

## Reconfiguring the Gothic Body: Abjection, Identity, and the Monstrous Feminine in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*

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### Abstract

This chapter examines Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* through the interwoven lenses of the Gothic and Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, centred around the monstrous figures of Mother and Eve/Evelyn. By situating the novel within the contemporary female Gothic fiction, the analysis demonstrates how Carter handles monstrosity as a strategic tool to investigate ideological constructions of gender, identity, and bodily autonomy. Mother's explicitly exaggerated entity and mythic authority display how illusory visions can duplicate intimidating structures under the disguise of revolution. Conversely, Eve's surgically constructed body and in-between identity represent the abject from within, exposing the psychological and symbolic violence of forced transformation and the instability of binaries regarding gender. Through close textual analysis, the chapter identifies the horror mechanisms Carter expands on, including grotesque corporeality, identity fragmentation, and the downfall of symbolic boundaries. These elements are combined to create a Gothic atmosphere that criticises the extremism of both patriarchal and radical matriarchal systems. Furthermore, the chapter shows that the desires motivating these monstrous figures shape their destructive courses while revealing the ideological fantasies they aim to reform. Ultimately, Carter's representations of monstrosity reflect contemporary concerns surrounding gender fluidity, reproductive technologies, and bodily regulation, positioning the monstrous as an effective ground for challenging and reimagining the social order.

### Introduction

Psychoanalytic studies demonstrate that repressed returns frequently manifest in characters that are commonly featured in Gothic works. A close examination of many Gothic narratives reveals that violence, murder and

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death dominate their plots. Sigmund Freud, one of the leading figures of psychoanalysis, identifies the death drive as one of the two fundamental human drives (Uğurlu, 2022, p. 21). Therefore, at the core of murders portrayed in Gothic works particularly at those committed without a detectable motive lies Freud's concept of the death drive.

Although Gothic literature revolves around this death drive, fear, uncertainty, and the extraordinary, these elements paradoxically evoke pleasure in the reader. By focusing on such themes, Gothic fiction attracts sustained interest and thus continues to evolve. In this sense, Gothic works acquire a quality that runs counter to conventional notions of beauty, yet they inspire fascination and pleasure in the reader despite or because of this contradiction. The fear-inducing and unsettling elements of Gothic literature evoke the feeling of the sublime precisely because they appear inappropriate, alien, or violent in relation to human consciousness, perceptual capacity, and external reality. The pleasure derived from this sense of the sublime contributes to the appeal and popularity of Gothic fiction. Being related to Freud's uncanny, there appears to be the sense of ambiguity in the Gothic fiction enabling the reader to keep fear and satisfaction simultaneously. In Gothic literature, grotesque also plays a key part, which usually couples with the uncanny. While reading many Gothic texts, the reader interprets events from the narrator's perspective. Since narrators do not always present events as they occur, the reader often remains uncertain as to whether what is described is real or imagined. Thus, the distinction between reality and the supernatural becomes blurred.

In numerous Gothic works, manifestations of human evil are attributed to an invisible, spiritual being: the devil. Just as Gothic literature itself has undergone transformation over time, its conceptualisations of evil and demonism have also evolved. Witches, often characterised by their malevolence, have traditionally been associated with femininity, as women in various societies have historically been perceived as possessing negative traits. In contrast to that, there are also a considerable number of texts in which the devil and demonic entities are represented as male. Such gendered approaches in Gothic narratives have contributed to the classification of subgenres as Male and Female Gothic. In works by male authors, female characters are often portrayed as abject, which is to say, more uncanny, ambiguous, liminal, and socially marginalised due to their perceived differences described as such by Anne Williams (1995):

In light of Kristeva's analysis of horror, therefore, we can see that Male Gothic conventionally echoes that primitive anxiety about "the

female”, specifically the mother. The gruesome physical materiality of Male Gothic horror expresses the “abject”, the otherness of the mater/mother who threatens to swallow or engulf the speaking subject. (p. 106)

Thus, the female is alienated and ‘the other’ needs to be suppressed by the speaking subject as a representative of the power of patriarchy. This situation results from the threatening quality of the abject against the symbolic order. Female authors, particularly in the early phases of the tradition, depicted their heroines in domestic settings either as motherless or powerless, usually bearing names suggesting purity and innocence, isolated from the public sphere, struggling to endure dire circumstances, often within narratives enveloped by romance and ultimately featuring rescue by another woman or through their own evolution into the heroine figure (Gündüz, 2025, p. 17). Over time however, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century works, female characters began to be depicted as more liberal and autonomous, defying norms, questioning patriarchal structures, appearing in more unconventional spaces, and lacking the conventional need for a romance or marriage narrative. In doing so, postmodern and contemporary women writers usually employed rewriting techniques, subversion, and deconstruction to challenge or dismantle traditional and mythological perspectives as well as binary oppositions.

In their engagement with abjection, Gothic texts stage a process that resists completion or resolution. Recognising that any effort at sublimation inevitably collapses back into the manifestations of the abject, they demonstrate that the cycle of abjection, which is structured as an ongoing dialectic of confrontation and struggle, remains perpetual mainly because the pure and the dangerous mutually sustain and continually reproduce one another. Therefore, Gothic narratives invite us to “stay attuned to the unnamable force that undercuts our sense of stable identity, inside and outside, foreign and unfamiliar” (Bronfen, 2016, pp. 3-4). In other words, binary oppositions in such texts, first consume and then, refute each other causing the attributed meaning to them to collapse.

Angela Carter stands as one of the foremost and most influential authors within this tradition performing the abovementioned practice. She remarkably blends feminist and humanist perspectives to subvert binaries as well as othering stereotypes directed towards women to dismantle restrictive social norms. This approach clarifies Carter’s close alignment with Julia Kristeva’s theory of the abject. Building upon Freud and Lacan’s psychoanalytic frameworks and introducing a feminist psychoanalytic

perspective, Kristeva's abject theory helps explain why monstrous or unusual figures in Gothic literature are perceived as such. According to Jerrold E. Hogle (2002):

Julia Kristeva has gone on more recently [...] to see the return of the repressed familiar in "the uncanny" as based on a more fundamental human impulse that also helps us to define the cultural, as well as psychological, impulses most basic to the Gothic. Kristeva argues for ghosts or grotesques, so explicitly created to embody contradictions, as instances of what she calls the "abject" and products of "abjection," which she derives from the literal meanings of *ab-ject*: "throwing off" and "being thrown under". (p. 7)

What is buried in the depths of unconscious finds its way in the outside world in the form of an extraordinary being i.e. a monster, a vampire, a mad scientist, a woman and needs to be expelled just as abject elements are expelled from the body in such forms as blood, sweat, urine etc. labelled as unwanted. For Kristeva, when these elements are oriented within the flow of body, which confronts to the pre-determined codes of society aka the Law of Father, these are not unwanted or othered. However, they become abject and othered when they go outside of the body and arise fear or disgust. To illustrate this with an example, when blood flows within the veins of a human's body, it does not pose a threat to the person or society whereas it causes fear and is treated as something to be kept out of sight when it is outside. The same applies to the pieces of hair: when they are placed on a person's head where they belong to, they are embraced whereas they are disgusted when seen in a bowl of soup or on the floors of a house. Departing from that, these abject elements are approached as things in-between without belonging to anywhere certainly just like female characters. When they fit in the society and its codes, women are welcomed; however, they are thrown on the edges as outcasts when they present their differences and true identities to the world. They are 'angels in the house', but devils outside. They are subjects in process trying to realise themselves, but to do so, they need both sides of binaries.

Kristeva makes the borderline of binaries more fluid and deconstructs them where necessary. To be accepted inside as a subject with an independent and valued identity, the person needs to experience, learn and exist in the outside world. Therefore, in order to continue their race, males and females need to coexist, cooperate and be in harmony for the peace and well-being of the society. Likewise, a person needs both the evil and innocent sides of the identity to survive in the course of life when faced with various

circumstances. Binaries like male/female, inside/outside and evil/angel are made more transparent and the borders separating them are more flexible in the new world order. In line with that in this chapter, a literary analysis of the Gothic figures Eve/Evelyn and Mother in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* will be conducted through the lens of Kristeva's theory of abject.

Carter is widely recognised for a distinctive literary aesthetic that positions her among the most significant British writers of particularly the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her narratives are marked by a striking fusion of violence and eroticism with elements drawn from the fantastic, the Gothic, and science fiction (Yılmaz, 2015, p. 36). Owing to this uninterrupted engagement with violence, sexuality, and pornographic imagery, Carter's work has frequently been interpreted as deliberately transgressive and she was defined as "an unorthodox figure" appreciated with her resolute fiction, paving her way into "the most unsettling depths of Western culture, only to transmogrify its myths and unleash its monsters" (Bristow and Broughton, 1997, p. 1). She was regarded as not only a daring and innovative writer but also a good defender of social justice protesting inequalities, which made her significantly influential in shaping what is called the contemporary British fiction today. In terms of style, as Jago Morrison (2006) states:

She makes good use of eighteenth-century forms, especially the picaresque and the gothic. Her texts are patterned with iconic references to the history of European art, from the ancient Winged Victory of Samothrace to the modernist nudes of Toulouse Lautrec. In texts like *The Passion of New Eve*, *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*, there are all sorts of witty references to popular songs, film iconography, variety and music hall. (p. 157)

As a postmodern and contemporary writer, she benefitted from intertextuality in her works combining various forms of art; therefore, her ideologist side in regard to feminism makes a valuable match with the Gothic. Although she initially focused on the criticism of patriarchy in her earlier works, she did not intend to design her plots revolving around it. In her later works, she expanded upon it and concentrated on "mocking and exploding the constrictive cultural stereotypes" (Makinen, 1992, p. 3). Therefore, her main concern was not limited to the criticism of the superiority of men in a male dominated society, rather she was an objective observer making harsh criticism against oppressive metanarratives including matriarchy, especially when it is practised irrationally and unreasonably. This view was also upheld by Ali Smith and Carter was depicted as "an exceptional thinker, critic, reviewer and essayist, a transformer of cultural

history and cultural potential” (Smith, 2007, p. 3). Evolving her writing to a wider selection of topics and being more involved in decoding culturally imposed norms through feminism, she describes that era in her life as “the part of the process of maturing” (Carter, 1998, p. 37). Through feminism, Carter came to recognise that her own femininity was a construct shaped by patriarchal ideology, and that the cultural myths imposed upon women produced a reality in which they could not comfortably exist (Aktari, 2010, p. 156). Consequently, she dedicated herself to the “demythologising business” in order to cultivate a political awareness capable of exposing the cultural formulations of sexuality within Western civilisation (p. 156). Her writing is marked by a rich imaginative power and sharp wit, which are qualities that enable her to contest both patriarchal conventions and rigidly defined literary genres.

Following her contemporaries with the same aim, central to her oeuvre is the act of rewriting. Via rewriting the familiar stories, she attempted to reconstruct some cultural concepts specifically the ones regarding gender stereotypes. As she famously remarked, “I am all putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode” (Carter, 1998, p. 37). In this sense, her rewritings take apart the oppressive boundaries through which the world is conventionally understood. In doing so, Carter “is always on the side of the less powerful against the powerful, and in her context, as she freely admits, she is mainly concerned with women’s experience” (Eaglestone, 2003, p. 204).

What affected her inclination towards the female Gothic was also her life-changing experience in Japan. Following a two-year stay there, Carter returned to England in 1972, stating that she felt as though she had arrived in an entirely new country: “It was like a waking up, it was a rude awakening. We live in Gothic times. Now, to understand and to interpret is the main thing; but my method of investigation is changing” (Carter, 1997, pp. 459-460). Here, she highlights the postmodern condition of the contemporary Western world, in which the once-familiar has become uncanny. This postmodern condition shares significant affinities with the Gothic: the dissolution of binary structures, epistemological and ontological indeterminacy, the erosion of stable subjectivity, and the loss of coherent meaning have produced a world that is unstable, anxiety-inducing, and uncanny, defined by blurred boundaries. Fred Botting observes that contemporary Gothic narratives exemplify the collapse of a prohibitive or regulatory force. Whereas traditional Gothic tales ultimately reintroduce normative boundaries by destroying their monstrous figures, in contemporary Gothic fiction, these figures:

[...] retain a fascinating, attractive appeal: no longer objects of monstrous others become sites of identification, sympathy, desire, and self-recognition. Excluded figures once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant monsters are rendered more humane while the systems that exclude them assume terrifying, persecutory, and inhuman shapes. (Botting, 2002, p. 286)

Accordingly, the Gothic of the present moment tends not to endorse the eradication of monstrous figures but rather to celebrate them. Destabilising conventional norms instead of reinforcing them has become the prevailing political orientation of contemporary Gothic fiction. Carter adopts Gothic motifs in a decidedly insurgent manner, overturning the structures and representations characteristic of the traditional Gothic. As Linden Peach (1998) notes:

The Gothic genre itself is subversive, giving expression to what is culturally occluded such as sexual fantasy and female desire. However, Carter's novels are frequently subversions of the genre; themes and ideas first explored – albeit however crudely – in Gothic writing are re-examined, challenged and expanded. (p. 28)

Carter's inclusion of Gothic elements in her texts is linked to her desire to reconstruct stereotypes concerning gender. She aims at saving the female gender from being materialised and objectified. She is also interested in rescuing her characters from the political and ideological aspects of the social codes by converting the binaries that have been attributed the characteristic of normative for long. Therefore, with these in mind, "Carter has found a battle ground in the Gothic to make her feminist ideals fight against established norms" (Aktari, 2010, p. 161). In order to get a thorough comprehension of these agendas of Carter illustrated in *The Passion of New Eve*, it is useful to mention the novel's plot briefly.

The events in the novel are expressed through Evelyn's point of view and his experiences, who is an Englishman arriving in New York for a university position only to encounter a city in a grotesque mood dealing with disorder both environmentally and politically. Right after Evelyn shows up in the city, the events get more violent and armed groups take over the control of the streets including the university he applied for, so he loses the chance to get the position and is left without an aim at the centre of a dystopia.

In the middle of this chaos, Evelyn meets a young black woman called Leilah, whose relationship is mainly based on the physical resulting in the woman's pregnancy, which is firmly unwanted by Evelyn, so the condition is finalised with an abortion. This leads him to the desert, and he finds



himself in a kind of oasis called Beulah, a technological and organised place displaying order, which is the opposite of New York. The place is ruled by a leader called Mother, who holds a grotesque, mythic and giant appearance. She is not only the mother of the community in Beulah, but also a scientist conducting operations, biggest of which is her project in mind to turn a male into a female and making her impregnated with the old male body's sperm. Evelyn becomes the victim of this project and with this transformation, the gender is, in a way, reinvented and matriarchy is welcomed in her world.

Before this last step of the experimental process; however, Eve understands the future awaiting for her and manages to escape from Beulah. While she is out in the desert, she is captured by a character named Zero, a one-eyed man who has established his own harem in another part of the desert torturing women with sexual abuse. This time, Eve falls victim of a patriarch and is exploited sexually by Zero, who is ironically infertile and blames a Hollywood film star called Tristessa for it, whom Evelyn once admired. Because of his obsession, Zero directs his militants to Tristessa's house, where they find out that she was actually a male by birth. Eve decides to save and protect Tristessa owing to her past admiration and together they flee into the desert. There they get intimate and are involved in an intercourse. Unfortunately; however, the peace does not last long and Tristessa is murdered by a youth militant group.

Eve manages to run away and finally makes her way to Los Angeles, which is not less chaotic than New York. There she comes across Leilah again, who now calls herself as Lilith and confesses that she is indeed the daughter of Mother. She convinces Eve to meet her creator one more time. Though she tries several times, she fails to find Mother. In the end, cutting off all her old connections, Eve faces towards the ocean, setting off by herself leaving the collapsing society behind as the New Eve.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, the character to be identified as the Gothic monster is Mother with her artificial, feminine, grotesque and mythic appearance blended with her technological competence increasing the fear she creates. Since she pictures misdirected maternal power, Carter hints she is not in favour of ill-motivated matriarchy for the sake of getting rid of patriarchy. Mother shows how certain ideologies including the feminism driven ones pose a risk for repeating the same motives of mechanisms that are aimed to dismantle. In that way, Carter situates Mother as a character hosting instability of power and the horrors of mythical absolutes.

Another character in the novel with an unstable and ambiguous 'monstrous' image is Eve after being surgically transformed from Evelyn. It



connotes a threshold suggested by Kristeva as the abject because of being in both sides of the gender and moving in-between them. Additionally, she is on the threshold of being in the real world with all the chaos it ignites and of a mythical dystopia with immense order. That is why, this in-betweenness is not only on the physical level but also on the psychological sense. She does not feel belong to either side and is not indispensable. She is an abject being, which makes her to be comprehended as monstrous, and feels neither female nor male completely. She is not adapted to being in a new body and mind because the old self and mind are still inside, which makes her both victim and victimiser. When she was Evelyn, she abused Leilah as a man and commodified her, while she experiences the same treatment herself tragically not only from the opposite gender (Zero) but also from the same gender (Mother). By doing so, Carter puts forward that she does not favour her own gender; instead both genders can be recognised as monstrous and in Eve's case, it is indeed doubled. She experiences segregation within segregation and becomes a figure desired but feared at the same time. She is linked to both uncanny and abject that suits the themes covered in Gothic fiction. In an indirect way, Carter implies the performative status of gender through this character. Gender is not only about being in a certain body, because when the body is switched, the mindset is not. In presenting Eve as an abject figure, Carter challenges the foundations of gender identity, suggesting that monstrosity emerges when the supposedly stable boundaries of sexed bodies are laid bare as fictions.

Mother's representation of the monstrous is more explicit and outstanding while Eve's is more complex and internal. Besides, Mother's monstrous character is based more on the material while Eve's fragmented self dwells more on the emotions making her scarier for the reader, who feels a sense of Catharsis. This double composition of monstrosity lets the novel to question not only the patriarchal constructions of the feminine but also the irrational fantasies attempting to replace them, which makes the idea of monstrosity an analytical tool Carter handles skilfully to work on cultural myths and codes.

## Analysis

### Abjection, Monstrosity, and the Gothic Reconfiguration of Gender

Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* creates a Gothic universe in which the monstrous functions not simply as a category of the supernatural, but as a structural principle shaping identity, gender, and power. The novel's central characters Mother and Eve/Evelyn are not merely 'monstrous' in a grotesque, external way; rather they exhibit different forms of monstrosity surrounded

with abjection, which unsettles the symbolic order, destabilises intelligibility, and encourages the subject to confront what society strictly rejects. Through these characters, Carter interrogates the fragility and sensitivity of gendered categories and exposes the violence long inherent in ideological systems, which provide a so-called liberation, but in fact administer rigid norms. In Carter's hands, the Gothic becomes a terrain of boundary collapse, producing beings whose existence reveals the contradictions within both patriarchal and matriarchal discourses.

Mother stands at the narrative's core as an exaggerated, grotesque figure of the monstrous feminine: her body, her mythic authority, and her technological mastery all come together to make her both awe-inspiring and terrifying. Evelyn's first description of her goes as such:

This woman has many names but her daughters call her Mother. Mother has made herself into an incarnated deity; she has quite transformed her flesh, she has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle. She is also a great scientist who makes extraordinary experiments and I was destined to become the subject of one of them; but I was ignorant of everything when, fainting, I arrived in Beulah. (Carter, 1982/1992, p. 46)

Her body is not simply metaphorical, but materially hybrid: part flesh, part synthetic artifact, part deity evoking what Julia Kristeva terms abjection, a space that is "neither subject nor object" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1), the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (p. 4) in *Powers of Horror*. She explains that for her, what is abject is "the jettisoned object [...] and draws me toward the place, where meaning collapses" because it is "radically excluded" (p. 2) from the symbolic order. Mother's grotesque form, then, is the embodiment of excess and symbolic overload; she cannot be fully contained within any stable category. Evelyn goes on further in his first impressions of Mother illustrating her as "the fearful, archaic thing" (Carter 1982/1992, p. 55), "a sacred monster", "was personified and self-fulfilling fertility" (p. 56). She may not be a typical half human half animal being, but she is a very grotesque figure of Cybele. She is a goddess of fertility but is an artificial and self-made one. Hence, Beulah is not a promised land for Evelyn. The fact that she was 'personified' and is at first referred as a 'thing' proves that she has this artificial and non-human appearance. Mother's corporeal enormity is emphasised continually from the moment she appears. She is so vast that she seems to "fill the round, red-painted, over-heated, red-lit cell in which she chose to manifest herself," and Evelyn immediately "became aware of an appalling sense of claustrophobia" (p. 60). Her overwhelming

presence goes beyond not only the boundaries of the room but also the boundaries of representation itself: she is “Mother; but too much mother, a femaleness too vast, too gross for [...] imagination to contain” (p. 63). Carter renders her not as a symbolic mother but as an excessive one, which is to say, a maternal force swollen beyond symbolic proportion, a grotesque embodiment of fertility, power, and myth.

Moreover, this above-mentioned enclosure is not merely spatial; it is apparently womb-like, with its circular architecture, oppressive heat, and suffocating redness. Evelyn is overwhelmed in a symbolic womb, trapped in an environment that imitates the conditions of pregnancy. Carter uses the foreshadowing technique here to underscore the symbolic rebirth through this scene. The womb is an abject place because it is between life and pre-life; in other words, it is a threshold, but a Gothic one with uncanny qualities: it gives life and is not normally supposed to cause terror, but it does without a proper reason and it is the exact place where categories concerning binaries like life/death, inside/outside and self/other begin to shatter.

Julia Kristeva’s abject is a concept which “disturbs identity, system, order,” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4) mainly because it draws the person towards the mother from whom the subject needs to be disconnected in order to have a non-fragmented and lucid self. Evelyn is stuck in a state of in-betweenness meaning that he is neither the man he was nor the woman he will be yet. He is alive but going through a symbolic dissection; he is present, but psychically dissolving under Mother’s gaze and dominance. The space around him exercises what Kristeva describes as the abject’s erasure of borders; which is to say, a blurring of limit that destabilises the subject’s sense of autonomy. Evelyn’s panic; for this reason, does not solely result from Mother’s physical scale but also from the abjection itself. He is terrorised by the idea of being drawn back to the pre-symbolic maternal space in which the identity is dissolved. His body, which is soon to be surgically transformed, is already in pieces and unstable because of this environment. The Gothic atmosphere contributes to this dissolvment, pointing Evelyn as an abject being caught between states, trapped in a liminal area where life and death, masculinity and femininity, self and other become indistinguishable. In this sense, the scene unfolds the novel’s core absorption into the collapse of boundaries and the monstrous potential of forced transformation.

Mother’s political desire, which is to establish a society ruled by women and “to make a start on the feminisation of Father Time” (Carter, 1982/1992, p. 64), is not rendered as legitimately utopic or a product of ideological fantasy. It is monstrously actualised through surgical violence

and mythic intimidation. When Mother says, she is about to “make a start on the feminisation of Father Time,” the capitalised Father hints her two-fold intention. She addresses both the symbolic figure of patriarchy and the masculine principle which builds the Western culture. At the same time, by situating herself as the one capable of ‘feminising’ Time itself, she is loaded with a God-like, creator status, which shows the extreme margins of her aspiration. In attempting to cross out the patriarchal creator figure and exchanging it with a maternal one, Mother reproduces the very totalitarian mindset she alleges to resist. Her vision becomes as violent, dictator-like, and socially destabilising as the patriarchal order she pursues to annul. By generating a new Eve through surgery and artificial mythmaking, Mother does not genuinely demythologise; instead, she basically relocates the place of myth from a divine and heavenly dimension to her own laboratory on earth. In doing so, she replaces one infinite authority with another. This act exemplifies Carter’s subversive technique: it demonstrates that even movements claiming to be revolutionary may turn out to be cloning the same oppressive, hierarchical structures they expect to challenge.

The narration below describes how Evelyn is physically transformed with the force and practice of Mother herself:

And now Mother was armed. The monstrous being brandished an obsidian knife as black as she was. I found it very difficult to see, in that abattoir light, and remember, now, an atmosphere rather than an event – a lowering sense of antique ritual; of the presence, also of stern adults who knew what was best for me better than I did myself; the full panoply of human sacrifice, in fact. [...] Raising her knife, she brought it down. She cut off all my genital appendages with a single blow, [...] And that was the end of Evelyn, who’d been sacrificed to a dark goddess [...]. (pp. 66-68)

This forced dismemberment and reconstruction literalises the violence of ideological imposition. Mother imposes her vision on the very matter of the body, converting Evelyn into her experiment aka her playground. In this process, she weaponises biology, technology, and myth, turning creation into domination. Her grotesque maternity becomes a Gothic spectacle but also a deeply political critique of what happens when power speaks through the body. Carter’s Mother is not monstrous because she is essentially evil, but because she presents a summing view provided with plain bodily control. Her order is simple and direct: the myth she frames demands submission. In Kristevan terms, Mother represents the abject maternal that is a distorted symbol of motherhood, which gives life with pure intentions

and aims at forming a society as such, may easily end up being domineering and destructive.

While Mother's horror derives from external magnitude and ideological imposition, Eve, formerly Evelyn, embodies the internal, lived horror of abjection. Her transformation marks a central Gothic catastrophe, meaning the self is rearranged, physically and psychologically. Upon awakening after the surgery, she reflects: "I know nothing. I am *tabula crasa*, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman, no; both more and less than a real woman" (p. 79). These lines exemplify Kristeva's notion of abjection as the collapse of coherence in the subject. Eve is confronted with the absence of a singular, stable self, and with the traumatic remainder of a former identity. She is totally in limbo here and portrays her position with these words:

I was in an object state and, besides, I had no money; no clothes, besides the ones I wore; no passport; no means of identification: no traveller's checks; no credit card. All my existential impedimenta had been tossed carelessly into Mother's wastepaper basket once it no longer fitted me. (p. 79)

Eve's body is neither fully male nor fully female, but instead a hybrid, liminal space that materialises cultural anxieties about gender, sexuality, and the invasive role of technology. Her existence unsettles the symbolic categories that society relies upon. The 'identification' mentioned here does not only refer to the ID card obviously, but also the identity of Eve/Evelyn covering his past and her present. The character has Eve's body, but Evelyn's mind, which is supported with her confession after looking in the mirror and remarking: "[...] I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, [...]" (p. 71). It is as if she had been denied of existence and does not fit into any category or location, but the question is 'Does s/he have to?'. She implicitly provides an answer towards the end of the novel:

Masculine and feminine are correlatives which involve one another. I am sure of that – the quality and its negation are locked in necessity. [...] But what the nature of masculine and the nature of feminine might be, whether they involve male and female, if they have anything to do with [...] my own factory fresh incision and engine-turned breasts, that I do not know. Though I have been both man and woman, still I do not know the answer to these questions. Still they bewilder me. (p. 146)

This kind of liminality is precisely where Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* locates the abject as a threat to identity. She asserts:

A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A “something” that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2)

Eve lives within that “something” — an otherness that is not quite measurable because she is her own transformation. Her horror is introspective and epistemological. She carries within her the memories, guilt, and desires of Evelyn; the man she was is not simply erased but inscribed in her flesh. She mourns that previous self and yet must live without it. This guilt-knitted self-awareness mirrors Kristeva’s idea of the ‘abjection of self’, where the subject realises that its whole identity is built around a foundational loss. It is hypothesised by her in this way: “The abjection of self would be the culminating form [...] revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being” (p. 5). Eve is, in effect, that ‘stray’ or ‘misfit’, who cannot fully belong to the symbolic order because her very being is structured around this irreducible loss. Her monstrosity is not one of brute force, but of unsettling contradiction: she is simultaneously vulnerable and powerful, re-made and fragmented, a hub of ideological conflict between Mother’s vision and Zero’s patriarchal tyranny. In other words, she harbours both sides of binaries within herself, and this duality constitutes her true, idiosyncratic identity, which she can only embrace, appreciate and eventually celebrate once she becomes aware of its complexity and of the fact that it is something to be affirmed rather than suppressed. For now, her terror lies in her own body, a body that refuses to resolve into a stable identity and thus defies any system that demands purity or fixity.

Carter crafts horror through both excess and instability, using Mother and Eve to materialise different modalities of Gothic terror rooted in abjection. Mother’s horror stems from her grotesque physicality and mythic ambition. Her body is described as colossal in scale and oppressive in its promise. The place she reigns, the subterranean domain of Beulah, “a strange land” (Carter, 1982/1992, p. 48), “where contrarieties exist together” (p. 45), is

itself a Gothic space: an underground world of transformation, ritual, and bio-technological experiment. Here, the holiness of birth is degraded and converted into a cold, clinical process. Horror comes out through her control over life, from mythmaking to duplication revealing that the maternal, too, could be the centre of pressure rather than safety, ease and comfort.

In contrast to that, Eve's horror appears sincere and destabilising. Her body is ceaselessly abused and is tortured psychologically beginning from Zero's violence and the flashbacks from being Evelyn, continuing with her own alienations of the self. Carter unveils her new form as exposed and susceptible. Her gender is not a trusted identity but a disputed one, always under revision. The monstrosity she embodies is not simply about what is done to her; it is more about what she has been turned into that is an absurdity – alive outside, dead inside. Hers is a body that both pushes away and amazes and she is a subject whose mere existence is a challenge to the symbolic order.

When it comes to what these characters really seek to achieve, Mother's ambition is illusory, in that she wants to disassemble the patriarchal world and build a new mythic order that is as symbolic as the available one. On one hand, she dreams of a race born of women alone, desiring a kind of homogeneity which eliminates the male influence completely. Ironically; however, while doing that, she copies the patriarchal dynamics. Her authority is unlimited, and her utopia is sustained via physical intimidation. Her appetite is not fed with political sources only, but also with the Gothic itself, meaning that she aims at petrifying when she paves her way through her aim.

Eve's desire, on the other hand, is ruptured and deeply existential. She longs to discover who s/he has become yearning for self-definition, freedom, and escape. Her journey is not about establishing a society, but about restoring her subjectivity, adrift from Mother's ideology and Zero's tyranny. Her final decision to set sail into the ocean signifies a refusal to be identified by any myth or system; it is the desire for a new narrative, one not imposed but chosen with freewill, even if that narrative remains ambiguous and open-ended as the New Eve in a new world order, where binaries are deconstructed and flexible borders are embraced for the sake of a profound society in harmony. This manifests itself and is inserted in the novel by Carter reflecting her own realistic vision upon Eve's question: "Will I be happy now I am a woman?", which is answered as, "Of course not! Not until we all live in a happy world!" (p. 73).



Mother and Eve, as Gothic-*abject* monsters, speak powerfully to contemporary concerns about identity, technology, and ideology. Mother's experiments in reproductive control foreshadow current debates around artificial wombs, genetic engineering, and bioethics. Her vision may raise significant concerns such as: who has the right to define reproduction? And whose bodies are shaped by ideology? Eve's threshold existence underlines modern discussions of gender fluidity, transition, and bodily autonomy. Her horror lies not in her queerness but in the violence which social and ideological structures inflict on bodies that refuse or 'fail' to conform to normative patterns. Through binaries, she parodies the daily lives of common contemporary people who burden each other with their own fears and desires and then expel them labelling them as 'the other' when such desires and fears disturb them after reflected backwards.

Furthermore, Carter's novel reflects today's ideological polarisation. Mother's radical feminism, Zero's patriarchal tyranny, and the protestors battling in the novel's chaotic America mirror contemporary controversies around gender, authority, and ideology. The monsters in Carter's world are not simply figures of fantasy, rather they are reflections, warning readers to examine how the boundaries we take for granted such as gender, power, identity are constructed, maintained, and challenged.

In Kristevan terms, the monsters are representations of the *abject*: they force us to confront what we exclude, suppress and reformulate so as to sustain meaning. As Kristeva reminds us, the *abject* "marks what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). Carter's Mother and Eve do not transgress these borders, more importantly, they uncover their fragility. In so doing, she reimagines the Gothic not as a retreat into horror but as a political and philosophical analysis, using the monstrous to illuminate the unsettling truth that even our most stable categories depend on rejecting what they are unable to contain.

## Conclusion

Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* positions monstrosity as a critical instrument through which the contradictions of gender, identity, and political ideology are possibly explained and reconceptualised. By centring the Gothic figures of Mother and Eve/Evelyn as reflections of Kristeva's *abject*, Carter demonstrates how the idea of monstrosity is produced not through metaphysical evil but through the fierce clash of social norms, mythic structures, and incarnate experience. Mother, with her grotesquely

magnified maternity and technologically engineered illusory vision as a mad scientist – a typical Gothic monster figure, reveals the dangers intrinsic in systems that claim to liberate while simultaneously reproduce oppressive forms of control. On the contrary, Eve becomes the centre of internal abjection: her surgically altered body and fractured identity illustrates the destabilisation of symbolic categories on which both patriarchy and radical matriarchy are based. Through her, Carter enunciates the horror of in-betweenness tied to the terror and potential that emerge when the self is pushed to occupy the space between binaries.

Together, these figures highlight the Gothic's capacity to articulate anxieties which surpass the limits of realist representation. Carter's use of abjection deepens the Gothic mood by taking the psychological, physical, and ideological fractions implanted in modern individuals to the foreground. In a world marked by political polarisation, technological invasion into bodily autonomy, and by the breakdown of stable identity categories, Carter's monsters feel uncannily contemporary. Their terrors lie not in their peculiarity or difference but in what they reveal about the systems that create and regulate this condition. By showing how bodies are controlled, myths are built and identities are imposed, Carter transforms the Gothic from the genre of fear into an instrument that encourages readers to confront the fragility of social structures.

In this sense, *The Passion of New Eve* approaches monstrosity not as a deviation to be eradicated but as a means of resistance and potential transformation, which reinforces the meaning and helps convey the message of the novel in a more clear and accurate way. The Gothic setting pictured as the city of New York in general with all its chaos and disorder indeed lead to new opportunities for characters especially in their quests of identity formation. It is the situation of New York that drags Evelyn into becoming the New Eve. Carter applies her style masterfully by mirroring the chaotic, fragmented and in limbo state of Eve on the paper with chapters that proceed in a non-linear form and in different lengths. In her hands, Gothic becomes a means of her style and fits well in the pitch-dark mode of the setting before enlightenment that calls for a change. At the same time, the abject states of Mother and Eve acknowledge the subtlety of ideological classifications that claim universality, while simultaneously opening pathways for imagining new forms of subjectivity beyond them. Carter's Gothic world, with its collapsing boundaries and ambivalent monsters, thus serves both as a warning and an invitation. It reminds us that any system striving for utter homogeneity risks duplicating the exact violence it condemns, and invites us to embrace the fluidity, multiplicity, and ambiguity that the Gothic prioritises.

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