

JULIA KRISTEVA'S CONCEPT OF MISPLACED ABJECTION IN ANGELA CARTER'S *THE PASSION OF NEW EVE*

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ABSTRACT

This essay studies Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* in terms of Julia Kristeva's concept of misplaced abjection. In her theory of subjectivity, Kristeva argues that abjection is put wrongly onto women. Accordingly, this essay is concerned to answer one central question: How does Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* represent Kristeva's concept of misplaced abjection? To answer this question, the study examines the protagonist's gender transformation. Through the first phase of his life, Evelyn is a misogynist and has no respect for women; however, he is later forcefully transformed into a woman by an elaborate sex-change surgery and begins to experience the position of the abject. It is assumed that this essay will finally reveal whether the kind of femininity Carter depicts is a social construction or an essential attribute of womanhood.

KEYWORDS: Abject, Feminism, Gender, Patriarchy, Subjectivity

INTRODUCTION

The essay studies Kristeva's theory of abjection in Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*. This novel, published in 1977, has long been considered as a feminist text exploring the construction of gender. The story is about a British man named Evelyn, who has moved to New York to teach at a local university. He is apparently a misogynist with no respect for the feminine sex. He befriends Leilah, a black dancer, and after impregnating her, forces the girl to abort the child illegally. Then, Evelyn escapes to an unnamed desert, where he is captured by Mother, a terrible matriarch, and brought forcefully to an underground city called Beulah. Mother transforms him to a female named Eve through an elaborate plastic surgery. From this point on, Eve experiences the sufferings of the feminine sex. She falls victim to Zero's sexual abuse and finally learns the disciplines of femininity. Eve finally marries to Tristessa, a biologically male actress; however, Tristessa dies of a shotgun. In the end, Eve, now carrying the child of Tristessa, returns to New York and plans for a new life. Accordingly, the present chapter analyzes Evelyn's journey in terms of Kristeva's theory of abjection.

This essay focuses particularly on the social and cultural relations between men and women, which Carter has pictured through Evelyn's gender transformation. Such relations render explicit the nature of femininity in the depicted societies. On the whole, the following discussion answers one central question: How does Carter picture the nature of femininity in *The Passion of New Eve*? To answer this question, the essay studies Evelyn's gender transformation under two major titles: "Evelyn, the Possessor of Power and Sex Offender" and "Evelyn/Eve, the Powerless and Abject Sex." The first title refers to that part of Evelyn's life when he possess masculine power and is not yet transformed into a woman. Here, his relationship with Leilah is studied according to Kristeva's definition of the abject and her notion of misplaced

abjection. The second title itself consists of two categories: “Evelyn, the Powerless Sex in the Matriarchal World of Beulah” and “Eve, the Abject Female Sex in Zero’s Harem.” Here, Evelyn’s relationship with Mother and the world of Beulah is the focal point. Next, the chapter discusses that part of Evelyn’s life when he is transformed into a female and experiences sexual abuse. The whole study revolves keywords as abject, feminism, gender, patriarchy and subjectivity. It is assumed that the following discussion will finally find out how Carter has pictured the nature of femininity in *The Passion of New Eve*.

KRISTEVA’S CONCEPT OF MISPLACED ABJECTION

The concept of misplaced abjection emerged by the publication of Kristeva’s 1980 book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, in which she draws her theory of abjection based on Jacques Lacan’s tripartite scheme of the real, imaginary and symbolic. Through her psychoanalytic account of abjection, she attempts to correct Lacan’s psychosexual model by forcing attention onto the role of the mother in the development of subjectivity. Jennifer Rich clarifies that Kristeva finds Lacan’s mirror stage unconvincing mainly because it neglects the role of the mother in the formation of the child’s subjectivity (2007: 52). Kristeva presents instead, as Dino Felluga indicates, “a more central place for the maternal and the feminine in the subject’s psychosexual development” (2011: n. pag.). To introduce the mother as a powerful determinant factor in the development of subjectivity, she rewrites Lacan’s mirror stage by suggesting the term abject. According to Lacan, the borders between subject and object are formed when the child at some point between six and eighteen months of age catches a glimpse of itself in mirror and takes the image to be itself. This identification of oneself with the mirror image is erroneous because the subject and the image are not one and the same. However, the identification helps the child to develop a sense of unity in itself and recognize that it is a separate subject from others. Kristeva argues that although the mirror stage may lead to a sense of unity, the child develops the fundamental borders between subject and object even earlier than the mirror stage as the result of a process she calls abjection (McAfee 2004: 45).

Kristeva claims that, as McAfee defines, abjection originally appears when the child has not yet recognized its image in mirror and still thinks of itself as indistinct from its mother’s body (ibid.: 47-8). “[The child] is not quite yet,” McAfee renders, “on the borderline of subjectivity. Abjection will help it get there” (ibid.). The child must abject the mother’s body in order to become an autonomous subject. Therefore, the first thing the child expels from itself as object is the mother’s body (ibid.). The child abjects its mother in the process of weaning; that is when the mother introduces the child for the first time to other foods than breast milk. Through the process of weaning, the mother is made abject (Oliver 1995: 135).

Kristeva describes the child’s relation to its mother as an abject relation which finally facilitates the child’s separation from its mother. Oliver elaborates on what Kristeva thinks of this abject relation:

The child does not see the mother’s sex as threatening, as scar, because she ‘does not have one.’ Rather, on Kristeva’s analysis, the child sees the mother’s sex as threatening because it is the canal out of which it came. For the child at this stage, its mother’s sex represents its birth canal. And, insofar as the child was once on the other side of that canal, its autonomy is threatened. (ibid.)

In *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Kristeva sets forth the idea that the mother is “alone of her sex” (1989: 253). As Oliver has noted, “to say that the mother’s sex is reduced to the birth canal for the child is not to say that

women's sex is reduced to the birth canal" (1993: 55). Oliver further simplifies that "mothers are women apart from being mothers; and not all women are mothers. Therefore, mothers and women are not identical" (ibid. 160). "The abject mother's sex," she adds, "threatens the child in a way that women's sex should not" (ibid.). In Kristeva's view, it is exactly this confusion which ultimately leads to the abjection of all women, rather than the mother whose abjection is necessary for the development of subjectivity (ibid.). Accordingly, she concludes that abjection is put wrongly onto women.

EVELYN, THE POSSESSOR OF POWER AND SEX OFFENDER

While in New York, the misogynist Evelyn abuses Leilah, who is an exotic black dancer. Carter depicts Leilah not only as a glamorous sex object, but also as a member of the black community to emphasize her abject subordination. As Evelyn has put into words, "she has been doubly degraded, through her race and through her sex" (ibid. 37). In other words, Leila is once abjected because of her femininity and once more because of her black heritage. Thus, part of Leilah's abject condition, other than her blackness, is due to her femininity. As a sex object, she attempts to represent an ideal sexual image. Immediately after Evelyn catches a glimpse of her in the street, Leilah makes him follow her through the city. As he pursues her, she gradually sheds her dress and underwear to put her enticing female body on display. On the one hand, Evelyn's pursuit of Leilah suggests that he perceives her as an object of sexual desire and she knows well how to function as such.

Leilah's abject condition is clearly described through the way Evelyn, the possessor of patriarchal power, perceives her. He describes her as a seductress, who always dresses erotically: black stockings, high heels, fur coats and crotchless knickers. Her attractiveness and seductiveness tempts Evelyn. His immediate reaction to Leilah's seductiveness is sexual excitement. The very sight of her erotically stimulating body, he turns metaphorically into a cock:

I was nothing but cock and I dropped down upon her like, I suppose, a bird of prey, although my prey, throughout the pursuit, had played the hunter. My full-fleshed and voracious beak tore open the poisoned wound of love between her thighs, suddenly, suddenly. (ibid. 25)

Evelyn's sexual hunger resembles a cock, the sex symbol. Other than lust, the cock has connotations of patriarchy and domination. In seducing Evelyn, Leila is the hunter; however, after she successfully seduces him, Evelyn becomes the hunter and Leilah the hunted. According to Merja Makinen,

his erotic consciousness rapidly dehumanizes Leilah, first by depicting her through a litany of animalistic images — "little fox"; "creature of this undergrowth"; "bird-like creature"; a creature who exudes "a hot, animal perfume" — before mystifying her in terms of various archetypes of female innocence — "shepherdess in pastoral"; "mermaid"; "Lorelei of gleaming river" (pp. 20-22). Later, she evokes for him more demanding types of femininity, like "the myth of the succubus, the devils in female form who come by night to seduce the saints" (p. 27). (1997: 157)

Sometimes Leilah is to Evelyn of animal nature or possesses a devilish spirit. Whatever she seems to him, Leilah is at all times a God-given object to be possessed: "the crucible of chaos delivered her for my pleasure, for my bane" (Carter 1982: 27). Evelyn describes Leila as "limp, passive and obedient" (ibid.: 34) and calls her "a perfect woman" (ibid.); that is to say, he thinks of an ideal woman as someone who is passively erotic and obediently submissive. To Evelyn, Leilah's passive eroticism turns her into "a perfect woman; like the moon, she only gave reflected light" (ibid.).

Therefore, the particular masculine way Evelyn perceives Leilah signifies his reductive sexual exploitation of her and his masculine superiority as well.

The very masculine way Leilah is perceived by Evelyn turns her to a character resembling femme fatales. According to Aaron Smuts, Leilah's sexual appeal is in line with the picture of femme fatale in Western culture: a "seductress/temptress/leader-astray" (2000: 96). Just like the abject, Leilah, the femme fatal of the story, is simultaneously threatening and inviting. In fact, Leilah quite aptly performs the role of the abject within the patriarchal system she lives. It is not her filthiness which causes her to be the abject; rather, it is her unlawfulness which puts her in an abject condition. Her unlawfulness is decided by the ruling social system. As Kristeva says, "it is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection, but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (1982: 4). Thus, Leilah, as a perfect image of femme fatales, occupies an abject position mainly because she stands against system and order. Leila and other similar looking femme fatales, as Zsófia Tóth has noted,

Point out as well as stand for disturbance as they signify the fissures and gaps in the 'system.' This way, they also raise awareness about its weaknesses as well as the fallibility of the rules and the orders(s) since they 'live and hide' in these fissures and gaps, and by coming out of these they exhibit the inconsistencies and the fragility of the system. They cannot be caught or grasped as they evade clear categories, they are the in-between causing unease, uncertainty and incapability. (2011: 54)

In this way, one might conclude that Leilah is utterly an abject creature revealing the weakness and fallibility of patriarchy. As the female abject in the male-centered city of New York, she is the target of Evelyn's abusive patriarchal power.

It is in fact Evelyn's abusive patriarchal power which turns Leilah into an abject victim. As Gregory Robinson indicates, "she [Leilah] is another incarnation of male fantasies" (2005: 169). In other words, "her passive femininity is nothing but a male creation" (ibid. 157). Evelyn considers Leilah as an object without subjectivity, a non-self. Thus, Leilah is socially the abject other. She has no subjectivity of her own; that is to say, she exists only in relation to a man. Evelyn's patriarchal power involves domination and Leilah surrenders herself to his authority. Her unquestioned submission allows Evelyn to victimize her. However, while he treats Leilah violently, she feels pleasure. Evelyn used to punish her whenever she seemed to him as a female demon:

Waking just before she tore the orgasm from me, I would, in my astonishment, remember the myth of the succubus, the devils in female form that come by night to seduce the saints. Then, to punish her for scaring me so, I would tie her to the iron bed with my belt. (Carter 1982: 27)

Evelyn reveals that whenever he did so, he would go out and leave Leilah to her punishment. Surprisingly, when he was out, she never made the least effort to free herself: "She would be lying just I had left her, her brackish eyes fixed — if 'fixed' be not altogether too taut and positive a description of their wandering gazes — upon the ceiling" (ibid. 28). According to Linden Peach, "the whipping of Leilah in *The Passion of New Eve* is similarly the result of her maneuvering herself into a situation in which she will be abused" (2016: 113). Evelyn believes that Leilah is "a born victim" (Carter 1982: 28) and is satisfied with her suffering:

What she could have seen in me? She must have liked my tender pallor and my blue eyes and my English accent she found so hard to follow, so quaint to hear. God knows what else she could have liked, except the victim's role. (ibid. 31)

However, Leilah has learned socially and culturally to play the victim's role rather than being an inborn victim. If she feels satisfied to play the victim's role, to pursue such satisfaction is not of her own choice; that is to say, the patriarchal domination has forced her to believe in female suffering as a normal procedure of life. Kate Holden explains that "Leilah makes herself a spectacle, dressing fetishistically before the mirror in the conscious construction of herself as object of male gaze" (1998: 74). Similarly, this piece of information conveys that the masculine culture surrounding Leilah has taught her to put herself consciously in an abject condition and take pleasure out of her suffering.

Learning that Leilah is pregnant, Evelyn's desire for her vanishes: "As soon as I know she was carrying my child, any remaining desire for her vanished. She became only an embarrassment to me. She became a shocking inconvenience to me" (Carter 1982: 32). Evelyn's reaction to Leilah's pregnancy represents what Kristeva refers to as the horror of the abject. According to Kristeva, the pregnant body is the abject and provokes fear and disgust (Longhurst 2001: 20). In the pregnant body, Sarah Adams explains,

Self and other (mother and fetus) coexist, sharing a split self. Both mother and fetus are in a process of becoming what Kristeva calls "subject-in-process." For Kristeva, we are all subject-in-process, but this can be seen more clearly in pregnancy. (2010: 983)

Thus, Leilah's pregnancy brings out her abject being into open. The non-pregnant Leilah had been the inferior sex so far; however, her pregnancy adds horribly to her abject condition. When Evelyn finds that Leilah is pregnant, he forces her to undergo an illegal abortion through which she nearly bleeds to death and becomes sterile. Kristeva states that in abortion, there lies "the basic fate and abominable tragedy of the other sex" (qtd. in Magennis 2010: 28). In this case too, the restrictive abortion law subjects Leilah to both physical pain and mental distress. While she has not yet recovered from the injuries of the forceful and wrongly done abortion, Evelyn leaves her. In leaving Leilah, he believes that her abject otherness might contaminate his subjectivity: "I said to myself: her slow, sweet flesh has suffused my own with its corrupt languor. The sickness of the ghetto and the slow delirious of femininity, its passivity, its narcissism, has infected me because of her" (Carter 1982: 37). To put it differently, Evelyn abandons Leilah mainly because he feels threatened by Leilah's abject otherness and desires to maintain his superior masculine subjectivity undisturbed. Being threatened by the fear of abjection, he escapes to the desert to maintain the properness and cleanliness of his subjectivity: "I would go where there were no ghosts; I needed pure air and cleanliness. I would go to the desert. There, the primordial light, unexhausted by eyes, would purify me" (ibid. 38).

EVELYN/EVE, THE POWERLESS AND ABJECT SEX

After the misogynist Evelyn escapes to the desert, he happens to experience how it feels to be socially abject. While living in New York, his patriarchal power allowed him to treat women abusively for the reason that patriarchy considers women as merely an abject creature to be desired and abused. However, Evelyn encounters a city named Beulah where the ruling social order is matriarchy. In Beulah, he is welcomed as the inferior sex and undergoes a forceful sex-change surgery to become a woman in retribution for his misogynist behaviors. Beulah is the place where Evelyn finds an

abject position as a man. After becoming a woman through the forceful sex-change surgery, Evelyn now called New Eve is captured by Zero, a misogynist who imprisons Eve in his harem and rapes her repeatedly. It is in Zero's harem where Eve experiences female abjection. These two phases of Evelyn/Eve's life is studied under two subtitles: "Evelyn, the Powerless Sex in the Matriarchal World of Beulah" and "Eve, the Abject Female Sex in Zero's Harem." These sections are fully discussed below.

Evelyn, the Powerless Sex in the Matriarchal World of Beulah

While wandering in the desert, Evelyn is captured by a group of women soldiers who brings him to an underground city named Beulah. This city seizes Evelyn's patriarchal power. It is the headquarters of the militant feminists in *the passion of new Eve*, "a place where contradictories are equally true" (ibid. 48). As Christopher Ranger has noted, Carter uses the name Beulah to remind ironically Blake's Beulah, which is "a paradisiacal, yet limited realm of ideal union between the sexes" (2007: 142). However, Carter's version of Beulah is altogether a different place. In this world of women, there is no perfectness or union between the sexes. Ranger explains that

the women who inhabit this shadow world are bent on the destruction of men; their chosen name infers that they remain contingent on the patriarchy they challenge, just as the female who seek rest in Blake's Beulah are emanations of their male counterparts. (ibid)

In other words, the Beulah where Evelyn is imprisoned seems to be designed not as a realm of ideal union between the sexes, but its function is to war against the world of men and establish matriarchy. The statue staged at the very entrance of the city symbolizes plainly the hatred and hostility of Beulah's inhabitants toward men:

A stone cock with testicles, all complete, in a state of massive tumescence. But the cock was broken off clean in the middle; upon the fractured surface, a vulture with the look of a hanging judge perched and, as I thought, winked at me most horribly. The top half of the cock, ten feet of it, lay in the sand of my feet but it did not look as if it had fallen accidentally. (Carter 1982: 47-8)

This broken stone cock signifies the fall of patriarchy and foreshadows Evelyn's sex surgery, which takes away from him the long-held power of patriarchal social order. Marie Lathers points out that the broken stone cock "marks the site [Beulah] as a region where patriarchy and its myths have been not merely banished, but purposely maimed" (1993: 17).

Moreover, Beulah's structural form reflects its very function of inverting the ruling social order. In terms of anatomy, Beulah resembles the female body, particularly the womb. As Lucy Sargission has figured out from all that Evelyn describes, Beulah resembles the womb in as much as its "rooms are round, passages curve and swoop inwards and downwards towards the belly of the earth" (1996: 22). In fact, Beulah pictures the myth of the womb which carter aims to demystify. Before elaborating on this point, it is more helpful to review first Kristeva's discussion around the womb.

For Kristeva, the womb, which embodies reproductive function, is the source of female abjection in Western culture (Latimer 2013: n. pag.). Barbara Creed, following Kristeva, argues that "the womb represents the utmost in abjection for it contains a new life form which will pass from inside to outside bringing with it traces of contamination — blood, afterbirth, faeces" (2012: 49). To put it differently, the womb, as part of the maternal body, must be expelled; otherwise, it is not possible to become that autonomous subject idealized by the western society, a subject being ruled by

the law of the father. While clarifying Kristeva's theory of abjection, Rina Arya indicates that "in the symbolic order the womb is the ultimate space of ambiguity with its invisible boundaries and the threat of irruption. It is part of the unruly natural world that cannot be regulated" (2014: n. pag.). So the womb is denied since it threatens the properness and cleanliness of the borders which preserve the autonomy of subjectivity.

According to Kristeva's discussion around the womb, one might say that Carter's representation of Beulah, as Eliza Filimon explains, "involves a demystification of the womb" (2014: 69) mainly because the womb, due to its reproductive function, is partly responsible for female abjection. Kristeva believes that female reproductive function derives its power from myths which elevate the womb to a sacred status; however, she adds that patriarchy uses the sacred status of the womb illogically as means to justify the subjugation of women. Along the same line, Carter's Beulah reminds that women are considered to be sacred merely because they possess the womb. This distinctive biological organ causes the women to be treated unjustly "for nothing can defile the sacred" (1979: 109). To put it differently, the possession of the womb and the capability of bearing children grants power to women; this power, however, puts them in servitude of patriarchy and reduces their dignity. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter suggests that the demystification of the womb is necessary precisely because

to deny the bankrupt enchantments of the womb is to pare a good deal of the fraudulent magic from the idea of women, to reveal us as we are, simple creatures of flesh and blood whose expectations deviate from biological necessity sufficiently to force us to abandon the deluded priesthood of a holy reproductive function. (1979: 109-10)

As Filimon concludes, Carter seems to picture Beulah in the form of the womb to indicate that "the myth of the womb [...] is equally repressive and empty, so the female subject must cross it to give free vent to her desires somewhere else" (2014: 68). Therefore, Carter's Beulah is designed to free women from social constraints mainly through abolishing the myths which patriarchy has developed. Evelyn is the first man who becomes the victim of Beulah and experiences the degraded position of the abject.

In Beulah, Evelyn encounters Mother who, as he describes, "had made herself into an incarnated deity; she has quite transformed her flesh, she has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle" (Carter 1982: 49). Evelyn narrates his encounter with Mother as follows:

I was appalled by the spectacle of the goddess. She was a sacred monster. She was personified and self fulfilling fertility [...]. She was fully clothed in obscene nakedness; she was breasted like a sow — she possessed to 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. (ibid. 59)

Mother represents what Kristeva calls the feminine monster. According to Magistrale, Kristeva's feminine monster signifies abject terror mainly because "it violates cultural categories, disrespects organizing principles, and generally serves to presents a chaotic alternative to the place of order and meaning, socially as well as biologically" (2005: 7). "The monstrous feminine," Creed discovers, "is centered within a woman's reproductive and mothering functions when they cross beyond their normal range of meaning and appear out of control" (ibid.). Magistrale concludes that "the abjection associated with and created by the feminine monster is therefor closely aligned with the rebellious mother insofar

as her rebellion against the paternal order is what produces both [...] chaos and monstrosity” (ibid.). Therefore, Mother, representing the feminine monster, threatens the male-centered world in which patriarchy is a fundamental truth; hence, she appears monstrous.

In such a place ruled by a feminine monster, Evelyn, who has been so far a misogynist violator of female sexuality, begins to experience himself the same violent treatment he used to have toward women. He, now the abject, is subordinated and subjugated to matriarchal power. Before his imprisonment in Beulah, however, he himself had been the subject of subordination due to his patriarchal power. The question is how does Evelyn gain insights into the experience of the abject? Above all, Evelyn, still a man (later he undergoes a forceful sex-change surgery), is raped by Mother. He describes the abject terror felt during Mother’s act of rape as follows:

Her flesh seemed to me molten, burning. I caught one glimpse of her gaping vagina as I went down: It looked like the crater of a volcano on the point of eruption. Her head reared up to kiss me and, for a hallucinatory instant, I thought I saw the sun in her mouth, so that I was momentarily blinded and retain memory of the texture of her tongue, although it seemed to me the size of a sodden bath-towel. Then her Virginia-smoked ham of a fist grasped my shrieking sex; when it went all the way in, Mother howled and so I did. (Carter 1982: 64).

To a misogynist mind, when a woman rapes a man, this is considered as an inverted rape and means a threat to patriarchy (Rubenstein 2005: 57). As a patriarch, Evelyn had always been the sexual violator; in Beulah, however, the misogynist protagonist of the story turns to be himself the victim. Before being raped by Mother, he, as the rapist, took pleasure from forced sexual act, though his violation inflicted pain on the other person involved. In Beulah, he experiences the reverse:

I took very little pleasure from it. None at all, in fact, for her thighs grasped me with the vigour of the female mantis and I felt only engulfment, followed by a few seconds brisk friction. Then came a great bellow that signaled a gratification with which I myself had had very little to do. (Carter 1982: 64)

Here, Evelyn is the object of rape and has no dominion in the act of rape. So for the first time in his whole life as a man, he feels the abject humiliation of rape: “She clasped her muscles together and expelled me [...] and I rolled over the floor, yelping, leaving a snailtrack of gasped gobs of semen in my wake” (ibid.). After being abused, Evelyn is discarded aggressively away, just in the same way the abject is spitted out. He expresses his immediate reaction to Mother’s abusive treatment as follows: “A flush of humiliation rise all over me [...]. I had no choice but to submit myself to her” (ibid. 58). Evelyn feels the indignity of rape much more deeply when Mother watched his “exemplary humiliation with perfect impassivity” (ibid. 64). He suffers such helplessness which women often experience during the act of rape. In other words, Evelyn, though before in the position of patriarchal authority, feels that he lacks enough strength to defend himself against the rapist. In terms of physical strength, Evelyn turns to be utterly powerless: “Her statuesque and perfect immobility implied the willed repose of the greatest imaginable physical strength” (ibid. 59). Altogether, Evelyn, previously the rapist, turns to a victim through Mother’s vigorous act of rape and for the first time lives the humiliated position of the abject. At this moment, he reminds poor Leilah, though just then he pities for nobody but himself.

As he feels the humiliation of rape in an inverted rape, Evelyn realizes that the very act of rape from which he suffered is in fact a kind of punishment for someone criminal: “The matriarchs, I surmised, had captured me; and they perceived me as a criminal since they did not organize the world on the same terms as I did” (ibid.: 53). Evelyn’s world is

organized on the oppressive terms of patriarchy; in Beulah, however, its inhabitants' world is organized on the terms of matriarchy, aimed to impoverish patriarchy. Therefore, the matriarchs of Beulah perceive patriarchy as a crime and any person with patriarchal mind as a criminal. They in fact believe that men misuse their masculinity. Evelyn's possession of a penis gives him the symbolic phallic power, which is masculine authority. As Susan Bordo explains in her book *The Male Body*,

The Phallus stands for a superiority that is not just biological, but partakes of an authority beyond (and often in contest with) the power, needs, desires of body [...]. The phallus [...] proclaims its kinship with higher values — with the values of “civilization” rather than “nature,” with man who is made in God's image, not *Homo sapiens*, the human primate. (1999: 89)

While the penis is no more than a biological organ, Evelyn misuses his symbolic power to treat women inhumanly. Thus, the matriarchs condemn Evelyn and the world of patriarchy in general, saying that “you've abused women, Evelyn, with this delicate instrument that should have been used for nothing but pleasure. You made a weapon of it!” (Carter 1982: 65-6). “I think,” Mother continues, “you're pretty little virility is just darling, harmless as a dove, such a delight! A lovely toy for a young girl... but are you sure you get the best use of it in the shape you are?” (ibid. 65). In Beulah, Evelyn's abusive masculinity is seen as an unforgiving crime; hence, the matriarchs degrade him from the position of power. In this sense, Evelyn's degraded position seems similar to Kristeva's definition of the abject as something which does not respect rules. According to Kristeva's theory of abjection, the disturbing quality of the abject is threatening to the established social order. In the same way, Evelyn, a misogynist, threatens the matriarchal social order of Beulah. So he deserves punishment and exclusion from his desired patriarchal world. Likewise, the abject needs to be jettisoned and excluded from the symbolic order.

To educate Evelyn in the sufferings of abject females, Mother decides to transform Evelyn into Eve through sex-change surgery and psychological manipulation. Sophia, the young handmaid of Mother, reveals Mother's proposed plan to Evelyn:

Mother proposes to reactivate the parthenogenesis archetype, utilizing a new formula. She is going to castrate you, Evelyn, and then excavate what we can call the “fructifying female space” inside you and make you a perfect specimen of womanhood. Then, as soon as you're ready, she is going to impregnate you with your own sperm, which I collected from you copulated with her and took away to store in the deep freeze. (ibid. 68)

As Lathers mentions, Mother's plan “represents the revenge of the feminine on masculine crimes” (1997: 23). In other words, Evelyn's future sufferings as a woman would be a payment for the evils he did as a misogynist. Before Mother castrates him ceremoniously, Evelyn conveys a passionate expression of deep sorrow: “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” (Carter 1982: 60). At this very moment, just a few seconds ahead of the surgery, Evelyn realizes that his castration would make him a mother-like figure. In Kristeva's theory of abjection, the mother figure is known as the exemplary abject. Kristeva believes that the abject is related to the mother: “Defilement is the translinguistic spoor of the most archaic boundaries of the self's clean and proper body. In that sense, if it is a jettisoned object, it is so from the mother” (1982: 73). Kristeva maintains that, as Oliver clarifies,

it is necessary for every child to 'abject' its mother to become an autonomous subject. The child abjects its mother in the process of weaning and separation. Through this process the mother herself is made abject. In other words, because she is seen as abject she can be abjected. (1994: 54)

So Evelyn fears castration mainly because he knows that the planned sex-surgery would make him a mother-like figure. He is quite aware that to be a mother-like figure is the beginning of living an abject life, dwelling between subject and object. Since Evelyn is utterly powerless in Beulah, he has no other choice but to undergo the surgical castration. He describes Mother's ferocity in abdicating him from the phallogocentric world as follows:

Raising her knife, she brought it down. She cut off all my genital appendages with a 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. (Carter 1982: 70-1)

After the surgery, Evelyn is named Eve, which is the diminutive of his own name. It was in fact a punishment to be transformed into a woman. Mother tries to humiliate and degrade Evelyn even in terms of name to make him abject in most aspects of life. The plastic surgery turns Evelyn into Eve merely biologically; that is to say, she is still a man deep in the mind: "The cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of me" (ibid. 74). To complete Eve's abject femininity, Mother starts to manipulate her psychologically. In the psychological aspect of the surgery, Eve is educated in the abject role of a suffering woman through playing video-tape recordings. She recalls particularly three video-tape sequences:

One consisted of [...] ever single Virgin and Child that had ever been painted in the entire history of Western European art [...]. There was also video-tape intended, I think, to subliminally instill the maternal instinct itself; it showed cats with kittens [...] and another, more inscrutable video-tape composed of a variety of non-phallic imagery such as sea-anemones opening and closing [...]. (ibid. 72)

The psychological manipulations which Eve recalls are specifically designed to introduce the role of the victimized feminine to her. Before the psychological manipulation, that is when Eve was biologically a woman but mentally still a man, Sophia asks about her mental state and Eve replies to her that "I don't find myself at all" (ibid.: 75). However, after the designed manipulation is done, Eve's feminine mental state begins to grow:

But at length the sense of having been Evelyn began, in spite of himself, to fade, although Eve was a creature without memory; she was an amnesiac, a stranger in the world as she was in her own body — but it wasn't that she'd forgotten everything, no. (ibid. 78)

Here, Carter seems to indicate that if women live an abject condition, they have already learned to be an abject being; in other words, abject femininity is something to be learned and not related to one's biology. This insight reminds Kristeva's views on feminism. "To believe that," she states, "'one is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as to believe that 'one is a man'" (qtd. in Moi 1985: 163). To put it differently, Kristeva believes that one cannot be a woman, rather becomes as such because woman is not a biological construct but socially constructed (Homer 2005: 118). Eve possesses a female body; however, she does not feel as a woman: "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" (Carter 1982: 83). This is in line with what Kristeva states about the feelings associated with femininity. She argues, as Jessica Tsui Yan Li has noted, "the female

body itself and the feelings associated with it have emerged historically in connection with the social constitution of women, the nature of women's experience and their social marginalization and representation" (2010: 59). Therefore, to be biologically a woman is not enough to feel as a woman because femininity is a social construct and has to be acquired through experience.

Eve, the Abject Female Sex in Zero's Harem

Soon after Eve realizes that she is going to be impregnated with her own sperm, she escapes from Beulah. Her escape leads only to further capture and yet another punishment. Eve is forcefully taken into Zero's possession and his authoritative control. Zero is a poet living in a ranch-house with his seven wives. She describes him through the following words:

Zero the poet adored the desert because he hated humanity. He had only the one eye and that was of an insatiable blue [...]. He was one-legged, to match, and would poke his women with the artificial member when the mood took him. (Carter 1982: 85)

Zero is, as Charley Baker states, "the ultimate personification of misogyny, almost to the extent of becoming a caricature" (2009: 77). Although Zero believes that once "he was masculinity incarnate" (Carter 1982: 104), he is now sterile and supposes that rape will cure his impotency. To maintain his manliness and prove that he has strength and a strong sex drive, Zero abuses any woman he encounters. Eve, who has just recently found a full female body and a partial feminine subjectivity, falls a victim to Zero's abusive treatments. When captured by him, Eve experiences quite unexpectedly what she calls an unceremonious rape: "He raped me unceremoniously in the sand in front of his ranch-house [...], while his seven wives stood round in a circle, giggling and applauding" (ibid.: 86). This is the first time Eve experiences rape as a woman and it feels unfamiliar to her:

I was in no way prepared for the pain; his body was an anonymous instrument of torture, mine my own rack. My nostrils were filled with rank stench of his sweat and his come and, dominating even these odours, the sweetish, appalling smell of pig-shit, a smell which clung to the entire ranch and its environs in a foul miasma. (ibid.)

After this unceremonious rape, Zero announces Eve as his eighth wife and rapes her frequently. The rape pollution turns Eve into the realm of the abject. Kristeva explains the shame associated with rape as "the subjective experience of recognizing oneself as abject or potentially abject" (Northrop 2012: 177). Therefore, Eve learns through rape and violence the discipline of victimized femininity and feels deeply the abject condition of being abused. Evelyn, as a man, thought that he was immune to rape; however, when Eve experiences rape as a woman, her world turns upside down and realizes that she is in no way immune to abusive treatments of zero and the world of men in general. According to Debra Malina, Eve, as the victim of rape, "is also *feminized* [emphasis in original], (re)constructed as powerless object even as her violator reaffirms his status as powerful (masculine) subject" (2002: 107). In other words, Eve's gender identity is reconstructed through the experience of rape. Sharon Marcus emphasizes this point, saying that

Social structures *inscribe* [emphasis in original] on men's and women's embodied selves and psyches the misogynist inequalities which enable rape to occur. These generalized inequalities are not simply prescribed by a totalized oppressive language, not fully inscribed before the rape occurs — rape itself is one of the specific techniques which continually scripts inequalities anew [...]. Masculine power and feminine powerlessness neither

simply precede nor cause rape; rather rape is one of culture's many modes of feminizing women. (1992: 391)

Therefore, Zero's act of rape pushes Eve more into the realm of abject.

As Eve becomes zero's eighth wife and begins to live in Zero's harem, she reports more on the abject condition of herself and the other seven wives. It is in fact in Zero's harem where Eve leans fully the discipline of victimized femininity. As Eve describes, "Zero believed women were fashioned of a different soul substance from men, a more primitive, animal stuff" (Carter 1982: 87). Roz Coveney suggests that life in

Zero's melange is a nightmare representation of male desire and the sort of complicity in one's own oppression [...]. What stops Carter ever looking like a radical feminist, rather than a radical and a feminist, is a sense of irony and perspective. (1994: n. pag.)

Sexually enslaved to Zero, his wives have swallowed blindly the myth of patriarchy's supremacy, so they subjugate themselves to their marriage contract: "They believed it predicated their very existence, since they'd decided to believe that sexual intercourse with him guaranteed their continued health and wellbeing" (Carter 1982: 88). Regarding such marriage contracts, Kristeva asks, as Katherine Goodnow explains,

What is there in the marriage contract or in the codes of love that invites the man's exercise of power and the woman's sacrificial submission? The answer, she suggests, lies in the way past tales and images of love and marriage are written in terms of dominance and submission. "To love, honour, and obey" has a long history in marriage ceremonies. (2010: 131)

In other words, Zero's wives submit themselves willfully to him in spite of his abusive treatments because the patriarchal social order has taught them to behave so.

The world of harem is ruled totally by Zero: "he ruled the roost and his world was law" (Carter 1982: 97). The wives have no subjectivity of their own; rather, their subjectivity is decided by Zero. As Eve observes, "he regulated our understanding of him and also our understanding of ourselves in relation to him" (ibid.). Thus, Eve and the other wives can define their subjectivity only in relation to Zero, whom humiliates them continuously to remind them of their utterly abject position. He smears "his excrement and that of the dog upon their breasts" (Carter 1982: 85). Since Zero believes that women are biologically an abject being and deserve humiliation, he brutally concludes that they do "not need the paraphernalia of a civilized society such as cutlery, meat, soap, shoes" (ibid.: 87). Despite all of the humiliations they experience under Zero's patriarchal rule, Zero's seven wives have accepted their abject position and victim status. Even they are grateful to Zero for allowing them "the sophistication of cups and plates" (ibid.). The wives obey him unquestioningly and are subservient in extreme, believing that they are unfit to eat the crumbs from his table. Eve continues to report that Zero beats his wives, showing more care toward his pigs: "If he let the pigs do as he pleased, he demanded absolute subservience from his women" (ibid.: 95). However, Eve believes that subservience is a wrong word to use because the wives are willing to live in an abject condition: "Although 'subservience' is the wrong word; they gave in to him freely, as though they knew they must be wicked and so deserve to be inflicted with such pain" (ibid.). It seems that the subservience the wives give to Zero freely is the main cause of their abject position; that is to say, it is actually their willing subservience which has made them such abject beings. Throughout the story, Carter reveals that all the wives have had a poor inadequate life. Eve suggests that "they were case histories, rather than women" (ibid. 99). She says that "they

loved Zero for his air of authority but only their submission had created that" (ibid. 99-100). To put it differently, if the wives do not obey Zero unquestioningly, he would have had no power. These observations while living in harem educate Eve in suffering and finally creates a real victimized woman out of her:

This intensive study of feminine manners, as well as my everyday work about the homestead, kept me in a state of permanent exhaustion. I was tense 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. (ibid. 101)

All the tribulations which Eve experiences in Zero's harem along with the other seven wives educate him in women's sufferings. It is in Zero's harem where she learns fully how it feels to be a woman in a patriarchal world. She finally becomes a complete woman both physically and mentally. Her full transformation into womanhood once more indicates that femininity is a social construct and should be learned.

CONCLUSIONS

This essay studied Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* according to Kristeva's concept of misplaced abjection. Such keywords as abject, feminism, gender, patriarchy and subjectivity were pivotal to the above discussion. To explain women's misplaced abjection in the story, this essay focused on the protagonist's gender transformation. The discussion was put forward in two main sections: "Evelyn, the Possessor of Power and Sex Offender" and "Evelyn/Eve, the Powerless and Abject Sex." Below, there is a summary of all being said in these sections.

Section one entitled "Evelyn, the Possessor of Power and Sex Offender," discussed Evelyn's misuse of his masculine power before his forceful sex-change surgery. In this phase of his life, Evelyn's treatment toward women is utterly vulgar and insulting. His abusive treatment of women is typical of patriarchal societies. As he encounters a femme fatale named Leilah, Evelyn's sexual hunger arises and he turns into a hunter. At this moment, Evelyn describes himself as a cock, an animal which connotes patriarchy and domination. Leilah is a black dancer, who is not only a glamorous sex object, but also a member of the black community; that is to say, she has been doubly degraded, once through her sex and once through her race. As the femme fatale of the story, Leilah performs here the role of the abject within the patriarchal system. To Evelyn, Leilah's passive eroticism turns her into a perfect woman because he thinks of a perfect woman as someone passive and obedient. However, Leilah's passive femininity is a male creation. In other words, it is Evelyn's abusive masculinity and the patriarchal social system in general which are responsible for Leilah's passivity as an abject female. She is finally abandoned after Evelyn finds out about her pregnancy.

In Section two entitled "Evelyn/Eve, the Powerless and Abject Sex," Evelyn experiences a radical punishment for his abusive sense of patriarchy. The subsection "Evelyn, the Powerless Sex in the Matriarchal World of Beulah" described the imprisonment of the misogynist Evelyn by a group of women soldiers who brought him to an underground city named Beulah. Beulah is ruled by Mother, a Feminine monster aimed to destroy patriarchy and establish matriarchy instead. In Beulah, Evelyn begins to experience the same violent treatment he used to have toward women. He, now the abject sex, is subordinated and subjugated to matriarchal power. Before his imprisonment in Beulah, however, he himself has been the subject of subordination due to his masculine superiority. To his great surprise, Evelyn experiences an inverted rape; that is to say, Mother rapes him and he turns into the victim of rape, who is totally passive and has no dominion in the process. So for the first time in his whole life, Evelyn feels the abject humiliation of rape. To educate Evelyn in the sufferings of abject

females, Mother decides to transform Evelyn into a woman through an elaborate sex-change surgery. After the surgery is done, Evelyn is called New Eve. The designed surgery makes her a female only in the body; mentally, she is still a man. However, she goes through a complicated psychological manipulation, which is designed specifically to make her learn the disciplines of victimized femininity. The subsection “Eve, the Abject Female Sex in Zero’s Harem” described Eve’s suffering as an abject female sex. After she escapes from Beulah, Eve is captured by Zero, who is a perfect personification of misogyny. Zero abuses any woman he encounters. Eve, who has just recently found a full female body and a partial feminine subjectivity, falls a victim to his abusive treatments. When captured by Zero, Eve experiences an unceremonious rape. To be raped as a woman is quite unfamiliar to her. The rape pollution turns her into the realm of the abject. Eve learns through rape and violence the discipline of victimized femininity and feels deeply the abject condition of being abused. In other words, Eve’s gender identity is reconstructed through the experience of rape.

Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve* clearly deals with issues of sexuality and gender. She rejects the idea of natural gender identity, believing that gender is not fixed but constructed. This finding is in line with what Kristeva states about sex and gender. As Oliver has noted, “Kristeva sees sexual difference as socially constructed in a very deep sense” (1993: 156). For Kristeva, the human body, male or female, is always only a representation, which is implicated in signification as well. Oliver continues to clarify Kristeva’s point as follows:

Through the dialectical oscillation between symbolic and semiotic elements, the body is always and at the same time operating within the Symbolic even while it troubles and exceeds it. Therefore there is no separation between the sexed body and the way in which it is perceived or represented. (ibid.)

So one might conclude that both Carter and Kristeva agree in the idea which Judith Butler beautifully expresses: “Our experience of our sex is always gendered” (1998: 29).

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