

**CHAPTER III:**

**CONCLUSION**

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It would be appropriate to say that Angela Carter as a mainstream writer chose Science Fiction as a mode to express some of her themes and ideas. In 1988, in an interview, she said to Anna Katsavos:

... , there was a whole group of science fiction writers in Britain in the sixties, who really were doing very extraordinary things, with the genre. They weren't writing about bug-eyed monsters and space at all. One of them, O.G. Ballard, coined this phrase, 'inner space'. I was quite profoundly affected by them ... .

It seemed to me, after reading these writers a lot, that they were writing about ideas, and that was basically what I was trying to do.<sup>1</sup>

Carter's Science Fiction is not studied with 'bug-eyed monsters', space-travels, and inter-planetary wars, which we come across in the popular SCIENCE FICTION. She had a serious purpose in accepting this form. Being a committed materialist she wanted to question the social reality. She used fantasy to examine material conditions of the world around her, because she firmly believed that 'this world is all that there is'.

It is seen that in all her writings Carter has taken up the issues of Sexuality, Reason and Post-modernism. Her commitment to Reason need not be seen at odds with her use of fantasy in her fiction. The literature of fantastic, says Rosemary Jackson, 'is a literature which attempts to create a space for a discourse other than a conscious one'.<sup>2</sup> It can be used as a subversive form to challenge established order, which is oppressive. Carter always had a social concern for the oppressed and the under privileged.

It can be seen from the discussion of her Science Fiction in the second chapter, that Carter has made use of Science Fiction novum of futuristic societies to explore the aspects of sexuality. In a dominant patriarchal society, it is taboo to write freely about it. She examines male / female sexual notions on the background of patriarchal ideology, and projects a new woman, who is able to find a rational solution to her problems. Marianne, in Heroes and Villains, for example, is a repressed woman in the world of her father. She rebels against it to join the Barbarians, who appear to her as an alternative to the oppressive ordered social system of the Professors. But here again she is the victim of crude patriarchal notions. She does not, however, run away from it. She undertakes to bring order to the Barbarian community, and bring about new social order. She does not compromise her rationality. This is, in fact, characteristic of Carter's fantasy. The elements of fantasy in her fiction are under conscious, rational control. She is not negative in her approach. Her heroines, like Marianne above, do not wantonly disrupt order. We can see that Carter's feminism is positive and well directed. Her

fiction does not offer straightforward story of woman's liberation. Feminist readers may become disappointed with her, because her fiction does not include any consolatory idea for them. She is against popular myths about woman – woman as a goddess, mother, etc. She believed that such myths gave false consolation to women and served to strengthen repressive patriarchal practices.

Carter did not like to label herself as a feminist, yet her writings are informed by feminist principles and preoccupation with issues like patriarchy, repression, female sexuality, etc. In The Passion of New Eve, she has created a female space, Beulah, under the matriarchal head, Mother, who is an essentialist matriarch, like Zero, in the same novel, who is an essentialist patriarch. She is against such essentialism. She does not accept that male-female relationship is essentially antagonistic. In her opinion, female principle is reconciliatory and synthesizing, and not opposing. She ridicules the absolutist position of Mother in Beulah, as well as Zero, in Zero's town. Both are rendered sterile and defected finally. She was deeply concerned with understanding sexual conflict between men and women. Evelyn, her protagonist in PNE, finally realizes how his notion of sexuality reduced himself to unlovable object. Sexuality without love leads to frustration.

Her rationality principle is bound up with her feminist ideas. She knew that modernist epistemology based on Reason is the foundation of feminist principle. Susan Rubin Suleiman has described her as a 'feminist post-modernist'.<sup>3</sup> However, her feminism is marked by her rationalism. She was against philosophical stance of

post-modernism because it undermined Reason. In The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, her protagonist, Desiderio, kills Doctor Hoffman and also his daughter, Albertina, because both stand for irrationality and unsatiated ego. He kills them for common good because they were out to destroy the very basis of community. We can see that between Reason and Desire, between Rationality and Wanton Imagination, she has always taken the side of Reason. She is not against desire. Her hero, Desiderio, was not totally against Hoffman, nor was he totally in favour of logical positivism of the Minister of Determination (in DH), but he could not allow the Doctor and his daughter to sacrifice common good for the sake of their insatiable desires.

Carter was a very well read writer. She was very well aware of cultural, political and literary theories of writer, like Barthes, Theodore Adorno and Michel Foucault. We can see the evidence of it in her fictional work. In her Heroes and Villains, we find allusions to Rousseau, Milton's Paradise Lost and Shakespeare's plays. In The Passion of New Eve, she uses the metaphor of alchemy, medieval and 17<sup>th</sup> century art of transmuting base metals into gold. Her Hermaphrodite characters, Tristessa and the New Eve, show her awareness of modern Psychoanalytical theory of Freud and Jung. And in DH, she is involved in post modernist argument of epistemology.

As a writer of Science Fiction, she was very different from her contemporary women Science Fiction writers. She very boldly handled the issues of sexuality so

that her fictional works like PNE and DH are criticized as pornographic fiction. The feminists were dissatisfied with the pornographic descriptions and depiction of violence against women in the fictions like HV, PNE and DH. She is charged with reactionary portrayals of women as objects of male desire, for example, Leilah in PNE, Marianne in HV and girls like Aoi and Albertina in DH. But these acts of violence are inevitable part of the story. For Marianne (in HV), sex and violence are closely connected. In the case of Leilah and Aoi (and even Marianne) Carter shows complicity of these women in the acts of violence. In the given circumstances Marianne, in fact, invites violence.

As from the foregoing discussion, Carter's Science Fiction easily renders the interpretations in terms of cultural and critical theory and psychoanalytic as well as socialist thinking. The three Science Fiction works treated in this dissertation have been examined only as Science Fiction, and in terms of specific Science Fiction novellas mentioned in the Second Chapter. Though this dissertation is restricted to such Science Fiction aspects and the elements of feminism in her fictions, it must be stated here that Carter's fiction is a rich literary production, inviting its analysis in terms of postmodern theory of literature, psycho-analysis, socialism, and post-structuralism.

**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. Anna Kastavos, 'An Interview with Angela Carter', Review of Contemporary Fiction, 14, 3, Fall, 1994, p. 14.
2. Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, (London: Routledge, 1981), p.62.
3. Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle' in Lorna Sage, Angela Carter. (Plymouth: Association with the British Council, 1994), p.100.