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THE ALCHEMY OF THE SELF IN ANGELA CARTER'S *THE PASSION OF NEW EVE*

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The deconstruction of the myths of gender pervades Angela Carter's most iconoclastic novel, *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). The narrative explores primarily "the social creation of femininity" and targets the culturally sacred discourses that regulate its notional and material constitution, such as cinema, psychoanalysis, mythology, and religion. In an interview by Anna Katsavos in 1988, Carter explained that the "demythologising business" (Carter, "Notes" 71) to which she subscribes ideologically consists in finding out "what certain configurations of imagery in our society, in our culture, really stand for, what they mean, underneath the kind of semireligious coating that makes people not particularly want to interfere with them" (Katsavos 12). I suggest in this article that Carl Jung's assumptions concerning the archetypal feminine and the androgynous self fall within the range of "semireligious" discourses that Carter satirically demythologizes in *The Passion of New Eve*. The novel reproduces many of the principles on which Jungian psychology is based in order to subvert them. For example, Carter ironically equates the unconscious with the feminine and consciousness with the masculine. The representations of the feminine also vary from the romantic or erotic anima figures to the powerful and menacing Mother whom the male ego (the center of consciousness) has to fight and from whom he should liberate himself. The inclusion of the anti-Jungian framework in Carter's novel not only dismantles these traditional stereotypes that Jung's archetypal theory helps sustain, but it also attacks the foundational notion of archetype, which, as Carter argues in *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), bears "a fantasy relation" to reality and truth (6).

The demythologizing of Jung in *The Passion of New Eve* coincides with the critical revision of his theories by feminists and archetypal psychologists, particularly James Hillman, in the 1970s, a circumstance that may account for the presence of this intertextual thread in Carter's novel. Early in the decade, Jungian experts Ann Belford Ulanov and Irene Claremont de Castillejo already opposed Jung's persistent use of a predetermined language that stereotypically identifies Logos and reason with the male principle and Eros and feelings with the female. Ulanov and Castillejo regarded the assertion that in women "Eros is an expression of their true nature, while their Logos is often only a

regrettable accident" (Jung, *Aion* 14) as inexact and "destructive" (Ulanov 338). As Ulanov wrote in 1971, "in Jung's typology, . . . woman is clearly the feeling type. This is confusing . . . [and] an inaccurate use of terms. Women have no more monopoly of the feeling function than men have of the thinking function" (337). Irate opposition to Jung came in the 1970s from the ranks of feminism. Naomi R. Goldenberg proposed a challenge to "the veneration of Jung himself" (444) as the first necessary step in the critique of his thought.[1] Jung's categorization of women as Eros and anima reeks of sexism, Goldenberg remarked. Moreover, his defense of the psychic marriage of the masculine and feminine, one of the leading principles of his philosophy, is "more beneficial to men than to women", for, while men are urged to embrace their repressed Eros, "women are by no means encouraged to develop Logos, since they are thought of as handicapped by nature in all Logos arenas" (447). Jung's defense of psychological bisexuality met with equally unfavorable comments from Carol Christ and Mary Daly. Throughout the 1970s some celebrated the notion of an androgynous personality as a model of gender identity and the solution to the integration of the sexes in harmonious conviviality.[2] In *Gyn/Ecology. The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), Mary Daly, a former advocate of androgyny, condemns Jung's theories as "pernicious traps" for women (253), particularly his notion of androgyny. Goldenberg relies on irony to disparage the androgyne, "that marvelous unseen creature" and "modern-day unicorn, . . . said to be out there somewhere, running around but nearly impossible to catch" (446). She further notes that Jungians fashion the archetypal feminine out of the "subjective selection of mythological material to document preordained conclusions" (447-448), an opinion that Carol Christ endorsed. For Christ, the feminine appears in the works of many Jungians as "a secondary and compensatory aspect of the male psyche and is derived from the analysis of myths and literatures created by males" (66). This circumstance brings Christ to state persuasively that "much of the Jungian writing about 'the feminine' tells us more about how men see women than about how women see themselves" (69).

Even though determinant in the construction of *The Passion of New Eve*, the anti-Jungian frame has remained unexplored so far by critics. As I will show, the satiric challenge to myths includes the heterodox treatment of Jung. Carter employs the same structures and allegories that Jung employs to mock his tenets. Structurally and thematically, the text hangs on a narrative of individuation and the stages of the alchemical work on which Jung relied to illustrate the individuation process, or the evolution of man toward selfhood.[3] The battle for deliverance from the Mother and the search for the anima (the feminine side of man's psyche) are Jungian models of development that Carter allegorically deploys in the novel. She introduces these motifs in a comic, picaresque narrative of self-quest that satirizes the symbolic marriage of the masculine and feminine on which individuation and alchemy rest, suggesting that such a union of opposites bears no effective relation to the psychic reality of individuals. Additionally, the alchemical imagery becomes an

alternative means through which Carter's feminist ideology finds expression in the text. Not only are the archetypes into which Jungian theory splits the Feminine —the positive and negative anima, the Good Mother, the Terrible Mother, and the Great Mother— subject to derision, but they are also contaminated with the vocabulary of the *nigredo*, the stage in alchemy akin to darkness, death, and putrefaction.

The myth of Tiresias, which Virginia Woolf had already adapted in *Orlando*, forms the basis of Carter's approach to the theme of the search for identity, a classic of second-wave feminism. In the futuristic setting of a United States on the brink of secession and civil war, a feminist guerrilla captures male chauvinist Evelyn, a young lecturer come from England, and transforms him into a woman (Eve). The surgeon and leader of the group, Mother, plans to inseminate Eve with Evelyn's sperm after intensive lessons in feminine sensibility, but the protagonist manages to escape from the commune. Nonetheless, once she is out, circumstances force her to rethink her former (male) identity and start a search for a new self.

Eve(lyn)'s quest[4] draws largely on the mythic descent of the hero into the underworld, which archetypal theory interprets as the descent of the male ego into the feminine unconscious, a dangerous journey because, as Jung explains, the unconscious may devour the conscious mind and disintegrate the personality (*Psychology* 337). When a man embarks on the process of individuation, he needs to confront the feminine and come to terms with it. Eve(lyn)'s journey across the States contains such an allegory. The unconscious is variously represented by Leilah, Mother, the harem, and Tristessa. These characters function as material projections sprung from the patriarchal collective unconscious, which identifies the feminine with "darkness, nothingness, the void, the bottomless pit . . . and hell" (Neumann, *Origins* 158).[5] The novel ironically reproduces these similes as a mirror that reflects back the stereotypical images of the feminine that men create and then project onto women. After introducing alchemy and some relevant notions of Jungian theory, I will examine the way in which Carter deconstructs the archetypal feminine and makes it into the site of the *nigredo* in the episodes dealing with Leilah, Mother, and Tristessa. I will further pay attention to the influence that the alchemical process has on the structure of the novel. Finally, I will focus on the protagonist's climactic fight against Mother for liberation and the ultimate dismissal of gender myths.

For many adepts and laymen, alchemy simply means chemical experimentation; but for others, this practice has a substantial mystic component that Jung also underscores. The lengthy refinement of base metals in the crucible until gold was obtained parallels the purification of the alchemist's soul. This spiritual evolution is central in mystic or philosophical alchemy, which uses the chemical process as a simile. The alchemist aspires to create gold or, alternatively, to discover the formula for the philosopher's stone, the elixir that joins to base substances and transmutes them into gold. Three main phases precede the creation of this metal, each symbolized by a color. The initial phase, the *nigredo*, is

characterized by chaos, darkness, and mental confusion. After many attempts follows the *albedo*, or white, which corresponds to the refinement of the mixture. The *rubedo*, or red, is synonymous with the final conjunction of chemical opposites, depicted in hermetic emblems either in the shape of the hermaphrodite or through the union of Man and Woman, the Sun and Moon, or the King and Queen, who are often represented as copulating.

For Jung, the alchemical work parallels the individuation process, or the subject's growth into a self. All through his writings, Jung defines the self as the archetype of unity and a "nuptial union of opposite halves" (*Aion* 64). According to him, the differentiation of the conscious mind from the unconscious, and the strengthening of the first, is a necessary stage in personal and historical evolution. However, the modern man has exclusively developed his conscious mind and has undervalued the unconscious. Jung insists, therefore, on the need to "integrate the unconscious into consciousness" (*Archetypes* 40) to achieve psychic wholeness, although what he means more precisely by this concept is left unexplained. As he is intent on clarifying in his works, complete understanding of the self is a chimera, for the self is boundless and limitless, a territory never to be "fully known" (*Aion* 5). Jung found an analogue for the self in the philosopher's stone, which Mercurius symbolizes: "He is metallic yet liquid, matter yet spirit, cold yet fiery, poison and yet healing draught —a symbol of uniting all opposites" (*Psychology* 295). In the process of individuation, a man needs to marry the feminine within himself, which he has debased and hidden deep in the unconscious. Jung conceives of the integration of the feminine as a long, perilous, and labyrinthine journey in which the man is terror-stricken and afraid yet also experiences a "fascinating attraction that threatens to become the more overpowering the further he penetrates into" the "unknown regions of the psyche" (*Psychology* 336, 335). Jung compares the early stages of this quest both to the dangers that the hero meets when he ventures into Hades and to the phase of the *nigredo*. In *Symbols of Transformation*, Jung locates individuation in the battle for deliverance from the Mother, which, as Christine Gallant puts it, involves the hero's eventual acceptance of the feminine and which occurs "without fear this time as he strives first to separate and then to connect again" (111).

Erich Neumann describes the Mother-Son fight in more detail. Like Jung, he believes that the development of the male ego consists in its "gradual emancipation from the overpowering embrace of the unconscious" (*Origins* 125), a process correlative with the masculinization of the child and adolescent. During this phase, the son tends to perceive the Great Mother negatively. She is the devouring unconscious (allegorically, the dragon that the candidate for hero should fight, for it threatens the growth of his masculine ego). Individuation occurs in the second half of life, in middle age. A man reenters his unconscious to face the Great Mother. The killing of her terrible side leads to the liberation of the anima and its differentiation from the Mother. The "Great Mother, hitherto the sole and sovereign form in which woman was experienced, is killed and overthrown" (*Origins* 200), and the positive anima,

the young virgin or man's beloved, takes the place of the Mother. With the liberation of the anima, "a portion of the alien, hostile, feminine world of the unconscious enters into friendly alliance with the man's personality" (*Origins* 204). The self replaces the ego as the center of psychic experience, and consciousness and the unconscious cease to be "two opposed systems split off from one another, but have achieved a synthesis" (*Origins* 414). The hermaphrodite signifies the unity of the self at this stage.

The Passion of New Eve refashions the process of individuation and playfully turns it into a feminist narrative that contradicts Jung. Eve(lyn) searches for his/her self, "that most elusive of all chimeras" (38). His/her quest deconstructs psychological bisexuality and the images and archetypes traditionally associated with the feminine, which Carter shows are based on imitation and performance. The novel follows closely the pattern of the fight with the Mother and liberation from her, and portrays a combat of opposites between the masculine and feminine, or the conscious and unconscious. Interestingly, the discourse of Jungian psychology coalesces with the apparatus of romance and Classical mythology. The slaying of the dragon and the "quest for buried treasure," in which archetypal theory reads the defeat of the Terrible Mother and search for the self, respectively, are two of the basic motifs of quest-romance literature (Frye 189, 193) that, as Neumann documents, appear in the story of Perseus. Perseus's killing of the Gorgon is, in fact, one of the numerous intertexts at the heart of Carter's novel. Other mythic structures, comically given a feminist stamp, condition the path that Eve(lyn) takes. His/her progress from New York to California parallels the course from dawn to (masculine) sunset, which suggests the protagonist's fading masculinity. His/her journey from east to west in the States echoes likewise the formulaic journey of the solar hero to the west, traditionally the domain of the Terrible Mother and the unconscious (Neumann, *Mother* 158, 187). Surgeon Mother is the dragon, the "sacred monster" (59), the "Minotaur at the heart of the maze" (58), as she is referred to in the narrative. Her emasculation of Evelyn in Beulah shows the deadly power that the dark, unfriendly unconscious she represents holds for the male ego. The battle for deliverance from Mother will reach its climax at the end of the novel when Eve confronts her in the gallery of caves on a Californian beach.[6]

In the manner of Jung, Carter's novel also interweaves the psychoalchemical discourse with the religious. The biblical resonances are manifest from the title. The central character is called the New Eve, which reminds us of Christ's denomination as the second or New Adam. For Jung, Christ personifies the androgynous self whereas alchemy identifies him with the philosopher's stone and relates his Passion, death, and resurrection to the stages of the *opus alchymicum*, which Eve(lyn) experiences during his/her journey. The "death" of the protagonist and his rebirth in the shape of a woman (Eve), which take place in the caves of Beulah, are modeled on the death and resurrection of the Messiah, whose doctrine of redemption from evil the novel stages. Leilah, Mother, the harem, and Tristessa embody specific models of femininity: sexual object, castrating mother, compliant servant, and paragon of sentimentality, respectively. These roles are conceptual shadows of the feminine that spring from

patriarchal projections. Linden Peach observes that Leilah is described as Evelyn's *shadow*, "recalling Jung's term for the way in which negative aspects of the psyche are projected on others" (120). Darkness and the shadows cast by cultural misperceptions are a constant in the chapters dealing with Leilah, Mother, the harem, and Tristessa. In his/her quest for self, the protagonist has to fight against this four-headed leviathan and redeem the feminine from projections.

Like Theseus, Eve(lyn) crosses the labyrinth where this monster lurks. Even the structure of the novel recalls a maze, in which New York, Beulah, Zero's ranch, and Tristessa's mansion function as blind alleys.[7] The labyrinthine mapping of the plot is in accordance both with the erratic wandering of Eve(lyn) across the States and the dynamics of the psychic journey, which, as Jung states, is made up "of fateful detours and wrong turnings" before the self is reached (*Psychology* 6). In the course of the narrative, the protagonist moves through the squares of an imaginary snakes-and-ladders textual board and through the "curvilinear galleries of the brain towards the core of the labyrinth within us," "the source we have forgotten," "the dark room, the mirror, the woman" (39). Leilah, Mother, the harem, and Tristessa are the devouring snakes and the deceptive gender models that Eve(lyn) should avoid. These serpentine turns of the maze —that Eve(lyn) nonetheless needs to follow— assist with the purification of his/her unconscious (the feminine) and his/her corresponding psychic evolution toward selfhood.

Additionally, and with a suggestion of the fraudulent aspects of alchemy, the novel embarks simultaneously on an eventually failed search for the Archetypal Feminine, whose alleged essence turns out to be, parodically, the false gold of tricksters. The chapter on Leilah seeks to elucidate whether her wild sexuality is at the root of the feminine principle. The episode of Beulah, the next path along which Evelyn winds in the maze, aims to establish whether the Mother archetype is the apex of womanhood. The chapter in which the protagonist enters Tristessa's mansion investigates whether the Eternal Feminine is the solution to the riddle. The blind alleys of the labyrinth are linked up with the phase of the nigredo. Lyndy Abraham points out that the labyrinth is "a place of deep confusion" through which the alchemist "must pass without becoming deluded and enthralled by deceptions and false ideas" (195). The same purpose seemingly lies behind the use of this metaphor in Carter's novel. Eve(lyn) tries to find "what the nature of masculine and the nature of feminine might be" (149), lost as he/she is in the maze of gender universals, collective myths and personal projections.

The ruin and decay of New York forebode Evelyn's impending descent into what the text depicts as the "heart of darkness," namely woman and the unconscious. New York appears to be shrouded in darkness, rot, and oppressive heat. Matter dissolves by stages over the fire of this immense crucible, this "alchemical city" (16) festering with violence, garbage, and death: "It was chaos, dissolution, nigredo, night" (16). The sewage system breaks down at the end of July; the hotel where the protagonist stays catches fire and fills with dense clouds of smoke; black rats gnaw among the garbage and infest the streets; the weather is hot; and a stinking rain of sulfur falls from the skies. A "lurid,

Gothic darkness" (10) hovers ominously over a New York that is no longer the city of Logos and "visible reason" (16). The hero is drawn into Hell by Leilah, a naked black model and go-go dancer he meets in the city. She is one of the first icons of the Feminine that the novel questions. Bewitched by Leilah's provocative eroticism, Evelyn sets on a *nigredo* journey through the gloomy streets of the ghetto in frantic pursuit of her. The symbolic meeting with the feminine fatefully attracts him. He feels an "archaic, atavistic panic" (25) yet also "all the ghastly attraction of the fall" (25). Lewdly and shrewdly, Leilah tricks Evelyn into the dark underworld. She leads him "deep into the geometric labyrinth of the heart of the city" (21) and farther into a "lightless" block of apartments (25) and her room, where "roaches swarmed on the floor and the worm-eaten night-light of the city flooded in through a curtainless window" (25). The darkness spreading over an apocalyptic New York permeates almost every element in the Leilah episode; even, in a humorous way, the dark coffee that Evelyn's neighbor alchemist Baroslav drinks, or the black bread that he eats.

Leilah fits one of the four primary archetypes into which Neumann splits the Archetypal Feminine: the negative anima or "young witch," whose defining traits are seduction, sexuality, ecstasy, madness, impotence, and stupor.[8] The three remaining archetypes are the positive anima (enacted by Tristessa), the Good Mother, and the Terrible Mother, the latter two of which Beulah's matriarch combines in the ambivalent figure of the Great Mother. According to Jungian theory, the archetypes of the anima and Mother are inborn truths, abstract and elusive, that take bodily shape —as an archetypal idea— when men project them onto women, either real or imaginary.[9] The subjective appropriation of reality begins at the level of archetypal ideas and of projections, the source of all the ego's illusions, in Jung's opinion. For Carter, the imaginary distortion of reality starts from the belief in the existence of archetypes. As Carter states in *The Sadeian Woman* —further developing theories that she discusses in *The Passion of New Eve*— "[a]ll archetypes are spurious" and bear "a fantasy relation to reality" (6). Archetypes are a "timeless, placeless, fantasy land" (106), false "universals" (6) that savagely ignore "the complexity of human relations" (6) and the uniqueness of the individual: "the function of the archetype is to diminish the unique 'I' in favour of a collective, sexed being which cannot, by reason of its very nature, exist as such" (6). The "language of common usage" (6) blends dominant cultural modes with archetypes, and the historical origin of these so-called "universals" is gradually lost.

The characters that embody the archetypes of the anima and Mother respond to fixed, universal, yet false, assumptions about the feminine. Moreover, the fact that Evelyn polarizes the anima into a carnal object (Leilah) or a chimerical ideal (Tristessa) depends not so much on the innateness of this archetype as on the influence of patriarchal culture. As the novel shows, Leilah performs a kind of femininity that is unnatural to her, that only dramatizes Evelyn's chauvinistic convictions. She manipulates reality in much the same way as he distorts it. Leilah is daughter to the

leader of Beulah; her real name is Lilith. As he chases her through the streets, Evelyn penetrates into the "fantasy land" (Carter, *Sadeian* 106) in which his whims and fears take fleshly shape in Leilah's fallacious persona. The episode makes clear the dissociation of the projected anima (Leilah) from the real personality of woman (Lilith). Something similar occurs later with Tristessa, the positive anima, and a man in drag. Both Leilah and Tristessa function as mere receptacles of Evelyn's fantasies. His patriarchal mind is projected on his anima-mirror, whose reflecting side he reconstructs as the distinctive essence of the female. In the case of Leilah, nothing but the protagonist's unbridled passion and predatory desire —which he vents on the black girl— impells him into her luscious arms. Only at the end of his epistemological journey will Evelyn learn of the illusory nature of her femininity: Leilah "can never have objectively existed, all the time [she was] mostly the projection of the lusts and greed and self-loathing of a young man called Evelyn" (175).

The novel links the reflecting, marginal, shadowy quality of the anima with the darkness of the *nigredo*. The mythic counterpoint between the radiance of the solar hero and the darkness of woman or the unconscious is, ironically, at the base of Evelyn's description of the anima. Leilah is for him the "perfect woman; like the moon, she only gave reflected light" (34) whereas Tristessa is "the shadowed half being of reflected light" (72). The alchemical *nigredo* is presented as being tantamount to Leilah (14), and to Evelyn through her. The darkness, *nigredo*, and sickness that he attributes to the anima only reflect back his still undeveloped self and psychic immaturity. Evelyn's contempt of women bespeaks his similar debasement of the unconscious.

The fetishistic description of Leilah that appears in this chapter, in which Evelyn often acts as the focalizer, is a corollary of his patriarchal mind, which fancies women simply as erotic objects. The protagonist's male egocentrism generates a narcissistic language on a par with his puffed-up masculinity. Reality is intoxicated in the sinuous, labyrinthine reveries of a ritually sensual language that shapes Leilah, both verbally and visually, into the alluring *femme fatale* and Evelyn's prey. In fact, the comparison of Leilah with animals is not infrequent. Her legs are said to "quiver . . . like the legs of racehorses in the stable" (19); she seems "a fully furred creature, a little fox pretending to be a siren, a witching fox in a dark wood" (20); her shoes transform her "into a strange, bird-like creature, plumed with furs" (20-21); she exudes a "hot, animal perfume" (21); she is "like a mermaid, . . . the lorelei of the gleaming river of traffic" (22); she is "subtle as a fish" (24). Even the animals with which Leilah is compared during Evelyn's night-chase evoke a sense of male domination over the female either by his hunting her like a bird or fox or by (sexually) mounting her.

Leilah's insistent claims that the protagonist stay with her (she gets pregnant and demands that Evelyn marry her), along with Evely's fear of being chained down by domestic life, caricature the attempts of the negative anima to retain the male ego in the feminine unconscious. Evelyn finally abandons the black girl and takes to the road, proud and excited, "[d]own the freeways in fine style, like

a true American hero" (37). His misogynist and narcissistic romance is humorously and abruptly cut short when he is captured in the desert and delivered to Mother, who, Frankenstein-like, effects the castration of his genitals and transforms him into a woman. In his new adventure into the unconscious, Evelyn now faces the archetype of the Feminine most dreadful to man: the Great Mother, "Queen of the Underworld" who "dangles the dark key of the infernal regions" (61). An emasculated phallus dominates the entrance to her town, dug underground possibly to comply with the ancient myths that relate the subterranean world to the womb and mother to the earth. The erect broken phallus makes Beulah's opening cleft in the desert sands a symbol of the vagina dentata while the depths of the town function as the womb where Evelyn will be reborn as Eve.

Carter's critique of the extremist factions within feminism that claim the Great Mother as the pinnacle of womanhood is apparent in this episode. Her views are similar to those of Naomi Goldenberg, who warns against the archetypes based on matriarchal absolutes and the tendency to essentialize the feminine through them. Goldenberg sees this "as a new version of the Eternal Feminine enterprise which could become just as restrictive as the old Eternal Feminine ever was" (448). Carter does not believe in "fairies" (10), as she calls Mother Goddesses in a 1984 interview with Mary Harron. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter manifests her total disagreement with the resurgence of poetic myths, "especially under the influence of Jung," that stupefy women by seemingly giving them power, but really only by masking the truth of their existence:

> All the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth, anyway. Mother goddesses are just as silly a notion as father gods. If a revival of the myths of these cults gives women emotional satisfaction, it does so at the price of obscuring the real conditions of life. This is why they were invented in the first place. (5)

Carter utilizes pastiche and travesty in *The Passion of New Eve* to undermine the archetype of the Great Mother. The leader of Beulah mixes up an array of references from Classical mythology, the Bible, psychoanalysis, and alchemy to stage this archetype as grandiosely as possible; but the more she adapts to it (in a pastiche-like manner), the more grotesque and unreal her femininity looks. The travesty of Greek, Egyptian, and biblical mythology is another discursive vehicle for the satiric carnivalization of Mother. For example, the ancient rituals that describe the death and rebirth of a male loved by a fertility goddess —as in the myth of Osiris and Isis, Attis and Cybele, and Adonis and Aphrodite—[10] are playfully overacted when male-chauvinist Evelyn is reborn through plastic surgery as the quintessential image of a *Playboy* girl (75). The juxtaposition of biblical mythology and

Mother's techno-feminist "remake" is also hilarious. The version of Genesis that recounts the creation of Eve out of Adam's rib while he is sleeping is reworked into the gory castration of Evelyn's male member while he is under anesthetics, followed by Mother's arduous task of molding Eve with the scalpel. The ludicrous treatment of archetypal and psychoanalytic theory persists likewise through the episode. As the protagonist penetrates into Beulah, he enters "the deepest cave" of the unconscious, "down in the lowest room at the root of [his] brain" where he has "exiled" Mother (58). She is compared to Jocasta, and Evelyn to Oedipus. In archetypal theory, incest with the mother signifies the symbolic castration —or regression into the unconscious— of the male ego. In a mad quixotic gesture, however, the goddess of Beulah makes "symbolism a concrete fact" (58), so the central character is literally emasculated following the scene of his rape. This literal staging of psychoanalytic, biblical, and Greek myths makes Mother's project appear nonsensical.

Added to the tactical literalness that Carter successfully employs to make fun of Mother is an emphasis on the performative origin of Mother's archetypal femininity. Almost from the beginning of the chapter the numinous tone that accompanies the depiction of the matriarch and her womb-like realm is contested by means of such words as "masquerade" (49), "ingenious stage-management" (52), "unnatural" (55, 58), "false-looking" (56), "blatant spuriosity" (57), "self-constructed" (58), or "artificial" (59). A clever shift in tone toward comedy occurs when Evelyn sees the goddess for the first time, when ancient myth merges into modern history, and abstraction merges into flesh. Carter's textual harassment of the Great Mother is then couched in comic language, mocking similes, and stylistic pastiche that effectively downgrade the numinosity of the archetype.

In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter condemns the rhetoric that poeticizes the womb and creates a transcendental, Platonic image of it beyond reality and the particular. She rejects this "entrancing rhetoric" (109): "For rhetoric it is, compounded out of several millennia of guesses and fantasies about the nature of the world" (109). In the scene of Evelyn's rape, Carter satirizes this language by having Evelyn describe Mother with occasionally bombastic similes in conjunction with an irreverently prosaic and frequently offensive content, compounded of unpoetic and derisive comments that express the protagonist's physical disgust at the goddess. Thus, Mother's skin is said to be "wrinkled like the skin of a black olive, rucked like a Greek peasant's goatskin bottle" (59). Her nipples leap about "like the bobbles on the fringe of an old-fashioned, red plush curtain at a french window open on a storm" (64); her tongue seems to Evelyn "the size of a sodden bath-towel" (64), her fist is like "Virginia-smoked ham" (64), and she is called a "bloodhound bitch in heat" (64) as she sways and bays on her throne. This inverted, parodic rhetoric —in a textual pastiche of styles, voices, and perspectives— coexists with the "entrancing rhetoric" that describes Mother as "earth," "fructification" (60) or "a sacred well" (63) and also her and her acolytes' mythological and religious self-parallels or Freud-ridden chants concerning Oedipal incest. To crown this farcical narrative

hubbub, the atmosphere is often accompanied by a scripted play of light and cacophonous and "shrieking" music (64) —so it seems to Evelyn— that one of Mother's supporters plays on the hi-fi.

Like Leilah, Mother is connected with the *nigredo*. She is "pestilence-bringer" (61), "the darkness that glides" (59), and the "darkest one" (59). Her room is "the focus of darkness" (58). Beulah is called the "crucible" (49), or place of transformation; and Mother is "queen of the crucible" (61), the alchemist who intends to transmute a male chauvinist into a sentimental woman. Mother is also the (alchemical) hermaphrodite satirized. The false beard she wears and the two tiers of nipples grafted onto her body betray the constructed basis of her androgyny. Similarly, the jocular collision, after the change of sex, between Eve's sexy female body and her lusty male mind plays on the unnaturalness of this archetype. As Roberta Rubenstein aptly says, Carter deconstructs the concept of androgyny "through the exaggerated marriage of opposites that reduces the figures to pastiches of bisexuality" (115). Indeed, when Eve looks at herself in the mirror for the first time, she exclaims: "I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And —how can I put it— the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself" (75). For all Mother's and her coreligionists' attempts, Eve's masculinist ego remains hard to dissolve. The "end of the maze was yet some distance away; I'd not gone far enough" (71), she admits. A further stage in the journey ensues when Eve escapes from the infernal depths of Beulah but is then captured by Zero. The comparison between Zero's black dog and Cerberus signals the third descent into Hades by the protagonist: "Dog, probably of Cerberus; come to drag me back to the Underworld" (84). Now a victim of Zero's unbounded violence (he maltreats and despises his seven concubines), Eve learns cathartically of the cruelties that Evelyn inflicted on women in the past and atones for the sins he committed (107).

Tristessa's gloomy mansion, into which Eve penetrates accompanied by Zero, becomes the setting for the heroine's new adventure into the "heart of the dark" (126). A former Hollywood celebrity, Tristessa epitomizes the suffering, passive, romantic, and languorously fragile female, the personification of the Eternal Feminine —allegedly the historically irreducible, true essence of woman. The glass house in which Tristessa lives is an emblem of her femininity: she is "a pane the sun shines through" (137), the mirror on which patriarchy projects its romantic notions concerning woman. Cinema, that arch-"Platonic shadow show" (110), presents Tristessa's etemal feminine as sermon to the masses. The hyperbolic womanhood (5) that she embodies is, however, just "dream" (7), "illusion" (110), "mystification" (6), and "visual fallacy" (147).

Zero makes Tristessa a prisoner when he breaks into her house, but Eve bravely rescues her. This episode satirizes the classic stories in which the hero liberates the captive damsel —symbolic of the anima from a psychoanalytic perspective (see Henderson 117)— for Evelyn's beloved is revealed as a man in drag. Tristessa "existed only by means of a massive effort of will and a huge suppression of fact" (129), as does the Eternal Feminine she embodies. The *nigredo* imagery informs, accordingly, the

illusory nature of her femininity. Almost from the start, Tristessa is called "Our Lady of Dissolution" presiding over darkness and chaos (15). Eve enters her mansion on "a very dark night" (124), finds the actress on a bier, and notices her "cadaverous, sepulchral beauty" (123). Her house is compared to a "transparent labyrinth" (116) and a mausoleum. The spiral glass staircase soars up out of the building and ends "in a round eyrie, like a crow's nest" (120). In alchemy, the crow is a symbol of the *nigredo* and the devil (Jung, *Mysterium* 521), much like the vulture (Jung, *Psychology* 169) perched on the broken phallus at the entrance of Beulah. Tristessa's mansion is also called a "glass ship" (135), a term employed in alchemy to mean the flask (see Abraham 146), which suggests that a new attempt to distill the essence of the Feminine will take place in this chapter.

During the hermetic work, the task of dissolving the substance and coagulating it was repeated often until the alchemist managed to refine it. The episodic and labyrinthine structure of *The Passion of New Eve* imitates this process in diverse ways. Each of Eve(lyn)'s adventures involves the gradual purification of the feminine unconscious from the constructs of gender. The feminine principle is also incarnated in different characters throughout the novel in the attempt to discover its essence. The feminine type that Leilah embodies proves a blind alley; so the substance dissolves, only to be solidified into another model —Mother— that proves equally inadequate as an alternative. The process is repeated later with Zero's harem and Tristessa. Additionally, several attempts to make the opposites marry occur in the text. The grotesque androgyny of Mother, Eve(lyn), and Tristessa is successively dissolved as a gender alternative. The conjunction of the masculine and feminine further takes the form of sexual intercourse, a motif found in hermetic emblems that depict naked couples having sex to symbolize the "chemical wedding." In Carter's novel, these unions tend to be destructive and sterile, given the fact that the characters enact stereotypes of gender, which makes the stage of the *nigredo* recur episode after episode. For example, Carter portrays the carnal-alchemical conjunction of Evelyn and Leilah as a violent clash of opposites:[11]

> I took hold of her roughly and pressed the most intransigent part of myself against her, under the mean light of the bulb, in the street of ruinous tenements where the silent, blind-eyed residents imbibed the foul air . . . . I dropped down upon her like, I suppose, a bird of prey . . . . My full-fleshed and voracious beak tore open the poisoned wound of love between her thighs, suddenly, suddenly. Leilah, the night's gift to me, the city's gift. (24-25)

Later on, Leilah almost bleeds to death after getting an abortion. This initial failure to produce the child (a symbol of the philosopher's stone) is followed by other unsuccessful attempts. Mother is a "sterile goddess of fertility" (77) whose abode is the desert, "the dehydrated sea of infertility, the post-menopausal part of the earth" (40). She rapes Evelyn and intends to use his semen to inseminate Eve, but

Mother's plans are marred when the protagonist flees from Beulah. The loathsome atmosphere of putridness, death, and ravenous violence typical of the *nigredo* also attends the "alchemical" conjunction of Zero and Eve in the ranch, "as much the realm of sterility as the desert that surrounded it" (102). As Zero rapes her, Eve is filled "with the 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" (86). The bed-scene to which Zero forces Eve and Tristessa in her mansion is a comic "charade" (134) of the alchemical wedding. As Jung writes, the union of the red (man) and white (woman) symbolizes the synthesis of the hermetic opposites (*Psychology* 64; *Mysterium* 230). Parodically, Eve and Tristessa share an androgynous condition, which may explain the fact that they are given in equal degree "a white and red maquillage" (133) with white powder and rouge. The final (alchemical) "dissolution" of the glass mansion (140), shattered to pieces like Tristessa's femininity, puts an end to this new failed attempt to marry the opposites.

The narrative explores a more harmonious conjunction of the sexes, allegorical of the self, when Eve and Tristessa, the only survivors of the catastrophe, make love in the desert and beget a child. Unlike the previous scenes, the present one approximates Jung's ideas concerning the peaceful union of the opposites. In the chaos of the *nigredo*, he argues, "the elements are . . . hostile to one another and will not unite of their own accord. They represent . . . an original state of conflict and mutual repulsion" in which consciousness (the masculine) tries to devour the unconscious (the feminine), or vice versa (*Aion* 237; *Mysterium* 230). Eve and Tristessa, by contrast, fuse tenderly into "a single self," masculine and feminine, "as if, out of these fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite together, the whole and perfect being," the symbol of transcendental unity and "the concentrated essence of being." As Carter writes, Eve and Tristessa "project" upon each other "all we had been, or might be, or had dreamed of being, or had thought we were," and these selves "seem . . . to be the very essence of [their] selves" (148) during their embraces. That the verb "seem" appears in this sentence is worth noticing, for this verb would point to the lack of ontological substance of the protagonists' selves. Their attempt to combine the masculine and feminine creates, as Mary Daly writes, "not integrity but delusions of wholeness" (388). The hermaphroditic motif that emblematizes Tristessa and Eve, along with "the unicorn . . . edg[ing] towards the virgin" (146), further denotes a stale conception of gender.[12] Although Eve and Tristessa alternate "docile" and "virile" roles (149) when perpetrating sexual intercourse, the choice of such a gender-charged adjective as "virile" hardly seems accidental. Generally, virility is synonymous with manliness and strength, which reduces docility to a feminine quality in the inclusive disjunction that the text generates. Illusive wholeness, the play of projections, and an intentionally essentialist language underlie Eve's and Tristessa's marriage of the masculine and feminine in this scene.

Alternatively, the alchemical plot sequence reveals that neither the model of mutual androgyny

nor balanced gender-exchange epitomized by these characters make the essence of the self. The death of Tristessa, killed by a militia of child soldiers, marks a new stage of *nigredo*. "I have not reached the end of the maze yet. I descend lower, descend lower. I must go further" (150), Eve says. The last part of the novel is concerned with the necessity of transcending bisexual parameters of gender in the constitution of the self, along with the protagonist's climactic fight against Mother for deliverance. Eve has driven to California where she is confronted with violence, death, and a civil war, the *nigredo* that ushers in a new *opus*, in the cyclical manner characteristic of the alchemical process: "chaos is come again. Who'd welcomed chaos, why —my former neighbour in New York, the Czech alchemist. . . . Welcome to anteriority, Eve; now I know we are at the beginning of the beginning" (166). Eve's descent into the unconscious and her second meeting with Mother, now in the seashore caves, abound in alchemical motifs and are modeled on the stages of the *opus*. The entrance to the grotto —and on to Mother's womb to which Eve returns in a new ritual of death and rebirth— is through a fissure in the rock. The heroine makes her way through it to find darkness —the *nigredo*— and the stench of putrefying matter: "The passage was choked, airless, dank, and a faint reek of rotten eggs hovered above the sulphurated streamlet" (179-80). Eve reaches a first large cave, illuminated by a bulb, whose white light parallels the stage of the *albedo*. She washes her body in a pool of warm water and hangs her clothes to dry. As Lyndy Abraham explains, the act of soaking in water implies the purification or whitening of the matter, a phase often represented in the hermetic iconography by the washing and hanging out of linen (198-99). The central character emerges into another cave that is illuminated by a red light (the *rubedo*). In this cave, she sees a spread white linen cloth on which lay a photograph of Tristessa, a glass flask, and an ingot of gold wrapped up in paper. Eve rips Tristessa's photograph into pieces. The stain of blood that appears on the white linen where the picture was formerly is a sign of the *rubedo*, in which the red color —usually blood— stains something white (see Abraham 123-24).

The glass flask contains "a large chunk of amber," another name given to the gold in alchemy. As Eve holds the flask between her palms and turns it round and round, the amber begins "very slowly, to soften, or, rather, to become viscous" (182), until it changes to a "heavy dew of resin." The *opus* starts to run back on itself, as well as time. Eve now sees the prehistoric drawings on the rock grow "brighter, their outlines firmer" (183). The next passage she crosses takes her to "Eocene time," before the Earth was peopled by the human race. The chthonic womb of Mother, the "walls of meat and slimy velvet" draw Eve inward and "ingest" her (184). Gradually in the cave, the world dissolves into the initial chaos or *prima materia* of alchemy: rivers flow backward to their source; furniture turns into trees, branches, and leaves; and animals shrink until they become, "in the alchemical vase, . . . a solution of amino-acids" that finally "dissolves into the amniotic sea." Lastly, in Carter's revision of the Genesis myth, the protagonist is "expelled" from this womb-cave to fall, in the final one, into "an immensity of darkness." She emits a cry "like that of a new-born child" (186), but there is no answer;

neither Dragon nor Madonna await the heroine in her rite of deliverance. For Mother, as Eve realizes in the caves, is only "a figure of speech" (184), an imaginary abstraction ossified and aggrandized through myth, projections, and rhetorical language. The cosmogonic de-creation that occurs in the caves seems to have erased the Great Mother and made this myth obsolete and absurd in the world of the new-born Eve:

> I called for my mother but she did not answer me.
>
> "Mama—mama—mama!"
>
> She never answered.
>
> Speleological apotheosis of Tiresias —Mother, having borne her, now abandons her daughter forever. (186)

The final debunking of myths and archetypes informs the rest of this passage. New Eve bursts out laughing when, after the ordeal in the caves, Lilith offers her Evelyn's genitals treasured in a box. The fact that the protagonist rejects them, besides implying the eventual acceptance of her own biological femaleness, further suggests the refusal to perpetuate the figure of the hermaphrodite. The "gentle and introspective" mood (174) of Mother, after the nervous breakdown that exiled her to the caves, also mocks the archetype of the Terrible Mother. One of its mythic manifestations is the "Old Woman of the West" whom Neumann connects with the "fearful dragon aspect of the Great Mother" (*Origins* 133). The mad old lady that New Eve meets at the end on the beach satirizes this myth, as the Californian lady is compared to a meek Gorgon whose "snakes" have "petrified" (190). Eve's final wish to "put [all symbols] away, for a while, until the times have created a fresh iconography" (174) calls prospectively for the creation of new icons more in tune with the current historical reality of women.

The last sentence of the novel —"Ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries, bear me to the place of birth" (191)— leaves open the pregnant New Eve's quest for self.[13] She pays Charon, the mad old lady, with the ingot of gold for her skiff and leaves America by night. The psychological map of the narrative ends up in the circular manner typical of the *opus*, whose progression alchemist Michael Maier relates to the course of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, to be born again purified (see Jung, *Psychology* 382). The boat on which the protagonist sets sail is another hermetic symbol of transformation heralding the *opus* she begins. Eve has embraced by now her female condition, but she still has to search for her identity. Her unfinished epic journey[14] seems bound for the paradisal regions of the female self far from the cultural pressure of myths and archetypes.

"We mediate our experience through imagination and dream but sometimes the dream gets in the way of the experience, and obscures it completely" (108), says Carter in *The Sadeian Woman*. Nowhere is this statement more evident in her fiction in relation to woman than in *The Passion of New*

Eve. The novel is a dense pastiche of references and allusions to mythology, the Bible, psychoanalysis, alchemy, romance, literature, and cinema, as the layers of dreams and fantasies that time deposits over reality to the point of even "obscuring it completely." As Carter wrote in "Notes from the Front Line," the past not only has a "decorative, ornamental" function, but it is also "a vast repository of outmoded lies, where you can check out what lies used to be à la mode and find the old lies on which new lies have been based" (74). It is through parody, irony, comic pastiche, and the grotesque that Carter most frequently attacks the history-ridden web of allusions in the novel. As I have sought to demonstrate, one of the intertextual threads woven through it is the deconstruction of Jungian theory. Here, Carter's literary strategy is also parodic inversion: a serious, heroic narrative becomes a picaresque text; and the androgynous New Adam is replaced by a messianic New Eve whose alchemical individuation does not end up poetically in the inner marriage of opposites. The "furious battle of psychic powers" (Jung, *Mysterium* 360) fought out within Eve(lyn) —leading to the union with the unconscious and feminine, according to Jung— is satirically contested in the novel, which presents this battle in the form of a picaresque and anticlimactic narrative. Carter seems to take the incipient debate on Jung's sexism in the 1970s into the sphere of fiction and subverts his patriarchal bias by inscribing a feminist narrative into the process of individuation. The novel flouts the belief in archetypal universals and the androgyny of the self. Related to this, Carter iconoclastically uses the same sexual allegory that Jung employs to convey the self's unity: the alchemical conjunction of the masculine and feminine. Carter reveals the marriage of complementary opposites as an anachronistic myth that needs be superseded, as it has no psychic foundation but rather a cultural one.

The novel shows that the Archetypal Feminine and its ramifications (the Great Mother, the Terrible Mother, the Eternal Feminine, and the negative anima) are dissociated from the psychic reality of women and have been constructed on dominant patriarchal projections, which limit women in their freedom by culturally standardizing certain configurations of gender. It is significant, in this respect, that New Eve's self cannot be assimilated in the end to any of the four archetypes with which Neumann chooses to describe the nature of the Feminine. His classification, much like Jung's, is part of a historical discourse from the past that proves outdated for Carter's new woman. As Lilith says meaningfully to Eve, time cannot be made to "stand still" (174). Even the female characters (Mother, Tristessa, and Leilah) that suit Jung's and Neumann's definition of the archetypal Feminine overact their femininity, which is revealed in all cases as alien to these characters and of a performative nature. Of course, the elixir —the essence that makes the Feminine— is never found in the novel, for no such gold exists. Carter may play the role of an alchemist experimenting throughout the text with the marriage of the masculine and feminine as the supposed panacea of selfhood, which she allegorizes through sexual intercourse or the presence of androgynous characters. Playfully and deliberately, however, her "alchemical" experiments in this line always fail. Although Carter

effectively parodies alchemy and its rhetoric of making opposites marry, the use of the imagery of the *nigredo* expresses simultaneously a pungent critique of gender constructs and of psychic androgyny. The novel explores the shadowy language and iconography that patriarchy projects on the feminine, the aesthetics —or the "entrancing rhetoric"— of the erotic and the sensual, of matriarchal supremacy, of sacrificial femininity, and of androgynous wholeness, all of which Carter reproduces ironically and dismisses with the imagery of the *nigredo*. The "Passion" of New Eve purifies the feminine from these distortions and moves beyond old-fashioned narratives —whether they be Jungian, alchemical, or Platonic— that romanticize the harmony of gender opposites for self-definition.

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NOTES

I wish to thank the anonymous readers for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[1] Goldenberg considers Jungian psychology "a form of patriarchal religion itself" (444). Mary Daly shares a similar opinion and, in her 1978 book, calls Jungianism a "secular derivative," or "sect," of the universal religion of patriarchy (39).

[2] See Morgan's "Androgyny: A Conceptual Critique" for the reception of the concept of androgyny in the 1970s.

[3] The alchemical imagery in *The Passion of New Eve* has received scant critical attention. Rubenstein, Day, and Johnson have interpreted some of the hermetic symbols in the novel. Day's is the most in-depth study. Like Rubenstein, he considers that the "metaphor of alchemy and its associated figure of the hermaphrodite are . . . central to the allegory of *The Passion of New Eve*" (108), but he misses the fact that the alchemical process is dependent on a narrative of individuation. Johnson sees some connections between the hermetic *opus* and individuation but stops short at this relationship and does not investigate it further.

[4] I will use the name "Eve(lyn)" when similar circumstances occur to both Evelyn the man and Eve the woman. Otherwise, I will use the name "Evelyn" when referring to the male protagonist before his sex change, and "Eve" after the sex change operation.

[5] Jung's disciple Erich Neumann argues in *The Great Mother* that his definition of the masculine and feminine is only descriptive of the development of male consciousness in patriarchal societies. Although Neumann values the feminine in the construction of a whole personality, his vocabulary manifests a certain tendency to essentialize the unconscious as feminine.

[6] I distinguish in my paper between Eve, the woman that Mother creates after she operates on Evelyn and who is still prey to his narrow-minded conception of the feminine, and New Eve, the character that emerges at the end out of the caves and is a symbol of the new self.

[7] In archetypal theory, the labyrinth signifies "the first part of the night sea voyage, the descent of the male following the sun into the devouring underworld" (Neumann, *Mother* 177). In the novel, New York, Beulah, and Tristessa's house are all compared to a labyrinth.

[8] The text to describe Leilah uses three of the figures that Neumann mentions in *The Great Mother* to illustrate this archetype: Lilith, the Lorelei, and the young witch. Not surprisingly, Evelyn also compares himself to a saint and Leilah to a succubus, an imaginary personification in medieval times of man's strong sexual desire, which he projected onto a female figure that –he claimed– accosted him by nights and tried to taint his moral incorruptibility.

[9] Archetypes for Jung are "universal images that have existed since the remotest times, psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration" (*Archetypes* 5). The archetypal idea, by contrast, is a concrete representation of the archetype. The archetypal idea is an image or symbol that "takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear" (*Archetypes* 5).

[10] Mother is black like Isis, and "corn-queen" and "barley-queen" (61) like her. The matriarch is also compared with Cybele and Aphrodite.

[11] I agree with Rubenstein for whom Evelyn and Leilah's "erotic union encodes a union of opposites not only in gender and racial senses but also in alchemical symbolism" (108). My argument is that the alchemical process of dissolution and coagulation determines, at a structural level, the sexual union of these two characters and of others in the novel.

[12] In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung regards the unicorn as the "wild, rampant, masculine, penetrating force" of the androgynous Mercurius while the virgin represents his "passive, feminine aspect" (438). The comparison between Tristessa and the unicorn may also be set in relation to the existing debates on androgyny. According to Stimpson, the advocates of the psychological hermaphrodite search for a "unicorn" (242). Stimpson calls androgyny a "poetic fiction" (245) with a strong patriarchal bias. Goldenberg ironically dismisses the androgyne as "a modern-day unicorn" (446).

[13] Carter's novel follows the pattern of the quest-romance that entails "the victory of fertility over the waste land" (Frye 193). Unlike New Eve, Mother and Zero are failed romance-heroes who want to repopulate the barren country with a new species. Zero regards Tristessa as his "holy grail, his quest" (108). He searches for her every day in his helicopter with the intention of killing her and recovering his fertility.

[14] Even the total number of chapters in the novel –twelve in all– seems determined by the classical division of epic poems such as *The Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* into twelve books.

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