THE FUNCTION OF THE FANTASTIC IN THE WORKS OF ANGELA CARTER AND JEANETTE WINTERSON

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ABSTRACT

THE FUNCTION OF THE FANTASTIC
IN THE WORKS
OF
ANGELA CARTER AND JEANETTE WINTERSON

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This study sets out from the premise that the fantastic, in the hands of the women writers with feminist awareness, can be used as a tool to subvert patriarchal gender roles that are culturally constructed. The dissertation aims at analysing the fantastic novels by Angela Carter, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman and Nights at the Circus, and by Jeannette Winterson, The Passion and The.PowerBook as examples in which the transgression of gender roles is achieved through the use of fantastic images. The analysis of the fantastic images in these novels is confined to the definitions by Tzetvan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson. The study asserts that through an efficient use of the fantastic mode, both Carter and Winterson negate culturally dominant notions of reality, whereby they resist the cultural constructions of gender. Within the framework of this dissertation, some concepts like the New Woman, historiographic metafiction, the lesbian continuum and compulsory heterosexualism are also studied where they become indispensable to the role that the fantastic images play. Thus, this study identifies each fantastic image in the novels studied with its possible cultural and political implications so that the "un-seen" of the culture, a term suggested by Jackson, can be seen. In other words, the study concentrates on the subversive nature of the fantastic images so as to see the ways in which the rigid boundaries of the gender roles in patriarchy can be transgressed.

Keywords: The Fantastic, Gender Roles, Transgression, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson

ÖZ

ANGELA CARTER VE JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN
ROMANLARINDA
FANTASTİK İMGELERİN İŞLEVLERİ

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Bu tez Angela Carter ve Jeannette Winterson'ın romanlarında kullanılan fantastik imgelerin, ataerkil kültürün dayattığı toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini dönüştürmeye yarar biçimde kullanıldığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tez, bu iki yazarın fantastik anlatım biçimini etkili bir şekilde kullanarak kültürel olarak baskın olan gerçeklik anlayışlarını olumsuzladıklarını, bu yolla da kültürün yapılandırdığı cinsiyet anlayışına direndiklerini savunur. Bu çalışma, bunu Carter'ın The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman ve Nights at the Circus, Winterson'ın da The Passion ve The.PowerBook romanlarını fantastik imgeler aracılığıyla cinsiyet rollerinin dar sınırlarının aşıldığı örnekler olarak çözümleyerek yapar. Çalışmanın çerçevesi içerisinde, fantastik imgelerin ayrılmaz parçası olduğu ölçüde Yeni Kadın, tarihsel roman, lezbiyen dayanışma grubu ve zorunlu heteroseksüellik gibi bazı kavramların da kısaca irdelenmesi yer alır. Bu nedenle, tez bir yandan da fantastik imgeleri, Jackson'ın "kültürün görünmeyeni" olarak adlandırdığı bazı kültürel ve politik anlamları taşımaya yarayan araçlar olarak değerlendirir. Başka bir deyişle, bu çalışma ataerkil kültürün kadınlara ve erkeklere biçtiği dar cinsiyet rollerinin nasıl aşılabileceğinin görülmesini sağlayacak biçimde, fantastik imgelerin eleştirel ve dönüştürücü yapısına odaklanır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fantastik, Cinsiyet Rolleri, Dönüştürme, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson

To those courageous enough to transgress the boundaries of gender roles

and

To those who are not so courageous enough to do it

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INTRODUCTION

This study analyses Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson's use of the fantastic and argues that the fantastic functions as a liberating and subversive component of their texts. In its analysis of the novels, the thesis argues that Carter and Winterson employ the fantastic in such a transgressive way that their narratives subvert the gender roles assigned by the patriarchal order. By juxtaposing the fantastic with the realistic mode, both novelists produce hybrid texts that deconstruct established modes of thinking. This study asserts that fantastic novels by Carter and Winterson negate culturally dominant notions of reality, and so they resist the dominant cultural constructions of gender.

Angela Carter and Jeannette Winterson are among the modern women writers who find the purely realistic literature unsatisfactory for transmitting their mindsets and worldviews. In their fiction, these two writers envisage characters with a set of values different from the traditional ones; they imagine a world with different natural laws and bodily forms. Accordingly, the experiences that these characters have are often outlandish and fantastic. Booker places Angela Carter among those postmodernist writers who "share a tendency to break rules, transgress boundaries, destabilize hierarchies, and question authority of various kinds in their work." (5) Winterson, like Carter, portrays people who are agents for transgressing traditional, discriminating and limiting boundaries. Carter and Winterson's texts adopt the "generic signals" (Fowler, 88) of the fantastic, and employ them for transgressive purposes. Their use of these generic signals enables the reader first to establish a connection with the text and the tradition, and then to measure the text against the tradition which results in the realization of the novelty that the text offers. (Fowler, 88-90) The realistic and the fantastic modes are alternately used in Carter and Winterson's novels to introduce the reader to generic signals from both of them. For instance, just as Fevvers flies with the help of her wings, the reader hears the hourly chiming of Big Ben. To use Kent's term,

this "syntagmatic foregrounding" of generic signals forms a kind of "hybrid genre" which "defamiliarise[s] or deform[s] the formulated conventions that constitute automatised texts." (143) Defamiliarisation used as a narrative technique facilitates the act of revision of gender roles for the reader. Hence, the use of the fantastic in Carter and Winterson's narratives corresponds to the transgressive and subversive characteristics of their worldviews. In due course, the fantastic helps these writers estrange the reader from the ordinary world with its known rules by inviting to an act of "suspension of disbelief". By encouraging the reader to transgress the boundaries of the real, such narratives prepare her for a change of mindset. Therefore, this study argues that the fantastic mode of writing in Carter and Winterson's novels highlights the masculine and the feminine roles assigned by patriarchy, which enable the reader to see the rigid gender roles transgressed in the fantastic images. For Caillois, the fantastic requires a setting which should be sufficiently removed from everyday life to leave room for mystery: "The fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday reality." (in Riemer, 21) In this sense, in novels by Carter and Winterson, fantastic images are a means of the "irruption of the inadmissible" within the "changeless" male order. Their novels, to use Friedrich Jameson's term, work as "socially symbolic acts" infused by their ideological viewpoint whereby they show up the "political unconscious".(35) For Jameson, part of history is simply ignored and, by reading a text, "symptomatically" the repressed and buried reality can be restored to the surface of the text. (20) This sort of reading means looking for the political and cultural implications in between the lines of a text; he maintains, "In those silences and aporias are located those aspects of social existence which are repressed, driven underground by the power of history which allows them no room." (20)

This study contends that the texts produced by Carter and Winterson become political agents that work for a revolution in the ways we perceive men and women. Similar to Jameson's description of narratives as socially symbolic acts, in narratives by Carter and Winterson, beneath the stated meaning, there is the repressed one which gives the history of the struggle, of the conflict between desire and necessity, of the private and the public. The reader is expected to dig out the buried reality in the texts to restore to the surface the political and cultural implications. This study

also suggests that the use of the fantastic in the novels by Carter and Winterson often refers to the unsaid and unseen of culture. Judith Fetterley, in The Resisting Reader, suggests a way of deciphering the hidden meaning in the texts which can be aplied to the texts by Carter and Winterson:

> The need to keep certain things from being thought and said reveals to us their importance. Feminist criticism represents the discovery/recovery of a voice, unique and uniquely powerful voice capable of cancelling out those other voices..." (xxiv)

With a blend of the real and the fantastic, Carter and Winterson turn the unspeakable, undramatizable, and unembodiable into something real in their novels. Joanna Russ in her article "What Can a Heroine Do? Why Can't Women Write?" asserts that when you "Make something unspeakable and you make it unthinkable."(90) Carter and Winterson, as women who can write, do the opposite; they think the unthinkable and envisage the unseen in order to create new worlds that do not work according to the laws of the world we know. They attempt to transgress the enclosing boundaries of the male order.

Undoubtedly, a theoretical basis is required to illustrate how Carter and Winterson achieve this transformative effect. Thus, Chapter II of this thesis provides a brief exposition of the theories of the fantastic by Tzetvan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson. Since the thesis maintains that the fantastic deconstructs the gender roles that are culturally constructed, within the scope of this study certain different topics that will help the reader penetrate the texts more deeply will also be discussed. For this reason, a conceptual framework for each work accompanies the reading of the fantastic elements in the novels to allow the reader to see the cultural and political implications of the fantastic images. In these conceptual frameworks, some concepts like the New Woman, the Angel in the House, compulsory heterosexuality, pornography and historiographic metafiction, which are indispensable to Carter and Winterson' arguments, are explored where necessary. These concepts are the *sine qua non* for an understanding of the transgressive function of the fantastic in their novels. It may be argued that Winterson's lesbianism and Carter's left-wing

feminism, make the writers and their works similar in the way they respond to the male order. Consequently, since the main body of the argument in this study would have been incomplete without an exploration of these concepts, they are also mentioned as elements forming the general framework of the novels.

Thus, this study analyses the function and implication of fantastic images in Carter and Winterson's two novels. Chapter II provides the theoretical background that frames the analysis of the novels, and also defines two terms crucial to this study: the "fantastic" and "gender". Chapter III includes both the conceptual framework and the analysis of Carter's The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman. In Chapter IV, the use and the function of the fantastic in Carter's The Nights at the Circus are analysed. Chapters V and VI study Winterson's use of the fantastic in The Passion and The.PowerBook. As some fantastic images like the "problematisation of vision" and concepts like "cyberspace" are very tightly interwoven in The.PowerBook, there is a minor change in the organisation of Chapter VI. "Vision" as one of the fantastic images is examined together with the concept "cyberspace". Lastly, Chapter VII concludes the study by comparing and contrasting Carter's and Winterson's use of the fantastic. This conclusion can be seen as an attempt to understand the cultural and political implications of their novels.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS

It can be suggested that Carter and Winterson's texts are subversive in the way that Jackson suggests that fantastic texts are. She argues that while Tolkien's fantasies support the ruling ideology with "a nostalgia for a pre-Industrial, indeed a pre-Norman Conquest, feudal order", more subversive texts engage in an act of dissolving repressive structures. (155) Thus, whereas the former type of the fantastic merely functions as a tool for escape and only consoles and compensates, subversive texts like those by Carter and Winterson confront the "tension between the imaginary and the symbolic" to bring about some radical changes. (Jackson, 155) Carter who questions "how that social fiction of my 'femininity' was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing." (Carter, 1997:38), and Winterson, who deems lesbianism the most revolutionary, radical and effective weapon against patriarchy, (Abalos, 291) are authors of subversive texts, according to Jackson's description of the subversive, as they are able to create new visions. In their novels, new visions, which cannot be seen in the existing cultural order, are constructed. The mimetic mode does not allow them to describe the not-yet-realised notions of femininity in culture. Therefore, Jackson's concept of "the unseen of culture" applies to both of these writers. The fantastic in their novels, as Caillois suggests in general, is always a "break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday reality." (in Riemer, 21) This break and irruption seen in their work corresponds to what Jackson formulates as the anticipation of the positive "unseen' of culture":

> Structurally and semantically, the fantastic aims at dissolution of an order experienced as oppressive and inefficient. Its paraxial placing, eroding and scrutinising the 'real', constitutes, in Helene Cixous's phrase, 'a subtle invitation to

> transgression'. By attempting to transform the relations between the imaginary and the symbolic, fantasy hollows out the real, revealing its absence, its great Other, its unspoken and its unseen. (180)

Starting with Todorov's definition, Jackson reaches a more comprehensive definition[1] that applies to 20th century fantastic texts like the novels of Carter and Winterson. Therefore, following the definitions of first Tzetvan Todorov and then Rosemary Jackson, this study contends that the politically and ideologically unspeakable and unthinkable in the work of Carter and Winterson is often represented by the use of fantastic elements. What Joanna Russ says on the limits of expression in "What can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can't Write?" sheds light on what lies behind Carter's and Winterson's use of the fantastic:

> Make something unspeakable and you make it unthinkable. Hence the lyric structure, which can deal with the unspeakable and unembodiable as its thematic centre, or the realistic piling up of detail which may (if you are lucky) eventually add up to the unspeakable, undramatizable, unembodiable action-one-cannot-name. Using the old myths, women cannot write. (90)

The reading of the novels by Carter and Winterson in this study is based on the premise that since a mimetic text works according to the laws of the world that is seen and known, it does not provide the means of thinking the unthinkable and speaking the unspeakable. In due course, this study suggests that the fantastic texts of Carter and Winterson create the culturally unseen through the use of the fantastic, which means that the fantastic has reality status in their fiction.

1.1 The Reality Status of the Fantastic

In The Fantastic in Literature Eric Rabkin regards the fantastic as a genre in "total opposition to reality". He states that to arouse "astonishment" in the reader, the perspectives enforced by the ground rules of the narrative world must be "diametrically contradicted in order for the fantastic to appear. [The fantastic]

appears when the ground rules of a narrative are forced to make a 180 degree reversal, when prevailing perspectives are directly contradicted." (in Cornwell, 13) Bringing a similar perception of the real in relation to the fantastic, W.R. Irwin, in The Game of the Impossible (1976) argues that the principle of the fantastic is the "overt violation of what's generally accepted as possibility." (x) Tolkien regarded this principle as "freedom from the domination of observed fact." (in Cornwell, 14) For C.N. Manlove, this freedom evokes "wonder" and it contains "a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects..." (in Cornwell, 14) Gerhard Hoffmann categorises the fantastic as being "in contrast to what might be loosely called the 'real' and argues that the contrast between "the reader's expectation of what is and should be 'real'" (in Cornwell, 14) constitutes the text. Kathryn Hume suggests that the fantastic in its attempt to make things visible seemingly "departs" from the real world: thus she defines fantasy as "any departure from consensus reality" (xi) There seems to be a consensus about the fact that the fantastic departs from reality. However, to what extent the fantastic departs from it, namely the reality status of the fantastic, remains an open question.

In his essay on "The Problem of Speech Genres", Bakhtin elaborates on the "interdependence of utterances" (1986:91) belonging to different realms and reflects on the function of alternating voices in narratives that can be dialogically read as steps towards the building of a fully-formed argument and a counter-argument. What he says about utterances can be applied to the "interdependence" of the real and the fantastic modes as two different forms of utterance. He says that:

> Utterances are not different to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another. These mutual reflections determine their character. Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communications." (1986:91)

In the texts by Carter and Winterson, there are both realistic and fantastic features and they seem to complement each other. These features are "echoes and

reverberations" of each other, which shed light on the reality status of the fantastic. Regarding the relationship of the real and the fantastic, Jackson suggests that the fantastic acts as a secondary text to reality, variously acting as a commentary on, or a mimesis of it. To quote her: "Fantasy recombines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real. The fantastic cannot exist independently of that "real" world which it seems to find so frustratingly finite." (20)

Strada asserts that fantasy is "a poetic mythology of a disenchanted and demythologized world" and "a discovery of an enigmatic and problematic dimension of our humanity". (in Cornwell, 21) Margaret Carter, like Strada, adds to this view a sense of historicity and says that, "in a milieu where a common standard of evidence and belief is not universally accepted": the genre of the fantastic arises. (9) Russian semiotician Smirnov takes the discussion back to the degree of reality in the fantastic. He maintains that fantastic literature arises when what is imagined is described "as though it were sensibly perceived reality". Zamiatin similarly postulates that "the fantastic is in the real, in the form of reality under the microscope." (in Cornwell, 22-23)

All of these ideas imply that the fantastic involves ideas about given reality; however Jackson's study is the most systematic in analysing the reality status of the fantastic, and in combining this status with the cultural and political implications of the texts. She calls the function of the fantastic 'subversive'. (20) For Jackson, as I will further discuss in part 2.3.2, fantasy becomes part of a "literature of subversion" insofar as it negates culturally dominant notions of reality and expresses unease or dissatisfaction with such notions. (106) In this subversive act, it is obvious that there is an attitude of resistance, and in some cases objection, and reconstruction in the face of the cultural constructions, which sums up the social function of the text. Jackson's notion of the "paraxial" and her perception of the fantastic as the "real under scrutiny" will also be explored in 2.3.2 as they are indispensable to her definition of the fantastic.

1.2 The Function of the Fantastic

Although it has been relatively easy for critics to agree on some common themes and patterns that recur in fantastic texts to designate them as generic features, the question of what fantasy does is still open to discussion. Difficulties in defining the implications of fantastic texts can be ascribed to the fact that within the whole body of fantastic literature there are many different fields such as folklore, mythology, politics, culture, history and so forth. In a sense, the richness of the resources of the fantastic generates the diverse attitudes taken towards its literature; while some approaches to the fantastic regard it as a high form which envisages a better world, some others take it as an escape from reality, which stands in opposition to the realistic mode of writing. Sandner, who explores the Romantic origins of modern fantasy, draws attention to one of the earliest and most frequently quoted definitions. He states that "the fantastic or fairy way of writing requires the reader to engage in what Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria (1817) calls 'the willing suspension of disbelief that constitutes poetic faith'". (12) Since the negation of imagination and intuition in the reason-loving Age of Enlightenment caused a growing interest in them, the Romantics encouraged a belief in the impossible and unbelievable. So, fantastic texts proliferated as the reading public became more and more willing to suspend their disbelief, which explains the rich evocations of the term "fantastic". As Atterbery suggests, the term went through a process of interpretation and reinterpretation. He notes that Coleridge's "willing suspension" later becomes a "holiday detachment" in Arvin Wells' terms, "aesthetic distance" in Robert Jauss, "defamiliarisation of the familiar" in Jose Ortega y Gasset, and a "displacement mechanism" in Gerhard Hoffmann. (Riemer, 16)

Each nuance in these different views marks a different function of the fantastic genre. For instance, while, Victor Hugo stressed the grotesque aspect of fantasy, Edgar Allen Poe focused on its transcendental and Maupassant drew attention to its supernatural qualities.(Cornwell, 6) Some critics have observed that whatever the difference is, all fantasy writers try to create the atmosphere of a secondary world. (Riemer, 17) This idea of a secondary world brings the concept of fantasy as a tool for creating alternative worlds to the fore. In due course, some contemporary critics

of high fantasy have described the fantastic as a genre that creates an alternative reality. For instance, J.R.R.Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy-tales" calls this alternative realm a "secondary world". He maintains that the events and creations in this world are phenomenologically impossible in our "primary world" which considers the material in the former one as magical and supernatural. Like other critics writing in a similar vein, Tolkien emphasizes that this secondary world must not only elicit a "secondary belief" but also evoke a sense of wonder in the reader. He adds that this world should have its own laws and rules which are consistent and credible enough to convince the dwellers of the primary world.

This observation takes us further in the discussion of the relationship between the real and the fantastic. Different degrees of the relation of the real to the fantastic mark different functions. Sullivan suggests that in commentary which is focused on the overtly political uses of fantasy, three positions have developed: conformist, subversive, and the hegemonic co-option of a challenge to the status quo. She holds that fantasy can be regarded: "as a compensation for social deprivation, where the satisfaction it offers reduces the individual's impetus to change conditions, and as escapist, in marshalling or creating desires for the purposes of control, as with advertising and pornography." (Sullivan, 5) In fact, reflecting on the function of the fantastic, most critics dwell on this compensatory role, and in order to justify this role of the fantastic they note that most classical fantastic texts written in the nineteenth century function as alternatives to the rigid realism that attempted to eradicate fancy. For example, in his article "The Liberating Potential of the Fantastic", Jack Zipes maintains that: "The fantastic was used to compensate for the growing rationalization of culture, work and family life in western society, to defend the imagination of children." (1983:71) Since fantasy acted as a means of escape, some critics think that the main function of the fantastic is to provide escapism.

Another line of argument regarding the function of the fantastic suggests that what is provided for the reader in the fantastic is not an escape from but practice for real life. Talking about this informative and preparatory function of the fantastic, Georges Jean says that "on the conscious level, fantastic and miraculous elements are used to prepare us for our everyday life." Jean focuses on the illuminating role that the

fantastic plays in the reader's life and asserts that, "magic is used not to deceive, but paradoxically to enlighten us". (in Zipes, 1983:172) For Mikhail Bakhtin who traces the origins of the fantastic to Menippean satire, such "extraordinary life situations" like magic, metamorphosis and dialogue with the dead are, in fact, means of "searching after truth", and a "test of a wise man's philosophical position in the world". Thus, he contends that:

> To this end, heroes of Menippean satire ascend into heaven, descend into the nether world, wander through unknown and fantastic lands, are placed in extraordinary life situations... Very often the fantastic takes on the character of an adventure story... In all these instances the fantastic is subordinated to the purely ideational function of provoking and testing a truth. (1984:114)

In a sense, by means of this ideational function of the fantastic, the reader is enabled to test her life against the measures given in the text or vice versa. In Breaking the Magic Spell, Zipes builds on Bakhtin's assertion and maintains that the fantastic has the function of "demystifying the operations" of the given world, (1992:94) and of "projecting human dissatisfaction". (1992:121) In that sense, the fantastic is itself a way of thinking, a mental preparation for the ideal life.

It is important to note here that when the meaning of the word "fantasy" in Latin, to make visible or manifest, is remembered, what Rosemary Jackson says about the function of the fantastic seems the most comprehensive notion:

> The shifts in the boundaries [of fantasy] have a political and epistemological function, exposing repressive aspects within a society by making visible the culturally invisible, by tracing the unsaid and the unseen of the culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made absent. (4)

So, in Jackson's notion of fantasy as subversion, fantasy ceases to be a mere representation of an individual struggle and gains a social and political dimension whereby it reveals the flaws of the culture it stems from. This change in the

definition of fantasy brings the concept of fantasy as a tool for creating alternative worlds to the fore. Todorov's emphasis on "hesitation" refers to this moment of illumination. It is a step taken towards a higher consciousness which has no counterpart in the real. In a sense, it corresponds to an alternative world which transgresses the narrow and rigid codes of the real world; as Attebery states, the fantastic eases the process of change "to the point of sundering the break of the unbending code" of the real world. (25-26) In the following two parts, Todorov's and Jackson's definitions are examined to provide the criteria for the analysis of the novels.

1.3 The Definition of the Term "The Fantastic"

1.3.1 Todorov's Definition of the Fantastic

Many critics have given different definitions of the fantastic, but it is Todorov who established the terminology that has become standard in the field. He describes the characteristics of the fantastic as a genre; in his essay "The Origin of Genres", he suggests a "codification of discursive properties". (1990:18) In his seminal work <u>The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre</u> (1975) Todorov attempts to diagnose and enumerate some "common denominators" of the genre. This work defines the fantastic basically as the "hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event." Although most early critics took Coleridge's idea of "suspension of disbelief" to designate the fantastic in texts, Todorov asserts that it is the hesitation between belief and disbelief that marks the fantastic and states that by simply suspending disbelief, one only surrenders herself to the marvellous realm which he puts in opposition to the realm of the uncanny. The fantastic is the state between the marvellous and the uncanny. Thus, his theory argues that the uncertainty or ambiguity, as to the nature of an event's either being marvellous or uncanny, is the defining feature of the fantastic:

> The fantastic requires the fulfilment of three conditions. First the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. Second this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is entrusted to a character... the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations. (1975:33)

In talking about the details of creating a fantastic effect, Todorov says that the classification of a work as fantastic also requires that the reader should identify with the world portrayed in the text. And when the reader makes a decision either by accepting what happens as absurd or by explaining it through the laws of nature, the hesitation, and thus the fantastic, comes to an end. If the reader does the first and concludes that the thing that causes hesitation has been supernatural, this means the thing resides in the realm of the marvellous. But if she maintains that the peculiar events stem merely from the strange nature of the character, then she is in the realm of the uncanny. Therefore, when the reader chooses between the marvellous and the uncanny and makes a decision, the hesitation disappears which puts an end to the existence of the fantastic. In the comparison of these two distinct realms, Todorov asserts that**:** "the marvellous corresponds to an unknown phenomenon, never seen as yet, still to come- hence to a future; in the uncanny, on the other hand, we refer the inexplicable to known facts, to a previous experience, and thereby to the past." (1975:42) However, "the hesitation which characterises [the fantastic] cannot be situated except in the present." (1975:42) Drawing on these two poles, namely the marvellous and the uncanny, Todorov enumerates different categories ranging from the purely marvellous to the purely uncanny. The changing forms of the fantastic move from the marvellous, which presupposes the existence of the supernatural and magic through the purely fantastic, which defies all sort of explanations, and finally to the other pole that opposes the marvellous, that is the uncanny, which assumes that strange things are the effects of the unconscious.

To systematise his analysis of the fantastic, Todorov also lists four different ways of creating the sense of hesitation through making use of the marvellous. These are the hyperbolic, exotic, instrumental and scientific states of the marvellous. When the fantastic is created through the portrayal of the excessive size of otherwise familiar creatures, this produces the "hyperbolic marvellous". (1975:54) The "exotic marvellous" for him takes place in far away places and relies on the reader's "ignorance". (1975:55) The "instrumental marvellous" which may include elements like flying carpets, an apple that cures diseases, or a pipe for seeing great distances, corresponds to technological anachronisms, or the appearances of modern inventions in a culture where they do not yet exist. (1975:56) Lastly, the "scientific marvellous", also known as science fiction, rationally applies supposed laws of nature that are unknown to science. (1975:56)

Despite the long enumerations of some elements in the fantastic texts, the essential formulation, which Todorov calls the "kernel" of his theory, is still centred on one thing: the hesitation felt by the reader. But Todorov is also concerned with a more general issue, namely with "a choice between several modes (and levels) of reading." (34) In "The Origin of Genres", he places more emphasis on this condition and this time he characterises the fantastic primarily by the feeling to be aroused in the reader. Taking a wider perspective, he maintains that:

> If my description is correct, this genre is characterised by the hesitation that the reader is invited to experience with regard to the natural or supernatural explanation of the events presented. More precisely, the world described in these texts is indeed our own world, with its natural laws (these stories are not fairy tales), but within that universe an event occurs for which we have difficulty finding a natural explanation. What the genre encodes is thus a pragmatic property of the discursive situation: the reader's attitude, as prescribed by the book. (the individual reader is free to adopt it or not) (1990:24)

Then Todorov touches upon the interaction between the reader and the narrative in detail since it is the defining aspect of the fantastic. He asserts that most of the time, the reader's role is not only implicit, but is often represented in the text itself as an

indispensable part of the text by the use of a character who witnesses the strange event which arouses "hesitation". At this point, he points out that this effect of hesitation aroused is communicated through the use of the narrative voice: "the identification of the one [the witness] with the other [the reader] is facilitated by the attribution to that character of the narrator's function: the use of the first-person pronoun *I* allows the reader to identify with the narrator, and thus also with that witness who hesitates as to the explanation of the events that come to pass." (1990:24)

In "The Origin of Genres", Todorov also acknowledges that all genres stem from speech acts and maintains that the speech act underlying the fantastic genre is "the speech act of a person reporting an event that falls outside the framework of natural explanations, when that person still does not want to renounce the framework itself, and thus shares his uncertainty with us. (1990:24) As a formalist, Todorov devises a formula for this speech act underlying the fantastic genre. In the speech act underlying the fantastic, he suggests, the required pronoun is *I*, which functions as an agent for the identification of the reader with the narrator. This is followed by a verb of attitude, such as *believe*,or *think*; this verb of attitude should be followed by a modalization of that verb in the direction of uncertainty which operates in two principal lines. One of these lines is the verb tense, "here the past ... contributes to establishing a distance between narrator and character"; the other line is the adverbs of manner, such as *almost*, *perhaps, doubtless* along with a subordinate clause describing a natural event." (1990:24) Todorov talks about this stylistic aspect of a text in his definition of the fantastic. The imperfect tense and modalisation are two stylistic devices that suffuse the entire text to create ambiguity for the reader. He gives some examples from Nerval's Aurelia which is "impregnated by these two devices", and takes a paragraph at random and shows how frequently Nerval uses them to arouse hesitation on the part of the reader:

> *It seemed to me that* I was returning to that familiar house.... An old servant whom I called Marguerite and whom I *seemed to have known* since childhood told me.... I *believed* I was falling into an abyss which split the globe. I *felt* painlessly

> swept away by a flood of molten metal.... I *had the sense* that these currents were constituted of living souls, in a molecular state.... *It became clear to me* that the ancestors were taking the form of certain animals in order to visit us on earth.... [*italics mine*]. (1975:38)

He thinks that with the help of these locutions, the reader is kept in both worlds at once, the world of the marvellous and that of everyday life, which heightens the effect of hesitation.

It is apparent that Todorov, as a critic who has been called Mr. Structuralism, seeks recurrent features of fantastic texts to finalise his definition. As Scholes suggests in the introduction to the English translation of The Fantastic, Todorov works like a scientist in searching for "linguistic bases for the structural features he notes in fantastic texts." (1975:x)

1.3.2 Jackson's Definition of the Fantastic

Jackson accepts Todorov's definition of the fantastic based on hesitation and models her theory of the fantastic- that is, the fantastic as a tool for subversion- upon Todorov's categorisation of the themes of the fantastic. So, Jackson's synthesis of the structural and semantic concerns of the fantastic provides a more complete account of the mode than Todorov's theory. Jackson's formulations help us understand the political and ideological implications of the structures of fantastic texts. In the analysis of the work of Carter and Winterson, namely in studying the fantastic images in their novels, Jackson's definition and Todorov's categorisation will be employed.

For Rosemary Jackson, Todorov's emphasis on only the structural elements of the fantastic is a major "shortcoming". (61) As Jackson states, the major drawback of Todorov's study is that it does not bring to the analysis of fantastic texts any psychoanalytic perspective. Therefore, Todorov's structuralist analysis does not enable the reader to understand the political and cultural implications of the use of

the fantastic. Todorov only deals with the poetics of the fantastic and contends that "psychosis and neurosis are not the explication of the themes of fantastic literature". (1975:154) Consequently, he ignores psychoanalytical resources. On the other hand, Jackson states that fantasy in literature "deals so blatantly and repeatedly with unconscious material that it seems rather absurd to try to understand its significance without some reference to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic readings of texts." (6) Thus, she aims to "extend Todorov's investigation from being one limited to the poetics of the fantastic into one aware of the politics of its forms." (6) In short, she makes an attempt to suggest "ways of remedying" (69) the "blind-spot" of Todorov's book, which is a neglect of political and ideological issues. To do that, she tries to "stretch Todorov's ideas into a more widely based cultural study of the fantastic."(7)

Rejecting a Bakhtinian[2] reading of fantastic texts as a means of a temporary suspension of law and order, Jackson maintains that in the hands of writers who tend to use the fantastic as an ideological apparatus, the fantastic becomes a tool for helping the reader to be critical about the law and order. Jackson's definition of ideology provides a perspective to see the real as something constructed by the authorities of power:

> Ideology- roughly speaking, the imaginary ways in which men experience the real world, those ways in which men's relation to the world is lived through various systems of meaning such as religion, family, law, moral codes, education, culture, etc.- is not something simply handed down from one conscious mind to another, but is profoundly *unconscious.* (61)

So, literature as an *imaginary* system of meaning, in which men's relation to the *real* world is delineated, has a rich potential for suggesting alternative ways to create different ideologies to transgress and reform systems like "religion, family, law, moral codes, education, culture, etc". Thus, fantastic literature describes a system which has not yet been constructed. Jackson suggests a major function for the fantastic in the "Afterword" of her work by using the phrase "the unseen of the culture" as its title.

To demonstrate the political and ideological potential of the fantastic, Jackson refers to Freud's theory which Todorov "repudiates as inadequate or irrelevant in approaching the fantastic":

> Freud writes, 'the "creative" imagination, indeed, is quite incapable of *inventing* anything; it can only combine components that are strange to one another.' Again, 'In the psychic life, there is nothing arbitrary, nothing undetermined.' Fantasy is not to do with inventing another non-human world: it is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* 'new', absolutely 'other' and different. (8)

This perspective enables Jackson to see the fantastic as "the literature of subversion". Thus, right from the start of Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, Jackson attempts to reveal the subversive potential of the fantastic which she elaborates by defining the reality status of the fantastic. In Jackson's reading, the fantastic is a serious attempt to go beyond a rigid and limiting vision of reality since fantastic texts are uncompromising in their interrogation of the 'nature' of the 'real'." (9) Thus, the fantastic from Jackson's point of view is actually the real that the writer dreams to see. For this reason, in her discussion of the relation of the real to the fantastic, which she calls the "'real' under scrutiny", she asserts that rather than creating an alternative order, the fantastic creates "alterity" which means "this world re-placed and dis-located". To express this "process of transformation and deformation" she uses the term "paraxis". A technical term employed in optics, "paraxis" emphasises the "preoccupation" of the modern fantastic with problems of vision and visibility. (43) Jackson explains the meaning of the term "paraxis" and "paraxial" by drawing a diagram which shows an object in front of a mirror:

> This signifies par-axis, that which lies on either side of the principle axis, that which lies alongside the main body. Paraxis is a telling notion in relation to the place, or space, of the fantastic, for it implies an inextricable link to the main body of the 'real' which it shades and threatens. ... A paraxial region is an area in which light rays *seem* to unite at a point after refraction. In this area, object and image seem to collide, but in

> fact neither object nor reconstituted image genuinely resides there: nothing does. This paraxial area could be taken to represent the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely 'real' (object), nor entirely 'unreal' (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two. (19, original emphasis)

This narrower and more selective definition provides a tool to help us understand the allegorical implications of the use of the fantastic. Since Todorov rejects the allegorical reading of the fantastic images, his theory does not shed light on the implications of the images. However, following Jackson's line of thought as she elaborates on the term "paraxial", it can be asserted that the fantastic corresponds to an "image in the making". In this way, Jackson implies that the fantastic can have allegorical implications, and that the fantastic does not come to an end, as Todorov claims, if an allegorical reading is allowed. By this phrase "paraxial", Jackson means that a fantastic image corresponds to a process in which the real "object" becomes the transformed form (the image); and this act of transformation stimulates a mental transformation in the mindset of the reader. The term "paraxial" and the reality status of the fantastic will also be explicated in detail in the chapter on Carter's The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman.

Jackson refuses to describe some texts as fantastic because they do not manifest any subversion, transgression or novelty, and thus do not perform a transgressive function. She also states that the political and ideological implications that these texts carry are conservative, and that not all fantastic texts are subversive. Therefore she tells the reader that she will deal only with the "more progressive" texts in which "the fantastic is at its most uncompromising in its interrogation of the 'nature' of the 'real'." (9) Besides, she considers that many fantasies function as "conservative vehicles for social and instinctual repression" (155) and she does not include those texts in the category of subversive fantasies. In order to illustrate what she means, Jackson compares the fantasies of Mary Shelley, Dickens and Stevenson to romances by writers like Le Guin, C.S. Lewis and T.H. White and indicates that whereas the former "challenge the very formation of a symbolic cultural order", the latter leave problems of social order untouched.

By describing the differences between two different types of fantasies, Jackson explains what a subversive text achieves. In other words, as she defines what is lacking in "the best-selling fantasies", she moves towards her formulation, the "unseen of culture." Since less progressive authors remain within the given cultural universe and never think of destroying the boundaries drawn by the present order, they can only fully delineate what is seen and what is known.

Through employing a certain reading strategy to reveal what lies under the pleasure of a fantastic text, Jackson wishes to create an effect of "de-mystification." (10) In a sense, she suggests that "a real social transformation" can only be achieved through this sort of iconoclastic reading attitude. Such an iconoclastic act of reading, as Fetterley argues in The Resisting Reader, is the outcome of a reading practice she calls, "re-vision" which enables the reader to see things with fresh eyes. For Fetterley, the consequence of this re-vision in turn is that books will no longer be read as they have been read previously, and thus will lose their power to bind us unknowingly to their designs. (xxii) This is very similar to what Angela Carter says about the practice of reading in her essay "Notes From the Front Line":

> Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode... I'm in the demythologising business. I'm interested in myths- though I'm much more interested in folklore- just because they are extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree. (1997:37-38)

Jackson describes the resources of a fantastic text in a similar fashion. She bases her theory upon the premise that being a product of indomitable desire, a fantastic text enables its reader to confront the thoughts and emotions that the dominant ideology suppresses. This assumption is the main guide in understanding the political implications of the texts to be studied in this dissertation:

> A fantastic text tells of an indomitable desire, a longing for that which does not yet exist, or which has not yet been allowed to exist, the unheard of, the unseen, the imaginary, as opposed to what already exists and is permitted as 'really' visible... Each fantastic text functions differently, depending upon its particular historical placing and its different ideological, political and economic determinants, but the most subversive fantasies are those which attempt to *transform* the relations of the imaginary and the symbolic. (9, original emphasis)

1.4 The Images of the Fantastic [3]

In order to study the various images employed in fantastic texts, many critics have formulated categorisations of them. In The Fantastic Todorov criticises these former studies, showing their shortcomings, and provides a classification which is the most systematic one compared to the former studies. Jackson adopts the main principles of Todorov's categorisation but provides more details about these images so as to reveal the cultural and ideological meaning behind the images. In this study, Todorov's categorisation and Jackson's additions to this categorisation will be employed.

Todorov asserts that to study the images that recur in fantastic works, one can assume two groups of images: what he calls the "themes of self" and the "themes of other".

> The attitude taken here has been quite different We have not tried to interpret the themes, but solely to establish their presence. Rather than to seek to give an interpretation of desire as it is manifested in *The Monk*, for example, or of death in "La Morte Amoureuse" – as a thematic critic would have done- we have been content to indicate their existence. The result is knowledge simultaneously more limited and less disputable. (1975:140-141)

Since Todorov regards a classification of images as indispensable to an analysis of the form of the fantastic, he informs his reader about the critical texts which attempt to deal with this issue but fail to offer a feasible classification. In doing this, he cites some of the previous suggestions made by Scarborough, Penzolt, Vax and Caillois.[4]

Basing his argument on some hypotheses, Todorov classifies numerous topics under the two headings of “self” and “other”. Images related to the “self” deal with the structuring of the relation between man and the world. But images of the “other” include and necessitate another person who will make themes like incest, homosexuality, and sadism possible. Todorov says that the second category contains images brought about by the products of desire in excess.

Rosemary Jackson accepts these two categories, but calls them the images of ‘I’ and the images of ‘not-I’. She justifies the change she makes in the naming of these categories by saying that:

> Whereas the themes of the self, the ‘I’, deal with problems of consciousness, of vision and perception, themes of the other, the ‘not-I’, deal with problems generated by desire, by the unconscious. The relation of self to other is mediated through desire, and fantastic narratives in this category tell of various versions of that desire, usually in transgressive forms (51)

Without departing from Todorov’s enumeration, Jackson suggests different names for these categories relating the I/the subject to the eye/perception, which she uses as a symbol for the problem of vision, which is one of the main concerns of the fantastic both for Todorov and Jackson. Her renaming is actually an elaboration on Todorov’s diagnosis, which enables her to articulate the psychoanalytical perspective and the implications of the fantastic images in a more precise manner.

1.4.1 Images of the Self

Todorov sees metamorphosis and the existence of supernatural beings, their power over human destiny, and their existence as beings more powerful than men as outstanding features of fantastic images of self. Since the fantastic represents a certain course of events that “might as well be called chance, fortune, accident” as normal, the fantastic for him creates a world that works according to the principles of “pan-determinism” and pan-signification”. He explains that the underlying feature of the term “pan-determinism” is a state in which everything has a certain cause:

"Everything, down to the encounter of various casual series (or "chance") must have its cause, in the full sense of the word, even if this cause can only be a supernatural order." (1975:110) In a sense, he erases the concept, "chance", from the terminology of the fantastic text. He replaces chance with a certain order which works under another underlying feature: "pan-signification". Todorov suggests that in a state of pan-signification, "everything corresponds to everything else". What Todorov refers to with the help of this feature is a plane of reality in which every single thing has a special meaning; and to denote this state of being he uses the term "super-interpretation". A character finding "deep meaning" in any object or subject he encounters is super-interpreting what is happening around her:

> ...since relations exist on all levels, among all elements of the world, this world becomes highly significant. As we have already seen with Nerval: the hour at which one is born, the name of the room, everything is charged with meaning. Even more: beyond the primary, obvious meaning, one can always discover a deeper meaning (a super-interpretation)... In this world, every object, every being means something. (112-113)

Seeing pan-determinism as an important component of fantastic texts, Todorov suggests that it implies the collapse of the limit between the world of objects and subject. A character in a fantastic text explains everything through a master cause and meaning which apply to everything around them. In order to explain what he means by pan-determinism, he gives some fantastic events and instances in Nerval's Aurelia as examples and he concludes that "what for others would be no more than a coincidence in time is here a cause." (1975:111) After giving examples from fantastic texts, Todorov elaborates on the relation between these terms and maintains that in a state of mind in which "everything corresponds to everything else" (pan-determinism), "this world becomes highly significant" (pan-signification). (1975:112) And to understand and interpret this sort of a world, the character starts to "discover a deeper meaning" (super-interpretation). In the course of such a concentrated thinking method, a character in a fantastic text starts to "manipulate" this pan-determinism; for example, he touches a ring and candles flare up, he throws the ring and a flood recedes, which means irrelevant events that are independent of each other are seen as the emanations of the same causality. Todorov asserts that the

"ultimate meaning of the pan-determinism manipulated by fantastic literature" is the collapse of the already established system, and he says: "On the most abstract level, pan-determinism signifies that the limit between the physical and the mental, between matter and spirit, between word and thing, ceases to be impervious." (1975:113) In this way, Todorov maintains that the fantastic evidently has something to do with limits, and interestingly, as Jackson argues later, this is where the subversive nature of the fantastic arises.

Todorov cites metamorphosis as another very significant theme of fantastic texts, and just like pan-determinism it constitutes "a transgression of the separation between matter and mind as it is generally conceived." (1975:113) by making the reader "shift from words to the things these words are supposed to designate". By the use of metamorphosis and pan-determinism, "the transition from mind to matter has become possible", since the boundary between matter and mind collapses. (1975:114) Todorov suggests that the principle that underlines metamorphosis is the same as that of pan-determinism: the transition from mind to matter becomes possible. To illustrate this, he refers to Aurelia again and says that a transition between idea and perception is easy in images of metamorphosis:

> The narrator of Aurelia hears these words: *Our past and our future are gone. We live in our race and our race lives in us.* 'This idea immediately became *visible* to me, and as if the walls of the room had opened on to infinite prospects, I seemed to see an uninterrupted chain of men and women in whom I existed and who existed within me." (italics mine) The idea becomes a matter of perception. Here is a converse example, where sensation is transformed into an idea: "Those countless stairways you exhausted yourself climbing up and down were the very links of your old illusions which encumbered your thought...." (1975:115)

One important point that Todorov makes about Nerval's Aurelia here is suggestive of the liberating potential of the fantastic. As "the idea becomes visible" to the narrator of the tale, Todorov describes this as the idea becoming "a matter of perception" (1975:115) and relates this issue of perception to psychology: "It is curious to note

here that such a collapse of the limits between matter and mind was considered, especially in the nineteenth century, as the first characteristic of madness." (1975:115) Thus, in the fantastic, transgression is often represented by the use of pan-determinism, and the limits of the "normal man" collapse. Todorov relates this to Alan Watts' statement from The Joyous Cosmology and states that watts wrote at the very beginning of his account: "The greatest superstition of all consists in the separation of body and mind." (1975:115) Piaget's theory of the development of infants also supports the thesis behind the collapse of boundaries and suggests that this collapse stands for a perception which is not mature and normal: "... at the beginning of his development, the infant does not distinguish the psychic world from the physical one." (1975:115) This is then, Todorov concludes, an "adult simulacrum of infancy". (115)

After describing the nature of metamorphosis, Todorov mentions one of its consequences, the "multiplication of personality", which is caused by the collapse of the boundary between mind and matter. He maintains that due to this collapse, one can now become several persons physically as easily as mentally. Thus, as "the effacement of the limit between subject and object" occurs so does the effacement between different identities. (1975:116) The subject is no longer separated from the object, just as is the case with "psychotics" and "infants"; both of these groups defy cultural codes; psychotics cannot cope with or conform to the mental and physical limits drawn by their culture, and infants live outside the codes as they are yet unable to grasp their ground rules. In a sense, the perception that the fantastic is based upon is one that is awry; thus this perception signifies the "odd" aspects of the culture.

This study argues that the images of metamorphosis and multiplication of personality employed in Carter and Winterson's texts correspond to the effacement of boundaries. As these writers enrich their texts with themes that problematise cultural and social perceptions of femininity and masculinity, the fantastic images help the reader sense the effacement of boundaries of the rigid gender roles assigned by patriarchy. This state of collapse recalls Lacan's "imaginary order", also called

pre-linguistic consciousness, where the infant cannot separate the real object from its representation. (ix) This imaginary order marks the narcissism by which the human subject creates fantasy images of himself and his ideal subject of desire. (6) The transgression of the boundaries between objects, human beings, plants and animals in the novels by Carter and Winterson corresponds to the possible collapse of cultural limits bringing forth a deconstruction of culturally constructed gender roles.

Accordingly, the time and space of the fantastic worlds in their fiction are not like the time and space of everyday life. It is then no wonder that almost all fantastic texts propose either a new time scheme or distort consensus reality. Space is transformed as well. The places that the characters dwell in are often used as tools to imply the subversive nature of the texts. As Todorov suggests, themes of self are based on one common principle: the fragility of the limit between mind and matter which gives rise to several basic themes such as "special causality, pan-determinism; multiplication of personality; collapse of the limit between subject and object; and lastly, the transformation of time and space." (120) Todorov connects these themes of self to the theories regarding the formation of the self:

> It has been evident, in any case, throughout this analysis that there is a correspondence between the themes of the fantastic grouped here, and those categories we use to describe the world of the drug-user, the psychotic, or the infant. Hence a remark of Piaget's seems to apply word for word to our object. "Four fundamental processes characterise this intellectual revolution affected during the first two years of existence: these are the constructions of the categories of the object and of space, of causality and of time. (1975:120)

Following Todorov, it can easily be drawn that the fantastic, by distorting the categories of the object, space, causality and time already defined by the symbolic order proposes a re-construction or re-coding of the cultural universe. So, what Jackson calls "the un-seen", in Todorov's categorisation, corresponds to the Freudian perception-consciousness system. To describe what he means, Todorov asserts that:

> The term perception is important here: works that are linked to this thematic network constantly emphasise the problematic nature of this perception, and especially that of the fundamental sense, sight ("the five senses, which are merely one sense- the faculty of seeing," as Louis Lambert put it): to the point where we might designate all of these themes as "themes of vision." (1975:120)

He maintains that "it is, in particular, eyeglasses and mirrors that permit penetration" into the universe which is different from the real one. (121) Giving Hoffmann's tale "Princess Brambilla" in which "glasses alone afford access to the marvellous"(121) as an example, he points out that vision achieved through indirect means becomes one of the main areas of interest for the fantastic: "To see through eyeglasses brings the discovery of another world and distorts normal vision. The derangement is similar to that provoked by the mirror.... Vision pure and simple reveals an ordinary world, without mysteries. Indirect vision is the only road to the marvellous." (122) In this way, Todorov explains why the first category of images, the images of self, can also be named the images of vision. In Hoffmann, vision is a predominant image: "we are literally beset, in his *ouvre*, by microscopes, opera-glasses, false or real eyes, etc." (123) which serve as symbols of "indirect, distorted, subverted vision." (122)

1.4.2 Images of the Other

Todorov sets this category in opposition to the image of the self and includes in it the images of the self's relation to other selves. He takes the self's communication with other selves and the relation of the self with others as the main source of this theme. Thus, as he formerly associated the image of the self to the relation of human beings to the world and used the Freudian term "the perception-consciousness system" to describe this image further, he links the image of the other to communication, and he calls these images alternatively images of "discourse", since he thinks of language as "the form par excellence, and the structuring agent, of man's relation with other men."(139)[5] Unlike the themes of the self which "imply an essentially passive position", this category shows men "entering into dynamic relation with other men."

(139) On a general level, these themes concern the relation of the individual to others rather than to the world, and for Todorov, in fact, this is the "relation of man with his desire" (139) For this reason, he thinks that "the point of departure" for this theme is "sexual desire" and states that:

> Literature of the fantastic is concerned to describe desire in its excessive forms as well as its various transformations or, one may say, its perversions. A special case must be made out for cruelty and violence, even if their relation to desire is in itself indubitable. Similarly the preoccupations concerning death, life after death, and corpses and vampirism, are linked to the theme of love. (138)

He cites the following themes which are all varieties of desire among the themes of the other: necrophilia, the love of death, incest, homosexual love, sadism, various partners, the ambiguity of the sex of the beloved, and the devil as lover. Most of these themes, as Todorov says, "do not truly belong to the supernatural, but rather to a social form of the uncanny." (131)

Rosemary Jackson accepts this category as she does the first one, the themes of the self, and compares the two to argue that only by choosing these images can authors of fantastic texts articulate some deeper concerns and problematise issues like the making of the self and the self's relation to others. Then, she reaches the conclusion that various motifs emanate from these two basic elements of 'I' and 'not-I', and notes that the main aim of the fantastic is to "erase this distinction" and "to resist separation and difference", suggesting that fantastic texts attempt to establish a state of undifferentiation, of unity of self and not-self. (52) For her, in its broadest sense, fantastic literature has always played on "revealing and exploring the interrelations of the 'I' and the 'not-I', of self and other." (53)

In discussing Todorov's categories, Jackson argues that it is possible to see two kinds of "myths" in the modern fantastic. In the first myth, "the source of otherness, of threat, is in the self". In this myth, the self generates its own power, which can be excessive knowledge, rationality, or the mis-application of the human will. She calls this myth the "Frankenstein myth". In the second kind of myth, otherness or fear

originates in a source external to the subject. She states that "the self suffers an attack of some sort which makes it part of the other. ...It is a sequence of invasion, metamorphosis and fusion, in which an external force enters the subject, changes it irreversibly and usually gives it the power to initiate similar transformations." (58) She associates this second myth with Dracula and says that: "Unlike the Frankenstein type, this Dracula type of myth is not confined to the individual subject: it involves a whole network of other beings and frequently has to draw upon a mechanical production of religious beliefs or magical devices to contain the threat." (59) In the Frankenstein myth, self becomes other through a "self-generated metamorphosis, through the subject's alienation from himself and consequent splitting or multiplying identities." (59) However, the second type, the Dracula myth, takes the problem of power as its centre. Jackson's interpretation of Todorov's categories and her coining of new terms for the two sets of themes and characters provide tools for a more detailed analysis of the themes and how they work in the texts.

1.5 Gender and Gender Roles

1.5.1 The Definition of Gender

Since this study contends that the fantastic functions as the tool for criticizing and deconstructing gender roles, the concept "gender" will be frequently used; thus the term should be defined. The most important thing to know about the term is that it does not equal sex. It is the set of cultural practices and representations associated with biological sex. (Elliot, 4-5) Thus, the term is used by feminists "who wanted to insist on the fundamentally social quality of distinctions based on sex" and denotes "a rejection of the biological determinism implicit in the use of such terms as 'sex' and 'sexual difference'." (Scott, 74) "Gender" is also used to refer to the socially and culturally constructed distinctions that accompany biological differences associated with a person's sex. While biological differences are constant over time and across cultures, the social implications of gender differences vary historically and socially. (Spain, 3) What makes gender different from sex is the variety that characterises it. This means that there are only two sexes, yet numerous gender roles are available in

different cultures and communities. Another important factor that defines gender as something separate from sex is that although sex is a given, gender is a construct that comes about as the product of some cultural and social matrices. Describing this basic difference between sex and gender, Rendell maintains that:

> In the most simple summaries, sex, male and female, exemplifies a biological difference between bodies and gender, masculine and feminine, refers to the socially constructed set of differences of a natural and pre-given order, whereas gender differences, although based on sex differences, are taken to be socially, culturally and historically produced differences which change over time and place. (15)

This idea of gender as a concept constructed in time reminds us of Simone de Beauvoir's statement in The Second Sex (1949) where she contends that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine." (281)

Most theories of gender take this concept of woman, as a subject in process, as their premise. In Gender Trouble (1990; reissued 1999), Judith Butler, who builds her theory of gender on modern theorists like Foucault, Lacan, and Kristeva, also refers to de Beauvoir's statement. She thinks that what de Beauvoir implies is that "... woman is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end." (33) Butler's subject is not a given, but a subject-in-process that is constructed in the cultural network by the deeds it performs, thus she says that gender is "performative". (35) Following the idea that gender is a process, not a natural given, Butler argues that "all gender is, by definition, unnatural". (35) As it is something unnatural, there remains no relationship between one's gender and one's sex, which means one can well have a female body but not have characteristics that are generally considered feminine. In this way, Butler implies that a person can be a masculine female or a feminine male. (8)

Expanding on this definition, Butler adds that the extent to which one chooses one's gender identity is not so large since there are very limited choices; she asserts that "to choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organises them anew." (131) This brings Butler to state that "gender is constrained by the power structures within which it performs. In that sense, gender is characterised as a 'structure', a 'mould' or a 'grid' in which (or by which) the subject is 'cast'." (Salih, 52) So, Butler concludes that all bodies are gendered and there is no natural body that exists prior to its cultural and social inscription. For Butler, gender is not what one 'is', but what one 'does'; and it is the product of a process. Thus, she states that: "Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being." (33) Defining gender as something constructed enables one to deduce that it can be altered or de-constructed. So, for Butler it follows that there are ways of "denaturalising" and "unfixing identities" to show the constructedness of gender. (Salih, 67)

If gender can be deconstructed, so can gender roles or gender identity. Gender roles can be defined as "a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity". (Reiter, 159) And gender roles include, "the behaviours, attitudes, values, beliefs and so on that a particular cultural group considers appropriate for males and females on the basis of their biological sex." (Bland, 4) Following these definitions, one can suggest that if gender is a construct, the roles that a particular society assigns to different sexes can be reconstructed. The roles ascribed to different sexes reflect the expectations of the society, and in that sense, gender roles are "representations" or rather "cultural constructs which create a mimetic version of the world, but 'mimesis' does not mean photographic reproduction, it means active refashioning." (Landa, 42) Each time a critical individual "refashions" the already-established roles, the rigid boundaries of these roles are transgressed.

In fact, the term "gender role" denotes a wide range of restrictions imposed on both sexes. As the term "gender" is used to refer to the cultural representation of sexual difference, and to the cultural meaning attached to sexual identity, gender roles mean

certain attributes given by culture to men and women. (McConnell-Ginet, 16) Being culturally constructed views in essence, these roles or expectations, conceptualised by the terms “femininity” and “masculinity”, are subject to criticism, which means they can be challenged and reconstructed. What makes a deconstruction and reconstruction of these established arrangements possible is the dynamism created by those who question the validity and use of these roles. Those who think that socially enforced roles and values restrict their right to exist freely reveal role segregation in education, the professions, housework and all sorts of decision-making processes. So, most feminists argue that traditional patriarchal gender roles are designed in order to perpetuate the male order in which men have more power and freedom, and which is oppressive for women. Thus, as Landa notes, these roles are transmitted in culture by means of children imitating certain role models like parents, relatives and public figures. In this way, gender roles are reproduced by means of mimesis, and they become “central to a culture’s interests”. To reveal the cultural implications of gender roles, she suggests that:

> They are defined not only by what men and women actually do or say, but by what they say they do or say: each culture will have a variety of means to express the way men and women are expected to behave... Gender roles, though, are eminently changeable and subject to revision... And, of course, men and women’s roles are in constant evolution throughout history. This is especially the case in the modern age, when traditional values and images of the self are shaken up and subject to redefinition.” (16-17)

This redefinition and refashioning of gender roles is often referred to in this study as criticism and deconstruction of the male order. As Scott says, if Derrida’s definition of deconstruction is employed, “this criticism means analysing in context the way a binary opposition operates, reversing and displacing its hierarchical construction, rather than accepting it as real or self-evident or in the nature of things. (84) In this sense, this dissertation studies the attempts by Carter and Winterson to criticise the patriarchal system and tries to understand the ways that gender roles operate in the male order to see how these roles can be reconstructed in the interests of both men and women.

1. 5.2 Gender Differences:

The social and cultural discrimination that traditional gender roles enforce upon men and women creates binarism which assigns to women roles that are different from those given to men. This binarism takes its strength from essentialism, "a belief in a unique female nature" which discriminates between men and women on the biological grounds. (Humm, 406) According to essentialist premises, "traditional or normal sexuality (heterosexuality) is the natural result of gender differences: male are and should be masculine, women are and should be feminine-not just female." (Landa, 20) This essentialism also relies on the psychoanalytical theories that study the different psychological processes girls and boys go through. Brennan maintains that psychoanalytic feminism attempts to show how the "feminine" is produced and organised in language, and how the feminine can escape and subvert traditional models. (in Humm, 227) These traditional roles demand that while girls remain emotional, boys should be more independent, and thus more logical. In patriarchal terms, emotional implies dependence and is thought to be dangerous for men as it makes them "womanly". (Landa, 23) The patriarchal hierarchy defines women as the negative pole whereas men are considered as neutral and positive. Women are seen as "the other" to men. De Beauvoir sums up this binarism as "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, she is the Other." (25-26) There is also the equation between masculinity and activity, and femininity and passivity. As Landa suggests, "Men are culturally constructed as active, as subjects who must face and master the world through manipulation and action: they are human subjects, while women are assigned a peculiar ground between the human and the objectual." (23) This basic dividing line confines women to the private sphere, i.e. home, while men enjoy the power to be active in the public one. Ortner also suggests, as Spain notes, that women are identified with natural reproductive processes while men are identified with cultural ones. (in Spain, 23) Unless cultural life changes, masculine attributes will continue to be valued over feminine ones which see women as the second sex. In "Is Female to Nature as Male is to Culture?" Ortner articulates a view shared by many feminists that women are associated with nature, reproduction and emotion, and thus assigned roles as caretakers of physical and emotional needs within the home while men are considered as the providers of wealth and active participants in

the social life outside home. (253-255) The rigid boundaries between feminine and masculine roles are the product of this basic binary opposition which proliferates in practical life in polarities such as hard-soft, tight-loose, rigid-pliable, dry-fluid, objective-subjective, reason-emotion, science-art, culture-nature and intellectuality-sensuality. (Frosh, 11) It is apparent that these attributes are all cultural constructs which result from essentialism, namely the idea that “sex is a natural force that exists prior to social life and shapes institutions” (Landa, 20) This study takes a feminist stance, viewing femininity and masculinity as the result of social and cultural practices, that is, as constructs, not primary drives. The representations of gender roles and gender differences emphasised by the fantastic images in the novels by Carter and Winterson will be analysed to reveal their critical and subversive potential.

CHAPTER 2

THE INFERNAL DESIRE MACHINES OF DOCTOR HOFFMAN

> *"Rather, from beyond the grave, her father [Dr Hoffman] has gained a tactical victory over me and forced on me at least the apprehension of an alternate world in which all the objects are emanations of a single desire." Desiderio*

If Nights at the Circus is a good example of the fantastic elements depicting an ideal state of existence for both the feminine and the masculine, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman (to be referred to as Desire Machines) serves as the theoretical background to this ideal state. Unlike Nights at the Circus, this novel sets out to delineate two opposite states of existence; the Real and the Fantastic. In that sense, this novel is a direct challenge to the already established patriarchal mode of existence for the two genders. In trying to challenge the prevalent modes for the feminine and the masculine, the novel employs the thematic struggle between the two worlds: the City of Reality and that of Fantasy. Through the siege of the City of Reality by the desire machines of Dr Hoffman, which evidently reflects the fantastic mode of existence, the reader is immediately offered a world in which boundaries are blurred and transgressed. The form of transgression, described throughout the novel, helps Carter meditate on the question of the boundaries dividing the sexes.

To put it simply, what makes this novel unique is that Desire Machines mostly focuses on the issue of the transformation of the patriarchal order on a large scale. In Desire Machines, Carter suggests a more radical set of changes to the underlying principles and practices of the world than she will do in Nights at the Circus. Thus, she suggests that the real change the patriarchal order needs will start not only from the daily acts of men and women, but also from their view of the cosmos, the spatial organisation of the cities they live in and their understanding of order, which determines their taste in music, their concept of beauty and so on. Seen from this

perspective, Carter's rewriting the Biblical myth of original sin at the end of the novel, for instance, is a narrative device that manifests Carter's proposition that the gender roles will not be truly liberating unless the existing order is turned upside down.

The fact that Carter offers such a radical and sophisticated approach to the conversion of the patriarchal order seems to be the result of her reading. Studying the modern transformers of culture, Carter bases her novel on philosophically strong ground. Surrealism, the fantastic tale tradition, Alfred Jarry's pataphysics (the science of imaginary solutions), Freudian psychoanalysis, the Marquis de Sade's challenge to the traditional concept of sex, the Frankfurt school's criticism of reason and the Enlightenment and Eric Satie's novel understanding of music are all thrown into Carter's melting-pot and are filtered through her unique feminist sensibility. Such a rich philosophical texture makes the novel hard to summarise; moreover, its multidimensional nature defies classification. The novel almost becomes Carter's grand narrative criticising some major texts of the modern era. This can be seen in the use of the epigraphs that start the novel, which are like a path through the labyrinthine design of the text. Thus, in the following section dealing with the conceptual framework to the novel, these epigraphs and their implications are explored in length to shed light on the meaning behind the fantatsic images in Carter's labyrinthine plot.

2.1 Conceptual Framework for Desire Machines

2.1.1 The Real versus the Fantastic: Plot, Characters, Setting and The Themes

In this novel, Carter seems to have made a resolution to write a fantastic novel that follows in the footsteps of the early fantastic tales by one of the key figures, E.T.A. Hoffmann. In fact, the title immediately recalls Hoffmann, the German author of fantastic tales, and his short story "the Sandman", which led Freud to speculate on the nature of the uncanny, and which literary critics of the twentieth century have used to elaborate on the principles of the fantastic in literature. Thematically, what

E.T.A. Hoffmann does in his work resembles the literary concerns of Carter. As Victor Lange suggests:

> Hoffmann does not juxtapose the real and the fantastic in order to devalue the one and extol the other; for him the fantastic is the real, bared and stripped of its incrustations of dullness and insensitivity... In Hoffmann's work it is madmen, lovers and artists who become, for an instant of bliss, the witnesses of that liberating and transcending power that life conceals under its comforting everyday surface... The two realms, the pragmatic and the ideal, remain in Hoffmann's tales radically separate. They are not harmonised in optimistic or utopian schemes. (x-xiv)

After even only a cursory look at the plot structure of Desire Machines, it can easily be claimed that Carter took a Hoffmannesque stance towards the real and developed it. Hoffmann's "The Sandman", in particular, can be seen as an inspiration for the novel, which seems to rework the story's themes for subversive effect. Desire Machines has a plot comprising a triangle of characters, the father, the daughter and the lover. The father, a figure displaying God-like machinations, is portrayed as a scientist, as in Hoffmann's "The Sandman". In Hoffmann's story, desire is accidentally created by the scientist-father Professor Spalanzani, through the production of an automaton, which becomes his daughter; conversely, for Dr Hoffman of Carter's Desire Machines, desire is the target product, and to produce it he employs his daughter Albert/Albertina and transforms her bodily structure into that of an automaton. As this desire brings upon Desiderio a challenge, Carter chooses to call the machines "infernal desire machines" and entitles the narrative The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman.

Alternating between two identities, the lover in Hoffmann's "The Sandman" illustrates the two basic Freudian principles underlying life: the Reality Principle and the Pleasure Principle. In his work Beyond the Pleasure Principle Freud defines the pleasure principle as an "avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure". (1961:3) He further adds that this principle follows from "the principle of constancy" which means human beings tend to achieve "stability" between feelings of

"pleasure" and "unpleasure". (1961:6) Freud explains that to bring these two sorts of feelings into relation, the reality principle takes the lead:

> Under the influence of the ego's instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (1961:7)

Like "The Sandman", the plot structure of Carter's Desire Machines is almost completely based upon the pleasure and reality principles; yet, through the use of the picaresque, it is turned into a very deep and sophisticated novel that portrays a wide range of characters and themes. Freud's "long indirect road to pleasure" becomes a picaresque "quest for pleasure" plot in the hands of Carter; furthermore many critics consider Desire Machines as a novel with a plot resembling that of Oedipus Rex in that the central character is in search of solving a riddle. For Peach the novel is "a rewriting of the Oedipus story."(101) Calling Desiderio, "a postmodern Oedipus", Robinson draws a parallel between Desiderio's narrative and Oedipus Rex and contends that "Like Oedipus [Desiderio] has rid the city of its pollution and, also like Oedipus, he must pay the price of his knowledge" (111) She also adds that "women in this novel, as in the quest story, are objects put into circulation according to the logic of male desire." (101) Carter subverts traditional quest narratives by changing the fate of the female characters to challenge the patriarchal order. For instance, Albertina, in some parts of the novel portrayed through the 'sleeping beauty' motif, meets Desiderio/ the prince, who is not presented as a bringer of life, but of death. (Sage:1992, 173) Carter uses a plot structure similar to the one used in Hoffmann's tale, yet her main aim is to subvert the traditional by first foregrounding and then disappointing the reader's expectations.

Basically, the novel is a war fought between the two principles. It can be suggested that Hoffman's working out of the conflict between the Reality Principle and the Pleasure Principle on a thematic level is, in Carter, turned into an allegory of the war

between the two principles. The protagonist, or rather the picaro, Desiderio, who develops through the experiences he has, departs from the humdrum life of the City of Reality for the realm of the Pleasure Principle ruled by Dr Hoffman. He is actually in charge of inspecting the world of Dr Hoffman and is supposed to collect clues for the counter-argument that is being built by the Minister of Determination, who rules the City of Reality. He starts this journey as an outsider, yet he tends to accommodate himself a bit too easily to the new standards of the world of pleasure thanks to the temptation of Albertina, the daughter of Dr Hoffman. Thus, it is clear that the Hoffmannesque triangle, that is the father/scientist, the daughter and the lover, recurs with the lover once again portrayed as an inexperienced young man to be easily lured by the miraculous beauty of the daughter. The resolution of the clash between reality and illusion in Hoffman's "The Sandman" is brought about by the destruction of the automaton. It is the death of the automaton which he sees as a rare beauty that the young Nathaniel finally admits is a mere artefact freeing him from confusion. Similarly, the war of the two principles in Carter's <u>Desire Machines</u> is finally settled by an allegorical use of the same thematic device: "the death of the rare beauty". Carter's hero kills the image of the young beauty; that way he brings about the resolution by the force of his own free will so that the Reality Principle prevails over the Pleasure Principle to bring, in Freudian terms, the "stability of pleasure". In sum, it is clear that Carter first resorts to the world of the traditional fantastic tales, and then modifies it by making the issues tackled in them more explicit. She, then, turns everything upside down. As Neumeier claims: "Whereas earlier Gothic/fantastic texts had to be interpreted in psychoanalytic terms by readers and critics, <u>The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman</u> provides its own reading" (in Armitt, 2000:179).

What Carter typically does is not to write a modern fairy tale; she simply takes a pattern of the fairy tale tradition and makes it a basis of her philosophising. She uses fantastic elements; however, her novel is not a traditional fantastic tale, which simply aims to astonish the readers. She feels that she has to do more in order to change the restricting patterns of the patriarchal order. Lorna Sage, one of her best friends and first critics, remarks that Carter worried about being ghettoized as fantastical. (1994:31) No wonder Carter warned critics in advance by saying that they should not

expect her to be interested in fairies. So, it should be kept in mind that Carter in Desire Machines does not aim to reproduce the traditional fantastic; instead, in making her social and cultural critique, she resorts to the fantastic mode in order to underline her messages. In Lorna Sage's words "[Carter] never accepted the madwoman-in-the-attic school of thought about the woman writer, particularly not about the Gothic or fantastical writer: freaks and fairies, she believed, were as much socially determined as anyone else, our 'symbols' are of course 'ours'." (1994:31) To emphasise that she does not simply write fantasies, in her 'Notes from the Front Line' Carter states, "I become mildly irritated (I'm sorry) when people, as they sometimes do, ask me about the 'mythic quality' of work I've written lately. Because I believe that all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the demythologising business." (1997:38) Later in an interview with Katsavos, she expands on what she means by being in the "demythologising business" by referring to the meaning of myth. Myth, for her, includes "ideas, images, stories that we tend to take on trust without thinking what they really mean, without trying to work out what, for example, the stories of the New Testament are really about."(1994:1) As her main aim is to demythologise, unlike most fairytale writers and most romantic fantasists, it is not the fairies themselves but the impact the fairies produce upon the reading public that she is actually interested in. If there are fairies and fairy tales in her work, they are there to be usurped, challenged and then reconstructed. As Warner suggests: "For a fantasist, Carter kept her feet on the ground... For her fantasy always turns back its eyes to stare hard at reality, never losing sight of material conditions." (Warner, 1996:25)

So, the fantastic, the "not-here", in Carter's Desire Machines, is always linked to the real, the "here". For the reader to build up a vision in the act of reading, s/he should attend to the real. As Rosemary Jackson suggests in her study of the fantastic, the fantastic text is always associated with the real. Thus, it should always be read against the real, which is possible only by means of metaphorical and allegorical readings. In Desire Machines Carter explores both the here and the not here to offer an alternative to the real, which disappoints her; seen from this perspective Desire Machines can also be regarded as a moral work written in the fantastic mode. In an interview with Haffenden, Carter claims that "If morals are to do with the way

people behave, then I do think the novel has a moral function."(96) In that sense, then, what Carter writes should be read as a moralising agent.

As Aidan Day argues, Carter violates the very first requirement of Todorov in relation to the fantastic in the sense that not only does she allow an allegorical and metaphorical reading, but she aims at one. For Todorov, in order for a text to be fantastic, it should "reject allegorical interpretations." (1975:33) Carter seems to reject this definition. For Day, the groundwork of this rejection is "Carter's materialism."(9) In other words, what makes Carter's texts so fantastic is the very fact that she emphasises the fantastic in the real, by deciphering cultural codes, unmasking cultural myths and showing the crude facts behind culturally constructed myths of femininity such as Fevvers, Albertina, and the Sadeian women. In an interview with Haffenden, she clarifies the "paradox that she chooses to accentuate the real by writing tall stories in lush locales" and she says: "I do like to reduce everything to its material base." (92-95)

With this mindset, Carter creates the character Dr Hoffman, a scientist, a figure who constructs and deconstructs things, and who considers and challenges the "material base". Lorna Sage defines Dr Hoffman as "the great patriarchal Forbidder turned Permitter". He is the great father who "sets the libido 'free' – a most depressing figure, because he points to the recognition that there's no world outside power games" (1994:34-35). As a figure who arbitrarily decides to construct and deconstruct things, Hoffman is a totalitarian. When he rules the world with his ideals, he creates a hellish order. He becomes "a totalitarian whose ambitions produced a nightmare born of a freedom that his totalitarianism had not originally envisaged."(Day, 89) So, as in Hoffmann's fantastic tales, the reader is offered the mingling of the real and the fantastic; contrary to her expectations the fantastic is not that desirable this time:

> The infinity of imagined and desired worlds, the true postmodern nightmare, was let loose by Hoffman even though behind that nightmare lay his original monomaniacal drive to control and direct fantasy. It is because of this paradoxical drive to direct the unleashed imagination that Desiderio calls Hoffman 'a hypocrite' (Day, 208)

In his essay “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning” Freud expands on the mechanism of the ongoing struggle in the individual soul caused by the clash between the reality principle and pleasure principle. Under the impact of unpleasant reality, the mind aims at attaining pleasure. The easiest and the most available way seems to Freud to be through fantasizing:

> What was presented in the mind was no longer what was agreeable but what was real, even if it happened to be disagreeable. With the introduction of the reality principle, one species of thought-activity was split off; it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This activity is phantasysing which begins in children’s play, and later, continued as day-dreaming, abandons dependence on real objects. (1986:222)

Then, just as the pleasure-ego can do nothing but wish and work for pleasure, and avoid unpleasure, so the reality-ego need do nothing but strive for what is useful and guard itself against damage. The Minister’s world of stability and the sense that the city gives that “nothing will change” stands, in Freudian terms, for the “renunciation of earthly pleasures”, ruled by the “doctrine of reward in the after life” (1986:224) The Minister, who stands for the Reality Principle, is represented as a dull figure; Desiderio, formerly an “ordinary clerk in government office” is promoted as the “special agent” to the Minister, but he does not talk favourably of him. Talking about his politics, he sees the Minister as a classicist since he perceives the universe in static terms and objects to novelty as a threat to the order and stability he very much admires. Accordingly, in whatever he does, he follows the known path of reason, which he sees as a guarantee for order; even his leisure activities like listening to music are designed upon the principle of maintaining order. So, being “sombre and sedate as a mandarin”, and “the most rational man in the world”, he prefers Bach to “frivolous” Mozart. (24) As an agent living under the Minister’s rule, Desiderio also resembles the Minister. He is constantly “bored”, “disinterested” and indifferent. His bedtime reading, for instance, is one of the masterpieces of not the Romantics but of the Neo-Classics: “The Rape of the Lock”. Thus, the starting point of the picaresque,

the city ruled by the reality principle, reflects a world similar to the one inherited by the Medieval people, “an ordered universe arranged in a fixed system of hierarchies but modified by man’s sin and the hope of his redemption.” (Tillyard, 13). Life seems to be a game where “every act is conducted under the most complicated system of rules.” (Tillyard, 14) The Minister’s theory, which he calls “names and functions”, envisages a static worldview:

> Each man was secure in possession of a certain name which also ensured him a certain position in a society seen as a series of interlinking rings which although continually in movement, were never subjected to change for there were never any disturbances and no usurpation of names or ranks or roles whatsoever. And the city circled in this utterly harmonious fashion with radiant serenity... (24)

Desiderio’s description of the city before the siege discloses how stable and fixed the Minister has made the city: “How was the city before it was changed? It seemed it would never change. It was a solid, drab, yet not unfriendly city.”(15) Dr Hoffman’s attack on this stability has the impact of a *coup*, which ironically plays on the theme of change that these people are so alienated from. The Minister’s ideal of “no need for change” is challenged by Dr Hoffman’s desire machines which send images that change perpetually. With the *coup*, the city is to be redefined from the beginning; all “names and functions” need a complete revision under the new principles. Desiderio describes this fantastic state of the city with a sobriety that does not match the things happening outside:

> This phantasmagoric redefinition of a city was constantly fluctuating for it was now the kingdom of the instantaneous.... Hardly anything remained the same for more than one second and the city was no longer the conscious production of humanity; it had become the arbitrary realm of dream. (18)

In this new order, shadows do not reflect real objects, clocks do not tell the time, sugar starts to taste salty, and a blue door gradually becomes a green one.

In short, signs cease to speak the previously agreed language. In other words, the Minister's "names" and functions", or sign and signifier, do not correspond to each other any longer. The *coup* is awesome to the minds that are used to living under never-changing signs, and from Dr Hoffman's perspective, it is a liberating one. When Dr Hoffman's Ambassador communicates his master's terms to the Minister, it is emphasised that Dr Hoffman wants "absolute authority to establish a regime of total liberation." (38) Responding to the Minister who complains that the clocks no longer tell the time, the Ambassador praises Hoffman's latest deeds:

> Yes, indeed! The doctor has liberated the streets from the tyranny of directions and now they can go anywhere they please. He also set the timepieces free so that now they are authentically pieces of time and tell every body whatever time they like. I am especially happy for the clocks... For the sake of liberty. (33)

Brooding over the destruction of the cathedral, "an illusion of the sublime" the Minister once again propagates his vision of stability and order. The symmetry of the cathedral, he thinks, "expressed the symmetry of the society which had produced it", and "in the serene and abstract harmony, everything moves with the solemnity of the absolutely predictable." (35) The dialogue between the Ambassador and the Minister ends with the former stating the underlying difference between their views: "Our primary difference is a philosophical one, Minister. For us, the world exists only as a medium in which we execute our desires. Physically, the world itself, the actual world- the real world, if you like- is formed of malleable clay; its metaphysical structure is just as malleable." (35) For the Ambassador, the Minister simply "murders the imagination in the womb" in the name of symmetry. (14) As Desiderio says in the introduction to his narrative, Dr Hoffman brings down on the city an "alternate world in which all the objects are emanations of a single desire."(14) To realise this, Dr Hoffman creates "his weaponry of images along the obscure and controversial borderline between the thinkable and unthinkable" (22) As the peep-show proprietor later tells Desiderio, Hoffmann's premise is that "everything it is possible to imagine can also exist." (97), thus he laboriously works to put this theory into practice. As such a premise requires a complete redefinition of the real and the

imagined, the novel then poses the question of what it means to live in a world where the boundaries are blurred. Hoffmann's offer of a surreal and liberating opposition to the Minister's policy of following the crude fact is reminiscent of surrealism, which is also manifest in one of the three epigraphs to the novel. The following parts explore the implications of the epigraphs which foreground the themes of the novel.

2.1.2 Epigraphs: paths through the labyrinth

The three epigraphs that Carter has chosen to place at the opening of the novel seem to sum up the underlying themes tackled in the novel. In that sense, the epigraphs are like clues to the whole narrative as they introduce the reader to the discussion of certain issues in the novel. In Desire Machines, as she will later do in Nights at the Circus, Carter openly puts into practice her maxim: "A narrative is an argument stated in fictional terms."(Haffenden, 79); in other words, by placing the epigraphs before the novel, Carter in fact announces the argument behind her fiction in non-fictional terms. In that respect, expanding on the epigraphs will help elucidate the meaning behind the sophisticated network of ideas in the novel. As Lorna Sage suggests, this "intellectual's book" infested with "obsessive, erotic and kinetic images" can be understood more easily under the guidance of these epigraphs. (1994:38)

2.1.2.a Surrealism reworked by Carter

"*Les lois de nos désirs sont les dés sans loisir*."

The first epigraph belongs to the Surrealist writer Robert Desnos, which reminds the reader both of the surrealist influences behind, and the thematic concerns, of the narrative. The epigraph, which translates as "The law of our desires are like dice that are thrown constantly" indicates the principle that Dr Hoffman's desire machines work upon. It can be inferred that the machines that work by desire, the laws of which know no certainty, shake the orderly world of the Minister. Thus, in the city under the siege of Dr Hoffman's desire machines, it is total uncertainty and "objective chance" that govern the world. Hoffman explains the meaning of

objective chance as “the definition of the sum total of all the coincidences which control an individual destiny” and adds that his reality-modifying machines, which are designed upon the pattern of objective chance, are powered by “eroto-energy”, which means the by-product of desire. (210) So it is desire, the “unleashed consciousness”, that rules in Hoffman’s city. (211) In this city, there is no certainty or precision. Experiencing this state of chaos, Desiderio longs for the static life in which he always knows when the servants will bring him “a winding sheet” as if he were already dead and his “hot drink before they put [him] to bed”. (221) In its normal state, i.e. before and after “the Doctor’s time”, “the clocks all run on time, every one. Time moves forward ... The shadows fall immutably.” (207) However Hoffman’s desire machines distort this order by replacing order with coincidences.

The emphasis upon the coincidences that lie at the centre of the law of objective chance is further strengthened by Carter’s constant use of the *deus ex machina* technique. In all troublesome situations, Desiderio is saved by last minute escapes. For instance, in “The Mansion of the Night”, freedom from restraint comes through following the *deus ex machina*: he manages to escape from the fireplace; moreover, he bumps into a clothesline on his way from which he can steal “fresh trousers and a shirt”, then he meets a “drunken peasant sleeping” whose sandals he takes from his feet, and he soon finds a bicycle “resting against a rustic bench” on his way. (64-66) In “The River People”, he comes to the recognition that he will be killed the next day only after accidentally hearing Aoi “half-waking, drowsily saying ‘Tomorrow. Do it tomorrow.’”(92) When he sees Aoi with a knife she is “clutching to her bosom”, it dawns upon him that he should escape at once. (92) Likewise, when he is all alone, he soon joins the Count and his valet Lafleur, who are in fact Dr Hoffman and Albertina in disguise. This is hinted at by the choice of names: the Count referring to the power and authority of the doctor, and Lafleur evoking the beauty and fragility of *la fleur, i.e.* the beautiful Albertina. Then all three, in danger of being killed, find a ship in which to escape from the land, and among the pirates that rule on the ship Albertina appears in a mysterious way to save him; later, as in fairy tales, just as they are about to be killed by centaurs, both are miraculously saved by Albertina’s father’s aerial patrols which appear at the last minute.

These last minute escapes, which at first seem to be a structural weakness of the novel, come to refer to the law of the world under Dr Hoffman's rule when the secrets of the desire machines are revealed in the last chapter. When we see that all the previous events are the result of Dr Hoffman's machinations, we realise that the coincidences are actually the very components of the law of objective chance. Desiderio's comment regarding the last minute escape offered by the patrols, which is in fact an intricate plot device of Dr Hoffman, is especially interesting:

> I knew [Albertina] was searching for her father's aerial patrols. Yet, as she trembled, I saw it was not with fear but with hope- or, perhaps, a kind of effortful strain; she gripped my hand more tightly, until her nails dug into my palm. I remembered the scrap of paper in the pocket of the peep-show proprietor's nephew. 'My desires, concentrated to a single point...' I am sure what happened next was coincidence. I am positive of that. I would stake my life on it... But that was not the extraordinary coincidence. (191)

The real coincidence, "the sacerdotal moment" for him comes with the sudden destruction of the buzzing horse-tree of the centaurs: "It went up in flames." (192) Ironically, Desiderio's becoming a hero by pure coincidence is another aspect of the *deus ex machina* nature of the events in Desiderio's narrative; what comes to Desiderio literally comes through the *deus ex machina*, i.e. out of the desire machines of the godlike figure Dr Hoffman.

Thus, as the epigraph from Robert Desnos suggests, Desiderio's life is a product of pure chance since "the law of our desires are like dice that are thrown constantly." He is totally controlled by the law of desire which knows no certainty. In conformity with this, Desiderio kills Dr Hoffman "unintentionally" (217) and kills Albertina in order "not to be killed by her"; thus, he is a hero just by coincidence:

> In this city, I am, or have been, as you know a hero. I became one of the founders of the new constitution- largely from the negative propulsion of my own inertia for, once I was placed and honoured on my plinth, I was not the man to climb down again, saying: 'But I am the wrong man!' for I felt that, if what I had done had turned out for the common good, I might as well reap what benefits I could from it. ... So I effectively

> evolved into a politician, did I not? I, an old hero, a crumbling
> statue in an abandoned square. (220-221)

Tracing the surrealist influences in the writings of women, Susan Suleiman thinks that Carter's affinities with Surrealism are clear and that she "may have learned a few tricks from Robert Desnos" (1990:162), who is one of the Surrealist movement's leading and "most prolific poets of desire." (Benedikt, 4) However, Suleiman maintains that Carter should not just be regarded as a writer who learns from the surrealist tradition; for her, Carter is one of the most important contemporary feminist writers who practices the anti-patriarchal and anti-traditional vein of Dada/Surrealism. Calling this attitude on the part of experimental women writers a "double allegiance", Suleiman puts Carter among those who both follow the experiments of the historical male avant-garde and criticise dominant sexual ideologies, thus using a double-voice discourse. (1990:163)

In following the experiments of the historical male avant-garde in Desire Machines, Carter can be said to pursue the aim of changing the social and cultural tradition that limits individuals. In order to grasp Carter's rationale in choosing Desnos' statement as an epigraph, Desnos' poetics and his art need to be briefly explored. As one of the most devotedly independent spirits of the Surrealist movement possessed, Desnos once claimed, to have "a mind full of metamorphoses"; so just like the other Surrealist artists, he wanted to set this mind to the work of "transforming the world". In the first *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924) the Surrealist group expressed the belief that their goal of transforming the world could best be achieved by re-structuring the world to resemble the unconscious and dreams—thus by implication, setting the world to rights, setting it in tune with human wishes and desires generally. Carter delineates a world of desires and wishes in her novel, and brings her work close to the unconscious with its states of trance, dream visions, and desires. The vital role that desire plays in this novel is expressed not only in the main title but also in that of the fourth chapter which is almost an allegory of desire: "The Acrobats of Desire". Armitt regards Carter's elaboration on the unconscious in this novel as a "cartography of the unconscious". (2000:180) She sees Desiderio's experiences as the products of his own imagination: "Desiderio tells his own story as a means of

delaying his own death, simultaneously analysing the relationship between the pleasure principle and the death drive as he goes." (2000:179) Desiderio's journey ends in the castle accompanied by Schubert's song cycle *The Winter Journey*, over which Dr Hoffman speaks the moral of the tale that "... invisible presences have more reality than visible ones." (200) Albertina also expands on the nature of love, which for her is the synthesis of dream and actuality. In describing her notion of love, Albertina highlights the significance of desire which recalls the Surrealist ideas the novel bears:

> There is the mirror and the image, but there is also the image of the image; two mirrors reflect each other and images may be multiplied without end. Ours is a supreme encounter, Desiderio. We are two such disseminating mirrors ... My father discovered that the magnetic field formed by our reciprocal desire- yes, Desiderio, our desire- may be quite unique in its intensity. Such desire must be the strongest force in the world and, if it could be crystallized, would show itself as a deposit which is the definitive residuum of the most powerful inherited associations. And desire is also the source of the greatest source of radiant energy in the entire universe. (203)

With this speech on love, Albertina's intellectual depth is revealed to Desiderio and he is impressed by this; in fact, it can be said that Carter here shows the reader the surrealist imprints underlying the text as well. The subject of desire, and the place of love and eroticism in the world, are at the core of Surrealist concerns—with the marvels of love being a touchstone for the transformation of the world which the original Surrealist group of the early-to-mid-1920s had called for. (Benedikt, 4) Actually, it is not only the emphasis on love and desire that makes surrealism a sub-text to Carter's novel. The perception of reality in Surrealist thought seems to parallel Dr Hoffman's project. First of all, as an "attempt to communicate the incommunicable" Surrealism sees the unconscious as the domain where the motivations of conscious thought are to be found, and aims to "raise desire from the level of instinct to the level of consciousness". (Cardinal, 17-32) Secondly, as an alternative to logic, which is seen as a tool for creating order in the universe, Surrealism suggests the possibility of reconciling physical perception and mental representation: "Lunatics fail to distinguish representation from perception.

Surrealists propose that the sane should recognise the advantages of this ‘faculty’ and try to acquire it themselves.” (Cardinal, 34) When a sane person attains this faculty, s/he will be able to see the same thing in both his/her “mind’s eye” and in terms of actual vision. Thus, in surrealist art mind and matter are reconciled. Surrealists put an emphasis on the concept of *le hasard objectif*, “objective chance”, which means that the material world presents an object corresponding to the secret appeal from within. Therefore, surrealists reject the accidental and see coincidences as the correspondence of the inner desire with the outer object. This concept also plays a vital role in Carter’s novel as I have shown.

In his Surrealism: Surrealist Visuality, Levy touches on the concept of visibility in the art of the surrealists. He claims that visuality and mental visibility are everything to Surrealism, which means that “the reference is more often to a state of the mind than to a physical state.” (9) Dali, another leading figure of Surrealism, whose art is “close to science” also “played on virtual reality” (Schiebler, 5) Magritte as a key Surrealist artist problematises visuality as well. In his René Magritte: Thought Rendered Visible, Paquet quotes Magritte as saying that: “Our powers of thought grasp both the visible and the invisible and I make use of painting to render thoughts visible.” (45) With its machines, the fuel of which is crude desire, with its peep-show proprietor who renders desires visible, and with the questions it poses about the reality of solid objects, Carter’s Desire Machines seems to have taken surrealism as its basis. The minor character, Mary Anne dreams of a love suicide, and in the morning she is found dead, Albertina reveals to Desiderio that she has accompanied him on every step of his journey, and the Count who calls himself a star-traveller, transcends all laws. The Count says:

> Before I [the Count] saw my other, I could have turned this mountain into a volcano. I’d have fired these rotten timbers round us with a single sneeze and raise from the pyre, a phoenix... They have eaten me down to an immobile core. I, who was all movement, My I is weaker than its shadow. I’m gripped by the convulsive panic of a mapless traveller in a virgin void. Now I must explore the other side of my moon, my dark region of enslavement... I am entirely alone. I and my shadow fill the universe. (146-147)

The peep-show proprietor, Desiderio's "master", makes the statement: "Everything depends on persistence of vision." (107) The phrase is almost a motto, and Desiderio reflects upon the maxim as he watches the show of the acrobats of desire:

> And, then, the *piéce de résistance,* they began to juggle with their own eyes. The severed heads and arms and feet and navels began to juggle with eighteen fringed, unblinking eyes...I could not entirely suspend my disbelief, although I might lay it aside for a while. I knew there was more to it than met the eye although, in the finale, so many eyes met and greeted one's own! (114)

What Desiderio sees fails to match what he believes the human body is like. The incongruity between the two becomes the very source of what we call the fantastic or surreal.

The emphases on the persistence of vision and on eyes can be explained through the *raison d'etre* of the fantastic. As Todorov and later Jackson suggest, visuality that refers to the discrepancy between what is seen and what is thought is one of the important themes of the fantastic. A sight which defies "consensus reality" is one of the requirements of fantastic works. In other words, through the theme of sight, the "problematic nature of perception" is emphasised. (Todorov, 1975:120)

As stated earlier in discussing Jackson's definition of the fantastic, since the word, fantastic, means to make visible, the emphasis on sight is cited as one of the distinguishing elements of fantastic literature. Jackson cites visibility as one of the central thematic concerns of the fantastic and notes that the fantastic often introduces "dark areas" and "spaces behind the visible":

> The topography of the modern fantastic suggests a preoccupation with problems of vision and visibility, for it is structured around spectral imagery: it is remarkable how many fantasies introduce mirrors, glasses, reflections, portraits and eyes- which see things myopically, or distortedly, or out of focus- to effect a transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar. (43)

For Jackson, this is the effect of the cultural environment that fantastic works emerge from: “In a culture which equates the ‘real’ with the ‘visible’ and gives the eye dominance over other sense organs, the un-real is that which is in-visible.” (45) She further comments that:

> That which is not seen, or which threatens to be un-seeable, can only have a subversive function in relation to an epistemological and metaphysical system which makes ‘I see’ synonymous with ‘I understand’. Knowledge, comprehension, reason are established through the power of the look, through the ‘eye’ and the ‘I’ of the human subject whose relation to objects is structured through this field of vision. In fantastic art, objects are not readily appropriated through the look: things slide away from the powerful eye/eye which seeks to possess them, thus becoming distorted, disintegrated, partial and lapsing into invisibility. (45-46)

By portraying the un-seen of the culture, fantasy, as Jackson deduces, “subverts dominant philosophical assumptions which uphold as ‘reality’ a coherent, single-viewed entity, that narrow vision which Bakhtin termed ‘monological’.”(48)

In Carter’s Desire Machines, the images in one’s mind’s eye, products of the imagination, are made real through an act of looking at a peep-show. In other words, the world is real as long as one looks at it; the moment one stops looking, it becomes a mere product of the imagination. And as if to overemphasise the significance of vision, Carter uses an image of peacocks swarming in the opera house in the middle of a show, which starts the distortion of vision in the city. The peacock, according to a Greek myth, bore a hundred eyes in its tail: when all the hundred eyes of Argus slept, Hermes, at the request of the jealous Hera, killed him. Hera then took the eyes and set them in the tail of the peacock, her favourite bird. (Hamilton, 77) In Desire Machines the beginning of the “delirium” is expressed through the image of the auditorium of the Opera House filled with peacocks:

> ...peacocks in full spread who very soon began to scream in intolerably raucous voices, utterly drowning the music so that I

> instantly became bored and irritated...I saw that everyone in the gallery was wearing a peacock-green skull cap and behind each spectator stirred an incandescent, feathered fan...All around me were the beginnings of considerable panic; the peacocks shrieked and fluttered like distracted rainbows and soon they let down the safety curtain, as the performance could not continue under the circumstances. It was Dr Hoffman's first disruptive coup. (16-17)

In Desiderio's words, this is the Doctor's first modification of "the nature of reality", the means of which they do not understand. (17) Yet, the reader is given a clue in the peacocks, symbolising, here, multiple vision; later this clue will be reinforced by the peep-show proprietor's comment that "Everything depends on persistence of vision." (107)

In his introduction to a collection of fantastic tales, Calvino claims that the essence of fantastic literature is "the problem with the reality of what we see" and lists some problematic cases. (Calvino:1997, vii) The true theme of the nineteenth century fantastic tale for him is the reality of what we see:

> To believe or not to believe in phantasmagoric apparitions, to glimpse another world, enchanted or infernal, behind everyday appearances. It is as if the fantastic tale, more than any other genre, were destined to make its entrance through our eyes, to become concrete in a succession of images, to entrust its power to communicate to the ability to create "figures". (Calvino:1997:xii)

After analysing the different stages of fantastic literature, Calvino calls the first three decades of the nineteenth century, "the visionary fantastic" noting "the direction toward the gradual interiorization of the supernatural" to set the central characteristic of the following stages which he calls "the everyday fantastic." (Calvino:1997, viii)

In her Desire Machines, then, Carter makes a retrospective study of the first phase of the fantastic, since the essence of the fantastic in this novel is the placing of the visionary in the foreground. Just as Hoffman, the story-teller did, in Carter's work Dr Hoffman places sight in the foreground of his world. In a way, the peep-show

proprietor is the modern version of the telescope of Hoffmann's protagonist, or of the naked eye of Gautier's Romuald; though different in form, it functions in the same way: it refreshes a view that has either been repressed or long forgotten, to create disturbance or discomfort out of the appearance of the unseen.

Thus, through the work of its desire machines Carter's novel transgresses the single-vision of the "Real-ity" Principle that is much too narrow to convey the experiences in the domain of the un-seen, and turns the un-seen into the seen of the culture: in the novel this occurs with the help of the peep-show proprietor. Through the different visions offered by the peep-show, Desiderio is given a new reality where he is forced to redefine himself.

2.1.2. b Wittgenstein:

> *(Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of the content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one: the definition is a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.)*

The second epigraph, taken from Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, sheds more light upon the thematic concerns of the narrative, and it parallels the surrealists' linguistic iconoclasm, that is the attempt to push language towards its limits, which Artaud sums up as the destruction of repressive rules and logic demanded by grammar and language since "word and linguistics are inhibitory to thought" (in Levy, 8). By penetrating the "imminent beyond" or surreal, by means of what Rimbaud calls the "alchimie du verbe", the Surrealists "hoped to translate the inventions of the unknown into verbal form". (Cardinal, 12) So, what the first epigraph evokes is solidified in words by the second epigraph from the master of words, Wittgenstein.

By putting this statement before her novel, Carter hints that the novel problematises the function of definitions. Through the varying and everchanging degrees of affinity between the definition and the defined object in the course of the narrative, the novel

examines whether or not a definition really serves as a mere “ornamental coping that supports nothing”. The problematisation starts as early as the appearance of the first oddities in the city. The first time Desiderio feels perplexed during the siege of the city is when the shadows inexplicably fail to match the objects around them, or, as Desiderio puts it, when “The shadows began to fall subtly awry.” (15) This clash between the signifier and the signified which is recognised by a visible indicator starts gradually to infiltrate all the senses: “Sugar tasted salty” (15), “A door one had always seen to be blue modulated by scarcely perceptible stages until, suddenly, it was a green door." (15) “seismic vibrations [made] great cracks in the hitherto immutable surface of time and space” (17), “The very stones were mouths which spoke.” (18) Thus, Dr Hoffman’s activities which started in “small ways” proliferate, leading to graver uncertainties like the one Desiderio expresses in the chapter called “Lost in Nebulous Time”. Living under the order of the centaurs, he seems to have lost the frame of mind that has so far enabled him to maintain a coherent sense of identity:

> For the first time led like a child by the great bay whose form was so much nobler than mine and whose sense of the coherence of his universe was so inflexible, my own conviction that I was a man named Desiderio, born in a certain city, the child of a certain mother, lover of a certain woman, began to waver. If I was a man, what was a man? The bay offered me a logical definition: a horse in a state of ultimate, biped, maneless, tailless decadence. I was a naked, stunted, deformed dwarf who one day might begin to forget what purpose such a thing as a name of my own served. (189-190)

The new definition of man offered by one of the leading centaurs is like the process of redefinition that Desiderio goes through; he sees the process at the very beginning of his narrative, his “memoirs”, as something that requires a complete redefinition: “This phantasmagoric redefinition of a city was constantly fluctuating for it was now the kingdom of the instantaneous.” (18) As Desiderio sees it, the process is that of redefining and renaming. According to Peach, out of the destruction of the city under siege a new way of seeing emerges, evoked by the swarming peacocks, and Desiderio’s real anxiety stems from this drastic change that is almost impossible to accommodate. (105) Interpreting the constant changes brought about by Dr

Hoffman's desire machines, Peach maintains that "a centre of gravity is shifting once again: on this occasion away from the rigid hierarchies and classifications of the rationalism in which Desiderio has been educated."(105) In a sense, the new shadows, objects, fruits and sugar all subvert conventional definitions to pave the way for new definitions. Desiderio refers to this shattering power of the Doctor, which impresses him enormously, as "the very power the Doctor abused with such insouciance, the power to subvert the world."(28) The things around, Desiderio says, are no longer familiar, "though they often teasingly recalled aspects of past experience, as if they were memories of forgotten memories." (19) This means of subverting the traditional perspective by means of the fantastic, as Peach mentions, reminds one of Brecht who is a "likely influence" on Carter; and to draw on the analogy, she refers to Brecht's "The Popular and the Realistic" and quotes from that essay: "Reality can be represented in a factual or fantastic form." (8) Thus, the Brechtian sense of estrangement available in Desire Machines functions as the impetus for an act of redefinition. As Sage points out, Carter thinks that "what we accept as natural is the product of a particular history. ... And art's purpose on this view is to help us recognise our own artificiality and to estrange us from our home-selves." (1994:27) Through portraying "artificial" worlds, which are in fact samples in a peep-show, Desire Machines presents Desiderio as a figure estranged from his home and home-self, lost in time and space, and failing to match reality with its definitions: "Nothing I saw was identical with itself any more. I saw only reflections in broken mirrors. Which was only natural, because all the mirrors had been broken." (12) Just as Todorov states, Desiderio moves into the world of the fantastic "through the mirror". Seeing nothing as identical with itself is a totally new state of being, which can only be called the fantastic:

> Since mirrors offer alternatives, the mirrors had all turned into fissures or crannies in the hitherto hard-edged world of here and now and through these fissures came slithering sideways all manner of amorphous spooks. And these spooks were Dr Hoffmann's guerrillas, his soldiers in disguise, who, though absolutely unreal, nevertheless, were. (12)

Thus, as Wittgenstein's epigraph implies, the already existing "definitions" in the city are left as mere "ornamental coping that supports nothing". Dr Hoffman, in a

way, reveals the truth of such a statement by separating the 'coping' from the 'thing' it supports, that is by separating the signifier from the signified. In such a revolutionary state, the peep-show proprietor works as an agent demonstrating the difference between saying and showing when he asserts that "Signs speak. Pictures show." (47) The wonderful park that surrounds Dr Hoffman's castle at Desiderio's journey's end is suggestive of the Garden of Eden where Adam names the things around him. The park which is, to Desiderio, a "sweet, female kernel", full of enormous flowers, brilliant birds, enchanting rabbits, with its beautiful roe deer sauntering among the trees full of fruit and which, interestingly is the very "park framed by the female orifice in the first machine of all", alludes to Eden. (196-197) Not only apple trees that are mentioned a couple of times but also the details in the plot structure help the reader realise the similarities between the park and the Garder of Eden. The allusion to Eden and to Adam's naming the birds and animals suggest a parallel between Desiderio's story and the Biblical myth of the Fall. Desiderio realises that he has already seen the park in the peep-show proprietor's machine before his allegorical fall into the "Mansion of Midnight". Being sent to the town to find a plausible explanation for the disappearance of the Mayor, he was seduced by the Mayor's daughter Mary Anne, the "beautiful somnambulist". When her "love suicide" (57) was interpreted as crime by the Determination Police, Desiderio was taken into custody, from which he escaped. Hence, what happens in "The Castle" turns out to be a mere simulacrum of the plot structure of "The Mansion of Midnight" with the distinct difference that what feels like a secret in the former is revealed in the latter. When Desiderio eventually reaches the castle and meets Dr Hoffman, all the secrets of the desire machines that have disturbed the course of his life are revealed. As he writes his memories, he talks to himself, and as "Old Desiderio" he remembers how "young Desiderio" had chosen reason:

> And when he offered you a night of perfect ecstasy in exchange for a lifetime's contentment, how could you possibly choose the latter?... Nothing excessive, mind- always only a gentle contentment... Perhaps I acted only on impulse. Perhaps he did not offer me a high enough price; after all, he only offered me my heart's desire. Besides, he was a hypocrite. (207)

It seems as if Albertina, an Eve figure seducing Desiderio all along without telling him that what they have been living through is a mere reflection of their desires, offers Desiderio the seeds of knowledge by taking him to the park. His heart's desire, Albertina, starts talking about the beauty of the apple blossom in the park, with an implied allusion to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge: "What a year it's been for apples! Look how heavy the crop is. The trees are bending almost to the ground. When I went away to quarantine the Count, it was apple blossom time. You can't imagine how beautiful the apple blossom is, Desiderio!" (197) As he listens, Desiderio eats an apple. Yet, Carter distorts the original myth, as the expected scene of embarrassment does not follow; Desiderio simply throws away the core with an indifference that is typical of him. He says: "The shrug is my gesture... The sneer is my expression" (220) The Biblical awe and shame following the tasting of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is replaced here by pure lack of interest in and indifference to Albertina's "patrimonial apple blossom" (197), which is accompanied by Desiderio avoiding killing both the Father and the daughter. The novel is a postmodern version of the Biblical story; and the allusion to Adam's naming the birds and animals should be understood as a redefining of the universe. In the Bible, the process of naming is vividly described:

> And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; and brought unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; (Genesis, 2-19-20)

This Biblical allusion underlying this chapter, which takes place in the realm of the Father/Dr Hoffman, is further emphasised in the chapter by the physical description of Albertina and Desiderio. In search of an escape from the centaurs' world, they are finally caught sight of by the "aerial patrols" of Dr Hoffman who immediately take them both on the helicopter in a hurry. Liberated from a ritualistic death-scene, they are naked in the helicopter. Desiderio, like Adam, feels ashamed even before eating the apple:

> I saw she had already put on one of their spare combat suits of drab, olive till and was now combing out her black hair... The co-pilot put away his camera and dug into a locker to produce clothes for me, too. Now, she was dressed, I was embarrassed at my nakedness and hurried to cover myself, though my fingers fumbled over the unfamiliar buttons. (193)

Moreover, Desiderio's question, "Am I the general's batman?" reminds us of Cain's "Am I my brother's keeper?", and foreshadows the murder of Albertina, which is similar to Cain's murder of Abel even if Albertina is not Desiderio's brother. (193) All in all, if the Castle of Dr Hoffman stands for The Garden of Eden of God, then Carter can be said to subvert the myth; Desiderio kills both the patrimonial God figure and the Eve-like daughter Albertina. In a sense, Carter envisions a life re-set from the beginning; the fall seems to be affirmed, although one can also think that with the death of Dr Hoffman, the Reality Principle is left to preside over the Pleasure Principle. However, since Desiderio loses his beloved Albertina, his survival cannot be considered a victory of the first principle over the second. Nevertheless, the Biblical allusion helps Carter in her "demythologising business" in the sense that she neither shows Desiderio as the winner nor as a pure loser.

2.1.2. c A New Order Like Alfred Jarry's Pataphysical Solution:

> *Imagine the perplexity of a man outside time and space, who has lost his watch, his measuring rod and his tuning fork.*

The third and the last epigraph, which is from Alfred Jarry's Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustrall Pataphysician, once again emphasises the impact that uncertainty makes on those who are used to certainty. Considering Jarry's challenging ideas which made him announce himself in Paris literary circles "like a wild animal entering a ring."(Braun, 51) makes it easier for the reader to grasp the challenge Carter makes throughout the novel. Jarry is a playwright and director, but he is also famous for his "neo-scientific novel": Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustrall Pataphysician. One should bear in mind the fact that Jarry's scientist, the

pataphysician Dr Faustrall, also attempts to formulate a new concept of time, just like Dr Hoffman's "Nebulous Time." Jarry's work prefigured Dada, Surrealism and Futurism, and he is also known as the founder of the "science of pataphysics" which he defines as "the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments." (Book II, Elements of Pataphysics) Jarry maintains that this science "extend[s] as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics." (21) Jarry attributed this science to a personage, Dr Faustrall, "a calm and collected science fiction style adventurer", who, in his work, sets this pataphysician to the task of "examining the laws governing exceptions", and of explaining "the universe supplementary to this one" or as he notes "less ambitiously" of describing "a universe which can be--- and perhaps should be--- envisaged in the place of the traditional one." (21-26) Pointing to the revolutionary aspect of Jarry's art, John Richardson asserts that "Jarry crashed the barrier between fantasy and reality, and established the parodic sense of pataphysics, which would detonate all traditional canons of beauty, good taste and propriety." (in Cruickshank, 2) In this sense, Dr Faustrall and Dr Hoffman have something in common. They would like to turn the world upside down and inside out by means of their experimental efforts, by the new science. Through their scientific labour, they disturb the traditional order. What Desiderio says in the "Introduction" is reminiscent of reason's response to such turbulence: "I was the confidential secretary to the Minister of Determination, who wanted to freeze the entire freak show the city had become back into attitudes of perfect propriety."(12) Jarry's quotation, then, can be read as a description of Desiderio's perplexed mind under Dr Hoffman's rule.

Actually Desiderio is not only perplexed by the Nebulous Time of Dr Hoffman, but also by the Faustian choice he is forced to make. Quite often in the novel Desiderio makes it known that he is being forced into making a decision which is like a pact with the devil. In the first chapter, he caricatures the authoritative figures: "Yet, essentially, it was a battle between an encyclopaedist and a poet for Hoffman, scientist as he was, utilised his formidable knowledge only to render the invisible visible, even though it certainly seemed to us that his ultimate plan was to rule the world." (24) Later, as Hoffmann's ambassador and the Minister negotiate, Desiderio makes a comparison between them and concludes that: "It was like the dialogue

between a tentacular flower and a stone". (33) In the last chapter, Desiderio broods over the choice he is compelled to make and in a tone like that of Jarry's "Faustrall" he says:

> I, of all men, had been given a casting vote between a barren yet harmonious calm and a fertile yet cacophonous temple. Well, you know the choice I made. Nothing in this city quarrels with its name. The clocks run on time, every one. Time moves forward on the four wheels of the dimensions just as it always did before the Doctor's time. (207)

And he concludes that Hoffman is a hypocrite and, besides, he is a Satanic figure who plays tricks on others. Dr Faustrall's projection of a man outside space and time with no watch or measuring rod to guide him echoes Desiderio lost in Nebulous Time. The chapter bearing the title "Lost in Nebulous Time" opens with Desiderio's ironically detached voice:

> There was once a young man named Desiderio who set out upon a journey and very soon lost himself completely. When he thought he had reached his destination, it turned out to be only the beginning of another journey infinitely more hazardous than the first for now [Albertina] smiled a little and told me that we were quite outside the formal rules of time and place and, in fact, had been since I met her in her disguise. (166)

In a sense, like Jarry's Dr Faustrall, Desiderio loses himself out of time and space to the extent that he calls himself "Desiderio in Search of a Master". (190) Desiderio humorously likens the Minister to Faust "who cannot find a friendly devil", and adds that even if he had found his Mephistopheles, he could not have believed in him. The Minister, to Desiderio, has all the Faustian desires yet, as he is a man of pure reason, he is left with no chance of actualising those desires: "since he had rejected the transcendental, he had clipped his own wings." (28)

In "The Mansion of Midnight" chapter, which plays on the theme of the initiation of Desiderio into the bizarre world of Dr Hoffman and Albertina, Carter portrays the Mayor's mansion and his daughter Mary Anne. The dialogue between Desiderio and Mary Anne sets the eccentric tone that will be heard throughout the novel. The image

of “a twist of apple leaves” also recalls the forbidden fruit as a Biblical allusion that is used in the last chapter as well. Answering Desiderio’s question about what happened to her father, Mary Anne replies in a very disaffected and indifferent voice that echoes Desiderio’s character:

> ‘He disintegrated of course’ she said. ‘He resolved to his constituents- a test tube of amino-acids, a tuft or two of hair’...She had not given me any answer I might have expected and, when I tried to question her further, she only giggled again and shook her head so that a twist of apple leaves fell to the floor and her hair flopped over her eyes. Then she put her cup down on the table with the excessive care of the born clumsy and ran up the dark corridor again. She must have left the door of the drawing room open, for her piano sounded louder this time, and she must have changed her music, for some irrational reason; now she played the lucid nonsense of Erik Satie. (54-55)

Satie’s music here functions as a sign that makes a quick reference to the theme of deviance from the normal. In other words, Carter’s choice of music is significant in the sense that Satie, known as an “eccentric and original composer” of pieces with odd titles like “Dried up Embryos”, “Drivelling Preludes (for a dog)”, and “Chilled Places” is another figure of a deviant fantasist (like Alfred Jarry and Robert Desnos) moving away from the accepted norms and rules. (Ainsley, 78) With Satie played by Mary Anne, an air of eccentricity and deviance is achieved in the chapter.

Satie was eccentric both as a person and a composer whose “whimsical ways and Bohemian manner of life attracted many artists and musicians.” (Kuhn, 1180) For instance, he wanted his short piano piece titled “Vexations” (1893) to be played 840 times in succession. As a collector, he had some peculiar habits like having 100 identical umbrellas, 84 identical handkerchiefs, and 12 identical grey velvet suits which he used to wear in succession. (Fogwall, 2-3) Thus, Satie seems to match Dr Hoffman, who also has an admiration for simulation. What Satie does with his music, Hoffmann does with his desire machines. Therefore, Mary Anne playing Satie on the piano contributes to the air of eccentricity that helps Carter build up the fantastic that functions as a demythologiser. Like Carter, Satie, “with his eccentric

titles and bizarre commentaries", (Sadie, 517) brings new ways of seeing reality by deconstructing the already established modes, which is clear in the note about the way he wrote his pieces: "[Satie"s] strange sparse scores, often written without bar lines in red ink are peppered with whimsical instructions: "Light as an egg", "Here comes the lantern", "Open your head", "Muffle the sound" "With astonishment", "Work it out yourself" etc." (Furstner, 1) It is obvious that these two eccentric artists, Alfred Jarry and Erik Satie, stand in parallel to Carter's Dr Hoffman who is a figure to break the ground rules of the the world and impose his own.

2.1.3 The Sadeian Woman: the Marquis de Sade as a Liberator

The Sadeian Woman (1979) is Carter's analysis of the Marquis de Sade and the representation of the female characters in his work, an analysis which has received many controversial comments. Taking what Carter argues in this work into account while reading Desire Machines sheds light on the representation of male and female characters and the sex scenes. For instance, in her novel, Carter does not veil sexual and bodily issues, but presents violent sex scenes such as the rape of Desiderio and then of Albertina. She does not screen violent sex scenes which may be considered by some as pornographic. In The Sadeian Woman, Carter mainly focuses on the idea that not only femininity but also sex are cultural constructs, and she maintains that cultural values are inseparable from sexual myths. Cameron states that the book is "mainly concerned with the elucidation of our own tortured ideas of sexuality inherited from the past." (in Bristow, 135) In the "Polemical Preface" to the book, Carter contends that:

> [...] our flesh comes to us out of history, like everything else does. We may believe we fuck stripped of social artifice; in bed, we even feel we touch the bedrock of human nature itself. .... But no bed, however unexpected, no matter how apparently gratuitous, is free from the de-universalising facts of real life. We do not go to bed in simple pairs; even if we choose not to refer to them, we still drag there with us the cultural impedimenta of our social class, our parents' living, our bank balances, our sexual and emotional

> expectations, our whole biographies- all the bits and pieces
> of our unique existences(9)

In the "The Erotic Traveller" chapter of Desire Machines, Carter explores the notion that sex is just a product of cultural values and depicts characters like the Count and his valet Lafleur who recall the Marquis de Sade and his valet. These two characters introduce Desiderio into a world of sadism and violence, and attend him on his visit to the House of Anonymity, where Desiderio witnesses a world of sexual extremities. The Count and his valet Lafleur, later revealed to be Dr Hoffman and Albertina in disguise, can actually be taken as an allegory of Marquis de Sade's philosophy of sex. As Carter makes an elaborate study in Desire Machines, which she calls an "exercise in cultural history", on the Sadeian premises in her The Sadeian Woman, the main arguments of the latter work are worth noting here.

By entitling her study The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography, Carter suggests that pornography should be studied as the reflection of a certain ideology, which implies that it is the prevalent ideology that designs sex roles and sexual life. Lorna Sage states that "[Carter] was becoming more and more obsessed with the notion that what we accept as natural is the product of a particular culture." (1994:27)The ideas in this work are stated in Desire Machines; as Carter herself says of her art, this "novel" is "an argument put in a fictional form".

The Sadeian Woman caused polemics just as the title of its opening part, "Polemical Preface" means to do. Carter makes a dynamic argument about pornography; so, the criticism it makes about the cultural codes of femininity has been received on ambivalent terms. For instance, "two well-known feminist critiques of pornography, Susanne Kappeler's The Pornography of Representation (1986) and Linda Williams's Hard Core (1990), addressed The Sadeian Woman, albeit briefly, in strongly antithetical terms." (Keenan, 133) While Kappeler thinks that Carter validates pornography "in the name of equal opportunity", (Keenan, 133) Williams suggests that by deeming it an opportunity for Juliette to have an active sex life, even though it is made possible in the service of men, Carter considers de Sade's plots

liberatory, and that Carter manages to "think beyond the binary opposition of pornography or censorship". (Keenan, 142) In other words, on the one hand, The Sadeian Woman is received as a mere reproduction and even an affirmation of the patriarchal views of femininity, on the other, it is referred as a challenge that helps the feminist movement extend its territory. It seems that although Carter is critical of the representation of femininity in patriarchal culture, she cannot help but think within the bounds of the cultural constructs. Thus, she sometimes tends to prefer between the equally victimised heroines of de Sade, which makes her sound contradictory.

In this work, Carter examines the Marquis de Sade's two famous heroines Justine and Juliette. By writing about them, and by analysing them as two distinct feminine role models, she moves towards a new definition of womanhood. She also attempts to establish a link with the cultural construct of femininity and sexuality, which she thinks can be clearly seen in the way de Sade created these two sisters as antitheses to each other. For her, if Justine is the thesis, Juliette is the anti-thesis. Carter asserts that Justine is the victim, whereas Juliette plays the *femme fatale*:

> Justine is the model for the nineteenth century and early twentieth-century denial of femininity as praxis, the denial of femininity as a positive mode of dealing with the world. Worst of all, a cultural conspiracy has deluded Justine and her sister into a belief that their dear being is in itself sufficient contribution to the world. (71)

Thus, Carter sees Justine as a figure "forever trapped in impotence". Juliette, for her, is the opposite character who thinks that, being beautiful, she deserves respect; so she becomes a libertine who uses her femininity as a weapon against male domination. If the former is a poor victim, the latter becomes a witty monster; yet, however different they may seem to be "Both are women whose identities have been defined exclusively by men." (77) Carter depicts two opposite images of femininity in male-dominated society and contends that although the system seems to provide alternative ways of existence for women to choose, these are fake since whatever

path a woman chooses to follow she simply becomes a passive figure playing the secondary role assigned to her.

In relation to Carter's attempt to rediscover these female characters in order to observe some underlying principles of sexuality in a male-dominated culture, on the back cover of the 2001 edition Margaret Atwood describes Carter as a "born subversive" as she "overturns" and considers these "badly behaved heroines" as early feminists. Before she starts examining the characters and finding some clues symptomatic of women and sexuality, Carter first presents a "Polemical Preface" where she introduces the main problem of the book:

> All the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth, anyway... (5)

Carter stresses that "sexuality is never expressed in a vacuum", and to shed light on the reasons behind sexual mythopoeia, she once again highlights the idea: "Flesh comes to us out of history; so does the repression and taboo that govern our experience of flesh." (11) She suggests that de Sade's Juliette is living proof that "biology is not destiny, since biology may be so easily amended." (104) Carter claims that by adapting to the demands and circumstances surrounding her sex, Juliette creates a unique state of existence; unlike her subservient sister Justine, Juliette plays a "little blasphemous guerrilla of demystification". (105) For Carter, this "demystification", namely the active sex life that Juliette is engaged in, promises a more liberating role for women which is in fact another way of satifying men's desires at the cost of being considered promiscious and disreputable.

After analysing the images of femininity reproduced in the patriarchal order, Carter concludes that "To be the object of desire is to be defined in the passive case." (76) In Desire Machines, it is not Albertina but Desiderio as a man who is defined in the passive case; the literal meaning of his name, the desired one, signals that he is the object of desire whom Albertina follows wherever he goes. Thus Desiderio subverts

the male gender role since he is represented in the passive case of femininity. His unusual gender development can be explained by the fact that Desiderio could not have a proper relationship with his mother, a prostitute, and has never known his father. Lacking a standard family education, he fails to follow the patriarchal gender role, which makes him an appropriate demythologising agent. Both Albertina and Desiderio defy the customary means of becoming a man and a woman; Albertina goes through an incessant process of transformation and changes her sex and bodily form, and Desiderio is often represented as the "feminine" object of desire, who is raped by the "acrobats of desire" and seduced by the matriarchal figure of authority of the "river people". Among the river people, Desiderio finds himself marrying a little girl, Aoi, who reminds him of "poor Mary Anne". This girl is indeed Albertina in disguise; Aoi, to Desiderio, is "too young to be married" as she still plays with dolls: "I often saw her cradling in her arms and lullabying a doll dressed like the river babies." (75) But as the weeks go by, Desiderio grows "attuned to the slow rhythms and amniotic life of the river" and opens himself to the expression of Aoi's desire. The way he describes the sexual relations with Aoi reveals a very unconventional gender formation since it depicts Aoi as a sexually active young girl who is taught "dexterity" in sex by her mother:

> Aoi was rather more solemn than usual but still she seemed to have studied every word and movement from a book of manners. Mama must have taught her everything. When I climbed into the bed beside her, she snuggled very prettily in my arms, reached down for my penis in a very businesslike way and began to stroke it very considerable dexterity... she procured me an orgasm I was quite unable to forestall even though, as I sobbed it out, I wondered anxiously that it might be out of order and the whole exercise had been designed to test my stoicism... Aoi seemed quite content and curled up to sleep until Mama brought us our breakfast in bed next morning, with many expressions of approval and kisses for both of us. (83)

The sexual mores of the river people, who seem to have established a matriarchal order, seem to be one of the alternatives to patriarchal mores. The fact that Desiderio is prepared for the act of love with Aoi by her mother's initiating sexual intercourse with Desiderio, and that he was accepted as the son of the family - he calls Aoi's

brothers “my brothers"- reveals that in this order lovers can consummate. However, it is only in “the Erotic Traveller” where the Count and his valet Lafleur suggest de Sade and his valet Latour, that Albertina and Desiderio consummate their love in bliss to feel themselves as one. In a sense, the Sadeian expression of desire in the House of Anonymity, which denotes the idea of living together under the same roof with no separating marks of known identities, functions as a melting pot of limiting boundaries.

Carter manages to create a transgressive atmosphere by describing a place where given definitions like animate and inanimate, animal and human are shaken. In “The Bestial Room” of The House of Anoymity, monkeys are “smartly dressed like bellboys”; the furniture is alive, thus the same monkeys are also “living candelabra” and “the serviceable armchairs were brown bears”; (131) and the Madame running this house calls it “a refuge for those who can find no equilibrium between inside and outside, between mind and body or body and soul, vice versa....”. (132) When Desiderio retrospectively talks about the time he spent in the House of Anonymity, he gives an exquisite account of his union with Albertina, saying that:

> I took her in my arms. We were exactly the same height and the arches of our bosoms met with a sonorous clang. ... The earth turned on the pivot of her mouth. The sense of seraphic immanence which had afflicted me in the city was now fulfilled. Her arms clasped my neck and her belly pressed against my nakedness as if striving to transcend the mortal flaw that divided us and so effect a total, visceral mingling, binding us forever, so that the same blood would flow within us both and our nerves would knit and our skins melt and fuse in the force of the electricity we generated between us. (136)

Carter’s description here suggests that the act of sex has a revitalising effect, and the union of Desiderio and Albertina creates the impetus to rebuild the world. This way, the positive atmosphere between them enabled by the Count metaphorically implies that contrary to most feminists’ arguments, de Sade and his notions of eroticism have an effect of unity. In placing the most satisfying fulfilment of sexual desire in the chapter with de Sade, Carter in a sense pays tribute to him. In her “Polemical Preface” to The Sadeian Woman, she holds that:

> He was unusual in his period for claiming rights of free sexuality for women, and in installing women as beings of power in his imaginary worlds. This sets him apart from all other pornographers at all times and most other writers of his period.... Sade remains a monstrous and daunting cultural edifice; yet I would like to think that he put pornography in the service of women. (37)

Carter thinks that the painful solitude of human beings can only be overcome by sex and by the sexual expression of love between men and women. As she does at the finale of Nights at the Circus, portraying Fevvers and Walser walking hand in hand, Carter proposes a harmonious and equal relationship between the two sexes without negating the rights of either men or women. Thus, the chapter "The Erotic Traveller" can best be read in relation to the ideas of de Sade that Carter quotes in the preface to The Sadeian Woman: "Let us introduce him with an exhilarating burst of rhetoric: Charming sex, you will be free: just as men do, you will enjoy all the pleasures that Nature makes your duty, do not withhold yourselves from one. Must the more divine half of mankind be kept in chains for the others? Ah, break those bonds: nature wills it." (37)

2.2 Fantastic Images in The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman

The fantastic images that Carter uses in this novel help her reveal gender roles and sexual roles as cultural constructs. Carter depicts Desiderio and his attitude towards his environment by referring to the two opposing principles, namely the Reality Principle which means all-for-reason, and the Pleasure Principle, which aims at attaining maximum pleasure. In each case, the novel emphasises that desire and its connotations, including gender roles and their practices, are cultural constructs; and whether they are inspired by reason or fantasy, these roles are designed by male authorities. Thus, the fantastic images in the novel, like Albertina changing her physical appearance, the fragmented bodies of the acrobats, and the images in the peep-show being made real, contribute to the reading of the patriarchal concept of gender and sexuality as limiting agents. Inevitably, these fantastic images reinforce the deconstructive move behind the novel.

In Desire Machines, thanks to the question aroused in the reader as to whether what is narrated by Desiderio really happens or whether he simply hallucinates what he sees in the peep-show, the underlying principle of the fantastic, hesitation, is achieved. The hesitation is immediately aroused by Desiderio's introductory note which starts with his "I remember everything. Yes. I remember everything perfectly." (11) The note implies that Desiderio is giving an account of what happened to him during and after Dr Hoffman's coup; as he speaks retrospectively about his feelings and experiences, realistically describing what sort of a narrative he will present and thus guiding his reader, he gives a sense of authenticity. Carter seems to have taken this strategy from the fantastic tale tradition; namely from Hoffmann's "The Sandman", Jan Potocki's "The Saragosa Manuscript", Cazotte's "Le Diable Amoureux" and Nerval's Aurelia which are cited in Todorov's The Fantastic as the most significant examples of the genre. They start in a similar way, by first setting the necessary tone of reality for the reader, which is later abandoned to heighten the feeling of hesitation, the first requirement of the fantastic. Todorov takes Cazotte's "Le Diable Amoureux" and uses Alvaro, the protagonist, and his hesitation to describe his theory of the fantastic:

> Alvaro hesitates, wonders (and the reader with him) whether what is happening to him is real, if what surrounds him is indeed reality or whether it is no more than an illusion, which here assumes the form of a dream... The ambiguity is sustained to the very end of the adventure: reality or dream? Truth or illusion? Which brings us to the very heart of the fantastic. (25)

Carter's Desire Machines follows Todorov's principle of the fantastic due to the ambivalence experienced by Desiderio, which arouses ambivalence on the part of the reader as well. So, Desiderio first sets the realistic tone by saying that he remembers what really took place in his past only to abandon this realism and certainty later. He implies that the reader should believe in his story, which can also be read in "the history books":

> Expect a tale of picaresque adventure or even of heroic adventure, for I was a great hero in my time though now I am an old man and no longer the 'I' of my story and my time is

> past, even if you can read about me in the history books- a strange thing to happen to a man in his lifetime... Although I am so old and sad, now, and, without [Albertina], condemned to live in a drab, colourless world, as though I were living in a faded daguerreotype. (14)

However as soon as he starts his narration, he says that "I don't remember exactly how it began," which shows him hesitating. (15) Similarly, in the first pages, he says that the only "persistent hallucination" which "never changed" in the constantly changing reality around him is Albertina. However, each time Albertina is on the scene, she appears in a different form. This conflict adds to the hesitation of Desiderio as the narrator, which further problematises the authenticity of his text. These juxtapositions keep the reader hesitating throughout her act of reading since it soon becomes clear that when Desiderio looks into the exhibits of the peep-show proprietor, the scenes in the peep-show prove to be samples of the experiences that he goes through in the novel. In other words, as the peep-show proprietor wisely repeats all through the novel, "everything depends on persistence of vision", which suggests that as long as Desiderio looks, what he sees becomes the reality of his life. It seems that what the peep-show proprietor says to Desiderio is in fact a reminder to the reader playfully offered by Carter. Simply, the reader continually hesitates about the authenticity of Desiderio's experiences. Step by step the text prepares the reader for the "suspension of disbelief"; thus, in the first step, the reader sees that Desiderio's own sense of belief is destroyed by Dr Hoffman's coup. Just as Dr Hoffman's "gigantic generators" send out a series of seismic vibrations which make great cracks in the immutable surface of the city, Desiderio observes:

> Whether the apparitions were shades of the dead, synthetic reconstructions of the living or in no way replicas of anything we knew, they inhabited the same dimension as the living for Dr Hoffman had enormously extended the limits of this dimension. The very stones were mouths which spoke. I myself decided the revenants were objects -*perhaps personified ideas*- which *could* think but did not exist. This seemed the only hypothesis which *might* explain my own case for I acknowledged them- I saw them; they screamed and whickered at me-and *yet* I did not believe in them. (italics mine, 17-18)

Faced with these changes, Desiderio says that he "[feels] *as if* he was watching a film in which the Minister was the hero and the unseen Doctor certainly the villain." (italics mine, 25) In this passage, it is evident that Desiderio is unsure about the state of the things around him, and this uncertainty is revealed by the use of words of ambiguity such as "might", "as if", and "perhaps". Todorov draws attention to the use of such phrases to arouse a sense of hesitation since he believes that such "stylistic devices" augment the effect of the fantastic. By using locutions like "as if", "perhaps", "may" and "might", the author of a fantastic text prevents the reader from plunging into the world of the marvellous, where there would be a sheer sense of unreality with no room for hesitation. (38) Words denoting ambiguity and uncertainty function as markers of hesitation; Carter fills Desiderio's speech with these locutions to create the sense of ambiguity. The exhibits of the peep-show proprietor soon add to the ambiguity that Desiderio suffers from. Exhibit Two, which is entitled "THE ETERNAL VISTAS OF LOVE", describes his feelings most clearly. When he first looks through the windows of the machine, he can only see two eyes looking back at him. These eyes that are suspended in the air have their lashes "scrupulously set one by one in narrow hems of rosy wax":

> The rounded whites were delicately veined with crimson to produce an effect like that of the extremely precious marble used in Italy during the late baroque period to make altars for the chapels of potentates and the irises were simple rings of deep brown bottle glass while in the pupils I could see, reflected in two discs of mirror, my own eyes, very greatly magnified by the lenses of the machine. Since my own pupils, in turn, reflected the false eyes before me while these reflections again reflected those reflections, I soon realised I was watching a model of eternal regression. (45)

In this initial stage, Desiderio has moments of realisation which also make the reader realise the distinction between reality and illusion; however, the complexity of the journey Desiderio sets out on and the novel's flux of images eclipse the initial focus on authenticity. Consequently, both the reader and Desiderio experience uncertainty and moments of realisation to intensify the process of hesitation.

2.2.1 The Problematisation of Vision: the Peep-show Proprietor

According to both Todorov and Jackson, vision and its problematisation are among the most significant components of the 'images of self' in a fantastic text. Todorov says that this image is among the most outstanding elements of the "images of self". Actually, this is what makes Todorov call some common denominators "images of self" simply because he thinks that the term "self" corresponds to one's perception and consciousness system in Freudian terms. What Todorov describes as a problem concerning the perception and consciousness of a character in a text is defined by Jackson as the theme of vision.

In order to explain the nature of the fantastic, Jackson employs a notion which is the outcome of an interesting meeting of concepts from optics and physics.[6] Jackson uses the term "paraxis", to refer to the "preoccupation" of the modern fantastic "with problems of vision and visibility". (43) In her discussion of the relation of the real to the fantastic which she calls the " 'real' under scrutiny", Jackson asserts that rather than creating an alternative order, the fantastic creates "alterity" which means "this world re-placed and dis-located". And this "process of transformation and deformation" is expressed by the term "paraxis". Using the notion "paraxis", Jackson then turns to the topography of the fantastic since she thinks that "many of the strange worlds of modern fantasy are located in, or through, or beyond, the mirror. They are spaces behind the visible, behind the image, introducing dark areas from which anything can emerge." (43) Jackson suggests that in the 'par-axial' realm, i.e. in the realm of the modern fantastic, the un-seen of the culture, the not-yet-seen of the culture, does exist. In other words, the transformed form of the real is not yet reflected, although the onlooker knows for sure that it will be, except that the image will not be the same as the object. Following Jackson's line of thought, it can be asserted that the fantastic corresponds to an "image in the making", that is to say, it offers a process of preparation for the transformed form of the real "object".

Jackson also observes that to create an effect of transformation, writers of fantastic literature make frequent use of mirrors, glasses and eyes which are all related to vision are used. Her example to illustrate this point is, as Todorov's also is, from

Hoffmann. She cites Hoffmann's "The Sandman" as a fantastic text that revolves around the "confused vision of its protagonist Nathaniel, whose apprehensions, terrors and phobias are all related to his eyes."[7] (44) At the centre of the tale, for Jackson, is "the fear of loss of sight, of no longer being able to see (and so control) things clearly." (44) Following Hoffmann's theme, she maintains that in Victorian fantasies as well, one can easily find the frequent use of "the device of a lens or mirror to introduce an indeterminate area where distortions and deformations of 'normal' perception become the norm"; and that "entrance into a fantastic landscape via an aperture or reflections" is common in the fantastic literature of different times.[8] (45) What Todorov sees in Hoffmann's "Princess Brambilla" then is a predecessor of Jackson's perception of Hoffmann's "The Sandman". In fact, Todorov draws attention to the vital role that the image of vision plays in the fantastic, and then Jackson extends his point. She sees the objects or indirect means of vision like telescope, glasses and mirrors as "vision materialised or rendered opaque, a quintessence of sight". (123) For Jackson, these objects stand for the vision to be materialised or vision to be rendered opaque. She simply means that whenever an author uses such devices in a fantastic text, she carries us into the realm of the unseen. Hence, she claims that the theme of vision has a lot to do with the viewpoint of the culture one lives in.

Among the fantastic themes that Carter uses, the theme of vision or perception prevails. In Carter's Desire Machines in particular there are so many motifs related to vision that not only the theme but also the plot line of the novel is centred upon the problematisation of vision. Right from the start, by an allusion to the main figure in the fantastic tale tradition, Hoffmann, the title acts as a generic signal that communicates not only the content but also the way that content will be dealt with throughout the text. In his Kinds of Literature, a study on genres, Alastair Fowler suggests that titles are "the first explicit commentary" (92) the reader is given and that "allusions" made to the representative examples of the genre that the text belongs to are "the most direct forms of indication." (90) Thus, Carter's title, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman works like the generic signal of earlier fantastic texts. Even a quick look at the cover of the book suggests that the

Hoffmannesque tradition of the problematisation of vision is also present in the text, with desire in the background activating the distortion or subversion of the vision.

In the fantastic tales of Hoffmann and later of his keen follower Gautier, it is the outstanding Romantic device, love at first "sight", that highlights the conflict of the protagonist. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" has, for instance, the *ocche*, eye-glasses, and the telescope that bring together the sight of the automaton and the fiery Sandman. The Sandman collects the eyes of the small children for his own children who live on the moon. Similarly Carter's Desire Machines starts with a reference to the eyes of a young and beautiful Albertina, a reference which functions as the key to the world of the fantastic. Desiderio's love at first sight for Albertina in this fantastic tale functions as more than a mere Romantic device to define Desiderio's infatuation. Desiderio considers Albertina's father as "the Emperor of the Marvellous" (26), and calls her "her father's daughter" (13); thus Albertina's eyes are symbolically indirect devices that help Desiderio penetrate the realm of the marvellous. In describing Albertina fifty years after he has lost her as "the heroine of my story, the daughter of the magician, the inexpressible woman to whose memory [I] dedicate these pages ... the miraculous Albertina", Desiderio reverts to Todorov's theme of self:

> And if Albertina has become for me, now, such a woman as only memory and imagination could devise, well, such is always at least partially the case with the beloved. *I see* her as a series of marvellous shapes formed at random in the *kaleidoscope* of desire. ... She closed *those eyes* that were to me the inexhaustible well-springs of passion fifty years ago this very day and so I take up my pen on the golden anniversary of her death, as I always intended to do. (13, emphasis mine)

And weirdly enough, fifty years after her death, though Desiderio states in an impersonal manner that "it was I who killed her", he still says that his only wish is to see Albertina as if he could: "And my desire is, to see Albertina again before I die." (14-15) Thus, as soon as the narrative starts, a sense of impossibility emerges as a leading concern of the novel. In other words, the impossibility of what Desiderio wishes foreshadows the problematic vision that the novel offers. This sort of impossibility, as Jackson asserts, can be seen as the component of the theme of

vision since she states that impossibility is “inscribed on a thematic level through the image of invisibility.” (49)

The main plot device of this novel, which is the vision gained through the peep-show (which Desiderio and the reader only understand at the end) also draws heavily on the theme of vision. The peep-show works by following the principle that images in one’s mind’s eye, the products of the imagination, are made real through an act of looking through a peep-show. The word “peep-show” immediately suggests an act of spying, inquiring, and looking into a place where one does not belong, and where one is supposed not to look. As peeping suggests a furtive look, a surreptitious glance that puts the spectator on a threshold, on a place where he steps neither into the new place nor leaves the old one, the act of peeping itself recalls a state of being in the paraxial as described by Jackson. The peep-show proprietor, Desiderio’s “master”, who is a figure of the old *seer* Tiresias of the plagued Thebes now “as blind as a bat”, makes the statement, and it soon becomes a motto in the realm of the fantastic narrative: “Everything depends on persistence of vision.” (107) As Jackson remarks, in modern culture seeing is believing; inversely, un-seeing is un-believing, which means what you cannot see *does not* and *cannot* exist.

So, everything depends on the ability of Desiderio to sustain the persistence of his vision in the peep-show; a persistent look, which means a continuous look at the images in the peep-show with a belief that these are not representations but the real scenes from life, is the only way to have a consistent perception in both senses of the word. At the beginning of the coup, Desiderio feels the opposite: he sees almost unseen beings as apparitions, but cannot and does not believe in them. The instability created by this contradiction becomes a riddle to be solved by Desiderio, whom Robinson calls “a postmodern Oedipus”. (110) Accordingly, “The City Under Siege”, during the coup of Dr Hoffman’s infernal desire machines, is like Thebes and it needs an Oedipus figure to solve the riddle of the literally distorted vision in the city: “A kind of orgiastic panic seized the city... This phantasmagoric redefinition of a city was constantly fluctuating for it was now the kingdom of the instantaneous.” (17-18)

Starting with Albertina's enchanting eyes, then employing the device of the peep-show, the text provides tools of vision that bring both the reader and Desiderio to the fantastic, where objects become "perhaps personified ideas". (18) In Todorov's terms, then, this process causes the boundary between the object and subject to collapse. Jackson would see in this collapse the unseen of culture; actually Desiderio uses very similar terms to Todorov's and Jackson's to conceptualise the distortion of vision in the city where forms and colours of objects start to change and become unfamiliar:

> I felt as if I was watching a film in which the Minister was the hero and the unseen Doctor certainly the villain; but it was an endless film and I found it boring for none of the characters engaged my sympathy, even if I admired them, and all the situations appeared the false engineering of an inefficient phantasist. But I had one curious, persistent hallucination which obscurely troubled me because nothing about it was familiar and, each time I saw her, she never changed. (25)

In this state of constant change, Desiderio perceives the Minister as the real hero since he stands for reason and stability; whereas the unseen Dr Hoffman with his almost invisible signs like apparitions, revenants, shadows and hallucinations, all of which are the rays of desire emanating from the desire machines, is given the role of the villain. Consequently, although the reader hesitates whether Dr Hoffman is a hero or a villain, one thing is for sure: his coup aims at rendering ideas visible, turning desire into a series of solid objects. Thus, Carter's Desire Machines, through the work of the desire machines transgresses the single-vision of the "Reality" Principle that is too narrow to convey the experiences in the domain of the unseen, and turns the "unseen" into the "seen" of the culture with the help of the peep-show proprietor. By doing this Carter in fact proposes a totally different state of existence with distorted concepts of time, space, femininity and masculinity.

Desiderio's reflection upon the maxim "everything depends on persistence of vision" culminates in "The Acrobats of Desire" in which he watches the show of the acrobats of desire in a perplexed manner. There, as has previously been mentioned, vision becomes problematised in an extremely concrete way, which is

described by Desiderio as follows: "I could not entirely suspend my disbelief... I knew there was more to it than met the eye although, in the finale, so many eyes met and greeted one's own!" (114) With an allusion to Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief", the incongruity between what is seen and what is traditionally believed is highlighted. What Desiderio sees conflicts with what he believes the human body can do. This incompatibility becomes the very source of what we call the subversive function of the fantastic in the sense that it clashes with the definition of the human body.

The parallel between the epigraphs Carter places before her narrative and the narrative content also heightens the problematisation of vision as a tool for deconstruction. As I have argued above, Carter makes constant references to Surrealism, in which she sees the potential for revolutionising the blinded and blinding perspective of modern culture. Surrealist artists tried to revolutionise prevailing views by putting an emphasis on the sense of vision, and blended sight and words to question the validity of both. The Dadaists, for instance, utilised language in their visual productions. (Richter, 32) In this sense, Carter's peep-show proprietor's naming his samples is a way of making the desires recognisable. In the novel, each sample of the peep-show proprietor has a title, and these titles determine the perception of the visual material, which inevitably offers new definitions for the objects in the samples. In that sense, each title serves as a ready-made definition, thus functioning as an "ornamental coping that supports" the content. In the peep show proprietor's samples Wittgenstein's and the Surrealists' ideas merge to open up a ground for the discussion of some other issues like desire and love in addition to sight and language.

Desiderio identifies the peep-show proprietor's samples as numbered "exhibits", and adds brief informative titles to all of them, which are allegorical. The titles gain their allegorical dimension when they are considered parallel to the peep-show proprietor's statement that the purpose of his display is to "demonstrate the difference between saying and showing". Like the "ready-mades" of the Surrealist artists, the samples call for a critical detachment between the object and the traditional meaning attached to that object. For instance, Exhibit Three, "The

Meeting Place of Love and Hunger" justifies the peep-show proprietor's maxim "Signs speak. Pictures show." "Upon a cut-glass dish of the kind in which desserts are served lay two perfectly spherical portions of vanilla ice-cream, each topped with a single cherry so that the resemblance to a pair of female breasts was almost perfect." (45) Similarly, in "Exhibit Six: The Key to the City", a penis of excessive size stands for the key. In "Exhibit One: I have been here before", he allegorically revives the sense of being in the mother's womb: "The legs of a woman, raised and open as if ready to admit a lover...this anatomical section, composed of pinkish wax dimpled at the knee." (44) With a meticulous technique, Carter delineates the Castle, which turns out to stand for the way back to the mother's womb. Thus, it is obvious that fantastic images of vision in her Desire Machines help Carter explore the relationship between signs and the meanings behind the signs. In this way, Wittgenstein's epigraph prepares a mindset for the reader who is introduced to Carter's imagining of the prescribed gender roles as "ornamental coping that supports nothing."

2.2.2 Metamorphosis: Albert/ina

The images of metamorphosis used in Desire Machines enable the reader to experience and internalise the idea that things do not have to be stable and also suggest that there is a potential for change. These transformations in the novel not only surprise Desiderio but the reader as well. The total impact of these images of transformation is the conclusion that what we see as man today may well turn out to be a ghost, or a ghost may well become a beautiful woman in disguise, who will open up a new path. Thus, the images of metamorphosis help Carter in her "demythologising" and deconstruction business since she can show the reader that definitions are not as reliable as one used to think. With the help of these images, Carter can play tricks upon the reader. As Robinson notes, Carter employs certain narrative strategies which depend on images of metamorphosis:

> In The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman, Carter appropriates a man's subjectivity to describe the fictions of his sexuality, but does so self-consciously; that is the text

> foregrounds the problematics of gendered address by deliberately framing the female figures within the text, as well as the woman reader, as figments of a masculine imaginary. In containing women within a figure of Woman, Carter demonstrates how Woman is trapped inside gender. But, her strategic engagement with fictions of male subjectivity simultaneously demonstrates what it means to be outside hegemonic representations of gender, dismantling them from the margins. (113)

The transformation not only of gendered bodies but also of spaces destroys the hegemonic order designed by reason. It is obvious that these images are not just fictional devices that offer entertainment, but also serve as vehicles for a political message. Linden Peach refers to this constant changing in the novel as the "recalcitrant, mocking iconoclasm of Carter's fiction", which supports the deconstructive move behind the novel. (1998:4) When read in parallel with the images of change in Ovid's Metamorphosis, which tells of the transformation of matter into living bodies, and also of human beings changed into animals, flowers, trees, the images of transformation in Desire Machines seem to be important demythologising agents. In Book XV of Metamorphosis, there is a long discourse of the philosopher Pythagoras who preaches the doctrine of impermanence and of unceasing change: "All things are always changing. But nothing dies. The spirit comes and goes, is housed wherever it wills, shifts residence. From beast to men, from men to beast, but always it keeps on living.... Nothing, I am convinced, can be the same forever. There was once an Age of Gold. Later an Age of Iron." (in Mack, 939-942) The Anigrus, a river of Elis, and the river Hypanis mentioned in "The Teachings of Pythagoras" have also become subjects of this incessant change. The process of change described in Ovid's work is quite similar to the one experienced in Desiderio's city. Ovid narrates the change of the Anigrus as follows:

> The Anigrus was good to drink from once, but now rolls down
> A flood that you had better leave alone,
> Unless the poets lie, because the Centaurs
> Used it to wash their wounds from Hercules' arrows.

> And Hypanis, rising from Scythian mountains,
> Once fresh and sweet to the taste, is salty and brackish. (942)

Similarly, in Desire Machines, right after the coup sweet things start to taste sour and salty. The coup changes the once "solid", "drab", "prosperous", "thickly, obtusely masculine" city into a "nervous" place: "Those bluff, complaisant avenues and piazzas were suddenly as fertile in metamorphoses as a magic forest." (17) And Desiderio says that sometimes "the proportions of buildings and townscapes swelled to enormous, ominous sizes or repeated themselves over and over again in a fretting infinity." (19) By delineating such a vivid atmosphere of change, Carter suggests that nothing remains the same and that change is the underlying force of the universe. Thus, she enables the reader to hold the belief that the patriarchal order, which rests on pure reason, will eventually change to include fantasy as well. The sense of change is immediately offered to the reader with the introduction of Desiderio as the odd-man-out of the community he lives in. He is not a typical male member of his society. First of all, being an orphan figure like Fevvers in Nights at the Circus, he lacks a typical family, which would provide him with gender role models. As Peach says, Desiderio is a poor man "who did not have a proper relationship with his mother, a prostitute, and never knew his father, whose genetic imprint he carries in the colour of his skin." (103) After his mother's death, Desiderio is brought up by nuns. This unconventional protagonist, who has an acute sense of loss and homelessness, helps Carter subvert conventional definitions in the sense that Desiderio, having no family ties and no classical patriarchal upbringing, offers a new role model. Desiderio's sense of indifference and detachment also contributes to the spirit of unconventionality that emphasizes the theme of change. Unlike the other people who dislike the "tumultuous and kinetic times" of Doctor Hoffman's alarming coup, Desiderio remains extremely calm. Complexity and turbulence surprise people, but Desiderio has only one wish: "And that was, for everything to stop." (11) He wants it to stop not because he is afraid, but because he is "bored" with all these changes. The unemotional tone of his narrative as he describes what he had experienced retrospectively reveals his aberrant nature:

> I became a hero only because I survived. I survived because I could not surrender to the flux of images. I could not merge and blend with them; I could not abnegate my reality and lose myself forever as others did, blasted to non-being by the ferocious artillery of unreason. I was too sardonic. I was too disaffected. When I was young, I very much admired the Ancient Egyptians, because they searched for, arrived at and perfected an aesthetically entirely satisfactory pose. When every single one of them had perfected the stance which had been universally approved, profiles one way, torsos another, feet marching away from the observer, navel squarely staring him in the eye, they stayed in it for two thousand years. (11-12)

His admiration for statis and his indifference to fluctuating images offer a contrast only to emphasise incessant change; and Desiderio's unique response to what is happening to the city under siege suggests an alternative viewpoint that makes him a very appropriate character to denote the concept of demythologising. As a figure with unusual responses Desiderio provides an alternative perspective through which the audience can witness an uncommon state of existence. Desiderio has a series of changing identities or, at least, roles.

Fantastic images of metamorphosis also figure in the scenes in which Desiderio and his love for Dr Hoffman's daughter, Albertina, are portrayed. As the love object upon whom Desiderio directs all of his desire, Albertina, keeps on changing her bodily state, each time catching Desiderio unawares, she becomes the very embodiment of desire which knows no consummation. Like the nature of desire, Albertina's promises of love are forever fleeting and deterred. So, both Albertina as a character and Desiderio with his passion for her are key figures in the novel which function as the embodiments of change.

The great changes the city goes through become an appropriate background for the bodily transformations of Albertina. A year after the desire machines of Dr Hoffman "modified the nature of reality" in the city, Desiderio says that "there was no longer any way of guessing what one would see when one opened one's eyes in the morning for other people's dreams insidiously invaded the bedroom while one slept..." and

"teasing memories of the past waited to greet us at the foot of the bed and these were often memories of someone else's past." (19) In this state of blurred boundaries of self and others, and of great merging of different subjectivities, it is no wonder that bodies are also transformed into different forms. The dividing line between life and death seems to have been nullified: "Dead children came calling in nightgowns, rubbing the sleep and grave dust from their eyes." (19) The boundaries between animals and humans are also transgressed: "The pigeons looped from illusory pediment to window-ledge like volatile, feathered madmen, chattering vile rhymes and laughing in hoarse, throaty voices, or perched upon chimney stacks shouting quotations from Hegel." The birds become so alienated from their existence as birds that they "forgot the techniques and mechanics of flight and then they fell down, so that every morning dead birds lay in drifts on the pavements like autumn leaves or brown, wind-blown snow." (20) Just as Fevvers' acquires the mechanics of flight as a remedy for the limiting boundaries of the feminine state of existence in the patriarchal order, the birds of Desire Machines attain human qualities only to be cited among the many transformations whose total impact is to change all the principles of the world. Nature seems to change its course as well: "Sometimes the river ran backwards and crazy fish jumped out to flop on the sidewalks and wriggle around their bellies for a while until they died." Inanimate objects become animated, "horses from the pictures of Stubbs in the Municipal Art Gallery neighed, tossed their manes and stepped delicately off their canvases to go to crop the grass in public parks." (20)

Albertina's appearance to Desiderio occurs among these fantastic happenings. As she keeps changing her physical form, each time disguising herself, Carter creates the idea that it is not the bodily form that gives the person her essence. This brings to mind Carter's discussions about the flesh and about gender roles; for her "Flesh comes to us from history!" (2001:9), by which she means it is the historical and cultural impositions that make one feminine or masculine. Following the footsteps of Simone de Beauvoir, Carter holds that one is not but rather becomes a woman. Thus, the bodily changes that Desiderio's lover goes through problematise physical form and raise the question of what makes Desiderio and others call her "feminine."

Albertina first appears to Desiderio in the form of a "curious, persistent hallucination"; she has transparent flesh which clearly reveals "the exquisite filigree of her skeleton". (25) Looking at this ghostlike apparition, Desiderio tries to visualise the familiar bodily features of a woman: "Where her heart should have been there flickered a knot of flames like ribbons and she shimmered a little, like the air on a very hot summer's day." (25) While Desiderio sleeps, she leaves imperatives on his dusty windowpane and scribbles some statements, two of which are significant in opposing the world of fantasy to that of reality: "DON'T THINK; LOOK" and "WHEN YOU BEGIN TO THINK, YOU LOSE THE POINT." Albertina seems to be the emissary of her father not only in initiating Desiderio into the world of fantasy but also in helping him to internalise the principles of this world. Unaware of the function that Albertina plays in his life, Desiderio simply desires her. Underlining the uniqueness of her physical existence, he calls Albertina a "visible skeleton" and says that:

> ...this miraculous bouquet of bone, the formal elements of physicality, was one of the third order of forms who might presently invade us, the order of angels, speaking lions and winged horses, the miraculous revenants for whom the city sometimes seemed hushed in expectation and who themselves would only be the amazing heralds of the arrival of the Emperor of the Marvellous, whose creatures we would by that time have all become. (26)

Not long after Desiderio starts to realise that she is a mere apparition, Albertina turns herself into the male emissary of Dr Hoffman ready to negotiate with the Minister. This young Ambassador has exquisite looks with his "high cheekbones", "glossy black hair" and his "sensual mouth purplish in colour as if he had been eating berries." (32) His clothes also give Desiderio the notion that he is not an ordinary man: "He wore flared trousers of purple suede and used several ropes of pearls for a belt around his waist. All his gestures were instinct with a self-conscious but extraordinary reptilian liquidity; ... I think he was the most beautiful human being I have ever seen." (32) After listening to the serious talk between the Minister and the Ambassador, it suddenly dawns upon Desiderio that the voice of the Ambassador is just the same as the voice of Albertina as she appeared in his dream in the form of a

black swan the night before. Then it turns out that the emissary to Dr Hoffman is actually Albertina in disguise. As the Minister signs the cheque for the dinner:

> [...] I saw the curious ambassador had left behind him on the chair he had occupied a handkerchief of the same exquisite lace as the fabric of his shirt. I picked it up. Along the hem, stitched in a flourish of silk so white it was virtually invisible, was the name I had only seen before in my dream, the name: ALBERTINA. The hieratic chant of the black swan rang again in my ears; I swayed as if I were about to faint. (39)

This set of transformations not only transgresses the boundaries between the dream world and the real one, but it also problematises Albertina's gender identity as Desiderio's love object. Although her gender identity changes, its content remains the same. For instance, in the chapter entitled "the Mansion of Midnight", Albertina in the young Ambassador's erect body becomes a fragile girl of seventeen. When Desiderio leaves his city in search of Dr Hoffman to assassinate him "as inconspicuously as possible", he stops at a mansion which is said to be the house of the dead Mayor. His daughter Mary Anne playing "the lucid nonsense of Erik Satie" on the piano is Albertina in disguise. Carter describes the room in such a way that it is suggested to the reader that there is some Albertina in this young woman: "The room was full of a poignant, nostalgic anguish which seemed to emanate from that slender figure whose face I could not see." (52) She is portrayed as such a pale and fragile figure that she is more like a ghost than a human being:

> She did not look as if blood flowed through her veins but instead some other, less emphatic fluid infinitely less red... She looked like drowning Ophelia; I thought so immediately, though I could not know how soon she would really drown, for she was so forlorn and desperate. And a chilling and restrained passivity made her desperation all the more pathetic. The housekeeper clucked to see the wraith-like girl's bare feet. 'Put your slippers on at once, Miss! ...You'll catch your death!'(53)

She enters Desiderio's room as an "unbidden guest" at night with her eyes "open but blind." With a rose in her hand, she approaches Desiderio. Just as a thorn under the leaves pierces his thumb, he realises that the rose is throbbing like a heart. Desiderio feels that the rose emits a single drop of blood "as if like a sin-eater". (56) The

awkward feeling Desiderio senses in Mary Anne is reinforced by the realisation that as Desiderio starts caressing her, it is as if she "feels his caresses through a veil." Her bizarre manners are soon accompanied by Desiderio's sense that "another person glances briefly out of her eyes". It is no wonder that in the morning, he wakes up to see that there is nothing but some dead leaves in the bed. Soon after she says that she has dreamed of a "love suicide", Desiderio finds her dead. (57) He tries to revive her by pressing his lips to her mouth. However, remembering the pale and lifeless posture of Mary Anne when he kissed her, he says that: "there was hardly any difference between what I did now and what I had done then, ... I don't know how much time passed while I attempted to manipulate her lifeless body." (61)

Albertina reappears in the chapter "The Erotic Traveller" when Desiderio is initiated into the world of desire expressed in erotic form. Accompanying the Count and his valet, Lafleur, Desiderio visits "the House of Anonymity", which is a gothic brothel. There, in a room called "the Sphere of Spheres", he meets Albertina this time as one of the metamorphosing girls, the victims of the erotic travellers. The Madam running this house says that her house is "a refuge for those who can find no equilibrium between inside and outside, between mind and body or body and soul, vice versa, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera." (131) This house which is populated by extraordinary people is like a far away castle. Describing the house and the girls in it, Desiderio says that there were about a dozen girls in the reception room who posed inside and towered above the visitors like "the goddesses of some forgotten theogony locked up". To him they look too detached and inverted to be touched:

> Each was as circumscribed as a figure in rhetoric and you could not imagine they had names, for they had been reduced by the rigorous discipline of their vocation to the undifferentiated essence of the idea of the female. This ideational femaleness took amazingly different shapes though its nature was not that of a Woman; when I examined them more closely, I saw that none of them were any longer, or might never have been, woman. All, without exception, passed beyond or did not enter the realm of simple humanity. They were sinister, abominable, inverted mutations, part clockwork, part vegetable and part brute. Their hides were streaked, blotched and marbled and some trembled on the point of reverting completely to the beast. (132)

None of these "metamorphosed objects" arouses the slightest desire in Desiderio, ironically recalling the meaning of his name, 'the desired one'. For Carter, it is Desiderio who is supposed to arouse desire; thus Desiderio confesses that although these girls come in "all the shapes of every imaginable warped desire" they seem to him "nothing but malicious satires upon eroticism," and he merely laughs at them with revulsion. (135) At the very moment when he indifferently thinks how abominable these girls are, he is offered a girl called Albertina. She is Desiderio's Albertina in the disguise of one of the girls working there known by the name Albertina. Desiderio and this girl fall in love with each other at first sight, and Desiderio foolishly responds to this growing interest with a question: "I do not know why she loved me at first sight." (136) They touch each other in such a loving and enthusiastic way that they move towards 'the round bed' that 'spins round like the world on an axis in the middle of the room'; the symbolic name of the room, the Sphere of Spheres suggests that when together, Desiderio and Albertina "melt and fuse in the force of the electricity [they] generate between [them]" to run the sphere of spheres, which means the desire between them is the very creator of the world." (136) When Desiderio is forced to leave her behind, Albertina feels so sad that she begins to "melt like a woman of snow.". Once again, Albertina goes through a process of transformation:

> As I was holding her, she grew less and less. She dissolved. Still weeping, she dissipated into the air. I saw her. I felt her. I felt her weight diminish. I saw her, first, flicker a little; then waver continuously; then grow more and more indistinct, as if she herself were gradually erasing the pattern she made upon the air. Her eyes vanished last of all and the last tears that fell from them hung for a little on the air after she had gone, like forgotten diamanté ear-drops. Then all that was left of this fragile bequest of tears was an evanescent trace of moisture on my shoulder. (137-138)

It is only after losing Albertina that Desiderio realises that they have always been together; however as he always looks for physical signs and takes heed of only fleshly existence, he fails to realise the soul of Albertina in disguise when she is alive. Upon realising that "the reciprocal motion" of their hearts is a "natural and eternal power", he says that "she travelled with me for she was inextricably mingled

with my idea of her and her substance was so flexible she could have worn a left glove on her right hand- if she had wanted to, that is." (142)

The last appearance of Albertina as a hermaphrodite, whom Desiderio easily recognises this time, is another clue Carter gives for us to think about sex and gender roles. Seeing her, Desiderio calls Albertina "the goddess of the cornfields, more savagely and triumphantly beautiful than any imagining, my Platonic other, my necessary extinction, my dream made flesh." (215) What Dr Hoffman tells Desiderio right before Albertina's appearance emphasises the transgressive nature of her hermaphrodite existence. When Desiderio sees a pair of sliding doors with Chinese characters painted on them, he says it is his wife's work and adds that: "She is the poet of the family. In rough translation, our motto says: "There is intercommunication of seed between male and female and all things are produced." (213) By this statement in the last chapter, Carter highlights gender roles as mere cultural constructs.

The awareness that Desiderio develops suggests that people's identities are mere outside definitions offered by the cultural and social environment. As the epigraph from Wittgenstein implies, the masculine and feminine identities that Albertina assumes are only outer definitions that mean nothing as to her essence. Thus, the fantastic images of transformation that Carter offers by portraying Albertina now as a ghost then as a young man function as the tools for transgressing the limiting borders of gender roles attached to women.

2.2.3 Fragmented Bodies: Acrobats of Desire

Another fantastic image Carter uses in Desire Machines is the disintegration of bodies. In the chapter, "The Acrobats of Desire", Carter describes nine Moroccan acrobats working in a travelling fair. This fair which is similar to the circus of Nights at the Circus presents a myriad bizarre characters. The male and female figures that Carter places in this fair all present different possibilities of the human form; in other words, they all transcend the boundaries not only of masculinity and femininity designed by the patriarchal order but also of humanity. However, the effect of

transgression is mostly achieved thanks to the acrobats who, as Jackson maintains in discussing the image of disintegrated bodies, “interrogate the category of character- the definition of the self as a coherent, indivisible and continuous whole which has dominated Western thought for centuries and is celebrated in classic theatre and ‘realistic’ art.” (82) Jackson notes that the image of dismemberment suggests incoherence and fluidity as opposed to the construction of selves, and such images in fantastic texts “exist in opposition to precious portraits of individuals as whole or essential. They break the boundaries separating the self from the other, leaving structures dissolved, or ruptured, through a radical open-endedness of being.” (87) So the dismembered bodies in Carter’s text also function as agents underlining separation.

In discussing the cultural construction of self, Jackson uses the terms coined by Jacques Lacan, namely the imaginary order and the symbolic order. (88-91) For Lacan, the symbolic order marks the entrance into the social world of communication through language. This is the world of knowledge of ideological conventions and the acceptance of the law of the father. (Lacan, 2) He claims that the symbolic order is made possible upon the acceptance of the name of the father, which means the laws that control the social rules and one’s desire. He states: “It is in *the name of the father* that we must recognise the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law.” (67) Upon acquiring language, a child enters into the symbolic order where she is “reduced to an empty signifier “I” within the field of the Other.” In short, by learning the rules of the language, she enters into the field of language and culture. This field of language and culture is always determined by the others that come before the “I”. According to Lacan, an important feature of this stage is that the linguistic position is marked by gender differences. Thus, all the actions of the subject are consequently determined by her sexual position. Lacan explains this by the fact that the world the individual enters is the world of patriarchy, while the imaginary order denotes the creation of an ideal version of the self with pre-verbal impetus to the creation of narcissistic phantasies. To put it simply, Lacan’s symbolic order represents the patriarchal order while in the imaginary order the self knows no boundaries. Thus, fantastic texts often try to recall the imaginary order by transgressing the boundaries of the patriarchal

order by making use of certain images. As Jackson argues, many fantasies dream of a "return to a state of undifferentiation, to a condition *preceding* the mirror stage and its creation of dualism. For prior to this construction, in a state of primary narcissism, the child is its own ideal, and experiences no discrepancy between self and other." (89) To enable the reader to recall the state of undifferentiation, many fantastic texts employ the images of the disintegration of the body. In her elaboration of the disintegration of the body, Jackson argues that:

> Unlike the symbolic, the imaginary is inhabited by an infinite number of selves preceding socialisation, before the ego is produced within a social frame. These selves allow an infinite, unnameable potential to emerge, one which a fixed sense of character excludes in advance... the most subversive fantasies are those which attempt to transform the relations of the imaginary and the symbolic. They try to set up possibilities for radical cultural transformation by making fluid the relations between these realms, suggesting, or projecting, the dissolution of the symbolic through violent reversal or rejection of the process of the subject's formation. (91)

Following Jackson's theory of the fantastic, it can be suggested that the fantastic image of disintegrated bodies in Carter's novel functions as the agents of interrogation of the process of character construction. As the examples from the novel will illustrate, through this interrogation Carter ultimately problematises the construction of feminine and masculine selves formed in the process of socialisation.

The disintegration of the acrobats' bodies is introduced in the context of characters who defy the rigid boundaries of femininity and masculinity. As a setting, Carter employs a travelling fair, which achieves the effect of universality since it "acknowledged no geographical location or temporal situation." (98) The fair people not only transcend the "commonplace", but also "language": "Since we had few tongues in common, we mostly used a language of "grunt, bark and gesture which is, perhaps, the common matrix of language." (99) Jackson recalls that to break the symbolic by dissolution or deformation of its language is, in Kristeva, a radical and subversive activity.(90) Thus, the sign language of the fair people can be seen as a subversive activity that heightens the effect of deconstruction achieved by the disintegration of bodily form. Moreover, the universal appeal of this language also

places ‘change’ against ‘fixity’, which is articulated by the peep-show proprietor as well: “Nothing is ever completed; it only changes.” In this order, there is “no tyranny” of a single form. (100)

While Desiderio works as an assistant to the peep-show proprietor disguised as his nephew, he meets a set of people in the fair. Madame de la Barbe, the bearded woman, is one of them. With her chestnut moustache, she mingles both the feminine and masculine traits. When she grows breasts at the age of thirteen, she grows also a beard, which can be interpreted as a transgression of the conventional gender identities of the patriarchal order. Desiderio mentions her “uncommonly maternal nature”, which he associates with “bringing a brioche freshly baked in the oven” and with her caravan “full of plants in pots, pet cats, over-upholstered sofas and framed photographs of kin.” (101) If she had no beard, she would well appear a typical “countrywoman who never stirred one half kilometre from her native ville”, however “Bearded, she was immensely handsome, widely travelled and the loneliest woman in the world.”(105) In the fair, she exhibits herself to the peasants in her booth. This “Bearded Bride”, as people call her, tells Desiderio that she is penetrated by the onlookers’ eyes. For Desiderio, who becomes Carter’s mouthpiece here, what makes her “unique” is not her beard, but the fact that “never, in all her life, had she known a single moment of happiness.” (106) Madame de la Barbe functions as an alternative figure containing both masculine and feminine traits; however she is by no means described as an ideal since people define her simply by looking at her beard and her breasts and fail to communicate with her as an individual.

Madame Buckskin is known as a “sharp-shooter” who sets up a row of whisky bottles every morning and shoots the neck of each one. “She was a paradox: a fully phallic female with the bosom of a nursing mother and a gun, death-dealing erectile tissue, perpetually at her thigh.” (108) She focuses all her attention on the polishing, oiling and fingering of her guns. Her world is composed of targets, and sexually she prefers women. No wonder she envies Madame la Barbe’s beard, thinking that if she had a beard, she could become the perfect man. What she admires in a man is “passivity”; thus she takes a great liking to Desiderio. Both Madame la Barbe and Madame Buckskin are given as examples of women who transgress the boundaries

of the femininity of the patriarchal code since they have both masculine and feminine features. By the portrayal of such figures, Carter shows that when women act like men they are simply regarded as “bizarre” and thus marginalised.

This juxtaposition of male and female gender codes in the travelling fair is accompanied by a male figure, who is portrayed as a cry-baby, the Alligator Man. As a child he spent his childhood in water up to his neck since his father forced him to be his assistant when he tried to build an ark. His father thought that the ark would protect them in the “imminent second Flood.” The Alligator Man leaves his family at the age of twelve, when his father sells him to a travelling showman “for the price of fourteen pounds of nails.” (111) In this way, he becomes a typical Carteresque character, who grows up and creates his identity outside the patriarchal family network. As one of those figures who either leaves or is forced to leave his/her family, the Alligator man becomes a self-made man who builds his own set of values independent from the patriarchal family structure. By playing his harmonica rather than obeying his father’s orders and working, the Alligator man also symbolically refuses to play the role of a son prescribed by the Bible. Unlike the three dutiful sons to Noah, Ham, Shem and Japhet, he does what he feels like doing; he leads a life of his own without marrying or forming a family. In fact, he symbolically resists the patriarchal construction of masculinity, and skips the process of reproduction of the patriarchal myth. Now, in the travelling fair, he performs as a man standing in a glass water tank up to his neck, where he “lay somnolently as a log, staring at those who came to stare at him with an unblinking malice.” (111) As he is accustomed to a life in water, he cannot bear the sunlight and has “shivering fits if he is out of the water for more than two or three hours.” (111) Living in water, he seems to have developed an alternative mode of existence; he even resists the universal truth concerning human beings that is “Human beings live on land!” (111) In a sense, he despises and opposes the underlying principles of becoming a proper man in this order. Desiderio’s impression of him accords to this: “he suffered from no human feelings whatsoever but I grew very fond of him for he had refined his subjectivity until he believed in absolutely nothing.” And when the Alligator man makes the first gift of his life and gives his harmonica to Desiderio, he is deeply moved, but at the

same time he feels sorry "to see the Alligator Man's inflexible misanthropy soften a little." (111)

After revealing a set of people who defy the standard character formation in the patriarchal order, Carter presents the images of the disintegrated bodies of the nine acrobats who have "almost female sinuosity of spine and marked development of the pectorals".(112) They perform such an unbelievable show that Desiderio thinks that knowing them means "stepping directly into the realm of the marvellous since they create all the images that the human body could possibly make- an abstract, geometrical dissection of flesh." (113) Every day, they practice a set of bodily exercises in order to be better at separating parts of their bodies. Four times a day they "transcended their own bodies and made of themselves plastic anagrams."(113) What they show in the fair is the culmination of their act with the parts of their bodies losing their unity and acting on their own:

> Mohammed, the leader, took his head from his neck and they began to juggle with that until, one by one, all their heads came off and went into play, so that a fountain of heads rose and fell in the arena. Yet this was only the beginning. After that, limb by limb, they dismembered themselves. Hands, feet, forearms, thighs and ultimately torsos went into diagrammatic multi-man whose constituents were those of them all. (113-114)

Watching them Desiderio thinks that he cannot entirely suspend his disbelief. After the demonstration is over, mechanically "Each torso took from the common heap its due apparatus back again and, composed again as nine complete Moroccans, they took their bows." (114) The way the acrobats leave also has a fantastic appeal: they "flared briefly like magnesium, reflecting a glare so harsh and violent it wounded the retina. And then the rain obscured them again" (116) When they invite Desiderio to take coffee with them, he finds that their house is decorated with mirrors and the Moroccans are the same height and share a similar form. Due to the mirrors, they are repeated everywhere: "I looked and now eighteen and sometimes twenty-seven and, at one time, thirty-six brilliant eyes were fixed on me with an intensity which varied according to the distance between the images of the eyes and their originals. (117) Desiderio feels trapped and is filled with rage, then as he states, they give him " the

most comprehensive anatomy lesson a man ever suffered, in which I learned every possible modulation of the male apparatus and some I would have thought impossible." (117) With the rape of Desiderio by these nine Moroccan acrobats, the text reaches a climax in the sense that this reads as the most painful and violent form that desire can take. And this rape scene is paralleled by the rape of Albertina by the centaurs in a later chapter, which is described as extremely painful and annihilating. Carter represents the rape in a matter-of-factual mode by portraying the acrobats performing mechanically. Desiderio leaves the house with a purse the leader Mohammed gives him. It contains twenty-seven spare eyes, which Desiderio thinks have been plucked off the mirrors; he plays marbles with them; when the last one disappears, he recovers. (119)

The mirrors surrounding the performing acrobats multiply the images of eyes and the disintegrated bodies. Bersani notes "the centrality of the mirror as a frequent motif in literature is a metaphor for the production of other selves. A mirror produces distance. It establishes a different space, where our notions of self undergo radical change." (ix) As the reflected object in the mirror is a disintegrated body, it doubles the effect of the fantastic in deconstructing the character formation. It also emphasises the parallel sense of disintegration Desiderio and Albertina have after being raped.

By portraying bodies dissolving and then putting themselves together again, the text proposes an alternative to the notion of indivisibility of character. A novel that has images of disintegrated bodies literally shows the violation of the unity of character. Through such fantastic images, the text ultimately problematises the representation of the real. As Jackson notes:

> Character is itself an ideological concept, produced in the name of a 'realistic' representation of actual, empirically verifiable reality outside the literary text. Realism, as an artistic practice, confirms the dominant ideas of what constitutes this outside reality, by pulling it into place, organising and framing it through the unities of the text. It presents its practice as a neutral, innocent and natural one, erasing its own artifice and construction of the 'real'. (83)

The ‘realistic’ language of unified and rational selves is nullified; along with ex-centric and hermaphrodite characters, the Desire Machines portrays dismembered bodies that “tell of an indomitable desire, a longing for that which does not yet exist, or which has not been allowed to exist, the unheard of, the unseen, the imaginary, as opposed to what already exists and is permitted as ‘really’ visible.” (Jackson, 91) Thus, the fantastic images of disintegration suggest the possibility of a better life that has an ‘unreal’ or ‘unseen’ status in the real order.

When read in the light of the conceptual framework which heavily relies on a critical and innovatory approach to the cultural constructions of the patriarchal order, it can be seen that the fantastic images help Carter highlight limiting gender roles and transgress them by means of offering alternative, but not very appealing, states of being.

CHAPTER 3

NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS

"when, truly, it felt like Year One"
Angela Carter "Notes From the Front Line"

...a new fear from my bosom vexes;
Tomorrow there may be no sexes!
Unless, as end to all pother,
Each one in fact becomes the other.

Woman was woman, man was man
When Adam delved and Eve span
Now he can't dig and she won't spin,
Unless 'tis tales all slang and sin!

(Punch April 27, 1895:203)

This chapter will focus on Carter's novel Nights at the Circus and study how the fantastic images are used as a means of transgressing the cultural boundaries of gender. These fantastic images function as tools for criticising the established and conventional representations of masculinity and femininity. Carter employs images of metamorphosis, and the conflation of time and space as weapons against patriarchal ideology. In this sense, the present reading of the novel is based on Carter's assertion in "Notes From the Front Line" that "a narrative is an argument stated in fictional terms." (Haffenden: 79) Thus, when each fantastic image in her novel is examined as an argument, it can be clearly seen that Carter's handling of the fantastic has significant cultural and ideological implications. In this respect, Rosemary Jackson's view of the fantastic as having the potential to bring the cultural unseen to the forefront applies to Carter's use of the fantastic. As Jackson suggests for fantastic works in general, in Carter's Nights at the Circus "Gender differences of male and of female are subverted and generic distinctions between animal, vegetable and mineral are blurred in fantasy's attempt to 'turn over' 'normal' perceptions and undermine 'realistic' ways of seeing." (49)

In Nights at the Circus, not only the time and setting but also the plot structure and the characters establish a network of meaning that clarifies the understanding of the function of the fantastic images. Thus, before analysing the fantastic images in the novel, the general framework that the novel's structural elements form should be examined.

3.1 Conceptual Framework for Nights at the Circus

3.1.1 Time : 1890s, *fin de siècle*

The location of the novel in the year 1899 is of vital importance in understanding the use Carter makes of fantastic images in Nights at the Circus. The novel, in which the calendar moves towards New Year's Eve, 1899, portrays England on the verge of a new century. In Carter's novel, the characters' perception of the coming century reflects authentic *fin de siècle* experiences; it represents Fevvers, "the elected divinity of the imminent century of the Common man", as the emblem of new hopes. (12) She performs as the bird-woman at a circus. On its departure for the start of a "Grand Democratic Tour of the United States of America", the circus presents Fevvers' arrival as an event that will "coincide with that of the new century":

> For we are at the fag-end, the smouldering cigar-butt, of a nineteenth century which is just about to be ground out in the ashtray of history. It is the final, waning, season of the year of Our Lord, eighteen hundred ninety nine. And Fevvers has all the *éclat* of a new era about to take off. (11)

Interestingly, it was in the 1890s that England saw the rise of the concept of the "New Woman" which can be seen as the culmination of responses to the changes in the place of women in society from the 18th century onwards. Economic changes, namely the changing roles of women in society, necessitated social and cultural ones as well. For the middle-classes, better living standards, specialisation in work and change in the demands of labour deprived women of much of the work they had previously participated in at home. (Brown, 70) This redundant, or idle, middle-class

population of women who stayed within the home is one of the main drives behind the creation of the narrow moral code and the unbending sexism of the Victorian middle-class. The moral code wanted women to act like angels in the house.

Due to the role the class plays in the making of the moral codes, different ranks embodied different representations and idealisations of women. The unbending sexism of the Victorian era did not apply to the nobility for instance. The fact that upper class men did not work made women equals in idleness; so, compared to middle-class women, aristocratic ladies had more control over their money, so were less subordinate. (Brown, 72) For noble women, the main pursuit was to attend parties and draw the attention of rich men. These women, the high angels, were spending all their time learning how to acquire perfect ladylike airs and graces and practising them at tea-parties. They were so outside of the "angel in the house" myth that in their leisure time, which was plentiful, they could even join in masculine outdoors activities like hunting. (Brown, 72) Working-class women were also independent of the code of conduct which restricted middle-class women; they were not expected to be the moral guides of their families because most of the time they were out working in the factories and elsewhere. Working class women, who were working for long hours to feed themselves, could violate the moral rules. And as they were violating them, family life of the proletariat was seen to be in a state of deterioration. (Brown, 73) Henry Mayhew's "The London Scavenger" from his monumental London Labour and the London Poor portrays a young woman who leaves the London Scavenger only for an irregular job in another town. The scavenger bluntly reports that: "[the woman] went to the hopping to earn a few shillings for herself, and never came back. I heered that she'd taken up with an Irish Hawker, but I can't say as to the rights on it." (121) Considering the original account of this London scavenger, it can be inferred that traditional values like loyalty, sacrifice and devotion could sometimes be annulled among proletariat families. Annie Besant's account of the young women working in a match factory also shows how different the expectations were for different classes. These girls could not find the time even to make a family: they worked for such low wages that not to lose a shilling, when a holiday was "given", they replied, "We don't want no holidays." (2) In these difficult working conditions, they could not be, and thus were not expected

to be, the angels of their houses. In short, the ideals, etiqette books and the moral code of conduct adressed neither the nobility nor the proletariat. The Victorian moral code of conduct was designed for the middle-class women and aimed at creating a woman whose only preoccupation would be the making of a well-established and morally acceptable family. When Virginia Woolf later refers to this idealisation of woman, which still pervaded the minds of the 1920s' women as a ghost, she gives a quick description of the middle-class house: "if the woman is the angel in the house, her husband is its lord." She further describes this angel and says:

> She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily; if there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught, she sat in it- in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own... In those days of -the last of Queen Victoria- every house had its angel. (4)

The concept of the New Woman rose as a response of middle-class women to the problematic aspects of this restrictive notion of femininity, which included purity, dependence, sacrifice, passivity and silence. These new women "broke out of the traditional Victorian roles for women and were no longer willing to sacrifice their interests for the benefit of others or to endure intolerable marriages." (Nelson,1)

Like these turn-of-the-century women, Carter's <u>Nights at the Circus</u> expresses the hope that the coming of the new year will be "Year One", i.e. a new beginning. In her famous article "Notes From the Front Line", which outlines her attitude towards gender and writing, Carter uses the term "Year One" in talking about the experiences of the 1960s that brought tremendous political and cultural changes to the lives of young people in the USA and much of Europe. Sarah Gamble calls this article Carter's "feminist apologia" since in it Carter strongly expresses her view that femininity is a social and cultural construct. (15) In this article, Carter contemplates the 1960s as the cultural era that shaped her as a feminist writer. She contends that it was the revolutionary spirit of youth that brought about the change in the perception of men and women. The protest movement culminated in the opposition to the war in

Vietnam and to U.S. imperialism. The rejection of the values of consumer society and the criticism of violent imperialism and apartheid were accompanied by a new movement of women's demands for equal rights. De Beauvoir’s The Second Sex, which investigated the roots of women’s subordination, became the handbook of the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s. For Carter, who was “a young woman during the 1960s”, the summer of 1968 was a remarkable time because of the socio-political leap that the youth of Europe made. She mentions the spirit of the 1960s in “Notes from the Front Line”:

> ... there was a brief period of public philosophical awareness that occurs only occasionally in human history; when, truly, it felt like Year One, that all that was holy was in the process of being profaned and we were attempting to grapple with the real relations between human beings. ... I can date to that time and to some of those debates and to that sense of heightened awareness of the society around me in the summer of 1968, my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a woman. How that social fiction of my ‘femininity’ was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing. (70)

The time Carter chooses to locate the events of Nights at the Circus carries the hope of liberating qualities similar to those of 1968. In the 1890s, it was expected that the new century would bring the necessary revelation through which the attributes assigned to men and women would be challenged and changed to create the new man and the new woman. In the novel, with her wit and courage, Lizzie also voices this expectation. As Carter’s Lizzie is bold enough to struggle against the patriarchal structure of Victorian society, she is also one of the first to recognise the coming year. “By my count” she says “it’s New Year’s Eve; we’re on the cusp, my dear, tomorrow is another time-scheme.” (284) In Nights at the Circus Carter represents the process of the profanation of the angelic role that was assigned to the middle-class women.

3.1.2 The Birth of the "New Woman": Liberating "the Angel in the House"

Considering the feminist principles and the reconstructive aims of Carter, the terms the "New Woman" and the "New Man" used throughout the novel can certainly be seen as references to the discussions of the 1890s. The *fin de siècle* social scientists' and feminist activists' discussions of the notions of femininity and masculinity resulted in the reviewing of traditional notions of gender roles. This process of questioning marked the birth of the concept of the "New Woman" which emerged as an antidote to the crippling notion of the Victorian angel in the house. The women who were assigned the role of angel simultaneously carried in their bodies, to use Ledger's term, "embryonic New Women". (5) The old values and the new ideals coexisted only to cause further disturbance both among men and women. Although the discussions are known today as the "Woman Question", they certainly problematised the concept of masculinity and the embryonic New Man as well. So, what was actually being reviewed was not only the role of women in society but also traditional gender roles. Pykett calls these discussions "the turn-of-the-century gender crisis" and summarises the spirit of the era as follows:

> By the 1890s there was widespread evidence of a crisis of gender definition. Scientists, social scientists, journalists, poets, novelists and literary critics all addressed themselves to the question of what was precisely meant by the woman in the modern age. They became extremely preoccupied with the question of gender boundaries, which they anxiously searched for and explored, and policed and reinforced, or blurred and undermined according to inclination (16)

Due to the developments in science and medicine, traditional and established views regarding man and nature were being revised. Science started to be used in interpreting and, in most cases, justifying the social system. Social Darwinists, for instance, considered biological facts as tools for persuading the public that it was the unalterable laws of nature that imposed the idea of hierarchy. (Kishlansky, 839) Thus, Darwin's "survival of the fittest", the dictum that summarises the process of natural selection, when applied to the social order, was read as an excuse for the inevitability of the white middle class man's superiority. The debate over the

inequality of the sexes was backed by the appropriation of Darwin's evolutionary biology into the social life of Victorian England. Thus, the new science legitimised the subordination of women as the second sex. The investigation of the relationship between brain size and its social and cultural connotations was one of the forces behind this legitimisation; the social Darwinists argued that the secondary position of women simply resulted from their smaller "brain size". (Kishlansky, 839) The responses of women demanding the right to vote -these women were called the Suffragettes later in the first decade of the twentieth century further reinforced the discriminatory hold of the Darwinists on the position of women. Angry and feeling threatened by the public claims of these women who were organising themselves in groups, male scientists responded aggressively to women's demand for representative rights. One startling example of opposition to this demand was expressed as follows: "What was decided among the prehistoric Protozoa cannot be annulled by an Act of Parliament." (in Kishlansky, 839) Obviously, social Darwinists saw the sexless prehistoric Protozoa as the bearers of the prophetic message that women should not enjoy political rights for they lacked the natural mental abilities to make decisions.

As the idea that "Woman's proper place is home." captured the attention of the middle classes, authors offered the reading public embodiments of this idea in fictional forms. For instance, Coventry Patmore brought the real and the fictional together when he wrote a poem to address his wife. The poem, "The Angel in the House" (1854-1862) was written in praise of his wife's "heroic" deeds, performed at home. Apart from serving as a compliment to the wife, the poem also provides the crystallisation of the Victorian image of married women as gentle, meek and industrious "maids and wives". In this sense, the poem, "a conservative conduct book for family life, a manual for husbands rather than for wives, despite its praise of women and the power of women" in fact summarises the middle class notion of femininity. (Armstrong, 449) Men demanded that women become angelic figures to make the home a shelter for men struggling in the socially transformed industrial order, and soothe and comfort them. In his poem, Patmore reflects this mindset: "Man must be pleased; but him to please/ Is woman's pleasure." (1599) He idealises

his wife as an “angel”, and suggests that such a figure of grandeur and affection should be accompanied by an appropriate male. Thinking that such a man will be a perfect mate to her, he says he will guide his fellow men to become so:

> On wings of love uplifted free,
> And by her gentleness made great,
> I’ll teach how noble man should be
> To match with such a lovely mate;
> (1599-1600)

Middle-class wives were expected to simply practise domestic ideals, and the ideals saw them as angels meditating on how to turn their homes into earthly paradises. It is obvious that the rationale behind this middle-class notion of femininity was to keep women within the home by to engage them in petty domestic chores Thus, to do so, many guidebooks were published, which preached to women the best ways to make their husbands and children most comfortable. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the essential virtue of Patmore’s wife, is to be the angelic woman that she is supposed to be, and note that:

> In and of herself, she is neither great nor extraordinary. Indeed, Patmore adduces many details to stress the almost pathetic ordinariness of her life: she picks violets, loses her gloves, feeds her birds, waters her rose plot, and journeys to London on a train with her father the Dean, carrying in her lap a volume of Petrarch borrowed from her lover but entirely ignorant that the book is, as he tells us, “worth its weight in gold.” (22-23)

To act like an angel was not easy for women since it required a relentless act of sacrifice and abnegation of the self. English Victorian women like Harriet Martineau and the Brontës started to criticise against this middle-class idealisation of domesticity. To fight against the idealised descriptions of femininity, they represented the middle-class heroines who could think and act like men. For instance, Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) speaks in a tone which suggests that she is trying to change the minds of the readers:

> Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to make puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (115)

Parallel to the spread of the notion of women as angelic wives, the number of responses increased both from the side of men and women. The phenomenon called "the nature of woman" was under scrutiny. J. S. Mill was one of those people who agreed that the middle-class ideal of femininity was a cultural construct which aimed to keep women under control. In his The Subjection of Women (1869), Mill asserts that "What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing - the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others." (238) Like Charlotte Brontë's heroine, he thinks that women feel and think like men, and all they need to prove this is to be allowed to exercise their faculties. So, he claims that "any of the mental differences supposed to exist between women and men are but the natural effect of the differences in their education and circumstances ,and indicate no radical difference, far less radical inferiority, of nature". (269) He believes that through a "better and more complete education" (299) the self-sacrificing wife of the Victorian marriage can become an equal member of society.

There were still conservative people who preferred the rigid moral code to the loss of the conventional woman. Morgan-Dockrell's article "Is the New Woman a Myth?" (1896) expresses the resistance to this equality; those who did not want to break with the conventions found it difficult to see this New Woman as an agreeable figure. Morgan-Dockrell ironically repeats the bitter tone of the conservatives and asks, "Is she, indeed, none other than an intensely aggravated type of the unwomanly, unlovable, unlovely, untidy, undomesticated, revolting, shrieking, man-hating shrew of all the centuries? Or is she on the other hand, verily an altogether new type of woman evolved from out the ages?"(17) As an answer, he suggests that women have come to the realisation that "the new world order demands not only men but also

women and children."; thus, she maintains that, "Man and woman should work harmoniously together." (18)

In addition to such intellectual endeavours to defend the rights of women and protests, there were also frenzied responses given in public to the romanticised view of women as angels. Maria Desraismes's public address (1891) criticised the superficial role prescribed to women:

> Of all woman's enemies, I tell you that the worst are those who insist that woman is an angel. To say that woman is an angel is to impose on her, in a sentimental and admiring fashion, all duties, and to reserve for oneself all rights; it is to imply that her speciality is self-effacement, resignation, and sacrifice; it is to suggest to her that woman's greatest glory, her greatest happiness, is to immolate herself for those she loves [...] In the face of this long enumeration, I decline the honour of being an angel. No one has the right to force me to be both dupe and victim. (842)

Desraismes' address summarises the views that produced the concept of the "New Woman"; in following her belief that sacrifice is "a custom", many women started to make attempts to liberate themselves from rigid Victorian domestic customs.

One of the liberating pursuits of the New Woman who, like Desraismes, "declined the honour of being an angel" was birth control. This would enable her to gain control over her body. However, most Victorian men saw this vital claim as recklessly bold for they feared the results this control would bring. Therefore, when Annie Besant advocated birth control and distributed books about contraception in 1877, she was immediately charged with corrupting young women. Parallel to the increase in the number of brothels, many new books that took as their subject matter the ills of birth-control were being published.
R.Ussher's Neo-Malthusianism (1898), which adressed the middle-classes, was one of those books that considered sex without procreation for women dissolute:

> Contraception would very considerably diminish ante-nuptial chastity on the part of both men and women, especially of the

> latter. If they came to know that they could indulge all sexual appetite without any fear of becoming mothers, they would undoubtedly surrender their virginity much more readily than if the fear of bearing a child was present. (in Stubbs, 12)

Despite the growing interest on the part of educated men in the issue of birth control, young girls were meticulously kept ignorant about the function of their sexual organs. The Obscene Publications Act of 1857 and The Contagious Diseases Acts of the1860s reflect the serious steps the government took to keep society under moral control. There was "a conspiracy of silence" so that there could not be any "danger of a well-bred young English-woman obtaining the slightest hint of sexual knowledge." (Stubbs, 12) Angels were expected not only to be innocent but also ignorant, since the latter was the *sine qua non* of the former.

While those women who remained ignorant were presented as good women, the rest took the risk of becoming fallen ones. The two sharply opposing representations soon heated the debate over the problematic nature of femininity in the eyes of men. There were miscellaneous views, all of which aimed to solve the riddle called womanhood: "Is she an angel or a fallen woman?" The fallen woman, who was viewed as the opposite of the angelic figure, signified all that was immoral and irrational. As George Meredith's poem "London by Lamplight" shows, while daylight is projected onto the angels, prostitutes appear in the dim corners of London. Meredith, whose moralistic stance represents the mainstream thought of the era, hopes to correct these ills and to eradicate level the difference between the angel and the fallen woman:

> Could I but give them one clear day
> Of this delicious loving May,
> Release their souls from anguish dark,
> And stand them underneath the lark;-
>
> I think Nature would have power
> To graft again her blighted flower
> Upon the broken stem, renew
> Some portion of its early hue. (3)

The solution to the issue of “the fallen woman” which Meredith naively leaves to ‘Nature’ could in fact be brought about by economic reforms and a change in the very perception of these women. They were portrayed as women of weak intellect who completely lacked the “angelic” qualities of “extreme emotional sensitivity, unlimited selflessness, and, crucially, indulged in ‘animal’ passion.” (Ingham, 23) Many readers and writers of the era were puzzled by these contrary images of womanhood and were seeking to understand the role of women in society. As Reynolds and Humble report in Victorian Heroines, the public in their efforts were tackling a binary opposition:

> Victorian woman is the sexually passive and angelic wife, sister and/or mother, or she is the sexually charged and demonic mad-woman-in-the-attic. The Victorian temper is described as “unyieldingly dualistic”, capable only of understanding sexuality in terms of polarities. (2)

Thus, it is obvious that the Victorian era involves different pictures of womanhood. Reynolds and Humble note the variety of this phenomenon; the era, they say, “began by inventing the fetishistic cult of the domestic angel and ended with the angels in bloomers, in offices, in higher education, and driving motorcars.” (4-5)

In Nights’s at the Circus, the bird-woman Fevvers becomes the embodiment of the debate about woman and her nature. She is portrayed as the Winged-Victory waiting for the coming of the New Year “as the last cobwebs of the old century blow away.” (39) The fact that Fevvers stands for the New Woman is consolidated by the words of Ma Nelson, the manager of the brothel. Ma Nelson's response ironically recalls the way the New Woman was seen in 1890s by the opponents of feminism. Upon seeing Fevvers flying, she provides a quick description that summarises the point:

> ‘ “Nelson, Ma Nelson, come quick; our little bird’s about to fly away!”
> ‘ “To think we’ve entertained an angel unawares!” she says.
> ‘ “Oh, my little one, I think you must be the pure child of the century that now is waiting in the wings, the New Age in which no women will be bound down to the ground.” (25)

The novel presents the process of Fevvers' transformation from an angel to the New Woman. The question Carter poses for the reader, "Is she an angel or is she the New Woman?" is emphasised by questions about the physical nature of Fevvers. Not only Walser, the American journalist, but also the Russian newsmongers try to answer the question. So, Fevvers and her wings become the most topical issue in both newspapers and public circles. People demand an answer to the question "Is she fact or is she fiction?" as there are rumours growing up around Fevvers' wings. Fevvers is such a novel type of woman that she embodies the problem. The use of irony in Carter's illustration of the growing public interest around Fevvers reveals the absurdity of the "mass hysteria" built around the female body. It seems that the following description is Carter's joke about what the middle class Victorian woman could be seen as being reduced to:

> That morning, the newspapers carry an anonymous letter which claims that Fevvers is not a woman at all but a cunningly constructed automaton made up of whalebone, india-rubber and springs. The Colonel beams with pleasure at the consternation this ploy will provoke, at the way the box-office tills clang in the delicious rising tide of rumour: "Is she fiction or is she fact?" His motto is: "The bigger the humbug, the better the public likes it" [...]
>
> He plots a new item, tomorrow, inserted in the foreign news by his contacts. This, contradicting the vicious 'clockwork' rumour, will proclaim that Fevvers, all woman as she is, is, back home in England, secretly engaged to *the Prince of Wales*. (147)

In public view, Fevvers oscillates between being a freak and a Princess, just like the women in Victorian England. In this respect, it should be noted that Carter's placing at the centre of her work a character whose physical nature comes under scrutiny recalls the contested gender terms of the turn-of-the-century England. Hence, the novel becomes the ground on which notions of femininity and masculinity are contested via the use of the fantastic. The way Carter portrays Fevvers and most of the other female characters in her novel suggests that Fevvers is neither a freak nor a Princess. However strange Fevvers might seem to onlookers, she should, in the final analysis, be understood as a woman trying to earn her living just like a man. She is not portrayed as a dependent woman who thinks of marriage as the only solution; if

she wants to marry Walser, it is only because she wants to live with him. Fevvers and Walser coming to terms with each other and walking hand in hand represent the egalitarian view of the New Woman and the New Man. Somewhat similar to the *fin de siècle* New Woman proponents, Carter presents Fevvers as a sexually and intellectually capable figure. Like the portrayal of the real new woman by Morgan-Dockrell, Fevvers, as described by Carter, "neither asks nor desires sexual superiority or supremacy; but she does claim in the name of justice to be allowed to be in all things what she is. (7) This of course is a challenge to the traditional gender roles imposed by the patriarchal social order. In this respect, presenting Fevvers and Walser as the epitomes of the New Man and New Woman, Nights at the Circus manages to contest the gender roles traditionally ascribed to men and women.

The novel also debates the traditional gender roles through the discussion of marriage by Fevvers and Lizzie. Although an anti-marriage attitude is adopted at the beginning of the novel, the last chapter presents the characters reviewing an alternative model of marriage and approaching the subject with sympathy. Symbolically, the change in attitude is brought about by the change of date and coming of the new year, which highlights the *fin de siècle* gender crisis. The idea of marriage brings the discussion of the New Woman to a halt when Lizzie says:

> "Don't you know the customary endings of the old comedies of separated lovers, misfortune overcome, adventures among outlaws and savage tribes? True lovers' reunions always end in a marriage. [...] The Prince who rescues the Princess from the dragon's lair is always forced to marry her, whether they have taken a liking to one another or not. That's the custom. And I don't doubt that custom will apply to the trapeze artiste who rescues the clown. The name of this custom is a "happy ending". (280-281)

Lizzie's suggestion of marriage soon leads Fevvers to think that marriage in the new age will be quite different from the traditional model of marriage which victimised women as angels in the house. She feels that with a man like Walser, who can really be a soul mate with his new identity, marriage will be something worth considering.

So, she dreams of making him the man she desires: “I’ll sit on him. I’ll make him into the New Man, in fact, the fitting mate for the New Woman, and onward we’ll march hand in hand into the New Century.”(281) This idea of hatching the New Man who will match the New Woman recalls the Victorian stereotype of a wife who should be clever and able enough to be a “good wife” and make her husband a “good man”. With the fantastic image of hatching, Carter makes her criticism of the sterotype in an ironic way. It seems as if Carter were alluding to Coventry Patmore’s lines: “I’ll teach how noble man should be/ To match with such a lovely mate.” If so, it is apparent that Carter is ridiculing Mr Patmore’s belief in masculine superiority and the female optimism that a woman could really teach man how to change and become better. The ideal mate, for Carter, is by no means a lord since her ideal woman is never an angel. If a woman has wings, they are there only to enable her to fly freely.

In conclusion, it should be recorded that Carter’s novel not only criticises the Victorian concept of the “angel in the house”, but it also offers an optimistic closure by suggesting an alternative version of the New Woman. This optimism is articulated by Fevvers who is “possessed” by the idea that “she had been feathered out for some special fate.” (39) This fate is obviously the New Woman’s liberating herself from the limits of the patriarchal notion of femininity. Mimicking the Winged-Victory monument in the brothel, Fevvers represents the angel of the house waiting “with lithic patience, for that destiny to manifest itself.” (39) In addition to the hope of liberation Fevvers’ wings recall, Carter makes another optimistic suggestion: men and women *can* live happily together. Of course, Carter does this in an ironic way by referring to the happy ending in the old comedies and to the Prince and the Princess of the fairy tale tradition. As it was Lizzy herself who criticised marriage at the beginning of the novel and now makes the suggestion, one tends to think that Carter may be teasing the traditional reader who is accustomed to solutions of not the real but the melodramatic type. A happy ending in the patriarchal order is almost always marriage, and Carter may well be ridiculing this limited choice offered by the social system. Marina Warner’s perception of Angela Carter as “a fantasist with a salty turn of mind, a dissident with a utopian vision of possibilities in the midst of disaster”

sheds light on Carter's preference for a happy end. In a sense, it is this use of humour that explains Carter's dissidence and unconventionality:

> The growing presence of humour in Carter's fiction signals her defiant hold on 'heroic optimism', the mood she singled out as characteristic of fairy tales, the principle which sustained the idea of a happy ending, whatever the odds. But heroic optimism shades into gallows humour. Although laughter breaks the silence and jesting can be provocative, disruptive, anarchic and unsettling, some laughter never unburdens itself from knowledge of its pessimism; it remains intrinsically ironic. (1996:197)

It seems Carter ironically suggests that the New Woman and the New Man who are still reverting to the age-old habit of marriage have still more to see and solve.

3.1.3 Settings: The Brothel, The Museum, The Circus and the Steppes of Siberia: From the Places of Confinement Where Angels Are Entrapped to the Wilderness

The settings in Nights at the Circus are so suggestive that they provide a very rich background to the fantastic images used in the novel. The fact that places are central to the comprehension of the novel is made evident by the titles given to the different parts. The novel comprises three main parts, which are entitled "London", "Petersburg" and "Siberia". London with Big Ben in the background, recalling the fact that it is the crowded urban landscape that surrounds the characters, is juxtaposed with the Siberian wilderness where the natural life cycle presides over the sophistication of a man-made culture. Petersburg serves as an intermediary setting. In addition to this general framework regarding the setting, there are also other places that add to the thematic network of the novel. In other words, the places chosen speak for the themes that Carter wants to construct.

By choosing places like the brothel, the museum and the circus as settings Carter seems to discuss the object status that women are prescribed by the patriarchal order. Such places of confinement used as the settings of the novel help the reader think

about the place of women in society. So, it can be said that thanks to the choice of these places of confinement, the concept of woman as an object designed to be looked at penetrates Nights at the Circus. This is even voiced by the motto of the circus director presenting Fevvers as the miraculous creature: “Look, but do not touch!” Women in the novel are turned into visual objects in the patriarchal market. All of these places market women as commodities, which Irigaray discusses in her “Women on the Market”. In this article, Irigaray explains how women in the patriarchal system are constructed and treated as objects. As commodities, women are valued with respect to their utility and all of them are oppressed in one way or another. Moreover, they are in constant service of men as sex objects, but they are deprived of sexual pleasure:

> Mother, virgin, prostitute: ... The characteristics of (so-called) feminine sexuality derive from them: the valorisation of reproduction and nursing; faithfulness; modesty, ignorance of and even lack of interest in sexual pleasure; a passive acceptance of men’s activity; seductiveness, in order to arouse the consumers’ desire while offering herself as its material support without getting pleasure herself... Neither as mother nor as virgin nor as prostitute has woman any right to her pleasure. (186-187)

Irigaray’s view of female sexuality as objectified in the market applies to Carter’s novel. The places where the events take place are metaphoric markets which men attend to get pleasure in return for a certain amount of money. Interestingly, the last setting, the steppes of Siberia stands not for confinement, but for liberation achieved. The wilderness where women have no exchange value, is outside the patriarchal market. One can notice different perceptions of femininity and masculinity parallel to the settings Carter uses. Thus, the places gain symbolic meaning regarding gender roles. It is obvious that not only the time and the terms used in the novel but also the setting have significant implications in terms of the criticism the novel makes about the attributes of masculinity and femininity.

In discussing the reasons for making women into objects of the gaze in her “Why Look at Women?” Susanne Kappeler draws an analogy between animals and women. She reads John Berger’s argument that elaborates on the fascination of men with

animals in the post-industrial era by replacing women with animals. The result of this reading is startlingly effective; though the subject of fascination changes, the process of fascination and the power relations remain the same. Thus, she concludes that the modern world keeps women as pets. When the increase in the demand for labour force made women attractive for employers looking for cheap labour, middle and upper class women gained the status of "pet in the private home". In a sense, while the proletarian women were out in factories, those women who did not have to work to survive increasingly became domesticated pets: "As the angel in the house, a status symbol of the man who does not need a working wife, she is one of those decorations and furnishings of the bourgeois home of the consumer society." (Kappeler, 71) Kappeler concludes that zoos provide people with the same sort of pleasure that is derived from looking at women. This phenomenon of making women objects of the gaze that Kappeler describes is one of the important issues put under scrutiny in Carter's Nights at the Circus. By presenting female characters as women on the market, the novel also describes the effect of the male gaze on women. This brings the different pieces of the discussion of femininity together.

The concept of the "male gaze" as articulated by Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" suggests that man is the bearer of the look and woman is a mere object of pleasure:

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (348)

The first chapter of the novel opens with the scene where Fevvers ironically offers herself as the object to be looked at. This way, she becomes the mouthpiece of the feminist critique of the male gaze:

> Look at me! With a grand, proud, ironic grace, she exhibited herself before the eyes of the audience as if she were a marvellous present too good to be played with. Look, not touch.
>
> She was twice as large as life and as succinctly finite as any object that is intended to be seen, not handled. Look! Hands off!
>
> LOOK AT ME! (15)

Although in this quotation Fevvers is the object of the communal gaze, it should be noted that feminist theory regarded the gaze as a predominantly phallic construction. As Visser claims, "the gaze is male: it is to do with appropriation, with the specifically male assertion of property rights, with the commodification of woman." (2) If the gaze is connected to the male assertion of property rights, then it is closely related to power relations in society. In this sense, the bearer of the gaze does not have to be literally male; those who assume a more powerful stance and practice supremacy over women can be said to have internalised the patriarchal power pattern. As Kaplan contends, "the gaze is not necessarily male, but to own and activate the gaze, given our language and the structure of the unconscious, is to be in the masculine position." (319) Fevvers is the central object of the gaze; throughout the novel, she is the centre of attention. She exhibits herself to be viewed, marvelled at and examined. As Mulvey says, the observer objectifies the viewed under a "controlling and curious gaze". (349) Following this view, it can be claimed that Fevvers, who is described as a freak, and a bird-woman, is actually a figure attempting to liberate herself from this "controlling and curious" male gaze. She plays a trick upon the viewer to do away with her ascribed role of passive mannequin and challanges the mere passive role of the objectified. This way, it can be suggested that Fevvers also functions as the medium to recall, to use Pykett's words, the "twin questions" of the late Victorian era: "What is a woman?" and "What does a woman want?". (137) This means that Fevvers represents the embryonic New Woman that the late Victorian public inspected since the public then scrutinised women to see what they were like:

> Who or what was this creature who so powerfully seized the public imagination, and who was analysed, reviled, caricatured and parodied in fiction and in the words and images of newspapers and magazines? [...] The New Woman (and the moral panic which surrounded her) was yet another example of the way in which, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, femininity became a spectacle. (Pykett, 137-138)

The scrutinising subject also recalls the point Rosemary Jackson makes about the themes of the fantastic. She sees "problems of vision" as "one of the central thematic concerns of the fantastic." (45) She contends that "Knowledge, comprehension, reason, are established through the power of the look, through the 'eye' and the 'I' of the human subject whose relation to objects is structured through his field of vision." (45) In this respect, it is crucial to note that the female characters such as Fevvers, Mignon and Fanny For-Eyes who are rendered spectacles by men, when described with the help of fantastic imagery, strengthen the critical aspect of the novel. Thus, the fantastic images in the novel help Carter problematise the issue of the male gaze.

As the title of the novel <u>Nights at the Circus</u> suggests, the focus is on a travelling circus which stands for the very place of confinement to exhibit people and animals. It is a microcosm of the world modelled on the master and slave relationship amongst the people outside. As a microcosm, it presents the images of femininity as objects to look at, as a mere spectacle. Moreover, the circus as the storehouse of miscellaneous wonders to be looked at provides the reader/ audience with a sense of voyeuristic pleasure. In an interview, Carter herself states that she designed the circus as a "microcosm" to enable an allegorical reading. (Haffenden, 89) The circus in <u>Nights at the Circus</u>, which keeps domesticated animals under control, is actually a micro-patriarchy that recalls the houses that kept women as angels. Carter explicitly inserts the idea of the circus as a microcosm into Lizzie's description of the circus, where Lizzie's tone is like that of a Shakespearean fool:

> 'A motley crew, indeed- a gaggle of strangers drawn from many diverse countries. Why, you might have said we constituted a microcosm of humanity, that we were an emblematic company, each signifying a different proposition

> in the great syllogism of life. The hazards of the journey reduced us to a little band of pilgrims abandoned in the wilderness upon whom the wilderness acted like a moral magnifying glass, exaggerating the blemishes of some and bringing out the finer points in those whom we thought had none. (279)

It is an emblematic company put under a "moral magnifying glass". To use Robinson's term, as the "magic circle of difference", the circus in the novel helps Carter portray different people from different places. (23) In this way both men and women working at the circus are seen as objects of the male gaze.

The other important locations that the events take place in are again patriarchy's cultural repositories for women: the brothel where the orphaned Fevvers is brought up and the "museum of monstrous women." Just like the circus, the brothel and the museum are places that bring together various sets of objects collected by the dominant group.

The Museum of Monstrous Women, another "magic circle of difference" exhibits miscellaneous women with physical deformities, or rather physical idiosyncrasies. Just like the prostitutes in the brothel, the women here live in peace and solidarity with each other. Fevvers can say that "Oh, it was easy work, all right, especially for me and the (Sleeping) Beauty." Fevvers does not mind living with her fellow inmates. She feels and makes the reader believe that there is nothing monstrous there other than the very monstrosity of those who pay money to Madame Schreck to be able to look at or make love with physically different women. Thus, Fevvers says that: "what I never could get used to was the sight of the (visitors') eyes, for there was no terror in the house our customers did not bring with them." (62) Madame Schreck's Museum exhibits "prodigies of nature", or "unnatural" women. The old woman creates a museum in a place that was once used as a wine cellar. The girls are made to stand in "stone niches cut out of the slimy walls". There are also "curtains in front" and a little lamp in front of each curtain. In each niche an objectified female figure is exhibited. These niches, as Fevvers says, are Madame Schreck's "profane altars" (61) In this sense, the museum serves as another brothel only slightly different

from the former one. In Irigaray's terms, it is another "market" women are sold at. After giving Walser a detailed account of the life in Ma Nelson's brothel, Fevvers mentions Madame Schreck's museum and compares the two places:

> 'Mr Walser,' she went on earnestly, spinning on her tool towards him. 'You must understand this: Nelson's Academy accommodated those who were perturbed in their bodies and wished to verify that, however equivocal, however much they cost, the pleasures of the flesh were, at bottom, splendid. But, as for Madame Schreck, she catered for those who were troubled in their souls.' (57)

As well as being dominated by the male gaze, in all three settings, the inmates are forced to endure a period of confinement as powerless victims. The conditions in these places degrade the inhabitants into objects. They are rendered mere objects to serve the interests of patriarchy. In summary, the circus, the brothel and the museum make women passive captives and reduce them to the state of commodities in the service of those male customers who can afford bodily and visual pleasure. Thus, while trying to understand the fantastic images used in Nights at the Circus, the social and cultural connotations of these places which keep women as objects should be considered.

The choice of the setting has another function, for it immediately recalls the dramatic increase in the number of prostitutes and of brothels in Victorian England. This serves as another component in the novel that enables Carter to articulate contemporary Victorian views of sexuality and womanhood. Although the numbers are contested, as Reynolds and Humble states, in 1851 there were about 42.000 illegitimate children in England and Wales, and it was estimated that as many as 'one in twelve of the unmarried women in the country above the age of puberty have strayed from the path of virtue'. (7) An article on 'Prostitution' published in the Westminster Review (1850) claimed that at least 50.000 prostitutes were known to the police in England and Scotland, 8.000 of them residing in London alone. (Reynolds and Humble, 7) These women were making money out of the bodily pleasures they offered to men, whereas Victorian women, as John Ruskin stated in his "Of Queen's Gardens", were supposed to be the moral guides of men and should

be educated to this end. He asserts that woman's "power is not for rule, not for battle, and her intellect is not for intervention or creation, but for sweet orderings" of domesticity. (23) Obviously, the high number of prostitutes failed to accord with the sacred ideal of womanhood. On the one hand, there were ideals as refinement and respectability, on the other a complete profanation of these ideals. Prostitution, hypocritically, was explained by the help of the middle-class moral that some women unfortunately and unwisely take the immoral road. In his preface to Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects (1857), a much quoted and highly-respected doctor of the era, William Acton, states his indignation against the practice of absorbing of "the great mass of prostitutes" into the "so-called respectable classes". (in Reynolds and Humble, 49) He could not tolerate prostitution; in fact, he was mainly angry because he was one of those men who thought that women should be sexless angels combining maternal and nurturing qualities. This late Victorian orthodox view of women and sexuality stigmatised the women who violated this moral code as the sources of social evil. Like most other scientists of the time who fostered the view of women as angels and who designed to keep them so, Acton wrote in support of the maternal aspect of women. In his monumental work, The Functions and the Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood Youth, Adult Age and Advanced Life Considered in Their Physiological, Social and Moral Relations (1862), Acton denies the existence of female sexuality and contends that:

> Love of home, children, and domestic duties, are the only passions they feel [...] As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him and but for the desire for maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions. (Ledger, 101)

It is obvious that Carter offers a critique of Victorian hypocrisy by making the brothel one of the most important settings of her Nights at the Circus. Moreover, the reference she makes to the nineteenth century increase in the number of brothels in England enables her to discuss feminine sexuality. Of course, as a feminist, Carter totally rejects the orthodox views of Victorian scientists like William Acton. What she points out in The Sadeian Woman illustrates her rejection: "The whore is

despised by the hypocritical world because she has made a realistic assessment of her assets and does not have to rely on fraud to make a living. In an area of human relations where fraud is regular practice between the sexes, her honesty is regarded with a mocking wonder." (95) Therefore, in contrast to the public image of prostitutes as immoral and unruly women, she presents the prostitutes in Nights at the Circus as humane and witty figures. Accordingly, the brothel is portrayed as such a pleasant place that the moralising point of view that degrades women working there is nullified. Even the description of the house matches the non-discriminatory stance Carter takes towards the prostitutes of the late Victorian period:

> An air of rectitude and propriety surrounded the place, with its tall windows over which we always kept the white blinds pulled down, as if its eyes were closed, as if the house were dreaming its own dream, or as if, on entering between the plain and well-proportioned pediments of the doorway, you entered a place that, like its mistress, turned a blind eye to the horrors outside, for, inside, was a place of privilege in which those who visited might extend the boundaries of their experience for a not unreasonable sum. It was a place in which rational desires might be rationally gratified. (26)

Carter evidently reproves Victorian hypocrisy, which works on the principle of seeing the prostitutes as "the sick to be healed". Her emphasis on the word "reason" also ironically reveals her criticism of the male point of view that justifies the brothels on the grounds that men need to "gratify" their desires and women need a "not unreasonable sum" in return. The girls working in this brothel are represented as witty suffragettes who are aware of the limitations and perceptions of the society around them. Ma Nelson is also "for Votes for Women." (38) The loving bond among the girls and the awareness they have can be read as an evident invalidation of the idea that prostitutes lack morality and ethical values. This all-female atmosphere in fact suggests just the opposite for the brothel is presented as a utopian alternative to the 'proper' patriarchal institutions like marriage and family:

> Let me tell you that it was a wholly female world within Ma Nelson's door. Even the dog who guarded it was a bitch and all the cats were females, one or the other of 'em always in kitten,

> or newly given birth, so that a sub-text of fertility underwrote the glittering sterility of the pleasure of the flesh available within the academy. Life within those walls was governed by a sweet and loving reason. I never saw a single blow exchanged between any of the sisterhood who reared me, nor heard a cross word or a voice raised in anger. Until the hour of eight when work began and Lizzie stationed herself behind the peephole in the front door, the girls kept to their rooms and the benign silence might be interrupted only by the staccato rattle of the typewriter as Grace practised her stenography or the lyric ripple of the flute upon which Esmeralda was proving to be something of a virtuoso. (38-39)

Considering the warmth and friendship among the girls, the novel can also be seen as "lesbian" in the broader sense implied by Adrienne Rich's concept of the "lesbian continuum", which spans the whole spectrum of women's friendships and sisterly solidarity. (1992:176) Nevertheless, the more conventional meaning of the term is also represented in the novel with the two female characters of the wilderness of Siberia, Olga and Vera, and the two women at the circus, Mignon and The Princess of Abyssinia, who reinforce this aspect of the novel as their relationships are attempts to establish bonds outside patriarchal "compulsory heterosexuality".

The agreeable scenes in the brothel also serve to convince the reader that Fevvers should by no means be considered an unlucky girl because she is left in the hands of whores. In fact, Fevvers is portrayed as the apple of many women's eyes, enjoying the care given by a myriad mother figures. All the girls working in the brothel act as her mothers and spend time meeting her needs. When Fevvers gets "bigger and stronger" at the age of fourteen, the girls in the brothel put leisurely activities aside and make her an "entire new set of dresses to accommodate the remarkable development" of her birdlike upper body. Lizzie narrates this stage hinting at the loving atmosphere in the brothel: "I'll say this for Ma Nelson, she paid up all expenses on the nail, out of pure love of our little kiddie and what's more, she thought up the scheme, how she should put it round she was a 'unchback. Yes." (32) Carter rejects derogatory views about brothels also by portraying Fevvers as reading books in her leisure time. A Scottish gentleman who is a very good friend of Ma Nelson leaves his rich library to the witty girls of the brothel. Thus, just like the other

girls there, Fevvers uses the library in her long hours of repose for her pursuits and for her study of aerodynamics and the physiology of flight. (40) The girls in the brothel are portrayed by Carter as mature enough to see the cruelties of patriarchy and to establish a bond of solidarity. Therefore, though they are physically victimised, they do not lack the skill to assert themselves as 'normal' people and oppose patriarchy's distorted vision of them. In criticising moralising attitudes towards prostitutes, for instance, Lizzie reproaches people like Baudelaire whom she names a poor fellow, "who loved whores not for the pleasure of it but, as he perceived it, the *horror* of it, as if we was, not working women doing it for money but damned souls who did it solely to lure men to their doors, as if we'd got nothing better to do." (39) The most important thing of all about the brothel is that none of the girls working there lives in a dream of emancipation brought by a gentleman. This assertive stance of the girls is crystallised in the words of Fevvers who says she never waits for "the kiss of a magic prince" as she sees "how such a kiss would seal [her] up in *appearance* for ever!" She is aware of the fact that her "angelic" appearance could easily encourage a magic prince to victimise her as the "meek wife", which, of course, means the "angel in the house". Thus she rejects this imposed fate. Just like Fevvers, who is a confident and independent woman in the form of an angel, the physically exploited girls are depicted as able women who have the capacity to survive by their own means. After the death of Ma Nelson, each one does her best to set up her own business. Of course, they part after the demolition of the house. They assemble in front of the brothel and set the house on fire. Fevvers delightedly narrates the event to Walser:

> "We shivered, from the cold, from anxiety, from sorrow at the end of one part of our lives and the exhilaration of our new beginnings. When the fire had fairly taken hold, off we went, Indian file, clutching our bundles, up the towpath, until we got to the main road and found a rank of sleepy cabbies under the Tower only too pleased to see custom at that hour in the morning. We kissed and parted and went each our separate ways. And so the first chapter of my life went up in flames, sir." (50)

By picturing the girls setting the house on fire, Carter suggests that it is the institution itself that needs a demolition job. By providing agreeable scenes in the brothel, Carter by no means suggest that prostitution can be tolerated, instead she implies that sisterly solidarity helps the girls working there endure the degradation. Her disapproval of prostitution is emphasised by the girls rejoicing when they demolish the house. In short, Carter delineates the brothel not as a prison for sick women in need of a moral treatment. This way she nullifies the prevalent views in society about prostitutes, and demythologises the myth of prostitutes as immoral women.

The last part of the book, Siberia, is different from the first three places of confinement. The wilderness of the steppes of Siberia adds to the sense of liberation and independence. Being a setting far away from the man-made cities, the steppes read as the blank slate on which experience will write freely. In the wilderness, there is nothing predestined or prescribed for men and women. The introductory description of the setting stands in contrast to the places of confinement mentioned before:

> Nothing.
>
> The train now ground to a halt with an exhausted sigh. The engine wailed softly, the locking wheels clicked and groaned but nothing in sight, not even one of those frilly little wooden stations like ginger-bread houses they put up in these parts, mocking the wilderness with their suggestion of the fairy tale. Nothing but streaks of snow standing out unnaturally white against the purple horizon, miles away. We are in the middle of nowhere.
>
> 'Nowhere', one of those words like, 'nothing', that opens itself inside you like a void. And were we not progressing through the vastness of nothing to the extremities of nowhere? (198)

Upon reaching the steppes, Fevvers says that they are all "translated into another world, thrust into the hearts of limbo to which [they] had no map." (225) The wilderness symbolises the land of freedom where there are no boundaries. As the circus crew find themselves literally lost in the wilderness, and "swallowed up" by the forest, they lose the social and cultural inscriptions written on them as well.

Accordingly, all the people they come across in the wilderness are figures that have strayed from the patriarchal mainstream: the murderesses who have killed their husbands and the lesbian couple Olga and Vera are fugitives from the cruelties of the patriarchal order.

Coming to this new world, Siberia, also serves as the symbolic act of rewriting the boundaries. For Lizzie, it is such a liberating feeling to be in the wilderness that she feels as if she has never existed before. Accordingly, she tells Fevvers that, "There's nobody to say what you should do or how to do it. You are Year One. You haven't any history and there are no expectations of you except the ones you yourself create." (198) This is the sense of "Year One" that both men and women need in order to reconstruct gender roles to fit an egalitarian set of relations. The idea that biology is not destiny, which means one's sexual identity does not impose any male and female gender roles, is allegorically expressed by Walser's amnesia. His mind becomes a *tabula rasa*, as life in wilderness symbolically annihilates the cultural constructs he has been exposed to. He does not need to recall prescribed views and identities. Thus, he forgets who he is. He even forgets his name and soon forgets his mother tongue. Upon getting lost in the wilderness, he becomes an apprentice to a shaman who lives a tribal life in the steppes. Walser goes through a process of transformation which makes him even forget how to speak. All these experiences in Siberia stand against the earlier viewpoint of the novel, which is based on the Western tradition. Carter even juxtaposes an image of Walser parenting a bear which he teaches how to dance with the former image of Walser as a serious sceptical journalist. The juxtaposition not only ridicules the image of the masculine identity that the patriarchal order of the Western world offers but also functions as the background to the fantastic imagery used throughout the novel. Out of the combination of the West with the steppes of Siberia springs the idea that the models of femininity and masculinity that the Western tradition has constructed fail to satisfy human beings. Thus, Carter places Walser as a New Man "busily reconstructing" his 'self' right from the beginning: "He was [physically] as much himself again as he ever would be, and yet that 'self' would never be the same again for now he knew the meaning of fear as it defines itself in its most violent form, that is, fear of the death of the beloved, of the loss of the beloved, of the loss of love." (293) And it is thanks to this

construction of the new self that Fevvers and Walser finally come to terms as lovers. The steppes as setting, in short, invalidate the patriarchal codes of femininity and masculinity. All the places used as setting in the novel function as catalysing agents of transformation, and thus support the critical framework Carter employs throughout the novel.

3.1.4 Plot and Characters: A Group of Miscellaneous People on the Move

Carter herself states in an interview the idea behind the novel as "very much to entertain and instruct". And she adds that she "purposely used a certain eighteenth-century fictional device-the picaresque, where people have adventures in order to find themselves in places where they can discuss philosophical concepts without distractions." (Haffenden, 87) With such different places used as settings and its picaresque layout, which makes the plot intriguing, as other Carter novels do, the novel defies a neat summary.

The novel opens very energetically with Fevvers relating what brought her to the circus. She speaks to Walser who is trying to solve the puzzling question concerning Fevvers' "notorious and much-debated wings" (1): "Is it fact or fiction?" "Is she a bird-woman or what?". Like the storytelling of Scheherazade, Fevvers's captivates Walser, and the immediacy of the question "Is it fact or fiction?" equally bewitches the reader. The question, "is it fact or fiction?" not only attracts our attention but also creates a Todorovian hesitation. In this sense, the question hints at the wavering tone of the narrative: Should we choose the matter-of-factual account of the events, which means looking through Walser's journalistic and sceptical perspective or should we believe in the oddities that Fevvers recounts? It is this wavering, or rather hesitation, between the two perspectives in the narrative that brings forth the culmination of the suspense, which ends in Walser and Fevvers falling in love to form a very extraordinary couple.

The fascination that the text immediately creates also stems from the peculiarities of the characters. The circus serves as the meeting place of a myriad characters such as

Fevvers, the winged victory, her Italian nurse, Lizzie, and the American journalist, Walser. There are many other characters, all of whom function as representatives of the circles and ranks they belong to and who exemplify many different figures of femininity and masculinity. The women in the Museum of Monstrous Women, the girls in Ma Nelson's brothel, the people in the circus, and the people who are encountered in the steppes, such as the shaman, the lesbian couple, and Olga and Vera, all embody unique stories that tell about patriarchy.

It is through a railroad accident that the characters are liberated toward the end of the novel; the train's going off the rails enables a literal and a metaphoric release from limiting boundaries into the steppes of Siberia. This symbolic event also points to the structural divide of the book, which seems to be the events before the accident and events after the accident. Although the novel is physically divided into three parts "London", "Petersburg", "Siberia" with the addition of a short "envoi" functioning as an epilogue, this event brings about the thematic division: before reaching the wilderness in Siberia the characters are not the same people. The accident creates a new plane of reality that portrays the characters in their transitional stage, and brings the picaresque plot into a totally new cultural setting. In conclusion, Carter employs the plot and the characters in such a way as to accord with the thematic network of the novel.

3.2 Fantastic Images in Nights at the Circus

The fantastic images in the novel help the reader see the patriarchal gender roles ascribed to men and women in their exaggerated forms. This act of magnifying also reinforces the critical effect that Carter attempts to create throughout the novel. The fantastic images used in this novel can be classified as those of metamorphosis.

3.2.1 Metamorphosis

There are various images of metamorphosis in the novel, all of which help Carter challenge conventional gender roles. The central image is Fevvers with her wings; however, there are other very significant images like the odd bodies of the women in the Museum of Monstrous Women. In her Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds, Warner asserts that transformations bring about a surprise and break the rules of natural law. In Ovid, she contends, "metamorphosis often breaks out in moments of crisis, as expressions of intense passion." (2002:16) As in Metamorphoses, the transformed bodies in Carter's Nights at the Circus mark moments of crisis; the turn-of-the-century gender crisis is one of these moments. The transformed bodies enable the women to disguise themselves, evade seduction, and step outside the patriarchal market. Thus, it should be noted that the female figures of metamorphosis in Carter stand for the "ever-changing bodies" that defy the death of the spirit forced on them by the patriarchal code. Ovid's introductory lines that summarise the significance of metamorphosis apply to the reading of the fantastic images of metamorphosis in Nights at the Circus. Like Ovid, whose "intention is to tell of bodies changed/ To different forms", Carter depicts transformed figures:

> All things are always changing,
> But nothing dies. The spirit comes and goes,
> Is housed wherever it wills, shifts residence
> From beasts to men, from men to beasts, but always
> It keeps on living. As the pliant wax
> Is stamped with new designs, and is no longer
> What once is was, but changes form, and still
> Is pliant wax, so do I teach that spirit
> Is evermore the same, though passing always
> To ever-changing bodies. (941)

3.2.1. a Fevvers and her Wings: Is it Fact or is it Fiction?

Carter employs a central fantastic image in order to pose questions about the socially acceptable form of femininity. At the centre stands the image of a winged woman with her emblematic name Fevvers, which is the Cockney pronunciation of feathers. By delineating a human being partly in animal form, Carter aims to criticise not only the patriarchal family structure but also the ideals of motherhood and womanhood that concord with the patriarchal codes. And the mingling of the human and animal forms offers an image of transgression which reinforces the revolutionising effect that Carter aims to have on the model of feminine identity adopted in patriarchal culture. The official name Fevvers is given by the legal authorities -"Sophie" –since feathers do not count as the proper way to name a person- suggests the inherent wisdom Carter attributes to her character. All through the novel, although Fevvers, the bird-woman, makes money out of exhibiting her body within the patriarchal order, thanks to her inherent wisdom, she never fails to assert her identity. In a way, the allegorical naming of her character already speaks for the discussion to be built around her throughout the narrative.

Fevvers is depicted as an orphan as was common in 19th century fiction. Thanks to this parental absence, Fevvers is given a path to follow like the one given to Pip, David Copperfield and Jane Eyre. The question about whether she has a navel or not also denotes the fact that as a bird-woman she lacks an umbilical cord. The absence of a navel obviously represents the possibility of proceeding and prospering as an individual without biological parentage. On a symbolic plane, this reads as the trait that liberates Fevvers from the bonds of patriarchal family structure at the very start of her life: she has no cord to tie her to the patriarchal code. Thanks to the absence of maternal and paternal role models, she can grow up without internalising the gender stereotypes that a patriarchal family would teach her. Moreover, Fevvers enjoys the chance of being brought up by 'wayward' women, who show her that for women life outside marriage and the biological family is possible. As she narrates her story to Walser and asks whether he will be daring enough to print all she tells him, she ironically quotes the orthodox view about those wayward women, namely the

prostitutes in Ma Nelson's brothel: "Come on, sir, now, will they let you print that in your newspapers? For these were women of the *worst class* and *defiled*." (21)

Fevvers' being brought up by the "girls" working in the brothel brings in an important theme in the novel. Fevvers' lack of parents recalls the orphan-convention of Victorian novels, and can be taken as a parody of Victorian fictional conventions. Criticism of gender roles that Carter makes is reinforced by the subversion of the established conventions of fiction. Unlike the orphans of Victorian fiction, Fevvers arouses no pity or sympathy, and there is no chance of her integration into society. Touching upon the historical basis of the orphan convention in fairy tales, Marina Warner suggests that the absent mother can be read as "a feature of the family before our modern era, when death in childbirth was the most common cause of female mortality, and surviving orphans would find themselves brought up by their mother's successor." (213) Correspondingly, the real mother is almost always replaced by a surrogate mother. Playing on one of the features of the fairy tale convention and Victorian tradition, that is, offering the narrator as "surrogate to the vanished mother", Carter offers a non-conventional image of femininity to supersede the absent mother. (Warner:1996, 215) Fevvers tells of the surrogate mothers she is offered not in a tone of resentment but of joyful contentment:

> In a brothel bred, sir, and proud of it, if it comes to the point, for never a bad word nor an unkindness did I have from my mothers but I was given the best of everything and always tucked up in my little bed in the attic by eight o'clock of the evening before the big spenders who broke the glasses arrived. (22)

Fevvers is cared for especially by an ex-prostitute Lizzie, who is a devout socialist and who initially looks down on the idea of marriage. Lizzie by no means serves as a simple substitute for the lost mother. Considering her waywardness, it can be said that she does not represent ordinary women. Observing this unusual Italian woman who "might have been any age between thirty and fifty", Walser thinks, "There was ex-whore written all over her." (13) Yet, Fevvers calls her a "witch" and says that

she has taken in Lizzie's rationality together with her milk: "you could say it's too much rationality as procured her not altogether undeserved reputation, for when she puts two and two together sometimes she comes up with five, because she thinks quicker than most." (225) Clever Lizzie is the mouthpiece for those anti-marriage activists who consider marriage to be a patriarchal trap designed to exploit women as servants, child-carers, domestic prostitutes, and cleaners. When Walser speaks in support of the prostitute by saying that there are "pretty decent whores [...] whom any man might have been proud to marry", Lizzie angrily interrupts him and argues against marriage as a decent choice for women: "'Marriage? Pah!' snapped Lizzie in a pet. 'Out of the frying pan into the fire! What is marriage but prostitution to one man instead of many? No different! D'you think a decent whore'd be proud to marry you, young man? Eh?' (21)

By placing Fevvers into the heart of a brothel where she is represented as the blue-eyed girl of the community and brought up collectively, it is suggested that to be happy and innocent one does not have to be brought up within the bonds of a patriarchal family structure. This serious challenge to patriarchal stereotypes of female characters can also be taken as a parodic reference to the orphan-convention in Victorian fiction. In describing the development of the Victorian girl, Reynolds and Humble argue that due to reasons like disease, disaster, desertion, war and particularly childbirth under poor conditions, many children lost their parents at an early age. (24) Accordingly, they emphasise that in Victorian fiction, there are many orphans like Charlotte Brönte's heroines, Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, Shirley Keeldar, and Dickens' Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Esther Summerson and Pip, or like Emily Brönte's Cathy. Especially "women writers added a second, yet more radical, symbolic layer to the orphan convention. This was a biological refutation of the patriarchal system of inheritance and its implications for marriage." (28) Like these heroes and heroines, Fevvers has no patriarchally inherited family life; but, being a bird-orphan, she is twice removed from the conventional family tradition. And so, she can easily evade the adoption of the oppressive gender roles learned in the family. What Reynolds and Humble say about Victorian heroines also applies to Fevvers in the sense that this orphan-convention provides a useful insight into

attitudes to changes in the construction of femininity. (37) In Nights at the Circus, the use of the orphan-convention functions as the biological rejection of the inevitable feminine role models in the patriarchal family organisation. This is reinforced by the fantastic image of Fevvers being hatched:

> "Hatched; by whom, I do not know. Who *laid* me is as much a mystery to me, sir, as the nature of my conception, my father and my mother both utterly unknown to me, and, some would say, unknown to nature, what's more. But hatch out I did, and put in that basket of broken shells and straw in Whitechapel at the door of a certain *house*, know what I mean?" (21)

Coming back to the animal form of Fevvers and its liberating connotations, one should note that the abnormal physical traits of Fevvers help the readers understand her as a strange form of femininity. Until fourteen, that is, until the age of puberty, she is physically quite a normal child, in Lizzie's words, "flat as an ironing board on both sides." (23) With the onset of puberty, however, things start to change; the unusual stage of her life first starts with an "infernal itching" in her back. She rubs her back "as cats do" to get rid of the "pleasurable irritation.", but then unable to get her fingers to the point where the itch is stubbornly placed, she asks the help of Lizzie to scrub her back since " the itch was situated in the most inconvenient location just between my shoulderblades". (24) Whatever the girls do to soothe the itch, like applying lotions and cooling powders, and even placing ice-bags on her back, the itch keeps increasing. Then, it is discovered that she is growing wings. Upon realising this, Fevvers says she felt no pain, but "bewilderment". There is a very detailed description of this scene of metamorphosis into a bird-woman:

> 'For as my titties swelled before, so these feathered appendages of mine swelled behind until, one morning in my fourteenth year, rising from my truckle bed in the attic as the friendly sound of Bow Bells came in through the window while the winter sun shone coolly down on that great city outside, which, had I but known it, would at one day be at my feet. [...] 'I spread,' said Fevvers. And all unwilled by me, uncalled for, involuntarily, suddenly they broke forth my peculiar inheritance- these wings of mine! Still adolescent, as

> yet, not half their adult size, and moist, sticky, like freshly unfurled foliage on an April tree. But, all the same, wings." (24)

The fantastic metamorphosis can well be read as the feeling of strangeness most girls feel as they pass from childhood into womanhood. With her new-fledged wings, an idea comes to her. She asks: "If I have wings, then I must fly!" So she wants to see whether she can or not. The scene where Fevvers is shown as a young bird-woman trying to fly is a rich illustration of the implications of the fantastic image that Carter uses. The mingling of the realistic details of the fantastic equipment, namely the wings, perfectly reveals the sub-text of the novel: the representation of Fevvers as a liberated woman in the making. The realistic details about the room and her sensations give a sense of verisimilitude, which further helps the fantastic image speak for the real circumstances surrounding Fevvers. She stands on the mantelpiece, and thinking "nothing ventured, nothing gained", she decides to take the plunge:

> And behind me, truly, sir, upon the wall, I could have sworn I heard, caught in time's cobweb but, all the same, audible, the strenuous beating of great, white wings. So I spread. And, closing my eyes, I precipitated myself forward throwing myself entirely on the mercy of gravity.
>
> [...]
>
> 'And, sir, I fell.
>
> 'Like Lucifer I fell. Down, down, down I tumbled, bang with a bump on the Persian rug below me, flat on my face amongst those blooms and beasts that never graced no natural forest, those creatures of dream and abstraction not unlike myself, Mr Walser. And then I knew I was not yet ready to bear on my back the great burden of my unnaturalness.' (30)

At the first attempt, she is unsuccessful. The second time she tries, she has Lizzie with her. Contrary to the prevalent images of her as a tableau vivant in the Museum, as a Winged Victory statue in the brothel and an aerialiste in the circus, this time Fevvers is presented as a flesh and blood bird-woman who tries to learn about herself despite the risk and pain she faces. Fevvers learns to use her wings to enjoy free flight. Big Ben and the cherry tree add to the authenticity of the experience of flight.

In this scene Fevvers is presented as a fantastic image of transformation that transgresses the traditional gender roles.

Prior to the second test, Fevvers meticulously studies birds and the "airy medium" which is Fevvers' "second home" so that she can make the most efficient use of her wings. (31) Thus, she observes the pigeons that have luckily built a nest upon the pediment outside their attic window. In her attempts to learn the "method of the act of flight", the surrogate mother, Lizzie functions as an agent helping Fevvers, metaphorically, liberate herself. She does her best to guide Fevvers, who appreciates her efforts: "But do not think I carried out these studies on my own; although she was flightless herself, my Lizzie took it upon herself the role of bird-mother." (32) After days of watching the birds "diligently", one Midsummer's Night, as they require "dark and privacy", they put the theory into practice. They go up to the roof of the house. Fevvers fears not only possible physical injury but also "the irreparable *difference* with which success in the attempt would mark (her)." (34) She fears the proof of her own "singularity", yet she cannot help but try and sees that she is able to fly:

> [...] the wind came up beneath my outspread wings and, with a jolt, I found myself hanging in mid-air and the garden lay beneath me like the board of a marvellous game and stayed where it was. The earth did not rise up to meet me. I was secure in the arms of my invisible lover! [...] I commenced once more upon the fearful fall. [...] And I kicked up my heels, that I had learned from the birds to keep tight together to form a rudder from this little boat, my body, this little boat that could cast anchor in the clouds.... Yes! I clapped my wing-tips together again, again, again, and the wind loved that and clasped me to his bosom once more so I found I could progress in tandem with him just as I pleased, and so cut a corridor through the invisible liquidity of the air. (35)

As she circles the house at a level that "just topped the cherry tree in Ma Nelson's garden, which was some thirty feet high", she becomes excited and joyful. However, she does not neglect to pick Lizzie a handful of cherries. Just as she describes her second flight, she laboriously describes the cherries she collects for Lizzie: "[...] the

fruit that had just reached perfect ripeness upon the topmost branches, fruit that customarily we were forced to leave as a little tribute for the thrushes." (36)

The sense of *verisimilitude* achieved through the use of such details helps the reader "suspend his/her disbelief." Fevvers' knowledge about the birds adds to the illusion of reality. Being a woman with wings, she thinks, she has not the perfect structure to fly as birds do. She observes storks, cranes and flamingoes and discovers that the "globe" imposes constraints and she realises that her body is not "the abode of limitless freedom." (41) She is a hybrid; although there is abundant space in her chest for lungs of the size required, her size and weight do not enable her to practice a perfect flight:

> The bones of birds are filled with air and mine are filled with solid marrow and if the remarkable development of my thorax forms the same kind of windbreak as does that of a pigeon, the resemblance stops abruptly there and problems of balance and of elementary negotiations with the wind- who is a fickle lover- absorbed me for a long time. [...] Any bird of my dimensions would have little short legs it could tuck up under itself and so make of itself a flying wedge to pierce the air, but old spindle-shanks here ain't fitted out like neither bird nor woman down below. (40-41)

Representation of Fevvers as an unconventional woman also reinforces the critical effect of her wings upon the social position of women. Since she discovers that she can fly, she starts performing as a bird-woman at a circus which singles her out as a very peculiar woman. This new-found skill secures for her all sorts of unusual jobs, first in the museum as the bird-woman, and then in the travelling circus as an aerialiste. Whatever she does to earn her living, she remains an eccentric woman, a mixture of this and that, who transgresses the conventional image of femininity. She is not a fully-grown bird; neither is she absolutely a woman. She is neither an elegant lady, nor an able bird; she is in-between the two, a bizarre woman with wings, the use of which poses a question. She is an intermediate figure. What Pykett says about the reception of the New Woman in the *fin de siècle* agrees with the way Fevvers is represented as the new role model of femininity: "The New Woman challenged

traditional gender boundaries in paradoxical ways. The mannish New Woman threatened such boundaries from one direction by quitting the sphere of the proper feminine, aping masculinity and becoming a new intermediate sex." (141) Fevvers does not ape masculinity, however with the masculine attributes she has, she can be seen as the mannish New Woman described by Pykett.

With his scepticism Walser is a figure that articulates this tendency to see Fevvers as a neither-woman-nor-man form: "Her face, in its Brobdingnagian symmetry, might have been hacked from wood and brightly painted up by those artists who build carnival ladies for fairgrounds or figureheads for sailing ships. It flickered through his mind: Is she really a man?" (35) Walser's sceptical approach to Fevvers' identity, which sums up the public response to her, brings to the fore the questioning of gender identities, of what the culture means by femininity and masculinity. To subvert the boundaries of culturally accepted femininity, Carter here experiments with the idea of ascribing manly qualities to women and sees the results. To this end, she turns Fevvers almost into a mannequin. Since Fevvers' behaviour does not conform to the ideal of womanhood, the juxtaposition of 'Fevvers-as-a-woman' with 'Fevvers-acting-in-a-mannish-way" offers a challenging message to the reader. Fevvers demonstrating "masculine" qualities subverts the gender-based judgements of the patriarchal order:

> Value is given to those "qualities" seen as masculine: for example, intellectual activity; assertiveness; independence; rationality; objectivity, activities in the public sphere and so on; whilst those seen as feminine are devalued and often held in contempt, for example, concern with body maintenance [...], submissiveness, passivity, dependency, emotion, subjectivity, domestic activities. (Nice, 5)

As the novel unfolds, Fevvers is presented as a weird creature who violates the established codes of femininity. The very first utterance of the novel, "Lor, love you, sir!" by Fevvers is followed by the narratorial comment. Her voice is unwomanly; it is described as clanging "like dustbin lids". (7) This voice is by no means suitable for women; it is "extraordinarily raucous and metallic [...] clanging of contralto or even

baritone dustbins."(13) Further in the narrative, Walser specifies this voice of which he becomes a "prisoner" as a "cavernous and sombre voice made for shouting about the tempest":

> Musical as it strangely was, yet not a voice for singing with; it comprised discords, her scale contained twelve tones. Her voice, with its warped, homely, Cockney vowels and random aspirates. Her dark, rusty, dipping, swooping voice, imperious as a siren's.
>
> Yet such a voice could almost have had its source, not within her throat but in some ingenious mechanism or other behind the canvas screen, voice of a fake medium at a seance. (43)

This spectacular description of Fevvers' voice can be read as a sharp contrast to the romantic compliments that traditional lovers make about the lovely and birdlike chirping voice of their beloved. By stressing Fevvers' unfeminine voice, Carter reinforces the subversive effect that her fantastic image is designed to produce. Fevvers is not an angelic woman with a sweet singing voice to tease men. She is, in contrast, a mannish creature who "guffaws uproariously", slaps her thigh as she laughs, flashes her "indecorous eyes" at Walser, and rips "six inches of false lash from her left eyelid with an incisive gesture and a small, explosive, rasping sound." (7) There is nothing conventionally feminine about her. In fact, she can be seen as a transvestite. In contrast to the image of her on the poster which shows her as "not English but an angel", she "pops the cork of a chilled magnum of champagne between her teeth." (8) As she goes on telling Walser about her story "with one eyelash off, one eyelash on", Walser describes her as looking "more like a dray mare than an angel." (12). With such "coarse" manners, there is nothing gentle in her face to make her the "ideal Victorian lady": "Her face, broad and oval as a meat dish, had been thrown on a common wheel out of coarse clay; nothing subtle about her appeal, which was just as well if she were to function as the democratically elected divinity of the imminent century of the Common Man" (12) The first note Walser puts in his notebook about his first impression is her "physical ungainliness": "Such a lump it seems! But soon, quite soon, an acquired grace asserts itself, probably the result of strenuous exercise. (Check if she trained as a dancer.)" (16)

Fevvers's "enormous appetite" which is a masculine attribute in the patriarchal order is another trait that accompanies her fantastic bodily appearance. The "huge" body she has which signifies an undisciplined eating habit refers to Fevvers' failure to comply with the code of conduct. The Victorian age, which the novel is set in, associated eating with sexual appetite, and thus aimed to impose the idea of moderation in eating. Etiquette books, for instance, preached to women about the right way to eat fruit; by the right way the authors meant the way which would not suggest anything related to sexual appetite. Women, the descendants of Eve who tasted the apple due to her excessive appetite, had to be tamed; thus the way to eat cherries had to be taught. Women's nature and the natural impulses had to be checked by the patriarchal code. "Very dainty feeders press out the stone [of cherry] with a fork in the first instance. [...] This is the safest way for ladies." (in Michie, 19) Fevvers is by no means a "dainty feeder", nor does she follow the safest way. When she feels hungry, she simply fills her mouth. As she gives Walser an account of her life, she eats in such a gargantuan way that she cannot speak:

> She tucked into this earthiest, coarsest cabbies' fare with gargantuan enthusiasm. She gorged, she stuffed herself, she spilled gravy on herself, she tucked up peas from the knife; she had a gullet to match her size [...] she wiped her lips on her sleeve and belched. She gave him another queer look, as if she half hoped the spectacle of her gluttony would drive him away. (22)

In the course of the narration, it is always Fevvers who remembers to eat. As she tells about the days she and Lizzie sold ice-cream she belches and asks: "Is there a bite left to eat in the place?" (51) Although Lizzie and Walser have also been there for hours, it is Fevvers who says "I'm starved again". (51) Lizzie goes out to find some food and leaves Walser "alone with the giantess"; the scene ironically portrays Walser and Fevvers as the modern Adam and Eve. Fevvers has the potential to seduce the rational and prudent Walser. Thus, in the absence of Lizzie, Walser feels uncomfortable with this bold woman, whom he compares to a giant. To put it simply, not only her manner of eating but also the amount of food she consumes shows that

Fevvers transgresses the limits of femininity determined by the Victorian code of conduct. Moreover, unlike the polite young women of the Victorian age, she prefers food to the exalting words of a gentleman. In her scale of values, food takes priority over men. When Mr Rosencreutz, the rich gentleman, invites Fevvers to dinner, she focuses her attention entirely on the table and does not take heed of his compliments like: "Flora! Quick spirit of the awakening world! Winged, and aspiring upwards! Flora; Azrael; Venus Pandemos! These are but a few of the names with which I might honour my goddess." (77) What makes her happy is not Mr Rosencreutz's glorifying words but the "substantial meal", namely "salad, and cheese, and a cold bird" that is prepared for her. The comment she makes on the "cold bird" also strengthens the image of Fevvers with a gargantuan appetite. She has such an excessive desire to eat that she even consumes an example of her own. She justifies this by the limited choice she is offered to satisfy hunger: "Which I'm that famished, I nibble a drumstick of, though, if there's the option, I won't touch a morsel of chicken, or duck, or guineafowl and so on, not wanting to play cannibal. But, this time, in my extremity, I whisper a prayer for forgiveness to my feathery forebears and tuck in." (77) She is by no means a typical sentimental lady who would feel sorry and cry about the killing of animals that are of her own sort. Fevvers's appetite which complements her above-mentioned mannish behaviour, on the whole, intensifies the deconstructive effect on the gender descriptions. Portraying Fevvers as a giantess, then, means challenging the accepted form of femininity. In her The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies, where she argues that the eating habits of each culture denote a specific moral code, Michie also surveys Victorian eating habits:

> A delicate appetite was much preferred, and young women might be forced to nibble scraps in their bedroom so they might face the dinner table with ladylike anorexia.... Even though some Victorian works on beauty espouse "plumpness" in young women, the most positive female characters in nineteenth century novels are most often frail and weak. Elizabeth Gaskell, the Bröntes, and even George Eliot use plumpness in their female characters as a sign of fallen nature. (20-21)

Carter's preoccupation with the female body, namely the process of its cultural construction and reception, and her rejection of morally accepted patterns are certainly reflected in the depiction of Fevvers as a giantess. Carter's friend and her earliest critic, Lorna Sage, touches upon her interest in the body, and calls this interest "her feminist politics of the flesh": "Self-consciousness had been her bane from the start, hence the anorexia. [...] She discovered and retained a way of looking at herself, and other people, as unnatural." (1994:28) Because of this self-consciousness, Carter rids Fevvers of the limitations put on female body. Defying the model of femininity imposed by the patriarchal code, Fevvers is not one of those women likely to suffer from anorexia nervosa. The definition of "anorexia nervosa" explains why Carter portrays Fevvers as a woman, who most definitely does not repress her desire to eat. Anorexia nervosa is:

> A psychophysiological disorder usually occurring in teenage women that is characterised by an abnormal fear of becoming obese, a distorted self-image, a persistent aversion to food, and severe weight loss. It is often accompanied by self-induced vomiting, amenorrhea, and other physiological changes. (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language)

This physical disorder is caused by the repression the patriarchal order puts on the female mind and body. Fevvers evades this fate by defying the patriarchal code as soon as she enters the market. When she grows her wings at puberty, she, in fact, distorts the very self-image the patriarchy expects of her. To make matters worse for herself, she does not lose but gains an appetite. This perplexes Walser who as an agreeable masculine figure deems Fevvers a threat to his authority, and calls her a "Nordic giant". (28) Fevvers's appetite and her "giant" form remind one of Bahktin's study Rabelais and His World in which he examines the appetite of Rabelais's Gargantua and coins the term"carnivalesque". Bakhtin contends that the mouth occupies a key position in the relation of man and the world, he suggests that, "Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself [...]. Man's encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself. The limits between man and the world are erased, to man's advantage." (1984:281) Bakhtin calls the body that

eats abundantly and joyfully the "victorious body" which "receives the defeated world and is renewed." (1984: 283) In this sense, Fevvers's Gargantuan appetite is an indication that manifests her triumph over the culturally imposed modes of living for women. What Gordon says about fat applies to the huge bird-woman of the novel: "the fat woman is the overt rebel against the patriarchal limitation of female desire [...] women may see fat as a liberating symbol." (151) Fevvers, in all senses of the word, *rejects* the limitations exercised on the feminine body not only with her six feet two height but also with her hugeness, the outcome of her huge appetite:

> God, she looked huge. Her crimson, purple wings, in flight, obscured the roof-tree of the Imperial Circus. Yet those marmoreal, immense arms and legs of hers, as they made leisurely, swimming movements through the air, looked palely unconvincing, as if arbitrarily tacked on to the bird attire. Walser [...] thought, as he had before: 'She looks wonderful, but she doesn't look *right*.' (159)

The physical aspect of Fevvers, who first mimics Cupid and then the Winged-Victory, actually wins a victory against the repressive practice of patriarchy. She does not become the "right" thing, but rather challenges the norm of womanhood. She first signifies Cupid's erotic love, which was presented as something alien to women's nature. As if to reject the idea that women should not enjoy bodily pleasure, Lizzie makes her a "little wreath of pink cotton roses" and puts it on her head and gives her a "toy bow and arrow". She becomes the active agent of pleasure. Thus, from the age of seven, she becomes a "tableau vivant", "the object of the eye of the beholder" (23) As she grows up to be a young woman, she starts to play Nike, which reinforces the idea that Fevvers with her Gargantuan body is triumphant. She becomes both literally and metaphorically the Winged-Victory, Nike, of the novel. Talking about the early days of her girlhood spent in the brothel, she says "I was the perfection of, the original of, the very model for that statue which, in its broken and incomplete state, has teased the imagination of a brace of millennia with its promise of perfect, active beauty that has been, as it were, mutilated by history." (37) Marina Warner, in her Monuments and Maidens, examines the myth of Nike and contends

that wings denote speed, flight and lightness, and says that different from the other winged figures in mythology:

> Nike's wings could never be those of such a solitary, secret bird... Nike is a sign of good omen, and her wings are golden. [...] But, most importantly, she represents a power for whom speed is one of the essence, yet who hallows and glorifies the spot of her temporary halt. This makes Nike an aspect of time itself, or more precisely a way we see our relation to time. She represents the propitious event that interrupts the ordinary flow and singles out the lucky winner. [...] Nike denotes an aptitude for success that happens only occasionally. (1985:133-140)

Fevvers, "the pure child of the coming New Age" becomes the solidified figure of the passage of time, like Nike. Her wings are like the golden ones of Nike, except that she frequently dyes them. (25) Just like the statue of Winged- Victory, Nike, she teases the imagination of her audience to such an extent that her curious existence leads to the phenomenon called "Fevvermania":

> Everywhere you saw her picture; the shops were crammed with 'Fevvers garters, stockings, fans, cigars, shaving soap... She even lent it to a brand of baking powder; if you added a spoonful of the stuff, up in the air went your sponge cake, just as she did. [...] Her name was on the lips of all, from duchess to costermonger. Have you seen Fevvers?' And then: 'How does she do it?' And then: 'Do you think she's real? (9)

The mass hysteria built around Fevvers both denotes the New Woman discussions of the 1890s, which asked, "What is a real woman?" and recalls the similar interest that the statue of Nike aroused in public. It seems that Carter alludes to the authentic "Nikemania" that pervaded not only England but Italy. As noted in Warner's <u>Monuments and Maidens</u>, at the turn of the century, the sculptor Ettore Ximenes placed a quadriga driven by a winged Victory in the Palazzo di Giustizia in Rome. Similarly, Thomas Brock's gilded Victory put on the pinnacle of the Victoria Monument in the Mall in London was unveiled in 1911. (1985:142-4) Parallel to the spirit of novelty that accompanied the coming of the new century, the movements

that aimed to persuade the public adopted this figure of Nike, the goddess of success and victory. People must have thought that using an image of success and victory, they could really succeed. For instance, Nike appears in the emblem Sylvia Pankhurst designed in 1908 for the weekly journal *Votes for Women*. The Nike of the Suffragettes is an angel in green and purple and white, blowing a trumpet with a bannerette: 'Freedom'. From the 1880s onwards, the goddess of Victory certified many claims, both commercial and political. Nike/Victoria appears on trademarks, cigar labels, as a stamp of quality, a guarantee of authenticity. (1985:142-144) Apparently, Carter's Fevvers plays Nike, Winged Victory or the Nike of Samothrace, as if she makes herself an emblem of 'Freedom'. She symbolises the Nike of the late Victorian era and occupies a key position in the public imagination.

Another aspect that augments Fevvers' teasing the public imagination is her interest in financial issues. The Victorian Age identified interest in money with the public sphere, which was spared to men only. Contrary to the Victorian Age's expectations of angelic women, Fevvers takes delight in making and keeping money. She is not depicted as a passive angel of the house who lacks interest and ability in money-making. Rejecting the feminine code of conduct imposed on her, she demonstrates wisdom in grasping the underlying principle of the system: 'The fittest survive; and the fittest means the richest!' While most young girls of the 1890s dreamed of a magic prince on horseback, Fevvers dreams of piles of money: "You'd never think she dreamed, at nights, of bank accounts, or that, to her, the music of the spheres was the jingling of cash registers." (12) She even thinks of bottling her smell and selling it, as "she never missed a chance." (9) Moreover, she does not comply with the image of romantic girls who lose their minds upon seeing a handsome face. She has wit enough to distinguish "a pretty face" from "diamonds". Thus, when she sees a glittering diamond bracelet sent to her as a present, her "pupils narrow down to the shape of £ signs." (173) Similarly, she does her best to solve Mr Rosencreutz's riddle just to get the hundred pounds gratuity; the thought of that hundred pounds "concentrates her mind wonderfully". (76) However she is by no means portrayed as a greedy or bossy person. Though she distorts the vision of the feminine offered by Victorian patriarchy, she is still a courteous figure who knows how to make others

happy. In the Grand Duke's palace she meditates on money and resents the luxury that the rich enjoy:

> Always the same! Thought Fevvers censoriously. Money is wasted on the rich. For herself, if she'd been as Croesus-wealthy as her host, she'd have fancied something like the Brighton Pavilion to call home, something to make each passer-by smile, a reciprocal gift to those from whom the wealth come. (184-185)

The victorious Fevvers who fights against patriarchal codes of femininity is presented as a weak figure only once, a real "bird in a gilded cage" like the one in the song that accompanied her shows at the circus. This presentation follows the Grand Duke's attempt to violate her virginity, which she escapes with difficulty. The event frightens her and makes her feel weak and desperate. Therefore, she interprets the explosion of the train as the aftermath of this unlucky attack on her body. She thinks that the Duke's attack caused the explosion, although in fact it was plotted by bandits living in the steppes of Siberia. As it is the explosion that breaks one of her wings, symbolically she infers that the Duke's attack degrades her to the state of, to use Irigaray's term, a "woman on the market"; besides, it decreases her "exchange value". So, she sees the two events as connected and pities herself: "As soon as her invulnerability was gone, what happened? Why, she broke her wing. Now she was a crippled wonder. [...] Helen, formerly of the High-wire, now permanently grounded. Pity the New Woman if she turns out to be as easily demolished as me." (273) The fact that Fevvers has been sexually harassed by the Duke, leading to the feeling of loss of innocence, is symbolically expressed by the loss of the sword, which Fevvers believes to have protected her since childhood. She feels sorry for herself and says: "Bereft of my sword, as I am; crippled, as I am . . . yesterday's sensation, a worn-out wonder- pull yourself together, girl." (247) The Grand Duke, who is a great patriarch, hurts Fevvers' confidence so that she suffers "the worst crisis of her life": "Am I fact? Or am I fiction? Am I what I know I am? Or am I what [Walser] thinks I am?" (290) By representing Fevvers with a broken wing pitying herself, Carter seems to refer to the current status of women who are "easily demolished" in the face of the patriarchal code of conduct still existing to impose limitations on them.

Then, she presents herself outside the identity attached to her as the bizarre aeraliste of the circus, as the Winged Victory, and begins to describe herself as an ordinary woman:

> No Venus, or Helen, or Angel of the Apocalypse, not Izrael or Isfahel . . . only a poor freak down on her luck, and an object of the most dubious kind of reality to her beholders, since both the men in the god-hut were accustomed to hallucinations and she who looks like a hallucination but is not had no place in their view of things. (290)

Although Fevvers broods over her broken wing, she never loses hope, which determines the tone of the novel from its onset. She decides to pull herself together. She knows that she can be "the blonde of blondes" again for what she needs is simply some peroxide. She holds the belief that she can soar up again on her mended wing. Interestingly, the moment she decides to look on the bright side and regains her confidence, she starts to regain the looks she has lost. Carter portrays this Fevvers as "big enough to crack the roof of the god-hut, all wild hair and feathers and triumphant breasts and blue eyes the size of dinner plates." (291) Though with a broken wing, the new Fevvers can easily become to the Nordic giant again. Her laughter fills the world around her and she has the awareness to say "there's nothing like confidence!" which is the last sentence of the novel.

This unwomanly figure that Carter offers in her Nights at the Circus actually poses the question regarding the gender roles that patriarchal culture imposes: "Who is a woman?" (Pykett, 137) Carter seems to recall the theories about the nature of femininity, especially that of de Beauvoir's statement in the Second Sex: "Femininity is a cultural construct: one isn't born a woman, one becomes one." (281) As Toril Moi argues:

> Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for 'femininity' are *natural*. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labelled both

> *unfeminine* and *unnatural*. [...] Patriarchy, in other words, wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness, called femininity. (122-123)

At this point, it seems that in placing a fantastic and unnatural image at the centre of her novel, Carter wants to demolish the patriarchal construct of femininity. In a sense, she offers a construct of her own as opposed to the patriarchal construct of femininity; this artifice called Fevvers is biologically a different creature who defies. She is not represented as a normal woman to whom essentialism might have been applied; in other words, her being a bird-woman challenges the cultural construct of femininity from the very start. The famous passage from her "Notes From the Front Line" outlines Carter's perspective as a feminist writer and illustrates the function of Fevvers as a fantastic deconstructive agent. Carter points out that she aims to understand, "how that social fiction of my "femininity" was created by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing." (1997:37) She asserts that:

> This investigation of the social fictions that regulate our lives- what Blake called the 'mind-forg'd manacles'- is what I've concerned myself with consciously since that time. (I realise, now, I must always have sensed that something was badly wrong with the versions of reality I was offered that took certain aspects of my being as a woman for granted) [...] Because I believe that all myths are products of human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the demythologising business. (in Wandor, 1997:38)

Fevvers then becomes an active agent to enable Carter to profess a feminist viewpoint about femininity. As a dynamically placed fantastic instrument, she demythologises the myth of women as angels. She is physically an angel as she has the wings, but she has no other angelic attributes.

3.2.1.b Monstrous Women as Transformed Female Bodies

Women in Madame Schreck's museum of monsters augment the subversive effect in the novel by representing a silent protest against the patriarchal construction of femininity. The female bodies here metaphorically defy the patriarchal order by rejecting the bodily code ascribed to women by patriarchy. In fact, what Fevvers does in behavioural terms to transgress the limits of femininity, these women do in purely bodily terms. Both as a winged bird-woman and as an intermediary figure in between the masculine and the feminine, Fevvers, to a certain extent, manages to live independent of the patriarchal code. Although the women with bodily deformities in the museum are not as outspoken as Fevvers, they still transgress the boundaries of femininity. In a sense, what they cannot do on the verbal, they do on the bodily plane. As Orbach claims, "whenever a woman's spirit has been threatened, she has taken the control of her body as an avenue of self-expression [...] If a woman's body is the site of her protest, then equally the body is the ground on which the attempt for control is fought." (xvii)

In general, the museum provides the reader with a spectrum of the female condition in the patriarchal order. These women are called "prodigies of nature" like Fevvers: "Dear old Fanny Four-Eyes; and the Sleeping Beauty; and the Wiltshire Wonder, who was not three foot high; and Albert/Albertina, who was bipartite, that is to say, half and half and neither of either; and the girl we called Cobwebs." (60) Although, as mentioned earlier, this museum is a place of confinement that exhibits women as spectacles in it, there is the strength of the feminine bond, which makes it a much securer place than the outside. These women do not think that they degrade themselves by working in this house. The Wiltshire Wonder who suffered all sorts of bodily and psychological insults before she joined the company of the other physically different women articulates the idea that life outside the museum is by no means better for women: "I'd rather show myself to one man at a time than to an entire theatre-full of the horrid, nasty, hairy things, and, here, I'm well protected from the dark, foul throng of the world, in which I suffered so much. Amongst the monsters, I am well-hidden; who looks for a leaf in a forest?" (64-65) Apparently,

Carter suggests that patriarchy can only be tolerated by establishing a feminine bond that shelters and heals.

As Fevvers has wings, she plays the guardian angel, which symbolically figures as the opposite to the angel in the house. She is in fact the very figure to kill the angel in the house. She stands at the Sleeping Beauty's head: "...full spread. I am a tombstone angel." (70) Unlike the other female figures here, Fevvers is represented as a powerful figure that has the capacity to guard and kill. Moreover, she is given a masculine attribute as she guards the beautiful young woman as if she were a prince. The Sleeping Beauty is literally the sleeping beauty of the museum. She opens her heavy eyes, "her little windows", only to eat. The details Carter gives draw a realistic picture of this image: The Sleeping Beauty wakes up only to eat "a little minced chicken or a spoonful of junket" and then sinks down again "under the soft weight of dreams." (64) Her sleep is not dreamless; sometimes she cries or laughs. Just like Fevvers growing wings at puberty, the bright and merry daughter of a country curate is transformed into a Sleeping Beauty in her fourteenth year, "the day her menses started". She is twenty-one now, but her female flow grows less and less as she sleeps. The loss of fertility and the extremely passive state the Sleeping Beauty experiences can be seen as a record of female silencing. The adolescent girl rejects the process of becoming a patriarchal "woman" and chooses the state of complete passivity. In this way, she also escapes from the tyranny of patriarchal gender roles. However, she cannot exist completely independent of patriarchy since by sleeping she passively surrenders herself to the male gaze of the attendants in the museum. It is obvious that patriarchy imposes a "double bind" on its victims, which means a "pattern of communication that imposes painful no-win situations." (Enfield, 459) Through the portrait of the Sleeping Beauty, Carter implies the impossibility of a real emancipation from the patriarchal order. The Sleeping Beauty is both the enchanted princess of the fairy tale who chastely waits for the magic kiss to transform her back into the real world, and the merry girl who is dissatisfied with the real world and wants to live in a dream world. She is either a subject to her Prince's whims, or a prisoner of a dream world; in each case she is a victim. This image of the adolescent

girl metamorphosed into a sleeping beauty is represented as one of the consequences of the restrictions imposed by patriarchy.

The Wiltshire Wonder, a dwarf, is a child/woman who has never grown up. Just like the Sleeping Beauty, she symbolically rejects the process of becoming a woman as it only results in objectification. However the Wonder, like the Sleeping Beauty, is in a double-bind; although she resists the process of becoming an adult woman, she fails to escape the patriarchal market altogether. Furthermore, as a metaphor of perfection, she is trapped in the realm of "giants". Her case is a typical 'Out of the frying pan into the fire!". Her "madcap", mother, who spends all her money on drink and men, sells the Wonder to a French pastrycook for "fifty golden guineas cash in hand". This way her sufferings start: she is served in cake at children's birthday parties for a couple of seasons till one child picks her up. The fact that she is sold by her mother for a sum of money problematises the concept of motherhood. Patriarchal ideology preaches that all women have an inherent maternal nourishing instinct. The myth of motherhood, which is one aspect of traditional feminine identity, is subverted by the Wonder being actually mothered by the small girl who rescues her and takes her home:

> This little girl was the eldest daughter of the house. She carried me off to the nursery and her nanny put soothing ointment on my burns and dressed me up in a silk frock that the young lady's own doll sacrificed for me, although I was perfectly able to dress myself. [...] I soon formed a profound attachment to the girl who'd been my saviour and she for me, so that we became inseparable and when my legs could not keep up with hers, she would carry me in the crook of her arm. (67)

She thinks that she made a fatal mistake by leaving the family to join a theatre company. She feels so guilty about this that whatever she does, Fevvers cannot make her feel "she was worth more than a farthing." (68) The Wonder envies the Sleeping Beauty, saying "except for one thing: she dreams."

Fanny Four Eyes literally has four eyes; the extra two are where her nipples should have been: "They were shepherd's blue, same as the eyes in her head; not big, but very bright." (69) With more eyes than a normal human being has, she symbolises the capacity to see more. Recalling Todorov's and Jackson's emphasis on sight and vision, it can be suggested that two extra eyes of Fanny Four Eyes function as tools that help the reader transgress the limits of the everyday vision. In that sense, her mamillary eyes make her stand outside the patriarchy's market where women are objectified to give men bodily pleasure. Fanny Four Eyes is singled out as a woman who does not comply with the code of femininity in patriarchal culture. In a tone reminiscent of Yeats in "The Circus Animals' Desertion", Fevvers says that as Fanny "saw too much of the world altogether", she decided to "come to rest with all other dispossessed creatures for whom there was no earthly use, in this lumber room of femininity, this rag-and-bone shop of the heart." She does not want to marry or have children. This way she is another woman who rejects being objectified on the market. She takes shelter in the museum where she feels comfortable in the company of fellow women. Fanny Four Eyes' mamillary eyes also parody the power of the male gaze rendering women a mere spectacle. Men visit the museum to look at female bodies of deformity, and Fanny's breasts look back on them as if to take revenge on the seductive looks that degrade women into sex objects. Fanny subverts the victim status of women, which John Berger defines as follows: "A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself....Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (47) Now it is Fanny's breasts, which are supposed to appear for the voyeuristic pleasure of men that act. In this sense, Carter's use of the metamorphosed female body signifies a challenge to patriarchal habits.

Cobwebs, whose face is covered with cobwebs from the eyebrows to cheekbones, never says a word or smiles. She is a melancholy creature whose life is "Patience". It is obvious that Cobwebs is emblematic of another feminine condition that recalls the silenced and victimised women patiently enduring the patriarchal order. Carter's solution to the subordination of the female seems to be androgyny. She suggests the idea by portraying Albert/Albertine, a bipartite, as the most joyful creature of the

museum. This way, androgyny, the presence of both male and female sexual characteristics within one body, is offered as a strategy to transcend the subordination of the female. Carter seems to imply that, in order to subvert repressive gender-based dichotomies, the two gender definitions should be hybridised. In this sense, Albert/Albertine is the embodiment of the picture Fevvers draws in the reader's mind's eye. The juxtaposition of the feminine and the masculine in Fevvers's conduct is solidified in Albert/Albertina's bipartite body.

In conclusion, transformed bodies function as fantastic images that enable Carter to disclose the sufferings caused by the male order. The women who are exhibited as monsters are symbolic of the fear men have of women. Even the name "monstrous women" explicates the feelings that the attendants have about the women in the museum. Failing to understand the female body, which signifies a lack from the male perspective, men deem it the "dark continent"; thus, the fact that the female body is a mere *terra incognita* for men is best portrayed by the houseful of women with physical differences. The fantastic images of metamorphosis in Nights at the Circus emphasise the transgression of the boundaries designed by patriarchy. Winterson's The Passion and The.PowerBook also problematise femininity as a cultural construct by means of the fantastic images.

CHAPTER 4

THE PASSION

Jeanette Winterson's The Passion is a novel with two narrators; Villanelle and Henri. The fact that there are two narrators, one female and the other male, facilitates the problematisation of gender roles, since the reader is given a chance to compare the tone of these narrators. Both Villanelle and Henri transgress the boundaries of ordinary gender roles by assuming the roles of the opposite sex as well as their own. Villanelle for instance has one of the characteristics of some of the male citizens of an Italian town where fishermen can walk on the water with the help of their webbed feet. Unlike the other women living there, Villanelle has webbed feet; and Henri, unlike the other soldiers in Napoleon's army, is chaste, which is presented as his least "masculine trait". In an interview with Margaret Reynolds, Winterson states that her novels take boundaries and desire as outstanding themes; and this novel discusses its declared focus, passion, from many diverse angles, and elaborates on the theme of "boundaries". The novel has four seemingly separate parts which are connected by means of the characters' activities. The novel takes Venice and Napoleon's base camp and later the devastated parts of his European Empire like Poland and Italy as its setting. Before studying the significance of the spaces used in the novel, Winterson's use of Napoleon as a fictional hero should be focused on as it tells us something about how Winterson subverts gender roles.

4.1 Conceptual Framework for The Passion

The Passion unfolds with the statement "I'm telling you stories, trust me." which is repeated through the novel. The statement both underlines the fact that within the body of the novel, there are several stories belonging to different people, and creates an emotional distance between the reader and the narrative. By the use of the

sentence, on the one hand the reader is reminded of the fact that what she reads is fiction, but on the other she is asked to trust what these stories tell her. Moreover, by asking the reader to believe what happens in the story, Winterson's narrator also introduces the reader to the world of the fantastic where there is always, to refer to Todorov's definition, "hesitation" about the authenticity of the story that is being told. When read against the unbelievable events such as Villanelle walking on the water due to having webbedfeet and Patrick seeing things in the distance due to his telescopic eye, the sentence serves as a message to highlight the fantastic images. Of course, the fact that the narrator notes that her narration is a mere construct is a self-reflexive feature of the novel.

4.1.1 Characters and Spaces of Their Own: Domestic versus Public Places

The plot of the novel centres on the meeting of two extraordinary characters, Henri and Villanelle and on Henri's passion for Villanelle. With this main subject matter of the novel, there is also Villanelle's passion for an unnamed woman and Henri's passion for Napoleon; the relations between the different characters all work out the theme of passion, and reveal the different aspects of passion: the passion felt by a young man for a hero, namely Napoleon, and the passion this same young man feels for a young woman who has a strong passion for another woman. Although the objects of passions change, the intensity of the feeling, which knows no boundaries regarding gender, age or class, remains the same. The plot places these different characters together in different settings; the two main places are labyrinthine Venice and the base camp during the Napoleonic wars. Interestingly, although the feeling of passion often concerns people's private space, thus evoking a domestic setting, Winterson places her characters in public spaces like the casino, the streets of Venice, and open spaces. When the outstanding concerns of the novel regarding gender roles are taken into consideration, it can be said that Winterson's choice of setting is deliberate since it reverses the reader's expectation as to the traditional placing of the sexes. As he is a soldier who looks up to Napoleon, we expect Henri to be out on the battlefield fighting or planning some tactics to defeat the enemy, but, since he is chosen as the neck-wringer of chickens and an assistant to the cook, he is

placed in the kitchen where he remains a passive observer in the background of the war. And Villanelle is mostly described as an adventurous young woman who spends most of her time walking out in the streets of Venice at night. She can be said to follow in the footsteps of the *flaneurs* of the nineteenth century who seemed to wander aimlessly in the streets only to compose some lines upon their observations. In the patriarchal order, these pleasing acts of observation belong to male members of society whereas in the novel Winterson places her male character in a kitchen and her female character out in the streets. Thus, together with the fantastic images to be studied, this act of reshuffling the gender-place relation subverts the traditional notions of gendered space.

Throughout history, manifestations of gender difference in the environment in many cultures are exemplified through the domination of domestic space by women and of public space by men. It has been accepted that, like gender, space is also a cultural and social construct in that arrangements regarding space indicate the nature of gender, race, and status differences in any given society. (Rendell, 104-105) Thus, the fact that men and women are culturally located in different spaces indicates that gendered space is a cultural construct. Rendell suggests that gender and space are productions of social, cultural and traditional values. She contends that gendered space may be produced according to the biological "sex" of the occupants:

> For example, toilets (restrooms in the US) are 'sexed' male or female because they are occupied by men or women, while the domestic kitchen is gendered feminine because the activity of cooking is something that is socially connected with women. However, how do we consider the kitchen of the public restaurant where the cooking is done by the chef who is usually male? (101)

So, if kitchens are traditionally occupied by women to perform some routine activities which are gendered as feminine, casinos are masculine places mostly populated by men who are after entertaining themselves by risking money. In Winterson's <u>The Passion</u>, these two places which imply two totally different realms, the former populated by women the latter by men, are set against each other to challenge the gender roles in the male order. Men, as the descendants of Adam, are

given the task of earning their living and keeping their family, thus it is men who are expected to entertain themselves by gaining and losing money rather than by the act of story-telling or asking riddles, like women. Such habits keep women in domestic space while men search for outdoor activities. Moreover, in patriarchal cultures, spatial segregation reinforces women's lower status. By preventing women from going outside after a certain time of the day, what patriarchal cultures actually do is to separate women from the knowledge used by men to produce and reproduce power and privilege. (Spain, 3) Thus, it is obvious that certain spaces are arranged socially and culturally to reinforce the inequality between men and women. The most outstanding indicator of the fact that space is gendered is the separation of the public and the private according to sex. Rendell asserts that patriarchal ideologies divide male from female and public from private. The positive terms of public, male and production are re-interpreted via their connections with the relatively inferior terms of home, private, female, and reproduction:

> The most pervasive representation of gendered space is the paradigm of the 'separate spheres', an oppositional and a hierarchical system consisting of a dominant public male realm of production (the city) and a subordinate private female one of reproduction (home). The origins of this ideology which divides city form home, public from private, production from reproduction, and men from women is both patriarchal and capitalist...This is problematic for feminists because assumptions regarding sex, gender and space contained within this binary hierarchy are continually reproduced. (103)

Following Rendell's argument, it can be said that activities that occur inside houses are considered as women's work while outdoor activities are associated with masculinity. Male and female territories are traditionally separated. In Bahloul's terms, "the passage between these two worlds, inner and outer, is a passage from one sexual world to another." (44)

Winterson's <u>The Passion</u> distorts the traditionally accepted norms regarding the relationship between gender and space by cross-placing the characters. For Villanelle, the ideal place is not home; she feels comfortable and at home while she is outside. Pamela Shurmar-Smith and Kevin Hannam observe that many women do

not feel comfortable anywhere except in their homes. The association of women with the domestic sphere and the public realm with men is a widespread tendency. (34-35) However, as for Fevvers of Angela Carter's Nights at the Circus, for Villanelle too, there is no domestic space that is designed to protect her from the public life outside. They are both placed at the very heart of public life; Fevvers is a central character in a circus, and she keeps travelling; similarly, the only internal space Villanelle prefers to be in is the casino which is not a domestic space. As Wiesman states, domesticity is described as an enclosure of femininity: "From early childhood women have been taught to assume the role of homemaker, housekeeper and housewife. The home, long considered women's special domain, reinforces sex-role stereotypes and subtly perpetuates traditional views of family." (2) By having Villanelle work in a casino- a public space- and wander out in the streets, and placing Henri in a kitchen- a private space-, Winterson negates the gender roles assigned by patriarchal authorities, and this challenge to the gender-space hierarchy in the male order supports the critical function that the fantastic images perform throughout the novel. The spatial organisation of the novel is also strengthened by the reverse roles assigned to Henri and Villanelle. While Henri as a young man emulating Napoleon is expected to be a stout soldier obsessed with the idea of fighting and defeating the enemy, he is portrayed as a meek person who feels "*home*sick from the start." (emphasis mine, 9) He misses his mother and his village. In the face of the deaths in the army, rather than thinking of new tactics to take revenge, he thinks "of [his] mother with her noisy heart and of all the women waiting in the fields for the men drowned yesterday and all the mothers' sons who have taken their place." (44) And Villanelle, unlike the typical girls of the patriarchal community she lives in, is an outgoing character who spends most of her time outside the boundaries of home. She is a promiscuous girl. She is able to move from situation to situation, from place to place by means of her webbed feet, a device that sets her apart from ordinary human beings. Her masculine feature, the webbed feet, seems to give her a semi-masculine image in her family and she is allowed to travel freely in Venice in her boat.

No wonder the epigraph to the novel, a quotation from Euripides' Medea, recalls the fact that like Medea, Villanelle is a brave woman who sets out on a journey of self-realisation and self-assertion despite all the restrictions surrounding her feminine

existence: “You have navigated with raging soul far from the paternal home, passing beyond the seas’ double rocks and now you inhabit a foreign land.” (1) She becomes a fluid character, as she summarises what she has done so far in life and presents her extraordinary life:

> I walked the streets, rowed circles around Venice, woke up in the middle of the night with my covers in impossible knots and my muscles rigid. I took to working double shifts at the Casino, dressing as a woman in the afternoon and a young man in the evenings. I ate when food was put in front of me and slept when my body was throbbing with exhaustion. (102)

That passage could well be read as the account of a man if it were not obvious that it is Villanelle speaking. Even as she dreams of the place she wants to die in, she reflects the reverse gender role she plays: it is not her deathbed at home but a stone out in the canal: “I would like to lie on the warm stone in May until my strength is gone, then drop gently into the canal.” (95) The critical stance used in the novel’s spatial organisation is emphasized by the description of Venice as the space for extraordinary stories and lives. Just like the changeable gender roles exemplified by Villanelle’s act of cross-dressing, Venice is represented as a changeable city. Villanelle describes this literally dynamic city which reinforces the fantastic image of transformation used in the novel:

> It is not always the same size. Streets appear and disappear overnight, new waterways force themselves over dry land. There are days when you cannot walk from one end to the other, so far is the journey, and there are days when a stroll will take you round your kingdom like a tin-pot Prince. (159)

On the first day Henri comes to Venice and wanders about by himself, he gets lost since there are street names used over and over again; Henri says “Not even Bonaparte could rationalise Venice.”(185) Venice is described as the “city of madmen” where the only rational place is the public garden, “and even there, on a foggy night, four sepulchral churches rise up and swamp the regimental pines.” (186) It is a living city in which maps are of no help. (187) Henri insists that cities do not change, but Villanelle confidently states “Henri, they do.” (187) Not only does the city change but it is also a riddle for its people. It is the “city of mazes.” (79) As it

defies the attempts to rationalise it, it naturally plays tricks upon its inhabitants: “Your course in compass reading will fail you,” because, “there is no such thing as straight ahead.” (80) In such a dreamy place where easy instructions fail to show one the way to go, “it is required you do awake your faith.” (80) Allegorically, Winterson seems to suggest that in this world of uncertainties and incessant change, the thing to rely on is not instructions, roles or boundaries that would soon be null and void in assisting you in the journey of self-actualisation. One can only attain satisfaction by relying on his/her vital organ, the heart. In sum, it can be suggested that the spatial organisations that Winterson employs throughout the novel help her negate the patriarchal rationalisation of compartmentalised life for men and women. Thus, both through her use of Henri’s and Villanelle’s representation as a man and woman who are assigned reverse gender roles and of Venice as a literally changing city, it is implied that the gender roles assigned by patriarchal authorities can also be transgressed and changed.

4.1.2 Historiographic Metafiction: Henri versus Napoléon

In The Passion, Winterson makes efficient and active use of the past. Winterson’s use of history as a conscious choice of subject matter is obvious in this novel and the fact that she inserts passages on the nature of history and story and that she juxtaposes the past and the theorising of the past makes the reader also take on the same task of rethinking, revising and revisiting the past. This act of revisiting the past is similar to what Adrienne Rich mentions in her seminal essay “When We Dead Awaken: Writing As Revision” (1971) in which she defines revision as not only a historical but also a cultural activity. To Stimpson, Rich creates a feminist poetics based on the idea that feminist writing can provide historical and mythical accounts of women’s lives which will help to counter the violence of patriarchy. (in Humm, 368) Rich, in her essay, suggests that:

> Re-vision -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. (in Humm, 369)

Winterson uses historical figures and helps the reader "see" these figures "with fresh eyes." The historical characters exist side by side with the fictional ones. This juxtaposition method that Winterson follows enables the reader to grasp a vision that emerges out of this method of processing the past as raw material. In this way, the monolithic, stable and monumental past is made plastic, since she rewrites History. By historicizing individual experiences, by blending the present and the past, she makes individual stories heard and narratable. In The Passion, Winterson historicises stories of ordinary people like Henri by juxtaposing his life with that of Napoleon. In this way, she becomes a writer of "historiographic metafiction", which is a term coined by Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism to refer to the texts that blur the line between fiction and history. (1988:113)

Winterson philosophises about the question of history in her first novel Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit (Oranges), which blends the personal history of the character Jeanette with Biblical history, and with that of Perceval. The "talismanic" title she gives to the first novel of her cycle echoes this innovative and pluralistic attitude towards history: if oranges stand for a set of ideas, by saying they are not the only fruit Winterson implies that there are different or alternative paths to follow. The novel unfolds a personal history that defies the accepted norms. In her defiance, the protagonist Jeanette fights against the reductionist attitude of her community which finds diversity threatening and equates all fruit with oranges only. And it starts with the "Genesis" of Jeanette who falls in love with a girl, that is, who finds out that there are roads not taken; she takes one, and that makes all the difference: she suffers exorcism and isolation. She is nullified, and so is her story, because she deviates from the norm. Therefore her story will not be recorded by mainstream culture. History simply will not recognise her experience of falling in love with a girl as a fact. Winterson's critique of this traditional notion of history is embedded within Jeanette's life story that contains the tale of Perceval as an emblem of loyalty to one's own values at the cost of everything:

> People like to separate storytelling, which is not fact, from history which is fact. They do this so that they know what to believe and what not to believe. This is very curious. How is it that no one will believe that the whale swallowed Jonah every day Jonah is swallowing the whale? I can see them now, stuffing down the fishiest of fish tales, and why? Because it is history. Knowing what to believe had its advantages. It built an empire and kept people where they belonged, in the bright realm of the wallet... Very often history is a means of denying the past. Denying the past is to refuse to recognise its integrity. To fit it, force it, function it, to suck out the spirit until it looks the way it should. We are all historians in our small way. (91-92)

The Passion, written two years after this novel, has also passages that express Winterson's approach to history and historical material. Since she contends that all of her novels revolving around similar themes respond to each other, the notion of history in Oranges will shed light on the juxtaposition of Henri and Napoleon in The Passion. In her interview with Margaret Reynolds, Winterson states that:

> All the books speak to each other. They are only separate books because that's how they had to be written. I see them really as one long continuous piece of work. I've said that the seven books make a cycle or a series, and I believe that they do from *Oranges* to *The PowerBook*. And they interact and themes do occur and return, disappear, come back amplified or modified, changed in some way, because it's been my journey, it's the journey of my imagination, it's the journey of my soul in those books. So continually they must address one another. (25)

Among the themes that recur is an intense preoccupation with history. Yet none of Winterson's novels can be classified as historical in the traditional sense. In her own words, Winterson uses the past as an "invented country"; she "land[s] on some moment of history and re-discovers it". (25) Theoretically speaking, she writes "historiographic metafiction". Thus, her novels problematise the validity of history, and the validity of the traditional view that the historical and fictional are separate. With the theory of historiography that Hayden White offered in the 1970s, the separation of the once distinct realms of factual and fictional started to be questioned. The objectivity of historical knowledge seemed problematic. Realising that it was not

the facts but the historian that speaks to the audience, White thought that the writing of history was quite similar to the poetic process; thus he concludes that since historians are also preoccupied with the act of storytelling and with finding an appropriate narrative technique for ordering events, history is "the literature of fact". (21) This way of thinking problematises the traditional categorisation of history and fiction.

Among many other postmodernist novels, Winterson's The Passion can be seen as the embodiment of such views regarding history. What Angela Carter, one major source of inspiration for Winterson, says of her novels is valid for Winterson's The Passion as well. For Carter, a novel is "an argument stated in fictional terms." (Haffenden,76) In this sense, it can be suggested that Winterson has a postmodernist view of history, and that her views regarding history are like guides to her whole narrative adventure. Thus, what she says about history outside the fictional realm can be very enlightening in helping the reader grasp how and why she resorts to history in The Passion, Sexing The Cherry and parts of The.PowerBook. In the interview with Reynolds quoted above, she explains her notion of the past and says that the past should be a place to re-invent:

> ... because the past is not a place that we know. We weren't there. And no matter what records are given to us, what objects, what stories, what histories, we don't know, because we weren't present. So to get at the past fiction is as likely a way of interpreting it as any. And I do think that history is a collection of found objects washed up through time, and that some of them we do hook out, and others we ignore. And as the pattern changes, the meaning changes. We are continually understanding our past in a different way because we are continually reinterpreting it and fiction does that very well. But you can only do it well if you let some freedom into your imagination. You can't do it well if you're trying to lock yourself slavishly into your notion of the past- which will not be true anyway. Or if you're making the past into the present, but in a silly wig and a different costume. (22)

Winterson 'lets her imagination free' and she never becomes the slave of the past narratives given to her. In this way, she also transgresses the boundaries, which, as

she states in the same interview, is one of the most important themes of this novel. The past in her The Passion is presented as something to invent.

As with many other contemporary writers like Graham Swift, Julian Barnes, John Fowles, Gore Vidal and Caryl Churchill, Winterson joins in the historiographic metafictional fiction writing. (Hutcheon, 1993:47-92) Winterson's The Passion elaborates on the concept of history and the notions of the past and of time by juxtaposing fictional and historical characters within the same space. Historical figures from different fields, namely political, military, religious and literary heroes, co-exist with the fictional characters. They are different, yet they share something in common: They are interestingly all male. The heroes employed in her different novels, Napoleon, Cromwell, the Puritans and even the beheaded King Charles I are in fact so powerful that history cannot silence them; knowledge does not refute their existence; they are recognised everywhere and remembered in every instance. Nicholas Jordan in Sexing the Cherry, who serves as Winterson's mouthpiece in that novel, articulates Winterson's response to this male-centred notion of heroism. Upon reading selections from his favourite book, *The Boys' Book of Heroes*, a collection of the short biographies of men like William the Conqueror, Francis Drake, Lord Nelson and Christopher Columbus, Nicholas Jordan infers that:

> If you are a hero you can be an idiot, behave badly, ruin your personal life, have any number of mistresses and talk about yourself all the time, and nobody minds. Heroes are immune. They have wide shoulders and plenty of hair and wherever they go a crowd gathers. Mostly they enjoy the company of other men, although attractive women are part of their reward. (113)

Nicholas Jordan's response is echoed in that of the twentieth century female ecologist, whose plan is to do away first with the World Bank and then with the Pentagon. In an ideal world that manages to get rid of pollution, men should also treat her differently: "I don't hate men", she says, "I just wish they'd try harder. They all want to be heroes and all we want is for them to stay home and help with the housework and kids. That's not the heroism they enjoy." (Sexing the Cherry, 145) A

reinforcement of this feminist critique comes from another figure in the novel, Fortunata, one of the twelve dancing princesses who takes a different road (like Jeanette of Oranges and the Dog-woman of Sexing the Cherry*)*. Fortunata in Sexing The Cherry is said to know about "the heroes and the home-makers, the great division that made life possible." Fortunata does not reject this division; instead she simply hopes to take on the freedoms of the other side, but then the question comes: "What if she travelled the world and the seven seas like a hero? Would she find something different or the old things in different disguises?" (150)

In The Passion, heroes from history co-habit with fictional characters and they dwell both in the present and the past. In placing these figures in the fictional space of her novels, and bringing them forwards to the present, Winterson shakes the pedestals that these male heroes are put on. Meanwhile, through the simultaneous existence of both the fictional and the historical, the separation of the literary and the historical is challenged. (Hutcheon, 1988:104) What Hutcheon says of such machinations is applicable to Winterson's fiction: "Postmodernist fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological." (1988:110)

In Winterson, historical figures cease to be as omnipotent and omniscient as they used to be in the social and cultural fictions commonly known as history. Her novels give the lies away since they reveal that heroes exist in our daily life. They are not beings apart. The truth is there are some other figures around who are equally real such as Napoleon's neck-wringer Henri who always wanted to be a drummer and who had dreams of being like Napoleon. And Patrick, "the de-frocked priest with the eagle eye." (24) Napoleon, General Hoche and Admiral Nelson of The Passion, and Cromwell, Charles I and the Puritans of Sexing the Cherry are all reduced to mere subjects of their author's whims; their existence is just as precarious as that of the other characters, the representatives of the common people, due to breaks in the narratives, the intervening voices, the different narrators and the questions raised regarding the validity of fiction. How long can the myth of Napoleon stand among the din of "I am telling you stories? Trust me."? How long can the serious and

unyielding image of Cromwell and the Puritans sustain itself within the deconstructive notion of history pervading the novel?

> There was no history that would not be rewritten and the earliest days were already too far away to see. What would history make of tonight? Tonight is clear and cold.... The stars show [the night] how to hang in space supported by nothing at all. Without medals or certificates or territories she owns, [Villanelle] can burn as they do, travelling through time until time has no meaning any more. (153)

Like Jordan's philosophising in Sexing the Cherry, Henri's diary kept during the Napelonic wars in The Passion stands as an alternative form of history-writing to recognised military history with its medals, certificates and territories. What the history books write is turned into stories in Henri's hands. But even these stories are problematised. This is emphasised by his friend Domino whose criticism of the way diaries are kept also questions the validity of the general trend in history-writing: "The way you see it now is no more real than the way you'll see it then." (46) Henri cannot agree with Domino's conclusion that in that case one should not write at all; however, he also thinks that he knows how old men distorted the facts to make the past always the best because it was gone, thus questioning the indisputable authority of the "old historian":

> 'Look at you' said Domino, 'a young man brought up by a priest and a pious mother. A young man who can't pick up a musket to shoot a rabbit. What makes you think you can see anything clearly? What gives you the right to make a notebook and shake it at me in thirty years, if we're still alive, and say you've got the truth?'(47)

They settle the argument when Henri tells Domino that what he cares about is not the facts but how he feels; he argues that how he feels will certainly change; so, he jots down his feelings since he wants to remember them. Thus, like Jordan, Henri deals with "the marginal (hi)stories that would not otherwise be told," and goes on keeping his diary. Domino raises the issue once again when he tells Henri about the fortune-tellers he knows. There, he states the underlying notion of history in Winterson's

fiction and addresses Henri who is seen as the audience: “I tell you, Henri that every moment you steal from the present is a moment you have lost forever. There’s only now.” (48) When Henri tells stories about the camp at Boulogne, he is aware of the distortion or revision that he, as a historian, is making: “I embroidered and invented and even lied. Why not? It made them happy. I didn’t talk about the men who have married mermaids.” (50) The marriage of the soldiers to the mermaids refers to disaster at sea, when hundreds of soldiers sink into the depths of the sea in the battle. Both Henri and Domino articulate the underlying notion of history: there is no single truth; the story told by a single person is not the absolute or the ultimate one; in a sense, “History” is, like Macbeth’s description of life, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” (V, 5, 22-28) Domino’s commentary makes us realise that there is no one truth about history, only a series of versions, and that the past is available only in its various texts.

In addition to the juxtaposition of historical and fictional characters, parallel events picked out from both the past and the present also help Winterson play with ossified, monumental history, and challenge the hard-boiled facts of that history. For instance, in Sexing the Cherry, The Great Fire of London of 1666 and Nicholas Jordan’s and the chemist girl’s wish of burning down the polluting factory in modern London occur simultaneously. Two Londons, the London of the past and that of the present, exist side by side. The plague of 1665 is set against the pollution of the modern world. Jordan who belongs to the realm of present events, and who is an alter-ego to the 17th century Nicholas Jordan, concludes that: “The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky... Empty space and points of light.” (167) So, important events like wars, executions, fires, victories, discoveries, and what historical figures do are seen as points of light in an empty space just like the deeds of other characters. Reverting to Angela Carter’s notion of novel-writing as a “demythologising business”, Winterson’s blend of history with fiction can be called a “de-mythologising notion of history” which levels out all the differences between male and female, now and then, Roundheads and Royalists, the French and the English, the Emperor and the neck-wringer, the priest

and the Peeping Tom, a Fairy and a little girl, the Dog-woman and the ecologist. This sort of de-mythologising attitude reinforces the critical attitude Winterson has towards the hierarchical system in patriarchy. Thus, in The Passion, Henri ends his life on an island, like Napoleon's exile on St Helene; Ali, the narrator of The.PowerBook, feels like the tragic lovers of literary history. These lovers - Lancelot and Guinevere, Romeo and Juliet, Abelard and Heloise, Tristan and Isolde- and George Mallory and Irvine who die as they try to reach the summit of Everest and the frustrated desire of Ali as a lover, are all juxtaposed to emphasise the failure of love.

By putting different figures from different periods of time together, Winterson seems to deny the prevalent notion of time as something that separates these people from one another. She makes different figures from various walks of life, and different historical periods come together to state the same message. Winterson seems to imply that although these people are from different periods and different ranks, the feelings they experience put them in the same scale. This juxtaposition of her characters to those characters from history and fiction contributes to the blurring of the boundaries achieved through the use of fantastic images.

4.1.3 The Lesbian Continuum and Compulsory Heterosexuality

Although she dislikes being called a lesbian writer, Jeanette Winterson accepts that she highlights certain fundamental issues regarding the attitudes towards lesbianism in a patriarchal society. Stating that she is not a lesbian writer, but a writer who also takes up issues related to lesbianism, Winterson articulates her criticism about how lesbian women are marginalised. The fact that Winterson is a political lesbian who fights against the compulsory heterosexuality enforced by patriarchal culture sheds light on the gender roles being deconstructed in The Passion. Though Winterson does not compose the text simply as propaganda against heterosexuality, the explicit lesbian desire and the explicit lesbian plot in the novel make it a lesbian text, which helps Winterson subvert patriarchal codes.

Lesbian feminists -like most, if not all, feminists- such as Mary Daly, Charlotte Bunch and Adrienne Rich contend that gender is a social construct which prescribes unequal power relations between men and women. Moreover, they consider sexual orientation as another socio-cultural construct, thus claiming that, like gender roles, sex roles are subject to change. Rich in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) discusses this central issue:

> The assumption that 'most women are innately heterosexual' stands as a theoretical and political stumbling block for many women. It remains a tenable assumption, partly because lesbian existence has been written out of history or catalogued under diseases; partly because it has been treated as exceptional rather than intrinsic; partly because to acknowledge that for women heterosexuality may not be a 'preference' at all but something that has had to be imposed, managed, organised, propagandised, and maintained by force, is an immense step to take if you consider yourself freely and 'innately' heterosexual. (177)

Rich argues that it is a courageous yet a rewarding act to question heterosexuality as a "preference to choice for women." (177) Many lesbian activists question this and attempt to challenge the privileged status of heterosexuality. They also fight homophobia which marginalises gays and lesbians as different, and struggle to liberate themselves from the bounds of compulsory heterosexuality. Political lesbianism realises that lesbians' concerns are undermined both by feminists and men, and lesbian women "are marginalised both as women, and therefore subsumed within the category of the 'feminine', and as nonwomen, departing markedly from stereotyped ('constructed') femininity." (Wolfe&Penelope, 3) Containing a lesbian plot of two women having an affair, Winterson's The Passion is a lesbian text, to use Faderman's definition of a lesbian text, "in which the subject of lesbianism is clearly and explicitly the centre." (49) It is a lesbian novel that "has a central, not marginal, lesbian character, one who understands herself to be a lesbian" and a novel that "places love between women, including sexual *passion*, at the centre of its story" (Zimmerman, 1990: 15, emphasis mine) Lesbian desire is not masked in the novel; Villanelle's passion for the woman becomes one of the central plots. As Maria del Mar Asensio states, in The Passion, Winterson questions and problematises the constructed fixity of heterosexuality and the established presumption of a binary

gender system by using “the very notion of sexual identity as a means of overthrowing.” (265) Villanelle’s bisexuality plays a key role in disrupting the categories of gender, the body and sexuality, suggesting that heterosexuality is not the only sexual orientation. In Winterson’s own words:

> I think that sexuality, or the versions of sexuality that we are served up from the earliest moments are prescriptive and in many ways debilitating. People don’t get a chance to find out about themselves. They are told who they are, that they fit in to certain patterns. How many people can honestly say that they have made their own choices, their own decisions? But that’s largely because of the picture book world that we’re offered, the story that we are told about ourselves, rather than being encouraged to tell our own stories. (in Barr, 30)

In The Passion, Winterson puts these ideas into practice by showing Villanelle making her own decisions. In this way, she criticises the notion that sexual identity and gender roles are natural. Winterson not only shows lesbianism as an alternative sexual orientation, but she also sees it as a way of struggling against male tyranny. The scenes in which the love between Villanelle and the unnamed woman are portrayed are contrasted with the representation of a husband who simply aims to control his wife. In the face of his tyranny, the woman feels at home with her same-sex lover, Villanelle. In this way, they seem to establish bonds of sisterhood. As Paulina Palmer notes “Sisterhood and women’s community are generally regarded by feminists as providing both a refuge *from* and a challenge *to* the oppressive facets of a patriarchal society.” (1989:126) This solidarity and sisterhood, available in The Passion, denotes what Adrienne Rich defines as a “lesbian continuum”, which has women sharing and caring for each other to stand firmly against male tyranny. Lesbianism becomes an influential tool to defeat patriarchal authority. To Adrienne Rich, heterosexuality has been imposed on women as an institution and women tend to enter heterosexual relationships to be approved and legitimised within patriarchy. (1980:62-91) Thus, by not entering into heterosexual relationships, lesbians radically negate male power. Winterson’s The Passion, like her The.PowerBook, delineates such a lesbian continuum that includes women discovering their own nature and fulfilling their desires in same- sex relationships.

Moreover, by delineating Henri's disillusionment with the prevailing notion of sex in the patriarchal order, Winterson suggests that heterosexual relations are inevitably stamped with the degradation always present in the hierarchical thinking of the patriarchal system. For example, on his entry into the brothel, Henri finds a sordid and violent atmosphere. Apparently, the image Henri is given of women by men talking about their experience in brothels is shattered when he experiences one as a soldier in the army. He calls the woman who runs the brothel "a giantess" (21) She dares to say that "Joséphine would never be crowned in Westminster as Bonaparte had promised." (21) It is the last thing a soldier who fights for Bonaparte wants to hear, least of all from a prostitute. Besides, for Henri, she has neither loving and uplifting words, nor anything beautiful to show him. She leads Henri and the cook together with the other soldiers to a "cold stone room furnished with pallet beds and a long table stacked with jars of red wine". (22) What Henri sees is not what he expects:

> I had expected red velvet the way the priest had described these seats of temporary pleasure, but there was no softness there, nothing to disguise our business. When the women came in they were older than I had imagined, not at all like the pictures in the priest's book of sinful things. Not snake-like, Eve-like with breasts of apples, but round and resigned, hair thrown into hasty bundles or draped around their shoulders. My companions brayed and whistled and shoved the wine down their throats straight from the jars. I wanted a cup of water but I didn't know how to ask. (22)

Violence in sex practised by men upon women is delineated in the scene where Henri witnesses the cook, who in the third chapter is revealed to be Villanelle's husband, forcing one of the women to have oral sex: "His woman knelt in front of him, her arms folded. Suddenly he slapped her across the face and the snap killed the talk for a moment. 'Help me, you bitch, put your hand in, can't you, or are you afraid of eels?'" (22-23) When he finishes, she noisily spits in the bowl on the floor and rinses her mouth with wine which makes the cook very angry as he thinks that his sperm should not be thrown into the sewers of France. When the woman says "what else

would I do with it?", the cook's response is a raised fist that "never fell" thanks to the giantess who "coshed him on the back of the head with a wine jar." (23) Answering his companions who ask him what happened to his head, he lies about the whole scene and says, he "fell over on the way back" (24) Henri never goes to the brothel with him again. When Henri is placed in the army as the neck-wringer, the cook resents him and wants to give him a black eye and says: "You think, you're safe because Bonaparte wants you. You're safe now, but there are years ahead." (31) Ironically, it turns out to be the cook rather than Henri who is in danger since Henri and Villanelle kill him in the last chapter of the novel.

The notion of a lesbian continuum is emphasized by the fact that throughout the novel there is a critique of marriage. The tone is set as early as the first chapter of the novel, which starts with the depiction of Henri in his early childhood in which he is told by his mother, Georgette, that marriage is not the ideal happy ending. Henry says: "St Paul said it is better to marry than to burn, but my mother taught me it is better to burn than to marry. She wanted to be a nun. She hoped I would be a priest and saved to give me an education while my friends plaited rope and trailed after the plough." (14) The negative attitude to marriage is articulated when Henri talks about his mother's story. Although she wants to be a nun, she is assured by her family that marriage is "more fulfilling". (15) So, "outwardly she was obedient and loving" but as she was prevented from following her own wishes, she "was feeding a hunger that would have disgusted [her parents]." (15) On the day she is to be presented as a marriageable girl, she escapes, and on her way sees a man, Claude whom she asks to take her to the nearest convent. Claude offers to give her a bed for the night, and she finds herself staying there for weeks. She marries him because she has no place to go. The way Henri portrays his mother as a superior figure who follows her own will despite all the atrocities around her emphasizes the idea that neither marriage to a man nor un-married status can serve women as a way out in the patriarchal system. She says "yes" to Claude's marriage proposal since "She could not go home. She couldn't go to the convent so long as her father was bribing every Mother Superior with a mind to a new altar piece, but she couldn't go on living with this quiet man and his talkative neighbours unless he married her. (17) Hers is a situation in which no alternative offers any real comfort. She can attain her goal neither by marrying

Claude nor by remaining single. So, she marries, but still keeps herself as an independent person. And as a self-assured woman Georgette preserves a room of her own even within the bounds of the patriarchal family structure. Thus, whenever Claude wants her, he has to “tap at the door”, “clean and shaven and smelling of soap”, and in just the same way as he asked her to marry him, he has to “wait until she says yes.” (17) This anecdote about Henri’s parents’ marriage shows that marriage in the patriarchal system is not necessarily a “loving union” as it is supposed to be. It is the only plan for the girls who are not allowed to pursue their own desires.

Another scene of heterosexual marriage in the novel is of a man in Henri’s village to a woman whose only plane of existence is home. Henry’s description of her explains what it means to be a married woman in the patriarchal order. Although the husband is portrayed as a man who loves his wife, this does not alter the fact that marriage in the patriarchal order is an institution designed to make husbands higher in status. The husband, having the time and energy to think creatively, “likes to think of himself as an inventor” and invents and re-invents things. However, his wife never speaks except to say “Dinner’s ready”, works in the fields and keeps house and, because the man likes his bed, she is soon bringing up six children too. (45) Henri thinks that she is the one who makes the husband possible. “In that sense she was god. Like God, she was neglected.” (46) The love affair between Villanelle and the unnamed woman is possible only when the woman’s husband is away; this typical Wintersonesque love triangle, of a husband, a wife and a female lover, suggests that the lack of love and passion in heterosexual marriages can only be filled by the love between women. Since Winterson dramatises the theme of the failure of love in the patriarchal family structure, the love between Villanelle and Henri is not consummated in marriage. When Villanelle tells Henri that she is pregnant, Henri suggests that they get married. Villanelle finds this idea unappealing and explains that she will not marry again or live in France. When they make love, Henri keeps on telling her “I am your husband.”; Villanelle’s response is a sharp “Stop it, Henri.” (243) This becomes the last time they make love, since they have different ideas about their relationship. For Henri the only way he can see their child is through marriage, while for Villanelle such a plan is useless as she says “I’ll bring the child when it’s safe and you’ll come

here again when it's safe... I don't know, we'll find a way. You have to go home." (243)

It is evident that the many scenes in the novel that depict marriage as a disagreeable practice and a same-sex relationship as the loving alternative to marriage function as a means of showing the lesbian continuum as the ideal arena for women to assert themselves. Thus the fantastic images that are employed in the novel like Patrick's telescopic eye, Villanelle's webbed feet and Villanelle's heart as having a separate existence from her body should be read as devices to denote the idea that gender roles in the heterosexual relations of the patriarchal order must be challenged in order to free women from the boundaries.

4.2 Fantastic Images in The Passion

The repetition of the phrase "I'm telling you stories. Trust me." after the reader is presented with a fantastic image or an event creates a sense of hesitation as described by Todorov in his definition of the fantastic. It is repeated in so many different instances that Seaboyer asks "What are we to make of it?" She suggests, "Perhaps what we are to trust is not the tale but the constructive and reconstructive act of telling, the creative force of narrative." (Seaboyer, 495) Apart from being a postmodern device reminding the reader of the fact that what s/he is reading is a mere construct, the phrase "I'm telling you stories. Trust me." underlines the fantastic images in the novel by raising the question of trusting or not trusting. It creates the same sense of hesitation as that in Carter's Nights at the Circus, which is voiced by the question "Is it fact or is it fiction?" Villanelle uses the phrase, "I'm telling you stories. Trust me." after she talks about the web-footed men in Venice, and after suggesting that she "walked across the canal like it was solid", and it is used by Henri after he relates how Josephine used to beat Napoleon at billiards and about Patrick's telescopic eye. And the very last sentence of the novel is "I'm telling you stories. Trust me." this time uttered by a mad Henri in prison.

Patrick's use of the phrase to end an anecdote which has some magical elements indicates the function of the phrase in creating a sense of hesitation. Patrick tells

Henri stories about the “goblins that live under every hill” (64) and says some of those goblins reduced his boots to the “size of a thumbnail”. One fine night in July, he says, as he was poaching, he was caught by the goblins in the middle of a “green fire” discussing their treasure “stolen from the fairies and buried under the ground with the ring of fire”. Then, thinking that there is no one around, he takes off his boots. Though there is no sign of burning, the soles of his feet tingle and this makes him think that he is “in a magic place” (65):

> He had dug all night and in the morning found nothing but a couple of moles and a pile of worms. Exhausted, he had gone back for his boots and there they were. ‘No bigger than a thumbnail.’ He searched his pockets and handed me a tiny pair of boots, perfectly made, the heels worn down and the laces frayed.. ‘An’ I swear they fitted me once. (66)

“I didn’t know whether to believe him or not.”, says Henri. Seeing signs of disbelief in his eyebrows, Patrick goes on to tell him that he could hardly hobble up to the altar the other day as his soles were burnt. He smiles at Henri and says, “Trust me. I’m telling you stories.” (66) just as Henri has said to us. But, as in the case of Henri’s tale, the reader has no certainty as to whether s/he should take these stories as facts or fiction. Patrick sleeps and Henri describes him as “lost in his world of goblins and treasure, always sure that he would find treasure, even if it was only a bottle of claret from behind the altar.” (75-76) By repeating what Henri says as he tells his story, “I’m telling you stories. Trust me.”, Patrick creates a Brechtian *Verfremdungsefekt* which heightens the ambiguity felt by the reader as to the reality of what he sees.

4.2.1 Patrick’s Telescopic Eye:

In Winterson’s The Passion, the image of metamorphosis which includes any sort of bodily distortion and the problem of vision are the two central fantastic images. When Todorov’s emphasis on vision is remembered, the vital role that the problematisation of vision plays will be clear: “To see through eyeglasses brings the discovery of another world and distorts normal vision... Vision pure and simple

reveals an ordinary world, without mysteries. Indirect vision is the only road to the marvellous." (122) In The Passion, indirect vision that is associated with the marvellous realm is achieved not through a tool, but through natural means. It is not eyeglasses or a telescope but his left eye that brings about Patrick's indirect vision. Acting as a "look-out" in Napoleon's army, his eye performs the task of the telescopes of the eighteenth century. The figure of a soldier squinting through a telescope is realised in the person of Patrick, but with no telescope aiding him. Patrick's story is related by Henri, the narrator of the first chapter "The Emperor": "During his stay [Bonaparte] heard a story about a certain disgraced priest whose right eye was like yours or mine, but whose left eye could put the best telescope to shame." (34)

Patrick is Henri's closest friend in the army, and as with other priests, Henri says he gets on well with Patrick, the "de-frocked priest with an eagle eye, imported from Ireland." (34) The way Henri tells the story of how Patrick was imported into the French army as a "look-out" is a source of ambiguity. On his visit to Ireland, Napoléon's General Hoche hears about the priest who could see miles and miles away. Although he is "sceptical of old-wives tales", he soon believes in the "miraculous property" of Patrick's eye as he listens to the women saying "they knew when they were being watched." (35) To be sure about the feasibility of this "miraculous property" of Patrick's eye, the General tries to find out whether Patrick's eye is really telescopic or not. The General's test reveals Patrick's special gift; however this gift has neither a religious implication nor a military one that is about his immediate future in the French army. Hoche pays "a tart to undress in a field some fifteen miles away" and places his soldiers at regular intervals with their red flags." (35) Patrick and Hoche embark on a conversation, then Patrick falls asleep. As he dozes, Hoche pulls out a red flag and waves it for a couple of minutes. Patrick "props himself forward, screwed up one eye, and in a voice as hushed and holy as the Bishop's at communion" asks out of the blue: "Would you look at that now?" and makes a remark about 'the tart': "she's as strong and brown as a cow". (36) Hoche takes Patrick to France with him. Interestingly, the vision that Patrick is capable of is quite irrelevant to the military context of the first chapter which takes place in the middle of the war against "John Bull", namely England. His visions are

mostly sexual. The story Patrick himself tells Henri about his “miraculous eye” contains a sexual incident as well. The vision comes to him as he is preaching in a church in County Cork on a hot morning:

> Patrick was preaching a fine sermon about Hell and the perils of the flesh and his eyes roamed the congregation; at least his right eye did, he found that his left eye was focused three fields away on a pair of his parishioners who were committing adultery under God’s Heaven while their spouses knelt in his church. After the Sermon, Patrick was deeply perplexed. Had he seen them or was he like St Jerome and subject to lustful visions? He walked round to visit them that afternoon and, after a few chance remarks, judged from their guilty faces that they had indeed been doing what he thought they’d been doing. (177)

The sight through which Patrick recognises his gift is completely incongruous with the setting he is in. As he preaches, Patrick catches sight of happily adulterous parishioners “three fields away”. The church doors are “wide open to let out the heat and the smell of sweat that even a good wash can’t get rid of after six days in the fields.” (177) When the religious connotation of the word “vision”, dream or similar experience, is taken into consideration, it can be suggested that there is a discrepancy between Patrick’s ability to gain vision as a priest and the nature of the vision he gets. Most confessions of the saints account that previously disbelieving people become devoted Christians after seeing some visions. However, the extra vision that Patrick has does not reveal him anything about religion; instead, it brings him voyeuristic pleasures. It can be suggested that Patrick’s miracle is symbolically the miracle of being able to see the sexual in a cultural universe that makes whatever is associated with the sexual “un-seen”. Actually, the reason why he is “de-frocked” is linked to this ability as he uses it for “squinting at young girls from the bell tower” (34). Henri says sympathetically:

> What priest doesn’t? But in Patrick’s case, thanks to the miraculous properties of his eye, no bosom was safe. A girl might be undressing two villages away, but if the evening was clear and her shutters were back she might just as well have gone to the priest and lain her underclothes at his feet. (34)

In the first part of the novel, there is another anecdote about a priest, which parallels to the parody pf Patrick as a religious figure. This anecdote talks about another unconventional priest Henri met as a child. Henri learns English and Latin, arithmetic and first aid from this priest, who "supplements his meagre income by betting and gambling." (18) He has a "hollow Bible with a pack of cards inside", and whenever he mistakenly brings this hollow Bible instead of a real one, he reads the first chapter of Genesis. The villagers innocently think that the priest likes the creation story. When Henri asks why he became a priest, he answers in a way that helps Winterson present her critical point of view: "If you have to work for anybody an absentee boss is best."(19) This religious figure is also a tool for her criticism of both the church and religion. Both Patrick and this priest are unconventional figures who do not conform to the authoritarian and solemn atmosphere of the church created by the great patriarchs. In this sense, the church portrayed by Winterson is not the typical patriarchal organisation that she keeps criticising.

In her article, "Women Priests" (Jan 15th 2002) published in the Guardian, Winterson suggests that the Church of England needs more female figures and sharply condemns the Anglican Church for employing men to practice authority in the public sphere while limiting women's power to home:

> Women have been legally treated as minors and as belonging to their husbands. The Church has encouraged this brutality. The Church has treated women disgracefully, although Christ did not. A religion of love soon corrupted into a religion of power. A religion founded on the value of the individual, has bundled all women together as weak, unfit, and subservient. The Church no longer burns women at the stake; it prefers to crucify them on their own ambition.
> Women can be priests- that is, they have reluctantly been allowed to serve at the bottom of the shining ladder. They can even rise to Archdeacon status, but they are not allowed to be Bishops. This is an interesting division of labour, and one might be tempted to imagine that once again women are doing the housework, while men are having a career. (2)

It seems that Winterson's parodic treatment of the priests in the novel is a way for her to criticise the male-centred perspective of the Anglican church. Patrick who now serves in the army where he is expected to perform as a patriotic soldier still employs

his left eye not to give news about the enemy camp but to gaze at women in the distance. As a priest, he fails to depart his vision neither from the sexual scenes nor from the every day life; he equally fails to meet the expectations of the army. In both cases, he is represented as an ordinary man who could have been a figure of authority if he had made a clever use of his "miraculous" vision. The way Winterson chooses to picture him, as a man who attaches no importance to the patriarchal ideals like authority and power, suggests that Patrick is not a character strictly following the masculine roles imposed by culture. Moreover, his symphatetic representation makes him appear as an alternative role model as well.

Patrick is a different priest and a different soldier. As his miraculous left eye suggests, Patrick's perception has a different way of seeing the things. The way he interprets the heavy loss of life in the war, two thousand men drowned in one night, proves this: "[Patrick] says the Channel is full of mermaids. He says it's the mermaids lonely for a man that pull so many of us down." (39) Henri first feels ambivalent about what Patrick suggests and as he watches the "white crests slapping against the sides of the ships", he wonders whether this "mischief storm is their doing?" (39) Yet, after witnessing the ships sinking, he understands what Patrick means and says "The mermaids won't be lonely any more." (40) In Henri's words, Patrick's imagination corresponds to "wild sightings". (176) He even claims "to have spotted the Blessed Virgin herself touring the heavens on a gilded donkey." (177): "He was always seeing things and it didn't matter how or what, it mattered that he saw and that he told us stories. Stories were all we had." (177) The war seems dull to Patrick's "perception" probably because the sights he can see are merely the unpleasant scenes of the battlefield rather than the scenes of sexual beauty. While Patrick's eye catches pleasing sights in peace time, he merely looks for enemies in time of war. Ironically, Napoléon requires him to look from the watch tower not to "squint at young girls" but to watch out for the young soldiers of the English army. Patrick describes to Henri the activity on the deck beneath the English sails:

> He could see the Admirals in their white leggings and the sailors running up and down the rigging, altering the sail to make the most of the wind. There were plenty of floggings. Patrick said he saw a man's back lifted off in one clean piece.

> They dipped him in the sea to save him from turning septic and left him on deck staring at the sun. Patrick said he could see the weevils in the bread. (38)

In the third chapter, "The Zero Winter" Henri gives the account of the war against Russia where the horses die of the cold of the "unimaginable zero winter." (131) Henri relates the hardships of the "zero winter": "To survive the zero winter and that war we made pyres of our hearts and put them aside for ever. You can't take it in and leave it awhile in a clean cloth and redeem it in better times. You can't make sense of your passion for life in the face of death; you can only give up for passion. Only then can you begin to survive." (135) The loss of passion accompanies other losses: Henri loses an eye at Austerlitz; Domino is wounded and Patrick loses his miraculous vision; he "never sees much past the next bottle." (130) The biggest loss in the zero winter is Patrick himself. One night, despite the cold, he sweats; though Henri and Villanelle pile their blankets over him, he cannot get warm: "He sweated and shook and shouted that he was freezing to death, that the Devil had got into his lungs and was breathing damnation at him." (175) At about dawn, he dies. Henri and Villanelle bury him hastily as they do not have much time and the ground is too hard to dig. After they bury Patrick and leave, Henri feels that they left their "optimism" with him. (176) What Henri calls optimism can, in fact, be considered as the unconventional which provides an alternative point of view. Patrick's eye reveals what is repressed, and what is opposed to the things that the cultural context and the patriarchal institutions like the army and the church require. This alternative point of view strengtens the challenge to the gender-oriented habits of the patriarchal order.

4.2.2 Villanelle's Webbed Feet

In addition to the theme of vision, Jeanette Winterson in The Passion also uses one of the most important themes of the fantastic, which is metamorphosis. She does this by saying that Villanelle feet are webbed like those of birds. With this image of a hybrid female body, partly human and partly animal, she subverts the norms of heterosexism and questions the politics of gender roles. By describing Villanelle as a woman with webbed feet, Winterson in fact calls into question culturally constructed

assumptions about women's bodies as realms that are already known. Her extraordinary body gives Villanelle a physical existence which can neither be controlled nor possessed. Simply, her webbed feet help her go beyond the constraints of stable gender roles.

First of all, the name given to Villanelle can be seen as a sign of her unique character. The name comes ultimately from the Latin word “villa”, which means a country house or farm. It suggests a rural setting which stands in opposition to the description of Venice as the spatial background to her narrative. But Villanelle as a figure containing diversity, namely animal and human, in her body sets a parallel to this contradiction. The villanella is genre of poem on a pastoral subject, introduced to France from Italy in the 16th century. As it developed it assumed a a very fixed and standardised form, a nineteen line poem consisting of five three line stanzas and one quatrain. (Quinn, 338). One underlying feature of a villanelle is that there is a precise pattern of repetition for the lines. As if she wants to recall this, Winterson uses frequent repetitions in the novel ; some phrases such as: “I’m telling you stories. Trust me.” (13), “You play, you win, you play, you lose. You play” (43), “Time is a great deadener.” (32) are repeated many times. This fixed form of “villanelle” makes it ironic as a name for a character who is full of diversity, who rejects all standard categories, and who knows no boundaries or bonds. What Seaboyer suggests about the nature of villanelles in the twentieth century is worth noting as it sheds light on the thematic network of the novel. She notes that the villanelle as a poetic form has gone through a change in terms of its themes “perhaps since Freud taught us to think about repetition in terms of the darkness that inhabits such pleasure, the music has gone, and poets have adopted the form to speak of death and loss." (493) Unlike the pastoral theme of the traditional villanelle, the modernist form consists of themes of human failure, despair, loss, grief and echoes of war. Thus, “in the style of the modernist villanelle, The Passion sings of loss, death, and the impossibility of love, with several epigrammatic and somewhat gnomic lines echoing uncannily back and forth between Henri’s and Villanelle’s narratives.” (494)

“Soldiers and women. That’s how the world is. Any other role is temporary. Any other role is a gesture.” (45) Henri perceives the world as compartmentalised, like the

world of soldiers, whose key figure is Napoleon, and that of women, with his mother as its heroine. As the novel unfolds, Winterson represents Henri as a young soldier whose patriarchal hopes of heroism fade one after the other. He can neither become a brave soldier like Napoleon as he simply helps the cook in the kitchen of Napoleon's army, nor can his hero Napoleon defeat the enemy. Besides, contrary to his expectations, women do not comply with one ready-made definition of womanhood. He sees that they are not like his mother. Falling in love with an extraordinary woman like Villanelle who acts 'like a man', Henri shows the reader that the world offers a diversity which defies the compartmentalised perspective of the patriarchal order. Henri soon finds out that the world offers more than courageous soldiers falling in love with beautiful women who remind them of their mothers. In this respect, with her unique personality Villanelle functions as the embodiment of this diversity because she is by no means a conventional woman. With her webbed feet which enable her to walk on water, she stands out as a figure who makes Henri and the reader question what it means to be a woman. To present Villanelle as an extraordinary woman, a rumour is mentioned: "Rumour has it that the inhabitants of this city walk on water. That, more bizarre still their feet are webbed. Not all feet, but the feet of the boatmen whose trade is hereditary." (80) Since only the fishermen have webbed feet, by having such feet Villanelle gains the right and the might to enter the realm of manhood: "There never was a girl whose feet were webbed in the entire history of the boatmen." (51) It is a device that sets her apart from other human beings; unlike the static and stable characters who simply resign themselves to the gender roles offered to them, Villanelle has the fluidity gained through the act of walking on water. Due to her magical nature, she is able to flow from place to place. Thus, the fantastic image of Villanelle with her webbed feet challenges the prescribed gender roles of the patriarchal order. As a character walking on water, Villanelle also reminds the reader who has a knowledge of Christianity and the Christian mythology of Jesus Christ. While religious figures become able to walk on water due to their faith in God, Villanelle seems to do this due to faith in herself.

The fact that Villanelle defies the standards of the patriarchal order is shown in the way she is born and brought up. Her oddity is considered to be the result of a mistake made by her mother. According to the legend in her community, if a boatman's wife

is pregnant, she is expected to perform a certain ritual which secures "a clean heart if her child be a girl and boatman's feet if her child be a boy." (81) There are very intricate instructions to be followed like taking the husband's boat and rowing to a terrible island where the dead are buried, taking a flask of wine, a sprig of rosemary, a lock of the husband's hair and a silver coin as offerings, leaving them on the grave of the most recently dead person in her family and being back before dawn, and leaving the boat for a day and a night covered in salt. (80-81) Villanelle's case is extraordinary right from the start; first of all just as her mother realises that she is pregnant, her father disappears leaving nothing except an empty boat behind him. Villanelle's mother still wants to perform the gloomy ritual; yet, it is not successful in the traditional sense. The first misfortune is the appearance of an owl that causes her mother to drop the sprig of rosemary into the sea. Not to waste time, as she has to be back before dawn, she leaves the offerings on her father's grave, whereas it is her husband who is the most recently dead person in the family. And later, she covers the boat in so much salt that it sinks. (84) To make matters worse, the hour of Villanelle's birth "coincides with an eclipse of the sun." which signifies disaster. (83) Her mother tries to slow down labour until the eclipse passes, but "impatient" as she is, Villanelle cannot wait. And when her mother sees that Villanelle's feet are webbed she faints. Having given birth to a girl with webbed feet, a girl with a masculine trait, Villanelle's mother's first response is self-condemnation. She blames herself for not performing the ritual as completely as other women do. Similarly, the midwife shows her dissatisfaction by offering to cut off "the offending" parts right from the start. (84) This is considered to be such a shame that the mother immediately agrees: "My mother weakly nodded, imagining I would feel no pain or that pain for a moment would be better than embarrassment for a lifetime." (84) As they cannot achieve anything other than bending the point of the knife, they rather tend to think that "It's the Virgin's will." (84) Consolation comes from Villanelle's grandfather; a man of the world, he asserts that "No one will see so long as she wears shoes and when it comes to a husband, why it won't be the feet he'll be interested in." (84) The responses to Villanelle being born with webbed feet, and the way the mother explains it as the result of accident indicate that there are very rigid gender boundaries in Villanelle's patriarchal community, where they prefer cutting off the offending parts despite the pain it will cause to allowing a girl to have a masculine

trait. It is a society which offers almost nothing to girls; when Villanelle reaches the age of eighteen, she sees that there are not many jobs for a girl. A girl can either "go into the bakery and grow old with red hands and forearms like thighs" or be a dancer. (86) She takes neither of these roads, and starts to work at the Casino. She also takes a boat and rows alone for hours as men do. And unlike the other women in her community, she says "I love the night" as she learns to enjoy the night by cross-dressing as a man. (92) It is ironic that only by cross-dressing can a girl safely experience the night life which men always enjoy easily.

The fact that Villanelle dresses as a man in the casino makes her a figure who transgresses the boundaries of womanhood. As she can entice a woman with her cross-dressed identity, the question what makes a person an attractive man or a woman is problematised. Villanelle knows no boundaries; she does not correspond to a single definition of womanhood. She is a beautiful young woman, a cross-dressed man, an able gambler and a reliable lover with her heart, her "reliable organ" as opposed to a man for whom his phallus is his reliable organ. (60). She does not comply with the expectations of the patriarchal culture by developing a co-dependent behaviour pattern. Although she is in love with Henri and although her heart is her "reliable organ", she does not become his wife. She resists the limits of patriarchal family structure by refusing to reproduce it. As Seaboyer points out in her article on The Passion, the fluidity of Villanelle's gendered identity makes it difficult to define her:

> Like Venice, she inhabits a phantasmagorical space in which she is now an "ordinary woman", now a fantastical creature. Like her city she is amphibious, a thing of land and water. Her ability to walk on water, in a book filled with references to biblical as well as sexual passion, is a distinctly masculine characteristic; this masculinity is reinforced in Winterson's Venice, where webbed feet are a kind of cultural fantasy, a phallic signifier of secret power. Villanelle's amphibious, sexually ambiguous body and the paradoxical, amphibious body of Venice both refuse the neat binary of true and false, good and evil, masculine and feminine, and against such paradoxical grounds, Winterson begins to trace disruptive, transformative possibility. (506)

Therefore, although the ordinary people who conform to the gender ideal of the patriarchal order may find Villanelle offensive with her webbed feet, Henri, as a sensitive young man who is by no means a standard soldier, describes her beautifully. Upon realising that the boat was moving without either of them rowing, he asks "We were moving. How?", then he says: "I raised my head fully, my knees still drawn up, and saw Villanelle, her back towards me, a rope over her shoulder, walking on the canal and dragging our boats. Her boots lay neatly one by the other. Her hair was down. I was in the red forest and she was leading me home." (214) He realises that it is Villanelle who moves the boats by walking on water; thus in a fashion that suits the fantastic trait of Villanelle, Henri cites her red hair as a red forest and fantastically thinks that Villanelle is taking him home, where his heart belongs.

4.2.3 Villanelle's Heart

Villanelle's heart, described as a separate piece of her body with a life and consciousness of its own, is another fantastic image in The Passion. Both Villanelle's repeated statement that her "heart is a reliable organ" and the ordeals her heart undergoes allow Winterson to emphasize the superiority of passion over mind. As Palmer notes in "The Passion: Storytelling, Fantasy and Desire", the motif of the heart not only "foregrounds the importance of passion" but also "re-works" the common topic in Renaissance love poetry: the exchange of hearts between two lovers. (1989:107) Palmer points out that:

> Donne in 'The Blossom' converses with his heart on the topic of love and, in 'The Broken Heart', describes the destructive effect which the experience of falling in love has on it. Villanelle's heart experiences a series of similarly turbulent adventures. She tells the Queen of Spades, in a manner reminiscent of Donne, 'If you should leave me, my heart will turn to water and flood away.' When she subsequently loses her heart, the conceit acquires a literal significance in the episode in which Henri, at her instigation, breaks into the Queen of Spades's house to retrieve it. (1989:107)

By applying a Renaissance literary device to a lesbian love relationship, Winterson seems to assert that the absence of a literary tradition for the narration of lesbian love does not mean that lesbian love is to be undervalued or denied. The motif of the heart indicates that lesbian love is not less valuable than its heterosexual equivalent. The fantastic nature of the heart, its being literally stolen by the woman and being retrieved by Henri, highlights the reality of the impact that a lesbian love affair may make on a woman's heart. The fantastic functions to show the significance of such a love affair and to challenge the negative attitude towards lesbians. Thus, Winterson uses a traditional literary medium for the writing of an untraditional love affair, which helps her transgress the boundaries of the representation of love in the patriarchal order. This fictional narrative, therefore, can also be read as an attempt to write the personal histories of women who experience lesbian love relationships, which have long been among the unsaid in the patriarchal order. When Villanelle asks "Could a woman love a woman for more than a night?" she articulates the above-mentioned attitude of heterosexual discourse towards lesbian love. (114) To show how problematic this reduction of lesbian love to mere physical desire is Winterson inserts a passage right before this question, in which Villanelle experiences ontological hesitation. Since she feels isolated and desperate when she falls in love with a woman, despite her webbed feet, Villanelle asks "Could I walk on that water? Could I?" (113) Then she tries to walk on water to see whether she can do so. This passage has a metaphorical dimension which in fact voices Villanelle's hesitation about whether she will sink and remain in love with a woman in the patriarchal society: "I faltered at the slippery steps leading into the dark. It was November, after all. I might die if I fell in. I tried balancing my foot on the surface and it dropped beneath into the cold nothingness." (113) Just like her webbed feet dropping into the cold nothingness of the Venetian canal, her heart falls into the unknown territories of lesbian love, which is metaphorically the "cold nothing" in the compulsory heterosexuality of the patriarchal order. Thus, as she is falling in love with the woman whom she calls the Queen of Spades, she feels hesitant since the love she feels is unusual. She wonders how a reliable organ like her heart can falter and fall in love with a woman rather than with a man as usual, and says: "My heart is a reliable organ, how could it be my heart? ... It was a woman I loved and you will admit that is not the usual thing. I knew her for only five months. We had nine nights

together and I never saw her again. You will admit that is not the usual thing." (155) To reinforce a positive attitude towards this lesbian love and take a position against compulsory heterosexual relationships, Winterson represents Villanelle's husband as an unpleasant figure and her father as a passive man. Although she talks about her mother at length, she gives a simple definition of the step-father: "He slaps me about the shoulder and makes some joke about how much money I'm making. He's a curious man; a shrug of the shoulders and a wink and that's him." Her father is such a shallow man that he has never thought it odd that his daughter was born with webbed feet. (100) She defines her husband as a "meat man" since he earns money by supplying the French army with meat and horses. (105) He is a harsh man; when Villanelle says she will keep her job in the casino, he hits her. She is not shocked, as she thinks that nothing good can be expected "from a meat man." (106) Thus, the meaning of the fantastic image of the heart is clarified by a negative representation of the male figures in the novel. The person to help her find the heart is also male but as mentioned earlier, Henri is a figure that transgresses the boundaries of conventional masculine identity.

When Villanelle wants Henri to find her heart in the house of the Queen of Spades, Henri first tries to persuade Villanelle that her heart is in her body like his, but she takes his hand and puts it against her chest. Henri feels nothing there, puts his ear to her body, and still hears nothing. Feeling confused, he says "you'd be dead if you had no heart," adding: "It was fantastic." (192) The response he gets from Villanelle about this "fantastic" situation is a bitter statement about the heartlessness of men, which reads as a realistic critique of Winterson of the men in the patriarchal order: "Those soldiers you lived with, do you think they had hearts? Do you think my fat husband has a heart somewhere in his lard?" (192) The heart then is something non-existent in men in the patriarchal order. Thus, when Villanelle is sold by her husband to a General to please the soldiers in the army, she is not given the time "to collect" her heart, "only my luggage"; but she thinks it a fortunate thing since the army "is no place for a heart." (163) Her heart is left in the woman's house, which Henri enters with Villanelle's advice: "Listen for it beating and look in unlikely places." (196) Winterson's portrayal of the rooms and the objects in them gives a "realistic" dimension to the fantastic image of the heart as a lost organ to be looked for. After a

search in the seven rooms, Henri finds Villanelle's heart in the eighth room where a sound stops him, "a noise not like the sound of mice or beetles". There is a detailed account of Henri's finding of the heart which adds to the authenticity of the image:

> On my hands and knees I crawled under one of the clothes rails and found a silk shift wrapped round an indigo jar. The jar was throbbing. I did not dare to unstopper it. I did not dare to check this valuable, fabulous thing and I carried it, still in the shift, down the last two floors and out into the empty night. (199)

Henri's returning the heart to Villanelle and her replacement of it in her body are also narrated in a very realistic and detailed way. When Henri is in the house, Villanelle waits outside in the boat and stares at the water. Then, Henri comes back and Villanelle starts rowing. With "her sweat shining pale under the moon" Villanelle stops at last and Henri hands her his "bundle":

> She gave a sigh and her hands trembled, then she bade me turn away. I heard her uncork the jar and a sound like gas escaping. Then she began to make terrible swallowing and choking noises and only my fear kept me sitting at the other end of the boat, perhaps hearing her die. There was quiet. She touched my back and when I turned round took my hand again and placed it on her heart.
> Her heart was beating.
> Not possible.
>
> I tell you her heart was beating. (200)

The fantastic nature of the heart as a separate organ is juxtaposed with the realistic image of Henri's mutilation of another heart: out of love for Villanelle, Henri murders Villanelle's husband, and cuts out his heart. The similar emphasis on the heart in these two events, Villanelle's replacement of her heart and Villanelle's husband's murder, puts the images into different realms, the first in the realm of the fantastic, the latter in that of the real, and gives the latter an air of "consensus reality", that is, the reality agreed on by the normal people outside the peculiar consciousness of the characters. When the husband sees Villanelle with Henri, he is surprised and angry. On his insulting remarks, Villanelle spits in his face. When

husband wants to kiss her, she pushes him and he loses his balance. He falls onto Henri nearly crushing him:

> He put his hands to my throat and I heard Villanelle cry out and throw her knife towards me, within reach. A Venetian knife, thin and cruel.
> 'Soft side, Henri, like sea urchins."
> I had the knife in my hand and I thrust it at his side. As he rolled I thrust it in his belly. I heard it suckle his guts. I pulled it out, angry knife at being so torn away, and I let it go in again, through the years of good living. That goose and claret flesh soon fell away. My shirt was soaked in blood. (212)

Then, Henri checks whether Villanelle's husband has no heart as Villanelle said. Henri says he cuts a triangle in about the right place and scoops out the shape with his hand, like coring an apple. He sees that he has a heart. Seeing such a "heartless" man has a heart, Villanelle starts to cry. This is the first time Henri sees Villanelle cry. She had cried "not through the zero winter", "not at the death of [Patrick] our friend", "not in the teeth of humiliation nor the telling of it". (213) It seems that what Villanelle is crying for is not the presence but the abuse and misuse of a heart. She cries hopelessly over the fact that the physical existence of a heart does not guarantee the presence of feelings. The realistic image of a heart juxtaposed with the fantastic one enables Winterson to indicate the opposite natures of the two, which recalls the necessity of an act of de/reconstrution of reality.

What Burns states about the use and meaning of fantasy in Winterson's work elucidates the understanding of the telescopic eye, the webbed feet and the heart as fantastic images. Burns argues that Winterson is using fantasy to "bridge the gap between harsh reality and a more hopeful construction of the social imagery." Considering the "fixity of reality" as the "hallmark of a static status quo", Burns asserts that Winterson's use of fantasy and eroticism pulls away from such fixity to open up a space for alternative lifestyles (alternatives to family, to heterosexuality, to society, to post-modern media). (304) Thus, the fantastic images in The Passion, like Patrick's telescopic eye and Villanelle's webbed feet and Villanelle's heart open up a

space for alternative realities that would challenge the established taboos and codes of the patriarchal order.

CHAPTER 5

THE.POWERBOOK

5.1 Conceptual Framework For The.PowerBook

When asked in an interview what she would say her key themes were in The.PowerBook, Winterson replied "Oh, boundaries, desire, time, identity." (Reynolds, 25) As most critics agree, Winterson reworks the themes that she has treated in her previous novels. Although some may think that Winterson merely repeats herself, she notes that she sees these novels as "a cycle or series":

> And they interact and themes do occur and return, disappear, come back amplified or modified, changed in some way, because it's been my journey, it's the journey of my imagination; it's the journey of my soul in those books. So continually they must address one another. (5)

Ali, the e-storyteller in the novel, also notes that her themes in the novel she is currently writing are "Boundaries. Desire". (35) In a self-referential mode, Winterson makes Ali give the answer to the question of her lover: "What are other books about?" In practice, Ali mirrors Winterson by saying she cannot write about anything else. (36)

The.PowerBook is based on the idea that cyberspace provides drastically different and varied possibilities for people to communicate with each other. The book draws on the facilities of the crossing of boundaries that cyberspace offers to individuals; so it is a play on the idea of cyberspace, changing identities and possible emotional interaction. The story starts in a virtual world with an e-mail ""Freedom, just for one night."(3) Winterson alludes to the lovers in the past meeting each other secretly at

night when all others are sleeping and makes Ali speak in a similar fashion: "Did anyone see you?" as if the virtual entry of the woman on her screen could be seen by the people next-door. With Ali's comment on the setting to the story, the reader is drawn into a process of questioning what it means to make a communication real:

> This is where the story starts. Here in these long lines of laptop DNA. Here we take your chromosomes, twenty-three pairs, and alter your height, eyes, teeth, sex. This is an invented world. You can be free just for one night.
>
> Undress.
>
> Take off your clothes. Take off your body. Hang them up behind the door. Tonight we can go deeper than disguise. (4)

By mentioning chromosomes and the possibility of changing one's height, eyes, teeth and sex, Winterson also employs the theme of identity and identity management. Apparently, cyberspace allows people to change their identities and enables them to adopt as different individuals. This freedom to alter one's identity or to express an imaginary one problematises the concept of identity: It is a "tricky phenomenological" case in which the real stands in opposition to fantasy. Thus, one is left with the question, "What's one's TRUE identity?" (Suler, 4) Winterson's Ali handles this question and speculates on it as she says she talks to people in cyberspace "whose identity [she] cannot prove." (94)

Winterson sets cyberspace in sharp opposition to "meatspace", and she uses the term "meatspace" to denote the flesh-and-blood existence of two people in a real room rather than in chat rooms on the internet. Her choice of Spitalfields as one of the places that the story takes place in the novel also ironically emphasises the idea of meatspace since it is London's meat market. Also, a meat market, in slang, means a place where men can size women up as if they were so much meat which recalls Luce Irigaray's groundbreaking article "Women on the Market". Winterson herself notes that she uses Spitalfields a lot in the novel "because that's a place where there is layer upon layer of life from Roman Britain, through Elizabethan times, the Georgian period, into the life of the fruit and veg market in the twentieth century."

(Reynolds,20) By this statement, Winterson also manifests how history-conscious she is. The idea of cyberspace, which stands in sharp opposition to meatspace, permeates the book, not only in the content but also in the cover and the title. The hardback 2000 edition is designed in such a way that with its black square shape, it very much resembles a set of compact discs. Thus, the reader is meant to touch his/her personal The.PowerBook as if it were a PC with the CDs in it to be played at home. The chapter titles are also from computer jargon, which heightens the effect of virtual reality within the novel. The term MENU replaces the traditional "Table of Contents". In the same way, chapter titles like, "OPEN HARD DRIVE", "NEW DOCUMENT", "SEARCH", "VIEW", "VIEW AS ICON", "EMPTY TRASH", "SPECIAL", "HELP", "SHOW BALLOONS", "CHOOSER", "QUIT" "REALLY QUIT?", "RESTART" and "SAVE" are also taken from the Microsoft Word programme. More importantly, these titles function as the thematic signifiers of each chapter. For instance, in the chapter "EMPTY TRASH", Alix gives the account of the hard life she has had in her childhood. The sharp gender boundaries in the family annihilate the existence of Alix as a girl. She can escape death only by living in disguise as a boy; not being tolerated as a girl, she is brought up to act as a boy. Looking at the title in the light of the content, one cannot help but think that Alix literally "empties the trash" she has in her mind. In this way, Winterson implicitly maintains that those memories that one may have in such a patriarchal family are merely trash. Likewise, in the chapter called "SEARCH", in which the tragic love story of Lancelot and Guinevere is told, everything is centred on Lancelot's search for the true feelings of his heart. Consequently, the titles from computer jargon emphasize that the novel is presented as a virtual world with stories like the ones in the real world.

This 'virtual world', which is also one of the subtitles, is also a source of the fantastic in this novel. With the image of a computer screen through which one can enter into the new world of cyberspace, the novel plays on the idea of problematisation of vision in a way similar to that of Angela Carter in Desire Machines. Just as Carter problematises the reality status of the images in the peep-show by making the proprietor say "Everything depends on persistence of vision.", so Winterson asks

whether what one sees on the screen through the internet is true or not. Winterson's The.PowerBook also explores the problem of vision, in a different fashion, however. The device of indirection, here, is not a telescope, a microscope or eyeglasses as in fantastic tales like "The Sandman" or "The Vampire". It is not a peep-show proprietor as it is in Desire Machines; and none of the characters have telescopic vision like Patrick in The Passion. In the novel, it is the screen of a computer which helps the user to penetrate into an unfamiliar world and which functions as the apparatus to distort and subvert vision. In this virtual world, perception is different from that in everyday one. By following the instructions of a software programme, the reader can enter and search for the story line. Similarly, the narrator of the story, Ali, writes, then rewrites and saves her story on the screen. As she tells her story, she takes the reader from sixteenth century Ottoman Turkey to modern London, and introduces many different stories with the same theme. So, the screen functions as a navigator.

Looking at some of the images in The.PowerBook, one can see that these fit into the category of Todorov's "theme of self" since they problematise vision/perception by making use of cyberspace as one of the planes of reality in the novel. The plot of the novel is centred on a love affair that starts in cyberspace; Ali corresponds with her lover via the World Wide Web. Her lover is married to a man, and this couple is physically together, yet the physical affinity does not form a contact that makes her lover spiritually satisfied; as Jeannine DeLombard states, in Winterson's tale, "the much-vaunted liberatory possibilities of cyberspace add merely another dimension to the itinerant possibilities of all prose, the seduction of all narrative." (24-25) As the narrator of the novel, Ali, is sitting at her screen, she receives an e-mail and "unwrap[s]" it and finds a message; the message reads "*Freedom, just for one night*." Then, transgressing the boundary between the screen and her mind, that is matter and mind, she starts to refer to the object as if she were actually, not virtually, in a room:

> Freedom for a night, you say. Just for one night the freedom to be someone else. Did anyone see you arrive? No. Then I can pull the blinds and light the lamp. The clock ticks, but only in time. From outside, looking in, there will be only a

> movement of shadows- the looming of a bear's head, a knife.
> You say you want to be transformed. (4)

The virtual world that she can reach via the screen is where the story starts for Ali and her lover. In cyberspace, together with her lover, Ali feels that she belongs to a different time scale which gives them the freedom to be transformed into other people. The things one writes with the keyboard on the screen enable an alteration of identity more easily than the fantastic can do; to denote this Ali likens the keys to the limitless possibilities that DNA offers to a human being.

In the chapter entitled "Virtual World", Ali questions the nature of this virtual world. Though she is aware of the fact that she should expect not a real but a virtual world, she still cannot help being sensitive to the messages. The loneliness and desperation she feels are real enough to make her feel like a "penitent in a confessional." (63) Then, as she gets no message from her lover, she starts to ask:

> What did I expect?
> This is a virtual world. This is a world inventing itself. Daily, new landmasses form and then submerge. New continents of thought break off from mainland. Some benefit from a trade wind, some sink without trace. Others like Atlantis- fabulous, talked about, but never found.
> ...
> I'm looking for something, it's true.
>
> I'm looking for the meaning inside the data.
> That's why I trawl my screen like a beachcomber- looking for you, looking for me, trying to see through the disguise. I guess I've been looking for us both all my life. (63-64)

It is evident that the screen as a medium starts to function as the way to the marvellous where the limit between the "I" and "you" collapses. As Ali searches for her lover, she says she will also be looking for herself. In the part called "meatspace"+, Ali elaborates on the form of communication in the virtual world. The dialogue between the two lovers on the net suggests the real nature of the relationship in the virtual universe:

> ‘Ali. I’m coming to London.’
> ‘Business or pleasure?’
> ‘I want to see you!’
> ‘I thought we weren’t seeing each other’
> ‘We’re not.’
> ‘Are you going to keep your eyes closed then?’
> ‘I’d always know you in the dark.’
> ‘Cut it out.’
> ‘Where do you live?’
> ‘You’ve got my Website.’
> ‘Meatspace not cyberspace.
> ‘Spitalfields.’(161)

Later, when they meet, following the mirror metaphor that describes the love between two women, Ali says: “You kiss me and the glass grows cloudy. I stop thinking. Meatspace still has some advantages for a carbon-based girl.” (174) and by mixing the mirror image in meatspace with the screen of cyberspace, Ali voices her faith in the truth of love in cyberspace despite the fact that meatspace offers some fleshly advantages. Interestingly, her lover can lie to her very real husband with whom she lives together in “meatspace”, but she cannot do the same thing as easily to Ali on the net. This shows the ‘real’ nature of the virtual world. Ali criticises her lover because she does not think of leaving her husband in spite of her love for Ali; in her criticism of this single case, in effect Ali questions the nature of heterosexual love and marriages. She does it by reverting to the crucial components of life such as time and space:

> Inside her marriage there were too many clocks and not enough time. Too much furniture and too little space. Outside her marriage, there would be nothing to hold her, nothing to shape her. The space she found would be outer space. Space without gravity or weight, where bit by bit the self disintegrates. (39)

In the scene where Ali as the narrator describes the love-making between herself and her lover, the effacement of limits is delineated. Through the description of the love-making between two women, Ali describes how one becomes the other. The

description gives us the ultimate aim of the use of the fantastic in this novel, that is the effacement of limits:

> Let me in. You do. In this space which is inside you and inside me I ask for no rights or territories. There are no frontiers or control. The usual channels do not exist. This is the orderly anarchic space that no one can dictate, though everyone tries. This is a country without a ruler. I am free to come and go as I please. This is Utopia. It could never happen beyond bed. This is the model of government for the world. No one will vote for it, but everyone comes back here. This is the place where everybody comes. Most of us try to turn this into power. We're too scared to do anything else. But it isn't power- it's sex. (175)

She defends lesbianism in the face of the heterosexual counter-argument that it is not a life-enhancing philosophy because it is not reproductive. Bearing in her mind such a counter-argument, Ali, the narrator, prepares a refutation as she metaphysically reflects upon the life of bacteria. Comparing the reproductive sex life of heterosexuals to the life of bacteria, she aims to degrade heterosexual ideology which is targeted merely at discipline and family in the name of reproduction. She shows the futility and lifelessness of such lives:

> Sex. How did it start? In the strange dark history of our evolution, there was a shift, inevitability, away from self-reproducing organisms- like bacteria- towards organisms which must fuse with one another to survive. You see, bacteria know the secret of eternal life. They do not die unless something kills them. They don't change, they don't age, all they do is multiply. Fusion allows complexity and diversity, but with it, we don't know why, hand in hand, came death in the first of her many disguises. Death disguised as life. It was our only chance. We took it. So those morbid medievals and those burning Romantic poets weren't wrong. Sex and death belong together, joined in our imaginations as they are in our DNA. Sex and death are our original parents. For some of us, the only family we'll have. (175-176)

It is evident that Winterson proposes a different order that shatters the physical and spiritual assumptions of heterosexual love, and this new love, lesbian love, is seen as

the only alternative to the heterosexual love that seeks a ruler, that wants to dictate and control with its rights, territories and frontiers. She also stresses the tyranny of heterosexual life by calling the time spent in the mother's womb "captivity". Since most lesbians choose not to become mothers, Winterson's demythologising of motherhood functions as a defense of lesbianism. Ali says that her parents "bred" her "unexpectedly" and "unwanted" like "sheep and pigs", and she says, "they did [her], and quickly too."(156): "My mother, they say, was a little red thing out of Manchester mills, who at seventeen gave birth to me, easy as a cat. Her voice was soft- like the river over the chalk pan of the riverbed. You will say I never heard it, but I heard it every day in the nine months that I was her captive or she was mine." (157) The way she talks of her origins serves as a de-mythologizing of the family because the family life that made her physical existence possible completely lacked spiritual satisfaction; this helps Ali to make the auditors of her tale accept her argument that heterosexual love and sex life are not the only ways to happiness, and that they make people unhappy. She follows an anarchic strategy. That is she attempts to break the boundaries of this order. She calls the anarchic space, this sex between women, "mirror geography" where one can see herself in flesh and blood: "You are a looking-glass world. You're the hidden place that opens to me on the other side of the glass. ... You are what the mirror reflects and invents. I see myself, I see you, two, one, none." (174) Here, Winterson seems to allude to Lacan's term the "mirror stage" in which a child sees herself as Other. According to Lacan, there is a gap between the two "I" s, the seen and the looker, and in order to bridge this gap which in fact signifies the gap between the child and the world outside the child, she enters the symbolic order through language. (6) This symbolic realm is also interpreted by Lacan as the law of the father, through which the child realises the fact that mother lacks penis, thus, father has more power in the world outside. By using the term "mirror geography" for the love between two women, Winterson implies the similarity of this space between women to the imaginary stage which is the stage experienced before entering into the symbolic stage, the law of the father.

In its employment of the mirror as a tool for problematising identity, the novel gains a fantastic dimension in Bersani's terms as well. In his A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature (1975), Bersani stresses the central role the mirror

plays in literature "as a metaphor for the production of other selves." (ix) The distance a mirror creates constructs a different realm that alters the individual's notions of self. He explains this as "a spatial representation of an intuition that our being can never be enclosed within any present formulation here and now- of our being." (x) In this way, the mirror provides versions of oneself transformed into another, becoming something or someone else. (Jackson, 87) As Jackson notes many fantasies employ mirrors that either distort vision or transform the familiar into the unfamiliar. (45) Todorov also emphasizes the significance of mirrors that "permit penetration into the marvellous universe." (121) He also contends that the use of mirrors in fantastic texts "constantly emphasizes the problematic nature of perception"; thus he categorises such images under the "theme of self" by referring to the Freudian "perception-consciousness system." (120) In a sense, the mirror becomes the medium for the reader to move into the marvellous plane in which the limit between the subject and object collapses. In a parallel fashion, the tyranny of gender roles and patriarchal ideology also collapses.

Another way The.PowerBook criticises the patriarchal order is by using other fantastic themes of self in Todorov's categorisation, like the transformation of the concepts of time and space. As the narrator states at the close of the novel, deconstructed time and space can be seen as the framework that supports the thematic network of The.PowerBook: "No date line, no meridian, no gas-burnt stars, no transit of the planets, not the orbit of the earth nor the sun's red galaxy, tell time here. Love is the keeper of the clocks." (244) An important point here is that this statement is not a poetic or allegorical expression that would -according to Todorov- put an end to the fantastic; the metaphor becomes literal. In other words, the statement that love's time is different is not a metaphor; and in practice, it can be understood by the fact that the existing, invented pieces of measurement cannot tell us anything about the nature of time. The narrator equates time with life, and implies that time is something tangible, not an abstraction as theorised by scientists. Thus, minutes and hours counted by clocks have the power which is real enough to change the course of our lives. The idea that time is substantial is also verified by the narrator's ritualistic act: "I took my watch and dropped it into the water. Time take it. Your face, your hands, the movement of your body... Your body is my Book of

Hours. Open it. Read it. This is the true history of the world." (243) Ali's refusal to see time as something abstract can be seen as a rebellion against the limitations of time. Walking down to the Thames, she meditates upon the passage of time and its mark on the river. The dirty Thames becomes the centuries solidified in front of her eyes, as she thinks that it is the past pumped through time and taken out to sea: "Mammoths used to drink from the shallow sandbank. This is a Roman river, an Elizabethan river. This is the route to the Millennium Dome." (243) The use of the present tense for the Roman era and the Elizabethan time again signifies that the time of the narrator does not conform to conventional notions of time outside her; accordingly, she feels time differently, not by glancing at the timepiece on her wrist but by dipping her hands in the water; as she does so, she feels that it is: "Liquid time". (243) As the Todorovian interpenetration of the physical and the spiritual worlds takes place, the "fundamental categories" like time and space are "modified as a result": "The time and space of the supernatural world, as they are described in this group of fantastic texts, are not the time and space of everyday life." (115) The.PowerBook brings forth a new categorisation of time not only by making the everyday concept of time null and void but also by repairing the distortion that this "time" has caused. Winterson finds an essence that defies all sorts of divisions when the boundaries of time are transgressed:

> What exists and what might exist are windowed together at the core of reality. All the separations and divisions and blind alleys and impossibilities that seem so central to life are happening at its outer edges. ... Beyond time, beyond death, love is. Time and death cannot wear it away. (110)

This essence that defies all definitions and borders like time and space is love. Winterson presents Ali engaged in her narrative attempts to bridge the gap between different times and different spaces. She tries to put the pieces of tragic love stories together by acting as the centre for them and as the story-teller of the novel. In Winterson's words, she seems to "wrap a moving story- the story of a love-affair- around certain iconic moments, like Paola and Francesca, Lancelot and Guinevere, the story of Mallory, and that was the choice." (Reynolds, 26) The stories in the novels are taken from different historical periods and from different geographical locations. With this juxtaposition of different time and characters, Ali's act of story-

telling, thus, functions to cross the boundaries of time and space. Ali herself explains why she keeps on telling stories, the story of "you", the story of "me" and the story of "others": "because a story is a tightrope between two worlds." (119) Through these stories, she slips between the gaps in history "as easily as a coin rolls between the floorboards." (215) The stories she tells have "no date", they are "simultaneous with time" (216) Although the stories have no date, to Ali, they are guidelines, or "maps", that show people the route to be followed. In a sense, Winterson asserts that by reading other people's stories about love, and the weight of accumulation which refers to the limitations around love, readers become able to make the right decisions for themselves in their own love stories:

> The stories are maps...A Marco Polo route through territory real and imagined.... In these wild places I become part of the map, part of the story, adding my version to the version there. This Talmudic layering of story on story, map on map, multiplies possibilities but also warns me of the weight of accumulation. I live in one world- material, seeming-solid- and the weight of that is quite enough. The other worlds that I can reach need to keep their lightness and their speed of light. What I carry back from those worlds to my world is another chance. (54)

During the course of her narrative, by cross-dressing, by acting in a very wide time span starting from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century, and in a wide geographical space stretching from Ottoman Turkey to modern London, the same topic, love, is played on. This way, she suggests that wherever one is, whatever time s/he lives in, patriarchy makes its tyranny felt, and one needs to fight for one's right to free love and sex. Thus, she tells the tragic stories of "great and ruinous lovers", of Lancelot and Guinevere, and of Francesca da Rimini and her lover Paolo, of George Mallory and Irvine among many others. In order to show how meaningless time is when love's universality is considered, Winterson solidifies the image of time by evoking Mallory's watch broken into pieces on top of Mount Everest. He reaches the peak of the mountain, but as it is very cold his life is in jeopardy; just as he tries to save himself, he breaks his watch and the glass breaks. With this image of a watch breaking into pieces, Winterson plays on the theme of time and ridicules those who cling to their timepieces limiting them in time and space: "[Mallory] started to laugh

and then he couldn't stop laughing, because it was so silly really, his watch going tick, tick, tick, when time had stopped long since and there was no time. Not here. They were outside time, he knew that." (152) The same devaluing attitude towards time is also present in Ali's story of the tulip. The narrator jumps from the 16th century Ottoman setting to the 20th century English one and says that this slip in time is done on purpose: "I wanted to make a slot in time. To use time fully I use it vertically. One life is not enough. I use the past as a stalking horse to come nearer to my quarry." (209) This statement also explains why Ali keeps on telling us about other lives.

Various love stories inserted into the main plot line have the function of making the reader see this story from a distance, and of creating a sort of *Verfremdungsefekt* that detaches the reader from the emotional density of love. This way, the lesbian relationship can easily be cited among the traditional love stories. In a way, read together with these famous love stories, a lesbian love story also becomes speakable. Winterson achieves this by reverting to the story-telling technique which makes Ali both the story-teller and the critic. For instance, Ali's critical comment, "The line between the real and the imaginary is thin" becomes an overarching statement for the novel itself. As she states in another chapter, the line between the two realms is very thin: "The more I write, the more I discover that the partition between real and invented is as thin as a wall in a cheap hotel room." (93) She can easily hear what is happening on the other side of the wall.

In the story of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo, the line between the two separate worlds, the real and the imaginary, seems to collapse as they make love and fall in love. They start to move so swiftly that they almost lose contact with the earthly limitation, gravity. This freedom from physical restraint immediately follows the emotional freedom they experience, namely the act of discarding Gianciotto, the husband to Francesca who is Paolo's brother. The love between Francesca and Paolo transgresses the boundaries of the marriage bond between Francesca and her husband. Upon seeing Francesca and Paolo making love, Gianciotto kills the two lovers, and Francesca describes the moment of death as a transgression of the line between the real and the fantastic:

> He was dead then, and I dead under him, and hand in hand our souls flew down the corridors and out of his brother's place as easily as our bodies had done when we left my father's house.
> I have never let go of his hand.
> We are as light now as our happiness was, lighter than birds.
> The wind carries us where it will, but our love is secure.
>
> No one can separate us now. Not even God. (129)

The story of Francesca and Paolo is enveloped in the parallel story of Lancelot and Guinevere. As the lovers in the former story read the story of the latter in which there is also a love triangle composed of the husband, the wife and the lover, in other words as the couples merge in the world of imagination, the common theme of the two stories is rendered more visible. This way, as the title of the part suggests the story becomes an "icon" for another story. Moreover, the meeting of the common themes of different stories reinforces the effect of the often repeated idea that love transgresses all the boundaries and defies limitations. The lesbian love of Ali and the married woman, in this respect, is another variation that plays on this idea, which recalls the stories of both Francesca da Rimini and Paolo and Lancelot and Guinevere. While the stories of different characters meet in the literary realm, similar experiences of ordinary people meet in the cyberspace as well:

> When I sit at my computer, I accept that the virtual worlds I find there parallel my own. I talk to people whose identity I cannot prove. I disappear into a web of co-ordinates that we say will change the world.... (93-94)

In the last part of the novel, "Save", the narrator again considers the waters of the Thames as something solid: as she looks at the river Thames, she thinks that the river itself contains centuries "pumped into it". To catch time, to be part of it, she dips her hands in the water calling it "Liquid time." (243) She says that there is no "date line, no meridian, no gas-burnt stars, no transit of the planets, not the orbit of the earth nor the sun's galaxy". (243) There is nothing to tell her the time. In an overarching attitude, she states that "Love is keeper of the clocks." Then, feeling no need for a timepiece that will tell her the time, she takes off her watch and drops it into water,

and says that “The lover’s body is my Book of Hours, the true history of the world is the one told by these bodies.” (244)

In sum, the story which takes place in the virtual world where the borders of identities are blurred goes beyond a specific time and a specific character. As she trawls her screen, Ali, the e-story-teller says she is “looking for you, looking for me, trying to see the disguise. I guess I’ve been looking for us both all my life.” (64) It seems that she is trying to build an identity for herself which is free from disguise and the limitations of time and space. In the part called “Own Hero”, Winterson makes Ali explicitly talk about the need to be independent of borders and limits, and imply that it is only by making oneself the hero of one’s life that the gap between many different heroes and heroines belonging to different times can be bridged:

> In this life you have to be your own hero. By that I mean you have to win whatever it is that matters to you by your own strength and in your own way. Like it or not, you are alone in the forest, just like all those fairy tales that begin with a hero who’s usually stupid but somehow brave, or who might be clever, but weak as straw, and away he goes (don’t worry about the gender), cheered on by nobody, via the castles and the bears, and the old witch and the enchanted stream, and by and by (we hope) he’ll find the treasure. (155)

As she describes in “Own Hero”, Winterson creates a unique hero in her novel who challenges gender roles through internet and story-telling. This hero escapes the body and its physical confines, which also brings about a freedom from the social confines as well. Therefore, the fantastic image of grafting can be understood as a manifestation of these liberatory possibilities in the patriarchal order.

5.2. Fantastic Images in The.PowerBook

5.2.1 Metamorphosis: The Plant into a Penis

Winterson’s use of the motif of metamorphosis functions as a criticism of the patriarchal order. Especially when it is accompanied with an anti-marriage attitude

and the portrayal of the conditional love of parents based on the gender of their children, the image of transformation becomes a tool for a criticism of the gender roles assigned by the patriarchal culture. The plant grafted between the thighs of Ali starts to respond to sexual desire, and the arousal she feels as the erection of the plant is followed by an act of ejaculation. The image of metamorphosis takes the form of the replacement of a penis by a plant. The title of the section "OPEN HARD DRIVE" gains a symbolic meaning when it is considered that the entire section gives the account of the adventure of the tulip ending its journey in the vagina of a young bride-to-be, who has had no previous sexual intercourse. In addition, the icon introducing the section title, a lock-shaped tulip, recalls the chastity belts that were mythically used to protect young ladies from vaginal intercourse. Thus, when the narrator starts the section by saying: "I want to start with a tulip. In the sixteenth century the first tulip was imported to Holland from Turkey. I know- I carried it myself." (9), the reader is given the sign of the story in which a tulip, growing into a phallus, functions as an opener of the "hard-drive". Namely, Ali's "tulip" acts as a penis and enters into the young lady's body through her hymen. Therefore, Ali calls this tulip that will open the so-called lock the "Key of Pleasure and Lover's Dream". (9)

Winterson gives a detailed account of what this "centrepiece" is like, which adds to the realistic effect that the fantastic image creates:

> About eight inches long, plump, with a nice weight to it. We secured it to my person and inspected the results. There are many legends of men being turned into beasts and women into trees, but none I think, till now, of a woman who becomes a man by means of a little horticultural grafting. My mother knelt down and put her nose close. 'You smell like a garden,' she said. (12)

Then a "strange" thing happens; as the Princess, under whose service Ali has to work as a young gentleman to teach the young lady the games of love, kisses and pets Ali's tulip, Ali's sensations grow. In Ali's words, her disguise comes to life, namely it begins to stand up as if it were a real erect penis. The tulip is even represented as

ejaculating. This way, the fantastic image of an embalmed tulip worn as a centrepiece starts to work as an image of transgression:

> I looked down. There it was, making a bridge from my body to hers... I kneeled down, the tulip was waving at me as it had done on the hillside that afternoon I cut it down. Very gently the Princess lowered herself across my knees and I felt the firm red head and pale shaft plant itself in her body. A delicate green-tinted sap dribbled down her brown thighs. All afternoon I fucked her. (22)

In a similar fashion as theorised by Todorov, who regards the supernatural as the symbol for "dreams of power" (109), the use of the fantastic makes it possible for the narrator of the novel to gain access to power; the "dream of power" comes true by a simple fantastic image. In a sense, through this fantastic image Winterson suggests that what Freudian theory sees as women's deficiency, or as "penis envy", can be replaced by a simple grafting from nature. A tulip can do what a penis can. The metamorphosis of an embalmed tulip into a penis acts as the agent of the collapse of the limit between a horticultural object and a human one; the image of tulip functioning as a penis can be read as a challenge to the central place given to men in patriarchal culture in the sense that it implies the possibility of a woman's having sexual pleasure without a penis. Interestingly, Winterson's use of the word "centrepiece" for penis gains an ironic dimension in the sense that it parodies the central role given to men in phallo*centric* male order, namely patriarchy. Ali as a girl stating, "This was my centrepiece."(12) and "Her fingers had reached the centre."(22) shows how easily the seemingly sharp boundaries between the male and female sex organs are transgressed, thus how meaningless it is to cling to these boundaries. For Winterson, who sees lesbianism as the only way for real emancipation from patriarchal norms, the tulip as a supernatural element causes the limit to "cease to be impervious". (Todorov,113) Thus, the book itself becomes, as its title claims, "The.PowerBook" that guides the reader into a world where dreams of *power* come true by making the female sex powerful enough to lead a life of their own.

When the passages in the novel that relate the nature of the metamorphosis are taken into consideration, it is seen that Winterson's use of the image of metamorphosis has a critical function. In fact, when Ali poses the question "What's so special about a tulip? Put it this way... When is a tulip not a tulip?" (9) she is the mouthpiece for Winterson's problematising of the established gender and sex roles in the patriarchal order. As is clear from the section, the penis is not the only means of giving satisfaction. This way, Winterson recalls the points raised by lesbian feminists. Among them, there is the discussion of phallocentrism, that is, of the dominant role ascribed to the penis in heterosexual relations discouraging women from realising their sexual desire; and there is also the point that lesbianism is not only a sexual but a political choice. While feminists identify the social construction of gender with its negative effects in creating unequal power relations between the sexes; lesbian feminists -apparently since the line of demarcation that separates them from the mainstream feminists is their sexual orientation- seem to consider sex and sexual orientations as their main issue. Thus, lesbian feminists contend that just like gender, sex is a construction, therefore is subject to change. A seminal text by the early lesbian activists who call themselves "Radicalesbians", "The Woman Identified Woman" raises this issue in the early 1970s:

> For a lesbian is not considered a "real woman". And yet in popular thinking, there is really only one essential difference between a lesbian and other women: that of sexual orientation- which is to say, when you strip off all the packaging, you must finally realise that the essence of being a "woman" is to get fucked by men. (2)

Charlotte Bunch in her 1972 article, "Lesbians in Revolt" (another historically important text of lesbianism), like the Radicalesbians, states that "Male society defines Lesbianism as a sexual act, which reflects men's limited view of women: they think of us only in terms of sex. They also say that lesbians are not real women." (2) In an attempt to clarify the point so as to inform the public about what lesbians are like, she says that the lesbian, "woman-identified-woman", centres her energies around women "not only as an alternative to oppressive male/female relationships but primarily because she loves women" (original emphasis, 2) She sees the sexism which divides women into two separate groups as "the root of all

oppression" and believes that "Lesbians must become feminists and fight against woman's oppression, just as feminists must become Lesbians if they hope to end male supremacy." (2) Lesbians, thus, attempt to struggle against the reductionist view of the public which sees lesbians as females whose main concern is the biological sex identity of their partners.

Like feminism, lesbian criticism questions and tries to challenge the privilege given to heterosexist and homophobic discourse which conditions people to think that gays and lesbians are perverse in nature. (Zimmerman, 1992:7-8) To refute male-centred arguments, lesbians discuss how women engage themselves in heterosexist relations. In the introduction to Contemporary Lesbian Writing: Dreams, Desire, Difference Palmer recalls the question raised in the 1970s as to how most women "take for granted their heterosexual orientation", and quotes one woman telling her about their discussions of the origin of their sexual orientation:

> We talked for hours about sex, problems with men, how we resented sex-roles...all those kind of things. But we never wondered how we got to be heterosexual. The question just didn't arise. I suppose, like the rest of the world, we assumed that was the norm. So all our questioning about why a woman's role within heterosexuality is constructed in such and such a way, never once extended to questioning heterosexuality itself. (1993:10)

In a critical approach to compulsory heterosexuality, Winterson presents the notion of a lesbian utopia where all the hierarchical relationships between men and women are destroyed. With her tulip which she can use as a penis, Ali becomes an agent defeating the superiority of the phallus in the patriarchal order. This image of grafting is also a form of articulation of Ali's rage against the degradation as a female in the male order. The origins of the problem about gender and sex roles date back to her childhood:

> When I was born, my mother dressed me as a boy because she could not afford to feed any more daughters. By the mystic laws of gender and economics, it ruins a peasant to place half a bowl of figs in front of his daughter, while his son may gorge on the

> whole tree, burn it for firewood and piss on the stump, and still
> be reckoned a blessing to his father. (10)

Gender roles are so discriminating and patriarchy's degradation of women is so deep that when Ali is born, her father even wants to drown her. Fortunately, her mother persuades her father to let her "live in disguise, to see if I could bring any wealth to the household." (11) Winterson presents another story which is similar to Ali's in the sense that there is the same hostility towards female children. The narrator of this story, Alix, is represented as an orphan who is adopted by "superstitious people. The kind of people who kept a rabbit's paw in each pocket and a crucifix round the neck just in case."(137) When they are asked whether they want a girl or boy, they hastily turn to each other with panic as they have not thought of it before. And as the warden taps her foot with impatience to get an answer, they immediately utter "Pink, please." They think that "Girls are cheaper, easier and cleaner." (138) This negative attitude towards the female sex is made less central by the double use of the gender pronouns "his" and "her" for Alix. In other words, the use of both pronouns for the cross-dressed female characters in the novel, helps Winterson blur the dichotomy between the male and female sexes and gender roles. For instance just as Ali is describing how she is dressed as a boy since her mother can not afford to feed any more daughters, the narrator interferes and asks, "How could Ali barter philosophies when *his* bulbs were itching?" (18, emphasis mine) Then, the narrator uses both his and her for Ali in the same paragraph. After asking "What happened to him?" the narrator starts talking about "her" and says, "When Ali unstrapped her bulbs and planted them in the good earth, she was obeying the command of the scriptures to go forth and multiply. Multiply she did." (213) Meanwhile, by referring to the power stories from the Bible, it seems that Winterson is adding one more story that shows the female sex as the potentially powerful sex, just like the male one in the patriarchal order. In that sense, once again the title of the novel makes the reader think that what they hold in their hands is a book that tells about and consists of alternative ways of existence for women in the patriarchal order.

Alix's parents' relationship to her also reveals this patriarchal hierarchy and serves as a critique of the patriarchal family structure. In Muck House, where Alix lives with

her family, reading and writing are forbidden, but as Alix says: “My mother could do both, my father could do neither, therefore they had no value.” (140) The unequal power relationship dominates the house where there is no love. Love is fantastically put into a jar and treated as one of the chemicals on the father’s shelf. Winterson’s representation of love treated as a liquid by the father functions as a critique of the male power in patriarchy. At the end of a row of jars, Alix finds an opaque one “with a heart drawn on it and a dagger through the heart.” (142) This image on the jar, which is a mere cliché mostly used by teenagers once again helps Winterson dramatise the father as a negative figure. As he sees Alix noticing the jar, he cries: “Never touch that jar. Never. If that ever gets loose we’re finished.” Alix innocently asks why and the father’s reply is symbolic of the family as a sterile institution of compulsory heterosexism: “Love. There’s love in that jar.” Thus, Alix learns that love is a “hazardous liquid” and wants to leave for another world beyond “the Muck House”. (142) Like Henri’s mother in The Passion, Alix's mother is represented as a pleasant person whose potential has been wasted in marriage and patriarchal gender roles. Unlike the father who never exchanges a word in conversation, she tells stories from her youth. As Alix listens to her stories, she infers that her mother’s youth is like a “far-off city where she had lived for a time and been happy.” (143) She is in “exile” from her past to which she can never return. Her tragic life makes Alix think that her past “is the only kingdom she could control.” (143) As she rhetorically asks whether she will be young again, the father with his sarcastic tone replies, “You won’t get any younger even if you clean your teeth twice a day.” (144) So, when the fantastic image of grafting is read against this patriarchal concept of the family, it is apparent that the tulip has a critical function. Ali underlines the significance of this image of metamorphosis herself and says: “There are many legends of men being turned into beasts ands women into trees, but none I think, till now, of a woman who becomes a man by means of a little horticultural grafting.” (12) Ali dresses as the opposite sex and changes her sex role like Orlando. She carries a tulip and a pair of bulbs “sewed on to a narrow leather strap and fastened round the hips” that recalls some artificial phallus on the sex-market designed for increasing sexual pleasure. This way, Ali is like the girls in the The Arabian Nights who try to preserve their virginity in the course of the ordeal they are forced into by patriarchal power relations. She is on a journey to take the tulip from the Ottoman Empire to Holland in

the sixteenth century, the Tulip Era. Thus not only the theme of the journey and of cross-dressing but also the historical and the geographical base to Ali's story evokes The Arabian Nights. Later in the novel, Winterson herself seems to draw an analogy between the tale of Ali and the tales in The Arabian Nights collection:

> It has not been proved, but it might be so, that Ali is not telling stories, but that the stories are telling him. As he knots himself into a history that never happened and a future that he cannot have, he is like a cross-legged Turk who knots a fine carpet and finds himself in the pattern... Ali tells stories. He puts himself in the stories.... What he is, what he invents, becomes part of the same story, one continuous story, where even birth and death are only markers, pauses, changes of tempo. (214-215)

Ali telling stories is presented as an endless story which will probably "shift to other mouths and other tales, while Ali, with his tale in his mouth, rolls on" (214-215) However, unlike the girls in disguise in the traditional tales who finally reveal their identity and submit themselves to the traditional plan made for them by the patriarchal order, which is either marriage or a return to the family, Ali of The.PowerBook is on the run. The often-repeated line, which is the opening sentence of the novel, "To avoid discovery I stay on the run. To discover things for myself, I stay on the run." (3), implies that Ali avoids the act of discovery which would offer her a typical life in the male order. As she feels that the act of uncovering her identity would mean a total surrender to patriarchy, Ali stays on the run. She describes the nature of her disguise by referring to the basic needs of animals; thus she justifies the act of disguise in the male order:

> An animal hides to save itself... I know about disguise. I disguise myself from predators. I disguise myself from circumstance. The camouflages I use are elaborate, but I know what they are. Even my body is in disguise today. But what if my body is the disguise? What if skin, bone, liver, veins, are the things I use to hide myself? I have put them on and I can't take them off. (15)

She feels that her life is “steel-hitched at one end into [her] mother’s belly, then thrown out across nothing, like an Indian rope trick.” The following comment she makes upon her life is like a manifesto which articulates the transgression of the boundaries and reconstruction of identity in the male order:

> Continually I cut and retie the rope. I haul myself up, slither down. What keeps the tension is the tension itself- the pull between what I am and what I can become. The tug of war between the world I inherit and the world I invent. I keep pulling at the rope, I keep pulling at life as hard as I can. If the rope starts to fray in places, it does not matter. I am so tightly folded, like a fern or ammonite, that as I unravel, the actual and the imagined unloose together, just as they’re spliced together, life’s fibres knotted into time. (210)

By making use of the fantastic image of grafting, Winterson elaborates on the pull between what one is and what one becomes. In this way, the fantastic becomes a critical tool for making the reader aware of the confines of gender roles and identity in the patriarchal order.

CONCLUSION

In the light of this analysis of the novels by Carter and Winterson, it can be seen that unlike escapist fantasies which aim at creating a world of make-believe for the reader to forget the problems of everyday life, these novels expose the problems that the patriarchal order creates for women. Both writers problematise the secondary role given to women in social life and, in their fiction, provide female figures who do not simply surrender to the rigid gender differences which describe women as inferior to men. Moreover, not only the female but also the male characters transgress the boundaries of the gender roles that they are supposed to play.

Having a look at the variety of the characters employed by the two writers in these novels- unmarried lesbian couples, heterosexually married men and women, prostitutes, single men and single women- one might ask whether the variety of fantastic images, like metamorphosis, vision, and the fragmentation of bodies, have different functions or not. Various fantastic images may refer to various planes of transgression. Moreover, the difference in Carter and Winterson's sexual imagery is also noteworthy: Carter has more heterosexual couples living together while Winterson, perhaps as she sees no hope for men and women in the patriarchal order, mostly portrays lesbian lovers. Both Desire Machines and Nights at the Circus represent heterosexual couples, namely Desiderio and Albertina, and Walser and Fevvers, as central to the plot structure; while the former ends with the portrayal of Desiderio feeling desperate upon the loss of his partner, the latter ends on a note of optimism with the lovers walking hand in hand as they step into the new century. However Winterson's The Passion with Villanelle and the married woman and The.PowerBook with Ali and her female lover draw the picture of love as an alternative to the heterosexual version. Although the lesbian couples in Winterson's fiction are not always represented as ideal and happily consummated lovers, they are certainly portrayed as individuals standing on firm ground to struggle against the

heterosexual norms. Misfortunes in relationships mainly stem from the existence of husbands as third parties, who are presented as the supporters of phallocentrism.

In Carter's Desire Machines, the fantastic images such as problematised vision, metamorphosis and fragmentation of the body put an emphasis on the transformative power of desire which is the raw material of Dr Hoffman's machinations. The novel, the plot of which seems to be as simple as a war between the Reality Principle and the Pleasure Principle, does not end in a quick solution to declare one as a winner and the other a loser. It rather implies that it is desire with its transgressive features that obliterates gender differences and redefines the world, however hard the present culture tries to suppress it. As Carter delineates the implications of desire, she employs characters like Desiderio and Albertina who do not easily conform to the gender definitions of patriarchal culture. In Carter's Nights at the Circus, in which realistic details are mixed with fantastic images, the fantastic has cultural and ideological implications whereby woman as angel-in-the-house is transformed to the New Woman implied by the victorious flight of Fevvers. The fantastic images of metamorphosis used on many parts of the novel enable the reader to see the unbending codes sundered, which means seeing things achieved which are deemed impossible in real life and thus the reader is challenged on a mental level which helps her to question established gender roles and stereotypes.

Winterson's The Passion employs fantastic images like the problematisation of vision and metamorphosis which are juxtaposed with realistic details. These images open up a space for alternative realities. The novel also demythologises the notion of history by showing the past as something to be invented, to be opened up to the present in order to prevent its being conclusive. As different people from different periods come up with the same message, which is "Love and passion should have a central place in life.", the concept of temporality is done away with and replaced by a universal appeal. In addition to the use of this historiographic metafictional device, the novel also reshuffles the traditional notions of gendered space which challenge male-oriented gender-place relations. The.PowerBook follows a similar strategy of transgressing the boundaries of gender roles assigned by patriarchy with the help of fantastic images. The images of metamorphosis and cyberspace replacing the

fantastic image of problematisation of vision, function to efface the limits of patriarchy. Concepts like the real nature of the virtual world and the thinness of the line between the real and the imaginary also increase the transgressive effect of the fantastic. The criticism of the patriarchal family structure and the presentation of lesbianism as the surest ways to survive love and passion are reinforced by these fantastic images. The.PowerBook shows lesbianism as the only real emancipation from patriarchal forms; it also demythologises motherhood which essentialist feminists use as a weapon against patriarchy.

In his Six Memos for the Next Millennium, Italo Calvino, himself a writer of fantastic texts, articulates the enlightening and transgressive function of the fantastic and suggests concepts for the literature of the next millennium. One of these concepts is "lightness" and he maintains that literature has an existential function which is "the search for lightness as a reaction to the weight of living": "Faced with the precarious existence of tribal life –drought, sickness, evil influences- the shaman responded by ridding his body of weight and flying to another world, another level of perception, where he could find the strength to change the face of reality." (1996:26) He also points out that this sort of levitation presented with an image of "a flight to another world" is a common occurrence and that Propp calls it one of the methods of "transference of the hero" in his Morphology of the Folktale: "Usually the object sought is in 'another' or 'different' realm that may be situated far away horizontally, or else at a great vertical depth or height." (1968:26-27) As contemporary fantastic narratives, Carter and Winterson's novels abound in flight imagery which corresponds to their transgressive function. The physical transgression of boundaries, such as gaining the swiftness of a bird, having webbed feet to walk on water, or telescopic eyesight and hatching like birds, enables the reader to visualise and thus validate the transgression of mental boundaries that make the destabilisation of hierarchies possible in real life. Peach suggests that in her fusion of different modes of writing, Carter's texts are in fact "social critiques", especially of the use of "sexuality as a form of social control", and says that her texts document the long historical tendency of patriarchy to exploit women. (2001:1) Winterson's writing also "bring[s] the politics of reading gendered narratives to the foreground" (Grice, 2)

Observing that the representation of female figures either as girls seeing marriage as the only solution or as madwomen who fail to conform to the rigid gender roles of the male order, many feminist critics like Joanna Russ and Patricia Meyer Spacks ask what a heroine can do and whether the reader can find female equivalents for Stephen Dedalus or Holden Caulfield. (in Attebery, 158) Attebery in "Women's Coming of Age in Fantasy" sees the limitations of realistic fiction as the main reason for the tendency on the part of feminist writers to employ the fantastic mode in their fiction, and explains the "formulaic constraints" of realistic fiction:

> First, it can find no "good universe next door." It is limited to the circumstances of the recognisable world, in which women have, or have had, little outlet for revolutionary or artistic impulses. Second, it is surprisingly limited in available plot lines. Marriage and madness or suicide correspond to the dramatic formulas of the comic and the tragic. (92)

Discussing the power of fantasy "to call certain assumptions into question" he concludes that the outcome in fantastic fiction is not despair, madness or suicide; "the female heroes represent an unprecedented range of models for development." (103-104)

As Carter and Winterson use the fantastic mode, they present heroines who simply ignore the master plan offered by the patriarchal order. In <u>Desire Machines</u>, the bodily transformations of Albertina and the fragmentation of the bodily forms of the acrobats suggest that sexual identity and gender roles can easily be transcended, and thus that they are just man-made limitations. Albertina has a rich array of male and female identities throughout the novel, like the somnambulist daughter of the Mayor, Mary Anne, a nine-year old girl in The River People tribe, Aoi, and a valet to the Count. This helps Carter problematise the validation of gender roles assigned by patriarchal culture. With the help of these changing identities, Albertina is metaphorically given the opportunity to experience different states of being and to transgress the limitations of patriarchal gender roles. Fevvers in <u>Nights at the Circus</u> also goes beyond the limited alternatives the male order offers to women. She becomes neither a fallen woman nor an angel in the house. Although she could well

have responded to the sexual desire of the Grand Duke and pursued a life of luxury as his mistress, Fevvers escapes from him and follows her own desires. She loves Walser who is ironically courageous enough to act as a chicken at the circus in order to travel with Fevvers. In The Passion, Villanelle, like Fevvers, refuses to marry Henri who is in love with her, and laughs at the idea that a child cannot be happy unless the mother is married to the father. She becomes a single-parent and lives a life of her own. Villanelle is also represented as a woman who can both literally and metaphorically walk like men in society due to her webbed feet: she walks on the waters of Venice like the boatmen, she works at a casino and she falls in love with a woman. Ali in The.PowerBook also provides the reader with an alternative female role model who travels long distances as early as the 16th century and implies that to be in love with a woman, one does not have to be a man. In this way, Winterson suggests a transgression not only of the gender roles but also of the sex roles accepted in the patriarchal order. Behind all of these examples, there is the suggestion Carter overtly articulates in The Sadeian Woman: male and female should be liberated from the masculine and feminine attributes which are mere social fictions: "There is the inarguable fact of sexual differentiation; but separate from it and only partially derived from it, are the behavioural modes of masculine and feminine, which are culturally defined variables translated in the language of common usage to the status of universals." (6)

In their questioning of received notions of gender and sexuality, Carter and Winterson also represent male figures. They reveal the limitations of the male gender role assigned by patriarchy both by portraying untraditional male figures that have feminine traits and by representing traditional male figures as unpleasant. In the first group are Desiderio and Alligator Man of Desire Machines, Walser of Nights at the Circus and Henri of The Passion, all of whom have feminine attributes like dependence, modesty, interest in household issues and emotional attachment to the people around them. Among the unpleasant male figures there are mostly fathers, husbands and other authority figures. The Minister, the Ambassador and the Count in Desire Machines are among these male authority figures and state officials who are in control and make life difficult for Desiderio. In Nights at the Circus, The Grand Duke; Colonel Kearney, the owner of the circus; Mr Rosencreutz, a rich man who

spends his money to gaze at "monstrous women"; and the Ape-Man, the ex-husband of Mignon are the unpleasant male characters who exercise their power over women, the physically weak and the poor. While Carter mostly presents unpleasant male figures having power in the public space, which makes her criticism larger in scale, Winterson's novels involve male characters from the private realm, like husbands and fathers. For instance, in The Passion, it is Villanelle's husband who is represented as an unpleasant character, namely as an indifferent husband whose life revolves around the routine of going to work and coming back. Ali's father in The.PowerBook is another male figure taken from the private realm, who is described as a disagreeable character. Unlike the strong and vivid mother, he has an unbending matter-of-fact stance towards everything. He shows no spark of imagination or love.

The difference of the realms that Carter and Winterson choose their male characters from can be explained by the difference in their worldview. Carter's strong socialist views, which she states overtly by reacting to being considered a mere fantasist, cause her to employ unpleasant figures that sustain the system. Smith says that "she was a committed socialist", and one "who knew that it is history that makes us, and who believed art is always political." (2) She expresses her anger at those who fail to understand the socialist implications of her work in an interview with Mary Harron of the Guardian in 1984: "I am a *socialist*, damn it! How can you expect me to be interested in fairies?" (Day, 1) Her views about sex and gender roles expressed in The Sadeian Woman by the premise "Flesh comes to us out of history; so does the repression and taboo that governs our experience of flesh" also underline the fact that her fiction is a statement of the urge in her to demythologise all that is constructed by the current system. (11) Thus, in her novels, ministers, ambassadors, dukes, employers and property-owners are represented as the watchmen of the myths the culture produces; for Carter, "Myth deals in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances," (5) With the help of fantastic images, Carter highlights these myths and, to use Jackson's term, shows the unseen of culture. In other words, what the patriarchal culture shows as important and powerful is made weak and disagreeable in her fiction; and culturally marginalised groups like unmarried women, minority figures like Lizzie and the princess of Abyssinia, lesbian couples

and prostitutes are placed at the centre of her novels. In her fiction, Carter criticises the fact that men are often the supporters of patriarchal society and they are the figures who have power over women both in the public and private space, and challenges the culturally constructed gender roles ascribed to men and women. In fact, what Rubin's suggests about gender construction explains how Carter regards and represents sex and gender roles:

> Gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes. It is a product of the social relations of sexuality... Men and women are, of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else...The idea that men and women are more different from one another than either is from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature. (179)

To Rubin, the source of this idea is the social system which oppresses women and everyone else "in its insistence upon a rigid division of personality." (180) Carter who has similar views expressed in The Sadeian Woman depicts cases which represent men and women as almost equally oppressed by the same source; therefore, optimism at the end of The Nights at the Circus results from the idea that patriarchy oppresses not only women but also men, expecting them to perform a set of gender roles: Fevvers and Walser laugh together as they move towards what is both literally and metaphorically a "new century". In Desire Machines, the male protagonist, Desiderio, is represented as a man who cannot feel content without a woman partner. He overcomes an ordeal and becomes a hero, but he confesses that although he survives, without his Albertina he feels himself "condemned to live in a drab, colourless world, as though living in a faded daguerreotype." (14) His only desire left is to see Albertina again before he dies. It can be argued that within the rich body of Carter's work, lesbian couples constitute only parts of the ideal egalitarian society in which the oppressed groups in patriarchal society are liberated.

Although Winterson does not present authority figures from the public realm, she is also a politically aware writer whose antimilitarism is apparent in her portrayal of the

hero of The Passion, Henri, as a meek soldier. As she is critical of militarist tendencies, she ridicules Napoleon's passion and represents him as a human being with his weaknesses. However, it can be suggested that she is more concerned with family relations. Among her favourite themes are love, loyalty, honesty and questions concerning bodily choices. The fantastic images in her fiction mostly highlight the sexual identity that individuals are forced to adopt in patriarchal culture. Winterson says that she wants to be seen rather as a writer than as a lesbian who writes, but the images and models she employs in her fiction make the reader think that she writes for the liberation of lesbians who are represented in her novels as more pleasant figures. Thus, while Carter's novels represent heterosexual love as the norm with a belief that under egalitarian conditions men and women can be happy together, Winterson sees lesbianism as the only alternative to the patriarchal order. In their use of the fantastic, both writers aim at transgressing what is real and prepare the reader mentally for the construction of a better world. In a 1986 interview with The New York Times, Carter said a labelling of her writing as "magic realism" was not accurate: "It's more realism than not. I can't define it until after it's done except that it is definitely fiction." (Richardson, 1) Winterson similarly implies that she wants to alter the unpleasant aspects of the real. In an interview she recalls the days of childhood in which she wrote sermons "driven by a need to preach to people and convert them" and says that the purpose of literature is to make a difference: "I think that that's its purpose- to open up spaces in a closed world- and for me, it's a natural progression which seems bizarre perhaps- from those days of preaching the Word to these days of trying to make people see things imaginatively, transformatively." (in Reynolds, 11) Unlike Carter's, Winterson's "Word" to people envisages a world of fiction and of reality in which only women are represented as agreeable figures. Compared to Carter's, Winterson's fiction is limited in scope.

FOOTNOTES

[1] She begins by pointing out the limitations of Todorov's study, and she concludes by admitting that an understanding of the subversive function of fantastic literature emanates from structuralist readings of texts rather than only the thematic aspects. (175)

[2] Jackson rejects a purely Bakhtinian analysis of fantastic texts. She finds this sort of analysis inadequate since "modern fantasy is severed from its roots in carnivalesque art: it is no longer a communal form." (2000:16) Since modern texts are produced in conditions completely different from those related to the Menippean origins of the genre, the Bakhtinian perspective fails to promise a fruitful interpretation of the fantastic texts written in the 20th century. To explicate the difference between the ground rules of the Menippea and of the contemporary fantastic, she notes that the Menippea as a traditional form of fantastic art has many links with carnival, which is a ritualised but temporary suspension of everyday law and order; however, unlike medieval fantasies, the subversive fantasies of the modern era intend not to suspend law and order but to deconstruct them and suggest the possibility for constructing them anew.

[3] It should be noted that Todorov uses the term "theme" as a synonym for "image" or "motif", so when reading the quotations one should bear in mind that "thematic study" means a study that focuses on the themes in a traditional sense, that is the "subject or main idea in a work" while "theme" refers to the repeated or frequently used images and motifs in a work. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

[4] For instance, for Dorothy Scarborough, the themes are classified simply as "modern ghosts; the devil and his allies; supernatural life". (in Todorov,100) Penzolt has a longer list including "ghosts, phantoms, vampires, werewolves, witches and witchcraft, invisible beings, the animal spectres."(in Todorov,100) Vax has his "werewolves; witches; parts of the human body; the pathology of personality; the interplay of invisible and visible; the alterations of causality, space and time; regression." and Caillois gives a more detailed list:

> ... the pact with the devil; the anguished soul that requires, in order to achieve peace, that a certain action be performed; the spectre doomed to an incoherent and endless journey; death personified appearing among the living; the indefinable, invisible "thing" that haunts;

vampires, i.e., the dead who obtain perpetual youth by sucking the blood of the living; the statue, figure, suit of armour, or automaton that suddenly comes to life and acquires deadly independence; the magician's curse involving a dreadful and supernatural disease; the phantom-woman appearing from the beyond, seductive and deadly; the inversion of the realms of dream and reality; the room, apartment, house, or street erased from space; the cessation of repetition of time. (in Todorov, 1975: 100-101)

Todorov thinks that Caillois fails to provide a logical classification and emphasizes the need for "systematization on an abstract level", which Witold Ostrowsky's study illustrates for him: "characters (matter and consciousness), world of objects (matter and space), action, causality, goals, time" (102) But, to Todorov, Ostrowsky's list like the others is also "lacking" since there are elements without organization. He studies these classifications only to find that all of these lists fail to provide an error-proof guide.

[5] Todorov's discussion of the fantastic does not have a gender-sensitive dimension, which is apparent in his use of the word "man" for "human beings". Jackson does not have a critical comment on this; however she is well aware of the potential that the fantastic carries to subvert patriarchy. Thus, she cites Emily Brönte, Elizabeth Gaskell, Christina Rossetti, Isak Dinesen, Carson McCullers, Sylvia Plath and Angela Carter as writers "all of whom have all employed the fantastic to subvert patriarchal society- the symbolic order of modern culture. (104)

[6] In order to facilitate the understanding of the term and its implications, Jackson places the following diagram into her text:

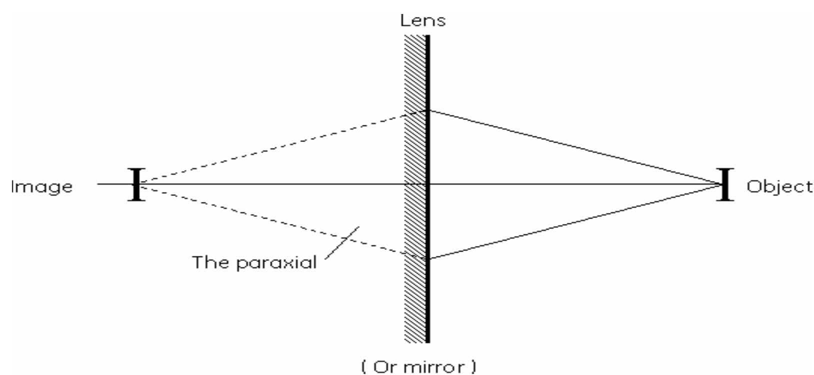

Figure:1

[7] In this story, it is love at first "sight" that accelerates the conflict of the protagonist. The tale contains the *ocche*, eye-glasses and telescope that bring together the sight of the automaton and the fiery Sandman that collects the eyes of the small children for his own children who live on the moon; in Gautier's "The Beautiful Vampire", the problem starts with "the effect of sea-green eyes...What eyes!" which makes Romuald experience the "sensation of a blind man who suddenly recovers his sight" and ends with a relevant advice to the reader: "Never look on a woman, but go with your eyes fixed on the ground, for chaste and steadfast as you may be, one minute may make you lose Eternity." (259)

[8] Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886), one of the early works of the genre, is for instance based upon this very problem. There, in the experimental realm of Dr Jekyll, Hyde appears and then disappears "like the stain of breath breath upon the mirror". (46) Certain drugs have the power to "shake and pull apart our covering of flesh, just as the wind might blow a curtain aside." (46) In Desire Machines, it is again the laboratory product of a physician, the samples of a peep-show proprietor that makes things appear and disappear. Stevenson's novel represents an important example of the fantastic. In almost all fantastic works, sight, looking and vision are problematised; or rather vision becomes a significant device of the fantastic. Todorov in his The Fantastic calls this a "fundamental sense, sight". (120) He maintains that sight is one of the themes of the fantastic by referring to Hoffmann's tale, "Princess Brambilla", the theme of which he states as "the play of dream and reality, mind and matter." (121) There, as the case in Desire Machines, vision offers the dividing line between the real and the fantastic, and it is sight that alters a real and ordinary world into the a fantastic one:

> It is eyeglasses and mirrors that permit penetration into the marvellous universe... Real wealth, true happiness are accessible only to those who manage to see themselves in the mirror...To see through eyeglasses brings the discovery of another world and distorts normal vision...Vision pure and simple reveals an ordinary world, without mysteries. Indirect vision is the only road to the marvellous. (121-122)

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- Instructor in the department of English Language and Literature, the Faculty of Humanities and Letters, Bilkent University, since Fall 1997

The courses I offer:

- Selections from English Literature
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- Translation from English
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• Freshman English instructor in the First Year English Program
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The courses I offered:

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• Research Assistant at Muğla University, Department of English Language and Literature, 1995-1996

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SHORT COURSES and WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

• August 2001- Adatepe Taş Mektep Yaz Semineri: Kültür Tarihi ve Tarihçiliği Üstüne. Mete Tunçay

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-Tragedy from the Greeks to…: Bakhtin's *carnivalesque* and tragedy
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• 1998-"Public Speaking" by Dr Jeanne Miller
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• 1993- British Council, "British Culture and Society", by Dr Laurence Raw and Dr Can Abanazır

PAPERS PRESENTED

- "The Imagined versus the real: Bakhtin's concept of "surplus" in Flaubert's Madame Bovary and Stendhal's the Red and the Black"
International Students' Conference, March 2001

- "Shall We Keep the Aspidistra Flying or Not? Double Voice of the Satirist in Orwell's Keep the Aspidistra Flying"
The 9th METU British Novelists Seminar: George Orwell and His Work, December 2001

- "History in Jeanette Winterson's Fiction", Hysterical Fiction: Women, History and Authorship" International Conference, University of Wales Swansea, August 2003

- "Blurred Dichotomies in Angela Carter's Fiction", International Conference, Universite Catholique, Louvain, Belgium, December 2004

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- "Shall We Keep the Aspidistra Flying or Not? Double Voice of the Satirist in Orwell's Keep the Aspidistra Flying"
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- "Unveiling the Veiled: The Subversive Use of Metaphors in Erendiz Atasü's The Other Side of the Mountain", Edebiyat, 13.1, Journal of Middle Eastern Literature, New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

- "Demythologising History: Winterson's Fictions and His/tories", Feminismo/s, Volume 4, December 2004

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

- 2Oth century fiction
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- Comparative Literature
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TURKISH SUMMARY

Angela Carter ve Jeanette Winterson'ın Romanlarında Fantastik İmgelerin İşlevleri

Giriş

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Angela Carter ve Jeanette Winterson'ın romanlarında kullanılan fantastik öğelerin romanların genel dokusu içerisinde oynadığı rolü incelemektir. Çalışma romanların incelenmesi aşamasında, iki yazarın da fantastik imgeleri ataerkil toplum düzeninde kadınlara ve erkeklere dayatılan cinsiyet rollerini eleştirip dönüştürecek biçimde kullandıklarını ve bu sürecin nasıl gerçekleştiğini gösterir. Her iki yazar da okurun yerleşmiş düşünce biçimlerini farkedip üzerine düşünmesini sağlamak için, hem gerçekçi hem de fantastik anlatım tekniklerini harmanlar ve bunları alışılmadık şekilde yanyana getirirler. Kısaca, bu tez fantastik anlatım öğelerini eserlerinde kullanan Carter ve Winterson'ın bu yolla egemen ataerkil kültürün cinsiyet yapılandırmasına direnen ve baskın gerçeklik anlayışını reddeden bir söylem yarattıklarını savunur.

Romanların İncelenmesinde Kullanılan Kuramsal Arkaplan

Fantastik terimi edebiyat eleştirmenlerince çok farklı anlamlarda kullanılmış, dolayısıyla da birbirinden çok farklı fantastik kuramı ortaya atılmıştır. Bunların arasında ilk sistemli çalışma Todorov'un fantastik eserlerin yapısal özelliklerini inceleyen The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (1975) başlıklı çalışmasıdır. Daha sonra pek çok kuramcı, kendi bakış açısını Todorov'un bu çalışmasını temel alarak oluşturmuştur. Bunların içinde, Rosemary Jackson'ın

Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (1981) adlı incelemesi Todorov'un üzerinde durmadığı, fantastiğin psikoanalitik çözümlemesi ve politik ve ideolojik olarak işaret ettikleri gibi başlıkları ele alması açısından çok önemli bir çalışmadır. Jsckson fantastik tanımını Todorov'un tanımı üzerine kurar. Yani, Todorov'un anlattığı gibi, fantastik ne tam olarak bir anlaşılamayan doğaüstü olgudan ne de bireyin algısındaki psikolojik bir bozukluktan doğar; fantastik, biri tamamen dışsal biri içsel bu iki birbirine uzak nedenle açıklanamayacak, bu nedenle de "Acaba öyle mi böyle mi?", "Okuduklarım/ Yaşadıklarım gerçek olabilir mi?" tereddütüne yol açan bir düşünüş ve hissediş durumundan doğar. Jackson Todorov'un bu tanımını kabul eder ve bu aradalık halini optik fizikten aldığı "paraxial" terimiyle ayrıntılı olarak anlatır. Paraxial alan ne aynanın önüne konmuş nesneyi ne de aynadan yansıyan imgeyi, fakat nesnenin imgeye dönüşmeden önce yeraldığı alanı anlatır. Bu açıdan ne tam gerçeklik ne de imgeyi anlatır. İşte fantastiğin yarattığı etkiyi de buna benzeterek, fantastik imgelerin gücünü -tıpkı aynadaki imgenin varlığını nesneye borçlu olması gibi- gerçeklikten aldığını, ve gerçekliği dönüştürerek yeni bir varoluş biçimine işaret ettiğini savunur. Bu düşüncelerini de fantastiği, "kültürün görünmeyeni" ni gösteren bir anlatım modu olarak ele almakla somutlar. Jackson'a göre bu biçimiyle fantastik egemen ideolojilerin bastırdığı duyguları, susturmaya çalıştığı düşünceleri dile getirmeye yarayan dönüştürücü bir araçtır. Bu tezde, Carter ve Winterson'ın eserleri bu fantastik tanımları ışığında incelenmekte, romanlardaki imgeler ataerkil kültürün dayattığı cinsiyet rollerine karşı verilen tepkinin bir anlatımı olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsiyet Rolleri

Bu çalışma boyunca kullanılan toplumsal cinsiyet terimi, biyolojik temeli olan kadın ve erkek cinsiyet rolüne değil, sosyal ve kültürel yapılandırmanın sonucunda ortaya çıkan toplumsal cinsiyeti anlatmak üzere kullanılmaktadır. Yani bu terim, kültürün ve toplumun, kadın ya da erkek olmaktan ne beklediği ve ne anladığının toplamını ifade eder. Örneğin kadınlardan, bağımlı, korumacı, sevecen, verici, fedakar, erkeklerden de güçlü, bağımsız, cesur, özgüveni yüksek olmaları beklenir. Toplumsallaşma sürecinde, bireylere bu beklenti ve tanımlamaların toplamı olan kadınsılık ya da erkeksilik kavramları öğretilir ve biyolojik olarak kadın olan

bireylerin kadınsı, erkeklerin de erkeksi toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini benimsemeleri beklenir. Yani kadın ya da erkek olarak doğan birey toplumsallaşma sürecinde kadınsı ya da erkeksi olur. Simone de Beauvoir'un The Second Sex adlı kitabında ifade ettiği gibi: "insan kadın doğmaz, olur." Kısaca, kadını ya da erkeği kültür ve toplum yaratır. Carter ve Winterson romanlarında bu rollerin ne kadar kısıtlayıcı ve baskıcı olabildiklerini anlatmak için, zaman zaman erkekleri kadınsı, kadınları erkeksi biçimde sunarlar. Karakterlerini sempatik kılarak da okurun kabul edilmiş cinsiyet rollerinin aslında birer kültür ürünü olduğunu ve değiştirilebileceğini düşünmesini sağlarlar.

Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman

Carter'ın bu romanı, Sürrealizm, fantastik öykü geleneği, Freud ve psikanaliz, Marquis de Sade ve pornografi, Alfred Jarry ve patafizik, Frankfurt okulu ve Aydınlanmanın eleştirisi, arzu, gerçeklik ve hayal gibi geniş bir yelpazeye yayılmış başlıkları fantastik bir olay örgüsü içinde harmanlayan, eleştirmenlerce de fikir birliği içinde ifade edildiği üzere özetlenmesi oldukça güç bir romandır. Baş kahraman Desiderio, Gerçeklik Şehri'nin ajanı olarak Hayaller Şehri'ni ve arzu makineleri ile Gerçeklik Şehri'ndeki düzeni ve istikrarı tehdit eden Dr Hoffman'ı izleyecektir. Ama süreç içinde arzularının aklına üstün gelmesiyle o da kendini bu iki şehir ve iki farklı kurallar dizisi içinde savrulur halde bulur. Roman boyunca kullanılan görmeye ilişkin fantasik imgeler ve metamorfoz imgeleri, okurun cinsiyet rollerine ve yerleşik kültürel düşünce kalıplarına eleştirel bir gözle bakmasını sağlar.

Nights at the Circus

Carter'ın bu romanında, diğerinden farklı olarak, olay örgüsü hayali bir şehirde değil de İngiltere'nin 1899 yılındaki Londra'sında, ardından Petersburg ve Sibirya steplerinde geçer. Romandaki karakterlerin ve olayların tam yeni bir yüzyılın eşiğinde resmedilmesi, Carter'ın 1800'lerin başında sanayileşmenin hızlanmasıyla ivme kazanan kadın sorunu, 1890'lardaki "evdeki melek"in karşısına konan "Yeni Kadın" kavramı ve bu kavramlar etrafında dönen tartışmaları canlı biçimde

sunmasını sağlar. Kısaca, Carter günümüz cinsiyet sorununu 1890'lardaki "Yeni Kadın" üzerinden anlatır, bunu da ergenlik çağında göğüsleriyle birlikte sırtında bir çift kanat çıkaran Fevvers adlı karakterini romanın merkezine oturtarak yapar. Fevvers, giriş bölümünde sözettiğimiz gerçeklik ve fantastik harmanlamasının bedenlenmiş halidir sanki. Fevvers'ın yanısıra gerçekten de hayatının çoğunu derin bir uykuda geçiren "Uyuyan Güzel", ikisi göğüslerinde dört gözü olan "Fanny Four Eyes" ve yarısı kadın yarısı erkek Albert/Albertina gibi sıradışı karakterler yaratmak yoluyla Carter cinsiyet rollerini ve kadının toplumdaki yerini farklı açılardan tartışan zengin bir belge niteliği taşır.

The Passion

Winterson'ın bu romanı tarihsel ve edebi kişileri birarada kullanan, çok anlatıcılı bir romandır. Carter'ın yukarıdaki iki romanında olduğu gibi, The Passion'da da fantastik öğelerin cinsiyet rollerini dönüştürme işlevi taşıdığı söylenebilir. Sadece balıkçı erkeklerin taşıdığı bir özelliğe, perde-ayaklara sahip olarak doğan Villanelle bu sıradışı yanıyla kadınsılık ve erkeksilik kavramlarını mercek altına almamızı sağlar. Bu eleştirel bakış açısı, cinsiyet ve mekan, zorunlu heteroseksüellik, lezbiyen dayanışması gibi tartışma alanlarının anıştırılmasıyla da desteklenmektedir. Örneğin, romanda yerleşik kültürel beklentinin tersine, kadınlar sıklıkla dış ve kamusal, erkekler de iç ve özel alanda gösterilir.

The.PowerBook

Bu romanda Winterson siberuzay ve sanal gerçeklik kavramları üzerinden zaman, mekan, beden, cinsiyet sınırları gibi konuları işler. Farklı tarihsel dönemlerden, aynı duyguyu yaşayan gerçek ve edebi kişilerin biraraya geldiği olay örgüsü, okuma süresince gerçek-sanal, kadın-erkek, eski-yeni, geçmiş-gelecek karşıtlıklarından özgürleşmemizi sağlar. Winterson, romanın başında kullandığı, 16. yüzyılda Ali'nin Türkiye'den Hollanda'ya gizlice götürdüğü lalenin penise dönüştüğü metamorfoz imgesiyle de ataerkil kültürün "phallocentric" tutumunu inceden inceye eleştirir.

Roman heteroseksüel aile kurumunu ve evliliği karşı olumsuz tutumuyla da sanki cinsiyet rollerine karşı durmak üzere destek güç veren bir rehber kitap özelliği taşır.

Sonuç

Carter da Winterson da fantastik öğeleri bir hayal dünyası, ya da Tolkien'in terimiyle "İkincil bir Dünya" oluşturup, bu dünyada sıkılanlara geçici bir rahatlama ve kaçış olanağı vermek için değil, tam da bu birinci dünyadaki yakıcı sorunların altını çizmek ve çözülmesini sağlamak üzere tartışmak üzere kullanırlar. İki yazar da kullandıkları metamorfoz, bedenin parçalara ayrılması ve görme ile ilgili fantastik imgeler aracılığıyla, ataerkil kültürün baskıladığı, seslendirilmesine engel olduğu düşünce ve duyguları görünür-duyulur kılar. Bu açıdan Carter ve Winterson'ın romanlarında Jackson'ın dediği gibi, fantastiğin kültürün görünmeyenini gösterme özelliğinden faydalandıklarını söyleyebiliriz.