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Género e Identidade Sexual em *The Passion of New Eve* de Angela Carter e *Sacred Country* de Rose Tremain

Playing with Gender and Sexual Identity in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*

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Resumo

A presente dissertação é uma análise comparativa da obra de Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* e da obra de Rose Tremain, *Sacred Country*. Ambos os livros retratam personagens que foram submetidas a intervenções cirúrgicas para mudança de sexo de uma forma irreal, como em *The Passion of New Eve* e de uma forma real como em *Sacred Country*. O meu principal objectivo é explorar a adaptação destas personagens a normas de género e a sua adaptação a uma nova identidade sexual. Deste modo, a minha análise incidirá sobre algumas considerações teóricas de género. Para o efeito, escolhi analisar o trabalho de duas das mais emblemáticas feministas: Simone de Beauvoir e Judith Butler.

É fundamental para o meu trabalho o estudo realizado por Beauvoir e Butler sobre sexo/género e a importância dos seus discursos sobre identidades sexuais e género como produções sociais. É também relevante o trabalho realizado por Judith Butler relativamente ao género como imitação e representação.

Por fim, as considerações teóricas de Donna Haraway são essenciais para a minha análise do corpo humano como uma superfície que pode ser alterada por práticas tecnológicas.

Abstract

The following dissertation is a joint analysis of Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*. Both novels portray characters whose biology has been reconstructed through surgery or technology in a non-realist form, as in *The Passion of New Eve* and in a realist form, as in *Sacred Country*. My aim is to explore the novels' protagonists adjustment to gender norms and their accommodation to a new sexual identity. In this way, my analysis will be followed by a focus on gender theoretical considerations. I have chosen to consider the work of two of the most emblematic feminists: Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler.

The contribution that Beauvoir and Butler made to the sex/gender debate and their discourse of sexual identities and gender as social productions are fundamental for my work. Judith Butler's theory of gender as parody and as performance also plays an important role in my study.

Finally, the work of Donna Haraway is essential for my exploration of the human body as a surface which can be altered and redefined by modern technology.

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? Abbreviations ?

The following abbreviations are used throughout to refer to primary sources:

Fictional works

Carter, Angela

PNE.....*The Passion of New Eve*. London: Virago Press (1977), 1996.

Tremain, Rose

SC.....*Sacred Country*. New York & London: Washington Press, 1992.

Theoretical works

Beauvoir, Simone de

SS.....*The Second Sex*. Ed. & trans. H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books (1949), 1973.

Butler, Judith

GT.....*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* New York & London: Routledge (1990).

Carter, Angela

SW.....*The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*. London: Virago Press (1979), 1993.

Introduction

Some of the recent theorizing about gender made way for the accelerated development of so-called unisex fashion and medical technology that has made possible, among other wonders, transsexual surgery, artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, surrogate motherhood, genetic engineering (which may make possible prenatal choices of a child's sex) amongst many other things. We may be living, then, the era of so-called 'flexi-sex'. In fact, since World War I women gained the freedom to wear trousers, put on men's suit and cut their hair short as young men grew their hair long.

Besides living in a 'flexi-sex' era we are also living in a society dominated by the mass media, especially by television. This media is, therefore, responsible for the large number of androgynous images that it disseminates. These are images that shift and blur the traditional boundaries between the sexes, in other words, images of people who play with their gender and sexual identity. Let us take as examples those pop music stars of both sexes who transform their outward appearances to conform to the image of the other sex. Examples abound, especially in the androgynous years of the eighties: Annie Lennox in concert, with her short hair, classic man's suit and hat, and a red bra; the young David Bowie with his excessive make-up and orange hair, strutting on the stage in long gowns and revealing shaven legs in short trousers; or his 'soft' successor in feminine eccentric looks, Boy George. We also have Prince, who in concert performances combines expressions of both extreme femininity and masculinity. Wearing excessive lace gowns, jewellery, lingerie or dressed in rugged leather, looking more like a princess rather than a prince. Last but not least we have Madonna, perhaps the icon most often used as an illustration of someone who does not keep to traditional gender roles. Madonna's repertoire of hyper-feminine images is quite extensive: from a

pornographic star to Marilyn Monroe. Yet she regularly wears boy's clothes or men's suits.

Although these phenomena of playing with gender and sexual identity abound in television, it is not my aim to continue to focus on this particular media, but to concentrate on the literary world.

In playing with gender and the relations between gender and biology, and gender and sexual identity, writers can achieve some powerful literary effects. When a hero or a heroine changes in the course of a novel and becomes a different person by the end, some reconfiguration of gender always plays a part. Authors also consciously challenge the expectations of the reader regarding gender. Many devices are used in fiction to unsettle the reader's preconceptions. Although the list of novels and devices are endless, it seems expedient to point out a few examples.

Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* (1928) plays with cross-dressing by introducing a protagonist, Orlando, who depicts transsexualism, although I must stress that Woolf comically eschews specific descriptions of the bodily alterations that mark Orlando's gender metamorphosis. His transformation is basically done through witty costume changes¹.

Ursula Le Guin in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) writes about science-fiction characters with a biology or sexual identity unknown to human society. In the glacial country of 'Winter' there are no men or women but hermaphroditic individuals who experience a cyclical sexual potency. This makes them temporarily male or female from a reproductive point of view. Truly disconcerting as well is Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975). In Russ's novel Whileaway girls produce female children who are raised communally after being separated from their biological mothers at the age of four or five. Russ's imaginative flight into Whileaway portrays, indeed, science-fiction characters with a biology quite different to human society.

One year after Russ's novel, Samuel R. Delany published *Triton*. Delany's novel describes us a society with remarkable utopian possibility. He places the main action of the novel on Triton, a satellite, and shows his intent to de-center the universe. The protagonist, Bron, has a sex-change operation as a quest for a whole, stable, and unique personality. Besides the sex-change operation that causes a major turning point in the book, it is the structure within Bron is placed that allures its readers. Delany reorganizes the family structure by introducing us a society with bisexuals, homosexuals and heterosexuals. People live in a society of varying sexual and stylistic preferences. In fact there are "forty or fifty basic sexes, falling loosely into nine categories, four homophilic" (117) and (presumably) five heterophilic, referring to which gender with whom you prefer to live regardless of sexual preference². And if Delany has created a text of disturbing possibilities so has John Varley.

In 1992 Varley published *Steel Beach*, a book skilfully written and tightly plotted. He presents a fluidity of gender that is complete, to the extent that his protagonist and other characters betray no gender consciousness or identity. Maintaining one gender for life is viewed as perverse or insane.

Finally, another set of examples comes from Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country* (1992). Both books operate with transvestism and portray characters whose biology has been reconstructed through surgery or technology in a non-realist form, as in *The Passion of New Eve* and in a realist form, as in Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*. There are also other observable similarities between the two. Besides introducing characters that suffer physical transformation, Carter and Tremain also deal with each protagonist's adjustment to gender norms and their accommodation to a new sense of selfhood. These characters share the sensation of being trapped in an imposed identity or of being Other to their Selves. Carter and Tremain's writing may thus be posited as a

quest for a Self through metamorphoses. In this way, I propose to construct a joint analysis of these subjects that will be followed by a focus on gender theoretical considerations.

In Part One I will concentrate on the sex/gender distinction which provides the basic framework for a great deal of feminist theory. This will be followed by a focus on Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler's considerations on that matter. Part Two will begin with a brief introduction of the body as a social construction and as a malleable surface that can be changed. This section will be completed with Donna Haraway's writings about the human body as a technological body and the analysis of specific works which consider the feminine body as castrated as well as castrating in particular: Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* and Angela Carter's *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*. All the theoretical considerations will be more closely applied to *The Passion of New Eve* and *Sacred Country*. Finally, Part Three will focus on Carter and Tremain characters' gender construction and Judith Butler's notions of gender as performance.

Part One:

1. Sex versus Gender

Gender has always been the central subject of feminist theory. Some feminists fear that to abandon gender as a central category of analysis is ultimately to abandon feminism: "born together, they will be buried together" (39)³ Obviously, then, to understand the goals of feminist theory we must consider its central subject. Here, however, we immediately plunge into a complicated and controversial morass. For among feminist theorists there is by no means consensus on such questions as: What is gender? and How is it related to anatomical sexual differences? In fact, the dichotomy sex/gender has provoked extensive feminist conflict. I must say, that the meanings of "sex" and "gender" abound with ambiguity and paradoxical argument not only in the feminist discourse but also in various areas. Many believe that gender has come to be used as a euphemistic synonym for all the meanings of "sex" except sexual intercourse. As I assess the situation, this usage has come about out of some sense that the word gender is somehow more polite (or more politically correct) than the word sex. Thus, on questionnaires, I frequently see respondents asked to indicate their gender, that is, whether they are biologically male or female. This sloppy usage has become quite prevalent and I personally find it to be the most damaging. I fail to see any reason to change the meaning of a word because it is more "polite". Personal distaste aside, this usage only further obfuscates the meaning of both "sex" and "gender". Due to these misinterpretations, there has been an increasing recognition of the necessity to clarify their meanings.

Gender and second-wave feminism were born together at the close of the 1960s. Prior to the late 1960s, "gender" was a term that had primarily

been used to refer to the difference between feminine and masculine forms within language. During the 1960s feminists extended the meaning of "gender" so that it came to describe the understanding of not only words but also types of behaviour as female or male. Feminists wanted to make the point that the association of specific types of behaviour with females or males was as much a social convention as was the association of specific words. Prior to this time, the dominant understanding was that such phenomena were "naturally" linked with males or females. It was thought that the biological distinction between women and men caused women to behave one way and men the other. Feminists wished to emphasise that such differences in behaviour were not a consequence of biology but of social convention. By including these under the category of "gender" rather than "sex", they hoped people would come to see such differences as socially rather than biologically caused.

Within feminist discourse a distinction soon developed between "sex" and "gender". It became widely accepted that while "sex" referred to those characteristics of an individual that were rooted in biology, i.e., chromosomes and genes that allow for differences in physical appearance and, therefore, for the two categories of male and female, "gender" referred to the differences between women and men that were a product of society. On this usage, gender was typically thought to refer to personality traits and behaviour in distinction from body. In short, feminists came to view differences between women and men as having two dimensions: the biological and the social, with "sex" referring to the former, and "gender" to the latter. Due to the fact that biological phenomena are often viewed as immutable, feminists frequently thought of the biological aspects of male/female differences as those that were unchanging across history and culture. Differences of "gender", however, or in how societies elaborated these biological differences in terms of expectations regarding behaviour, were thought of as variable across cultures.

In the early 1980s, some feminists began to find problems with this belief. They began to ask whether even the biological differences between women and men were as unchangeable as many thought. According to Alison Jaggar, changing social practices have led to changes in the body. Thus she noted that women are becoming physically stronger as strength in women has become more socially acceptable. Moreover, Jaggar claimed that changing social practices can affect not only women's external physical structure but also their internal biology, and include changes in their genetic qualities. Thus, she notes that a cultural preference for smaller women in certain societies may have resulted in the greater selection of such women for reproductive purposes. Jaggar also claimed that the interactive casual relation between biology and social practice made theoretically problematic the idea of a sharp line between nature and culture.⁴

Furthermore, the distinction between "sex" and "gender" was being questioned for other reason. One problem with the distinction as formulated by feminists in the 1960s was that it assumed that the biological distinction between women and men, or "sex", was a given, unaffected not only by social practice but also by social interpretation. But many feminists were coming to recognise that all distinctions, even those called biological or natural, were formulated from within a particular theoretical perspective. This meant that even the biological distinction between women and men was socially constructed, and thus as potentially variable as the social conventions, which were thought of by feminists as part of "gender". Joan Scott in *Gender and the Politics of History* expressed this point in the following way:

It follows then that gender is the social organization of sexual difference. But this does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and natural physical differences between women and men; rather gender is the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences ... We cannot see sexual differences except as a function of our knowledge about the body and that knowledge is not

"pure", cannot be isolated from its implication in a broad range of discursive contexts (2)⁵.

This relationship between biology and socialisation was metaphorically described by Linda Nicholson as a "coat-rack view of self-identity" (41)⁶. According to Nicholson, the body is seen as a type of rack upon which contradictory cultural artefacts, specifically those of personality and behaviour, are thrown or superimposed. Also, the realisation that even the biological differences between women and men are socially constructed from within a given theoretical framework was receiving further support from work being done by historians. Thomas Laqueur, in his study of medical literature on the body from the Greeks through the eighteenth century, identifies a significant shift in the eighteenth century from a "one-sex" view of the body to a "two-sex" view. In the earlier view, the female body was seen as a lesser version of the male body "along a vertical axis of infinite gradations" (148), whereas in the later view the female body becomes "an altogether different creature along a horizontal axis whose middle ground was largely empty" (148)⁷.

To sum up, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, a growing body of literature was beginning to challenge the idea that the old distinction between "sex" and "gender" was useful. Many came to believe that this distinction obscured the crucial point that "sex" itself was a social construction and thus was a part of and not separate from "gender". Moreover, as some were coming to see, the failure to see "sex" as a social construction had important political consequences. For example, Nicholson argued that "the feminist tendency to separate 'sex' and 'gender' and to view the former as the unchanging constant upon which variable social constructions of the latter are built – a position [she] labelled 'biological foundationalism' – encouraged feminist tendencies to minimize differences among women" (291)⁸. Nicholson claimed that "the idea that

the body provided certain constants in women's experiences led to theories depicting women's situation as fundamentally similar across history and culture" (291). Inevitably, however, such theories tended to assume the meanings, which were most familiar to those creating the theories. As an example, Nicholson refers to some feminists who have taken women's smaller size relative to men, a physical difference highly emphasised in post-industrial societies, to possess the same meaning and importance in all societies. In this way, the tendency to view "sex" as separate from "gender" contributed to feminist tendencies to homogenize the experiences and situations of women.

Despite the relative incoherence of definition of "gender" in relation to "sex", the former category continues to be one of the main issues within feminist discourse, giving rise to various gender theories. Within the enormous and ever-evolving variety of gender theories among second-wave feminists (from 1960s onward), I have chosen to consider the work of two of the most emblematic feminists: Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler.

1.1. Conceptualising Sex and Gender: Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler

Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive”, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts.

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 7⁹

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 301¹⁰

With these fighting words delivered in 1949 in *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir inspired almost all the newly emerging feminist writers two decades later to draw a distinction between sex and gender. As science historian Donna Haraway writes, “despite important differences, all the modern feminist meanings of gender have roots in Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that ‘one is not born a woman’”¹¹. Beauvoir’s famous distinction between sex and gender has also been developed in unexpected and radical directions. Monique Wittig, one of the French feminists of the movement with which Beauvoir worked in the 1970s, developed Beauvoir’s postulate to lesbian political ends in a famous essay of 1981 entitled “One is Not Born a Woman”. Wittig has no truck with any concept of sex based on biology, arguing that “man” and “woman” are political categories which should be abolished.

Theorists, critics and even historians have drawn and continue to draw on Beauvoir’s influential analyses. Amongst many feminist theorists, Judith Butler is one of the writers who has written on *The Second Sex*, especially on the sex/gender distinction. It is, therefore, my intention to consider Butler’s interpretations while analysing Beauvoir’s ideas

The stimulating essay written by Judith Butler "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*" published in 1986, argues that Beauvoir's famous formulation "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" can be read as a radical programme for the role of the body in interpreting gender norms¹². The point of departure of Butler's reading is the distinction between sex and gender which Beauvoir's formulation offers: it suggests, for Butler, that gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired. In other words, gender is the cultural meaning and form that a body acquires. It postulates, then, that the sex/gender distinction implies natural bodies and constructed genders with the consequence that "being" female and "being" woman are two very different sorts of being. According to this framework, and in Butler's point of view, being female may be only a more or less fixed set of biological facts, while being a woman is an active process of negotiation between the individual and the cultural norms with which we have to deal. In this sense, if gender is the variable cultural interpretation of sex, then it lacks the fixity of simple identity. Butler puts it in this way:

To be a gender, whether man, woman or otherwise, is to be engaged in an ongoing cultural interpretation of bodies and, hence, to be dynamically positioned within a field of cultural possibilities. Gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realizing possibilities, a process of interpreting the body, giving it cultural form. In other words, to be a woman is to become a woman; it is not a matter of acquiescing to a fixed ontological status, in which case one could be born a woman, but, rather, an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities (31).

Butler argues that it is Beauvoir's use of the verb "become" which allows for the process of gender acquisition to be seen as an interplay of individual choice and acculturation, and which emphasises the constantly ongoing nature of this process. Gender is not only a cultural construction imposed upon identity, but in some sense gender is a process of constructing ourselves: "to *become* a woman is a purposive and

appropriative set of acts, the acquisition of a skill, a 'project', to use Sartrean terms, to assume a certain corporeal style and significance" (31). The notion that we somehow choose our gender can be puzzling. It tempts me to ask if the verb "become" implies that there is a moment at which we are outside gender. Butler replies that it seems impossible that we can occupy a position outside gender, because "we never experience or know ourselves as a body pure and simple, i.e., as our 'sex', because we never know our sex outside of its expression as gender. Lived or experienced 'sex' is always already gendered" (33). Thus we begin the process of becoming our genders from an already embodied, already culturally assigned place, a place "which cannot be found and which, strictly speaking, cannot be said to exist" (33) as Butler claims. Moreover, the kind of choice we make draws upon Sartre's doctrine of prereflective choice: "a tacit and spontaneous act which Sartre terms 'quasi knowledge'" (34). Not wholly conscious, but nevertheless accessible to consciousness, it is the kind of choice we make and only later realize we have made. Beauvoir seems to rely on this notion of choice in referring to the kind of volitional act through which gender is assumed.

Butler goes on to raise the question of whether, if gender is choice, women could conceivably be blamed for choosing their situation as victims of oppression. Her conclusion is that although the French theorist is well aware of the complex material origins of oppression, which prevent it from being simply generated by choice, her emphasis on choice is empowering because it reminds us that oppression is contingent and that oppressive gender norms only persist to the extent that individuals take them up repeatedly. Butler sums it up in this way:

The phenomenology of victimization that Simone de Beauvoir elaborates throughout *The Second Sex* reveals that oppression, despite the appearance and weight of inevitability, is essentially contingent. Moreover, it takes out of the sphere of reification the discourse of oppressor and oppressed, reminding us that oppressive gender norms persist only to the extent that human beings take them

up and give them life again and again. Simone de Beauvoir is not saying however, that oppression is generated through a series of human choices (35).

In the beginning of *The Second Sex*, one finds the expression of a duality – that of Self and the Other. According to Beauvoir, man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; “she is not regarded as an autonomous being ... she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other (16)¹³. In revealing that women have become the “Other”, Beauvoir also emphasises the need for women to seek transcendence or a path of self-recovery. She remarks that

Woman is enticed by two modes of alienation. Evidently to play at being a man will be for her a source of frustration; but to play at being a woman is also a delusion: to be a woman would mean to be the object, the Other – and the Other nevertheless remains subject in the midst of her resignation ... The true problem for woman is to reject these flights from reality and seek self-fulfilment in transcendence (SS, 82-83).

In Butler’s point of view, transcendence may suggest, on the one hand, that Beauvoir accepts a gender-free model of freedom as an ideal for women’s aspirations. On the other hand, insofar as transcendence appears a particularly masculine project, her argument seems to urge women to assume the model of freedom currently embodied by the masculine gender. In other words, because women have been identified with their anatomy, and this identification has served the purpose of their oppression, they ought now to identify with “consciousness” – a transcending activity beyond the body. But if this were Beauvoir’s view she would be offering women a chance to be men, and therefore, the model of freedom currently regulating masculine behaviour ought to become the model after which women fashion themselves. It is questionable whether she accepts a view of consciousness or freedom which is in any sense beyond the body, but her discussion of the Other permits a reading which

is highly critical of the masculine project of disembodiment. Beauvoir does not intend women to imitate the masculine project of disembodiment because it is self-deluding. Simone de Beauvoir's discussion of the Self and the Other as a reworking of Hegel's dialectic of master and slave shows the masculine project of disembodiment as unsatisfactory. Butler puts it best in this way:

The self-asserting "man" whose self-definition requires a hierarchical contrast with an "Other" does not provide a model of true autonomy, for [Beauvoir] points out the bad faith of his designs, i.e. that the "Other" is, in every case, his own alienated self. (...) By defining women as "Other", "men" are able through the shortcut of definition to dispose of their bodies, to make themselves other than their bodies, and to make their bodies other than themselves. (...) The embodied aspect of his existence is not really his own, and hence he is not really a sex, but beyond sex. This sex which is beyond sex must initiate a splitting and social projection in order not to know his own contradictory identity. (...) The disembodied "I" identifies himself with a noncorporeal reality (the soul, consciousness, transcendence), and from this point on his body becomes Other. Insofar as he inhabits, his body must appear to him as strange, as alien, as an alienated body, a body that is *not* his. From this belief that the body is Other, it is not a far leap to the conclusion that others *are* their bodies, while the masculine "I" is a noncorporeal phenomenon. The body rendered as Other – the body repressed or denied and, then, projected – reemerges for this "I" as the view of Others as essentially body. Hence, women become the Other; they come to embody corporeality itself. This redundancy becomes their essence, and existence as a woman becomes what Hegel termed "a motionless tautology (37-38, italics in the text)¹⁴.

In clarifying the notion of the body as "situation" – a field of cultural possibilities both received and reinterpreted, Butler argues that Beauvoir "suggests an alternative to the gender polarity of masculine disembodiment and feminine enslavement to the body" (38). For Beauvoir, Butler writes,

any effort to ascertain the "natural" body before its entrance into culture is definitionally impossible, not only because the observer who seeks this phenomenon is him/herself entrenched in a specific cultural language, but because the body is as well. The body is, in effect, never a natural phenomenon (39).

Butler draws our attention to the conclusion of "The Data of Biology" chapter where Beauvoir writes,

it is not merely as a body, but rather as a body subject to taboos, to laws, that the subject takes consciousness of himself and accomplishes itself ... It is not physiology that can found values; rather, the biological givens assume those that the existent confers upon them (SS, 65).

If Beauvoir's view, Butler argues, is that the body exists as a locus of cultural interpretations, "then Simone de Beauvoir's theory seems implicitly to ask whether sex was not gender all along" (40), a view radicalised in the work of Monique Wittig and Michel Foucault, who "challenge the notion of natural sex and expose the political uses of biological discriminations in establishing a compulsory binary gender system" (40)¹⁵. Beauvoir does not suggest the possibility of other genders besides "man" and "woman", yet her insistence that these are historical constructs which must in every case be appropriated by individuals suggests, according to Butler, "that a binary gender system has no ontological necessity" (40). In fact, Beauvoir argues explicitly against the ontological necessity of sexual dimorphism earlier in the biology chapter. Beauvoir argues against Hegel that

it is in exercising sexual activity that men define the sexes and their relations as they create the sense and the value of all functions that they accomplish: but [sexual activity] is not necessarily implied in the nature of the human body ... The perpetuation of the species appears as the correlative of individual limitation. One can thus consider the phenomenon of reproduction as ontologically founded. But we must stop there. The perpetuation of the species does not entail sexual differentiation. If [sexual differentiation] is assumed by existents in such a manner that in return it enters into the concrete definition of existence, so be it. It nonetheless remains that a consciousness without a body and an immortal man are rigorously inconceivable, while one can imagine a society reproducing itself by parthenogenesis or composed of hermaphrodites (37).

Butler's analysis provides an alternative reading of existentialist concepts of freedom and choice found in radical feminism. For Butler,

In making the body into an interpretive modality, Beauvoir has extended the doctrines of embodiment and prereflective choice that characterized Sartre's work (...) Simone de Beauvoir, much earlier on and with greater consequence [than Sartre himself], sought to exorcise Sartre's doctrine of its Cartesian ghost. She gives Sartrean choice an embodied form and places it in a world thick with tradition. To "choose" a gender in this context is not to move in upon gender from a disembodied locale, but to reinterpret the cultural history which the body already wears. The body becomes a choice, a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh (41).

It is also obvious that the French theorist's view of the body anticipates the radical challenge to the notion of natural sex subsequently developed by Michel Foucault and Monique Wittig. Considered as a philosophical and intellectual authority, Beauvoir, provides inspiration to a host of feminist theorists as well as literary critics, historians and so on. Butler's work is a striking example of the way in which Beauvoir's insights in *The Second Sex* continue to inspire feminist theorists. Butler's article on *Le Deuxième Sexe* prepares the way in a number of respects for the influential theoretical texts which Butler has gone on to write in the 1990s.

Judith Butler's rapid ascent to reigning "Queen of Gender"¹⁶ began with the publication of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990). Although *Gender Trouble* had nothing to do with ideals of dissolving gender distinctions, Butler's book is sometimes taken as an expression of the times when gender is purportedly in trouble.

Butler's position is associated with two main ideas discussed in *Gender Trouble* as well as in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993): the contribution she made to the sex/gender debate, and her ideas about gender parody and gender performance. The latter will be widely discussed in Part Three (see pages 83-98).

As I referred to earlier, the sex/gender debate belongs to a period in feminist theory when gender behaviour was understood as "culturally constructed" and sex as the "biological" fact of being man or woman. But Butler argues that feminists wrongly took the categories of "sex" or

“biology” to be “extra-discursive” (*GT*, 7), or “pre-cultural” (*GT*, 7). Gender appears to be the behaviour arising from the fact of biological sex. Feminists had argued that gender behaviour arose not as an effect of biological sex but from the effects of cultural construction. However, they had not challenged the concept of biological sex as *tabula rasa* to be then written on by culture. Butler argued that where sex appeared to be the cause and gender behaviour the effect, the very “originality” and “prior-ness” of sex was itself the effect – of cultural convention which posits the pre-cultural biological given. Butler argues that gender naturalisation relies on “distinctions between the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer” (*GT*, viii). Although sex appeared as inner and gender behaviour as outer, *both* sex and gender “can be shown as productions that create the effect of the natural, the original and the inevitable” (*GT*, viii). So *Gender Trouble* was taken partly as a critique of sex as a category of originality. It seems that Butler’s position on the sex/gender debate has shifted recently. When interviewed by Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal about this distinction, Butler replies:

One of the interpretations that has been made of *Gender Trouble* is that there is no sex, there is only gender, and gender is performative. ... And it has seemed to many that the materiality of the body is vacated or ignored or negated here – disavowed, even. (...) So I have shifted. I think that I overrode the category of sex too quickly in *Gender Trouble*. I try to consider it in *Bodies That Matter*, and to emphasise the place of constraint in the very production of sex¹⁷.

So what became important to Butler in writing *Bodies that Matter* was to go back to the category of sex, and to the problem of materiality. Butler begins to note that sex might be construed as a norm which materialises a body. She also stresses the fact that the materiality of a body is not only invested with a norm, but in some sense animated or contoured by a norm. Butler puts it in this way:

The category of "sex" is, from the start, normative, it is what Foucault has called a "regulatory ideal". In this sense, then, "sex" not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls. Thus, "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, "sex" is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled¹⁸

Gender Trouble as well as *Bodies that Matter* called for a new way of looking at sex and gender. In her first book, for example, she criticises some feminists who reinforce a binary view of gender relations in which human beings are divided into two clear-cut groups – women and men. These feminists close down options rather than opening up possibilities for a person to form and choose their own individual identity. Butler notes that feminists rejected the idea that biology is destiny, but then developed an account of patriarchal culture which assumed that masculine and feminine genders would inevitably be built, by culture, upon male and female bodies, making the same destiny just as inescapable. That argument allows no room for choice, difference or resistance. In other words, rather than being a fixed attribute in a person, gender should be seen as a fluid variable which changes in different contexts and at different times. This gender fluidity is also expressed when Butler tackles the problems she sees with the sex-gender-desire link.

If conventional theory states that our sex (male/female) produces our gender (masculine/feminine) it also causes our desire towards the opposite sex. According to Freud, the way we gain our identities is linear, all influences happen in a set order. As a result of this only two relations are possible: you identify with one sex and you desire the other. Freud explains homosexual attraction by claiming that when, for instance, a woman

desires another woman, deep down she really identifies with men and this is the reason she desires a woman. Butler, however, rejects this uncompromising explanation because it does not leave any room for variation, for alternative influences on different people in different situations. Butler gives us the example of Michel Foucault's Herculine Barbin (a hermaphrodite) as someone who is not categorizable within the gender binary and who "occasions a convergence and disorganization of the rules that govern sex/gender/desire" (*GT*, 23)¹⁹. Moreover, Butler concludes that our gender is not a core aspect of our identity but rather a performance, how we behave at different times. Our gender (masculinity and femininity) is an achievement rather than a biological factor. To illustrate this point Butler refers to Aretha Franklin's song, *You make me feel like a natural woman*. In this song, Franklin can sing, "You make me feel like a woman" without this presumed necessarily obvious. In other words, a woman does not necessarily feel feminine all the time, any more than a man feels masculine. Once again, Butler suggests that we should think of gender as free-floating and fluid rather than fixed:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (*GT*, 6).

Part Two:

1. Corporeal Fluidity and Social Construction

We may not know exactly what sex is; but we do know it is mutable, with the possibility of one sex being changed into the other sex, that its frontiers are often uncertain, and that there are many stages between a complete male and a complete female.

Havelock Ellis, *The Psychology of Sex*, 225²⁰

There is no pre-given "nature", rather it is always culturally contingent and changeable.

Lynda Birke, *Feminism and the Biological Body*, 32²¹

The long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny is just a simple example to affirm that sexual identities can be constructed. Although, in some ways, the notions of "choice" or "free play" appear as unthinkable, it is, after all, possible to adorn or physically alter the surface of the body, to fit with changing cultural mores. For the sake of argument, let me state that it is my intention to explore the relationship between body as sexed, therefore, I will align sexual identity with body and body parts, since sex refers to such bodily matters as for example, vagina and penis.

We can thus "make over" the body in various ways; yet a shadow remains. The internal, anatomical body seems constraint. Admittedly, we can "tune up" some parts of our anatomy. But "the biological" always seems to be foundational, the ever-present bedrock to our theorising. It is that assumption of the biological body as a set of constraints that I take issue with. That is not to say that I am denying that there are constraints – human bodies cannot fly, nor can we breathe underwater, for instance.

What I seek to challenge is some of the constraints that seem to connote fixity, the body as the bedrock imposing limits on what the human might seek to do. This vision of fixity becomes equated with essentialism. Yet insofar as the flesh of the biological body offers constraints to our possibilities, these are dynamically generated; they do not necessarily imply fixity. It is such alternative narratives – of possibilities, not determinisms – that I want to explore here.

The biological body and our sexual identity, then, are to be thought as a social construction and not as natural objects. The body, for example, appears as “a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself” (*GT*, 8). The body is figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. According to Butler, bodies are significant sites of resistance, they matter, i.e., they signify, but they also intervene and interrupt, insistently breaking up and rearranging cultural attempts to code their meanings. Bodies cannot be easily contained. They erupt from the categories we prescribe for and invent to describe them. As well as for Foucault, bodies are fabricated historically, rather than revealing a complicity in transcendental, ahistorical structures. The work of Foucault has been influential in supporting the view that not only gender, but also sex and bodies, are social constructions. Foucault takes aspects of our selves which in western culture have come to be taken as fixed, and analyses them as historical effects of power which are constituted by shifting social forces, rather than by our fixed, physical being. Sex and bodies can then be seen as social productions rather than as material; as giving us the possibility of multiple social identities, rather than confining us to an essential self, which is “truly” us. Although he may not have intended to abstract his analysis from material existence, feminists have found his emphasis on social construction useful.

I shall be arguing that the body is most profitably conceptualised as an unfinished biological and social phenomenon which is transformed, within certain limits, as a result of its entry into, and participation in, society. It is this biological and social quality that makes the body at once such an obvious, and yet such an elusive phenomenon. On the one hand, we “all know” that the body consists of such features as flesh, muscles, bones and blood, and contains specific capacities which identify us as humans. On the other hand, though, even the most “natural” features of the body change over the lifetime of an individual. For example, as we get older our faces change, our eyesight deteriorates, our bones can become brittle, and our flesh starts to sag. Our upbringings, for example, affects our bodies in a myriad of ways: our development as girls and boys who walk, talk, look and even urinate differently all depends on the patterns of body training we receive from our parents and from society.

In this way, since the body can be socially constructed and can be seen as a malleable surface, it can be always transformable. The body surface has become a project to be worked upon, “an entity which is in the process of becoming; a *project* which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an *individual’s* self-identity”²² (5, emphasis in the original). Various practices illustrate this: body-building, body piercing, anorexia, cosmetic surgery and transsexual surgery for those who want to change their sexual identity.

Cosmetic surgery has provided a fast growing number of individuals with the opportunity for a more radical and direct way of reconstructing their bodies in line with particular notions of youthfulness, femininity and masculinity. Facelifts and liposuctions are just a small selection of the operations and procedures open to people with money who want to reconstruct their bodies. The medical gaze of the cosmetic surgeon transforms the female body, for example, into a surface for the inscription of cultural signification where we can examine the literal and material

reproduction ideals of beauty. In this way, cosmetic surgery *literally* transforms the material body into a sign of culture. Cosmetic surgery is not then simply a discursive site for the "construction of images of women" but is actually a material site at which the physical female body is surgically dissected, stretched, carved and reconstructed according to cultural and eminently ideological standards of physical appearance. The same happens with those who are submitted to sex-change surgical procedures, like vagionplasty and phalloplasty in order to tailor their bodies to their own inner sense of femininity or masculinity. Anatomical sex is universal but it is changeable.

Bearing all this in mind, my aim is to reject biological determinism and to disentangle the phrase echoed by Freud that "anatomy is destiny". My focus will be on transsexual surgery.

1.1. The Swift Knife of the Surgeon

I was lead, like a sacrificial animal, to the altar, to the operating table, where
Mother waited with a knife.

Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve*, 69²³

Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* takes on de Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but becomes a woman. The story begins with Evelyn, an Englishman who lands in New York. He finds the city itself a narrative of discontent, "scribbled all over with graffiti in a hundred languages expressing a thousand different griefs and lusts and furies" (*PNE*, 12). Evelyn is an innocent abroad in an apocalyptic landscape inhabited by gun-toting thugs and rats as "fast as piglets" (*PNE*, 17). The city, he says, is a "metaphor for death" (15), and just as chaos and dissolution begin to reach unbearable limits, he meets Leilah. Leilah is "a girl all softly black in colour – nigredo, the stage of darkness" (14). And while the city is seen as a site of chaos, Evelyn's treatment of Leilah highlights the negative aspects of the chaos in which they both find themselves.

It is with the woman that Evelyn begins to behave himself as a chauvinist male. The girl is also an incarnation of one type of male sexual fantasy. Evelyn first sees her wearing what a little later he calls her "public face" (30):

Her tense and resilient legs attracted my attention first for they seemed to quiver with the energy repressed in their repose ... but the black mesh stockings she wore designated their length and slenderness as specifically erotic, she would not use them to run away with ...

She had on a pair of black, patent leather shoes with straps around the ankles, fetishistic heels six inches high and ... an immense coat of red fox was slung around her shoulders ... This coat revealed only the hem of a dark blue, white coin-dotted dress that hardly covered her. Her hair was a furze-bush, à la Africain,

and she had bright purple lipstick on her mouth. She loitered among the confession magazines, chewing a stick of candy (19).

This “public face” is something Leilah consciously constructs using a mirror and as she is constructing it she becomes it:

I used to adore watching her dressing herself in the evenings, before she went out to the clubs ... She became absorbed in the contemplation of the figure in the mirror but she did not seem to me to apprehend the person in the mirror as, in any degree, herself. The reflected Leilah had a concrete form and ... we all knew, all three of us in the room, it was another Leilah. Leilah invoked this formal other with a gravity and ritual that recalled witchcraft; she brought into being a Leilah who lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection. (28).

Above all, of course, this “not-self” is designed to suit masculine taste. Leilah constructs herself as a reflection of a masculine view of what makes her erotically desirable. Evelyn, the male subject, due to his erotic dream of Leilah deprives her of autonomous subjectivity and in this way she is constructed as an Other, and as an object. To quote Beauvoir “[Leilah] finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (*conscience*) which is essential and sovereign” (SS, 29, italics in the original). The masculine gaze still defines the woman and turns her, as Evelyn comments of her, into a “victim” (28). Being the object of the masculine gaze turns her into “dressed meat” (31).

Evelyn’s treatment of Leilah is dismissive. When he defines her as a temptress, dressed in the paraphernalia of fetishistic pornography – black-mesh stockings, high heels, sensuous fur coat, and crotchless knickers, his only reaction is arousal. He becomes “nothing but cock” (25). Leilah appears essentially to Evelyn as a sexual being, thus she is what Beauvoir calls “the sex” (SS, 16). For him “she is sex – absolute sex, no less” (SS, 16). The narrative reveals how his erotic consciousness rapidly dehumanises Leilah. The pay-off to this relationship is predictable. Evelyn grows tired of

Leilah but she gets pregnant. Evelyn insists she has an abortion. Her womb becomes infected and she has a hysterectomy. Evelyn blames her for everything that has gone wrong: "why did you seduce me, in the first place?" (36).

Carter's novel reveals that the man's systematic mistreatment of his lover is not an innate sexual drive but is instead the result of how he has been culturally taught to view femininity. His abusive masculinity and sexual exploitation of women, implies that such behaviours have been absorbed from countless Hollywood films, particularly those featuring Tristessa. This screen goddess embodies for Evelyn the essence of idealized femininity - passive, suffering and tortured. The cinema industry's persistent representation of women as objects made solely for men's erotic pleasure becomes a bleak reality.

It is due to Evelyn's repeated abuse of the female sex, that a radical feminist leader rapes, castrates and surgically transforms this man into a woman. He decides to leave New York city for the western deserts of the States: "I would go to the desert ... there ... I thought I might find that most elusive of chimeras, myself" (38), where he is captured, by what Susan Suleiman describes "a scientific - military society of Amazons, led by a black female doctor called Mother"²⁴. It is in the desert that Evelyn becomes Eve. The metamorphosis is not the result of a choice, but of a surgical experiment planned and performed by the women of Beulah against the protagonist's will. The experiment is described by Nicoletta Vallorani as "an arithmetic operation: male attributes are subtracted from the protagonist's body, while female shapes are added" (179)²⁵. The matriarchy is technologically highly sophisticated. Mother has turned herself artificially, by a kind of super plastic surgery, into a version of a Greek "goddess of fertility" the "many-breasted Artemis" (77), and she is the surgeon in charge to remove Evelyn's genitalia with one fell swoop of a knife. Evelyn describes the horrible surgical procedure in this way:

Raising her knife, she brought it down. She cut off all my genital appendages with the single blow, caught them in her other hand and tossed them to Sophia, who slipped them into the pocket of her shorts. So she excised everything I had been and left me, instead, with a wound that would, in future, bleed once a month, at the bidding of the moon. Sophia staunched the blood with a cloth, then took another needle from the tray. This one extinguished the world completely (71).

And that was the end of Evelyn as a biological man. Not only was he castrated but turned into a biological female, with all the necessary organs including an uterus. While looking in the mirror, Evelyn was astonished with his new self and began to explore his new organs:

I looked again and saw I bore a strong family resemblance to myself, although my hair had grown so long it hung down to a waist that, on the operating table, had acquired an emphatic indentation. Thanks to the plastic surgery, my eyes were now a little larger than they had been; how blue they were showed more. The cosmetic knife had provided me with a bee-stung underlip and a fat pout. I was a woman, young and desirable. I grasped my tits and pulled out the dark red nipples to see how far they'd go; they were unexpectedly elastic and it did not hurt to tug them sharply. So I got a little more courage to explore myself further and nervously slid my hand between my thighs.

But my over-taxed brain almost exploded, then, for the clitoris transplant had been an unqualified success. The tactile sensation was so well-remembered and gave me so much pleasure, still, I could scarcely believe the cleft was now my own (*PNE*, 74).

And not only is he deprived of his penis, but also his name is deprived of "lyn" and becomes Eve. While the surgery continued in Mother's underground operating theatre in the "chthonic complex of laboratories" (73) where work went on night and day, Sophia gave the new Eve massive injections of female hormones daily.

After his/her transformation from Evelyn into Eve, New Eve feels uncertain about who he/she is. According to Maria Aline Ferreira "New Eve feels steeped in an ontological void"²⁶. Eve/lyn comments: "I know nothing. I am a tabula erasa, a blank sheet of paper, an unattached 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. Now I am a being as

monstrous as Mother herself; but I cannot bring myself to think of that. [I] remain wilfully in the state of innocence that precedes the fall" (83). Throughout the whole process, Eve/lyn shows a double, ambiguous nature. Similar to Woolf's *Orlando*, since the protagonist embodies the unbearable loneliness of being neither and both, eternally. For him, happiness collapses into sorrow as one century collapses into the next. Evelyn's surgical operation has been compulsory and therefore no new awareness is implied in it. A female body has been simply added to a male identity. The two genders exhibit a contiguity which does not become continuity. No integration is possible. Eve/lyn's body and mind, therefore diverge. What emerges from this process is simply the admission that the conflict between genders can by no means be settled. Male and female as exponents of an irreducible dichotomy may be put side by side, summed up, deconstructed, agglutinated, but never fused nor composed in a complex figure including both genders. In other words, sexes could be combined in androgyny, which is not – and never will be – a stable combination of genders. Hybridisation is the only possible operation. Therefore, due to Eve/lyn's perplexity about his/her status in the world he /she can be seen as a hermaphrodite, like his/her name, Eve/lyn, suggests. Although Eve/lyn does not have male and female attributes like a hermaphrodite, the situation is more peculiar. His/her body is of a woman while his/her mind is of a man, just like a hermaphrodite who is not really the combination of a whole man and a whole woman. In Beauvoir's words a hermaphrodite "consists of parts of each and thus is neither" (SS, 27).

It seems that his friend Baroslav, an old Czech soldier who lived in the same block of apartments, foresaw the coming events. Baroslav, an alchemist, gave Evelyn an ingot of gold made in his alchemist's crucible. The metaphor of alchemy and its associated figure of the hermaphrodite are to be central to *The Passion of New Eve*. Evelyn records that Baroslav possessed a "seventeenth century print ... of a hermaphrodite ... that

exercised a curious fascination upon me, the dual form with its breasts and its cock..." (13). Popularly known as the art of transmuting base metals into gold, alchemy encompassed a range of magical dimensions. The work of transmutation, by which the alchemist could arrive at prime matter and then reconstitute gold through the addition of particular qualities, can be compared to Mother's surgical procedures in order to create a woman out of a male body. Moreover, in alchemical thought, mercury was personified as a hermaphrodite, and it was through such an image of union of opposites, (like in Eve) that alchemy made its magical claims.

If Eve/lyn is "literally in two minds" (77) after the operation, "self" becomes an indeterminate concept. Indeed, the issue is further complicated because there are "feminine" qualities in Eve/lyn even before his metamorphosis, and "masculine" qualities in Eve after it. Evelyn describes himself as slender and delicate, and when Sophia dresses him in clothes like those worn by the women in Beulah, he says that he could have been her sister "except that I was far prettier than she" (55). He also comments "I would often make a gesture with my hands that was out of Eve's character or exclaim with a subtle male inflection" (101).

It is also noticeable that Mother constructs Eve according to a masculine view of what the perfect woman should look like. Eve, then emerges as a variation upon what Leilah had been, an incarnation of male sexual fantasy, a "not-self". The new Eve records that:

When I looked in the mirror, 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, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines. I touched the breasts and the mound that were not mine; I saw white hands in the mirror move, it was as though they were white gloves I had put on to conduct the unfamiliar orchestra of myself ... they turned me into the *Playboy* center fold. I was the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my own head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy (74 - 75).

Also, when Leilah redoubles herself, Evelyn's brief attempts to convert her into an object of male fantasy are entirely unsuccessful. The existence which is reflected on the mirror is stripped and reincarnated in the form of Sophia, Evelyn's guardian through his time of transformation and rebirth.

This girl had been my captress; I recognised the face she had revealed when she unmasked herself to drink from her water bottle, but now she wore civvies, a vest or tee-shirt with, silk-screened on the front, a design based on the motif of the broken phallus that had greeted me upon my arrival at the town, and a skimpy pair of blue denim shorts. She looked, however, entirely and comprehensively clothed, even though so much of her skin was showing; she looked like a woman who has never seen a mirror in all her life, not once exposed herself to those looking glasses that betray women into nakedness (54).

According to David Punter, "the New Eve does experience, on behalf of the world, the wrench and dislocation which is at the heart of woman's relationship with herself in a world riddled with masculine power-structures: inner self forced apart from the subject of self-presentation, an awareness of hollowness, a disbelief that this self-on-view can be taken as a full representation of the person alongside the bitter knowledge that it will be, that at every point the woman is locked into the metaphysical insult of the masculine gaze"²⁷.

We may conclude, then, that the structure of doubleness becomes too complex for narrative. The novel's introduction of Evelyn, a male-to-female transsexual, his enforced metamorphosis into a woman and the sex operation he undergoes that serves merely to transform him biologically, is the subsequent inculcation of the attributes of dependence and passivity that women are expected to display, and his enactment of them, that make him truly *feminine*.

?

And then, hearing the familiar screech of her guineafowl coming from near the farmhouse, she thought, I have some news for you, Marguerite, I have a secret to tell you, dear, and this is it: I am not Mary. That is a mistake. I am not a girl. I'm a boy.

Rose Tremain, *Sacred Country*, 5²⁸

As daring as Carter's novel, *Sacred Country* inspires us to reconsider the nature of sexual identity and gender. Although both novels are fiction works, Tremain's characters are precisely imagined, unique and at the same time so real. While *The Passion of New Eve* deals with a male character who is trapped in a female body, *Sacred Country* focuses on Mary, a 6-year-old girl who is trapped inside her female body. The novel is told through the narratives of several different characters, but it is my aim to work, almost exclusively, on the protagonist, Mary Ward.

In 1952, Mary, observing a minute of silence for the dead King George IV, while standing in a potato field in Swaithey, suddenly becomes aware she was not a little girl. "That was a mistake", she said to her pet. "She was a boy". This epiphany has a major impact on her life, since from that time on Mary struggles in order to make her pressing wish come true. This novel can be also as daring as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, but Mary Ward did not take centuries and successive reincarnations to morph into Martin. She had one mortal life to live and became Martin in that time. It took her nearly 30 years. Orlando's transformation is much more magical. Woolf's protagonist had become a woman after his long time sleep:

He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! We have no choice left but confess – he was a woman (132)²⁹.

If one can say that *Sacred Country* is magical it all has to do with Mary's harsh quest in submitting herself to psychoanalysis, and afterwards having various operations.

Throughout the novel one can see that Mary, a biological female, has been indeed born into the wrong body. Similar to Eve after the surgery, Mary's mind and body diverge. Already 21, Mary writes a letter to D'Esté Defoe (Georgia Dickens pseudonymous), who worked for a weekly magazine called *Woman's Domain*, illustrating her anxiety to become a man as well as the confusion that haunts her mind/body:

I am a woman of twenty-one. Or rather, my body is a woman's body, but I have never felt like a woman or colluded with my body's deceit. In my mind, I am, and have been from childhood, male. This is an ineradicable thing. I am in the wrong gender.

I dress as a man. I loathe my breasts and all that is female about me. I have never been sexually attracted to a man. I do not even dream of Sean Connery.

Please help me. Please tell me whether anyone else has ever felt this? Please tell me whether it could be ever possible to alter my body to fit my mind. Since the age of six, I have suffered very much and I want, at last to take some action. I have no friends in whom I can confide (SC, 175).

In fact since the age of six, Mary dreamt about her coming life as a boy. She would feel her body "trying to grow its man's skin between the settee cushions and the green eiderdown" (32). Her glasses were always dirty and misted up, and her thin hair lay damp round her head like a cap. She would also feel uncomfortable wearing girl's clothes. She liked her school uniform, "especially the tie which was red and white and like a man's tie. [She] looked nicer in [her] uniform than [she]'d ever looked in any other clothes and the only bit of [herself] that [she] couldn't stand to see were [her] bare legs between [her] grey skirt and [her] grey socks" (73). While still a child she would put on her "Martin clothes, [her] aertex shirt and [her] grey shorts and [her] plimsolls, Blanco'd white" (50). Later on when Mary went to London, she bought her first pair of jeans and got rid of her girlish clothes: "she hurled all the skirts she owned out of her window into

the sooty airwell. She could see them lying there, yards below: suicide skirts ... No make or style of jeans was right for Mary: she was too short. But the hard feel of the denim in her crotch was potent. She felt bigger than she was" (156).

Mary's movements were also jerky and wild. She would "run like a sprinter" and "faster than a boy" (53). More disconcerting seemed to be her aims. A tennis ball was her doll. She'd pitch the ball in an arc and then tried to outrun it. Analysing all this, Mary can be described as a boyish girl, or as a tomboy. Tomboyism generally describes an extended childhood period of female masculinity. If we are to believe general accounts of childhood behaviour, tomboyism is quite common for girls and does not generally give rise to parental fears. Because comparable cross-identification behaviours in boys do often give rise to quite hysterical responses, we tend to believe that female gender deviance is much more tolerated than male gender deviance. Tomboyism tends to be associated with a "natural" desire for the greater freedoms and mobilities enjoyed by boys. Very often it is read as a sign of independence and self-motivation, and tomboyism may even be encouraged to the extent that it remains comfortably linked to a stable sense of a girl identity. In an interview on *Masculinity Without Men* Judith Halberstam states that "[T]omboys, for example, partly construct themselves as rebellious or sporty girls and partly they are constructed within highly scrutinized context of childhood as 'not-girly'". Moreover, "the tomboy may be a young person for whom misrecognition (her own and other people's) becomes part of her sense of self" as Halberstam puts it³⁰. Tomboyism is punished, however, when it appears to be the sign of extreme male identification (taking a boy's name or refusing girl clothing of any type) and when it threatens to extend beyond childhood and into adolescence³¹. Mary is punished by her parents when they observe that she "should have some grace" (40). She is immediately enrolled in dancing lessons where she has to wear a

thistledown skirt and pink ballet shoes. Mary's father, Sonny, hit her when he discovered that she used to hide her breasts with bandages.

Teenage tomboyism presents a problem and tends to be subject to the most severe efforts to reorient. We could say that tomboyism is tolerated as long as the child remains prepubescent; as soon as puberty begins, however, the full force of gender conformity descends on the girl. Gender conformity is pressed onto all girls, not just tomboys, and this is where it becomes hard to uphold the notion that male femininity presents a greater threat to social and familial stability than female masculinity. For girls, adolescence can be a lesson in restraint, punishment, and repression. It is in the context of female adolescence that the tomboy instincts of many girls are remodelled into compliant forms of femininity. That any girls like Mary do emerge at the end of adolescence as masculine women is quite amazing. Perhaps the growing visibility of lesbian communities to some degree may facilitate the emergence of masculine young women.

Mary pronounces herself mired in a realm of unbelonging, but also alienated from belonging in almost every category that might describe her as female. Mary is an "unjoined" person who doesn't want any friends and doesn't know how to be anyone's friend. While childhood in general may qualify as a period of "unbelonging", for the boyish girl arriving on the doorstep of womanhood, her status as "unjoined" marks her out for all manner of social interactions.

Mary begins to change her identity by changing her name. On the first day of school, Mary promptly answers to her teacher that her name is Mary Ward, "but [she has] never been Mary, [she] has always been Martin, and [she] would like to be called Martin, please" (73). Mary thinks names are often wrong: "Minx for a little slow car; Mountview for a place not near any mountain. [She] thought, people just decide things without giving them any attention" (49). Mary may be suggesting that the fixity conferred by names traps people into a certain identity. She thinks that naming

represents the power of definition, and name changing confers the power to re-imagine identity.

Mary becomes fascinated when she discovers her grandmother's *Dictionary of Inventions*. Just like the Thermometer was invented by Galileo in 1597, there was still a number of inventions to come and a major one as well. Invention and reinvention play an important role in Mary's life. It gave her power to start her own invention:

There was a gap between the low limb of the pine and its higher branches. When Mary stood in the tyre, it was this gap she was aiming for. The gap was a test. This is what she believed. There would be others, but this was going to be the first test. If she could make the tyre go up into the gap with such a speed and power that she and it flew vertically above the pine limb and down again on the other side, completing a circle, well, then anything she prayed for would certainly happen. In particular, becoming a boy would happen. It was just a question of time, a question of waiting until you could invent yourself and surprise everyone with your discovery, like Patrick Miller, British, 1788, who had invented the paddle wheel. Before, no one had dreamed of a boat with wheels, just as now, no one could dream of Mary Ward not being a girl. But, as Miss McRae had said: "There is a great deal yet to come, things we might not be able to imagine now". One day, she would be in a dictionary. But the tyre wouldn't go high enough to reach the gap. It wouldn't even get to the vertical point where Mary was upside-down (27).

However, it was only when she received D'Esté Defoe's reply that the date for the invention of Martin Ward was actually coming. Defoe's letter was important due to the fact that it referred to some examples of transsexuals and showed Mary the right steps to follow before surgery. This is how it went:

Dear Divided, Devon,

I have given a great deal of thought to your problem, and no, you are not unique. Others have suffered as you are suffering and have been helped by counselling and, in some cases, by surgery. The first male-to-female sex change operation was performed on an American GI, George Jorgensen, in 1952 and he/she is now living happily as Christine Jorgensen. In 1958 it was revealed that ship's doctor, Michael Dillon, had been born Laura Maude Dillon and had changed herself surgically.

But a word of warning, Divided, Devon. The route to surgery is long. And it is not a route that all can take. Your first step must be to see your GP and ask him to

refer you to a psychiatrist specialising in sex counselling. Only he will be able to discover whether you could adapt to life as a member of the opposite sex. Put yourself in his hands and he will help you towards your future.

Good Luck and *bon voyage!*

D'Esté Defoe (176, italics in the original).

It was time, then, for Mary to attend a psychiatrist. Dr. Beales was the chosen one. According to Dr. E. P. Walker a plastic and reconstructive surgeon at the Southern Cross Hospital in New Zealand, the complex transition from one sex to the other has to be undertaken in a coordinated programme involving the patient's General Practitioner, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Endocrinologists, Urologists, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon and many more. All the medical staff carefully select suitable candidates for sexual reassignment surgery. The general practitioner, for example, will try to elicit whether there is some genetic abnormality, hormonal abnormality, anatomical abnormality; psychological abnormality or whether there has been some aberration in the sex of upbringing. With the help of a psychologist, who will make an indepth analysis of the patient's motivation for sexual reassignment will be able to talk about realistic expectations and determine the patient's ability to cope with the outcome of sexual reassignment from a psychosocial point of view³².

In *Sacred Country*, Dr. Beals begins by inquiring of Mary whether "[she] could mend an electric fuse and whether [she] knew the rules of cricket" (177). He continued by asking her if she "enjoy[ed] or repudiat[ed] domestic tasks, such as hoovering?" or if she ever felt "jealous of men's superior strength?" (177). Mary's reply was that she "had never possessed a Hoover ... that [she] thought men used their strength to annihilate women, as [her] father had tried to annihilate [her] ... If [she] had let [herself] be a true girl in [her] childhood, [she] would have been destroyed" (177). Dr. Beales was concerned with the fact that Mary may be experiencing a severe stage of tomboy identification and that she may change her mind

about her sexual identity. Mary maintained a consistent and focused sense of herself as male. But, became unsatisfied with the doctors last words:

If I recommend that you proceed with hormone treatment and eventually surgery – be able to pass as a man in ninety-nine per cent of social situations. But you will not be a man. Nor will you any longer *be* a woman ... You will be a partially constructed male. The world will take you for a man and you will look like a man – to yourself. And so your internal conviction of your essential maleness will receive confirmation when you look in the mirror – and your anguish will cease, or so it is hoped (178 – 179, italics in the text).

Mary would be “partially constructed”, and androgyny would be playing its part. For Eve as well as for Mary, hybridisation is the only possible operation.

Due to Mary’s lies about her parents being dead, Dr. Beales supposedly concluded that she also invented all or part of everything she had told him. Hence, this invalidates every session they had, and Mary had to find someone else to take her case. She began a new session with Dr. Martin Sterns who immediately began a “monitored metamorphosis” (214):

The female hormone, testosterone, will, when ingested into a body that is female, effect certain changes over a period of time. The most significant of these will be:

- A loss of body fat.
- A reduction in breast size
- An enlargement of the clitoris
- The gradual appearance of facial and body hair
- Cessation of the menstrual cycle (214).

The sex hormones are part of the scientific story about how we become one sex or the other. Early exposure to hormones (long before we are born) ensures that the brain and internal reproductive hormones are pushed in one direction or the other; female or male, homosexual or heterosexual. The sex hormones seem obviously gendered. They move around the body in the blood and they can cross the partial barrier

between the brain and the rest of the body. If these molecules were intrinsically gendered, the reasoning went, then they must have a role in the differentiation of gender. And if they can get into the brain, then they must be able to affect behaviour. This is the basis of biologically determinist claims; hormonal differences in the body translate into differences in the brain and its function. The first thing Mary noticed after taking the hormone was her body that lost bulk. She began to look lanky, like a youth of fourteen and the hair that grew on her upper lip and in a little line around her jaw was like the hair of puberty, "a faint brown fuzz" (227). She would also expect her breasts to shrivel. She imagined them looking like the breasts of an Indian woman of the Amazon forest she had seen in a photograph at the Natural Museum. Instead, Mary's breasts got harder and smaller. She felt light, almost weightless and a desire to run. She was almost recognisable as a boy and the boat attendant's words: "Want to take one out, *lad?*" (228, my italics) stabbed her with pleasure. She bought herself a suit and a tie and went to bars, bought drinks for young women and sometimes put her hand "on their silky legs or touched the top of their breasts. They expected to come home with me, but this wasn't possible except in my mind. My body had to stay inside its suit, hidden from view" (232).

Twenty years and six months after the two-minute silence Mary went into hospital for a mastectomy:

Three incisions, like a triangle, were made near to my nipples and through these wounds all the breast tissue that remained in me was taken out. The operation was called a bilateral mastectomy. The incisions were sewn up and there was my chest, neat and flat, with a bright white bandage round it (254).

Mary always saw her breasts as a source of embarrassment. She would inspect herself with mingled astonishment and horror, and she would view with anguish her breasts' growth:

She was fifteen and she could see and feel damage all around. It had begun in her. Her flesh had refused to harden as she believed it would. It had disobeyed her mind. In her mind, she was Martin Ward, a lean boy.

She touched her breasts. The skin of them was very white, their texture indescribable, like no other part of her. They seemed like sacs enveloping the embryos of other things, as if something had laid two eggs under her skin and now these parasites were growing on her.

She always touched them when she woke, hoping vainly to find them shrunk or burst or sliced away. She touched them under the bedclothes in the dark, where she couldn't see them. She couldn't stand to look at them. In the day, she wound a crepe bandage round and round them seven times and fastened it with a safety pin. She was Martin in her mind and she hoped that, with the bandages on, it would be her mind that showed (98).

When her father discovered her secret, he brutally unwound the bandages, exposed Mary as a freak person and left her suffering in great torment:

He crooked his left arm round Mary's neck and pinioned her against his chest. With his right hand he pulled off her school tie and opened her shirt. She screamed. She tried to push his hand away. She kicked his shin.

The crepe bandages were exposed. They were grey by now. They could have been secretly washed and hung to dry out of Mary's window, but part of her had refused to believe that she would keep on needing them.

Sonny pushed her in front of him towards the kitchen table. She clawed at his arm. He pulled open a drawer and took out the kitchen scissors. His wrist was against her windpipe, beginning to choke her ... Sonny cut into the wad of bandages in the cleft between Mary's breasts. The scissors were blunt and the bandages wound round her seven times ...

When he'd cut through the wedge of bandage, he pulled back her shirt. He held her breasts in his hand. He pulled them up, showing them to her. He said: "Look at them. Go on. You look at them!" ...

Sonny pushed her away and she fell onto the gritty paments of the kitchen floor. She struggled to find the two sides of her shirt and close it. Sonny kicked her thigh. "You're an abomination," he said. "That's what you are".

He kicked out again with his boot, then Mary heard him walk out of the kitchen and slam the door behind him. She thought, now it's over. Except that it isn't. It's now that it all begins (101 – 102).

From infancy to puberty Mary has grown, of course, but she has never been conscious of her growth or that certain female attributes would develop on her body. According to Beauvoir, before and after puberty "day after day [the girl's] body was always a present fact, definite,

complete; but now she is 'developing'. The very world seems horrifying; vital phenomena are reassuring only when they have reached a state of equilibrium and have taken on the fully formed aspect of a fresh flower, a glossy animal; but in the development of her breasts the girl senses the ambiguity of the word *living*. She is neither gold nor diamond, but a strange form of matter, ever changing, indefinite, deep within which unclear alchemies are in course of elaboration" (332 – 333, italics in the original).

In Kimberly Peirce's film *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) Brandon Teena, a tomboy (played by Hilary Swank), uses breast binders, just like Mary, to hide them from societies' eyes³³. In fact, Brandon's sexual ambiguity resembles Mary's. Hilary Swank's extraordinary performance convinces us to accept Brandon as a man just as the people of Falls City unwittingly did. With her prominent cheekbones and gaunt face, Brandon is striking as a woman. Brandon cuts her hair short as Mary's, puts on a plaid flannel shirt over her tightly wrapped upper body and stuffs a sock (crotch stuffers?) down her jeans. Swank inhabits Brandon so confidently and so well that it's easy to forget that it's a woman under those flannel shirts. From the masculine way she walks to her disgust at having to deal with the reality of being female, she treats her menstrual cycle as not just an annoying, but also a revolting inconvenience. The same happens with Mary. During the sessions Mary told Dr. Beales she never menstruated, but her period had come soon after she had thrown her skirts into the airwell. She endured the monthly bleeding by disowning it. She never looked at it and similar to Brandon Teena she inserted and extracted tampons with her eyes shut. Both Brandon and Mary treat their menstrual cycle as a burden and as something useless from their point of view. Simone de Beauvoir's discourse is aware of the negative connotation given to the female body when it tends to expurgate itself from any mark of femininity, abjecting all repulsive "feminine" elements, such as menstruation. In "The Data Biology" chapter Beauvoir focuses on the young girls' body and on the sense of Otherness that the natural

“feminine” characteristics, especially her menstrual cycle, may propose. Beauvoir put it in this way:

It is during her periods that she feels her body most painfully as an obscure, alien thing, it is, indeed, the prey of a stubborn and foreign life that each month constructs and then tears down a cradle within it; each month all things are made ready for a child and then aborted in the crimson flow. Woman, like man, *is* her body; but her body is something other than herself (SS, 61).

Interesting as well is Elizabeth Grosz’s definition of the female body. In her book *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Grosz asks whether “the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens order?”. Women may have many anatomical structures in common with men, she notes, but “insofar as they are women, they are represented and live themselves as seepage, liquidity” (203)³⁴. To be female is to leak in excess.

If we take Beauvoir’s words into mind one can see that she is not answering to the question “why is woman the Other?” by calling the body “other than herself”. The body is not enough to define her as woman, “there is no true living reality except as manifested by the conscious individual through activities and in the bosom of a society” (SS, 69). According to the French feminist, biology is not enough to give an answer to the question as well as it is not nature that defines woman; “it is she who defines herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life” (69). This highlights Butler’s words when she postulates that the body is never a natural phenomenon.

Mary defines herself as a man and in doing so, she regards her female body as a “hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it” (SS, 15). Women have ovaries and a uterus, “woman is a womb” (SS, 13) said Beauvoir, and these are the peculiarities that imprison Mary in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature.

Hence, she is submitted to a hysterectomy. She had never believed she possessed a womb from which her blood could come, in this way she lied to Dr. Beales telling him she never menstruated.

The association between the female body and the uterus or the womb signals the dominant cultural definition of the female body as primarily a reproductive body. Despite the technological possibilities of the body reconstruction, in the discourse of biotechnology the female body is persistently coded as the cultural sign of the "natural" the "sexual", and the "reproductive", so that the womb, for example, continues to signify female gender in a way that reinforces an essentialist identity for the female body as the maternal body.

Curiously, however, Mary does not proceed with the reconstructive surgery. In spite of the doctors assurance that Mary is "of the few female-to-male transsexuals for whom the creation of a penis is of critical importance" (311)", she believes in her happiness by living each day as Martin, without a penis. Mary still remembers how, in the past, the mastectomy was a painful experience. The construction of a penis wouldn't be a less painful one. Mary describes the procedure in this way:

This penis is real, my flesh, moved and sculpted. A pedicle or barrel of tissue would be raised on my abdomen. Operation by operation, it is moved downwards till it hangs where it should. The urethra is routed into it. A synthetic stiffening rod of the same kind that is inserted into the penises of impotent men is sewn inside it.

With this, I could be a woman's lover. She would know no difference. Almost none.

Sterns believes that I will never be happy until I am capable of this. He thinks this is what I keep dreaming about.

I don't dream about this. I don't dream about anything. Days unfold. Martin lives them (311).

It is the absence or not of a penis that I will consider next.

1.2. "To Have or Not to Have a Penis? That is the Question": the Castrating Mother and the Castrated Woman

What is his mother's widdler like? This enigma has led Hans to construct an elaborate phantasy about his mother's genitals in which she is terrifying not because she is castrated but because she castrates. The game therefore represents Hans' attempt to solve the riddle of Mummy's widdler. The answer he comes up with is that her widdler is phallic in shape and has a sharp, cutting blade, like teeth. Not only did she threaten him with castration when younger, he knows she has the power to castrate him herself.

Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, 96³⁵

The social fiction of the female wound, the bleeding scar left by her castration ... is a psychic as deeply at the heart of Western culture as the myth of Oedipus, to which it is related in the complex dialectic of imagination and reality that produces culture. Female castration is an imaginary fact that pervades the whole of men's attitude towards women and our attitude to ourselves.

Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*, 23³⁶

Carter is deeply concerned with the demythologisation of creation, and thus her favouring and construction of an archaic maternal figure. In *The Passion of New Eve*, the mother figure is the effigy of the archaic mother who rules omnipotently over a community of women who, under her orders, performs the most revolting actions. Evelyn's descending into the heart of the desert, which may signify metaphorically his descent to hell, is saturated with repetitions in order to put forward Carter's need to unmask maternal myths.

The exaggerated artificiality is part of the author's idea to demythologise these myths. This is Evelyn's description of Beulah:

The floor was flat enough, although the room was round and also covered with a shiny, plastic substance. It was very cool, yet I could not hear the hum of the air-conditioning. Chill-feeling, weftless, warpless bedcovers, a fabric that had never seen the loom; a functional neck-rest to support my still-aching head. I was

dizzy that the room, with its look of a science fiction chapel, waltzed around me, but when I saw there was no door out of this spherical place, I leapt from the bed (50).

“This simulacrum of the womb” (52) resembles at the same time hell. Evelyn notices that his chambers are invaded by rosy and pinkish blushes, eventually turned crimson, and that the temperature rises until it is “blood heat” (52). Beulah’s descriptions of a womb-like home and Evelyn’s travelling through it transgresses the limits of fantasy. The protagonist even comments: “I could not breathe; I knew I was at the place of transgression” (63). The voyage through the womb takes Evelyn lower, deeper and to a warmer location until he is finally introduced to Mother:

Descend lower. You have not reached the end of the maze, yet (49).

Now I felt I had been precipitated unceremoniously into the very heart of an alien cosmogony. Beneath the earth, sweating as I was in its humid viscera, I felt the dull pressure of the desert (52).

The corridor wound up round and round in descending spirals; I soon knew for certain we were bound down. The light here was also pinkish, like an artificial evening. We often passed the mouths of subsidiary corridors, winding off into the depths of the earth (56).

Carter continues with her description of the labyrinthine space of the womb coloured in dark and red tones:

Down, down, down an inscrutable series of circular, intertwining, always descending corridors that exerted the compulsive fascination of the mandala, as though, in some way, I myself had made the maze I now threaded, untenderly manacled by Sophia’s hand. My destination impelled meIt grew warmer and warmer (57).

Down, down, down into the dark, down into a soft, still, warm, inter-uterine, symmetrical place huge with curtains of crimson plush, into a curtained cabinet where there was a white bed. A dim, red glow, the internal light of Beulah, covered everything (69).

The image of the womb as an enthralling place can be compared to the image of the vagina as a place out of time and attractive due to its quality of confusion that allows the individual to be lost in it. This is a recurrent theme in Carter's fiction. Take "Peter and the Wolf" as an example:

Her [the girl-wolf's] lips opened up as she howled so that she offered him, without her own intention or volition, a view of a set of Chinese boxes of whorled flesh that seemed to open one upon another into herself, drawing him into a inner, secret place in which destination perpetually receded before him, his first, devastating, vertiginous intimation of infinity (57)³⁷.

In Evelyn's eyes, Mother grows to unimaginable dimensions, disregarding norms of proportion: "Time is man, space is woman" (53). The archaic mother's figure is so grotesque that she becomes omnipresent (Evelyn is watched all the time) and omnipotent. Although Evelyn cannot see Mother, nevertheless he feels her weight; Mother is space:

I felt the dull pressure of the desert, of the mountains beyond the desert, of the vast prairies, the grazing cattle, the corn; I felt upon me the whole heaviness of that entire continent with its cities and its coinage, its mines, its foundries, its wars and its mythologies imposing itself in all its immensity, like the night-mare, upon my breast. I grasped. I choked. My fear took on a new quality; not only fear for my own safety, now, but dread of the immensity of the world about me (52).

Mother certainly strikes the reader as a grotesque figure. She is compared to a Hindu statue, as Marx's head and as a stone pediment. Resorting to surgery, Mother is the possessor of two pairs of breasts. It could be said that it is the excess of feminine attributes, in fact to the point of being self-fulfilling reproductively that makes her an archaic mother. She is "the primeval 'black hole', the originating womb which gives birth to all life" (27) and the "Mother - Goddess who alone created the heavens and earth" (24)³⁸. The great goddess is not just compared to earth; she *is* earth, she is everywhere in nature, or rather, nature in her: in her olive skin, in her fig-like hands.

Barbara Creed stresses that the archaic figure is somewhat different from the mother of the semiotic chora, posed by Kristeva, in that the latter is the pre-Oedipal mother who exists in relation to the family and the symbolic order. The archaic mother is the generative mother, "the pre-phallic mother, the being who exists prior to knowledge of the phallus" (20). If she exists prior to the phallus one attributes to her a missing phallus. Creed presents Dracula, for instance, as a representation of the phallic and as an "attempt to deny the totalising power of the archaic mother" (21). As Creed states:

Identifying with the archaic mother, Dracula attributes to her the phallus she never had and does not need because she exists prior to knowledge of the phallus. She is all-powerful and absolute unto herself. Dracula, however, becomes her fantasized phallus, attributes to her a shape, a clearly defined, erect form in order to combat the threat of her formlessness, her totalising, oceanic presence (21).

The point Creed wants to make is that the archaic mother is not only castrated but rather castrates. Creed supports her argument by attributing to Dracula and to his lethal teeth the symbolism of the *vagina dentata*. She defines the "toothed vagina" in this way:

The *vagina dentata* is a mouth; the cannibalistic mother eats her young; the dyadic mother symbolically incorporates the infant. Fear of the *vagina dentata* and of the oral sadistic mother could be interrelated, particularly in view of the complex mythological and linguistic associations between the mouth and the female genitals (109).

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Mother is, then, a generative threat who by using the knife which represents the phallus, castrates Evelyn. Sophia's words illustrate Mother's action towards Evelyn: "Mother proposes to reactivate the parthenogenesis archetype, utilising a new formula. She's going to castrate you, Evelyn, and then excavate what we call 'the fructifying female space' inside you and make you a perfect specimen of womanhood" (68). Mother even forces all her daughters to shear off the

left breast, a mutilation said to have been performed by the Amazons in order to facilitate the handling of the bow. The novel is, nevertheless, extremely rich in references to parthenogenetic maternal figures – the mother who gives birth to all living things. These references to the archaic mother abound in the litany sang to “Mamma”, a musical praise to her life-giving and killing gifts. She longs to reconstruct as well as to kill male sexuality. Her intention is to kill time so that the symbolic Law never arrives or, as she puts it, to proceed to “the feminisation of Father Time” (67). By renouncing men as well as phallic time, the inhabitants of Beulah seek to engender a feminine space outside history, creating a new era, the Year One, when the virgin Eve, having been parthenogenetically impregnated with Evelyn’s sperm, shall bring forth the new Messiah. Carter seems to be drawing attention to Beauvoir’s claim that “in parthenogenesis ... the male appears to be fundamentally unnecessary” (SS, 36).

Readers of *The Sadeian Woman* will know that Carter saw the radical feminist romanticization of Mother Nature through such goddess-worship as “silly” – nothing but “consolatory nonsense”: “This theory of maternal superiority is one of the most damaging of all consolatory fictions ... it puts women in voluntary exile from the historical world, this world” (SW, 63). Carter criticises maternal myths by offering up a Great Mother that seems blatantly overcoded. In this way she deuniversalizes myth by parodying this maternal figure. In “Notes from the Front Line”, Carter admits her work to be the result of an “absolute and *committed materialism*, i.e., that *this* world is all that there is, and in order to question the nature of reality one must move from a strongly grounded base in what constitutes material reality”³⁹. Hence her objection to the critiques which refer to the mythic quality of her writings: “I believe that all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I’m in the demythologising business”⁴⁰.

The archaic figure multiplies phallic symbology: she calls herself the Great Parricide, the Grand Emasculator (49), the Castratrix of the Phallogocentric Universe (67), she wears a false beard and Carter suggestively uses the word "erect" in relation to her (69). It is noticeable that the phallus' power towards her own femininity is reduced. Evelyn sees his male appendage as insignificant before Mother's body:

Before this overwhelming woman, the instrument that dangled from my belly was useless. It was nothing but a decorative appendage attached there in a spirit of frivolity by the nature whose terrestrial representative she had, of her own free will, become (60).

What I want to suggest is that Mother not only is a sole parent but is also an androgynous figure. Mother's dual nature is perhaps best defined at the end of the novel when Eve goes back to the womb/cave and ponders over the mythical bird archaeopteryx:

[B]ird and lizard both at once, a being composed of the contradictory elements of air and earth. From its angelic aspect spring the whole family tree of feathered, flying things and from its reptilian or satanic side the saurians, creepy crawlers, crocs, the scaled leaper and the lovely little salamander. The archaeopteryx has feathers on its back but bones in its tail, as well; claws on the tips of its wings; and a fine set of teeth. One of those miraculous, seminal, intermediate beings brushed against a pendant tear of rosin in the odorous and primeval amber forests and left behind a feather (185).

On chapter eleven, with the help of Lilith Eve is driven to Mother, to her maternal body that is no longer a threatening one. Having gone mad before the victory of historicity and phallicism, Mother has become a ridiculous woman, overly made up, displaying her flaccid flesh in a red and white bikini, dying her hair in an excessive, yellowed shade. She seems to be unaware of the world around her and has withdrawn to alcoholism, all under the pitiful eye of the daughter, Lilith.

Eve detaches her self from the mother's body and is willing to accept her own feminine body and generative capacities. She must now return

“into earth’s entrails” (180). Eve, this time voluntarily, makes her way back to the mother’s womb, once again experiencing the symptoms of claustrophobia, extreme heat and the suppression of time. She has, nevertheless, a totally different attitude towards the voyage:

The rock had softened or changed its substance; the textures under my enquiring fingers were soft and yielding. Time no longer passed. Now the dew felt like slime; this slime coated me. The walls of this passage shuddered and sighed at first almost imperceptibly, so that I mistook it for my own breathing. But their pulsations exert greater and greater pressure on me, draw me inward.

Walls of meat and slimy velvet.

Inward.

A visceral yet perfectly rhythmic agitation ripples the walls, which ingest me.

I’m not so scared as once I would have been, to go worming my way through the warm meat of the insides of the earth, for I know, now, that Mother is a figure of speech and has retired to cave beyond consciousness (184).

Eve’s reconciliation with mother takes the form of a separation from her body, her castration, due to the fact that Mother has become blind, and her death. It also allows Eve to embark towards a new beginning, “to the place of birth” (191). It is a possibility of renewal (rebirth):

The walls of meat expelled me. Without a cry, I fell into a darkness like the antithesis of light, an immensity of darkness, the final cave through which now marched, animating the darkness, the parade of the great apes, which wound me back on the spool of time that now wound up. My shaggy breast, my great carved brow with a germ of a brain behind it. I have forgotten how I picked up a stone and shattered a nut with it. The sound of the sea sounds omnipresent, the sea, which washes away all memory and retains it.

I have come home .

The destination of all journeys is their beginning.

I have not come home.

I emitted, at last, a single, frail, inconsolable cry like that of a new-born baby. But there was no answering sound at all in the vast, sonorous place where I found myself but the resonance of the sea and the small echo of my voice. I called for my mother but she did not answer me.

“Mama-mamma-mamma!”

She never answered.

Speleological apotheosis of Tiresias – Mother, having borne, now abandons her daughter forever (186).

Mother stands as the larger-than-life aggressor who rapes and then castrates Evelyn against his will – and such sexual violence is fit retribution for his terrible abuse of women. Her aggression commands a seductive power, and it seduces us to the last. Her final vindication comes when the newly born Eve is offered Evelyn's genitals in a miniature refrigerator. Now experienced enough to know the full reality of being a woman, she rejects the precious penis. Eve "laughs and shakes her head" as Evelyn's genitals "are sent skimming into the sea" (187). Curiously, both Eve and Mary Ward reject a penis. Both Carter and Tremain seem to be giving body to Freud's myth of woman as a castrated man. Carter's nod to Freud's discomfiture suggests that she is aware of the revolutionary potential of shifting castration from woman to man. Freud would be "upset" because he inscribed his notion of gendered power relations across the genitals, with the penis representing the triumphant male subject and the vagina representing a "bleeding wound" – a passive female space.

Simone de Beauvoir also criticizes Freud's psychoanalytic theory for attempting to impose a male model onto female experience:

Freud concerned himself little with the destiny of the woman; it is clear that he modelled it on the description of the masculine destiny of which he limited himself to modifying several traits ... [He] admitted that woman's sexuality is as evolved as man's; but he scarcely studied it in itself. He wrote: "The libido is in a constant and regular fashion essentially male, whether it appears in a man or a woman". He refused to pose the feminine libido in its originality (SS, 78-79).

By relying on a reductive male model of feminine sexuality, Beauvoir argues Freud was unable to explain either penis envy or the Electra complex, primary features of his psychology of woman. Freud

supposed that woman felt herself to be a mutilated man. But the idea of mutilation implies a comparison and a valorization ... it cannot be born from a simple anatomical confrontation ... Freud took [this valorization] for granted when it was necessary to account for it (SS, 81).

Thus for Beauvoir a primary feature of the development of female heterosexuality and the transference of a girl's attraction from her mother to her father is the father's sovereignty, that is, the social context of woman's oppression. Here Beauvoir extends social constructivism to sexuality.

In "The Psychoanalytic Point of View" chapter, Beauvoir analyses the little girl's childhood bearing in mind Freud's castration complex. According to Freud, towards the age of five the little girl discovers the anatomical differences between the sexes, and reacts to the absence of the penis by acquiring a castration complex. Similar to Mary Ward, when she sees her menstrual blood, the little girl imagines she has been mutilated. Beauvoir affirms that like her genital development the whole sexual drama is more complex for the girl than for her brothers. In consequence she may be led to react to the castration complex by denying her femininity just like Mary and by continuing obstinately to desire a penis. Mary's attitude turned her towards homosexuality. Mary's rejection of her femininity is due to the lack of the penis; she feels penis envy, penis, here, can symbolise privileges enjoyed by boys. For the sake of argument, I would like to stress that penis envy is manifested in very diverse ways and in different cases. In this way, my analysis of Mary's penis envy may vary from other children that share the same castration complex.

In the sense in which the psychoanalysts understand the term, "to identify oneself" with the mother or with the father is to "*alienate oneself* in a model, it is to prefer a foreign image to the spontaneous manifestation of one's own existence, it is to play at being" (SS, 82, italics in the text). Hence, woman is enticed by two modes of alienation: "to play at being a man will be for her a source of frustration; but to play at being a woman is also a delusion: to be a woman would mean to be the object, the *Other* – and the Other nevertheless remains subject in the midst of her resignation" (SS,

82 – 83, italics in the original). Mary decides the former doesn't regret her choice nor feels frustrated.

It is clear that during childhood, the little girl as well as the boy feel jealousy if a new child is born, sometimes even rage. Mary, for instance, would tease her brother Timmy when playing with a ball:

Mary threw the green ball at Timmy. She threw it several times but not once could he catch it. She thought, this is why Estelle is in despair, because Timmy can't catch a ball, because he walks about with his fingers over his eyes, because he has no stars on his class star-chart at school. 'You're barely human,' she said as he dropped the ball yet again, 'you're killing our mother (43).

Moreover, she decided to kill him with an insect spray on Christmas night: "A Flit death was a peaceful one. You breathed the sweet-smelling poison and you slept. And in the morning you didn't wake" (44 – 45), said Mary. Fortunately, their father, Sonny, rescued Timmy from a "cloud of poison" (45). Sonny always considered Timmy superior; he was a bad student, but an excellent swimmer. Above all, Timmy was Sonny's "treasure, his boy" (5). When Mary's mother, Estelle, was pregnant of Timmy, Sonny would lay his damaged ear on Estelle's belly and would pray for a boy. Mary envied Timmy for being a child of Sonny's imaginings. She would console herself in thinking that the penis is hidden in her body and will come out some day.

According to Freud, during the Electra complex the little girl identifies herself with her father, while the boy becomes fixed on his mother and desires to identify himself with his father; this presumption terrifies him and he dreads mutilation at the hands of his father in punishment for it. Then aggressiveness towards the father develops. In Mary's case due to the fact that she always rejected her femininity and always saw herself as a boy, she never identified herself with Sonny nor with her mother. Because of her suffering at her father's hands, she only wished for his death: "when I'm a man, I will kill you" (43). Estelle never protected Mary from Sonny's brutal

aggressions, nor comforted her child. Estelle was always lost in a vague dream of her own that eventually led her to a mental hospital. It often happens that when a child has felt a lack of maternal affection, she is haunted all her life by the need for it. Mary searched for that love in the arms of Georgia – her lover. She shared a lesbian relationship with a much older woman, who seemed in her eyes to bear a sacred character. Mary as a lesbian and declining to be a woman wished to have around her the soft delight of feminine protection; from the warm shelter of that womb she could emerge into the outer world with some mannish boldness, she behaves like a man, a man who desires an older mistress. This pair may correspond to the well-known heterosexual couple described by Beauvoir as the “matron and adolescent” (434). But such relationship never became a true amorous passion. Mary broke off with her lover, because she despised Georgia for desiring her. Mary could only “love women who loved men, not women who loved women” (197). Curiously, Mary always felt fascinated by another woman, her childhood love-object – Pearl: “I deluded myself that my life as Martin, holding Pearl in my arms, was going to come one day. I’d always believed it without once saying it. This was the name of my future, *Martin and Pearl, Estab. C. 1976*” (273, italics in the text). In Beauvoir’s point of view, the penis is singularly adapted for playing a role of “double” for the little boy – it is for him at once a foreign object and himself; it is a plaything, a doll, and yet his own flesh. It becomes for the child an “*alter ego*” (SS, 79, italics in the original). For the French feminist the individual’s specific transcendence takes concrete form in the penis and it is a source of pride. Thus the incarnation of transcendence in the phallus is a constant; and since it is a constant for the child to feel himself transcended – that is to say, frustrated in his own transcendence by the father – we therefore come upon the Freudian idea of the castration complex. Not having that *alter ego*, the little girl is led to make an object of her whole self. Beauvoir continued: “if woman ... succeed in establishing

herself as subject, she would invent equivalents of the phallus, in fact, the doll, incarnating the promise of the baby that is to come in the future, can become a possession more precious than the penis" (80). Pearl was Mary's doll, her "precious thing" (14). Mary is depriving her lover of autonomous subjectivity. Both Evelyn and Mary construct Leilah and Pearl, respectively, as Others – as objects:

Mary watched. There was something about Pearl that mesmerised her. It was as if Pearl were a lantern slide and Mary sitting on a chair in the dark. Mary took off her glasses. Without them, it seemed to her that there were two Pearls, or almost two, lying in the chestnut shade, and Mary heard herself say a thought aloud, like her mother did. "If there were two," she said to Irene, "then there would be one for you and one for me" (9).

I kissed her. I put my tongue into her mouth and sucked all her sweetness. I drank her. My head grew light with the sweetness of my precious thing ...

I stopped kissing her. I knelt between her legs. She was sobbing. She put her hands over her face, blocking me from her view.

"Pearl," I said. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Forgive me. You're my precious thing ..."

She got to her feet. She began putting all her belongings into her suitcase. It was night. I tried to warn her not to go anywhere but she paid no attention. All she kept saying was: "I am not a *thing*. I am not a *thing*. I am not a *thing!*"

Thing. Person. Beloved. What matters is that she was precious to me. It's not only the naming of something that makes us love.

It's everything entire (274, italics in the original).

Mary always dreamt of Pearl and always wanted to protect her as well as her mother of any harm. After studying Arthurian legend in school, Mary swears to protect Lindsey, Pearl, and Estelle:

In history, the class was studying the Arthurian legend. Miss Gaul said: "It may be that the Round Table did not exist, but of course it has existed down the centuries in people's mind, so you could say that it has an existence of a certain kind. "Mary said: "Are there other things in history that only had one kind of existence and not another?" ...

So Mary decided, Arthur was not a legend. Not for me. For me, he existed and Sir Galahad and Sir Lancelot. And I will be like them. I will acquire an armour and I will be afraid of nothing. And in this way I will protect the people who could come to harm. I will protect Lindsey, who signs herself "Mrs. Ranulf Morrit" in her geography book, and I will protect Pearl, who refuses to learn to swim and could

drown in Swaithey pond, and most of all I will protect Estelle: from Sonny's rages; from forgetfulness; from being sent back to Mountview (82-83).

What compels her to make this oath is the fact that this legend is an exaltation of heroism. And, in ancient tales man is the privileged hero. Beauvoir enumerates the overwhelming superiority of the male in this way:

Everything helps to confirm this hierarchy in the eyes of the little girl. The historical and literary culture to which she belongs, the songs and legends with which she is lulled to sleep, are one long exaltation of man. It was men who built up Greece, the Roman Empire, France, and all other nations, who have explored the world and invented the tools for its exploitation, who have governed it, who have filled it with sculptures, paintings, works of literature. Children's books, mythology, stories, tales, all reflect the myths born of the pride and the desires of men; thus it is that through the eyes of men the little girl discovers the world and reads therein her destiny (SS, 315-316).

Mary would dream about Estelle in a metal bin, being hurled about and hurt as the bin spun round, and she would dream she was a knight with an armour ready to rescue her mother: "I jousted with the bin and stopped it turning. I put my mother on my grey charger and rode away" (48). She is aware of her female body, but her apprenticeship for life consists in having a male body as a weapon for fighting; she takes pride in fights, challenges; at the same time she learns to scorn pain and to keep back the tears. After all "boys don't cry":

I had this thought about suffering: I thought, if I suffer a lot, I will grow a man's skin. If I suffer and refuse to cry, a penis will grow out of all that is locked away inside. It needs only time (29).

I remembered how in the past, I had imagined pain was my ally. I had imagined that if I suffered enough I would become a man, of my body's own accord (254).

However, Livia, her dead grandmother, is a constant presence throughout the book. Mary often revisits the story of her grandmother's glider accident:

Mary was fond of the photograph of her grandmother. She looked quiet and peaceful and Mary was fairly sure she hadn't said thoughts out loud. And when she thought about her death in the glider, she didn't imagine it crashing into a wood or plummeting down onto a village; she dreamed of it just drifting away into the sky, dissolving and gone. But she had never been able to imagine herself growing up to be like Grandma Livia. She knew she would not become beautiful or join the Women's League, whatever a Woman's league might be. And after the day of the two-minute silence, she knew she would not even be a woman (6-7).

In my point of view, the ghost-like figure of Livia symbolises the spirit of adventure and heroism that Mary eagerly searches. The ghost hovers silently above Swaithey like a bird urging everyone to their own destinies. However, Livia's death has always been obscured, and Mary never knew properly where she was going in the glider. Her grandfather, Cord, was the one who told Mary what really happened:

"She wasn't going anywhere. She was just circling. She took off from the field and- "

"Which field? Where?"

"Place called Ashby Cross ..."

"She was on her second circuit. She lost height very suddenly. I wasn't watching, thank God. I wasn't there. But she lost her thermal and she started to come down and down. People at the club said she could've made it in except for the wires."

"What wires?"

"Pylon wires. Electric. I mean, that's why I said to those chaps at Mountview, don't do this electric stuff to my daughter. Once was enough."

"She flew into the electric cables?"

"Yes."

"She was *electrocuted*?"

"Yes, old chap."

"Why wasn't I ever told that?"

"Don't know."

"I imagined it all wrongly."

"Did you? What did you imagine?"

"An impossible thing: that she just floated into the sky and disappeared."

"Well," said Cord, "there you are. What we dream up is invariably better, eh?" (276-277, italics in the text).

It seems like Livia's death makes her a pallid figure compared to Sir Lancelot. After all, Beauvoir was right when she recognised that in novels of adventure "it is the boys who take a trip around the world, who travel as

sailors on ships, who live in the jungle on breadfruit. All important events take place through the agency of men" (SS, 317). Livia's death confirms what these novels and legends say. It also emphasises the force of the physical image, the image of a castrated woman that provides a powerful physical correlative to the cultural assumption of women's inferiority.

2. The Re-Gendered World of Donna Haraway

It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. It is not clear what is mind and what is body in machines that resolve into coding practices. In so far as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice (for example, the homework economy in the integrated circuit), we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras.

Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century", 177⁴¹

As I have referred to earlier, bodies are malleable surfaces that can be worked upon. They can be transformed by technological practices which are continually altering and redefining our bodies. Eve and Mary Ward's sex-change surgeries are only two examples of how technology manages to undermine what once was "natural". Almost daily, we are bombarded with news of innovative technologies capable of repairing bodily injuries, for example, laser surgeries, replacing body parts, and now cloning animal as well as human bodies to create genetically identical beings. We are told how succeeding generations of artificial "devices" will be even more complex than the ones we have today, aided by research in microelectronics and tissue engineering. Anne Balsamo in her book *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*, suggests future technological developments: "[f]or example, glass eyes will be replaced with electronic retinas, pacemakers with bionic hearts, and use of the already high-tech insulin dispenser will soon become obsolete in favor of an organically grown biohybrid system that could serve as an artificial pancreas" (1)⁴².

These examples announce the collapse of the temporal distance between the present and a science fictional future in which bionic bodies are commonplace. Curiously, the idea of the merger of the biological with

the technological has infiltrated the imagination of our culture. The "technological human" has become a familiar figuration of the subject of postmodernity. For whatever else it might imply, this merger relies on a reconceptualization of the human body as a technological body, a boundary figure belonging simultaneously to at least two previously incompatible systems of meaning – the organic/natural and the technological/culture. At the point at which, as I have stressed before, the body is reconceptualized not as a fixed part of nature, but as changeable. It also establishes a framework of a hierarchy of culture over nature, since new technologies are invested with cultural significance. Donna Haraway in her essay "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriated/ Others" takes as a self-evident premise that "science is culture" (296)⁴³. For Haraway, nature is a "*topos*, a place, in the sense of a rhetorician's place or topic for consideration of common themes"⁴⁴. Nature is, strictly, a commonplace to "rebuild public culture"⁴⁵. Nature is also seen as a "*trópos*, a trope. It is figure, construction, artifact, movement, displacement"⁴⁶. Artifactualism, then, means that nature for us is *made*, as both fiction and fact. And, if organisms are natural objects, it is crucial, says Haraway, to remember that they are not born; "they are made in world-changing techno-scientific practices by particular collective actors in particular times and places"⁴⁷. Haraway's remarks surely highlight Beauvoir's observation that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. But humans are not the only actors in the construction of organisms. According to Haraway, machines and other partners "are active constructors of natural scientific objects"⁴⁸.

In "A Cyborg Manifesto", Haraway elaborates a new fiction of feminist identity, her "political myth"⁴⁹ – the cyborg. Her main goal of this "ironic political myth" of the cyborg is to create a utopian world: "a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end" (150). The cyborgs stand as a metaphor for her essay

because they are the only bodies that stand a chance in postmodern culture. Cyborg bodies are constructed by communication networks and other hybrid discourses such as biotechnology, in short a cyborg is “a cybernetic mechanism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction”⁵⁰. Her definition of a cyborg is better argued in her latest book, interestingly titled *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan@_Meets_OncoMouse*TM: *Feminism and Technoscience*:

The cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a fusion of the organic and the technical forged in particular, historical, cultural practices. Cyborgs are not about the Machine and the Human, as if such Things and Subjects universally existed. Instead, cyborgs are about specific historical machines and people in interaction that often turns out to be painfully counterintuitive for the analyst of technoscience⁵¹.

Haraway's “A Cyborg Manifesto” is also seen as a socialist-feminist analysis of women's situation in the advanced technological conditions of postmodern life. She argues that the elementary units of socialist-feminist analysis such as race, gender, and class are in the process of transformation. She chooses the cyborg as a metaphor for her text, due to the fact that a “cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction” (150) and does not dream “of community on the model of the organic family” (151). Moreover, the cyborg does not aspire to “organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity” (150) as well as it “is not afraid of joint kinship with animals and machines ... of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (154). The cyborg thus evades traditional humanist concepts of women as childbearer and raiser, of individuality and individual wholeness, the heterosexual marriage and nuclear family, transcendentalism and Biblical narrative - the great chain of being (God/man/animal/etc.), fear of death, fear of automatism, insistence upon consistency and completeness. It evades the Freudian family “drama”,

which is about individuation, separation, the birth of the self, wholeness before language; and the Lacanian sense of woman as other. It attempts to complicate binary oppositions such as “self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man” (177), which have been “systematic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals” (177). Haraway likens the cyborg to the political identity of “women of colour”, which “marks out a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship” (156). Cyborg, though, is grounded in “political-scientific” analysis, which takes up most of the “Manifesto”. She stresses that “we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system” (161). Her list on pages 161-162 expresses a transition from “the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks” (161), which she has called “informatics of domination” (161). This is Haraway’s “chart of transitions” (161):

Representation	Simulation
Bourgeois novel, realism	Science fiction, postmodernism
Organism	Biotic component
Depth, integrity	Surface, boundary
Heat	Noise
Biology as clinical practice	Biology as inscription
Physiology	Communications engineering
Small group	Subsystem
Perfection	Optimization
Eugenics	Population Control
Decadence, <i>Magic Mountain</i>	Obsolescence, <i>Future Shock</i>
Hygiene	Stress Management
Microbiology, tuberculosis	Immunology, AIDS
Organic division of labour	Ergonomics / cybernetics of labour
Functional specialization	Modular construction
Reproduction	Replication
Organic sex role specialization	Optimal genetic strategies
Biological determinism	Evolutionary inertia, constraints

Community ecology	Ecosystem
Racial chain of being	Neo-imperialism, United Nations
	Humanism
Scientific management in home/ factory	Global factory / Electronic cottage
Family / Market / Factory	Women in the Integrated Circuit
Family wage	Comparable worth
Public/Private	Cyborg citizenship
Nature/Culture	Fields of difference
Co-operation	Communications enhancement
Freud	Lacan
Sex	Genetic engineering
Labour	Robotics
Mind	Artificial Intelligence
Second World War	Star Wars
White Capitalist Patriarchy	Informatics of Domination

Haraway analyses scientific discourse as both constructed and as “instruments for enforcing meanings” (164). She argues that “one important way for reconstructing socialist-feminist politics is through theory and practice addressed to the social relations of science and technology, including crucially the systems of myth and meanings structuring our imagination” (163). According to Haraway, the relations between science and technology is a material reality that women need to be aware of and not fear or disparage⁵². These relations are “rearranging” categories of race, sex and class. For Haraway, feminism needs to take this into account. Her analysis of “women in the integrated circuit” (170-173) tries to suggest that as technologies radically restructure our life on earth, women do not, and are not, through education, training, and so on, learning to control these technologies, to “read these webs of power” (170). She advises that a social-feminist politics must address these restructurings.

Since, as Haraway sees it, the world is changing rapidly, and this is due mainly to scientific/technological discourses and the claims they make physically upon us, her aim is to keep some kind of agency not based upon a whole and individual self, and a feminism not based upon natural unity between women.

The "Cyborgs: A Myth of Political Identity" sub-chapter of her "Manifesto", acknowledges Haraway's debt to writers of science fiction. Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, John Varley, and others are "story-tellers exploring what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds. They are theorists for cyborgs" (173). In fact, if we consider the multimedia cyborgian entertainment events such as *Star Trek*, *Blade Runner*, the *Terminator* and *Alien* series, we can find that contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs – "creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted" (149)⁵³. Let's consider David Cronenberg's 1996 film *Crash*.

In his adaptation of James Graham Ballard's 1973 novel, David Cronenberg reveals how the human organism is so endlessly adaptable. Like the book, the film is a cautionary tale of how we might adapt to the environment that we have ourselves created, sterile and isolated from nature. And, like the book, *Crash* unfolds without moral judgment, presenting a vision of a modern world, man-made of concrete and metal. The immediate subject matter of *Crash* is the strange lure of the automobile collision, provoking as it does the human fascination with death and the tendency to eroticise danger. The dismemberment and cutting to pieces and the vision of a body confused with technology: incisions, excision and scarifications abound in the novel. Ballard presents us a body without organs or pleasure of the organs:

Her mutilation and death became a coronation of her image at the hands of a colliding technology, a celebration of her individual limbs and facial planes, gestures and skin tones. Each of the spectators at the accident site would carry away an image of the violent transformation of this woman, of the complex of wounds that fused together her own sexuality and the hard technology of the automobile (189).

He also presents us a body entirely subjected to the cutting and to the scar under a sexuality without limits:

Each of them would join his own imagination, the tender membranes of his mucous surfaces, his grooves of erectile tissue, to the wounds of this minor actress through the medium of his own motocar, touching them as he drove in a medley of stylised postures. Each would place his lips on those bleeding apertures, lay his own nasal septum against the lesions of her left hand, press his eyelids against the exposed tendon of her forefinger, the dorsal surface of his erect penis against the ruptured lateral walls of her vagina. The automobile crash had made possible the final and longed-for union of the actress and the members of her audience (190)⁵⁴.

Furthermore, Vaughan's vision of female bodies shows us how bodies and technology can combine in a seductive and inextricable way:

As Vaughan turned the car into a filling station courtyard the scarlet light from the neon sign over the portico flared across these grainy photographs of appalling injuries: the breasts of teenage girls deformed by instrument binnacles, the partial mamoplasties ... nipples sectioned by manufactures' dashboard medallions; injuries to male and female genitalia caused by steering wheel shrouds, windshields during erection ... A succession of photographs of mutilated penises, sectioned vulvas and crushed testicles passed through the flaring light as Vaughan stood by the girl filling-station attendant at the rear of the car, jocularly talking to her about her body. In several of the photographs the source of the wound was indicated by a detail of that portion of the car which had caused the injury: beside a casualty ward photograph of a bifurcated penis was an inset of a handbrake until; above a close-up of a massively bruised vulva was a steering-wheel boss and its manufacturer's medallion. These unions of torn genitalia and sections of a car body and instrument panel formed a series of disturbing modules, units in a new currency of pain and desire (134).

Cronenberg expresses the ideas that were in the novel in visual form. The same character, Vaughan (played by Elias Koteas), is a scientist obsessed with the erotic power of the crash, as witnessed by his head-to-toe scars. Later in the film he confesses to James Ballard (James Spader) that his project is "something we are all intimately involved in - the reshaping of the human body by modern technology". As I have stressed before, the ostensible subject of the film is the erotic appeal of car crashes as well as sex between man and machine, flesh and metal. Flesh and metal intertwine right in the film's opening image where Catherine Ballard's (Deborah Unger) naked breast touches the wing of a plane.

These characters in Ballard's novel as well as in Cronenberg's film are quintessential technological bodies. They are cyborgs just like the monster created by Victor Frankenstein, the Terminator that tears back the skin of his forearm to display a skeleton of steel, and just like Mother – the woman scientist in Carter's novel. In fact, Haraway should also acknowledge her debt to Angela Carter for creating such a "mythological Trickster, [a] shape-shifter"⁵⁵, who created her own self and also a new self.

Mother's body is a bizarre fusion of flesh and artificial matter. She is a monstrous being due to her surgical metamorphosis, but repulsive in Evelyn's views:

Yet there it was, in person, the mystery, enshrined in an artificial grotto seated upon an everyday chair [...]. She was personified and self-fulfilling fertility.

Her head, with its handsome and austere mask teetering ponderously on the bull-like pillar of her neck, was as big and as black as Marx' head in Highgate Cemetery; her face had the stern, democratic beauty of a figure on a pediment in the provincial square of a people's republic and she wore a false beard of crisp, black curls like the false beard Queen Hatshepsut of the Two Kingdoms had worn. She was fully clothed in obscene nakedness; she was breasted like a sow – she possessed two tiers of nipples, the result (Sophia would tell me, to my squeamish horror) of a strenuous programme of grafting, so that, in theory, she could suckle four babies at one time. And how gigantic her limbs were! Her ponderous feet were heavy enough to serve as illustrations of gravity, her hands, the shape of giant figs leaves, lay at rest on the bolsters of her knees. Her skin, wrinkled like the skin of a black olive, rucked like a Greek peasant's goatskin bottle, looked as rich as though it might contain within itself the source of a marvellous, dark, revivifying river, as if she herself were the only oasis in this desert and her crack the source of all the life-giving water in the world.

Her statuesque and perfect immobility implied the willed repose of the greatest imaginable physical strength [...]. And in that belly, rich as thousand harvests, there was no treacherous oblivion for me for, at birth, I'd lost all right of re-entry into the womb. I was exiled from Nirvana forever and, faced with the concrete essence of woman, I was at my wit's end how to behave. I could not imagine what giant being might couple with her, she was a piece of pure nature, she was earth, she was fructification.

I had reached journey's end as a man. I knew, then, that I was among the Mothers; I experienced the pure terror of Faust (*PNE*, 59-60).

Mother's intentionality is to transform herself into myth-matter, to "ma[k]e herself into an incarnated deity" (49):

One glance assured [Evelyn] she was sacred. She had been human, once; and she had made herself into this. This!

Mother has made herself! Yes, made herself! She was her own mythological artefact; she had reconstructed her flesh painfully, with knives and with needles, into a transcendental form as an emblem, as an example, and flung a patchwork quilt stitched from her daughters' breasts over the cathedral of her interior, the cave within the cave.

I was at a shrine (60).

The text is, nevertheless, extremely rich in references of Mother. She is everywhere, but embodies contradiction as well: big as the universe, she owns the sun (Evelyn sees it in her mouth, swallowed and hidden to preserve darkness in Beulah), the moon, the stars and the earthquakes (she is nature); she is mother and patroness of both virgins and prostitutes and, in fact, she herself is the "most immaculate of harlots" (62); like Danae, Alpheo and Demeter she rapes; like Ai-Uzza, the goddess of the Arabian Desert (Beulah is also in the middle of the desert and mother had already been referred to as an oasis), Mother governs "the dry tides of the inward sea", she is "the tripe moon of birth of death of divination" (61); Queen of the Underworld and Empress of Demons (Persephone) she is also the corn goddess, the goddess of agriculture known in Ancient Greece as Demeter and as Cybele in Egypt. These deities were believed to be at one time "fructifier quickener pestilence-bringer" (61) for they both sent cured and disease. Mother is also Carridwen/Cerridwen, Kunapipi, Kalwadi, Kadjara, Brigid, Andaste, Kekate, Aateantsic, Manat, Derketo, Freija the Woman, Rhiannon, Rigantona, Arianhod, Dana Bu-Ana the Good Mother, BlackAnu the Cannibal, Diana, Bellili, Salma, Anna, Fearina, Salmana, Kali, Maria, Ahrodite, Jocasta (62).

The depiction of Beulah where Mother plans and executes her surgery is as much a part of herself as her own body. Although quite distinct, in surrealistic Beulah, "the place where contrarities exist together" (48), technology is fused with the maternal body in order to make Mother's ends meet. Beulah as well as its inhabitants disclose every step of the way

their faith in artificiality. The exaggeration of Beulah's artificiality is part of Carter's plan to demythologise and de-sanctify Mother. This is one excerpt describing Beulah:

I lay on a pallet on the floor of a dim, white room lit only by a fringe of pinkish luminescence at the foot of the wall. This room was quite round, as if it had been blown out, like bubble gum, inflated under the earth; its walls were of a tough, synthetic integument with an unnatural sheen upon it that troubled me to see, it was so slick, so lifeless. Everything in the room had a curiously artificial quality, though nothing seemed unreal, far from it; Beulah, since its blueprint is a state of mind, has an impeccable quality of realism. But it is a triumph of science and hardly anything about it is natural, as if magic, there, masquerades as surgery in order to gain credence in a secular age (49).

Besides being cool and covered with plastic, Evelyn's room was lighted artificially; all walls resembled this unnaturalness, particularly due to its "shocking cleanness" (57); all the surfaces, again, were unnatural, slippery, ersatz, treacherous, false-looking" (55-56). Sophia, who treats Evelyn with the frigid efficiency of a nurse, had "a lean, sallow, sharp-featured face and an abrasive manner" (55). She appears pushing "a stainless steel trolley covered with an impeccable white cloth" (54). She feeds him synthetic broth and pseudo-milk pudding although always with "stern" (55), "impersonal care" (55), "without kindness" (54). Evelyn also witnesses how the underground laboratories are, in fact, factories producing synthetic milk and wafers from chemicals, proteins from petrochemicals and chipped vegetable substitutes. They even had recycling mechanisms which purified their urine into water. The daughters perform all motherly tasks without motherly affection. Everything was "as clear, as shining, as sterile as an operating theatre" (56).

Other passages also recall the artificial quality of Beulah. The place is, after all, the artificial representation of the reproductive system, a generative cave of death. Evelyn, in the round room, feels "buried" (51), "swallowed up underground and trapped" (50), helplessly "sucked [...]"

down" (57) through the "humid viscera" (52) of the earth. Here, "at the place of birth" (52), Evelyn will die to be reborn as an astonishing Eve.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1817) also plays a relevant part in *The Passion of New Eve*. Carter's novel can be seen as revising the creation scene in *Frankenstein*, featuring a woman scientist, herself of monstrous proportions creating another woman. The significant difference between Eve and Victor's monster is that while the former represents an idealized female body, the symbol of perfection and seduction, the latter can be described as a grotesque, freakish male body. In *Frankenstein*, the monster is made up of parts from other bodies, in many ways like Eve, rebuilt out of a male body using parts from other female ones. These are three excerpts describing Victor's attempt to create the being:

I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large (43-44).

I collected bones from charnel-houses; and distributed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all other apartments by a gallery and staircase [...] (44).

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips (47)⁵⁶.

As the merging of many body parts, New Eve, Victor's monster and Mary Ward as well, may be said to deftly embody the Harawayan cyborg. All three characters transgress boundaries and defy such deeply-rooted dualisms, described by Haraway such as culture/nature, male/female and maker/made (177).

Part Three:

1. Constructing Gender and Transgressing Borders

The relation between culture and nature presupposed by some models of gender “construction” implies a culture or an agency of the social which acts upon nature, which is itself presupposed as a passive surface, outside the social and yet its necessary counterpart.

Bodies that Matter, 4

Nomadism ... is not fluidity without borders but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries. It is the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing.

Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 36⁵⁷

Before Evelyn’s unwilling transformation into a biological woman, he asks Sophia, “does a change in the coloration of the rind alter the taste of a fruit?” (68). Despite the assurance of Sophia that “a change in the appearance will restructure the essence” (68), the novel is less certain. Besides exploring the problems of appearance (sexual identity) and essence (gender), it also examines the process by which Eve learns to adapt her female body to her male history. As Evelyn becomes Eve, she/he has to learn to be a woman because she/he is seen by others, and eventually sees herself as a woman.

Mother’s transformation of Evelyn into “a complete woman” with “tits, clit, ovaries, labia major, labia minor” (68), suggests that appearance alone is not quite enough to produce essence. The new Eve has to be taught to be a woman. Mother seems to share the same argument as Beauvoir and Butler in considering gender to be the result of education and of social construction. Her education, then, consists of videos showing all possible paintings of the Virgin and Child “accompanied by a sound

track composed of the gurgling of babies and the murmuring of contented mothers" (72). There was also a video intended to subliminally "instil the maternal instinct". It showed "cats with kittens, vixens with cubs, the mother whale with her offspring, ocelots, elephants, wallabies, all the tumbling and suckling and watchfully tending, furred things, feathered things, flippered ... And another, more inscrutable video-tape composed of a variety of non-phallic imagery such as sea-anemones opening and closing; caves, with streams issuing from them; roses, opening to admit a bee; the sea, the moon" (72).

This education also involves telling stories about men's treatment of women's bodies. Sophia would sit at Eve's bed-side and would give her "minatory lectures" (73). These lectures are described by Eve as follows:

She would read me accounts of barbarous customs such as female circumcision (had I known how prevalent a custom it was and how it was achieved by the excision of the clitoris?) and remind me of how fortunate I was that Mother, by a positive miracle of surgery, had been able to provide me with just such a magic button of my very own. She told me how the Ancient Chinese had crippled their women's feet; the Jews had chained the ankles of their women together; and the Indians ordered widows to immolate themselves on the pyres of their husbands and so on and so forth, hour after hour was devoted to the relation of the horrors my old sex had perpetrated on my new one until I would moan, in a voice that grew softer and, against my will, more musical with each day that passed and I would try to snatch away her books with hands that continually refined and whitened themselves (73).

Particularly because Eve's new body is formed by "concensus agreement on the physical nature of an ideal woman drawn up from a protracted study of media" (78), the psycho-surgery is reinforced by showing Eve Hollywood films of Tristessa St. Ange. Certainly the films that were shown to Eve were about the pain of womanhood: "Tristessa, your solitude, your melancholy – Our Lady of the Sorrows, Tristessa; you came to me in seven veils of celluloid and demonstrated, in your incomparable tears, every kitsch excess of the mode of femininity" (71). Eve thus learns to be a woman as cinema spectacle: an image made to be looked at by the

spectator. In effect, Eve learns that she must accept being looked at as Evelyn once looked at women. Carter may be underlining the importance of looking and being looked at. Due to the fact that Eve has been trained to be a woman by watching Tristessa's films, Eve is clearly being instructed in a male vision of what a woman should be. Her response, therefore, is going to be different from Evelyn's response to the same film. For Evelyn, Tristessa is erotic; for Eve, Tristessa is a lesson in the "shadowed half being of reflected light" (72). The media images of women sometimes show the female spectator that she is an object to be looked at rather than the subject of an active gaze of her own. In *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Teresa de Lauretis makes the point that "the project of feminist cinema ... is not so much 'to make visible the invisible', as the saying goes, or to destroy vision altogether, as to construct another (object of) vision and the conditions of visibility for different social subject"⁵⁸. Such a project would articulate the position of the female spectator with regard to film and would raise the question of how to "reconstruct or organize vision from the 'impossible' space of female desire ... and how to represent the terms of her double identification in the process of looking at her looking"⁵⁹.

This new Eve, then, is not only at all new: she simply reconfirms the patriarchal bias of the old myth of Eve. She is still masculine, not simply in the literal sense that the old Evelyn persists in her body, but in the sense that her body is a construction of the masculine gaze. In this way, Mother's psycho-surgery of Tristessa, has constructed Evelyn as the "shrine of his own desires" (128). Moreover, his ideal woman is a femme fatale, a combination of beauty and suffering, "romantic dissolution, necrophilia incarnate" (7). The irony here is that the femme fatale has herself ambiguous connotations, which Mary Ann Doane describes as "the fact that she never really is what she appears to be"⁶⁰.

Eve's life changes dramatically when she is forced to experience a condensed and fantastic version of woman's life in Zero's harem. In this

respect, Eve's observation that "[Zero] was the first man I met when I became a woman" (86) seems an appropriate retribution for the humiliation which, as Evelyn, he exercised on Leilah. When Eve was captured by Zero, he immediately raped her "unceremoniously in the sand in front of his ranch-house after he dragged [Eve] from the helicopter, while his seven wives stood round in a circle, giggling and applauding" (86). Later on Zero repeated the act even more savagely:

He appeared to believe me, nodded, told me to lie down on the floor regardless of the excrement which littered it, unfastened his fly, brought out a weapon which I now saw was of amazing size and, with a wild cry, hurled himself upon me; he entered me like the vandals attacking Rome. I felt a sense of grateful detachment from this degradation; I registered in my mind only the poignant fact of my second rape in two hours. 'Poor Eve! She's being screwed again!' (91).

Eve experiences Zero from two perspectives simultaneously. She tells us that his rape of her "forced me to know myself as a former violator at the moment of my own violation" (102). However, it is Zero's repeated rapes which succeed in fitting Eve's/Evelyn's mind to her body: "the mediation of Zero turned me into a woman. More. His peremptory prick turned me into a savage woman" (107-108). Eve comments that she is forced to look back on what Evelyn once was and to know that Evelyn, too, was once a violator as Eve is now being violated. This suggests that she recognises herself as both self and other. In this way, Zero is an exaggerated version of the young Evelyn. He treats the women in his harem in an exaggerated version of the way in which Evelyn treated Leilah. For Evelyn and Zero, women represent and solely exist as male fantasies, they are, nevertheless, mere submissive victims. For instance, both characters treat women as animals. As I have pointed out earlier, Evelyn's erotic consciousness rapidly dehumanizes Leilah by depicting her through a litany of animalistic images - "little fox"; "creature of this undergrowth"; "bird-like creature" and a creature who exudes a "hot, animal perfume" (20-22). Zero's women are treated worse than pigs (an animal usually considered in relation to its

filthiness or edible traits). "Pigs were sacred to Zero" (94), women weren't. He also "allowed his pigs a liberty he denied his wives" (95). The language spoken amongst them was one the girls could not understand, only Zero: "[h]e would bark, or grunt, or squeak, or mew at [them] because he only used the language of the animals toward his wives unless there was a very exceptional emergency and [they] had to answer in kind" (96). Furthermore, if Zero didn't like the tone of his wives response, "he would savage the offender unmercifully with his bullwhip" (96). In spite of all this, the women adore the one-eyed, one-legged dictator who occasionally defiled them by smearing dog and human excrement upon their breasts. Zero also seems to be an exaggerated version of what some women have to endure and probably an understatement of what others have to put up with from men. He is physically repulsive and Eve loses her virginity in a parody of the way many men have taken women. Therefore, we can say that Carter is focusing her writing on male power over women, especially sexual violence against women. In fact, not only *The Passion of New Eve* but also Carter's non-fiction work *The Sadeian Woman* explore violence and violation. In *The Sadeian Woman* Carter uses two Marquis de Sade characters – the sisters Juliette and Justine – to explore polar opposites: Justine is a version of Eve, Leilah, Zero's wives and later Tristessa, while Juliette represents the female aggressor. Where Justine is submissive and sentimental, Juliette is aggressive and more rational. Juliette is a prostitute who thieves, murders, seduces, then kills her father, and finally commits infanticide on her only daughter. "Justine is the thesis, Juliette is the antithesis" (SW, 79) writes Carter. Juliette can be compared to Mother due to the fact of her violent attitudes towards Evelyn: she rapes, castrates and surgically transforms him into a woman; and to Zero as well. After all, Juliette is "a woman who acts according to the precepts and also the practice of a man's world and so she does not suffer. Instead she causes suffering (SW,79). On this view, Juliette becomes a phallogocentric woman.

Zero's violence towards women makes one lesson clear: in such a cruel and egocentric place made and mastered by him, sexual pleasure frequently devolves upon the pain of women. Moreover, exploited by Zero, Eve has to learn that there is nothing inevitable, natural or right about the sexual abuse of women.

Eve also learns to be a woman among Zero's girls: "[t]his intensive study of feminine manners, as well as my everyday work about the homestead, kept me in a state of permanent exhaustion. I was tensed and preoccupied; although I was a woman, I was now also passing for a woman, but then, many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations" (101). However, the result of her apprenticeship as a woman became too emphatically feminine and somehow roused Zero's suspicions because Eve began to behave "*too much* like a woman and he started to watch me warily for signs of the tribade" (101, italics in the original). Zero, who thinks of himself as the concrete fact of machismo, assumes that to be too much like a woman is to show signs of lesbianism, which he hates to the point of violence. When he first captures Eve, he examines her closely because she seems almost too perfect to be real. Zero's sterility, however, he blames on Tristessa, whose apparently female gaze has symbolically castrated him. In the cinema where Zero watches Tristessa perform the role of Emma Bovary, he thinks that her eyes have consumed and doomed him.

In spite of Eve's apprenticeship as a woman in Zero's harem it is noticeable that at the end of the novel, one can see an unfinished Eve. Eve's journey through a womblike labyrinth or "a parody of a mythical journey's to the Underworld" (128) as Linden Peach describes it seems to be a journey of self-discovery or an open future⁶¹. Thus, it also seems that Angela Carter promises a revelation that she does not deliver. Eve's intention in setting out on the ocean could be a return to Evelyn's home: "Ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries, bear me to the place of birth" (191) –

it would be a place where she has no history or identity as a woman – a desire to return to his “old self”, as if Eve wanted to be reborn as a man.

The protagonist’s quest for a true self makes gender a central issue of a circular journey through three sexed utopian spaces that alternately host and reject the protagonist and determine his/her physical and psychological metamorphosis. The protagonist reports his journey through a dark and decayed New York, his escape to the desert, his arrival in a female community, and his experiences as a woman in Zero’s place. Three different spaces are described as complex metaphors. Basically, Evelyn is a traveller. In the first pages of the novel, he moves from London to New York. His personal experience as a man, therefore, is deeply marked by the awareness of the body of a European metropolis that as a literary topic, has been considered male⁶². When moving overseas, however, Evelyn finds an urban landscape which he perceives as unfamiliar and about which he says: “[n]othing in my experience had prepared me for the city” (24). In terms of gender, New York is clearly male, just like Evelyn. Significantly, New York displays all the colours of decay:

It [New York] was ... an alchemical city. It was chaos, dissolution, nigredo, night. Built on a grid like the harmonious cities of the Chinese Empire, planned, like those cities, in strict accord with the dictates of a doctrine of reason, the streets had been given numbers and not names out of a respect for pure function, had been designed in clean, abstract lines, discrete blocks, geometric intersections, to avoid just those vile repositories of the past, sewers of history, that poison the lives of European cities (16).

When looking for freedom, Evelyn finally gets to the city of Beulah. The first phase of his journey towards female identity is performed inside the body of Beulah. As I have mentioned before, this place is built on analogy to a womb and is, literally and figuratively, Mother’s body. It shows the darkness and the fascination of a female pregnant body. But Beulah is also what Nicoletta Vallorani calls “a gynocratic society” (182)⁶³. Carter’s

decision to include a utopian space like this one partly reflects the tendency that Wendy Martin acknowledges in many women writers:

The utopian community of sisters ... is a profoundly political phenomenon which results from an evolution in consciousness from acceptance of traditional values, or at least the effort to adjust them, to questioning of these values, to rebellion and finally separation from the dominant culture to form a new social order (250)⁶⁴.

Therefore Beulah is created by women to host a female, feminist, and gynocratic society. Spaces like Beulah are often symbolically mentioned in novels like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* and others. All have different figures springing from the same female mind and all of these writers give their cities the shape of a female body.

It is from the body of Beulah that Eve, physically a woman and psychologically a man, will make a clean start on another journey. It is important to notice that the awareness of a terminally decentered life leads the protagonist towards a new ritual death perceived as the only possible way to recover a lost sexual identity. The protagonist returns, then, to the desert. Evelyn describes his intention of self-discovery in terms of the spatial:

I would go to the desert ... the arid zone, there to find, chimera of chimeras, there, in the ocean of sand, among the bleached rocks of the untenanted part of the world, I thought I might find that most elusive of all chimeras, myself (38).

The wilderness and the absence of any possible fertility of the desert, serves as a metaphor for the protagonist's condition of being a hybrid creature with no memories and no shared experiences: "a tabula erasa, a blank sheet of paper" (83). Being a hybrid, he /she does not belong to any community: he/she has no history, no tradition, no shared life and finally no gender. The ideal site for his/her search for identity appears to be Zero's

place. Both physically and psychologically, the place is built to reproduce the symbolic meaning of a patriarchal community. The assumed rigidity of the patriarchal model is purposefully highlighted in order to provide a highly concentrated version of a woman's life in a harem. By the same token, Zero, the father and owner of all the women living in his harem, assembles all the negative features of patriarchal power. He is a tyrant celebrating any form of perversion. Significantly, Zero is a figure of totalitarian sexuality, opposite but similar to Mother.

The protagonist's search takes him through a maze of gender configurations in order to realize or create his own subjectivity. His quest makes him move from London to New York and from there to the desert. His journey, though, ends up in the American desert. This seems particularly ironic since it can be seen as a parodic reversal of the myth of America as the land of opportunity and possibility. "In the beginning all the world was America" – so the opening epigraph of the novel declares. Carter's use of this quotation highlights the distinction between natural and acquired elements that forms the central concern of the novel. "America", then introduces the notion of an identity in which gender traits are traded back and forth. Evelyn's expectations of America is therefore a "place of transgression" (63).

In a similar way, *Sacred Country* also gives us a sense of what it means to be trapped in a particular body and place, and what it feels like to escape. Mary, who is also an English person, reports her journey through three different spaces in her quest for a true sexual identity. Mary was born and lived almost all her childhood in a small rural town called Swaithey in Suffolk. Tremain interestingly treats the bleak town of Swaithey with a steady eye, describing the harsh circumstances of Mary's early life. The inhabitants of Swaithey are described as narrow-minded people who couldn't accept the fact of Mary wanting to be a boy. "This country is afraid of the unusual" (133) said Mary and indeed their belief in Mary's little

secret was hard to imagine. So the question of belief began to torment the protagonist :

I made a parade in my mind, like an identity parade, of everyone I knew and I passed slowly down it, telling them one by one. Only my father was absent. I told Cord and he began staring at the sky. I told Timmy and he said: "I have to go to a swimming lesson now". I told Lindsey and she laughed. She said: "Does this mean you can't be one of my bridesmaids?" I told my mother, but she wasn't listening. She was trying to remember the words of a Perry Como song. I dismissed the parade and they all walked away without a backward glance (SC, 133).

Only Edward Harker believed in Mary because he also believed that " '[e]verything in nature is resurrection' A person who believes in previous lives is perhaps the person to tell, and he has been there all the time" (134), thought Mary.

Mary's disconnection from her surroundings and her belief that she wasn't , "in her true essence, a girl, made everything difficult for her" (201). Mary was eager to put an end to her suffering and to move away from Swaithey:

I felt it arrived in my mind: the feeling of an ending. I'd planned to stay one more year in Swaithey, to retake the A-levels I had failed because of my insane love for Lindsey and then to try for a university far away from Suffolk and far away from everyone I'd ever known. And now I saw that I had to leave straight away. Not that actual night, wearing Cord's old camelhair dressing gown, but as soon as I could, as soon as something could be found for me – a place to live and a job with the post office or in a shop or in a factory making gliders, it didn't matter what. I had to transmigrate. Not my soul, which I knew would probably stay behind, hiding in the Suffolk lanes or in a ditch like my old tennis ball, but my body. I had to move it, or it would die right here (150-151).

Her next stop was London. The city had an important role in her transformation and accommodation as a boy. For the first time in her life she began to know the meaning of happiness and it made her feel less lonely. It was in London that she met her lover, Georgia, was submitted to psychoanalysis and later to surgery. Moreover, she began to behave as a man. Already there she bought herself a pair of jeans and "hurled all the

skirts she owned out of the window" (156). Important as well was the fact that Mary finds her own support group amongst her co-workers. Mary could rely on her male friends Rob and Tony who helped in her determination to become Martin. Mary's words illustrate her friends support:

Rob was the first to speak. He said: "What's wrong with being a woman, Mart?"

I said: "Nothing is wrong with being a woman. It's only that I'm not one. I never have been."

Tony said: "Heck, Mart. What a destiny! I'm flattened."

But they grew acclimatised to it. When they did , they found me more interesting than before, as though I'd become an honorary Abo. They raised my salary. They bought me my own coffee mug with the name Martin on it. They saw me as one of the dispossessed (213).

It is noticeable that in the novel, Mary isn't the only character who escapes from provincial Suffolk. Mary's teacher, Miss McRae, moved to Scotland, Pearl and Timmy went to Shropshire, Gilbert to London and Walter to Nashville. Gilbert used to complain about life in the country. He argued "Suffolk people were narrow in their hopes, he said they had no vision, he said it might soon be time for him to be moving on" (167). And he did move on to London, "[t]he swinging part of London ... It's time to swing before I'm too old" (169) declared Gilbert. The local homosexual dentist Gilbert is not the only one who longs for a swinging life, Walter, Gilbert's first lover, wants to become a Nashville country music star. However, Walter also went to London, before travelling to America. He went to London because "he had to get a glimpse of a new place. He had to remind himself that a world outside Swaithey existed. Swaithey had started to kill him. He knew that if he stayed there, working in the shop, living with his mother, he would one day pick up a filleting knife and stick it into his heart" (189). Eager to have a life before it's over, Walter packed his suitcase, took his guitar and headed himself to Nashville. The members of the Latchmere Country Music Association had given him an old map of Nashville and taught him the first lines of the Declaration of Independence. He said "I

wish I'd known years ago that the Pursuit of Happiness was a right. In Swaithey it wasn't, was it?" (257). Similar to *The Passion of New Eve*, America in *Sacred Country* is also considered a country of all possibilities and a land for those who pursue happiness. After Mary had the hysterectomy done, Dr. Sterns recommended her to "go and look at another place, another bit of the world" (278). All Mary had ever experienced was England. Dr. Sterns also reminded Mary that "the mind can get tired of both the internal and external landscape" (278), he believed Mary's was "exhausted with both" (278). She flew to Nashville and joined Walter. Mary begins to lead a happy life in Tennessee working on a farm, but above all she is happy due to the fact that everyone recognises her as a man – as Martin. It seems like Martin has fulfilled his wish by finding his gender in America, even though he denies going back to England for a "reconstructive surgery" (311). He makes it clear that he does not have a strong desire for a penis. Martin rejects such move and insists that his expression of his man self is one that he has always inhabited:

I tell Stern in a letter that I have no desire to return to England. I tell him I have reached a plateau, a level place. I say to him: "Something or someone would have to *call* me back for me to give up life that I have. The idea of more surgery doesn't call me.

I remind him and I remind myself that I am thirty years old.

And out in the fields I say to Jeremiah: "Age isn't the only thing to creep up on us. Sometimes it's happiness" (312).

One might conclude that both Carter and Tremain's novels focus on the production of gender which takes place in multiple locations. Much of the narratives focus on both transsexuals, Eve and Martin, plays with the sense of transitivity and sees transsexuality as a passage or journey. Along the way, predictably enough, borders are crossed, and both protagonists leave places in order to achieve bodily coherence. Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* calls "border wars" (163) to these transitions. The terminology of "border war" is both apt and problematic. Halberstam

postulates that “[o]n the one hand, the idea of a border war sets up some notion of territories to be defended, grounded to be held or lost, permeability to be defended against. On the other hand, a border war suggests that the border is at best slippery and permeable” (163)⁶⁵.

According to Halberstam, metaphors of travel and border crossings are inevitable within a discourse of transsexuality, but they are also laden with the histories of other identity negotiations, and they carry the burden of national and colonial discursive histories. Halberstam stresses that within discussions of postmodernism, the transsexual body has often come to represent contradictory identity per se in the twentieth century and has been discussed using precisely the rhetoric of colonialism. She refers to Janice Raymond who identified the transsexual body in 1979 as part of a patriarchal empire intent on colonizing female bodies and feminist souls,⁶⁶ and Sandy Stone who responded in her “Posttranssexual Manifesto” by allowing the “empire” to “strike back” and calling for a “counterdiscourse” within which the transsexual might speak as transsexual⁶⁷.

Bearing in mind Carter and Tremain’s novels, the narrative of transsexualism can also be seen as one of loss, loneliness and disconnection. The transsexuals in these narratives share a serious quest for place and belonging. In *Sacred Country*, Mary counters her grandfather’s claim that “everything important in life was dual, like being and not being, male and female, and that there was no country in between” (129). Mary thinks of herself: “Cord is wrong, there is a country in between, a country that no one sees, and I am in it” (129). The literary narrative of gender transitivity and gender dysphoria, then, has understood the experience of the “wrong body” in terms of a complex rhetoric of unbelonging and non-identity. In response to this fundamental sense of being out of place, Tremain and Carter’s transsexuals conjure up images of imaginary lands, both countries in between and border worlds of the dispossessed. They also live their lives as nomads. Rosi Braidotti points out that

being a nomad, living in transition, does not mean that one cannot or is unwilling to create those necessarily stable and reassuring bases for identity that allow one to function in a community. Rather, nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent. The nomad is only passing through; s/he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity. The nomad has no passport – or has too many of them⁶⁸.

In this way, transition and mobility are alibis to Carter and Tremain's protagonists in their quest of a true identity.

2. Gender as Performance

Consider gender, for instance, as *a corporeal style*, an "act", as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where "performative" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.

Gender Trouble, 139 (italics in the original)

Gender as performance is generally employed to analyse constructs of femininity and masculinity in society and to discuss forms of role-play in the lesbian and gay community. However, as I hope to demonstrate, since gender and sexuality are important themes in contemporary literature, they also furnish a useful tool in interpreting works of fiction. Their significance in this respect is illustrated by the fact that certain aspects of *The Passion of New Eve* respond fruitfully to an analysis of this kind. Before turning to Carter's novel, I will define the key features of the concept and summarize some of the different versions that have recently emerged.

The theorizing of gender as performativity is particularly associated with the writing of Judith Butler. Although Butler is by no means its first or only proponent, she gives the most detailed and complex account. Gender, she argues, rather than reflecting essence, is constituted through a set of "discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within categories of sex" (*GT*, x). This provides us with a means to denaturalize and deconstruct the conventional view that heterosexual gender roles are "normal" and "natural". As Butler observes, "reality is fabricated as an interior essence ... Acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organising gender core" (*GT*, 136). The fabrication of this illusion is, she maintains, by no means innocent but is "discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality"

(*GT*, 136). Emphasizing the relevance of these ideas to the understanding of lesbian and gay roles, Butler argues that:

The "presence" of so-called heterosexual conventions within homosexual contexts as well as the proliferation of specifically gay discourses of sexual difference, as in the case of "butch" and "femme" as historical identities of sexual style, cannot be explained as chimerical representations of originally heterosexual identities. And neither can they be understood as the pernicious insistence of heterosexual constructs within gay sexuality and identity (*GT*, 31).

Rather than reproducing heterosexual identities, lesbian and gay roles, in Butler's view, serve a deconstructive purpose. As she points out,

The repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilisation of gender categories. The replication of heterosexual constructs in non heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original (*GT*, 31).

Thus, butch/femme and drag roles, instead of reflecting original heterosexual identities, have the effect, Butler argues, of exposing and highlighting their constructed aspect. They achieve this by means of the element of parody and "excess" they display. Butler concludes her discussion, in fact, by observing that "gay is to straight *not* as a copy is to original, rather, as copy is to copy. The parodic repetition of the "original" ... reveals it to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original" (*GT*, 31. Italics in the original). Therefore, if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of the bodies, then "it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (*GT*, 136).

Butler's is not the only version of "gender as performance" that has achieved popularity. The French theorist Luce Irigaray proposes an alternative one. Irigaray's version concentrates attention not on lesbian and gay roles but on femininity and its construction. Basing her analysis on

the concept of feminine masquerade, Irigaray describes the masquerade as the acting out on the part of the female subject of a set of male-defined roles. She comments:

I think that the masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own. In the masquerade, they submit to the dominant [male] economy of desire in an attempt to remain "on the market" in spite of everything⁶⁹.

Irigaray, however, recommends a strategy of resistance which women can employ to challenge and escape male-defined identities. She calls this "playing with mimesis"⁷⁰. Woman, Irigaray argues, by parodically mimicking conventional images of femininity, can expose to male control and achieve a degree of agency.

There are obvious similarities between Irigaray's theory of mimesis and Butler's concept of gender as performance. Their accounts of gender as a result, are similarly anti-essentialist and foreground the in-authenticity of gender roles. They argue that the performance of a parodic version of femininity, or, in Butler's case, of drag or butch/femme roles, has the effect of deconstructing heterosexual and patriarchal roles and identities, thus exposing their very constructedness.

Carter and Tremain are primarily creative writers, but the former employs the ideas of performativity and mimesis discussed above more imaginatively. Her treatment of them is, as I will point out, varied, involving a range of different emphases and contexts. Therefore, I have chosen to discuss Carter's approach in isolation. Furthermore, theatricality seems to be a theme that appears central to Carter's novel. This is not surprising since dramatic performance in all its varieties – masquerade, travesty, cross-dressing, drag – leaps out at the reader from the pages of *The Passion of New Eve* as both style and subject. For many of Carter's most recent critics, her theatricalism, which dates back to her earliest work, has

emerged, often by way of this body of gender as performance theory, as synonymous with her self-proclaimed, "demythologizing" project, the project of "investigating" femininity as one of the "social fictions that regulate our lives"⁷¹.

The novel introduces three different examples of the performative aspects of gender. The first hinges, of course, on the figure of the transsexual Evelyn/Eve. His enforced metamorphosis into a woman involves two separate stages. The sex operation he undergoes serves merely to transform him biologically, but subsequently the enactment of attributes he has to display make him feminine.

Another example of construction of femininity in the novel is Leilah. She first appears as a black prostitute with whom, in the opening chapters, Evelyn has an affair. She also appears as a hallucinatory embodiment of the city and its labyrinthine corruptions; her femininity is seen as the expression of a decadent culture. Leilah, of whom Evelyn claims: "I never knew a girl more a slave to style", is a prostitute, obligingly transforming herself every evening under his gaze onto an exotic and fetishized object of art. Towards the close of the narrative, Leilah casts off the roles of sex/art object, which she has performed up to now, and unexpectedly reveals herself as a feminist fighter. This identity, Carter implies, represents her "true self"; the former is dismissed as mere play-acting.

However, the most interesting example of gender as performance in the novel, and the one that most clearly anticipates the theories of Irigaray and Butler, is the film star Tristessa. It is my aim, henceforth, to focus on Tristessa's voluntary change of identity and will of "self-construction".

Zero is obsessed by Evelyn's old film icon Tristessa, whom he believes caused his infertility by casting a spell on him from out of the silver screen. Zero claims she is a "Witch" and a "Dyke" (92) and spends much of his time searching the desert for the home to which she has retired so that he can ravish and murder her, and thus restore his fertility. When Zero and his

harem, including Eve, do eventually find Tristessa they discover something about her that surprises them all. She is a man. Thematic issues aside, this moment of revelation is not less alluring than the wrenching twist in Neil Jordan's film *The Crying Game* (1992). The film begins as a typical civil war thriller and transmutes into a strange love story. Fergus's (Stephen Rea) relationship with Dil (Jaye Davidson) seems to be proceeding along conventional lines until the moment of revelation when Fergus discovers Dil's secret, that she is a man. Dil's performance of femininity is awesome and strangely pathetic when Fergus cuts her hair and makes her dress up as a boy in order to disguise herself at the end of the film. Both Dil and Tristessa are men trying to preserve the illusion that they are women and Fergus as well as Eve just fall in love with that fantasy. Evelyn puts it in this way: "Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah! And all you signified was false! Your existence was only notional; you were a piece of pure mystification (6). Tristessa is clearly a transvestite, an icon of cinematic sexuality and a drag queen. He is of the only woman which as a male he could find desirable. When he is captured by Zero, the harem women make him aware of the maleness which he has never been able to accept as part of himself. They perform obscene naked dances, "contemptuously flourishing their fringed holes at him" and "brandishing mocking buttocks" (128). But, of course, this is a parody of how men are supposed to like to see women. They show Tristessa a false, carnivalesque version of the maleness from which he has tried to separate himself. What Zero and the others discover is that Tristessa has the physical appendages of maleness even while continuing to manifest the famous signs, and beauty, of her quintessential femininity. And if Eve is a masculine projection of what a woman should be, so is Tristessa, who is another incarnation of masculine sexual fantasy, another "not-self", another piece of mythology:

That was why he had been the perfect man's woman! He had made of himself the only woman he could have loved! If a woman is indeed beautiful only

in so far as she incarnates most completely the secret aspirations of man, no wonder Tristessa had been able to become the most beautiful woman in the world, an unbegotten woman who made no concessions to humanity.

Tristessa, the sensuous fabrications of the mythology of the flea-pits. How could a real woman ever have been so much a woman as you? ... Tristessa had no function in this ontological status, only an iconographic one (128-129).

This critique of the film star Tristessa is part of what Carter stresses in *The Sadeian Woman* as the general critique of twentieth-century Western cultural images – particularly filmic images – of women. We can say, then, that Tristessa is a version of Sade's Justine, a comparable product of the masculine imagination, and as Carter was to point out in *The Sadeian Woman*, Justine is a kind of model for many twentieth-century representations of women:

Justine is the model for nineteenth and early twentieth-century denial of femininity as praxis, the denial of femininity as a positive mode of dealing with the world (SW, 71).

Justine was always the object of punishment, but she committed only one crime and that was an involuntary one; she was born a woman and for that, she was ceaselessly punished. Worst of all, she presented the enigmatic image of irresistibility and powerlessness forever trapped in impotence. Comparing Justine to Marilyn Monroe, Carter suggests that it was her entrapment within a masculine image of what she should be that destroyed the film star:

Justine marks the start of a kind of self-regarding female masochism ... Justine's place in the aetiology of the female condition in the twentieth century is assured; she is the personification of the pornography of that condition.

She is obscene to the extent to which she is beautiful. Her beauty, her submissiveness ... are what make her obscene ...

In herself, this lovely ghost, this zombie, or woman who has never been completely born as a woman, only as a debased cultural idea of a woman, is appreciated only for her decorative value. Final condition of the imaginary prostitute: men would rather have slept with her than sleep with her. She is most arousing as a memory or as a masturbatory fantasy. If she perceives herself as

something else, the contradictions of her situation will destroy her. This is the Monroe syndrome ...

Justine is the model for the nineteenth and early twentieth-century denial of femininity as praxis, the denial of femininity as a positive mode of dealing with the world. (SW, 57, 70-71).

Tristessa the man in drag is an agent of this masculine cultural conspiracy. It is a point underlined by his full name, Tristessa de St Ange. Carter stresses that in Sade's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1795) Madame de Sant-Ange is the libertine who initiates the girl Eugenie into the practices of sadism. These two females become, like Juliette, co-opted by and agents of patriarchal power. The image of woman which Tristessa perpetuated in scores of film roles was a denial of history, an act of masculine mythologizing and a definition of female impotence:

"Passivity", he said, "Inaction". That time should not act upon me, that I should not die. So I was seduced by the notion of a woman's being, which is negativity. Passivity, the absence of being. To be everything and nothing. To be a pane the sun strikes through" (137).

Eve describes Tristessa in a manner that is traced with a memory of how the film star's victim role had aroused her when she was growing up as a boy: "Tall, pale, attenuated enigma, your face an invitation to necrophilia, face of an angel upon a tombstone, a face that will haunt me forever, a face dominated by hooded eyes whose tears were distillations of the sorrows of the world" (121). Tristessa's image of woman defines a female masochism which is both produced by and sustains sadism. Tristessa the man projects an image of woman as object, devoid of subjectivity. As Carter was to write in *The Sadeian Woman*:

To be the *object* of desire is to be defined in the passive case.
To exist in the passive case is to die in the passive case – that is, to be killed.
This is the moral of the fairy tale about the perfect woman (76-77).

Above all, the masculine subject's desire to destroy the object of its desires is simultaneously a desire for self-annihilation. In Tristessa's case this syndrome is contained within the one figure of a man in drag. That figure finds an actual fulfilment when Zero arrives to destroy Tristessa. The whole syndrome is symbolised by the transparency and fragileness of Tristessa's house, which is built of glass:

While Zero ingeniously tortured you in your gallery of glass, you must have been in absolute complicity with him. You must have thought Zero, with his guns and knives and whips and attendant chorus of cringing slaves, was a man worth the ironic gift of that female appearance which was your symbolic autobiography. I read it at a glance. You had turned yourself into an object as lucid as the objects you made from glass; and this object was, itself, an idea (129).

But if Tristessa is like this, so is Eve. Eve has been constructed by Mother's patriarchy according to the same principles as Tristessa used to construct himself as woman; according to the predilections of the masculine gaze. In the programme of conditioning to which the patriarchy subjected her after Evelyn's physical transformation into a *Playboy* centrefold, the media image of Tristessa herself was of great importance: "New Eve, whose sensibility had been impregnated with that of Tristessa during the insomniac nights of transmutation in the desert" (119). Eve recognises her kinship with the masculine fantasy that is Tristessa, not just because Eve was once Evelyn, but because Eve's physical appearance is taken out of media images of the female that were generated by the masculine gaze.

Tristessa's construction of himself as a woman in terms of passivity is contradicted at the point when he is forced by Zero to have sex with Eve. Tristessa, stripped of his clothes, is made to lie on top of Eve and he mutters to her about "woman's being" which he associates with "inaction" and "passivity" (137). Eve finds all this tiresome and takes the initiative: "I was tired of waiting. I clasped my legs about him and drew him into me" (137-138). This activity on Eve's part contradicts the female passivity

emblematised by Tristessa who here is put into a passive role as a man. He even observes: "I thought I was immune to rape" (137). The issue of activity and passivity in sexual roles is further elaborated when Eve and Tristessa's lovemaking is described once they have escaped the clutches of Zero and his mad harem. Here, Eve, on top, beats down mercilessly on Tristessa and – again in contradiction to the image of female passivity – smashes the image of the passive woman he had constructed himself as. This activity on Eve's part is returned by the man who then overwhelms *her*:

We sucked at the water bottle of each other's mouth for there was nothing else to drink. Turn and turn about, now docile, now virile – when you lay below me all that white hair shifted from side to side ... your hair dragged your head impetuously with it, this way and that way; I beat down upon you mercilessly, with atavistic relish, but the glass woman I saw beneath me smashed under my passion and the splinters scattered and recomposed themselves into a man who overwhelmed me (149).

As I have stressed earlier, according to Beauvoir, man needs "Others" to affirm his existence and to break away from immanence. He engages in projects to achieve transcendence. The female is used by the male as the "Other" and she remains the object; she never becomes the subject. What Beauvoir meant to say, I take it, was that oppression constructs woman's subjectivity by marking the body as a passive, sexual object. The oppressed subject comes to see herself as object because she experiences her own body as an object, as a physical thing, rather than transcendent. As a result of oppression her body is not just an object for men, but an object for herself. Although she is a subject, she becomes an object for herself, because she does not experience her body as the instrumentality of her will; she has no control over it. For Beauvoir, the oppressed person is both subject and object for herself since she experiences her body as alien to her subjectivity.

Through Eve's narrative voice, Carter ironically exposes this construction of the feminine "otherness" staged by Tristessa's manipulative

cross-dressing. In an interview with John Haffenden, Carter makes a similar point about the actress Rita Hayworth. Only a man, she claims, would wonder how a real woman could ever have become “so much a woman”:

I created this person in order to say some quite specific things about the cultural production of femininity. The production slogan for the film *Gilda* [Dir. Charles Vidor, 1946], starring Rita Hayworth, was “There was never a woman like Gilda”, and that may have been one of the reasons why I made my Hollywood star transvestite, a man, because only a man could think of femininity in terms of that slogan⁷².

Seen as a specific “cultural production” of a mythical gender identity, Tristessa’s characterization reminds us of Irigaray’s masquerade theory and Joan Riviere’s well-known thesis as well. Riviere postulates that femininity is a masquerade that women may chose to don so that they can enter society, even though this mask has been designed by men⁷³. Understood as masquerade, Tristessa’s cross-dressing is a male appropriation of femininity, not a radical form of gender-bending.

Tristessa certainly embodies Carter’s dislike of Hollywood’s cultural imperialism and its misogynistic representation of femininity. But, as Eve observes, there is a perpetual fascination with such appalling myth-making: “he must have both loved and hated women, to let Tristessa be so beautiful and make her suffer so!” (144). This point emerges in a an influential critical essay on Hollywood film that is contemporaneous with Carter’s novel. In “Visual pleasure and narrative cinema”, Laura Mulvey adopts a psychoanalytic perspective to argue that classic Hollywood films (such as *Gilda*) give pleasure when the viewers situate themselves in the position of a “male viewer”⁷⁴. Mulvey claims that such pleasure comes from a specific fetishistic male gaze on women characters as objects of desire. Since, however, Freudian theory suggests that the female body is a site of castration, Mulvey claims that great anxiety emerges from this “scopophilia”. The anxiety can only be resolved, argues Mulvey, by seeing the woman sadistically punished in the storyline. Carter seems to be

echoing Mulvey's critical position at the moment when Evelyn gets an erection in the cinema while watching Tristessa playing a starring role where the woman character dies from brain fever. Similarly, the figure of Mother points to the misogyny inherent in Hollywood's appropriation of femininity when she refuses to reassign Tristessa's gender because she is ineradicably male. In Mother's world, Tristessa represents too much of a woman, this clearly illustrates the harm inflicted on women who conform to such a negative sense of self. Carter clarified this point in her essay "Notes from the Front Line":

I am interested in myths ... just because they *are* extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree ... I wrote one anti-mythic novel in 1977, *The Passion of New Eve* – I conceived it as a feminist tract about the social creation of femininity, amongst other things (71).

Tristessa possesses a female identity typically weak and dependent along with a lack of being. Her attractiveness rests, the narrator says, "on your beautiful lack of being, as if your essence were hung up in a closet ... and you were reduced to going out only in your appearance" (72). Her appearance and even her gender become a performance rather than an essence. In this case, Tristessa learns to perform gender, and the very act of performance suggests a liminality that would seem to argue against an original essence. The wedding in which Tristessa plays the bride and Eve the groom, is the culmination of the performative images: "[u]nder the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove, no matter how hard I tried, although I was a boy disguised as a girl and now disguised a boy again" (132).

Tristessa's words make clear that she projects her identity as transvestite. She also fetishizes parts of her body in a way accurately characteristic of the male transvestite. The psychologist Robert Stoller, one of the principal theorists of transvestism in the 1960s, gives an example of

this in an account provided by one of his subjects: "sometimes in my mind I could mostly imagine the legs [his own] as being girls' legs"⁷⁵.

Indeed, it is productive to consider Carter's fictional characters in relation to the work of Stoller. The mid-1960s and early 1970s saw the establishment of gender identity clinics and research programmes devoted to the study of gender dysphoria syndrome. Also, it was not just professional psychologists who recorded accounts of gender transgression; whoever cross-dressed or underwent sex-reassignment surgery began to write about their experience.

These autobiographical accounts reveal some striking preoccupations in common. Most noticeable is the transsexual's repeated identifications with Hollywood film stars such as Greta Garbo, Bette Davis and Marlene Dietrich – stars in fact who are recognized queens of camp. In *Gender Trouble* Butler quotes from Parker Tyler's "The Garbo Image" as follows:

Garbo "got in drag" whenever she took some heavy glamour part, whenever she melted she melted in or out of man's arms, whenever she simply let that heavenly-flexed neck ... bear the weight of her thrown-back head ... How resplendent seems the art of acting! It is all *impersonification*, whether the sex underneath is true or not (*GT*, 128, italics in the original)⁷⁶.

So even when surgery has been carried out, there persists an understanding of gender as performance. For the performative emphasis of camp means, as Susan Sontag argues, that to perceive camp in a person is to "understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role" (280)⁷⁷. Sontag's definitions of "camp" in this seminal essay have since been qualified and challenged by many critics. Andrew Ross, for example, points out that while Sontag had characterized camp as "apolitical", she later amended this view, stating that camp had had "a considerable if inadvertent role in the upsurge of feminist consciousness in the late 1960s" (161). Moe Meyer and Cynthia Morrill both regard Sontag's distinction of camp as "gay-sensibility"

as ahistorical, and limited to “the presumption that Camp is a discursive mode offered to heterosexuals as a means for homosexuals to gain acceptance”⁷⁸. In reading transsexual’s autobiographies, one realizes that in many cases they do not entirely abandon the camp style traditionally associated with the transvestite – the “arabesques of kitsch and hyperbole” (*PNE*, 5) prevalent in Tristessa’s autobiography.

If, as Sontag puts it, camp “neutralizes moral indignation and sponsors playfulness”⁷⁹, then Carter produces a similar tone in *The Passion of New Eve*. With her exaggerated femininity and her association with the theatre and performance, Tristessa is clearly the embodiment of camp. Tristessa’s elusive identity seems to reside somewhere in the many fictional roles she dramatizes and in the wardrobe of variously gendered costumes from old Hollywood films. In assuming the exaggerated shape of drag queen, her own subjectivity is mediated by the role of starlet, the fictional heroines she plays, and the cinema screen itself. Consequently, the multiply coded figure acts as a “screen” onto which definitions of femininity and male desire are projected. Appearing to Eve “in seven veils of celluloid”, Tristessa demonstrates “every kitsch excess of the mode of femininity” (71). Nevertheless, both modes of gender move across the transvestite’s face. As they escape together in the abandoned helicopter, Eve observes Tristessa looking back at the shattered house: “he, she was lifted as on a wire, the mimic flight of the theatre, from the tomb she’d made for herself; he looked about him with the curiosity of Lazarus” (143). The interchange of pronouns, signifying the simultaneous presence of both genders at this moment, is expressed in terms of mimetic performance.

The drag queen’s metaphoric role is further highlighted when we consider the difference between her gender performance and that of Eve. As cross-dressers, both Tristessa and, in certain circumstances, Eve are concerned with their act. When, after years of reclusion in his glass house, the intruders arrive to enact Zero’s revenge, he pretends to be another of

the waxwork figures in his mausoleum, as he wants to be unseen. The frequent references to “translucent skin” – his flesh seems “composed of light”, he “flickered upon the air” (143, 147), suggests a kind of invisibility. He lives in “a nameless zone” (126) and has no “real name” (144), except his stage name, itself an abstraction of emotion, “Tristessa”: sadness and suffering. In fact, it is very like many drag names which themselves declare their metaphoric nature and are linked to performed identity.

It is clear that these are gender-transgressive figures who pose a threat to the binary world-view of other characters. As Zero seeks to impose the binary logic of marriage on them, the girls gather the scattered limbs of the destroyed waxwork bodies to construct witness for the event:

they put the figures together haphazardly, so Roman Navarro’s head was perched on Jean Harlow’s torso and had one arm from John Barrymore Junior, the other from Marilyn Monroe and legs from yet other donors – all assembled in haste, so they looked like picture-puzzles (134).

The group intend these mannequins to stand as a cruel parody of the cross-dressed and ambiguously gendered couple who kneel before them. The “picture-puzzle” figures are inanimate reflections of Tristessa and Eve in this regard, and placing the couple within the paradigm of heterosexuality becomes an attempt to “solve” the visual anomalies with which their attackers have been confronted. Although Tristessa and Eve learn to perform their genders, Tristessa is the one who performs it in a more ambiguous way. Because of the lack of an original gender, both parody the feminine without becoming it. This illustrates what Butler argues in terms of parody: “gender parody, as in transvestism is *of* the very notion of an original ... so gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin” (*GT*, 138). Moreover, for Butler the notion of an original or primary identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities. Within feminist theory, such parodic

identities have been understood to be either degrading to women, in the case of drag and cross-dressing, or an uncritical appropriation of sex-role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality, especially in the case of butch/femme lesbian identities. Butler also stresses the fact that the relation between the "imitation" and the "original" gives us a clue to the way in which the relationship between primary identification – that is, the original meanings accorded to gender – and subsequent gender experience might be reframed. The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But Butler argues that we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: "anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance" (*GT*, 137). Butler explains that "if the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance" (*GT*, 137). If there is a lack of an original gender in Tristessa as well as in Eve, there is clearly a sense in which Eve may be seen to be as much in drag as Tristessa. As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman", it also reveals, "the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely coherence" (*GT*, 137). Furthermore, "*in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*" (*GT*, 137. Italics in the original) as Butler stresses. Indeed, part of the pleasure of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary.

Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to establish a relation between gender and sexual identity theories in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*. This was hopefully achieved even if in the process further questions arose instead of answers. Most of the issues have been obliquely dealt with but in order to discuss certain topics, many others needed to be left out. However, this work was for me a process of discovery.

The reason why I have chosen these two novels was due to the fact that both writers use the sex/gender topics in full knowledge of the parameters they involve. *The Passion of New Eve* and *Sacred Country* are illustrations of how gender and sexual identity are becoming increasingly a phenomenon of options and choices. In this way, my first step was to focus on the central subject of feminist theory – gender. Even though a major focus of feminist theory has been to denaturalize gender, feminists as well as non-feminists seem to have trouble understanding the relationship between *gender* and *sex*. Feminists even seem to have difficulties thinking through the meanings we assign to and the uses we make of the concept “natural”. What, after all, is the natural in the context of the human world? There are many aspects of our embodiedness, our biology, that we might see as given limits to human action which science does not hesitate to challenge. The tendency is for science to disenchant the natural world. More and more the natural ceases to exist as the opposite of the cultural or social, while nature becomes the object and product of human action.

My second step was precisely to reject biological determinism and to point out that our bodies are not natural objects but malleable surfaces that can be transformable. Therefore, I focused my work on transsexual surgery and on the metamorphosis of the characters. Transsexuality has

become something of a favoured topic for gender studies nowadays, because it seems to offer case studies for demonstrations of various gender theories. Moreover, medical descriptions of transsexuality have been preoccupied with a discourse of “the wrong body” that describes transsexual embodiment in terms of an error of nature whereby gender identity and biological sex are not only discontinuous but catastrophically at odds.

I have also drawn attention to technological practices which alter and define our sexual identities. As Donna Haraway puts it, the world is changing very quickly and this is due mainly to scientific/technological practices. The technological availability of surgeries to reassign gender has made the option of gender transition available to those who understand themselves to be tragically and severely at odds with their bodies, these surgical transitions have been embraced by increasing numbers of gender-variant people.

Rosi Braidotti in *Nomadic Subjects* argues that all tools are products of our creative human imagination, which copy and multiply the potencies of the body. She also states that

Technology fulfills the human’s biological destiny in such an intimate way that the organic and the technical complement and become adapted to each other (44).

Furthermore, in *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Braidotti points out the relationship of body and technology and more specifically the ways in which human is now displaced in the direction of a glittering range of post-human technological variables. Braidotti argues that

Contemporary science and technology in fact have reached right into the most intimate layers of the living organism and the structures of the self, dissolving boundaries that had been established by centuries of humanistic thinking. This

means that we can now think of the body as an entity that inhabits different time-zones simultaneously, and is animated by different speeds and a variety of internal and external clocks which do not necessarily coincide. Hence the renewed importance of the issue of temporality, or of bodies-in-time⁸⁰.

My final step was to focus on the characters' adaptation to a new self and a new body. In this way, I analysed Carter's examples of performative aspects of gender: the transsexual Evelyn/Eve, Leilah and the most exciting example, Tristessa. This analysis was followed by a focus on Judith Butler's theoretical considerations of gender as parody and as performance. In Butler's point of view, gender is performative because it creates the very categories ("sex", "women", "men", "nature") and sexed identities which it purports to explain. Butler also proposes a strategy of parodic repetition, that is, of the masquerade. She emphasizes that we explode the category "women" by allowing as many other alternative genders as there are individuals. If biology is not destiny, if body is construction, then any sex goes. Like Butler, I believe that sexual and gender identities involve some degree of movement between bodies, desires, transgressions and conformities; we do not necessarily shuttle back and forth between sexual roles and practices at will, but we tend to adjust, accommodate, change, reverse, slide, and move in general between moods and modes of desire.

?End Notes?

¹ In Sally Potter's film *Orlando* (1992), based on Virginia Woolf's novel, the mechanism by means of which Orlando changes sex is more-or-less ignored. The fabulous costumes as well as the fascination look at changing eras overlap Orlando's gender metamorphosis.

² Samuel R. Delany, *Triton*, New York, Bantam Books, 1976, p. 117.

³ Lyne Segal, *Why Feminism? Gender, Psychology, Politics*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999, p. 39.

⁴ See Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, Totowa, Rowman & Allanheld, 1983, pp. 106-13.

⁵ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 2.

⁶ Linda Nicholson, "Interpreting Gender" in *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, Linda Nicholson & Steve Seidman (ed.), Cambridge & New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 41.

⁷ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge & Mass., Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 148. Although we, for example, see female sexual organs as different organs from those of men, and by their differences signifying the distinction of women from men, in the earlier view these organs were seen as less-developed versions of male organs. Thus, in the old view, the female vagina and cervix did not constitute something distinct from the male penis; rather, together, they constituted a less-developed version of it. But, around the middle of the eighteenth century, this older view began to give rise to a newer perspective which placed great emphasis on the differences. The result was not only the inclination to view the sexual organs of women and men as completely different, but also the inclination to emphasise the differences in all aspects of women's and men's bodies: "structures that had been thought common to man and woman – the skeleton and the nervous system – were differentiated so as to correspond to the cultural male and female". Ibid., 35.

⁸ Linda Nicholson, "Gender" in Alison M. Jaggar & Iris Marion Young, *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, Massachusetts & Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1998, p. 291. Further references to this text will be cited parenthetically by page number.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York & London, Routledge, 1990, p. 7. Henceforth, page references to this will be given in the text.

¹⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans. by H.M. Parshley, New York, Vintage Books, 1973, p. 295. Beauvoir's most influential book *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 1 vol, was first published in 1949. Further references to Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* will be cited parenthetically by page number.

¹¹ Donna Haraway, "'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, London, Free Association Books, 1991, p. 131.

¹² Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*", 1986, in Elizabeth Fallaize (ed.), *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*, New York & London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 30-42. Further references to Butler's essay will be cited parenthetically by page number.

¹³ Loc. cit..

¹⁴ The Hegelian master-slave dialectic is a complicated relationship whereby the master attempts to dominate the slave, but ultimately requires the slave to confirm him in his dominance, something that requires the slave's own subjectivity, and which therefore undermines the sovereign subject-position of the master. While Hegel's subversive reading of the subjectivity of the slave as being necessary to confirm the subjectivity of the master challenges a simple, dualistic interpretation of this relationship as a dominant master victimizing a dominated slave, it is also crucial to realize that the slave's refusal to confirm the master in his dominance could easily cost the slave her/his life.

¹⁵ See Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman", in Linda Nicholson (ed.), *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, 1997 and M. Wittig, "The Category of Sex", *Feminist Issues*, 2, 1982. And see Foucault's introduction to the volume he edited, *Herculine Barbin, Being Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century Hermaphrodite*, trans. Richard McDougall, New York, Pantheon, 1980. Also, Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York, Vintage, 1978. Monique Wittig consciously extends Simone de Beauvoir's doctrine in "One is Not Born a Woman" while Michel Foucault, Butler claims, is not indebted to Beauvoir, although he was a student of Merleau-Ponty. For both theorists, the very discrimination of "sex" takes place within a cultural context which requires that "sex" remains, Butler notes, dyadic. Butler also writes that "the demarcation of anatomical difference does not precede the cultural interpretation of that difference, but is itself an interpretive act laden with normative

assumptions” (40). That infants are divided into sexes at birth, Wittig points out, serves the social ends of reproduction, but they might just as well be differentiated on the basis of earlobe formation or, better still, not be differentiated on the basis of anatomy at all. In questioning the binary restrictions on gender definition, Wittig and Foucault release gender from sex in ways which Beauvoir probably did not imagine. And, yet, her view of the body as a “situation” certainly lays the groundwork for such theories.

¹⁶ In a conversation published in the journal *differences*, Gayle Rubin concludes by laughing a little at her interviewer, Judith Butler. Rubin has just offered some long comments about sadomasochist imagery, to which Butler responds:

I'd like to bring us back to gender.

And so Rubin teases her:

You would! ... I think I will leave any further comments on gender to you, in your capacity as the reigning “Queen” of Gender!

Quoted in Penelope Deutscher, *Yielding Gender: Feminism Deconstruction and the History of Philosophy*, London & New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 11.

¹⁷ Extracts from Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler. <www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm>

¹⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, New York & London, Routledge, 1993, pp. 1-2.

¹⁹ See Michel Foucault (ed.), *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century Hermaphrodite*, trans. Richard McDougall, New York, Pantheon, 1980, originally published as *Herculine Barbin, dite Alexina B. présenté par Michel Foucault*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978. The French version lacks the introduction supplied by Foucault with the English translation. In *Gender Trouble* as endnote.

²⁰ Havelock Ellis, *The Psychology of Sex*, New York, Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1933, p. 225.

²¹ Lynda Birke, *Feminism and the Biological Body*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 32.

²² Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, London, Sage, 1993, p. 5.

²³ Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve*, 1977, London: Virago Press, 1982, p. 69. Further references to Carter's novel will be cited parenthetically by page number.

²⁴ Susan Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*, Mass. & London, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 138.

²⁵ Nicoletta Valloranni, “The Body of the City: Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*”, in Lindsey Tucker (ed.), *Critical Essays on Angel Carter*, New York, G.K. Hall & Co., 1998, pp. 176 – 190.

²⁶ Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira, “Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* and Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*: A Comparative Reading. <<http://65.107.211.207/ht/pg/ferreira.html>>. Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) is a hyperfiction, a text that can only be read on a computer monitor. Maria Aline Ferreira compares both texts due to a considerable number of narrative and thematic concerns. Both characters have their bodies transformed as well as their sexual identity.

²⁷ David Punter, “Angela Carter: Supersessions of the Masculine”, in Lindsey Tucker (ed.), *Critical Essays on Angela Carter*, New York, G.K. Hall & Co., 1998, p. 53.

²⁸ Rose Tremain, *Sacred Country*, New York & London, Washington Square Press, 1992, p. 5.

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 132.

³⁰ Genders OnLine Journal – Masculinity without Men: Annamarie Jagose interviews Judith Halberstam. *Genders* 29, 1999. <www.Genders.org/g29/g29_halberstam.html>. Jagose interviews Halberstam about her book *Female Masculinity*.

³¹ For more on punishment of tomboys see Phyllis Burke, *Gender Shock: Exploding the Myths of Male and Female*, New York, Anchor Books, 1996. Burke analyses some recent case histories of so-called GID or Gender Identity Disorder, in which little girls are carefully conditioned out of male behaviour and into exceedingly constrictive forms of femininity. See also Kenneth J. Zucker & Susan J. Bradley, *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adolescents*, New York & London, The Guilford Press, 1995. This volume provides a detailed analysis of gender identity disorder in both boys and girls. It also focuses on transvestic fetishism and homosexuality. Shedding light on the topic as well are discussions of relevant studies of adults with transsexualism and analyses of research on the development of sexual orientation. Detailed clinical case material is included throughout.

³² See Dr. E.P. Walker. Gender Reassignment Surgery. <www.plasticsurgery.co.nz/grs-main.asp> for more details on the operation, the team, the protocol, the programme, post operation and the costs.

³³ Kimberly Peirce's *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) is the true-life story of the person who called himself Brandon Teena and was actually a young woman named Teena Brandon. Brandon was a young person born female who chose to live as a male from a fairly early age. Brandon started to passing himself off as a man to local girls where he developed something of a reputation as a ladies man. When rumors began to circulate about Brandon's gender ambiguity, John Lotter and Marvin Thomas Niessen raped and killed him. Lotter and Niessen were arrested and convicted of the murder.

³⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 203.

³⁵ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, London & New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 96. Creed reconsiders Freud's little Hans story and the fear of being castrated by his own mother. Little Hans, a five-year-old boy, suffered from a phobia which expressed itself as a fear that a white horse might bite him. This phobia later expanded to include a fear of horses falling down and of heavily vehicles such as carts and buses. Freud's reports date from when Hans was three years old. At this time he developed an interest in his "widdler". He asked his mother if she had a widdler but his parents never explained to Hans the nature of her genitals and their difference from those of the male. At this time he also mistook a cow's teat for its widdler. When he was three and a half, Hans's mother discovered he was touching his penis. She threatened him with castration. Freud argues it was this event which led to Hans acquiring a fear of castration. See Sigmund Freud "Analysis of a phobia in a five year old", in *Standard Edition*, vol. 10, pp. 1-50 for more information on Little Hans story.

³⁶ Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), London, Virago Press, 1993, p. 23.

³⁷ Angela Carter "Peter and the Wolf", in *Black Venus* (1985), London, Vintage, 1994, p. 57.

³⁸ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, pp. 24 & 27.

³⁹ Angela Carter, "Notes from the Front Line" in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1997, p. 38. Italics in the original.

⁴⁰ Loc. cit..

⁴¹ Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, London, Free Association Books, 1991, p. 177. Haraway's "Manifesto" was first published in 1983.

⁴² Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 1996, p. 1.

⁴³ Donna Haraway, "The Promise of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others" in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, New York & London, Routledge, 1992, p. 296.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 296. Italics in the original.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 296.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 296. Italics in the original.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.297.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 298.

⁴⁹ Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 149.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 149. Haraway in her essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1983), enters into a tradition of socialist and feminist critiques of science and technology within late capitalism and patriarchal society with a distinctly postmodernist radicality. Despairing at the magnitude of problems such as, nuclear war, growing poverty, forms of marginalisation and insecurity, especially for women, and the penetration of global capitalism, militarism, and patriarchy, Haraway seeks a way to turn this apocalyptic world into a utopian place. Her solution resides in the transgression of boundaries and the construction of an emancipatory utopia for what are no longer mere humans. According to Haraway, humans have become, and are increasingly, cybernetic organisms, or cyborgs, for short. I believe her essay was a serious joke about a world heading itself towards destruction, as indeed it seemed to a great many back in 1983 and perhaps still does today. In 1983, if you recall, the United States was increasing their weaponry, and the Reagan administration had put forward its Strategic Defense Initiative, all of this under the intense opposition of citizens. So out of a sense of desperation, Haraway turns to the "Cyborg Manifesto" as a way to undermine this global economic and cultural system. She begins by challenging two boundaries of modernity: the differences between animal and human and between machine and life.

⁵¹ Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*, New York & London, Routledge, 1997, p. 51. In this book, Haraway concentrates on biological networks and takes a critical look at the way biotechnology is constructing our bodies. She tackles masculine bias in scientific culture and sees herself as the troubled “modest witness” of genetic engineering.

⁵² The relations between science and technology is a growing area of interest. See for example Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflection on Gender and Science*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985 and *Feminism and Science*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996. See also Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1986 and *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987. Evelyn Fox Keller argues that science has traditionally been a masculine enterprise because it has a marked sexual division of labour and because it perceives and pursues nature as if nature was a female object. Science is based on binaries between mind (masculine) and nature (feminine). One of Fox Keller’s central arguments is that while much of science might be multiple and collective the dominant *ideology* of science is intensely individualistic and masculine. Her solution is to replace this dominant view by increasing the representation of women in science as well as by encouraging scientists to create plural realities, a feeling for organic nature and an abandonment of the masculinist either/or approach all of which, she claims would transform science into a quiet conversation with nature. Sandra Harding provides a wide-ranging feminist taxonomy appropriate to our rapidly changing technological and scientific world which she calls the feminist standpoint theory. Standpoint theorists reject the notion that there are universal truths or universal answers to social questions by pointing out that gender, class and race will always shape any individual understanding of the world. Harding suggests that women’s experience of marginality combined with our material activities of reproduction, labour and our refusal of dualisms such as culture/nature, mind/body, provide us with an understanding of social life which is distinct from, and perhaps superior to that of men. Harding also argues that if philosophic and scientific traditions and cultures are distorted by abstraction and a separation from the world then genuine social understanding can only develop from relational capacities, from moral and political commitment and from an ethic of care rather than one of exploitation.

⁵³ Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, p. 149.

⁵⁴ James Graham Ballard, *Crash*, New York, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1973, pp. 189-190. Further references to this book will be cited parenthetically by page number.

⁵⁵ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism Western Culture, and the Body*, Berkeley & London, University of California Press, 1993, p. 228.

⁵⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1817), Hertfordshire, Wordsworth, 1993, pp. 43, 44 & 47.

⁵⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 36.

⁵⁸ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 139.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

⁶⁰ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, New York & London, Routledge, 1991, p. 1.

⁶¹ Linden Peach, *Macmillan Modern Novelists: Angela Carter*, London, Macmillan Press, 1998, p. 128.

⁶² “If a city may be said to have a sex”, writes Jane Marcus, “London was, and is, unmistakably male” p. 139, in “A Wilderness of One’s Own: Feminist Fantasy Novels in the Twenties”. In Susan Merrill Squier (ed.), *Women Writers and the City: Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1989, pp. 134-160.

⁶³ Nicoletta Vallorani, “The Body of the City”, p. 182.

⁶⁴ Wendy Martin, “A View of the *City Upon a Hill*: The Prophetic Vision of A. Rich”, p. 250 in S. Merrill Squier, *Women Writers and the City: Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism*, pp. 249-265.

⁶⁵ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 1998, p. 163.

⁶⁶ See Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1979.

⁶⁷ See Sandy Stone, “The ‘Empire’ Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” in Julia Epstein & Kristina Straub (eds.), *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, New York, Routledge, 1993, pp. 280-304.

⁶⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, p. 33.

⁶⁹ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, ed. & trans. by Catherine Porter & Carolyn Burke, New York, Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 133. Irigaray’s *Ce Sexe qui n’en est pas un* was first published in 1977.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁷¹ Angela Carter, "Notes from the Front Line", in Michelene Wandor (ed.), *On Gender and Writing*, London, Pandora, 1983, p. 70. Further references will be cited parenthetically by page number.

⁷² John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview*, London, Methuen, 1985, p. 86. Quoted in Merja Makinen, "Sexual and Textual aggression in The Sadeian Woman and The Passion of New Eve" in Joseph Bristow & Trev Lynn Broughton, *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, London & New York, Longman, 1997, pp. 149-165.

⁷³ Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a masquerade" in Victor Burgin, James Donald & Cora Kaplan (eds.), *Formation of Fantasy*, London, Methuen, 1986, pp. 35-44.

⁷⁴ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, London, Macmillan, 1989, pp. 14-26.

⁷⁵ Robert J. Stoller, *Presentations of Gender*, New Haven & Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1985, p. 149.

⁷⁶ In *Gender Trouble* quoted from Parker Tyler "The Garbo Image" in Esther Newton *Mother Camp*

⁷⁷ Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967 quoted in Heather L. Johnson "Unexpected geometries: transgressive symbolism and the transsexual subject in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*", in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, pp. 166-183.

⁷⁸ See Andrew Ross, *No Respect*, New York, & London, Routledge, 1994, p. 161 and Moe Meyer, *The Politics of Camp*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 8, 115-116.

⁷⁹ Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp", p. 290 in Heather L. Johnson "Unexpected geometries".

⁸⁰ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002, p. 21.

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