller, both necessary for confronting the cultural weight of western civilization.” (108)

The narrative displacement to “the other side of the story, where a well-known story is told from some non-canonical perspective, enables the woman writer to reveal the emotions of the female characters under these circumstances highlighting different causes and different responses. According to Virginia Woolf a woman writer creates from her life experiences and the contradictions of her consciousness, the new context in which she gains permission to speak and act in autonomous fearless ways, for which, “she must kill the angel in the house, that self-sacrificing, charming, flirtatious phantom who always pleases others, never herself” (123) Carter and Namjoshi have re-written myths, to deconstruct the myth of male supremacy, a patriarch construct, and offer the readers a new paradigm. In Carter’s “The Erl-King” (BC 84-91), a reworking of Goethe’s Ballad, the captive girl turns on her captor. She refuses to be transformed and caged like the other girls. She plans to “strangle” (91) him. Namjoshi rewrites the Greek myth of Perseus and Andromeda in the fable “Perseus and Andromeda” (FF 47) unlike the original version where Perseus heroically saves Andromeda from a Sea-monster. Namjoshi’s fable presents Andromeda as stronger, ready to fight the dragon rather than the usual function of serving as bait. She tells the Prince, “You be the bait, and I’ll fight the dragon” (47). Though Atwood has not
re-written myth, she too has attempted to deconstruct the myth of male supremacy in her stories. In her “Blue Beard’s Egg” (BE 131-164), Atwood has attended to the egg’s mythic significance as a fertility symbol which in her story becomes the symbol of positive transformation.

Again for a woman writer to accomplish the task of aggressive truth-telling from female experience, the writer must necessarily “rejoin the internal struggle between censorship, respect for dominant ideology- and expression of muted insights” (125). Further, Du Plessis continues that:

The expression of a woman’s feelings can be achieved only by de-legitimating narrative patterns embodying the social practices and mental structures that repress women. The writer must ‘break the sentence’ of beliefs and ‘the sequence’ of plot structures that express them. (125)

The choral or group protagonist is another major strategy of female modernism, which is a way of empowering narrative if one chooses not to depend upon the romance and personal plots nor certain basic assumptions underlying the plots. Women writers are influenced by the social changes that women as a group have undergone and their narratives reflect this corresponding change. No longer pinned down by “love as the only natural action” (163), women writers and their writings reveal a greater scope. Men and women characters of these women
writers will not be observed wholly in relation to each other emotionally but as they cohere and clash in groups and classes. This muting of the emotional results is the de-emphasis of the plot of romance, which in turn suggests a direct correlation between women’s critique of romance and their professional status. Only when a woman writer has achieved social and economic freedom, will her writings be “more critical of society”. (Women and fiction 83). The communal protagonist facilitates the organizing of the work so that neither the development of an individual against a backdrop of support characters, nor the formation of a heterosexual couple is central to the work. The communal protagonist then operates as a critique of the hierarchies and authoritarian practice of gender. Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi have depicted communal protagonists in their tales, in the sense that their heroines are not just individuals but are also representatives of the whole class of women, particularly the New Woman. Carter’s Madeline in “Penetrating to the heart of the Forest” (FW 47-60) Atwood’s Emma in “Two Stories about Emma” (BE 111-130) and Namjoshi’s Gretele in “In the Forest (FF 95) are fine instances.

The use of intertexts, quotations or allusions from other texts affords a quicker understanding and a clearer vision. Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi, have taken advantage of this facility and readily adopted this technique.
Carter in her short stories particularly her collection *The Bloody chamber and Other Stories*, has made use of fairy tale inter texts. The Blue beard story in “the Bloody chamber”, Beauty and the beast in “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”, the story of Snow White in “The snow-child”, sleeping Beauty in “The Lady of the House of Love”. Red Riding Hood in “The Werewolf” and “The Company of Wolves” and a combination of motifs from several fairy tales in “Wolf-Alice”. “The Erl-King” is an adaptation from Goethe’s Ballad and “Puss-in-Boots” from Rossini’s music. In her collection *American Ghosts and old World Wonders* the story, “Ashputtle or the Mother’s Ghost” is based on the original version of Cinderella “Ashputtel” inter-text. Carter in some of her short stories makes use of familiar characters- like the notorious prostitute, Lady Purple, the Oriental Venus in “The Loves of Lady Purple” (FW 23-38), the famous French poet Baudelaire’s mistress, Jeanne Duval in “Black Venus” (BV 9-23), Edgar Allen Poe in “The Cabinet of Edgar Allen Poe” (51-61) Tamburlaine in “The Kiss” (27-29) and Lizzie Borden in “The Fall River Axe Murders” (103 – 121).

This technique of inter-textuality has been effectively employed by Carter to offer a new paradigm. Carter’s use of this technique is not a mere imitation or the production of an exact copy, but the creation of something unique and original inspite of the abundant use of intertextual frames. It is permeated with
‘the sense or organic and harmonious wholeness’ (Still 4) that is characteristic of any original work.

Atwood too, in several of her short stories has made use of inter-texts and allusions. In “Blue beard’s Egg” (BE 131-164) Atwood makes use of “Fitcher’s Bird” inter-text and attempts a revision of the Blue beard story. This inter-text is a parallel for the story of Sally and Edward’s marital life. Sally again plays both Fitcher’s Bride as well as Fitcher. Like the wives of fitcher/Blue beard / the robber Bridegroom, Sally is in danger of being replaced with other women or like the goose-girl’s maid put into a barrel stuck full of nails and rolled downhill. Like the innumerable wicked stepmothers she thinks of the other sirens without pity. ‘Trouble with your heart? Get it removed, she thinks. “Then you’ll have no more problem.” (138) At times her Blue beard tendency gains the upper hand filling her with the desire to shape Ed according to her preconceived mould. Rather than the other women, it is in reality Sally who wants to gobble Ed up and claw him into tiny bits in the little dark room so that there won’t be anything left.

In the fairy tale she has written for children, Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut Atwood parodies the traditional fairy tale ‘The Princess on the pea’, on which she bases her fairy tale. Inter-textuality is also seen in a few stories like ‘The Salt Garden’ (BE 201-227), where Alma making a magical salt garden for her daughter Carol thinks of “the crystals forming on the thread, like the
pictures of the Snow Queen’s palace in the Hans Christian Andersen book at school” (204). In “Unearthing Suite” (BE 263-281), the narrator leading two children through the woods, teaches them “to look on both sides of the trees” (276) so that they will not lose their way, alluding to the fairy tale motif of “children in the wood, potentially lost” (278). In ‘Weight’ (WT 177-194) the Blue beard inter text is brought in, where Molly being “murdered by her husband, with a claw hammer” (180), and again the “Beauty and the Beast” inter text, where Molly, the smart advocate, thinks that “any toad could be turned into a prince if he was only kissed enough, by her” (182). In “Wilderness tips” (WT 195-222), Portia looking at her great-grandfather’s portrait is instantly reminded of “A Robber King” (218), and in “The Man from Mars” (DG 13-37) where Christine always considers herself very ordinary and identifies herself with “the false bride” or “the ugly sister” (29).

In Atwood’s collection Good Bones and Simple Murders, also the technique of inter-textuality has been used, particularly “Unpopular Gals” is full of inter-textual echoes to popular fairy tales – Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel to quote a few lines: “I was always the ugly sister.” (7), “I loved him more than anything did. Enough to cut off my foot.” (8) “barrels studded with nails” (9), “Cooking and eating children” (9) “Rapunzel” (10) “making those girls drudge in the kitchen.” (11) “Gertrude talks back” – makes use of Shakespeare’s allusion- to Hamlet. Here Atwood makes use of this inter text to give another version of
Gertrude story. Again, “There was Once” (22-26) is based on Cinderella or Ashputtle story.

Suniti Namjoshi like Atwood and Carter has made use of the technique of inter-textuality in her altered tales and given emphasis to role reversal, where the female characters are presented as “liberated women” contrary to their traditional roles in a male-dominated society. The fables “Perseus and Andromeda” (FF 47), “Jack Three’s Luck” (101) and “In the Forest” (95) highlight the role reversal. “Perseus and Andromeda” is an adaptation of a story from Greek mythology where Perseus heroically saves Andromeda from a sea-monster. In Namjoshi’s fable the possibility of a reversal of roles is highlighted, where the Princess is also portrayed as a strong woman capable of fighting the dragon. This is contrary to the traditional notion that only princes fight dragons. Similarly in “Jack Three’s Luck” an adaptation of the traditional fairy tale “Jack and the Beanstalk” it is the Giantess who replaces the giant. The boys are expected to take on the role of a slave to serve the master in this case a giantess. The fable, “In the Forest”, is an adaptation of the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel”, which presents the girl, Gretel taking on a dominant role. She is presented as the “Braver and wiser” of the two. Hansel is pictured as a coward, who “runs back home to his wicked step-mother.” But Gretel doesn’t run “she stays on”. (95) “The Princess” is an adaptation of a tale by Hans Christine Andersen, about a princess who could not sleep because of a pea placed under a pile of mattresses. This fable by Namjoshi is intended to
satirize the fact that sensitiveness is an essential and commendable womanly quality.

Namjoshi’s fables “Happy Ending” (FF 112), “The Three Bears” (39), “Of Spiders” (57), “The Hare and the Turtle” (68), “The Mouse and the Lion” (97) are fine instances of inter-textuality. “Happy Ending” is a fable based on Hans Andersens’s tale “The Ugly Duckling” She creates a new story of the younger brother of the ugly Duckling who unlike his brother was a drake and hence it was natural that the drakes would get along with the ducks. The problem was solved when they realized this. Modelled on the Goldilock’s story Namjoshi in her fable “The Three Bears” presents Goldilocks as a little pretty boy, who in fact has all the qualities of a girl. “He makes such a sweet and good little girl.” (39) The fable “Of Spiders” presents Miss Muffet of the nursery rhyme “Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet” in an entirely different way. Here Miss Muffet is not a coward, but her problem is that she is too innocent. The spider who is in fact Aracne is the “best spinner in the whole universe” (57) “The Hare and the Turtle” Namjoshi’s re-telling of the famous Aesop’s fable,” The hare and the tortoise”, the tortoise is presented as a cheat who symbolizes the powerful male who always gets his way. The Hare on the other hand is depicted rather pathetically and symbolizes the powerless woman who has to accept things as they are; as the turtle points out to her, “you really should learn to be a good loser.” The concluding lines of the fable serves as a generalization that other turtles are worse, “This turtle had a cousin,
who when he raced with hares, always drew the finishing line at the edge of the ocean.” (68). In the fable “The Mouse and the Lion” Namjoshi subverts the tale about the mouse and the lion. In Namjoshi’s fable, the mouse is presented as very wise and thoughtful mouse, who suddenly realizes that it had already done a favour to the lion by not killing her. The fable concludes with the mouse not setting the lion free. The Lion and the Mouse symbolize the powerful and the powerless respectively. But the tale again suggests a case of reversal- “world inside out” the powerless overcoming the powerful.

Theorists such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Elizabeth Janeway and Ann Oakley have drawn attention “to the oppressive effects of stereotypical representation of women as sex-object, wife and mother” (Palmer 14). According to them these roles have “the effect of relegating women to the private sphere of sexual relations and family life, while debarring them entry into the public one of professional work and political struggle.” (14) Women writers such as Fay Weldon, Joanna Russ, Doris Lessing, Marge Piercy, Muriel Spark, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi in their writings have invariably attempted to free women from the patriarchal stereotyped representation of women by subverting the gender roles. As Patricia Waugh in Feminine Fiction observes:
In fantastic texts by writers such as Carter, Russ, Atwood, and Weldon, the feminine subject is fragmented, dispersed, in an attempt to rupture or deconstruct the ‘fixed’ ego formed doubly in alienation. These writers push their representations to the limits of the signifying order, attempting to reverse the development from the imaginary to the symbolic and to envision an alternative subjectivity formed out of the dissolution of the unequal boundaries of gender. (Waugh 169)

Kate Chopin, Stevie Smith, Atwood, Eudora Welty and Carter have exploited the forcefully subversive elements of fairy-tale, folklore and mythology. A combination of these elements intermixed with the fantastic and the real, “are modes of subjecting powerful traditional, cultural forms to astute criticism, satire and ironic reversals of meaning.” (Wheeler 13) Women writers make use of these subversive elements to question “patriarchal attitudes to sex, work, art and play” (13) by submerging into “the forms which unconsciously structure and ‘people our imagination from our earliest childhood.” (13)

Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their short stories have adopted this strategy of subverting the gender-roles in order to deconstruct the traditional role of a woman and make her active, enterprising and independent. In Carter’s “Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest”, Madeline is a resourceful and enterprising girl as opposed to her brother Emile who is portrayed as docile. In search of the
mythic and malign Upas tree in the heart of the forest, Madeline is bitten by a carnivorous lily. Emile suggests that they tell their father about this “lily”. But it is Madeline the wiser of the two who reasons with him, “we must not talk of the things we find in the heart of the forest. They are all secrets. If they were not secrets, we would have heard of them before.” (FW 56) Madeline speaks with such gravity that Emile fails to understand her. He looks at her in a new puzzlement:

He sensed the ultimate difference of a femininity he had never before known any need or desire to acknowledge and this difference might give her the key to some order of knowledge to which he might not yet aspire, himself, for all at once she seemed far older than he. (56)

Ultimately when they find “the mythic tree” it is Madeline who dares to pluck the fruit, taste it and then offer it to Emile, who meekly accepts it, just as Eve in the Garden of Eden offered the forbidden fruit to Adam. In “Reflections” (FW 81-101) Carter has again reversed the traditional female role and has portrayed a strong and powerful girl Anna who holds the narrator captive under her necromantic skill from the moment he is allured by her singing that is a “trajectory of sound far more ornate than that of the blackbird”, and picks by a mysterious shell, that was very heavy and appears very curious, “The whorls of the shell went the correct way. The spirals were reversed. It looked like the
mirror image of a shell, and so it should not have been able to exist outside a mirror: in this world, it could not exist outside a mirror.” (83) He is taken by her to a dilapidated house where he meets her aunts, an androgyne and where he is made to pass through the mirror and ultimately Anna rapes him brutally until the narrator liberates himself from her clutches by shooting her with her own gun.

In “The Cabinet of Edgar Allen Poe” (BV 51-61) Carter once again reverses the gender roles and portrays Poe’s mother as a strong and stoic female character who faces a lot of hardships to make a living for her family. She has to earn the livelihood besides her traditional task of nurturing. She makes her living by acting. She acts even “when racked by the nauseas of her pregnancies” (52) and “meanwhile on stage, her final child, in utero, stitched its flesh and bones together as best as it could under the corset that preserved the theatrical illusion of Mrs. Elizabeth Poe’s eighteen inches waist until the eleventh hour, the tenth month” (58), and little Edgar sat on her knee and suckled at her bosom while she learned her parts. Her husband David Poe hardly ever extends a helping hand to her and finally after the birth of their daughter he coolly deserts her.

Atwood in her stories invariably portrays the New Woman as opposed to the traditional one, particularly in “Two Stories About Emma”- “The whirlpool Rapids” (BE 111-119) and “Walking on Water” (120-129). Atwood has portrayed in Emma a very bold and enterprising woman as opposed to the traditionally
docile one. The Narrator at the outset of “The Whirlpool Rapids” (111-119) defines fearless women:

There are some women who seem to be born without fear, just as there are people who are born with the ability to feel pain. The painless ones go around putting their hands on hot stoves, freezing their feet to the point of gangrene, scalding the linings of their throats with boiling coffee, because there is no warning anguish. Evolution does not favour them. So too perhaps with the fearless women, because they aren’t very many of them around. (111)

Emma is such a fearless woman “who will do anything, though that isn’t how she thinks of herself. The truly fearless think of themselves as normal” (112) She is an ordinary waitress in the coffee shop of a tourist motel near Niagara Falls. She is invited by her friend Bill to join a test run on a new kind of tour down the Whirlpool Rapids below Niagara Falls, on a big rubber raft, to be conducted by the travel agency he is working with. Bill feels that this kind of thing might appeal to Emma, as she is “a physically brave young woman, a bit of a daredevil, willing to put on a life-buoy at a moment’s notice and sit on a large inflated platform of rubber and swirl down the dangerous Niagara Whirlpool Rapids.” (114) Even when the test run fails and Emma fights bravely in the water in the face of death, she bursts out with an energy resulting from anger “I refuse to die in such a stupid
It is much later that she realizes that she had been “close to death” (117) Emma is filled with the conviction that “everything will work out for her somehow” (119). The impact of the accident on Emma is her firm conviction that she is “invulnerable.” She had been thrown into the Whirlpool Rapids of Niagara Falls and had lived; “therefore nothing could touch her.” (119)

Atwood has again subverted the traditional female role in portraying Emma in the story “Walking on Water” (BE 120-129). Emma is here depicted as an independent, daring and invulnerable type of woman. Emma on a boat journey up the Nile, jumps off the boat being pestered by a young Arab. The men aboard are respectful after that incident and keep their distance. They are rather surprised that “a young western woman travelling alone could ever have been serious enough about what they (consider) her honour to risk death for it.” (121) Emma is here portrayed as a sort of tom-boy. Falling in love is a venture for Emma that “seems to be a lot like sky diving.” (122) She has a preference for “exceptional men.” (122) whom she can look up to. Robbie, an archeologist appeals to Emma. On a vacation with Robbie on a Caribbean Island- St Eunice, Emma hears of an underwater ridge running out to wreck Island and at low tide it is possible to walk from one island to the other along the ridge: she decides to make an attempt. In the adventurous attempt Robbie is almost killed though Emma escapes unscathed. She is rather disappointed that “no one complimented her on her feat of daring or referred to her as Miss Jesus” (128)
Suniti Namjoshi, like Carter and Atwood also subverts the traditional gender roles to portray the New Woman. Namjoshi adopts this strategy in a number of fables like "The Three Piglets" (BDF 30-31), "The Example" (FF 52), "In the Forest" and "The Red Bird of Paradise, where the female characters are depicted as stronger. Women can hope to become complete human beings only if they reject the old feminine image and become a different kind of woman. They can break out of the housewife trap only by learning to compete directly with men in professional work. Nicholas Davidson in *The Failure of Feminism* aptly points out "women, as well as men, can only find their identity in work that uses their full capacities. A woman cannot find her identity through others—her husband and children." (15) This innate desire of women to break out of the housewife trap is highlighted in Namjoshi’s fable “The Three Piglets” (BDF 30-31). Here the three female piglets express their ambition to become a poet, a saint, a business woman respectively. The fable reveals that women are not content to stay at home and lead a quiet life, a role that patriarchy has designed for them. On the contrary, they desire to hold respectable professions.

The fable ‘The Example’ (52) an exponent of lesbian feminism highlights the fact that lesbians are disapproved of in a patriarchal set up. Here a wren, the sparrow’s children’s tutor is dismissed merely because she happens to be a lesbian, for which people have great aversion. The wren tries to reason with the parents in vain. But still the sparrows refuse to accept her arguments. "Ah, but
what you are, after all, is something that our very own children might turn out to be. And what you are, is dreadful and horrid” (52). In “The Example” Namjoshi subverts the traditional female role to a very radical role—that of a lesbian. In the “O Red Bird of Paradise”, the bird community is unprepared to accept the “unusual birds”—the red ones with green wings. It isn’t that “they were freaks or even mutants or stray representatives of an exotic species or anything like that.” (53) They were unique representing the bold, radical, liberated females. Society is reluctant to accept any change in the traditional way.

Namjoshi’s fable “In the Forest” is another example of subversion. Here the fable, which is an adaptation of the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel”, presents a subverted picture of the traditional gender roles. Gretel in this fable takes on a dominant role as opposed to the traditional passive one. She is depicted as the “braver and wiser” of the two who takes the initiative to enter the wicked witch’s house. “She stays on” (95) but her brother, Hansel is here pictured as a coward, prefers to” run back home to his wicked step-mother” and endure the ill-treatment passively.

Feminist assertion of the female body as a female estate or the feminist rejection of man’s ownership of the female body is a crucial concern of women writers, which invariably appears in their writings. As Sidonie Smith observes:
In the patriarchal set up the object female body has not been a personal body, however. It has been the community body one which threatens to contaminate the body politic, to destroy the very fabric of cultural identity and nationalism. (qtd. Bhatt 47)

These lines focus on how the female body has been viewed by patriarchy as the female body may earn a bad reputation and have a corrupting influence on future generations and so ought to be controlled. Like other properties the female body should also be owned by men who would have complete authority over it and take all decisions regarding it. The role of women is confined to be passive and as sexual objects in order to please men mentally as well as physically. Toril Moi in Feminist Literary Criticism believes that, “the patriarchal traditions imposed certain social ideals and standards on women”. (209) Those who conform to it are termed feminine and those who failed to do so are called unfeminine and unnatural. Since women under patriarchal traditions have been victims intellectually, emotionally or physically, Elaine Showalter suggests that “the attempt of gynocritics should be to illuminate every aspect of women’s writing in a male-dominated society” (216). The female authors experience an anti-patriarchal rage, which gets reflected in their writings. The themes, subjects, characters and situations created by female authors out of this rage are bound to be different from those male writers in a patriarchal society. For Toril Moi, the feminist writing has “discernible anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist position.” (220)
But all this has been altered with the women’s liberation. Women have asserted their rights including the right to their bodies and thus rejecting the male supremacy over the female body. “The female body has [become] a site for feminist struggle for autonomy, which has been frequently stressed in women’s writing.” (qtd. Bhatt 48) Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi have also stressed this struggle for autonomy in their stories.

Carter in her short stories has adopted this strategy of writing the body to reject the objectification of the female body. Carter’s “The Bloody chamber” (BC 7-41), “The Tiger’s Bride” (51-67), “Flesh and Mirror” (FW 61-70), and “Master” (71-80) are fine instances of this technique. In “The Bloody Chamber” the Marquis, “the old monocled lecher” (15) examines his new bride’s body “limb by limb” in keeping with the patriarchal notion of the female body as an object. He strips her “as if he were stripping the leaves of an artichoke” (15) the narrator cynically describes how he assesses her like “a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab.” (11) She also observes “a regard of his”, “the sheer carnal avarice of it” (11) that she has never seen before. In “The Tiger’s Bride”, the Beast’s sole demand is to see Beauty naked. Beauty initially resists this objectification of her body.

In “Flesh and Mirror” (FW 61-70) the narrator who has come in search of her lover to Tokyo, fails to find him and is accosted by a stranger who takes her
“to an unambiguous hotel with mirror on the ceiling and lascivious black lace draped around a palpably illicit bed”, Here the narrator’s body becomes a commodity to be sold to the stranger and “the stark reflections of her body engaged in the sexual act force the tale’s female narrator to confront her role in fabricating the images of herself she presents to the world” (Sellers 107-108). The narrator feels that the “duration less time” that they spent making love; they “were not themselves”. (64) Again the “Master” highlights the objectification of the female body in a patriarchal set up. The girl is a bought “commodity” of the master “bartered for the spare tyre of his jeep.” (74), whom he abuses and treats only as an object as he tells his “half-breed guide” (73) “licking his chops with remembered appetite”. (73) “Brown meat, brown meat. To him she is ‘only a piece of curious flesh he had not paid much for.” (75)

Atwood in her stories, “Hairball” (WT 39-56) and “Giving Birth” (DG 228-248) has given particular attention to the female body from the women’s point of view rejecting the objectification of the female body. In “Hairball”, the moment Kat realizes that Gerald has lost interest in her, she has her revenge on him and sends him the “pickled” tumour in a box of chocolate truffles. Kat realizes that Gerald is in reality not interested in her as a person but only her body, which is only a mere object. In Giving Birth” by juxtaposing the “other woman” with Jeanne, Atwood is able to depict what is paradoxically contained in yet at the same time absent from Jeanne’s experience. The “other woman” as it were shadows the
protagonist throughout her experience of childbirth, thereby representing the other side of childbirth. Here the other woman is not treated as an individual and is not even given a name, and as such her body is merely an object to be played with at will. It is the other woman who screams from pain. It is the “other woman” who doesn’t want to have a baby maybe because she has been raped or because she has ten other children or because of poverty or starvation.

Suniti Namjoshi, like Carter and Atwood, adopts the technique of writing the body to satirize the objectification of the female body, in her fables. In her fable “Anthropoi” (FF 9) which is a strong attack on patriarchy she condemns this objectification of the female body when she says that women are raised like thorough-bred horses, purely for their pleasure’ (9). In the fable “Scheherazade” women are compared to mares- as both yield to the pleasures of their exploiters - men and stallions – “the mare submits to the stallion” and “the princess give(s) much pleasure” (42) to the Caliph. Both become instruments of pleasure. Again in “Blue beard’s Way” (SF 98-101) Bluebeard, who is a miser hoards gold, furniture and women. He believes that as Economists say, “from the male point of view cows and women are a form of property.” Blue beard treats his women as commodities “locked in individual cells.” (98)

Images of travelling and journeys are an effective metaphor for imagination and aesthetic experience. Women writers like Smith, Bowles, Atwood, Ingalls,
Lessing and Barnes have made use of the journey metaphor and "have emphasised specifically its power as an image for expressing exploration into the realms of the unconscious and the unknown". (Wheeler 2) They also made use of the metaphor "as a description of the process by which an author could search for and find a voice and style of her own." (3)

In Shelley's view, "writers have the invaluable function in culture of revitalizing old metaphors and of creating new ones". (3) The familiar world is regarded as an image of established literary conventions, themes, strategies and language. Women writers by breaking the boundaries of literary conventions are able "to have new experience" and discover "new and stimulating forms of expression." Houses and rooms can become "intense allegories for states of mind, social edifices, ideologies or formalities that imprison" (Wheeler 14) as the writings of May Sinclair and Gilman. For Rays and Chopin "houses and rooms are left behind like clothes that no longer fit the merging personality." (14) For Cather and Chopin, the house may also be an image "for a person's spiritual being" and "the leaving of the family home signifies destruction of an old way of life for the creation of a new way." (14)

In keeping with this female tradition, Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their short stories have made use of the images of journey; places, cities, rooms and houses- commonly used by women writers. A survey of their short stories reveal
that besides these common images all three of them in their short stories have made use of two images- the rose image and the mirror image, in a special way.

In Carter’s “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” it’s the “White Rose” that becomes the cause for the separation of Beauty and her father. The rose also becomes an image of love and passion as it arouses the Beast’s passion. In the “Snow-child” on the contrary, the rose becomes an image of terror for “it bites” (92), when the countess touches it. When the snow-child plucks it from the bush, “She pricks her finger on the thorn: bleeds, screams, falls” (92). Here the snow-child becomes the object of the count’s sexual desire and the rose here becomes the threatening image of the genital rose with teeth. In “The Lady of the House of Love” again Carter makes use of the rose as an image of corruption: something that suggests impending doom. As the British soldier approaches the mansion, “the heavy scent of the red roses” blows into his face “a blast of rich, faintly corrupt sweetness strong enough, almost to fell him” (BC 98). The soldier is being lured by the crone to Nosferatu’s castle for the vampire queen, Countess Nosferatu to feed on. The rose becomes an image of a “fanged rose” (107). When the soldier re-joins his regiment after the Countess’ death, he discovers the countess’s rose; tucked into his breast pocket. Being attracted by the girl and “her death so unexpected and pathetic” he resurrects the rose and its “heavy fragrance”
of the “monstrous flower”, whose petals had regained “their corrupt, brilliant, baleful splendour” (108) fills the room.

Atwood in her short story “Underglass” (DG 65-78), makes use of the ‘rose image’ which becomes a conciliatory image of gift of love to make up for a temporary separation of five days. Before going back the narrator thoughtfully cuts a rose from someone else’s garden and puts it carefully in her bag, “encased in plastic wrap with step swathed in wet toilet paper. Redundant. It’s a gift though” (87). Though she admires roses she has never wanted to be one, maybe that’s the reason that she never bothers “whether the stem hurt” (67). She greets her husband with the rose, which “he sniffs at dutifully” and she sets it in a glass beside the alarm clock. When she finds that she has been cheated she throws away the rose as it has lost its significance.

Suniti Namjoshi has also made use of the rose image in her fable, “Beauty Incarnate and the Supreme Singer” (SF 84-85). Here, the rose is seen as an image of perfect beauty or the incarnation of beauty, as the wren tells the Iris, “you are not Beauty Incarnate like the rose” (84). In Namjoshi’s “In the Garden” (BDF 87-88), the new variety of roses becomes food for the Blue donkey and the White Unicorn, a more concrete image, serving a utilitarian purpose. The unicorn tells the Blue Donkey “oh look, a new variety of roses! Do let’s try them. They look delicious” (87).
The mirror image is another common image employed by Carter, Atwood and Namjoshi in their short stories. The mirror is a recurring theme in Carter’s fiction. Carter in “Reflections” (FW 81-102) and “Flesh and the Mirror” (61-70) also makes use of this powerful image. In “Reflection” the male narrator is forced to kiss himself in a mirror. Since he expects the reflected lips to be cold and inert, he is surprised to find that they are warm and moist and excites his sexual desire. The narrator is drawn through the mirror by the kiss into the antithetical realm of the other side. Despite, the strange, topsy turviness of this realm it becomes impossible for the narrator to distinguish between the real world and its reflection. In another short story, “Flesh and the Mirror”, the mirror above the lover’s bed in the “blue movie” (68) hotel room they rent for the night has the effect of reducing the lovers to their actions beneath it: “time, place and person” (62) are annihilated here because in this case there is “nothing whatsoever beyond the surface of the glass” (65). Carter in “A Souvenir of Japan” (1-12) also makes use of the mirror image. Here again the mirror becomes an image of insubstantiality. In Japan “as if in celebration of the thing they feared, they seemed to have made the entire city into a cold hall of mirrors which continually proliferated whole galleries of constantly changing appearances, all marvellous but none tangible” (9). The Japanese have a great respect for mirrors and “in old-fashioned inns, one finds them hooded with fabric covers when not in use” (9). As Taro says “Mirrors make a room uncosy” (9).
Atwood in “Iconography” (BAM 101-102) makes use of the mirror image as an image of reflection, where one can see oneself. “Watch yourself. That’s what the mirrors are” (102). Suniti Namjoshi in her “The Function of Friendship” (SF 91-92) refers to the mirror as reflecting truth “Truth, Truth holding up a mirror to justice” (92). The mirror image used by Atwood, Carter and Namjoshi acts as an image of reflection. If for Atwood it is just reflection, for Carter on the other hand it is also but an experience of passing through the mirror that annihilates the distinction between the real and the unreal. It also annihilates time, place and action in “Flesh and Mirror”. It becomes an image of insubstantiality as in “A Souvenir of Japan”. For Namjoshi the mirror reflects the truth.

Modern and post-modern stories reject logical conclusions to a tale in keeping with the post structuralist view of meaning as being an endless chain of signification where there is no end or closure but infinite possibilities of meaning. The ending of a novel or short story is a significant narrative strategy. It is “never the logical conclusion to a tale as the ordering of the plot would lead us to believe” (Gender & Literature 12), and “the way a novel ends is a statement on the self: on its ability or inability to survive, especially when the ‘self’ is a woman cornered in a world which does not permit her expression. Madness, death, suicide or surrender is some of the ways the novel ends” (53). Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi in almost all their short stories favour this sort of open-endings. Their stories hardly conclude with a logical or final ending.
This is quite evident in Carter’s stories like “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” (BC 41-51), the Beast and Beauty start life as Mr. and Mrs. Lyon. In “The Tiger’s Bride” (51-67), Beauty undergoes a transformation “My earring turned back into water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur.” (67) Again in “The Lady of the House of Love” (93-108), the vampire queen finds release in death. “the end of exile is the end of being” (106). In “The Werewolf” (108-110), Little Red Riding Hood continues to live in her grandmother’s house after her death and “she prospers” (110). In “The Company of Wolves” (110-118), Red Riding Hood “sleeps in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf” (118). In “A Souvenir of Japan” (FW, 1-11), the narrator and her lover, Taro continue to live amidst a sense of evanescence and seemingness. They see in one another’s eyes “reflections of nothing but appearances, in a city dedicated to seeming” (11). In “The Executioner’s Beautiful Daughter” (12-21), despite, the troubles a normal routine continues for Gretchen “she went out for eggs” (21). In “The loves of Lady Purple” (23-38), Lady Purple, the shameless Oriental Venus returns to her prostitution. She makes her way “out of logical necessity to the single brothel it contained” (38). In “Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest” (47-60), Madelina and Emile taste the fruit and are awakened into realization. “He took the apple; ate; and, after that they kissed” (60). In “Master” (71-79), the girl gains her liberation once she kills her captor. “She grew bored and bounded away” (79). In “Reflections” (81-101), the narrator finds his liberation in killing Anna.
In “The Kiss” (BV 27-29), the architect grows wings and flies away and Tamburlaine’s wife runs away to make “her living in the market” (29). In “Peter and the Wolf” (79-87), Peter tramps “onwards, into a different story” (87).

Atwood in her stories too favours this sort of open-endings like for example in “Hurricane Hazel” (BE 31-60), the narrator expresses a sense of relief of “having come unscathed through a major calamity” (58). “Loulou or the Domestic Life of the Language” (61-82), Loulou has the consoling sensation of being wanted by the poets when she realizes that “this is what they require of her, possibly all they require: that she should be just like Loulou. No more, but certainly no less” (81). In “Blue beard’s Egg’ (131-164), Sally realizes that the egg is after all-alive “but what will come out of it” (164), is rather vague. The “Scarlet Ibis” (179-199), ends with the enriching experience of having seen the Scarlet Ibises. “something that really ought to be seen, if you like birds” (199). In “The Salt garden” (201-227), the story ends on an optimistic note that “nothing can kill it. After everything is over, she thinks, there will still be salt’”(227). In “The Sunrise” (241-261), Yvonne stands watching the sunrise, the symbol of hope. Again in “The Man from Mars” (DG 13-37), though the foreigner pursuing Christine had been deported, she still feels “He would be something nondescript, something in the background” (137). Mrs, Burridge is waiting for something to happen, but which hasn’t taken place “she gets up and goes to the kitchen door” (137). In “Dancing Girls” (210-227) the dancing girls continue to dance, “the
dancing girls were sedately dancing” (227). In “Hairball” (WT 39-56). Kat having taken out her revenge on her ex-lover Gerald, “feels light and peaceful and filled with charity” (56). In “The Bogman” (87-106) as time passes Connor “loses in substance every time she forms him in words” (106), until he finally becomes “an anecdote” (106). In “Death by Landscape” (107-129), though Lucy is believed to be dead. Lucy feels her presence long afterwards “she is entirely alive” (129).

Suniti Namjoshi’s fables are not the traditional type of compact fables with logical endings. Most of her fables have open-endings and offer the readers infinite interpretations. In “A Moral Tale” (FF 21) Beauty ‘had been warned and she hadn’t listened” (21). “The Three Bears” (39) ends with the comment “he makes such a sweet and good little girl” (39). In “The Oyster Child” (78) three alternate endings are given “why the oyster said nothing a) from habit. b) because by this time she was already dead. c) out of sheer modesty” (78). In “Tae Dower” (88-89) also three alternative endings are suggested and left to the reader’s choice. In “The Pelican” (SF, 68-70) the pelicans give an uncertain answer to the Blue Donkey’s question whether they were pelicans or fishes? “Both”, hoping that at last they’d got it right.

Leaving the readers the choice to arrive at their own conclusions, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi in the short stories reject the traditional logical conclusions. Summarily, these writers in their rewritten fairy
tales and other feminist stories have with varying degrees of success experimented the strategy of 'writing beyond the ending' which breaks the narrative from the traditional established structures of fiction and the feminine consciousness by 'breaking the sentence' and 'breaking the sequence'. They have attempted to give voice to the voiceless, thereby highlighting the muted position by bringing their female characters to the forefront through the techniques of fantasy, intertextuality, subversion, writing the body and open-endings. The foregoing analysis of the stories show how reversal of the conventions of plot and narrative voice upsets ideological priorities.

Women writers being generally dissatisfied with the male discourse have experimented more imaginatively with fiction by disrupting literary fashion and traditional conventions. Particularly women writers like Woolf, Barnes, Bowles, Smith, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Gertrude Stein experimented with new themes, forms and style. They also exploited the gothic, the grotesque, folk tales and fairy tales to give voice to their protest of male dominance. Moreover, they adapted traditional imagery, techniques and other established conventions for different ends in innovative ways to redesign their experience and “make literature more expressive of their own experiences both as women and artists.” (Wheeler 4)