

# Queer Re-Reading and Fluid Interpretations

## A Comparative Literary Method in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Liebhaberinnen* (1975; *Women as Lovers*, 1994) and Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977)

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### What is Queer Re-Reading ?

**Queer Re-Reading** is a method of literary analysis that combines the act of recursive textual engagement with the critical and epistemological aims of queer theory. It reframes re-reading not as a return for clarity but as a return for productive confusion - a **radical re-encounter** with a text - foregrounding instability, ambiguity, and multiplicity.

Queer Re-Reading is a method of literary return that foregrounds contradiction, gender fluidity, and interpretive openness while embracing textual ambiguity as an epistemic and political resource. It actively resists closure and essentialist readings, situating texts as mutable sites of ideological and affective negotiation. In this sense, (re-)reading becomes an act of becoming – both for the reader and the text.

### Methodological and Critical Foundations

This approach draws upon a wide-ranging critical lineage that rethinks identity, narrative, and interpretative practice:

**Dallas John Baker:** "Queer Becoming"  
Identity as a processual, relational negotiation

**Judith Butler:** *Gender Trouble* (1999)  
Gender as *performative* – a stylised repetition of acts shaped by cultural norms

**Patricia Spacks:** *On Rereading* (2011)  
Re-reading unveils the instability of interpretative closure

**Rachel Carroll:** *Rereading Heterosexuality* (2022)  
Hegemonic heterosexuality is not merely critiqued but creatively undone through layered readings



### Why Re-Read Queerly ?

Queer Re-Reading matters because it contests the assumption that texts have singular, stable meanings waiting to be discovered. Instead, it asserts that meaning is always provisional, relational, and shaped by the reader's positionality and desire.

Traditional Re-Reading	Queer Re-Reading
Seeks deeper meaning	Seeks destabilisation of meaning
Affirms authorial intent	Resists narrative and ideological fixity
Focuses on continuity	Embraces rupture, multiplicity
Reiterates interpretation	Disorients interpretation

In a cultural and political moment that increasingly demands ideological legibility and narrative coherence, Queer Re-Reading enacts refusal. It resists the pressures of resolution and coherence, offering instead an ethics of uncertainty and messiness. As a mode of critique, it amplifies voices and desires rendered invisible by normative logics.

Process over Fixity

Textual Messiness  
as Method

Reading as  
Embodied Practice

### Key Innovations of Queer Re-Reading

Critical Undoing

Re-Reading as  
Political Refusal

Unsettling Canons  
and Critical Scholarship



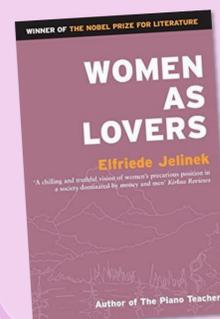
### Primary Comparative Queer Re-Reading

#### *The Passion of New Eve* by Angela Carter



- Carter's text is a fevered allegory of gender's theatricality. Through the grotesque transformation of Evelyn into Eve, the novel literalises gender as a surgical and spectacular construct, exposing the **artifice of gender**.
- Rather than seeking a resolution in Eve's transformation, the queer re-reader traces the collapse of gendered binaries through surreal exaggeration, refusing to locate Eve in any stable identity.
- Queer Re-Reading foregrounds the **violence of imposed embodiment** and the critique of both **patriarchy and matriarchy**

#### *Women as Lovers* by Elfriede Jelinek



- In stark contrast, Jelinek's style is restrained, mechanical, even suffocating. Her realism is not mimetic but parodic - a procedural exposé of how gender and romantic aspiration are mass-produced.
- The text becomes a record of **institutionalized heterosexuality** - marriage, motherhood, and domesticity - as modes of economic and ideological containment.
- Queer Re-Reading highlights here not victimhood, but systemic critique of **heterosexual reproduction as destiny**



### Conclusion

"Every renewed exchange between book and reader contains elements of both [stability and change]."

Patricia Spacks (4)

Queer Re-Reading makes refusal its method: refusal of closure, refusal of recuperation, and refusal of normativity. It reframes reading itself as an act of becoming. It is not about discovering what the text "means," but about what the text does - to us, through us, and outside of us. The reader is implicated, undone, and remade with each return. In this, Queer Re-Reading is not merely a method but an ethical and affective stance: an openness to the disorder of meaning and the instability of self.



### Bibliography

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### Images:

Bikadoroff, Roxanne. Cover Image. *The Passion of New Eve*, by Angela Carter, 1982. Front cover.

Wall. Cover Design. *Women as Lovers*, by Elfriede Jelinek, trans. By Martin Chalmers, 1994. Front Cover.