

GENDER TROUBLE IN HEROES AND VILLAINS

Ranbir Kaur

Ph.D. Scholar

University Of Jammu, India

Abstract

Heroes and Villains is an outstanding example of how Carter amalgamates and reinvents the gothic tradition and the science fiction to put forward her feminist views. The present paper talks about Gender Trouble in the novel Heroes and Villains. The novel Heroes and Villains [1969] as an exercise in Gothic by consciously choosing a gothic mode because reviews of her previous fictions called them Gothic. She says it is a truly Gothic novel, full of dread and glamour and passion. The novel Heroes and Villains is based on the time after a nuclear war. Heroes and Villains is a post-apocalyptic gothic fiction. Post-apocalyptic fiction delves into fears about the future- that our present course will lead us to a catastrophe and may prevent us from having any future at all. The Gothic components in Angela's works can be seen as part of renewal of the marginalized subgenres of the past during the so called post-modern era. Carter works with the taboos traditional to Gothic literature: rape, incest, female sexuality and male sexual violence and suggests a truly nightmarish scenario that the future may be dominated by all that is gruesome about the past. At the end we can say that Heroes and Villains being a female gothic fiction challenges conventions, namely the conventions of a patriarchal society, through the transgression of boundaries set by these conventions.

Keywords: Gothic Literature, Gender, Post-Apocalyptic, Feminist, Taboos, Science Fiction.

GENDER TROUBLE IN HEROES AND VILLAINS

- Ranbir Kaur

H*eroes and Villains* is an outstanding example of how Carter amalgamates and reinvents the gothic tradition and the science fiction to put forward her feminist views. The relation of Angela Carter's work to Gothic is an uneasy one. In a 1987 interview with Les Bedford she affirms that her early work was not gothic and she wrote *Heroes and Villains* [1969] as an exercise in Gothic by consciously choosing a gothic mode because reviews of her previous fictions called them Gothic. She goes on to describe her subsequent decision to write *Heroes and Villains*, "a truly Gothic novel, full of dread and glamour and passion" (qtd. in Munford 8). One of its epigraphs is from Leslie Fielder's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960): "The Gothic mode is essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness" (qtd. in Pyrhönen 217). Here she may be recognizing what her works share with the form so defined, but Gothic is just one of the anti-realistic sources she used in her parodic picaresques. Gothic literature is a reaction to the Age of Reason rather than a continuation of the prevailing philosophical doctrines and Gothic fiction is indeed an easy target for satirists since the spirit of the fiction represented the polar opposite of the enlightened mentality of the Age of Reason. Her works fit in both sides of the boundary between Enlightened reason and the imaginary, across which Gothic is assumed to work: they are coherently critical by eccentric means, but don't lose the magic of storytelling. Carter's work is renowned for its lush, imagistic prose, gothic themes, aggression, and a stream of eroticism. In her 'Afterword' to the collection *Fireworks*, Carter acknowledges this debt:

Cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious- mirrors; the externalized self; forsaken castles; haunted forests; forbidden sexual objects. . . a system of imagery derived from subterranean areas behind everyday experience (121).

Heroes and Villains is a post- apocalyptic gothic fiction. Post- apocalyptic fiction delves into fears about the future- that our present course will lead us to a catastrophe and may prevent us from having any future at all. Gothic fiction on the other hand confronts fears about the past- that we have not and will under no circumstances be able to rid ourselves of its nastiest horrors. In mending these two genres together, Carter proposes a truly nightmarish scenario: that the future may be subjugated by all that is "monstrous" about the past. *Heroes and Villains* comments on the present and expresses fears and apprehensions about human history. Gothic

fiction deals with fears about the past and the novel in harmony with traditional gothic form- the tyrannies and superstitions of the past come back to haunt the present. Carter retains a Gothic atmosphere through “a fear of the barbaric not only from the past but also in the present and the future,” (Punter, *The Literature of Terror* 183) and throughout the novel maintains a pervasive sense of decay.

The Gothic components in Angela’s works can be seen as part of renewal of the marginalized subgenres of the past during the so called post-modern era. Carter works with the taboos traditional to Gothic literature: rape, incest, female sexuality and male sexual violence and suggests a truly nightmarish scenario that the future may be dominated by all that is gruesome about the past. Rape in this novel has multiple connotations, being used once to demonstrate the power of one sex over the other and then to illustrate the sense of desire. Carter demonstrates the veiled fears, apprehensions, suspicions and desires of women in the society. *Heroes and Villains* being a female gothic novel concerns with the heroine who is in clash with the standards of the male-subjugated society and the role that the society imposes on her. This kind of Gothic writing generally presents the main female character as both a victim and a bold heroine. The Gothic form has constantly been used to cope with troubles of gender difference, structures of power play between the sexes and women’s upheaval against patriarchy.

Conventional Gothic fiction questions conventions, incorporating sexual and gender conventions, through the transgression of boundaries. David Punter however, also indicates that, conventional Gothic fiction always returns to a traditional ending. Taboos are cleared away and a conventional patriarchal order is reinstated. Altering and re-working them within a modern actuality, she concerns with modern transgressions of boundaries of sexual taboos and she takes in hand the same subject, still in a more fundamentalised way and with a different ending. Fred Botting’s statement is enlightening: “Angela Carter’s fiction, self-consciously mixing different forms, including fairytale, legend, science fiction and Gothic, shows the interplay of narratives shaping reality and identity, particularly in relation to the production of meaning for sexuality” (110).

The novel *Heroes and Villains* is based on the time after a nuclear war when there were three existing societies: the Professors, an influential group of survivors who form sprinkled enclaves of civilization sustained by farming; the Barbarians, nomads who have suffered outside the bunkers, prowling the Professors’ villages for supplies and food; and a third group of ‘non-

connoted' characters designated as 'the Out People', mutants who have been defaced by the radiation, inhabiting the ruins. Being dressed in rags and fur, wearing collars of glass, metal and bone certainly add to the gothic atmosphere of the chapel and proficiently stand for a residual, radical Otherness that impedes the reconstitution or the reversing of the binary opposition between dominators and subaltern.

The Gothic tradition according to Angela Carter is nothing sacred but "deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism . . . It retains a singular moral function—that of provoking unease" (Marie Mulvey- Roberts 35). The protagonist, Marianne, is a Professor's daughter and throughout her early days she witnesses an attack on her village during which a youthful Barbarian murdered her brother. She is a character with the basic Gothic characteristics as one who feels alienated wherever she dwells. As a typical Gothic heroine, Marianne grew up as a prisoner in both the physical and mental sense in her father's world, and even more ghastly imprisonment in her Gothic lover's world. Similar to all Gothic female characters, Marianne is continuously under the strained guardianship of a patriarchal figure. Marianne, unhappy in her tower, dislikes that as a woman she is both an outsider and insider to her own community. She feels incapable of properly expressing her discontent and feels caged and desires to be free. Marianne expects to seek her way in the world, but the world of Barbarian is a world she does not know and therefore she cannot protect herself within it. For her it might be a place of absolute freedom, but it is exercised beyond limits and eventually leads to abnormality, turning into a prison or torture chamber.

Being a gothic novel, it is her journey as a source of knowledge and discovery of the self, a journey which is inwards in so far as it offers less emphasis on the external and physical space, and concentrates on the hero's learning and self-discovery. This inward movement physically takes Marianne from Professor-land to the Barbarian settlement and makes her an expert in the unconscious which further forms a new kind of reality which had been repressed by the pressures of civilised existence. A journey into the unconscious undertaken by the right traveller; after all, "woman is a specialist in the unconscious," claims Julia Kristeva (qtd. in López 108). Aiden Day describes it thus:

In Marianne's case, the professional rationalism that seeks to deny the power of the id sets up in her a longing- which she does not initially comprehend- to get in touch with the id. It sets up in her a longing to engage with the Barbarian strangeness that is physically

outside her community but which resides in her own being... It is her own desire she finds, and which is, fundamentally, much more important than Jewel himself. (qtd. in López 107)

Marianne's fascination for the newness and weirdness of the Barbarians is an outcome of her boredom. Marianne opposes, assimilates, amends, or discards the expectations fostered upon her, and assesses her own expectations, produced within and by her varying social locations. It is among Barbarians that she identifies her own seditious spirit and consequently she cannot think of marrying any young man from her own community. She confirms her stand in the following words: "I don't want to marry . . . I don't see the point. I could marry someone from outside, but nobody here. Everybody here is so boring, father". (*HV* 10-11). In this attempt she analytically engages her own perception of self and the perception of self held by those around her.

Being a part of Barbarians, whose name suggested to Marianne, the freedom in its linguistic link to roughness. Marianne discovers she is given a new non-status: she is no longer insider-outsider, as she had been in her professor village, but is now outsider-outsider: exterior to both the community and to its social relations. Her status as a woman from outside the group is one of vulnerability and danger. Marianne being inactive and a non-agent is evenly influential as she remains unincorporated into the kinship relations within the new community and for that reason is able to evade her commodity status. After her attempted escape and rape by her dark companion Jewel, she is forced to marry him following the rituals having gothic touch attached to it.

She is an alien figure who grows up in the land which is assumed to be rational and sexually oppressive and is not able to deal with her own awakened desires. There is no one in the community of Professors that she could identify with; therefore, she casts her desires into the strange and bizarre Barbarians. She feels like an alien figure at both the places as she is total stranger among the Barbarians and they find her filthy and atrociously alien. A learned and self-assured woman in a tribe "caught in the moment of transition from the needs of sheer survival to a myth-ruled society," (Oramus 121) she is thus woman-alien. Being alien figure to the tribe, Marianne snubs to take on conventional female roles and depicts a steady psychological transformation. She gains the knowledge how to communicate or verbalize her own desires and to objectify the man she fantasies: Jewel. Marianne's reformed outlook towards her and others

makes her liberated and empowered. In a way both symbolize fighters in this emblematic battle between men and women.

Marianne is an agent of an alien world that stimulates anger and grief in Jewel. Marianne towards the end of the novel feels inclined to compose a new narrative for herself and make the world around believe in it. Anne Cranny-Francis's assertion in an essay is most suitable for a discussion of Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* (1969):

Woman as an alien, the non-patriarchal alien in a patriarchal society, the patriarchal alien in a non-patriarchal society, the non-patriarchal alien experiencing the stress of positioning as a patriarchal subject—all are strategies used by feminist science fiction writers to deconstruct patriarchal ideology and its practice. (qtd. in Oramus 117)

Being an alien woman, she stands for herself and suspends the tribe's patriarchal structure and initiates a new segment or time in its history. It is she who created a reconciliatory way between the two patriarchal worlds. The ancient order centred on binary oppositions (hero/villain, passive/active, natural/civilized) and a number of pre-holocaustic taboos that are discarded. Unlike standard disaster story authors, Carter does not set up stern binaries between the Professors and the Barbarians, i.e., the refined and the savage. The post-holocaust narrative enables her with a space where she delves into the smudging of traditional boundaries and the way in which such artificial boundaries are maintained. She couldn't easily find any place of her own where she could develop her own independent identity so she decides on a set up that suits her best.

Carter's characters move violently between the two identities they switch between. These liminal identities of the characters which form the basic ingredient of gothic are represented by the conventional binary oppositions, most often: virgin-seducer, or subservient—domineering within the character, but also by fabricating the two identities of one character. According to Manuel Aguirre in "A Grammar of Gothic":

Gothic dwells on the liminality of the human condition, its potential for change—change not on the moral plane but also (and increasingly so as the genre develops) psychologically—change which, in the 18th-century debate on cherished identity, is all too often seen as degrading or annihilating. Caught in the threshold region, Gothic characters are, if not destroyed, transformed. They acquire numinous

features and may come to resemble such denizens of the limen-ghosts, monsters, demons-as exhibit a non-rational (compulsive, excessive, repetitive, mindless) behaviour. (131)

After discovering her identity she like every gothic heroine yearns to have power over the tribe and to become a person in command, which she proclaims by restating the Bible: “I will be the tiger-lady and I will rule them with a rod of iron” (*HV* 50). Punter notes that the focus on the consequences of social power and social marginalization is also a typically Gothic concern: “the Gothic is, in any reading, about power... The question of disability and power, is of course, all around us” (qtd. in Anolik 6). Marianne now figuratively acquires the tiger’s power and magnificence: not by getting a tattoo, but by reigning ‘with a rod of iron’ over the tribe. Her “rod” most likely stands as her learning and wisdom, the passion of reason her father taught her, pooled with her skill to reconcile binary oppositions and merge nature with nurture, reason with instinct, the Barbarians and the Professors. In opposition to her own wish, Marianne vulnerably becomes a witch, Medusa, the victim of rape, a bride, a wife, and a mother. According to critic, Richard Boston *Heroes and Villains*, is above all “a fable that discusses the roles of reason and imagination in a civilized society” (qtd. in Cavallaro 80). One of the most imperative themes in the novel is the drive to have Power. Carter endeavours to depict women opposing the conventional picture of womanhood with a new manifestation of female figure. Carter deems the tyrannical and devastating power of the social system in which men are looked upon as the authority within the family and society. She managed to free the women from patriarchal society which keeps women passive and men active.

Marianne first as a daughter then as a wife is always under patriarchal strain and is devoid of Power and is expected to be submissive wherever she dwells. Suffocation and a sense of dependency engender a sense of fascination towards Barbarians. She is a strong-willed and independent young woman, unfazed by rape or savagery, fearing only the loss of her own autonomy. Marianne, the tiger-lady has a long road to power behind her as she is feared and it is this fear that becomes the source of her power among the Barbarians. The mytheme of man the seeker who controls his victim and woman the conquered victim who must surrender to his ‘power’ is presented by Mrs. Green, the only mother figure in the novel, as the normative operation of human relations and existence. She also exhibits the devastating effect of patriarchy and the female bonding in it.

Unlike many other critics, Clark is not prepared to read Carter's writing allegorically. Rape, he argues, "is a patriarchal taboo because even when it is not successful the act signifies the subjugation, humiliation and reduction of women" (Gamble 53). All through the novel Marianne draws near all the social relations as relations of power. In *Political Bodies/Body Politics: Semiotics of Gender* (2014), Darlene M. Juschka contends that:

She does not sentimentalise her relationship with Jewel because they are husband and wife; she does not sentimentalise her relations with Mrs. Green the mother figure; she does not sentimentalise her relations with other women of the community because they are, like her, women; she does not sentimentalise her relations with the children because they are deemed innocent; she does not sentimentalise her relation with Donally because they are both from professor communities; and finally she does not sentimentalise her relation with deity. (53)

The text demeans the concept of natural relations between women centred on a mutual female essence, between men and women based on biology, and between women and children based on instinct, and instead insinuates that all human relations are constructed, deferred and organised within society. Margaret Atwood in her essay on Carter's stories "Running with the Tigers", compares the relationship between man and woman with that of tiger and lamb and affirms that the tiger will never lie down with the lamb; it is the lamb the helpless and feeble female--which should learn the tigers' ways. Marianne, in the same gesture aspires to craft a new definition for a power system by neutralising binaries of object/subject; other/same; villain/hero; male/female, intellect/desire or civilized/wild and in consequence manufactures a fresh and new subjectivity for women, the phallic woman. Not only Marianne is depicted as the one who aspires to have power but Jewel and Donally too wished the same. As Donally sarcastically asserts, "there must be something you want. Power? I can offer you a little bit" (HV 68). Jewel rapes Marianne only to demonstrate his power over her and Donally exercises his power over Barbarian with the help of rituals and magic and fears to lose it after the arrival of responsive and knowledgeable Marianne.

It becomes important to note that as soon as Marianne makes an effort to escape from the Barbarians, Jewel comes after her and rapes her, effectively making her his "battle trophy, an object of male conquest" (HV 59). This act of rape, its utter violation of self, is an expression of the phallogocentric and misogynistic worldview that has been imposed on him by his father figure

Donally. Jewel admits that he rapes her to suppress his fear of her otherness and to ensure his position of power and he forces her into marriage to subjugate her completely. As per feminists view, rape is a crime which demonstrates the male wish to control and govern women. Carter in *The Sadeian Woman* (1978) highlights the emotional impression rape has on women and feels that more than the terror of physical harm and disgrace, “it is the fear of psychic breakdown or a disturbance of the self that rules a rape victim” (6).

Marianne undergoes traumatic experience and suffers a psychic dismemberment: the violent incursion of her physical privacy disunites her from any firm sense of reality, as she faces utterly disassociated from herself. This brutal experience of rape directly affects her psyche and terrorizes all her prior notions of autonomy. Jewel’s this act of ferocity or forcefulness intends to trap her in a system of patriarchal power and aggression and is thus imposed to revisit the disgusting and sickening enclosure of the Barbarian camp that is subjugated by its superstitious and exploitive handling of the (female) other. Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* (1970) comments on the effects of patriarchy upon women’s sexuality and says: For the great mass of women throughout history have been confined to the cultural level of animal life in providing the male with sexual outlet and exercising the animal functions of reproduction and care of the young. Thus the female has had sexuality visited upon her as a punishment in a way of life which, with few exceptions, and apart from maternity, did not encourage her to derive pleasure in sexuality and limited her to an existence otherwise comprised mainly of menial labor and domestic service. (119)

The main motive behind this action as Jewel himself confesses is that he necessitates to “swallow” and “incorporate” Marianne into the tribal/familial dynamic, negating the menace of her existence as a troublesome foreigner: “I’ve nailed you on necessity, you poor bitch” (HV 55-6). The aftermath of this incident which involved corporeal violence terrorizes her with a loss of all boundaries. She vigorously refutes Jewel’s reality by in turn objectifying his status in relation to her as a means for self- preservation, projecting onto him the erotic phantasy of demon lover. Roxanne Dunbar, a leader of the Women’s Liberation Movement, in the article “Sexual Liberation” (1969) opines:

Traditional as well as contemporary sexual relations are based on power of male over female. Pleasure is derived from that power... Sex for a man is the only or best way to prove or express his virility, both by the demonstration of sexual potency and by the imposing of his will on her...

As women have frequently observed, sex can be a fast way to ruin a good relationship. Either because the man just can't treat her as an equal... or because he doesn't know how to treat a woman equally in a sexual relationship, or because he was secretly or subconsciously after the conquest all along.

Heroes and Villains focuses on the suppressed desires and brings those hidden desires to the surface level. By highlighting the social location of all relationships, Carter utterly accentuates the politicised spirit of desire. It becomes apparent in the text of Heroes and Villains that all of Marianne's relationships are marked by desire, and desire for the other to be fixed in relation to herself: fixed as an object of her desire in order that she may fix her subjectivity. It is due to the intricacy or complication of social interactions that each relationship deceives her desire. Initially she associates her desire to the Barbarian world and executes it by uniting with Jewel to her disgust. The ideological dodginess of the rape in Heroes and Villains dwells in the fact that the rape might be read as the accomplishment of Marianne's subdued self-conscious desire. Marianne's desire finds its quintessence as a stranger and her desire for subjectivity for the women in community indicates that she is a threat to the societal system that works within. She can therefore be a witch as she works contrary to the rules fixed for woman in society. Jewel too sees her desire for freedom subjugated to her desire for power.

The female subjectivity verified in the character of Marianne in Carter's Heroes and Villains is a complex web between the manifestations of Marianne's own desires and the desire of those others for whom she is simply Other. The novel on the whole deals with the objectification of characters. Under the objectification of Marianne, Jewel's anxiety is centred on the fact that he is unable to cope with Marianne as with other women. Marianne does not seem to incorporate into his concept of femininity where women are expected to be dependable on men. Instead of delicate and empathic heroine with patience of a saint, Carter offers impulsive and rebellious Marianne with "sharp cold eyes" who since her early childhood has not been obedient child sitting in the corner of mother's kitchen (*HV 3*). Jewel rapes her in order to reassure or comfort himself about his masculine status. His agitation and nervousness allegorically signifies the fears and apprehensions of men in the twentieth century. All the members of the group including Jewel echo their knowledge of self through the prism of societal relations and therefore snub Marianne's pursuit for subjectivity demanding that she sustains the status of object.

Marianne's refusal to objectify herself terrorizes the social structure as a whole for it is fabricated upon the subjugation of those labelled as women. Marianne is doing and going beyond what is commonly expected from her by reversing her role. Though she is gendered as female but she is regarded more as masculine than feminine. Jewel reveals to Marianne that his main intension behind raping her is his fear. He explains to Marianne: "There is the matter of our traditional hatred. And, besides, I'm very frightened of you" (HV 56). Jewel's apprehension and dread of Marianne might be universalised on all conventional patriarchal tormentors who picture strong women as threats that might deprive men of power. He explains his tutor Donally's view to "Swallow you up and incorporate you, see . . . I've nailed you on necessity, you poor bitch" (HV 62). Jewel "nailed Marianne" to obedience in order to get her under his check or control and to "alleviate his fear". Further, objectification of Jewel illustrates that Marianne doesn't correspond to the concept of submissive women living in the 'male-dominated society' and hence, she becomes a victim of a rape. The act of rape is the consequence of Marianne's avoidance from the female role that the society prescribes for her and it might be seen from Marianne's point of view as an objectification of Jewel and a fulfilment of Marianne's desire.

The process of developing her subjectivity entails that Marianne becomes a phallic female: not the object of the objectifying gazer. Marianne must stand out of the world and affect the attitude of boredom or alienation in order that she can rationally assess it. With the increase of her subjectivity there is simultaneously increase in objectivity of those around her. Jewel who is objectified and deprived of his masculine authoritarian powers ascertains his male status through anger. The interplay of subjectivity and objectivity is mapped out in the social relations in Carter's novel as Jewel's attempt to categorise and objectify Marianne as a wife is reversed into Marianne's objectification of Jewel into a victim of her sexuality. Jewel is passionate, fleetingly tender, and sometimes compassionate, but his subjectivity is a product of his social context and subsequently to certify his own subjectivity he must betray Marianne:

She heard him growl into her throat: 'Conceive you bitch conceive... 'Why?' [Marianna asked]. 'Dynastically', he said at last. 'It's a patriarchal system...' 'Give me another reason' [she responded]. 'Politically. To maintain my status.' [But Marianne knew there was something more abstract and pushed] 'Revenge,' he explained. 'Shoving a little me up you, a little me all furred, plaited and bristling with knives. Then I should have some status in relation to myself' (HV 99).

It is suggested that both Marianne and Jewel are the seekers of power and autonomy and thus both strive to prove their authority to the other and to objectify their counterparts. Carter doesn't allow her women to be objectified and restricted to a domestic life of cleaning and cooking. Herself being a radical libertarian feminist she advocates her beliefs about giving the women the power to escape from repression. She believes that women are able to prove their identity without resorting to men. Through gothic mode Carter manages to save women from subjugation.

The novel demonstrates the hidden fears, anxieties, uncertainties and desires of the society as stated above and Carter makes use of the "uncanny" to bring out those elements. The "uncanny" is chiefly perceived as a gothic weapon that women authors use in order to liberate female literary characters from patriarchal domination. Carter applies the "uncanny" to criticize the conventional or stereotypical ideas about male and female positions in the society. She reduces the "binary opposites" between male and female gender by using the concept of the "uncanny". Carter generates situations when "uncanny" feelings are evoked by the radical uncertainty about one's gender. She ridicules all clichés that instinctively or unconsciously give priorities to a male gender. The uncanny- the return of the repressed- brings with it the possibility of such 'intimate revolt' as it disturbs the subject's sense of a logical identity.

As Kristeva explains in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), "uncanniness maintains that share of unease that leads the self, beyond anguish, towards depersonalization... [It] is restructuration of the self" (188). Marianne functions as an "uncanny" figure as she is depicted as an attractive object and by combing Jewel's hair and identifying him as a bizarre stone; she liberates herself from Jewel's domination. Marianne's strategy of overpowering the patriarchal system lays in objectification and depersonalisation of her male counterpart and oppressor Jewel. By depriving Jewel of his active qualities of an agent, Marianne manages to triumph over the male tyranny.

Traditional form of "uncanny" is used for Marianne to highlight what life without autonomy and action can do to women. She also represents this "uncanny" factor of passive Victorian disobedience as a starting point for Marianne's "uncanny" development. Carter pertains to the Gothic mode of the 'uncanny' to question the aesthetic conventions and social taboos and delves into the relationship between self and other. In *Heroes and Villains*, this "relationship" is presented by interactions between Marianne and Jewel. Marianne and Jewel are represented as symbolical literary characters that object the traditional conception of male and

female roles and images. Carter makes use of 'the uncanny' to turn aside from the orders of logic, utility and patriarchal morality. Moreover, she creates the 'uncanny' feeling of ambiguity about the distinction between male and female genders. Marianne functions as 'the uncanny' for Jewel because she does not fit into his pattern about women. Jewel fears Marianne because he is not able to categorize her.

Marianne makes Jewel "uncertain" and apprehensive because she seems to be different from the women that Jewel is familiar with. Jewel's helplessness to define Marianne as a woman makes him anxious. Jewel's coping strategy is to firstly 'swallow Marianne up', which signifies the action of a rape and after that to 'incorporate her'. By being his wife, Marianne would become vulnerable and would lose the frightening power of unknown. Karen Stein in her article "Monsters and Madwoman" claims: A male strategy for lessening this fear is to define woman as "Other", to simplify and to stereotype. Karen Horney illustrates how, rather than acting in response to each woman as unique, complex, and so potentially formidable being, men have split the concept of Woman into pairs of stereotyped antitheses: "saint/sinner, virgin/whore, nurturing mother/ devouring stepmother, and angel/ witch" (qtd.in Stein, "Speaking in Tongues"). According to Karen Horney, the male strategy is to rob women of their 'uncanny' power by casting them into familiar and agreeable positions. The use of uncanny helps Marianne to get from the position of a 'victim' into the position of a master.

Heroes and Villains tells a story of Marianne's maturation in a world full of bits and pieces of old symbols and power structures and Myth plays a very significant role in the novel. Marianne gains knowledge to see that these binding discourses are giving way to entropy, and that in her world of total chaos new myths have to be created --and that a new, post-patriarchal epoch is yet to be commenced. Jewel is fascinated to wild-cats which are possibly the effect of his own vulnerability and its mythical significance is going to survive the end of civilization and shall remain a handy metaphor. Marianne chooses to rule over the tribe as its tiger-lady not in an act of imitating a queen of the wilderness fairytale motif, but in an attempt to start a new epoch with its new myths. Marianne discards the mytheme of natural dominion and woman as either whore or virgin, and instead grounds her way through the gender/sex signing system, a system which is explicitly stranded in societal relations.

Donally is a character in the novel that is governed by mythical world and introduces the Barbarians to the power of myth and ritual as he asserts about Marianne: "it's a well-known fact

that Professor Women sprout sharp teeth in their private parts, to bite off the genitalia of young men” (HV 55). He is a bizarre giant Gothic figure wearing a black fur robe and many necklaces: “donning purple and black blotches, dark red spots and scarlet streaks which covered all his face.... He was robed from head to foot in a garment woven from the plumage of birds...” (HV 71). Donally is a grotesque parody of the patriarch with a tattoo which implies the image of woman as a seductress and restrains everything that poses a threat to him. Donally fabricates a grotesque wedding ceremony for Jewel and Marianne in order to astound the Barbarians and is conscious that the only way to maintain or uphold the power structure is through ritual and magic. He is drunk on the power he exercises over the Barbarians by exploiting their ignorance and their superstitious fear. He believes that fear is the only passion through which one can control a community. Donally tells Marianne that she has no alternative, it is either ‘marry or burn’.

He further states his words by showing her a medieval skull which carries a poster with the motto: “AS I AM, SO YE SHALL BE” (HV 63). Marianne yields to Donally’s threats and marries Jewel against her wish. In the patriarchal world, even an outcast woman has no choice of her own as she is made to wear a wedding dress of some pre-holocaust period and is taken to the chapel:

She was prepared for the unexpected; even so, the bizarre phenomenon of Donally took her by surprise. He was perched on the altar like a grotesque bird. He had donned a mask of carved wood painted with blue, green, purple and black blotches, dark red spots and scarlet streaks which covered all his face but for the bristling parti-coloured beard. He was robed from head to foot in a garment woven from the plumage of birds (HV 71).

The wedding rites conjured by Donally are equally horrifying and absurd. Donally, oddly attired, carries an adder in a basket. Marianne doubts that he will finish the ritual by nailing the snake to her breast. The most petrifying moment arrives when it is time for the assimilation of blood: another piece of ritual Donally devices for them. Jewel draws out a knife and proffers it to Marianne who is scared stiff:

She flinched involuntarily. His eyes snapped open; he grimaced and snatched at her hand. She writhed and struggled; she tried to shout but the drifting veil caught in her mouth and gagged her. Donally’s talons gripped her arm and she ceased to

struggle, helplessly gazing on as Jewel advanced the blade towards her wrist. He made a little cut in the flesh and few drops of blood oozed out (HV 73).

Carter seems to be asserting that even a nuclear holocaust is not enough to alter male-female polarisation and male domination. The most apposite remark about the whole ritual lies in Marianne's words: “‘What a farce,’ she said as unpleasantly as she could. How grotesque” (HV 77).

However, it is not at all astounding that the Professors and the Barbarians share the same myth of patriarchy represented by Adam and Eve. Marianne becomes a victim of the oppressive patriarchal society of the Barbarians though in the initial part of the novel she casts off the patriarchal discipline of her own community. Her experience escorts her to understanding of the “otherness” and also the myths which maintain the “categorization”. She also comprehends that in both the societies patriarchy and its maleness are the common values and their attitude to women is the same. Jewel wants Marianne to give birth to a baby boy as he needs ‘a son’ as theirs is a ‘patriarchal system’. He also needs a son to take revenge upon the Professors community by maltreating and bullying Marianne. Having a son will, according to him, certainly offer him a higher status in the society. Though, Marianne’s revolutionary spirit resents his ideas: “By submitting me to the most irretrievable humiliation? By making me give birth to monsters? What, like the sleep of reason?” (HV 92).

Mythification of Marianne within the tribe comes from the apparent fact that she is a foreigner and, as such, a source of enigmatic attraction and rejection in equal ways. She would have understood it from their first meeting that the tattooed back of Jewel manifestly mirrors the sort of mythological disguises Barbarians had in store for her:

He wore the figure of a man on the right side, a woman on the left and, tattooed the length of his spine, a tree with a snake curled round and round the trunk. . . The woman offered the man a red apple and more red apples grew among green leaves at the top of the tree, spreading across his shoulders, and the black roots of the tree twisted and ended at the top of his buttocks. . . Eve wore a perfidious smile. . . close-pored skin which rose and fell with Jewel’s breathing, so it seemed the snake’s forked tongue darted in and out and the leaves on the tree moved in a small wind, an effect the designer must have foreseen and allowed for. (HV 93- 94)

The tattoo on the Jewel's back re-enacts the myth of the Fall, showing a deceitful Eve and vulnerable Adam in a timeless recollection of the primordial sin. It even features the grotesqueness where Eve offers Adam the forbidden fruit. Donally is a sinister grotesque figure with his peculiarities and odd outward manifestation. He is of the view that it is this deceiving woman who should be accused for all the misfortunes of the human race: "Eve wore a perfidious smile" (*HV* 85). In her appraisal of the myth of the Fall, Julia Kristeva argues that:

The myth of the relationship between Eve and the serpent is the best summary of [the exclusion of women from knowledge and power]. The serpent stands for the opposite of God, since it tempts Eve to transgress His Prohibition. But he is also Adam's repressed desire to transgress, that which he dares not carry out, and which is his shame. The sexual symbolism helps us understand that the serpent is that in which, in God or Adam, remains beyond or outside the sublimation of the Word. Eve has no relationship other than with that, and even then because she is its very opposite, the 'other race'. (qtd. in López 111)

Donally struggles intensely to prohibit Marianne, who in Kristeva's words stands as the "other race", from attaining knowledge and power but is somewhere unable to bear in mind that she is a cultured and erudite Professor girl who will snub to be sublimated. She even snubs his mythification of becoming their holy image, "the virgin of the swamp" (*HV* 56).

Marianne's "conflict" with the conventional patriarchal society lures her into the position of a victim. Barbarians perceive Marianne as "Medusa" as Cixous in "The Laugh of Medusa" affirms that she is a powerful creature, whether in myth or historical conjuring with special ability to turn men into stone. She is generally portrayed as the embodiment of things feminine and could have been a very prototypical goddess of a matriarchal society. They seek to shield themselves by 'making a sign against evil eye' and this evil eye may be sighted as another form of 'the uncanny'. Carter draws on the mythological powers of Medusa to authorize or empower Marianne. Marianne figuratively transforms Jewel into a stone by the process of objectification, for example, in the description of Jewel as a "curiously shaped attractive stone . . . an object that drew her" (*HV* 82). Since Marianne's sexuality is repressed in the Professor's land, she has to discover an alternative for the fulfilment of her desire in the community of Barbarians. She objectifies Jewel into dehumanized objects; therefore, she robs him of his powers. Marianne

transforms Jewel into an object of her desire. Jewel claims: "She converted me into something else by seeing me" (HV 122).

She "converts" him into a passive object of her sexuality as she couldn't associate with anyone from the community of Professors and thus endeavours her desires into the strange. Jewel tells Marianne "What ice- water eyes you have," (HV 87) and her witnessing his brother's murder absolutely alters Jewel's relationship towards her: "she converted me into something else by seeing me" (HV 122). Jewel fully recognizes the symbolic significance of that first encounter and Marianne's authoring of him. Eyes, knife, and blood were the elements which governed over Jewel and Marianne's first vision of each other. The mythic versions of the primordial female figure thrown upon Marianne, mainly that of the pious, inaccessible, motif of the virgin will disappear once she is made to come in vicious contact with her corporeality through Jewel's raping her:

Feeling between her legs to ascertain the entrance, he thrust his fingers into the wet hole so roughly she knew what the pain would be like; it was scalding, she felt to the core but she did not make a single sound for her only strength was her impassivity and she never closed her cold eyes, although the green sun made out the substance of his face to be polished metal and she recalled the murder she had witnessed, how the savage boy stuck his knife into her brother's throat and the blood gushed out. Because she was difficult to penetrate, he spilled several hot mouthfuls of obscenities over her. Taken by force, the last shreds of interior flesh gave; he intended a violation and effected one; a tower collapsed upon her. Afterwards, there was a good deal of blood. (HV 61-62)

Hence, three elements which allegorically rule over Jewel and Marianne's encounters emerge again: the blood she sheds due to the loss of virginity, the knife she memorizes and which parallels the phallus with which Jewel now imposes himself on her, and the eyes Marianne decides not to close so as not to lose the little authority and agency she can still preserve under the circumstances.

Julia Kristeva proposes that as long as we fail to alter our relations to otherness and be aware of how we ourselves are other, then we will always retreat to a primal, aggressive space, one that remains informed by patriarchal tradition underpinning hostility between self and other. As Kristeva in *The Feminine and the Sacred* (2001) asserts,

. . . so long as we have recognized another other- which is not the other person . . . but the other logic in me, my strangeness, my heterogeneity...—then the cult of the ‘origin’, of the inaccessible foundation, of the unnameable paradise will embrace its ‘return of the repressed’ in the form of a ‘faith’, or, more brutally, in the form of fratricidal wars that claim to reconstitute the lost foundation. (163)

Julia Kristeva suggests that by recognizing the Other and the abject as part of ourselves, refusing borderline and opposition, we can overcome the need to find victims, scapegoats and enemies. In *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), which develops her argument in *Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva links the need to expose the boundaries, rejections and repressions of Western patriarchal-based horror with the need for racial and political equality:

...our disturbing otherness, for that indeed is what bursts in to confront the ‘demons,’ or the threat that apprehension generated by the protective apparition of the other at the heart of what we persist in maintaining as a proper, solid ‘us’. By recognizing *our* uncanny strangeness we shall neither suffer from it nor enjoy it from the outside. The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, then there are no foreigners. (*STO* 192)

Marianne feels an alienated sense of self and locates herself as an abject figure with the recognition of the impossible, untenable identity the subject projects onto and derives from the other. For example, just as the Barbarians are in many ways figures of imagination of the Professors’ own making, reassuring them of their own (illusory) superiority, Marianne projects onto Jewel her desires and fears in order to secure herself from having to recognise her increasingly fragile and fragmented identity. Marianne allocates him the role of sprite or demon lover not only as a means for shielding herself from his “reality” but also as an affirmation of her utter autonomy, which she deems places her in a higher position to Jewel. She settles on an eroticisation of the Other that is chiefly an outcome of her own foreignness to her desires (her desire, in fact, for the Other). As Carter depicts in the novel, “Jewel’s brown throat rippled and, watching him, Marianne wondered if the urge she felt to touch him was a need or a desire or if, contrary to what Donally said, both were functionally the same” (*HV* 95).

Angela Carter told Elaine Jordan that “Marianne is very much a stranger to her own desire, which is why her desire finds its embodiment as a stranger” (López 89). In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva, within the theoretical milieu also articulates of “strangers” and

“foreigners” who, far from being sagaciously commodified as Others, occupy the core of the subject becoming a constituent element of its being. She argues that the visceral and sometimes vicious response to the outcast or figure of difference is an unconscious acknowledgement that:

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity... The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from our struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious... Delicately, analytically; Freud does not speak of foreigners: he teaches us how to detect foreignness in ourselves. (STO 1, 191)

Her theory of abjection deals with an exploration of the primeval aggression positioned in the subject's formation of identity which indirectly focuses how the boundaries constructed between self and other show the way to a more violence between the sexes. This subject in process has the effect of exposing sexism intrinsic in philosophical practice. Angela Carter herself questions whether becoming partial or favouring the maternal might offer an alternative model for gendered identities and relations. Both the male and female protagonists in the text try to suppress the other in their endeavours to affirm their own sense of autonomy. Sara Gamble asserts,

Carter's work has consistently dealt with representation of the physical abuse of women in phallogentric cultures, of women alienated from themselves within the male gaze, and conversely of women who grab their own sexuality and fight back, of women troubled by and even powered by their own violence (111).

Eventually, the third- person narrative of *Heroes and Villains* follows the standpoint of a girl as she is pushed into the estranging terrain of a muddled world where she struggles to stay alive in a society that is harsh or unpleasant towards the ‘feminine’. Feminine survival is attained through learning how to play by patriarchal conventions of mastery and violence. Carter even attempts to refuse the role of victim but manages to do so at the cost of victimising others. Marianne falls prey to the myth of the ‘Monstrous Mother’ and its fantasy of power, which leaves her in an abject positioning that not only further isolates her from her desires but also propagates a patriarchal order. The reason being that she fails to produce an alternative narrative for herself, and in spite of her seeming transgressions she remains devoted to a phallic law that enforces upon women an iconic status of femininity overtly located in our origins. For instance, although Marianne believes she is asserting her self-rule when she runs away from the sterile enclaves of the Professors, the tribal/familial myths of her adopted community (the Barbarians)

threaten to assimilate or subsume her sense of autonomous identity, restricting her to a maternal-feminine role that is figured as both detested and desired, feared and reserved. Kristeva, in her study of the human subject asserts that “. . . the subject is committed to trial, because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, overruled” (qtd. in Ibsen 78). Marianne notices herself being cast in the role of precarious temptress, whose keenness to disturb the law, to transgress its boundaries, makes her both awfully potent and exceedingly susceptible to a society that fears the “feminine”.

Carter’s association of the “sins” of both Eve and Lilith with that of Marianne are used to enlighten and justify the “bad heredity” that a masculine fantasy considers is inherently passed down to all members of the female sex (*HV* 124). Further radically, owing to Eve/woman’s desire for that which prevails outside the law, as a continual reminder of her transgressions she is afflicted with the “curse” of producing children. In other words, according to patriarchal analysis of the biblical text, a woman’s only feasible path to salvation or redemption is through her role as suffering mother.

In *Heroes and Villains* Marianne, the female subject is expectant (in patronising tones) to “embrace [her] destiny with style” (*HV* 124), as her only access to the symbolic order is to suffer and bear children. Marianne, as her name implies, stands as a personification of liberty and reason initially rebels against this maternal positioning, yet her only way for endurance or survival is to learn how to manipulate the mystique of myth and spectacle for her own ends. While doing so, however, she steadily keeps on or resumes defining herself according to her reproductive role, which ends up reiterating a patriarchal order’s repressive view of women.

Eventually, all her effort to play with myth disappoints to produce a new world, and she is barely representative of a radically New Eve but purely “Eve at the end of the world” (*HV* 61). She has although raised herself to the importance or position of authority, she is only “Queen of the Midden” (*HV* 61), repressively controlling or having power over the refuse mass of western society, which, if it ever restores again, will in all probability fabricate upon and repeat the same cycles of violence and hierarchical power structures with which it started and brought itself to an end.

Thus, throughout the novel we become conscious of the fact that even if it seems that most of civilization has deteriorated or crushed away, the patriarchal order breaking down in turmoil as a result of its own aggressive desires and inclinations, its myths nevertheless continue

to remain securely in place. Carter mainly intends on revealing the inherent dangers of continuing to live by these tradition codes and demonstrates how the violence inscribed in our original narratives, chiefly the ways in which they construct antagonistic or hostile divisions between self and other, are at the root of brutality not only in our present but also anticipated future. This justifies the saying that in our origins lay our ends, or as T.S. Eliot once articulated in *Four Quartets*: “in my end is my beginning” and *Heroes and Villains* concerns this vague borderline existing between beginnings and endings.

Being an apocalyptic novel, *Heroes and Villains* exhibits the process of “uncreation”, where all has “reverted to chaos” and dissolves in “an ever widening margin of undifferentiated and nameless matter” (HV 136). Although, the text is sited at the end of the world, it purely enacts a regression to some primeval scene, which is not so much a lost paradise but instead an un-representable space, a claustrophobic nightmare. So, Carter investigates “the ways we project fantasies onto the world and then stand back in horror when we see them come to life” (Punter, *The Literature of Terror* 141) and this horrific fantasy projected onto the world leads to imagining vicious ending in the belief that this might clear the way for a new beginning. She places under inspection how our disappointment to revolutionize our relations to the origin, makes inexorable an end that is only a brutal echo or replication of the beginning, in which “time is going backwards and coiling up... history would back on itself” (HV 93).

Being written in the late 1960s, *Heroes and Villains* deals with the conceptual basis that most likely intended to act as a critique of the “us” and “them” mentality so rampant during the height of the Cold War. The critique seeks to picture how the violent divisions between self and other, rooted in the very origins of western culture may latently be accountable for bringing about its own end. The novel reveals how the End does not essentially guarantee a new beginning, as there is no renewal or transformation in human relationships and gendered identities, but only deterioration to a “Barbarian” society founded on primeval fears and resentment directed towards the “other”. Marianne take turns in the focalizing process and in this sense competes with the male characters and introduces thus a more dominant rebellion of the traditional male perspective that actually grounds traditional Western thought. Marianne as a child “broke things to see what they were like inside” (HV 4) and cuts her long hair to demonstrate that she has rejected to submit to the feminine code and thereby implies a rebellious spirit and a deviant psyche. In *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), Irigaray argues that, apart

from the possibilities of falling silent or retreating into mysticism (which offers women a discursive identity beyond the constraints of rational patriarchal logic), the most effective means for women to extricate themselves from this fixed position of female lack is mimicry, the imitation of male discourse:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. Whereas a direct feminine challenge to this condition means demanding to speak as a (masculine) 'subject', that is, it means to postulate a relation to the intelligible that would maintain sexual indifference. (76)

Women in the community of Professors, by and large, have no role to play except cooking, nurturing children, and taking part in social ceremonies. Even Marianne struggles to see her way beyond the male fantasies projected onto her. Throughout the text she is forced to negotiate her sense of self or distinctive identity in relation to the shaky and susceptible positioning of female suppression that Jewel's view enforces upon her but perhaps goes one step ahead by projecting her desires onto the male (Jewel) in order to affirm her identity. This reversal however permits Marianna to construct for herself a powerful fantasy of sovereignty. She gradually relinquishes the role of the female victim but Carter gradually strips this away since she is indeed allowed very small space for transgression. The main protagonists of Carter's literary works not only create different identities within themselves, but also shift from being passive puppet-like women to the courageous and conscious ones.

Eventually, the novel not only exposes and uncovers the estrangement from her desires but also her perplexed state in a patriarchal order where she has failed to picture any relationship between the sexes other than one of fear and antagonism. Marianne in her very first meet with Jewel is endangered with enclosure; her self-control instantly begins to crumble. She confidently proffers help to Jewel to run away from the Professor's compound, affirming that she is leaving with him of her own free-will, and he absurdly insists on professing her as his hostage: "She had wanted to rescue him but found she was accepting his offer to rescue her" (HV 18). Moreover, even if he is "as complete a stranger as she could wish to meet" (HV 23), answering her desire to know the Barbarian "other", she becomes conscious that he is not so much other but is forced to admit her own escalating sense of self-isolation as Kristeva suggests in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) that all of us who choose the path of exile are running away from, and towards,

alienation: “Or should one recognize that one becomes a foreigner in another country because one is already a foreigner from within?” (14). This kind of feeling is aroused not only because Marianne is confronted with the strange heterogeneity of her desires, her unexpected desire for Jewel unsettling her rigid sense of autonomy, but is also due to the fact that Jewel views her as an object of exchange.

Elaine Jordon has claimed that “fascination with Jewel as beautiful Barbarian is a revenge for the erotic objectification of women” (qtd. in López 94). So, here the male gaze connotes a phallogocentric economy of desire and it places the female subject as the repressed other in relation to the male, absolutely conveying to Marianne that “as a battle trophy, [she is] of less use but more interest than a bolt of clothes” (HV 25). This penetrating gaze of the male hero or hero/villain in Gothic literature is absolutely patriarchal. Marianne been rendered as an object is “trapped in his regard” (HV 23) and is overcome with a sense of vertigo (HV 23), and more ominously, a loss of distinct boundaries between her of self and other, which she badly attempts to preserve. It is mainly from this situation onwards that Marianne sets out to be subjected to abjection, which Kristeva figures as the “hole into which the subject may fall” (qtd. in Stibbs 75), marking both the place of origin and eradication of the subject, and eventually confirming to the impossibility of apparent or clear borders.

Theory of “abjection” concerns with the primeval myth of the pre-oedipal mother-child bond, envisioning the origins of subjectivity according to the human need for boundaries or borders. The maternal body stands for the primary body from which the child must learn to separate himself in order to attain the link with the Symbolic paternal order. It’s through one’s possession of language that human individuation is attained and experienced and is further escorted by the infant’s parting from the mother. For Kristeva, it is a sadistic or upsetting splitting as the boundaries between me/not-me are being set up and it is language that helps to direct or control this separation. Thus, it’s Language which plays a critical role in providing a compensation for that primal loss in the ability to connect and bond with the mother.

Elizabeth Grosz directs that when this loss is not effectively dealt then the “object” becomes the most governing and replaces the subject and the subject (he/she) further loses all the proportionate sense of boundaries and is ultimately pushed into a space of struggle against the m(other) in order to retrieve his or her identity. On the whole, Kristeva’s examination of those conditions that hamper, or permit, the infant’s access to symbolisation offers the insight into how

the subject's demand to his/her own body and identity is largely stimulated by the need for excluding that which confronts the subject with a hostile or intimidate otherness. The novel focuses on the main feature of Kristeva's theory as both Jewel and Marianne try to set up their sense of selves through rejection (abjection), or repression, of the other.

Kristeva's theory in *Heroes and Villains* is evocative as Marianna is plunged into a distinctly abject terrain when she enters the Barbarian community, where everything is foreign and strange well marked by a pervasive reek of disease and decaying flesh. This confrontation is described by Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* as the unclean or improper: refuse, corpses, bodily fluids, defilement, those things that stand on the ambiguous borderline of "death infecting life" (4), frightening or upsetting identity, system, order, and enlightening that which we "permanently thrust aside in order to live" (3).

The novel highlights many incidents for example, the deteriorating mansion in which the Barbarians dwell is "a gigantic memory of rotten stone", a puzzling mess of architectural styles, literally bewildering Marianne's previous sense of boundaries and inhabited order among the Professors (HV 31). The mansion's kitchen is an "abattoir" of bloody meat, bones, decaying meat, and cadavers (HV 46), a "cave" crushing Marianne with its "smell of earth, of rotting food and of all-pervading excrement" (HV 42). In response to this space of food, filth, and waste, "Marianne drew herself coldly inside her skin" (HV 42), swiftly concluding that "she had no reason or desire to stay any longer in this disgusting and dangerous place" (HV 51). She is not frightened and no longer feels seduced by the Barbarians' mystique of otherness, revolted in fact by the "vast midden" of their existence (or bare subsistence), Marianne's only yearning or desire is "to escape, as if somewhere there was still the idea of home" (HV 52). She struggles and yet becomes unsuccessful to maintain his or her boundaries similar to that of Kristeva's abject.

Marianna is a rebellious child who lacks decorum and her primary impulse is to (re)establish her own individuality or uniqueness by separating herself from the Other through abhorrence as "Other" i.e. Barbarians in this case have become so brutal and wild as their name implies, that even her nurse attempts to coax her into behaving properly with frightening titbits of mythic lore characteristic of fairy tales: "If you're not a good little girl, the Barbarian will eat you" (HV 4). Carter brings out how both the society groups use certain myths and folk stories to sustain their identity and also their biological, cultural and social borders. Marianne, as a child was told threatening tales about the Barbarian people and one such tale is about how the

Barbarians slit the bellies of women after they rape them and sew cats up inside them. One more such tale is how the Barbarians brutally wrap small girls, bake them and eat. These tales had a tormenting effect on her psyche and she sets forth upon a perilous journey of self- discovery but fails in her first attempt.

She snubs to acknowledge or admit any connection with the “other”, which in a way means escaping from reality, a refusal to confer the customs in which one’s identity is certainly (in)formed by the identities of others as her frequent encounter with abjection, her fall into its rabbit hole of disorder, dis/ease, and disappearing boundaries, problematically develops into a fantasy of absolute autonomy. To Kristeva, rejection of the foreigner is a self-protecting, self-consolidating and self-aggrandizing attempt to deny our own otherness. On one hand, opposition to the other is vital in the construction of individual identity, yet that encounter also results in the loss of the sense of a unique, identity, a identify that deviates from the homogenous ideal norm. As Kristeva puts it, encountering the other forces us to see that “we are our own foreigners, we are divided” (*STO* 181). A consequence of our own foreignness, Kristeva suggests may be that we no longer “hunt” the “foreigner . . . but rather... welcome them to that uncanny strangeness” (*STO* 192), which we share with them.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva identifies projection as essential to warding off the isolating void of the abject. It is through this process that one claims one’s own territory because the Other, dwelling within as an alter ego (sub-conscious), points it (the self) out through loathing: “I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be ‘me’. Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be.” (*POH* 10) In her dive into the psychoanalytic pool, Marianne constructs Jewel as her Other, her alter ego, almost an imagined version of herself whose dark flesh constitutes a “magic source of attraction” (*HV* 83). Marianne fantasises that Jewel is a demon lover who “possesses” her specifically as it permits her to prolong “denying him an existence” (*HV* 88), an exclusion or omission that lets her to claim her own identity. For her, to acknowledge Jewel’s reality or even to attempt to identify with him would compel her to confront the disgrace of her “newly- awakened, raging and unsatisfied desire” (*HV* 87).

Marianne cannot accept what might be their mutual need of each other because “if he was necessary to her... she would be changed” (*HV* 134). She is petrified with the collapsing

boundaries between self and other which is agonizingly disorientating and accompanies the encounter of abjection: “when she perceived she and Jewel were, in some way, related to one another she was filled with pain for her idea of her own autonomy might, in fact, be not the truth but a passionately held conviction” (HV 132). Marianne feels hesitant or unsure about Jewel and it in turn shields her from directing that abhorrence towards her. Jewel captures “on in her eyes the ghastly attraction of the deformed” (HV 86), becoming “an object which drew her”, a phantasy of “pleasure and despair” (HV 82-3). Eventually, the relationship between Jewel and Marianne is founded on a desire “to annihilate one another”: Marianne counters to Jewel’s violation of her by “counting her own extinction as well as his, [since] she discovered extraordinary powers as soon as the dark removed the dangerous evidence of Jewel’s face” (HV 87).

Marianne is alarmed with her nightly encounters with Jewel playing out as mutual acts of resentment and obliteration in the space of a waning, attic room, half-exposed to the sky as its roof steadily disintegrates away and she initiates overtly to associate sex with brutality or ferocity. The border between interior and exterior is softening and it is further emphasised when Marianne perceives Jewel’s body “dissolving in the darkness” (HV 81). The Gothicised interiors in Angela Carter’s works point to an illegitimate control of women’s sexuality and power.

A typically Gothic mixture arises, a combination of opposites that permits to see the cracks and borders, lies and constructions in what we take as stable. Marianne sets out to convince herself that as she takes delight in their intensely vicious intercourse, she thus finds herself to be more powerful than Jewel: “as if he were helplessly trying to prove his autonomy to her while she knew all the time he vanished like a phantom at daybreak... at the moment when her body ceased to define his outlines” (HV 89). Marianne’s denial to play the role of victim is exceedingly awkward even if her objectification of Jewel is read as an instrument of self-protection, or defiance, permitting her to preserve whatever restricted power or self-control that is accessible to her. As per Marianne, survival is dependent on a dissent of the other’s irreducible difference, aspiring a reversal of the other by projecting onto Jewel a reflection of her violent desire.

Marianne exerts patriarchy’s own weapons of domination and considers that these are her only accessible tools which indeed end up being curved against her. Marianne and Jewel share a relationship in which Jewel’s real presence in relation to Marianne is one of shared tussle of

mastery over the other. Both of them dreadfully endeavour to assert their autonomy as Marianne, on one hand tries to break the shackles of patriarchy and Jewel, on other hand tries to impose his power and suppress her. Jewel's sadistic conduct and sexual violent behaviour towards Marianne do depict a power of its own as he asserts, "some status in relation to myself" (HV 90). The position which Marianne enjoys is even more "terrible violation of her privacy" as he commands her during intercourse: "Conceive, you bitch, conceive" (HV 98). She feels baffled as she realises that her sense of power and status is still dependent on Jewel and he still has the capacity to force upon her an identity contrary to what she is. All her earlier notions about her relationship between pleasure and power have "died now, she realised pleasure was ancillary to procreation" (HV 99).

Marianna is endangered completely by the maternal role as Carter introduces the wedding dress as an overpowering sign of forced femininity. The wedding dress is overtly portrayed as "an image of terror", its putrid slice of fabric a "crumbling anachronism", and its "bodice slid down her flesh with sensations of slime and ice", Marianna had "turned into a mute, furious doll which allowed itself to be totally engulfed" (HV 68-9). For Marianne her dress stands as an abject figure, as she commences to sense her "dissolving perimeters" while fighting against this impersonation of "the sign of a memory of a bride" and still echoing "the drifting veil caught in her mouth and gagged her" (HV 72-3). The white colour wedding dress symbolizes purity but it is viewed as an object of sex by patriarchal ideology of Barbarians. It is by burning the dress in a carnival bonfire that she challenges the patriarchal system. Mrs Green, who symbolizes "some kind of domestic matriarch" (HV 43) guides Marianne "to reconcile herself to everything from rape to mortality" (HV 59) as she is forced onto "a primitive bride-bed" (HV 76).

Luce Irigaray asserts that the women have been being historically projected the maternal role by the patriarchal order to restrict women's identities solely to their reproductive status and it is their reproductive status only that has historically been privileged as the only guarantee of female identity but the motherhood often "gets wrapped up in some weird kind of holiness" (84) and it must be rejected as a social construct "that once had a place and function but now has neither any more" (HV 57). In an interview with Anna Katsavos, Carter commented that "It's not very pleasant for women to find out how they are represented in the world" (16).

Carter herself calls for "the secularisation of women" and in *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) she argues:

To deny the bankrupt enchantments of the womb is to pare a good deal of the fraudulent magic from the idea of women, to reveal us as we are, simple creatures of flesh and blood whose expectations deviate from biological necessity sufficiently to force us to abandon, perhaps regretfully, perhaps with relief, the deluded priestesshood of a holy reproductive function. This demystification extends to the biological iconography of women (109-10).

It is basically her reproductive role that isolates her from articulating openly her own desires or subjectivity. As Sarah Gamble notes: "Having... failed to find glamorous objective Other [in Jewel], Marianne. transforms her own self into an icon of otherness" (79). Marianne falls prey to the charm of a mythic version of herself, acknowledging somewhat lethargically at first and then truly the reproduction function into which Jewel has confined her. In pursuit of power she considers that it is a child who might provide her ever desiring power to certify her place among Barbarian just as Jewel had wished a son to ensure his own status. Her need of power to the level of insanity made her cast herself as a matriarchal tyrant and to present herself as horrifying and ghastly mother as she has cultured that her most effectual weapon is fear, "the ruling passion" (HV 50).

Donally, the tyrant or a grotesque parody of patriarch who terrifies and suppresses the tribe through ever locked serpent which ironically turns out to be merely "a dead snake, and stuffed" (HV 133). Even though Angela Carter has not read Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* prior to writing her novel, she has inherited the concept of grotesque from Swift. Bakhtin's grotesque is similar to Kristeva's "abject" in its double nature, both regenerating and degrading, "contradictory and double- faced" (qtd. in Filimon 53). His power seems to be synonymous to the lifeless and impotent serpent, which has no genuine or realistic foundation. Consequently, just as the serpent in itself "signifies nothing" (HV 126), Donally's warnings, prohibition and laws turn out to be purely blustering, frantic endeavours at safeguarding his feeble authority. His frustration and fear of losing power made him churn out curses on the female sex: "She shall have a vile childbed culminating in a monstrous birth and ultimately she will betray you in circumstances of unbelievable horror" (HV 130). Reverting back when forced to leave after Jewel's death, she declares that: "They won't get rid of me as easily as that. I shall stay here and frighten them so much they'll do every single thing I say . . . I'll be the tiger lady and rule them with a rod of iron" (HV 150).

Marianna has learned a lot from her journey and from her relationship with Jewel and has transformed her completely. She realises the importance of power and the use of violence as a form of self-preservation. Thus, Carter's representation of sexual violence in *Heroes and Villains* questions the custom in which men are entrapped in cultural codes of anguish and distress used to control or dictate women. Carter is of the view that woman with power doesn't always prove to be an effective remedy to male violence but often suggestive of women's complicity in their repression through the upholding of further violence as it becomes quite evident when Marianna, having been the prey of rape, effectively imposes the same act on others. She intentionally "roughly seized hold of him and crushed him inside her with her hand" (HV 115), knowing she could defend herself easily from the ineffectual sexual advance of Donally's son. She inflicts others by drabbing the occasion to physically govern another as a means to affirm her own revenge against Jewel for having "put a kid up [her]" (HV 116). Marianna's actions or the 'rape' of the boy is the reaction to her pregnancy and she finds herself jammed in the emotional maternal fantasy of herself: "She was caught in a storm of warmth of heart; she wanted to fold him into her, where it was warm and nobody could harm him, poor, lucid, mindless child of chaos now sucking her as if he expected to find milk" (HV 116).

Marianna, as an abject fantasy initially viciously dislocates the boundaries between mother as nurturer and devourer, and later has nothing to proffer the other (no milk). It even interrupts Kristeva's own view that maternity might offer access to the other, as she never accepts the truth of Other, even if at one point she makes an effort "to feel the shape of the child down there which knitted its flesh and blood out of her own in the artificial night of the womb" (HV 135). The womb is a liminal space, which must necessary be crossed to come into the world; as in a rite of passage, this limen is ambiguous, it is neither life nor death. Abjection is the recurring, threatening sensation of an incurable instability of the self that finds expression in the body, in the secretions which exceed it, in its crevices. Sites of expulsion and of incorporation, borderline sites of horror and pleasure, all stand for the critics definition of abjection:

We may call it a border: abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it- on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. But also, abjection itself is a compromise of judgement and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives. Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of

pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which the body becomes separated from another body in order to be- maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified vanishes and where only the imponderable affect is carried out” (POH 9-10).

She doesn't see herself as a maternal figure and perceives her womb and child as fake and alien that further terrorizes her desperate claim to autonomy. Even the presence of Other within her body turns out to be an alienating experience which further hampers her from expressing her desires explicitly. In addition to forced motherhood, the reason behind her alienating self is that she herself reduces her identity to maternal, assuming this is now her only means to power. Marianne's identity is thus that of an archaic mother, that rules through terror whose power is derived from the masculine fears that a history of patriarchal narratives have projected onto women's bodies. “Fear of the archaic mother”, writes Kristeva, “turns out essentially to be a fear of her generative power. It is power, a dreaded one, that patriarchal filiation has the burden of subduing” (POH 77).

In Kristeva's model of abjection, the mother remains for every subject-male and female- a terrifying source of generative power. As a result, the sexually aware woman like Marianne is a threat to the patriarchal order. And women's bodies are thus a focus of cultural fear and loathing for the forces they might release. As per Kristeva, because women are positioned outside the symbolic order, outside linear, historical time, then as both gestating (reproductive) and desiring (speaking) subjects, they are relegated to a temporal space that is cynical, an extra-subjective time to encourage a more productive access to the Other (denoted by the mother's relation to the foetus). Kristeva views that the maternal body is both factually and metaphorically a healing space dizzying in its vastness, where boundaries between self and other are not so rigidly constructed as it is in symbolic order, which insists on a distinct separation between self and m(other).

From women's perspective, Kristeva asserts that, the experience of motherhood offers an alternative space/time of disruption/transgression, where maternity remains an unheard discourse. Luce Irigaray who has a very different sense of the psychic from Kristeva throws important light on our understanding of the relation between women and the Other when she writes in *Speculum of other Woman* (1985): “In this proliferating desire of the same, death will

be the only representative of an outside, of a heterogeneity, of an other, women will assume the function of representing death” (27).

In other words, the desire to overcome the monstrous in horror, to render the terrifying and ominous female vulnerable, stems from a wish to control the most frightening threat i.e. death. But the women in the house of Carter’s horror fiction refuse to die. In fact, on occasions they actually rise up from the dead, since they are absolutely determined to go on living- and, what is more, on their own terms. Carter’s fiction centres on purging the old mystifications which exiled women to eternity [maternity] as motherhood represents an emblematic and cultural space to which women have been exiled from history and from access to produce their own narratives, “The womb . . . is a fleshy link between past and future, the physical location of an everlasting present tense that can usefully serve as a symbol of eternity, a concept which has always presented some difficulties in visualization” (HV 108).

Kristeva posits the maternal as a border from which textual terrorism can be launched and comments that a woman has nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses. *Heroes and Villains*, like “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975) explore the danger that such collapses initiates renewal. Marianne, the artist/dreamer never completes her works of destruction, however, and the renewal promised in the conclusion may be the established, not the removal of “a repressive and authoritarian superstructure” (Gamble 65).

Thus, *Heroes and Villains* being a female gothic fiction challenges conventions, namely the conventions of a patriarchal society, through the transgression of boundaries set by these conventions. Angela Carter also challenged modern British society and strove to go further and to break clear of conventions, especially those set by the modern patriarchal society. It is this trait what distinguishes Angela Carter as a writer of Modern Gothic. The Gothic heroine will certainly instil change in the patriarchal arrangement of her society as she transformed herself and developed an identity which remained as strong as iron rod.

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