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Reworking of Fairy Tales in the Work of Angela Carter
Přeprocování pohádek v díle Angely Carterové

Diplomová práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

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1. Introduction

Angela Carter belongs to the respected British writers of her era with the noticeable impact on contemporary authors and readers as well. Her literature is dealing with the wide range of topics, nevertheless, in this thesis I focus particularly on the issues of feminism, gender roles and female sexuality, and my emphasis is put on the rewritten collection of fairy tales *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) that this thesis analyses. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Carter's fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* are affected by the feminist ideas and thoughts that are especially claiming equal rights for men and women and female sexual freedom, and to prove this impact on the tales also by the support of well known critics by incorporating their opinions.

At the beginning of this thesis I concentrate on these fairy tales with the respect to other literature that Angela Carter published. I am interested in themes that serve as a connecting element among Carter's fiction. With the respect to the critical authorities, their opinions are first introduced and their statements are crucial for all the paper. The names as Margaret Atwood, Aidan Day, Merja Makinen, Jack Zipes and others are mentioned, and their critical attitudes are analysed.

After this introductory part of Carter's essential thoughts in her literature in general, the feminist ideas in her known works *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) and *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) are demonstrated and contrasted. Here the critical sources also play the important role because I focus especially on the obvious resemblances of the treatise and the collection of fairy tales. As both the works were published in the same year I am going to comment on it and provide the analysis of the treatise and collection to find out their shared perspectives, and to prove that *The Sadeian Woman* also represents one of the sources for Carter's postmodern collection of fairy tales. Consequently, the thoughts that play the crucial role in *The Bloody Chamber* are especially highlighted.

The following chapter deals with the theme of fairy tale as a genre, its origin and meaning for the society. Mostly, the opinions and attitudes of Vladimir Propp

are introduced. Nevertheless, Jak Zipes and Christina Bachhilega are also the important authors for providing the relevant background to the fairy tales. Then, I describe Vladimir Propp's structural division of fairy tales that is crucial also for the practical analysis of Angela Carter's fairy tales, which is the next part in this thesis.

In the chapter five I am going to analyse all the thoughts and subject matters that have been already mentioned above and that are essential for Carter's tales. First, her tales are slightly introduced, then her style of writing is presented, and finally the collection itself and individual stories are described. There are four stories that I pay the special attention to. I begin with the core story of this collection which is "The Bloody Chamber" and then I continue with the following stories "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride". The last story that is foregrounded is "The Company of Wolves" which is the rewritten version of "Little Red Riding Hood", the tale that is very popular with the readers. Also other tales from *The Bloody Chamber* are mentioned but they are not provided with such a space as the above mentioned tales even though they also represent important stories from Carter's collection. In this chapter, the critical perspectives are analysed, most essential scenes are pointed out, the significant thoughts and their impacts are highlighted, and the portrayal of female protagonists is described. All these tales are compared to one another as there are many resemblances amongst all of them.

Finally, I close this thesis by the conclusion where all the crucial findings are again emphasized. I finalize this paper by providing the reader with the essential subject matters that were analysed in the practical part of this thesis in order to repeat the most significant aspects of Carter's fairy tales. Therefore, all the outputs of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* are highlighted in order to provide relevant data that I found out during the compilation of this diploma thesis.

2. Angela Carter and her literature with the emphasis on *The Bloody Chamber*

Angela Carter is a postmodernist British author as her writing is said to be innovative, non-traditional, and controversial. She is well known for fiction and non-fiction literature dealing with the wide range of topics into which belong the issues of social status, interpersonal relationships and gender problems. Furthermore, she focuses on the subject of feminism and the position of women in society, which means that Carter advocates for female rights. She belongs to the era of twentieth century's writers, especially to the second half, as she was born in the forties of the last century. She died quite young at the age of 52 because she suffered from cancer. Nevertheless, her impact is still crucial not only on literature but also on social sphere nowadays.

In her writing Angela Carter is interested in the role of women and in the question of gender in contemporary still male dominated society. She fights for the women rights and expresses her confidence in female abilities. Furthermore, she tends to highlight feminine aspects in her fiction and short stories, and she devotes her non-traditional fairy tales in the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* to this subject matter. These tales are specific by their content as Angela Carter tackles some taboos about female sexuality, violence against them, and their position in the society, which is not typical of classical fairy tales as we generally know them. Nevertheless, not only Carter's fairy tales are known for her interest in female personality but also her other literature is characteristic by that. As Marina Warner claims, Angela Carter as a writer is "fascinated with female impersonation."¹ Therefore, she introduces her female characters and their different nature and roles to provide the reader with the wide scope of female figures. Consequently, Angela Carter engages in female characters in each of her fairy tale and other fiction as Carter is definitely woman-centred writer.

Concerning *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, the collection that is analysed in this thesis, her tales evoke the feeling that women are often suppressed

¹ Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On fairy tales and their tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995), 194.

by male society trying to be superior and victimize them. Consequently, in her stories Carter points out that women can be stronger than it is generally expected, that they are able to make decisions based on their own judgements, and are capable of bearing more troubles than it is believed. Angela Carter does not attack the men. She claims that women do not have so many chances to rightfully present themselves as they deserve, which is the matter that should change (especially in the eighties of last century). Milada Franková asserts that the problem is that men live with the myths about the women and they are much more influenced by these myths than women are because women are more able to realize that they are not based on truth.² Nevertheless, also the women sometimes tend to passively accept their role and they do not try to change it, which contributes to the general way of thinking in the society.

Therefore, in her literature, Carter ingeniously reverses roles of men and women as she personally rationalizes, “[a]ll art is political and so is mine.”³ It confirms the idea that Angela Carter attempts to affect the predominant general public opinion that women should not represent strong political roles and highly positioned professions. As a result, Carter reverses the traditional roles also in her fairy tales to show that it is possible for a woman to stand in for male duties and abilities, and I am going to focus on this theme in this thesis as well. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (published in 1979) serves as an example of rewritten postmodern fairy tales expressing that women should be accepted more seriously in society and they should be provided with the same chances as men are. They ought to get the equal opportunities in the sphere of occupations and also have a chance to succeed in the domain of politics.

Carter’s style of writing can be for many readers surprising but that is the reason why Carter as a writer is still very influential. As Merja Makinen mentions, Angela Carter fights for the equal rights and occasions for the both genders in a shocking way, which has its purposes. “Many a reader has found the savagery with

² Milada Franková, *Britské spisovatelky na konci tisíciletí* (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 1999), 47.

³ quoted in Alison Easton, “Reading Angela Carter,” in *Angela Carter: [contemporary critical essays]*, ed. Alison Easton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 1.

which she can attack cultural stereotypes disturbing, even alienating.”⁴ Makinen stands for the opinion that Angela Carter expresses herself in a rather wild style in order to force readers to think about the content of her literature. In my opinion, Makines is right because Carter makes her readers realize what the purpose of her writing is. By this above mentioned savagery and most of the times even brutality she can aim it as people generally remember the issues that are controversial and unexpected, particularly in the genre of fairy tales. Since reading about brutality against women makes public realize that there could be something wrong in a surrounding culture from the point of view of female perspective, they can begin to debate it.

Nevertheless, Carter’s literature has more objectives. Sally Keenan also highlights that there are “... certain characteristic features of Carter’s writing: an intention to provoke questions rather than to provide answers, to engage with contradictions without seeking necessarily to resolve them.”⁵ Angela Carter writes very specific literature as her works disprove with general beliefs but they do not provide any solutions or final statements of what is good and what is bad. Concerning *The Bloody Chamber* that is central in this thesis, Makinen adds that also in this collection Carter tends to suggest questions without solving them:

The Bloody Chamber is clearly engaging with a reader historically situated in the early 1980s (and beyond), informed by feminism, and raising questions about the cultural stereotypes of femininity. *Bloody Chamber* draws on a feminist discourse – or at least an awareness that feminism is challenging sexist constructions.⁶

Feminism plays a crucial role in Angela Carter’s writing. Carter provokes and introduces issues that could be highly controversial in the time when *The Bloody Chamber* was published, but on the other hand they can have an immense impact on people’s mind and way of thinking also nowadays. Sally Keenan points out that Angela Carter was able to discuss problems that are still very crucial for

⁴ Merja Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” in *Angela Carter: [contemporary critical essays]*, ed. Alison Easton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 20.

⁵ Sally Keenan, “Angela Carter’s *The Sadeian Woman: Feminism as Treason*,” in *Angela Carter: [contemporary critical essays]*, ed. Alison Easton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 40.

⁶ Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” 25.

contemporary society like feminism, culture, and politics long times before these debates were staged.⁷ What is more, Carter focuses on these issues deeply and is not afraid to publicize them also in the form of fairy tales. “Carter’s telling of fairy tales was designed to help kill giants in the everyday, patriarchal world.”⁸ I agree with Aidan Day’s statement as, in my opinion, Angela Carter’s killing giants could be taken as a euphemism for expressing male intolerance towards women and their sometimes noticeable unwillingness to accept women on the same and equal level in the society. It could be a strong statement but contemporary society deals with these problems very often as well, therefore it is still a topical issue.

Nevertheless, Angela Carter belongs to writers that have a specific attitude to their writing. For the analysis of Angela Carter’s fairy tales, Jill Matus reasons that “[a] characteristic procedure of Carter’s is to seize upon some image, icon or bit of mythology and draw out its implications, making gorgeous what is denigrated or scorned, blaspheming against what is held sacred, and exposing what is usually kept covert.”⁹ Taking into consideration Angela Carter’s style of writing, she definitely defies conventional literature as we generally know it, and particularly her fairy tale as a genre go against traditional writing. What is more, in her literature she works with references. Rebecca Munford mentions that Carter goes “[f]rom fairy tale to decadence, from medieval literature to Victoriana, and from cookery books to high theory, Carter’s narratives are littered with allusions and references drawn from a wide range of cultural spheres.”¹⁰ I agree with Munford’s opinion as in Carter’s literature the nuances concerning her other works or other important literature are also clear. Furthermore, Carter likes interweaving of different characters that she has already portrayed in her fiction or non-fiction literature or those figures that have been portrayed by other well-known writers.

In general, Angela Carter mocks serious or taboo topics and subverts the traditional development of the plot in her tales. Hence, I would like to mention

⁷ Keenan, 37.

⁸ Aidan Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” in *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass*, ed. Aidan Day (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 133.

⁹ Jill Matus, “Blonde, Black and Hottentot Venus: Context and Critique in Angela Carter’s ‘Black Venus’,” in *Angela Carter: [contemporary critical essays]*, ed. Alison Easton (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 165.

¹⁰ Rebecca Munford, “Angela Carter and the Politics of Intertextuality,” in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1.

Aidan Day's opinion who claims that "Carter's mocking and subversive humour can be felt thorough her fiction, where she frequently uses it against the most unhumorous of objects. Humour directed towards sometimes deadly serious ends is a Carte forte. It is an aspect of the zeal that drives her style."¹¹ It can be stated that Carter's way of writing is obviously untraditional and sometimes even controversial. However, that is the reason why she is so popular with her readers because her style is different from the most of the female writers. That is particularly regarding sexuality and all the issues connected with this theme. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton confirm it by stating that "[i]t is not a particularly English trait, nor a conventionally feminine one, for a writer to be brazenly concerned with sexuality."¹² Angela Carter is not afraid of the public reactions. What is more, Carter is open-minded and writes about the facts she believes in although she knows she could be criticised a lot, mainly because she is the woman. Yet, she is attracting so many readers by her innovative non-fiction and fiction literature that she gains a respected position amongst many writers. Alison Easton asserts:

Angela Carter's readers know well the pleasures her own writing give: delight in invention still grounded in recognizable reality; the sensuousness and shocks of the experience described; the exuberantly decorative linguistic surface; the exhilaration in crossing a line into the unspoken or forbidden; the perfectly hit target of her dissent; her learned wit and ribald laughter (no decorous English gentlewoman, this); and finally, relief from terrors faced and survived through a saving irony.¹³

Alison Easton points out significant merits of Carter's vivid style of writing. It makes readers feel nervous, shocked, afraid but pleased as well, and they also sense other feelings that not every book is able to evoke, which I consider as one of the Carter's most essential benefits. Her expressions are so absorbing that many a reader cannot stop reading when he or she starts. Angela Carter uses unusual connotations in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* too, thus her language is also very playful

¹¹Aidan Day, "I'm a socialist, dam it! How can you expect me to be interested in fairies?" in *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass*, ed. Aidan Day (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 1.

¹² Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton, introduction to *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (New York: Longman, 1997), 2.

¹³ Easton, 1.

and inventive. That is the next reason why she attracts readers because it belongs to her great writing tools.

On the other hand, for some readers it can be a quite difficult task to find a pleasure in Carter's literature. Merja Makinen predicates that "[t]o enjoy the humour – the payback with many of Carter's texts – reader needs to position themselves outside phallogentric culture (at least for the process of reading)."¹⁴ In my opinion, Makinen proposes that readers have to forget about their sex, status or position in society and they have to perceive Carter's works without prejudices in order to relish from her literature. Also Aidan Day asserts that Carter's writing could be considered written in an extreme manner but Day belongs to the critics who desires it because it is very often sensational and entertaining.¹⁵ It confirms that Carter is a great female author because she joins the thrilling moments with the amusing ones and she creates the tension.

Angela Carter has an absolutely original attitude to her own writing. As Anja Müller mentions, "[w]hat is socially constructed can be socially changed – and change is precisely the postulate at the centre of Carter's works."¹⁶ Angela Carter expresses original thoughts, comes with controversial topics, suggests the gender changes, and everything is hidden behind the mask of British female author who looks like a good aunt or grandmother. At the end of twentieth century, Angela Carter becomes "... almost alarmingly 'central' for all sorts of readers and researchers. This is not just because – as Gore Vidal mischievously pointed out once upon a time – death can be a very wise career move for the artist, but because she found a way of speaking for a longed-for loss of singularity."¹⁷ Angela Carter died very young, but she gained her own respect because of her openness in literature. Carter is exceptional because she comes with a different attitude to writing, and her fairy tales that are analysed in this thesis include the unexpected topics of sexuality, violence, brutality against women that, in my opinion, generally readers do not assume they come across in fairy tales. Nevertheless, not only *The*

¹⁴ Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 26.

¹⁵ Day, "I'm a *socialist*, dam it! How can you expect me to be interested in fairies?" 1.

¹⁶ Anja Müller, *Angela Carter: Identity Constructed/Deconstructed* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997), 39.

¹⁷ Lorna Sage, introduction to *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago Press, 1994), 3.

Bloody Chamber but also other fiction and non-fiction literature caused Carter's uniqueness.

Carter as a writer is motivated by other authors and their works as well. One of them is for example below mentioned Michel Foucault. Sage mentions that Angela Carter bases her slightly aggressive way of writing on the book *The History of Sexuality* written by Michel Foucault that inspired her.¹⁸ Angela Carter acquires the inspiration from many authors. Yet, she still writes as a detached writer as "[n]one of her novels is autobiographical, no in any visible way. She was individuated. Even fantasy, in her hands, is not allowed to be a lure, an indulgence."¹⁹ Carter is a mature writer because she is able to produce a lot of materials in her literature but the readers can hardly ever feel any personal feelings or hesitations of the writer. Nevertheless, they can find ideas she shares with other prominent authors that are mentioned as Michel Foucault or Marquis de Sade, who is analysed later in this thesis. Yet, it is important to point out the fact that Sarah Gamble comments on:

Carter might not have been into self-disclosure, she might not have used her art to reflect on personal dilemmas, but that doesn't mean that she eliminated herself from her work entirely, or indeed at all. As an intellectual, Carter expressed herself through ideas, believing that 'a narrative is an argument stated in fictional terms'. Carter was perfectly happy to describe her work as allegorical.²⁰

Therefore, Carter writes down her ideas and transforms them brilliantly into the form of fairy tale and other genres. Not only *The Bloody Chamber*, but also other tales and novels written by Carter are usually labelled by critics as innovative, non-traditional and are praised for Carter's style of writing. Carter is especially interested in politics, issue of class, feminism and social order. Hence, her ideas are projected into her fiction.

¹⁸ Sage, introduction to *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, 14.

¹⁹ Nicole Ward Jouve, "'Mother is a Figure of Speech'," in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago Press, 1994), 151.

²⁰ Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 11.

3. Feminist aspects in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

Angela Carter belongs to feminist writers, which is obvious from the content of her literature dealing most of the times with female protagonists who, for instance in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, very often function more as heroines than victims. For her feminist purposes, Angela Carter has some literature examples that inspire her. According to the critical resources which I present in this thesis, Carter is influenced by Marquis de Sade, the French aristocrat well known for his style of writing that was celebrating the libertine sexuality at the turn of nineteenth century. Yet, Angela Carter "uses Sade's writing to expose twentieth century feminine roles of victim."²¹ Carter selects some of the aspects that Sade mentions in his fiction and applies them also in her literature concerning especially the theme of sexuality and female attitude to it, and the theme of victimization of women. Consequently, Carter fights for women not to be afraid to speak aloud about their sexual desires and lust, and other wishes, in order to get the same chances as men have.

Angela Carter published her own non-fiction feminist treatise, inspired by de Sade, *The Sadeian Woman* the same year (1979) as *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Therefore, it is assumed that writing *The Sadeian Woman* had also a powerful effect on the collection of fairy tales, because the issues of femininity, male's dominance, and sexuality in general are the most analysed themes in *The Bloody Chamber* as well. Sarah Gamble describes Carter's process of writing, "[a]ll the time that she was working on *The Bloody Chamber* stories, she was still trying to complete *The Sadeian Woman*. *The Sadeian Woman* is therefore a key text for the understanding of Carter's fiction."²² Since Carter was writing both these works at the same period, they definitely had some impact on each other. What is more, Maria Lauret notices that "American feminist fiction in the 1970s and 1980s was a liberating literature, a female body of texts which sought to liberate both women and writing from the constraints of masculinist double standards in literature and in

²¹ Elaine Jordan, "Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions," in *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction*, ed. Linda Anderson (London: Arnold, 1990), 20.

²² Gamble, *Angela Carter: A Literary Life*, 156-157.

life.”²³ Maria Lauret highlights the essential information about Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Sadeian Woman* as at the time Carter was writing these two works, she was also affected by the social changes and it had an impact on her literature. Therefore, both *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Sadeian Woman* are freed from constraints and Carter provokes by her overt attitude to women, their position in society and particularly to their sexuality. In the following paragraphs I am mainly going to analyse the opinions of two respected female critics Sally Keenan and Margaret Atwood, who are interested in the issue of feminism and relation between *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Bloody Chamber*. Also other critical sources are mentioned but these two writers are fore grounded.

Sally Keenan expresses her opinion about *The Sadeian Woman* by claiming that Angela Carter’s “... attention has been directed at her deconstruction of cultural myths of femininity and the repression of women’s sexuality ”²⁴ Sally Keenan is talking about the treatise, however, in my opinion, the same statement could be also valid for *The Bloody Chamber*. Angela Carter is interested in all these cultural myths known from classical fairy tales and produces a piece of work which fights against these deeply rooted cultural traditions concerning the role of women in the society. Margaret Atwood states that Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Sadeian Woman* affect each other nevertheless they are still individual works sharing some aspects. “It’s fair to suppose that these two books represent two different approaches to the problem of the ‘nature’ of women and thus of men, one theoretical, one fictional; though in her work such divisions are less useful than in the work of others, since she blends myth-making into her theory and theorising into her myth.”²⁵ Thus, both of these works are interwoven, which is confirmed also by the words of Lorna Sage who writes about Angela Carter and her literary achievements. Lorna Sage comments on the collection *The Bloody Chamber*:

It may seem a project remote from the Sade book, but it was not, for in retelling these tales she was deliberately drawing them out of their shapes, out of the separate space of ‘children stories’ or ‘folk art’, and into the world

²³ Maria Lauret, *Liberating Literature: Feminist Fiction in America* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1.

²⁴ Keenan, 37.

²⁵ Margaret Atwood, “Running with the Tigers,” in *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago Press, 1994), 118.

of change. It was yet another assault on myth – though this time done caressingly and seductively.²⁶

Nevertheless, even though both of her books have much in common, Sally Keenan expresses that “*The Sadeian Woman* may not have received the detailed and serious treatment it deserves because of the ways in which Carter reworked or worked out some of the issues it touches on in her fiction, notably in *The Bloody Chamber*”²⁷ For Keenan analysis, it could be said that publishing both books in the same year redirected the readers’ and critics’ attention to *The Bloody Chamber*. Therefore, *The Sadeian Woman* was not so discussed because *The Bloody Chamber* as the collection of very controversial, partly Gothic fairy tales evoked more sensation than this theoretical treatise which also deserves a lot of critical attention.

I agree that these two books were probably affecting each other as some aspects can be found in both *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Sadeian Woman*. Furthermore, *The Sadeian Woman* took five years for Carter to finish it, hence she was writing both works concurrently and the basic feminist thoughts are expressed in both of them. Margaret Atwood claims, that “[i]n both books, the distinction drawn are not so much between male and female as between ‘tigers’ and ‘lambs’, carnivores and herbivores, those who are preyed upon and those who do preying. In a world in which one has only these two choices, it is of course preferable to be a tiger....”²⁸ In my opinion, Atwood proposes that we as people should choose between these two roles which one we want to play. This is exactly what Carter mentions herself in her treatise *The Sadeian Woman* stating that “[i]f women allow themselves to be consoled for their culturally determined lack of access to the modes of intellectual debate by the invocation of hypothetical great goddesses, they are simply flattering themselves into submission.”²⁹ These words confirm that Carter stands for the opinion that women also have the choice to live a different life. Concerning the feminist context in *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter tries to wake women up and to make tigers and predators from them in order to realize

²⁶ Lorna Sage, *Angela Carter* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), 39.

²⁷ Keenan, 39.

²⁸ Atwood, 118.

²⁹ Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman* (London: Virago Press, 1979), 5.

their strengths and possibilities because it is “the only way in which women can avoid being regarded as no more than flesh.”³⁰ It is definitely one of the themes in *The Bloody Chamber* that repeats in nearly all of the tales. Carter does not pity the women who become the victims of society, according to Sarah Gamble, Angela Carter in *The Sadeian Woman* highlights and “.... steadfastly refuses to regard such women as victims at all; indeed, one of her primary purposes in the book is to urge women to repudiate the dubious status of passive, suffering martyr.”³¹ Angela Carter points out the same thoughts in *The Bloody Chamber* as her female characters are usually those who do not accept the role of victim and they fight against it, otherwise they are condemned to death. The issue of victimization is the next common theme that both of these works have in common.

Furthermore, Sally Keenan deeply discusses connection between *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Bloody Chamber* in the field of sexuality and feminism:

It is more than coincidental that 1979 marked the publication of both *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Bloody Chamber*. Carter’s revisionary fairy-tales brilliantly display how the discursive structures we inherit are not inevitably monolithic, or resistant to recasting. Through them, she wittily presents the relationship between cultural structuration and human agency as dynamic and malleable. Simultaneously exposing the structures of power manifest in our most conventional narratives of gender relations, she transforms those stories into images of erotic experience from the perspective of heterosexual women, remaining the heroines as active agents in their own sexual development. However, the route she takes towards that revision constitutes what could be called a scandalous liaison with the book on Sade. Taken together, her revisionary fairy-tales (traditional literature for children) and her analysis of Sade’s work (considered adult reading – that euphemism for pornographic literature) are deeply implicated in one another; they are, it could be said, contrasting sides of the same genre.³²

Sally Keenan brilliantly points out the merits of Angela Carter’s writing as Carter exposes cultural stereotypes and reverses the roles of men and women, which in eighties of the last century was something inconceivable. Therefore, Carter drew readers’ attention as she came with the fresh attitude to sexuality, particularly the female sexuality that de Sade portrayed in his fiction *Justine or the Misfortune of*

³⁰ Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1997), 102.

³¹ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 100.

³² Keenan, 41-42.

Virtue (1791), which is the source for Carter's *The Sadeian Woman*. Keenan adds that "[b]oth texts stress the connections between sexual and economic relations in a patriarchal society. The archetypes of both the pornographic and fairy-tale worlds confuse the 'historical fact of the economic dependence of women upon men'."³³ These facts have still influence on contemporary modern society although they are issues of the past. Concerning Angela Carter and her attitude to sexuality and feminism, Margaret Atwood confirms the above mentioned ideas:

Although her interest in role-breaking and role-remaking is evident from her first published work, her explorations of gender crossover in relation to passivity and aggression were particularly intense in ... her analysis of the writings of the Marquis de Sade, *The Sadeian Woman*, and her collection of revised fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber*.³⁴

Atwood approves with Sally Keenan's thoughts about the Carter's method to reverse the roles of men and women that is also obvious from *The Bloody Chamber* and plots of these stories.

All the critics dealing with Carter's literature suggest that Carter has very open attitude to sexuality. Nevertheless, Carter's texts are not clearly pornographic even though it could be said they are highly erotic. However, Angela Carter advocates pornography because she does not agree with censorship. "Carter's fascination with pornography can be traced to her experiences in Japan, a country in which, as she portrayed it, the sadomasochistic fetishisation of the female body is commonplace."³⁵ Carter's temporary living in Japan probably affected her attitude to this issue. She states that people can learn from pornography a lot because they can learn about culture stereotypes and conditions which help to determine female and male attitude to sexuality.³⁶ For example, Charlotte Crofts asserts that "Carter attempts to reappropriate supposedly misogynistic genres, such as pornography and fairy tale, and put them in the service of women."³⁷ It is known that Carter is a feminist writer trying to promote the female's independence and sexual freedom by

³³ Keenan, 43.

³⁴ Atwood, 117-118.

³⁵ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 98.

³⁶ Keenan, 46.

³⁷ Charlotte Crofts, *'Anagrams of desire': Angela Carter's writing for radio, film and television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 9.

incorporating them into the traditional genre as a fairy tale for example is and by adding the necessary erotic elements.

Concerning the issue of sexuality and Carter's openness and dealing with sexual taboos, *The Bloody Chamber* definitely provokes. On the other hand it also supports other ways of thinking about traditional stereotypes. It is one of the reasons why Carter appreciates de Sade and projects his thoughts into her literary works, as for her "... he is radical because he is capable of imagining women as sexually active beings, rather than the mute recipients of male desire."³⁸ Angela Carter is doing exactly the same because she advocates for female sexual needs and overtly writes about them. Nevertheless, her tales are not completely pornographic as Sade's fiction definitely is. Nicole Ward Jouve mentions that Angela Carter "... was the *moral* Pornographer, using Pornography to make her reader think, instead of indulge, or want to imitate."³⁹ I would say that Nicole Ward Jouve proposes that Carter does not want readers to behave in the same way as in her literature, but she wants them to think about the situation of male and female position in the society. Reading a fairy tale, the readers are thinking about Carter's reasons of including sexuality and eroticism into this genre. By eroticism Carter intends to "... uncover and contest the issues of power and control which it disguises."⁴⁰ Therefore, eroticism as a tool can greatly serve to Carter's purposes.

Since Marquis de Sade was very controversial in the sphere of female sexuality, Carter gains a lot of her inspiration from de Sade who, according to Margaret Atwood, stands for these opinions:

In order to escape victimisation, women have to divest themselves of the trappings of conventional womanhood; they have to denature themselves Mercy, pity, peace and love, and especially chastity and motherhood, go out the window; in come ruthlessness, lasciviousness, the separation of sexual pleasure from procreation, and delight in the pain of others.⁴¹

Although I would say that Angela Carter probably does not agree with all the parts of this statement because her female protagonists in the fairy tales do not enjoy

³⁸ Gamble, *Angela Carter: A Literary Life*, 158.

³⁹ Jouve, 151.

⁴⁰ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 103.

⁴¹ Atwood, 119.

pains of their fellows, as I perceive it, it is still obvious that some of these thoughts are shared by Carter too. Angela Carter portrays her female characters as victims till the moment they denature themselves and start to act in some of the situations as “predators”. This is the only way how to survive and it is proved in many of her tales. As a feminist advocator, Atwood agrees with some of these facts but “[w]hat Carter seems to be doing in *The Bloody Chamber* – among other things – is looking for ways in which the tiger and the lamb, or the tiger and lamb parts of the psyche, can reach some sort of accommodation.”⁴² In my opinion, this is Carter’s task as she wants to find some balance between dark and bright sides of people’s nature. It means that Angela Carter encourages her characters to come to some consensus that would be acceptable for both men and women, which I think is highly visible in her fairy tales in this collection, mainly for example in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, where Mr Lyon is able to find a compromise to make his Beauty happy and satisfied (see the chapter). Concerning *The Bloody Chamber* in general, there are cases when Carter tends to show moral superiority of women in her stories as well, for example in “The Company of Wolves” (see the chapter), because Angela Carter indicates that women win, but contrary to it she also comes with the idea that men and women can live in consensus as in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” or in “Puss-in-Boots”, and they can be on the same level without necessity of any superiority.

It is believed that women are more sensitive than men but on the other hand it is also necessary for women to live in the accordance with their wild features that they usually try to hide, forget, and cover by their appearance and behaviour. “It is Carter’s contention that a certain amount of tigerishness may be necessary if women are to achieve an independent as opposed to a dependent existence, if they are to avoid – at the extreme end of passivity – becoming meat.”⁴³ Some of Carter’s tales evoke the feeling that it is possible to live in accordance with the both wild and calm features because both these parts are necessary for successful life. Concerning the analysis of Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, in my opinion, Carter wants to make people realize that women can be also tigers and they should have the opportunity to present it also publically. “Carter

⁴² Atwood, 120.

⁴³ Atwood, 121.

does not suggest that women are inherently better than men but simply that women are given far less chance in this world to transgress.”⁴⁴ This statement is crucial in order to express Carter’s attitude to feminism as she does fight for the equal rights of both sexes to let women express their nature, and not to force them to wear masks.

Therefore, the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* can serve as an example of Angela Carter’s feminist thoughts and disagreement with the situation of women and their positions in the contemporary society. As Christina Britzolakis mentions, Angela Carter “.... rejects male-constructed images of women as a form of false consciousness.”⁴⁵ Consequently, Angela Carter offers new images and representations of females, and the roles of women in various situations as it is analyzed in the main part of this thesis. Every fairy tale brings a different vision of woman in general, varying from the original concept. Each of portrayals is significant and original for a different purpose in order to portray women in many roles they can perform, as winners and as losers, as heroines and as victims. Jack Zipes marks Carter’s tales as “.... feminist fairy tales or tales in which traditionally sexuality was questioned.”⁴⁶ In general, Carter’s tales offer a perspective how society should perceive women and their changing social position, and that is the reason why her stories can be sometimes so provocative and outrageous.

⁴⁴ Merja Makinen, “Sexual and textual aggression in *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Passion of New Eve*,” in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (New York: Longman, 1997), 154.

⁴⁵ Christina Britzolakis, “Angela Carter’s fetishism,” in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (New York: Longman, 1997), 44.

⁴⁶ Jack Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xxxi.

4. Tradition, meaning and structure in the genre of fairy tale

4.1. Origins of fairy tales and their meaning for society

For the analysis of the fairy tale there are many schools that can be used for its study in general. However, in this thesis I am going to focus on Vladimir Propp's methods and his attitude to this genre as he belongs to significant personalities in this sphere. Going back to the past, there were linguists dealing with the composition of a fairy tale long time before Propp came up with his chronology and rules. For example, Vseleвод Miller, a Russian linguist, who was interested in Russian folklore and founded a historical school concerning this concept. There were also other schools like mythological school or Finnish school which analysed the form of fairy tale as well.⁴⁷ Jens Tismar also belonged to respected German scholars interested in the genre of fairy tale as he wrote important studies concerning the principles of tales.⁴⁸ However, Propp is the one who is nowadays considered to be the linguist with one of the best divisions of fairy tale's chronology. Therefore, I also chose him for the analysis of fairy tale's genre as his methods and special structural division could be applied also in Angela Carter's collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*.

Vladimir Propp is a respected structuralist who discerns various aspects and elements that should be included in fairy tales. He defines a fairy tale as a story with the development of the plot that leads from main character's unhappiness or lack of something important to some reward and gaining of the lost happiness. Propp highlights that a plot sequence is a significant aspect in the structure of fairy tale.⁴⁹ This is the basic summary of the fairy tale's development and its rules as readers know it today. However, going back to the history it is also important to shortly outline the roots of fairy tale and its origin. Vladimir Propp mentions that the roots are based on folklore and historical-social aspects of the times when fairy tales were

⁴⁷ Vladimir Jakovlevič Propp, *Morfologie pohádky a jiné studie* (Jinočany: H&H, 1999), 150-151.

⁴⁸ Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, xv.

⁴⁹ Propp, 81.

produced and orally disseminated.⁵⁰ In order to provide the deeper explanation of the genre itself, the fairy tale is a kind of allegory which task is to illustrate typical characteristics of social classes, animals and people in general. Realistic features are seldom presented and more often charms and supernatural elements appear and are highlighted. According to Vladimir Propp, the fairy tale is an intentional poetic fiction which does not affront, is considered to be unrealistic, and therefore, also very popular.⁵¹ It means that the plot of the story is not regarded seriously and the readers tend to read it as a fictional projection of changed reality. Christina Bacchilega also points out that the genre of fairy tale "... bears the traces of orality, folkloric tradition, and socio-cultural performance."⁵² In my opinion, it is also the main reason why Angela Carter published her controversial ideas and thoughts in the form of fairy tales.

People know that the fairy tale is not a true story but at the same time they also realize that there are some historic roots and sociological aspects that are incorporated into these tales. As Jack Zipes mentions in his *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, great influence had tales written usually in Latin language from 14th to 17th century because "... they constituted the genre of the literary fairy tale that began establishing its own conventions, motifs, topoi, characters and plots, based to a large extent on those developed in the oral tradition but altered to address a reading public formed by aristocracy, clergy and middle classes."⁵³ What is important for the genre of fairy tale nowadays is the fact that a writer has the space to express whatever he or she wishes. It means that the writer can also tackle more non-traditional issues and attack the traditional ones and it is accepted by readers because they do not take it so much seriously, but on the other hand they still appreciate the long tradition of tales.

Concerning the traditional fairy tale, Propp adds that the narrator, target audience or the reader do not believe the content of fairy tale but yet it is

⁵⁰ Propp, 272-273.

⁵¹ Propp, 274-275.

⁵² Christina Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 3.

⁵³ Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, xvi.

represented as a vivid narration of actions and dynamic plot in a thrilling story.⁵⁴ Although the fairy tale is unrealistic, it can serve as a highly important source for the past of nations. "Originally the folk tale was (and still is) an oral narrative form cultivated by non-literate and literate people to express the manner in which they perceived and perceive nature and their social order and their wish to satisfy their needs and wants."⁵⁵ It provides relevant information about the times when the fairy tale was told and was made up due to the folklore from which it gained an inspiration. Nevertheless, Jack Zipes mentions the essential fact about fairy tales that "[b]oth the oral and the literary traditions continue to exist side by side today, interact, and influence one another, but there is a difference in roles they now played compared to their function in the past. This difference can be seen in the manner in which they are produced, distributed and marketed."⁵⁶ Therefore, Angela Carter applies this form to express her dissension with the society and its behaviour.

The fairy tale is the right genre for Carter to portray her basic ideas about the society because "... they provoke us to think about the way we live."⁵⁷ This provoking is exactly what Carter intends to do with this genre. Furthermore, "[t]he more the literary fairy tale was cultivated and developed, the more it became individualized and varied by intellectuals and artists, who often sympathized with the marginalized in society or were marginalized themselves."⁵⁸ Angela Carter belongs to those writers who write in order to express their discordant thoughts with society nowadays to manifest that there should be some changes undergone.

Regarding the overall structure of fairy tale, today it could be said that Vladimir Propp is one of the most respected linguists and folklorists. Vladimir Propp also emphasizes the fact that the fairy tale is only engaged with the figures that maintain some tasks and are significant for the development of the plot in the story itself. Moreover, there is only one hero who stands at the forefront of the story and other protagonists get into the contact with this hero due to various functions of

⁵⁴ Propp, 275.

⁵⁵ Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 7.

⁵⁶ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, 2.

⁵⁷ Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, 22.

⁵⁸ Jack Zipes, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2007), 7.

their roles and actions.⁵⁹ This technique is also applied by Carter who engages only a few characters in her tales that are important for the story. Therefore, only those figures that are necessary in the plot development are depicted and introduced in the fairy tale.

4.2. Vladimir Propp and structuralist approach to fairy tales

In this chapter Vladimir Propp's structural division serves as a theoretical background for the practical part of the thesis where individual tales are analysed. According to Vladimir Propp, the genre of fairy tale has some basic steps and procedures. It is highly important to keep the order of these steps to give a right pattern to the tale.⁶⁰ In Propp's point of view, the characters in the fairy tales are agents who have a special function in the story itself and these functions are basic parts of the plot. Every character fulfils some of the functions in the story, which is generally called the sphere of agent's action. It means that a character can have one of the following roles: villain, donor, helper, princess (a sought-for person), her father, dispatcher, hero (seeker or victim) and false hero.⁶¹ These are the possible agents that fulfil a certain function in the narrative strategy to develop the plot of the story. It is not necessary to engage all the characters with their roles and functions, nevertheless, there is some order that has to be always kept.⁶² The number of functions in the fairy tale is therefore highly limited.

In general, fairy tales begin with some initial situation where the family members are introduced or the future hero/heroine is known either by mentioning his/her name or by characterizing of his/her status. Even though this situation is not called a function, it is an important element in a fairy tale and has to be obeyed.⁶³ In spite of that, there are some functions that exist for this initial situation as it is mentioned in the overview of them below. These ones (not all of them) should be,

⁵⁹ Propp, 278.

⁶⁰ Propp, 26-28.

⁶¹ Michal Peprník, "Hand-out: Vladimir Propp, Morfologie pohádky" (paper presented at the seminar Literární Kritika a Teorie, Olomouc, Česká Republika, March 23, 2012).

⁶² Propp, 26-28.

⁶³ Propp, 31.

according to Vladimir Propp, included in the fairy tale. Later on I deal with these functions in the selected tales from Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* in order to provide the reader with Carter's attitude to this classification and choices of functions in her tales. In the paragraphs below are stated fairy tales' functions in Vladimir Propp's order that are concerning the classical magic fairy tales.

The fairy tale usually starts with the leaving. The main character abandons his/her family. It is possible that the members of older or younger generation (more often) leave to set off to get to know the world. However, this part can also start with the death of the family member, which means that there is an absence of a family member at the beginning of the story. Then, the hero/heroine (Propp's terms) in the story gets a prohibition, an interdiction to do something to prove they are able to fulfil some task. They can also get an advice to be aware of a possible danger or an order to avoid some places on their way. If one does not obey prohibition or order, it can have serious consequences for him/her. It is called the violation of this prohibition or order and it means that evil character, villain, enters into the story, and his/her aim is to cause some misfortune, harm or damage. Many figures can act in the role of villain because it can be performed by a witch, dragon, devil, and others. The hero/heroine violates an interdiction and the villain uses intrigues to aim his/her evil actions. Then, the fourth and fifth step is querying of villain about the main hero via different characters in the story and it leads to the revealing of the required information. The evil character learns information about his/her victim, but sometimes also hero/heroine can obtain information about the evil character. The sixth step is called stratagem, which is usually in the form of a sly cheating done by villain in order to obtain important information about the victim or his/her possessions by different cunning ways. Then, the victim is defeated by this trickery and consequently is unwittingly helping the enemy. The victim falls either into a trap or fraud/complicity, which brings some preliminary misfortune. These first seven functions can be regarded as a preparatory phase of the fairy tale. The next phases are to follow.

The evil causes harm or injury to one of the family members, which is very significant function as it initiates the main plot of the story. According to Vladimir

Propp, the villain can cause this harm by nineteen different ways. However, there is also possible to begin this part with the lack of something important which evokes searching for it. For example, the villain's misdeed can mean a lack (princess is kidnapped). The ninth step represents the connecting moment of the story, which introduces a hero/heroine into the fairy tale who is either injured or who can be a seeker. It causes that a hero or heroine leaves his/her home. It is called mediation and it represents a necessary moment to keep the structure and order of the fairy tale. Therefore, the hero/heroine has to leave home. Misdeed which was made is known and hero/heroine is here to fulfil the request or provide help.

The tenth step means the beginning of counteraction. Hero/heroine⁶⁴ decides to accept the quest and he/she starts to act. This function is introduced only in the case of the seeker. Hero departs home and the new character, called the donor, enters to the fairy tale. The donor provides some means with the hero to destroy misfortune. However, the hero has to get through different situations to get these means (for example magical ones), therefore hero is tested by donor (his function) before receiving magical means or helper. Testing can have many different forms but it is here to prove hero's good character. Next function represents a reaction of the hero to the donor's testing, which is usually successful this time. Hence, this reaction leads to reaching the thing, item which the hero was searching for. This step is called the receipt of magical auxiliary.

Spatial transport between two kingdoms follows because the seeking item is usually placed in the different kingdom and hero is the one who has to move in order to reach it. Meanwhile there is a struggle, the hero is stopped by some inconvenience and fights with the villain. The hero is marked by this struggle, for example he is wounded, which leaves a scar, or the hero gets some item like a ring or a scarf that represents a special symbol. Then, the hero destroys the evil and it brings a victory leading to a liquidation of initial misfortune or lack, which represents a climax of the fairy tale. This liquidation can have many forms again. Following phase is the return of the hero. Then, next step is usually a pursuit of the

⁶⁴ Through the rest of this overview only the term hero is mentioned but it does not express the character is necessarily male but it can represent a woman as well. But for the continuity, the term hero and pronouns he and his are stated.

main hero by some evil character who does not want to give up. Nevertheless, the hero is rescued from pursuit, the villain is destroyed and hero is finally saved. At this point the fairy tale usually ends but another evil can sometimes appear again. It introduces the next villain and the beginning of the next narration. There is a repetition of the above mentioned functions and new ones appear.

In this case, it leads to the point of unrecognized arrival of the true hero, called arrival incognito, who comes back home or arrive to a different country. The false hero has wrongful claims and hard and difficult task is proposed to the hero. This step represents one of the most favourite elements in the fairy tale. The hero can get many different tasks, is tested again, and finally he solves the task. The hero is then recognized due to his marking, fulfilled task or due to the item he received like above mentioned ring or scarf, and the evil is finally revealed. Following phase is an exposure of the villain/false hero, which is called transfiguration of the hero. The hero is celebrated and the villain is punished. The last function brings a reward for the hero, either wedding, ascent of the throne or he gets the thing which he was looking for. It means a victory for him and it brings the end of the fairy tale.

The above mentioned functions are crucial for the logical structure of the traditional fairy tale even though it is not necessary to apply all of them, in the case they are used they have to follow the rules of analysed sequence. Some functions have their counterparts, for example, fight and victory or pursuit and rescue. It is essential to introduce these pairs of actions because then there is a natural development of fairy tales.⁶⁵ These functions represent Propp's attitude to the genre of fairy tale.

Coming back to Angela Carter, she also introduces these counterparts in her stories as it is visible from their content. Jack Zipes comments on the choice of the proper elements in the fairy tale, "[t]he characters, settings, and motifs are combined and varied according to specific functions to induce *wonder*."⁶⁶ Angela Carter little bit reverses the role of her wonders because she uses them only marginally and they are more or less unexpected as they sometimes seem controversial (see the analysis). Nevertheless, still there are some wonders that

⁶⁵ Propp, 32-65.

⁶⁶ Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, xviii.

save some of the characters and help them to survive, but on the other hand also cause their death as survival belongs to the repeating motifs in Carter's tales.

To finalize this part, Propp asserts that it does not matter which character fulfils which function and how one reaches it because the functions are stable and they are highly important features of individual fairy tales. Functions do not exclude one another because many functions can be included in one fairy tale and does not affect an exclusion of a different function. On the other hand, functions influence one another and the plot developments, especially the ways in which are functions represented. One character can fulfil more than one function according to the role or the sphere of actions he or she has to fulfil.⁶⁷ Writing fairy tales means that a writer should be aware of Propp's division and explanation of his functions. Nevertheless, it is important to mention Jack Zipes' words that "Propp's structural approach should be regarded with caution because there are innumerable variations in theme and plot types throughout Europe and North America."⁶⁸ Angela Carter's structure of fairy tales is in some of the aspects also very different from Propp's form. Still, Carter's fairy tales and their structures, characters and their roles will be analysed in practical part too but the reader has to be aware of the fact that Carter goes against the traditional way of writing the tales. Therefore, her organization of tales is non-traditional in comparison with the above mentioned Propp's overview of roles, function and structure.

⁶⁷ Propp, 32-64.

⁶⁸ Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, xvii.

5. Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* analysis

5.1. Introduction to Carter's fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber*

Charms and the supernatural figures are not the only features that are enhanced in Carter's fairy tales, but the above mentioned question of gender is especially very often raised. Carter is also interested in animal characters that are represented in her tales to illustrate typical human vices as fables do. Therefore, Carter incorporates all these elements together and she adjusts them in her own innovative way. For example, she deals with the female vampire or she uses charms that signify death and includes animals that most of the times represent the beast. In general, fairy tales are narratives that play "... a privileged role in the production of gender, and as such are deconstructed and reconstructed in a variety of ways,"⁶⁹ which fulfils the writers' intention. Angela Carter also comes with her gender deconstruction as she fights against prejudices of today's society and uses this genre and various characters in her tales to achieve her goals. "Especially since the 1970s and up through the present, the fairy tale has become more aggressive, aesthetically more complex and sophisticated, and more insistent on *not* distracting readers but help them focus on key social problems and issues in their respective societies."⁷⁰ Angela Carter therefore had a great base for her collection to write the tales where she could incorporate her feminist thoughts and to attract her readers as in the times she published her collection, the society approved the allegorical literature. Christina Bacchilega explains the reasons why Carter uses the genre of fairy tale as her source of stimulation for expressing her attitude:

Creative writers seem equally inspired by the fairy tale, which provides them with well-known material pliable to political, erotic, or narrative manipulation. Belittled, yet pervasive and institutionalized, fairy tales are thus produced and consumed to accomplish a variety of social functions in multiple contexts and in more or less explicitly ideological ways.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Bacchilega, 10.

⁷⁰ Zipes, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*, 25.

⁷¹ Bacchilega, 2-3.

Consequently, Angela Carter produces the postmodern fairy tales in order to point out the faults of contemporary society. In this form Carter has lots of space to attack these faults as there are many plots, characters and narratives she can be inspired from.

In her fiction Carter stands for the opinion that women have their sexual needs and that they can feel delight and related pleasure, as she tends to express through her writing. Merja Makinen confirms this by pointing out that "Carter's texts have always engaged with eroticism."⁷² Eroticism and sexuality in general are the issues that are represented in nearly each of her fairy tale as for example in the tale "The Company of Wolves" where the main female protagonist skilfully uses eroticism, nakedness and female assets to her benefits to save herself from possible death. Angela Carter is therefore interested in this issue and every tale exemplifies a different woman and her attitude to sexuality in general.

However, Carter's texts are not pornographic, even though they can seem like that, but they play with eroticism to express a disagreement with the general prevailing point of view about female sexuality. Angela Carter is a feminist author who is exploding female stereotypes of being passive and goes the other way round in order to shock her readers. She reaches her goals by joining of two controversial themes and those are violence against women and female sexuality together with their lust for sexual passion that both evoke lots of critical debates. Gina Wisker notices that Carter "... addresses a genre not only dominated by male practitioners, but also male fears of female sexuality and female subjectivity."⁷³ Female subjectivity is one of the topics that is highlighted by Carter in her tales too because the main female protagonists in nearly all of Carter's tales use their subjectivity together with the eroticism in order to obtain what they want.

Thus, eroticism and violence are the tools that Angela Carter uses to point female strengths out. Sally Keenan asserts that Carter's "... suggestion that women too readily identify with images of themselves as victims of patriarchal oppression,

⁷² Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 28.

⁷³ Gina Wisker, "Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter's horror writing," in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (New York: Longman, 1997), 116.

that in effect they are frequently complicit with that oppression, was a distinctly unfashionable notion in the mid-1970s,"⁷⁴ the time before she launched her collection in public. Carter wants to prove the women that they do not have to agree with their position in the society. Angela Carter does not accept the traditional image of women therefore she comes with original female protagonists that utilize their uniqueness for their benefits. Carter once mentioned that "... fairy tales, stories from the oral tradition, are all of them the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of the ordinary men and women whose labour created our world."⁷⁵ Therefore, Angela Carter explores and investigates the genre of fairy tales and produces her own conceptualization of them, how she captures them, and what she finds relevant to point out because they portray the structure of society or at least people believe it is so. Angela Carter adds:

Ours is a highly individualised culture, with a great faith in the work of art as unique one-off, and the artist as an original, a godlike and inspired creator of unique one-offs. But fairy tales are not like that, nor are their makers. Who first invented meatballs? In what country? Is there a definitive recipe for potato soup? Think in terms of the domestic arts. 'This is how I make potato soup.'⁷⁶

Concerning her fairy tales, Angela Carter is very original. She introduces the new style of tales as the stories include both wit and irony. Additionally, they are terrifying, thrilling and at once amusing. Carter joins all the elements together even though some readers can consider the content of these tales too open-minded. Angela Carter does not copy but she produces her own original versions of famous fairy tales in order to differ from the most of the writers publishing fairy tales.

5.2. Style of writing of fairy tales

In general, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* is a collection of postmodern fairy tales as they totally transform the original tales and add features of eroticism, Gothic, brutality, but also humour even though this humour is

⁷⁴ Keenan, 39.

⁷⁵ quoted in Sage, introduction to *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, 2.

⁷⁶ quoted in Sage, introduction to *Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, 2.

sometimes little bit perverse. They criticize the old classical versions of those tales that have a long tradition in human history. These new versions are rewritten on the basis of Charles Perrault's and Madame Leprince de Beaumont's tales and they show these stories from absolutely different perspective as they add brutality, savagery and the symbol of blood.⁷⁷ Darkness, sorrow and grief are also the repeated motifs in Carter's stories, therefore, Lucie Armitt is one of the critics who highlight that *The Bloody Chamber* comes not only under the genre of postmodern fairy tales, and she expresses that term Gothic is also very appropriate:

Quite clearly, rather than being fairy-tales which contain a few Gothic elements, these are actually Gothic tales that prey upon the restrictive enclosures of fairy-story formulae in a manner that threatens to become 'masochistically' self-destructive. In order to comprehend this point fully, we need to elaborate upon what characterizes the structural conventions of a fairy-tale, namely the interrelationship between play, space and narrative consolation in the never-never world of the happy ever after.⁷⁸

Lucie Armitt is right as Carter's tales include lots of Gothic aspects. Furthermore, they are not appropriate for children and their content is more or less in some of the cases similar to horror stories, as for example the introductory tale "The Bloody Chamber", which original version was also very dark one, or "The Snow Child". However, there are also tales as "Puss-in-Boots" that belong to lighter genre because they can brilliantly join eroticism with amusement. All of Carter's tales are rewritten on the basis of their original versions and Carter intends to differ from them in some significant way, therefore, she adds the elements of brutality but sometimes also the wit and irony. The reader should not expect the typical development in the case he or she is reading the tales from *The Bloody Chamber* but the reader ought to be open to Carter's attitude to her writing and accept her own structure of fairy tales. Angela Carter does not write in the serene manner but she comes with the scenes that can totally astonish the reader. She incorporates

⁷⁷ Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 22.

⁷⁸ Lucie Armitt, "The fragile frames of *The Bloody Chamber*," in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter: Fiction, Femininity, Feminism*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (New York: Longman, 1997), 89.

lots of untypical stories, their contents and developments, and changes the plot of original tales that inspired her.

Angela Carter is interested in the classical known fairy tales as for example “Little Red Riding Hood”, “Bluebeard” or “The Master Cat, Or Puss in Boots” and she uses them as her literary sources for her own new conceptualizations of them. As Aidan Day claims, “Carter’s interest in Perrault’s rendering fairy tales was precisely that, in his telling, Perrault remained grounded in material reality. Carter celebrated Perrault’s worldliness, even though she may not have agreed with the morals he was pushing.”⁷⁹ Therefore, in my opinion, she changes the basic plot to her own satisfaction in order to come with the new morals adjusted for contemporary society.

Angela Carter intends to illustrate these tales from a different point of view and offers her readers to make their own judgements about both versions because the old versions are usually known to all readers. She especially highlights the roles of women in the stories. Carter portrays women as self-thinking figures that are able to care about themselves, fight against male superiority and enjoy sexual act with delight. It is quite different from the old concept when readers consider that in the traditional tales women are described as weak humans who need to be protected. Consequently, Angela Carter suggests that women are much more independent than it is believed and expected, and Carter attacks old traditional points of view. Moreover, Carter’s tales are sometimes very ironical. Merja Makinen points out that even though the reader considers this new version, the original story is still there as well because the old stories are incorporated in the new ones.⁸⁰ Therefore, the reader can realize the ironical moments as they make significant reference to classical versions. Aidan Day asserts that “Carter successfully inscribes an old form with a new set of assumptions in *The Bloody Chamber* tales.”⁸¹ It means that during the reading of the tale, the reader knows it is not a completely new story but the story is enriched with the completely new mission.

⁷⁹ Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” 132.

⁸⁰ Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” 24.

⁸¹ Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” 145.

What is also exceptional concerning Carter's tales is her innovative style of writing. As Christina Britzolakis mentions, "Carter characteristically writes in the postmodern mode of pastiche, mixing high and low culture."⁸² In her fairy tales the changing themes are mingling and she incorporates lots of elements and characters from different spheres. Concerning the usage of fantasy in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* Angela Carter is very skilful writer. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton open their compilation of critical essays *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter* by introduction of Carter's style of writing:

In every case, fantasy embodies a power to influence, distort, but also reconstruct the world. So by wresting myths and legends from their originators, Carter creates a powerful dialectic. Throughout her writing, she maintains that the possibility of creating new desires cannot be dissociated from the cultural forces that have moulded over time."⁸³

Angela Carter has an amazing talent for changing the original versions of the tale known to the society. What is more, she reverses their original meaning so perfectly that, in my opinion, every reader is astonished by that and has to think of their new mission. However, Merja Makinen claims that "Carter's tales do not simply 'rewrite' the old tales by fixing roles of active sexuality for their female protagonists – they 're-write' them by playing with and upon (if not preying upon) the earlier misogynistic version."⁸⁴ Keenan adds that in Carter's "... fairy-stories, she seeks to expose a truth that those old tales have only thinly disguised : that female virginity is the precious jewel of the ruling classes, token and guarantor of their property rights."⁸⁵ Both these opinions are worth mentioning as I agree that Carter does not accept the typical division of female and male positions, rights and duties, but she goes against these traditional concepts, against male perspective.

Angela Carter intentionally reverses the roles to present a new way of thinking which she stands for. Aidan Day describes Carter's fairy tales in this way:

Carter's fairy tales are better described as materialist, rationalist 'fables of the politics of experience'. Specifically, of course, it is the gender politics

⁸² Britzolakis, 50.

⁸³ Bristow and Broughton, 13-14.

⁸⁴ Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 24.

⁸⁵ Keenan, 44.

and intimately related class politics of experience that they are preoccupied with. Carter's tales go deeper than Perrault's kind of moralising about experience: they look at the way in which experience is fundamentally structured in gendered terms.⁸⁶

Day's assertion confirms that Carter is interested in the gender roles and therefore she writes to make her standpoint obvious. "From the beginning, fairy tales were symbolic commentaries on the mores and customs of a particular society and the classes and groups within these societies and how their actions and relations could lead to success and happiness."⁸⁷ Angela Carter is aware of this fact and brilliantly applies it to express her own attitude to contemporary society.

Furthermore, providing her characters with different disguises is the great technique that Carter utilizes because her characters are gradually putting away their masks to show their real inner world, which is one of the Carter's intention and she is praised for that. She does not use the fairy tale to show the perfect world, she employs this genre to highlight that we live in imperfect world where we pretend to be somebody else but we can be natural as well. "For Carter, the virtue of the fairy tale lies in its status as an inherently democratic form, always open to appropriation and interpretation."⁸⁸ Carter knows that the fairy tale offers lots of space for expressing her ideas. She has the wide sphere of activity and can exploit every tale for different purposes to manifest various thoughts. "Carter celebrates the removal of borders, the transgression of limits and makes way for new, intersubjective notions of selfhood."⁸⁹ Carter wants to fuse both the roles of men and women, to go behind the typical borders and want women to behave as men do and men to accept this transgression of border.

Another important fact about Carter's fairy tales is that "Carter was insistent that her texts were open-ended, written with a space for the reader's activity in mind."⁹⁰ It means that every reader could use his or her own imagination about the possible ends of the individual tales and stories and work with his/her own fantasy as Angela Carter usually does not end the story with some final statement implying

⁸⁶ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 134.

⁸⁷ Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, xxi.

⁸⁸ Gamble, *Angela Carter: A Literary Life*, 156.

⁸⁹ Müller, 8.

⁹⁰ Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 25.

the fate of individual characters. "Carter always knows what she's doing with words, and the double ending turns on the double meaning of 'all right' *all right* as in 'solved', as in 'finished', and as opposed to 'something wrong' and 'something left undone'."⁹¹ Carter's ends of fairy tales usually offer more than one possible explanations of their conclusion perhaps also because they intend to provoke the reader to think about the mission of each of the tale.

Carter does not end the stories with happy or unhappy final scenes, most of the times she leaves them open. "Carter flirts with textual danger on her own untamed terms, refusing to give us clearly defined answers. For her readers such flirtation proves all to be good."⁹² Therefore, it depends on reader's mind and fantasy what one finds to be the right end for him or her even though another reader does not have to agree with it. "Meaning for Carter is open-ended; it is both multiple and changeable. Carter creates new perceptions for her readers by displacing the accepted hierarchy of meanings, putting together stylistically and thematically what is usually kept apart."⁹³ Her openness makes Carter rather exceptional concerning the era when she published these fairy tales and her status as a writing female. Therefore, she makes her readers to feel that they are incorporated into the tales, as there are no final answers and statements. They can choose because *The Bloody Chamber* is "... allowing space for the interactive involvement of the reader in the interpretative act."⁹⁴ Angela Carter leaves space for reader's own thoughts and interpretation of the tales.

5.3. *The Bloody Chamber* - collection

The Bloody Chamber consists of ten stories. Some of them are considered more crucial in Carter's construction of female identity and are widely discussed by the critics for their controversial content. "The Bloody Chamber" is a core introductory Gothic story, a re-written Bluebeard story from Charles Perrault, which

⁹¹ Atwood, 134.

⁹² Armitt, 98.

⁹³ Linda Anderson, preface to *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction*, ed. Linda Anderson (London: Arnold, 1990), viii.

⁹⁴ Crofts, 44.

is followed by the other nine tales. Makinen divides the further nine fairy tales into three categories. First three tales deal with the cats, concretely lion/tiger/puss, the next three are connected with magical beings or so called supernatural figures, erl-king/snow-child/vampire, and the last three with werewolves.⁹⁵ Margaret Atwood claims that the collection *"The Bloody Chamber"* is arranged according to meat-eater: three cat family stories at the beginning, followed by 'Puss-in-Boots' as a kind of comic coda; three wolf family stories at the end; and three ambiguous supernatural creatures – erl-king, snow-child, female vampire – in the middle."⁹⁶ It is obvious from the structure of the collection that Carter divides the stories according to the well know rule of the symbolical number three as it is typical of fairy tales. Only "The Bloody Chamber" does not fit into any of these categories and stands on its own apart perhaps because it bears the same name as the collection itself and functions as an opening and core story.

The sequence of the fairy tales follows in the order "The Bloody Chamber", "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", "The Tiger's Bride", "Puss-in-Boots", "The Erl-King", "The Snow Child", "The Lady of the House of Love", "The Werewolf", "The Company of Wolves" and the last one closing the collection is "Wolf-Alice". All the titles that Angela Carter uses are renamed except for the tale "Puss-in-Boots" which retained the original name, and there is a high resemblance between the title "The Snow Child" and "The Snow White", where child stands for white. The rest of the tales are called differently in the comparison with the original sources from which Carter derived her inspiration. Carter goes against the classical tales and her fairy tales "... defy rules of sexual and social conduct in a spirit aglow with mischief."⁹⁷ It means that she reverses the traditional social order that is typical of fairy tales, and comes with the new attitude to the content of original tales.

Each of the tales in *The Bloody Chamber* shares some common theme with the following tale but those subjects are usually standing in opposition. Angela Carter is always trying to describe two sides of one coin as Merja Makinen notes, "[e]ach tale takes up the theme of the earlier one and comments on a different

⁹⁵ Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 28.

⁹⁶ Atwood, 122.

⁹⁷ Warner, 418.

aspect of it,"⁹⁸ which is certainly obvious from the content of the stories. Lucie Armitt confirms this idea by stating that "[i]mages, symbols and motifs from one story turn up in another in a way that reiterates and reworks the concerns of a previous vignette."⁹⁹ Then, Angela Carter can offer readers more possible conceptions of two similar stories and make counterparts from them. As for example in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and in "The Tiger's Bride" where "one of Angela Carter's two rewritings ends with Beauty's new perception of Beast as a man faintly resembling a lion, suggesting that his physical transformation may not be what the tale is about, while in a startling reversion her second rewriting concludes with Beauty willingly turning beast."¹⁰⁰ Christina Bacchilega notices that Carter does not want to directly state what is right or wrong, but she offers two and sometimes even more possibilities of end as in the sequence of three wolf tales.

What is common for all the stories is the fact that Angela Carter engages in women representatives that have a strong role in human relationships. At the beginning of these tales the women are usually the victims, but as the story continues their roles are going to change. At the end of the tales the women are those who win over the men and become heroines except the sequence of the tales "The Snow Child" and "The Lady of the House of Love" where the female protagonists die and are defeated. I assume that Angela Carter's aim is probably creating the contrast and tension to previous and following stories as these above mentioned tales are in the middle of the collection. The women presented in stories become victims thorough the plot and are condemned to death. They are not rescued as in "The Bloody Chamber" and they do not invent any plan to save themselves as in "The Company of Wolves", or do not take all the courage to kill the villain as the heroine in "The Erl-King". They are the victims of the higher power which they cannot affect.

Nevertheless, in other tales women can defeat men and run from those who hurt or torture them, from so called villains, and female characters fight against their submission. Angela Carter's aim is to attract the reader's attention by ascribing

⁹⁸ Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 29.

⁹⁹ Armitt, 96.

¹⁰⁰ Bacchilega, 80.

the male characteristics as for example wilderness, lust and independence to the women in order to attack the "... patriarchal power relations and the stereotypical representation of women."¹⁰¹ Angela Carter carries out her task brilliantly as Makinen adds because "... the curiosity of the women protagonists is rewarded (rather than punished) and their sexuality is active (rather than passive or suppressed altogether)."¹⁰² These elements are different from the old tales where women would be punished for their curiosity, overt sexuality and possible openness of feelings. Lucie Armitt expresses that "[i]t is not simply the characters themselves (and the transformative potential of their bodily metamorphoses) that free up new and anti-conventional readings of women's pleasure. The stories comprising *The Bloody Chamber* are also (inter) textual metamorphoses of fairy-tale and each other."¹⁰³ Angela Carter skilfully structures her collection of stories as in every fairy tale the reader can feel the impact of the previous one and the different conceptualization of the following story from the point of view of the preceding one. It is particularly visible in the sequence of tales "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" where different perspectives of womanhood are compared.

All of the tales are in some way dealing with the theme of sexuality. Open sexuality is a typical feature of female protagonists in *The Bloody Chamber* although it usually takes them some time to discover this part of identity. After this finding, the female characters are in the most cases at the end of the stories open-minded (concerning their sexuality and eroticism). Aidan Day claims:

In *The Bloody Chamber* Carter is concerned not simply to point out what is wrong with conventional representations of gender; she is concerned at once to offer different representations, different models. These two concerns may be apparent simultaneously in a single tale. Sometimes the two concerns emerge most clearly in the counterpointing between two different tellings of the same tale.¹⁰⁴

For example, "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" are tales that represent motif of a beast where the lion is portrayed as being humble and gentle

¹⁰¹ Wisker, "Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter's horror writing," 116.

¹⁰² Makinen, "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality," 22.

¹⁰³ Armitt, 89.

¹⁰⁴ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 134.

and the tiger represents a ferocious and reclusive figure, therefore these two stories counterpoint two kinds of beast.

These two contrastive tales in Carter's collection highlight different significant aspects that are typical of male dominated society. It shows that not only women but also men behave according to some conventions. Therefore, the man can represent a gentleman and he regards a woman with the respect and also listens to her needs and wishes, as in the case of "The Courtship of Mr Lyon". On the other hand, "The Tiger's Bride" shows that there can be men with real savagery inside them. They do not want to admit that women should be heard and men could fulfil their requests. By these counterpointing stories, Carter implies that men can choose the role which they want to play in the real life as well. "In Carter's tale the male is represented as being as much trapped within the patriarchal scenario as the female. Here, the female, equal to the male in fleshly nature *and* appetite, dismisses nursery superstitions about the uniquely threatening animality of the male."¹⁰⁵ Aidan Day asserts that society should get rid of prejudices about gender in general. Therefore, Carter includes these two beast tales where Beauty changes from the victim to the character who gains a respect, and the Beast realizes Beauty's strengths.

The common motif of skin and flesh is also very often enhanced in all of the fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* as Aidan Day comments:

Carter's empirical materialism leads her to see both women and men as creatures of the flesh and as equally rooted in and driven by fleshly impulses. To deny women the same fleshly ontology as men would be to fall into the patriarchal 'angel in the house' syndrome of misrepresentation of women, which of course has its equally constraining counter-misrepresentation of women who act out fleshly impulses as whores. It is patriarchal culture – in a duplicitous attempt to contain the female – which has generated the idea of male libido as threatening to devour sexually unmotivated females or as needing to protect itself against sexually motivated one.¹⁰⁶

The Bloody Chamber brilliantly deals with the generally established ideas about female roles in society and analyses these issues in order to provide a different

¹⁰⁵ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 114.

¹⁰⁶ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 147.

point of view. Carter shows that women with some sexual libido are not necessarily whores (as society labels them) but they are ordinary women who share these sensations with men, and there is nothing wrong concerning their feelings. Since Carter stands for the opinion that fairy tales are the tales that common public believe in as they are anonymous and it means that they are “the products of universal experience,”¹⁰⁷ it could be the main reason for Carter’s trying to portray fairy tales from a different perspective. There is the importance of “anonymity of the teller” and additionally the fact that fairy tales were “... originally transmitted orally, it was passed from teller to teller, all of whom freely modified it to suit the specific requirements of their audience.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Angela Carter does exactly the same. She uses the genre of fairy tale to adapt her own attitude to world nowadays which is demonstrated in the content of individual tales that are analysed below.

5.4. “The Bloody Chamber”

“The Bloody Chamber” which is the first tale in this collection belongs to the most debated fairy tales written by Angela Carter, and represents one of the darkest and gloomiest fairy tales from *The Bloody Chamber*. Nevertheless, this fairy tale is not only a representative of gothic style of writing but as Margaret Atwood asserts the tale shares a lot of features with the well known novella *Justine, or the Misfortune of Virtue* by Marquis de Sade. Margaret Atwood claims that this fairy tale resembles Marquis de Sade’s *Justine, or the Misfortune of Virtue* because the novella tackles the topic of female sexuality and strength as Angela Carter does in this collection too.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the female protagonist in Carter’s tale resembles a lot de Sade’s character Justine. Therefore, this story deals with both the horror situations and with female courage to face up to the cruel destiny. Gina Wisker determines this story as a “domestic horror” and she adds that “[t]his version of the traditional story features an art connoisseur who treats his new wife

¹⁰⁷ Keenan, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 130-137.

¹⁰⁹ Atwood, 118.

purely as commodity, an ornament, and a sexual feast for the eyes.”¹¹⁰ Comparing to the novella which this story is partly similar to, Justine is taken only as an object that should obey and listen to all her masters she had thorough her life. Nevertheless, in the case of Justine there are much more masters and their sexual wishes she is obeyed to fulfil in the comparison with Carter’s heroine who has only one master, Marquis.

Therefore, as Carter derives her inspiration from de Sade’s novella, there could be found some parallels between the main characters of these stories. There is an essential resemblance between de Sade’s Justine and Carter’s heroine (her name is not mentioned in the story) as both of the female protagonists are very shy and introvert at the beginning of the story, have their own inner world, do not want to give up their beliefs (especially Justine) and both prove to be strong enough to accept their destinies. Through the development of the story, both characters are progressively changing as they start to be more self-confident. They bear their destinies with raised head, but Justine is the one who proves more strength and is more able to fight against evil.

This is only general description but going deeper to the structure of both fictions the theme of sexuality represents a core issue in them. Comparing to de Sade, even though Carter does not apply so vulgar expressions and brutal descriptions as he did, Carter also plays with this subject matter alongside with sexual perversions. In my opinion, both of the authors incorporate this controversial topic into their literature to show the society in the right way. They highlight that nobody is as chaste as he or she seems and even the monk (in de Sade’s version) can have secret perversions which he is hiding before the outside world but he shows them when he feels secure. Nevertheless, Sally Keenan states that Carter links Marquis de Sade especially with feminist promotion of female sexual freedom.¹¹¹ Concerning sexual freedom, Justine’s sister Juliette is right example of it. Nevertheless, Angela Carter is more inspired by character of Justine and her nature. Additionally, Carter also points out female devotion and bravery, for example concerning the role of the mother in her story, unlike Marquis de Sade.

¹¹⁰ Wisker, “Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter’s horror writing,” 122.

¹¹¹ Keenan, 38.

The plot of "The Bloody Chamber" itself implies Angela Carter's literary interests. The main character, victim at the beginning, comes into the castle of her just married husband Marquis, villain to be, as an innocent, frightened young lady. However at the end of the story, due to undergoing of hardship by discovering Marquis' torturing chamber, she bears her sudden tragic destiny courageously. Nevertheless, she is rescued by her brave mother, helper, who finally saves her by cutting off her daughter's husband head. This rather brutal ending of the story highlights the fact that women are willing to do anything for their family. There is the character of mother, a woman, who comes at the last moment to save her only daughter without knowing exactly that something is going to happen to her daughter but an intuition leads her.

Since this story is a rewritten fairy tale on the basis of Perrault's "Bluebeard", the plot is very similar to the original tale. Carter keeps the original version a lot, however, the young bride is not saved by her brothers but by her mother, which is even more surprising development. Carter is usually more interested in the issue of fatherhood than maternity as it is obvious from this collection as well, nevertheless, in this tale the relationship between mother and daughter is foregrounded. Carter's version is narrated by the first person (opposite to the Perrault's one), the main female protagonist herself. She is going to marry a wealthy Marquis, a little bit mysterious man who had had in his life three wives before he met Carter's heroine. He is much more experienced than his young bride and through the story, the reader can feel his attitude to his wife who should represent the role of jewel which he acquired. "Marquis purchases his new, impoverished, beautiful wife in order to control her, to engulf her and devour her innocence through perversion."¹¹² His young wife serves as the next quest he has to finalize because of her pure innocence that attracts him at her.

The story begins with the leaving and Carter keeps Propp's division of individual steps. The female protagonist leaves her mother to get to know the world by marrying Marquis, the future villain who chooses her and she agrees because of

¹¹² Gina Wisker, "Behind Locked Doors: Angela Carter, Horror and the Influence of Edgar Allan Poe," in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 189.

his property that is charming her. Marquis becomes an owner of this girl, she is an item of his affection, and she feels it in an immense way. As an example can serve a situation when she first enters into their bedroom which is full of mirrors, they are everywhere and they make her feel that she is just a sexual object, which attacks her innocence. "The multitude of mirrors and hence of girls emphasises her objectification: she loses individuality and becomes an item in a series of multiply reproduced items, a specimen of female sex in the Marquis' harem."¹¹³ The main female protagonist gradually realizes Marquis' depravity and his obsession with pornography and women in general.

She is expecting that there will be the moment of sexual intercourse but even though she realizes that fact, at the beginning of their marriage she feels ashamed. "I could not meet his eye and turned my head away, out of pride, out of shyness, and watched a dozen husbands approach me in a dozen mirrors and slowly, methodically, teasingly, unfasten the buttons of my jacket and slip it from my shoulders. Enough!"¹¹⁴ As a virgin, the girl feels terrified by Marquis' practice and his calm behaviour. She knows that he is much stronger than her and that she must surrender his concupiscence. Nevertheless, the surprising moment comes when she starts to feel excitation as well, "I was aghast to feel myself stirring."¹¹⁵ Angela Carter exposes the general belief that young virgin does not feel any sexual desire and she has to submit to her husband's requirements against her will. Here, in "The Bloody Chamber", we see the girl who is slowly losing her qualm and she becomes the woman who enjoys her husband's touches, which is Carter's repeated topic in her tales. The young bride is the victim in this story, nevertheless, "Carter reminds us how victimhood for women often carries with the dangerously seductive companions of 'willingness' and 'virtue'."¹¹⁶ Carter's protagonist is frightened by her feelings as she is aware she tends to forget her virtues and she has to fight with her vices.

The young girl becomes the woman. Even though she is alone and does not have any friend in the castle except for the piano-turner, she changes into stronger

¹¹³ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 154.

¹¹⁴ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 14-15.

¹¹⁵ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 15.

¹¹⁶ Bacchilega, 122-123.

and stronger human. She is missing her mother, has to fight with solitude and obey the rules of her husband. Once he is called away from the castle, she has to face up her own curiosity and her temptation to break the promise she gave him, and see what is prohibited by her husband. When she finds the chamber which is forbidden to her, she is obviously absolutely frightened. By seeing the room full of torturing machines and dead bodies of Marquis' three former wives, she realizes the brutality of Marquis' actions, the possible impact of her disobedience, and is thinking about running away, feeling to be desperate. It is too late as Marquis finds out that she entered into his secret chamber and wants to punish her by torturing her as well. This is a typical example of Propp's rule expressing the testing of the main character and consequent violation of prohibition.

Carter's protagonist does not follow the order she had to and the girl is going to be punished for her disobedience. Marquis gave his wife the keys and she was told not to open this forbidden door. However, she was said so with such a strong emphasis which evokes the feeling that it was obvious Marquis must have known that she was going to break the rule. It woke up her curiosity about the room so much that she could not stop to think about it. As she claims, "I only did what he knew I would."¹¹⁷ It could be then assumed that he was looking forward to declaring her guilty of disobeying his rules and he enjoyed this feeling to be in the superior position, and the fact that he had a right to manipulate with her as he wanted:

It is in this Sadeian spirit that the patriarch of 'The Bloody Chamber' desires total ownership and control, needing to test his powers by leaving suddenly, entrusting the household keys to his new wife. Not surprisingly, when the girl seeks knowledge, figured in the key she finds to the locked and forbidden room, she falls foul of his need for complete domination. In opening up the room, it looks as if she shall be the next in the series of dismembered wives.¹¹⁸

In my opinion, Angela Carter suggests by this plot development the men's strong superiority and dominance in the society. "What Carter's tale will, of course, emphasise is that the bottom line of this kind of proprietorial objectification of the

¹¹⁷ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 37.

¹¹⁸ Wisker, "Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter's horror writing," 123.

female is the murder chamber in the Marquis' castle, where women have literally been denied subject-status and have been turned into objects, dead meat."¹¹⁹ His wife knows that she is going to be the next sacrifice and Carter highlights Marquis' enthusiasm from his social role, joy from his higher position and from the chance to play with his victims that are represented by women, his wives. Carter describes the typical social roles of men and women where men rule women and women have to obey.

Even though Carter's character is expecting the execution, she survives and the fact that she is saved by her mother is the surprising element in this story. The story describes an unexpected bravery of female sex as Carter applies it in nearly every tale in this collection. There is neither a man nor a brother to rescue the lady in distress but the mother of Carter's protagonist. Also the girl seems to be absolutely in a shock by her mother's behaviour:

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother ... one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father's service revolver and, behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the witnesses of a furious justice ... without a moment's hesitation, she ... took aim and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head.¹²⁰

Even the girl did not expect her mother to be so strong and murder her husband without any hesitation although she knows about her adventurous life in her youth. As Gina Wisker mentions, "[w]hile in the various versions of the traditional fairy tale, the wife who crosses the thresholds of power and knowledge usually escapes being a victim, rescued by a strong man, in Carter's feminist revision, she is rescued by her warrior mother who breaks down the castle doors, reclaiming the space and her daughter."¹²¹ Carter does not approve with traditional versions, she tries to come with something new and unexpected. "Here the strong bond between mother and daughter figures as a kind of 'maternal telepathy' that sends ... her mother to the curious bride's rescue."¹²² I would say that Carter proposes that also women can

¹¹⁹ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 153.

¹²⁰ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 39-40.

¹²¹ Wisker, "Behind Locked Doors: Angela Carter, Horror and the Influence of Edgar Allan Poe," 190.

¹²² Ellen Cronan Rose, "Through the Looking Glass: When Women Tell Fairy Tales," in *The Voyage in Fictions of Female Development*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983), 222.

function as rescuers not only men. Additionally, Nicole Ward Jouve claims one interesting fact about Angela Carter's fiction, "[m]others or grandmothers are speedily and neatly disposed of (e.g. wolf eats grandmother). Or they contradict all motherly representations: the girl's mother in *The Bloody Chamber* is a tiger-shooting, horse-riding, pistol-wielding heroine"¹²³ Angela Carter suggests that women can represent an immense threat for men in many cases. Carter is persuaded that women are able to stand in for male duties and they can fulfil them without any troubles, which represents a danger for men because they do not expect it and neither Marquis did.

As Aidan Day mentions there is a difference between the end of this story and the original one about Bluebeard. The fact that the girl sets up with the blind piano-tuner shows that he is more a man than any other man who is able to see because his blindness bears a symbolical aspect in this tale as he cannot see women and take them as objects without considerations of their feelings.¹²⁴ Then, "Carter's pianist heroine in 'The Bloody Chamber' and the piano-tuner may achieve a harmonious relationship free of the oppressions of one by another."¹²⁵ The girl feels a sigh of relief that her piano-turner cannot see her because of her red key mark on her forehead done by Marquis when he found out his wife's disobedience. It could be considered as a symbol of shame because she did not obey instructions of her husband. Carter's tale then represents the next function from Propp's structural division of fairy tale and that is the marking of the heroine.

However, in "The Bloody Chamber" the heroine is marked to remember her faults she has done and to avoid them in the future as she is wearing the symbol of shame and is happy that her piano-turner is not able to see it. "No paint nor powder, no matter how thick or white, can mask that red mark on my forehead; I am glad he cannot see it – not for the fear of his revulsion, since I know he sees me clearly with his heart – but, because it spares my shame."¹²⁶ Feeling the shame makes Carter's character to realize that she violated the prohibition and she gave

¹²³ Jouve, 156.

¹²⁴ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 156-157.

¹²⁵ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 157.

¹²⁶ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 41.

up her virtue. In my opinion, the protagonist is aware of her sin that was caused by her curiosity and now she has to deal with the consequences it evoked.

Therefore, she is happy for a new chance in her life. As Aidan Day confirms, Carter "... has also been careful to note at least some element of responsibility on the girl's part for having been taken in by, at least, the Marquis' money."¹²⁷ Additionally to Day's opinion Margaret Atwood claims, "[t]hat the passive heroine is not in fact killed off by her author is due in part to her loss of 'pure' perfection. She does not remain chaste, like Justine "¹²⁸ There is the main difference between Justine and Carter's female protagonist. Justine defended herself from intrigues, even though she was most of the time part of them, she still worshipped chaste ideas but Carter's protagonist fell into her own trap and Marquis was aware of it. "[T]he young girl is flattered by his gifts, his wooing, his financial security. In 'The Bloody Chamber', the monstrous husband figuratively devours his bride as he ravishes her, attempting to govern her imagination and her quest for knowledge."¹²⁹ The girl is charmed by Marquis wealth and gifts he gives to her, which she later admits with the obvious shame and regret. Carter's character's "... precarious safety lies in her innocence, but once she loses it – as, confronted with her new husband's pornographic desires, she is intended to – she is doomed to internment in the bloody chamber which represents the deepest, darkest realm of the Sadeian erotic fantasy."¹³⁰ For the reader, Marquis' intrigues to manipulate with her are obvious, for the girl acting in the tale, they are hidden. Nevertheless "[t]he young bride's minutely detailed, hauntingly visual, and soul-searching account reveals that she self-consciously viewed her innocence as an asset—she exchanged her virginal body for her husband's riches."¹³¹ Being aware of her own selling out, she realizes her guilt even more.

Lots of literary critics mention the question of moral pornography in Carter's "The Bloody Chamber". The main female protagonist failed her chastity when Marquis was looking at her with a sexual desire. "And, for the first time in my

¹²⁷ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 158.

¹²⁸ Atwood, 123-124.

¹²⁹ Wisker, "Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter's horror writing," 123.

¹³⁰ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 154.

¹³¹ Bacchilega, 120.

innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away.”¹³² She later adds, “I was not afraid of him; but of myself.”¹³³ When she recognizes his lust for her, she enjoys that even though she is disgusted by that, she cannot help herself as she is fighting with competing feelings. His perverse manners excite her in some way. Adian Day mentions that there is the “... image of positive female response to male pornographic attention.”¹³⁴ Then, he adds that “[o]ne of Carter’s most potent strategies in the telling of this tale is having a narrator who is not just recounting things she has experienced but is recounting simultaneously her awareness of and growing reflective distance upon these things.”¹³⁵ Consequently, the reader can more easily recognize bride’s awareness of her mistakes and vices.

Carter’s protagonist realizes the fact that she will never be the same person anymore and she has to bear her mark as the sign of her loss of innocence and chastity. In this tale the reader can feel more or less happy ending as the villain is destroyed and woman is saved. Carter fulfils the Propp’s rule about the positive final in the fairy tale even though Carter’s protagonist has to accept the consequences of her breaking of promise, she is rescued and starts from the beginning with her piano-turner. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that Carter’s character functions here more as passive heroine, as Atwood noticed, because even though she is courageous, she actively does not do anything to rescue herself. Then, her mother as a helper is more heroic as she is willing to act in order to save her daughter, who is more or less devoted to her destiny and the role of victim that Marquis pushed her into. Therefore, it could not be said that she is the real heroine fighting with the evil.

5.5. “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”

“The Courtship of Mr Lyon” represents the next tale where relationships between male and female characters are foregrounded. Angela Carter opens again

¹³² Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 11.

¹³³ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 20.

¹³⁴ Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” 160.

¹³⁵ Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” 162.

the topic of femininity, superiority and sexuality as in the above analysed tale “The Bloody Chamber” and in the following one “The Tiger’s Bride”. “In each of the first three tales, Carter stresses the relationship between women’s subjective sexuality and their objective role as property: young girls get bought by wealth, one way or another.”¹³⁶ As I have already mentioned, it is the case in “The Bloody Chamber” but also in “The Tiger’s Bride” and “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” where the main female protagonists experience the same situation. Beauties are sold or it could be said they are rented to Beasts by their own fathers because of their debts they have to pay for. Consequently, Carter is interested not only in the relationship between Beauty and the Beast and how it is gradually changing, but also in the issue of fatherhood.

“Beauty and the Beast” is an original fairy tale that served as an inspiration for “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”. Angela Carter highlights the moments when Beauty opens her soul to the Beast, which is a repetitive plot in both of the stories even though both tales have absolutely different development. Nevertheless, finally in both version the Beast is not enemy any more, he (the beast represents a male gender) is not going to devour Beauty but, on the contrary, he intends to embrace her as the Beast is also opening his soul progressively.¹³⁷ Therefore, there is the resemblance between the original tale written by Madame Leprince de Beaumont “Beauty and the Beast” and Carter’s both variations as Beauties in her tales also have the power to affect Beasts and their feelings in an immense way.

The relationship between father and his daughter is the next important theme that is fore grounded in both the tales and the difference between “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride” is obvious. In the first fairy tale, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, the father does not take his daughter as his property but he likes her and wants to fulfil whatever he notices in her eyes. However, finally, he is forced to leave his daughter with the Beast but wants her to return back. In the second tale, “The Tiger’s Bride”, the father treats his daughter as his property and

¹³⁶ Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” 29.

¹³⁷ Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” 29-30.

his love to her is not as visible as in the first tale, in my opinion, there are nearly no signs of paternal love except for his crying when he loses her in cards. He is a gambler and loses his daughter because of his huge financial debts and then he seems not to be interested in his daughter anymore. "My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards."¹³⁸ Atwood notices that the father in "The Tiger's Bride" "is quite ready to trade his daughter's virtue for his own gain – in a card game."¹³⁹ Therefore, there is the visible difference between these two tales and the relationships between fathers and their daughters. Nevertheless, Carter introduces both of the tales with the abandoning of family members and Beauties' task is to save what their fathers have done wrong by staying with Beasts, Mr. Lyon and Tiger. Propp's rule of leaving is therefore kept again.

The reader can definitely feel much more cruelty in "The Tiger's Bride" than in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon". As it is mentioned by Aidan Day, "[t]he role of women as items of exchange in a patriarchal system is accented even more sharply in "The Tiger's Bride" than in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon"."¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Beauty in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" is willing to obey her father's wishes and decisions than Beauty in the second tale who does not have reason to worship her father. Beauty's obedience in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" is caused due to the nice relationship she always had with her father. Furthermore, it could be also caused by her natural sensitivity to please her surroundings. Also later, when she returns to the Beast is more or less clear that she first does it on purpose to make Mr. Lyon happy. Still, although she feels pity for the Beast, she is woeful that she has to leave her sorrowful father. Carter's "[f]ather figures and patriarchal power are attacked, deconstructed, shown to be hollow or vulnerable."¹⁴¹ The paternal love represents fundamental topic of Carter's tale, she comes with two paternal figures. One who is in pain when he is leaving his daughter, which is demonstrating a great love, and the another showing the father who is taking his daughter as his property and not expressing nearly any kind of sorrow from her loss.

¹³⁸ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 54.

¹³⁹ Atwood, 124.

¹⁴⁰ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 139.

¹⁴¹ Jouve, 155.

Since she is brought up in wilder conditions in “The Tiger’s Bride”, Beauty resembles more to patriarchal way of thinking and she discovers her own animality and sexuality due to the influence of Tiger. However, she does everything from her own volition. She is able to discover her animal part inside her when she feels she is ready for that, opposing the force and pressure and waiting for the moment she wants to change. It could be said that Beauty is tested if she can live in accordance with Tiger and finally she proves it. As Aidan Day mentions:

In “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” Beauty is not only defined as but defines herself as victim in the patriarchal game that she finds herself caught up in. In “The Tiger’s Bride” Beauty, having begun to define herself outside the prescriptions of patriarchal culture, refuses the role of victim. She refuses to be a lamb. The tiger reveals his animality beneath the human mask and she, asserting herself, does the same. Her stripping does not place her as the object of masculine gaze. It incorporates into her subject position an animality which cultural construction of what she is has sought to mask.”¹⁴²

Day’s thoughts confirm what was mentioned above, Beauty in “The Tiger’s Bride” is the one who is adapting to a new style of living as she also seeks for different life after her miserable experience with her father. Therefore, she is a seeker, she undergoes an enormous change, and she finally seems to be satisfied because she finds what she longs for, the freedom. Beauty has to give up her manners and customs to successfully pass through this change but she seems to be happier than before.

However, Beauty in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” more or less accepts the role of victim. She takes her role with all the duties and stays with the Beast as she promised. She is tested as well because she realizes she gave a promise to the Beast to come back to him, and now she has to prove she is able to fulfil her oath. Both of the female protagonists are tested, however, there is the difference between Beauties. Even though Beauty from “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” feels some affection to Mr Lyon, still it is noticeable that she does not behave only according to her wishes as Beauty in “The Tiger’s Bride” does. It could be surprising for many readers that Beauty in “The Tiger’s Bride”, belonging to a higher class, gets undressed, takes her mask off, her noble appearance vanishes and she becomes the animal. Contrary

¹⁴² Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” 142-143.

to “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, in “The Tiger’s Bride” Carter’s tale “... concludes not, by contrast, in the socialization and humanization of the Beast, but in her accepting her inward deepest, essential Beastly nature and becoming transformed herself.”¹⁴³ It means that Carter puts both these tales into total contrast as in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” Mr Lyon is the character that undergoes change into sophisticated man as it is analyzed in the next paragraph. “Lambhood and tigerishness may be found in either gender, and in the same individual at different times.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, Mr Lyon is the one who finds the elements of lambhood inside him and he gives up his frightening masks.

Carter points out that men can also realize their sensitive part of nature and women can find their wild side. Women should wake up also their animal parts because that can be the moment they become independent and satisfied. “Read the beasts as the projection of feminine libido, and they become exactly that autonomous desire which the female characters need to recognize and reappropriate as a part of themselves (denied by phallogocentric culture).”¹⁴⁵ As in the “The Tiger’s Bride” Beauty reveals that she is also the tiger inside and is full of sexuality, wilderness and savagery, which is not generally believed to be right concerning female sex. Nevertheless, it makes her free and deprived of all the conventions that made her burdened.

However, in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” it is vice versa, Mr Lyon is undergoing the change, this time it is not Beauty. “Mr Lyon, who begins as a beast ... is changed by love from carnivore to herbivore. From a flesh-devouring savage animal who roars and runs on all fours, he desolves into plain Mr Lyon, walking quietly and on two feet, with his wife ... in his rather bourgeois garden.”¹⁴⁶ Being loved and giving love makes a human from the Beast and he changes from his wild roots to a kind man due to the core moment in this story, which is returning of Beauty back to the Beast. Even though Beauty first seems to be forced to come

¹⁴³ Jacqueline Pearson, preface to *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), ix.

¹⁴⁴ Atwood, 121-122.

¹⁴⁵ Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” 31.

¹⁴⁶ Atwood, 124.

back, she realizes the Beast's love and it changes her as well. Christina Bacchilega explains Beauty's transformation:

Through Beauty's eyes the Beast becomes Mr. Lyon, and from these same eyes come tears 'like snow'. Embracing that naturalizing vision first found in the external focalizer and then in the lion's green eyes, she not only transforms and reincarnates the beast, but through an act of 'magical reciprocity' she comes to see herself as he and the external focalizer/narrator wish to see her.¹⁴⁷

Beauty then represents the right female character that comes to see Mr Lyon in the correct way as a man deserving to be loved. Sarah Gamble comments on the scene when Beauty and the Beast meet again and when Beauty realizes her deep love to Mr Lyon:

In the context of Carter's fiction as a whole, Beauty and the Beast's mutual avowal of love is a remarkable achievement, for it is the very first time a couple have succeeded in meeting on terms which are founded on genuine affection on both sides. It is an encounter which changes both of them, for it is not only the Beast, as he always traditionally does in this story, who gains humanity through the love of another; Beauty, too, is saved from a not-quite-human fate.¹⁴⁸

Beauty who used to be the spoiled child becomes the mature woman. The final scene supports this idea of consensus between both of them. "Mr and Mrs Lyon walk in the garden; the old spaniel drowns on the grass, in a drift of fallen petals."¹⁴⁹ This description evokes the calm and peaceful atmosphere and the feeling that everything is as it should be. Definitely, this tale is one of the happiest stories in this collection and it resembles the end of original fairy tale a lot.

In contrary to "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", there is a different transformation in "The Tiger's Bride" because it goes other way round. Not Tiger, but Beauty makes a transformation from a civil educated human to savage animal. She "... strips herself of all clothing – that of her former daughter-role, that of her present sex-object – down to her 'real' nakedness, that of herself as subject rather than object, watched only by her 'maid', a smiling mechanical simulacrum of herself

¹⁴⁷ Bacchilega, 94.

¹⁴⁸ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 133.

¹⁴⁹ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 51.

– the obedient shell her father has required her to be”¹⁵⁰ As it is written in the fairy tale itself, “[t]he Tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers.”¹⁵¹ Therefore, Beauty is the one who undergoes the process of changing and she accepts her deep animal instincts rather than coming back to her father. Beauty realizes the superficiality of people who tend to wear their masks and she wants to reveal her real soul by stripping of her clothes and to approach the Tiger. Bacchilega comments on Carter’s intention to portray this tale with different transformation:

Like “Beauty and the Beast,” “The Tiger’s Bride” tests social mores by focusing on the family, but in Carter’s story the father’s hypocrisy and weakness underscore for the daughter and ourselves the rottenness of a social order that trades (female) bodies to sustain some privileged souls. Finally, while the heroine willingly honours her father’s promise, yet bravely rejects the Beast’s offer, she has no allegiance to the father. Her attachments are to the horses and to the excitement of hearing old wives’ tales about tiger men.¹⁵²

Beauty is therefore tested as well to prove her principles because she finally stands naked in front of the Tiger as she promised but does not obey him at the first time to demonstrate how strong she is. As a result, she gains a respect which is her reward because she has never been respected before by the man. “So although it is not easy for her to obey the Beast’s command, Beauty has nothing to lose and everything to gain by stripping herself of her clothes and her socialized identity. Abandoned by men, she turns to the Beast and discovers herself.”¹⁵³ Carter uses Propp’s rule of testing to prove the good character of the main protagonist and to show if she can be devoted to the new life.

She proves herself, Beauty is freed and she becomes animal as well. Ellen Cronan Rose adds that “Beauty discovers the animal in herself—her sexuality—only by stripping herself of the veneer of civilization which has socialized her as a woman.”¹⁵⁴ Concerning the Tiger and his figure, it is obvious that he is the one who is more frightened in this tale even though it does not seem so but he is not able to

¹⁵⁰ Atwood, 125.

¹⁵¹ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 64.

¹⁵² Bacchilega, 96-97.

¹⁵³ Rose, 224.

¹⁵⁴ Rose, 225.

accept Beauty's change so easily. "He went still as stone. He was far more frightened of me than I was of him."¹⁵⁵ The Tiger has a bigger fear from this change because he realizes that Beauty and he become equal which is dangerous for him as he can easily surrender to her. However, according to Nicole Ward Jouve, it was "[h]er fearlessness" that "frees them both. As he begins to lick her white skin, it falls away, and there appears in its place shining fur."¹⁵⁶ Again it is a woman who breaks the rule and the man in the body of beast is slowly accepting the fact that the woman can accommodate him or even feel animal instincts as he does. "Both Beauty and Beast in this story thus shrug off the disguises that society forces them to assume, and in this way the predator/prey dichotomy is shattered with the establishment of a harmonic and mutually beneficial relationship between man and woman."¹⁵⁷ Finally, the stripping of Beauty represents relief for the Tiger because he feels that they are on the same level and nobody is forced to pretend anything unnatural, which frees them both.

However, in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" the Beast accepts the human way of living contrary to "The Tiger's Bride" where Beauty decides to change her life. In my opinion, these tales obviously represent two tendencies by which Carter suggests that both men and women are capable of changes and concessions. Carter shows that there is no space for prejudices because both sexes can give up some elements in their lives to reach some unity with the opposite sex. These tales belong to happier ones because the reader can feel harmony of Beauty with Mr Lyon and Beauty with the Tiger. Carter fulfils rule of happy end even though in the second tale "The Tiger's Bride" this kind of happy end is not expected.

5.6. "The Company of Wolves"

"The Company of Wolves" is the next tale that deals with the horror elements mainly due to Angela Carter's descriptions of the setting at the beginning

¹⁵⁵ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 67.

¹⁵⁶ Jouve, 144.

¹⁵⁷ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 134.

of the story. Carter evokes the feelings of fear and tension in the reader immediately from the introduction of the story:

At night, the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames, yellowish, reddish, but that is because the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from your lantern to flash it back to you – red for danger; if a wolf’s eyes reflect only moonlight, then they gleam a cold and unnatural green, a mineral, a piercing colour.¹⁵⁸

Angela Carter opens the story in this way in order to create the horror surrounding that makes the reader to tremble. She greatly plays with the words to evoke the feeling it is real. All the stories engaging werewolves and wolves have this task, to be terrifying and scaring. However, they play very significant role in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* for other reasons too. “The three werewolf stories also deal with women’s relationship to the unruly libido, but the werewolf signifies a stranger, more alienated otherness than the cats, despite the half-human manifestations.”¹⁵⁹ The fact that a werewolf plays the role partially as a man and partially a wild animal can usually evoke much more terrifying feelings because nobody knows what to expect. Carter here suggests that human and wolves have much in common because humans are often driven by their animal instincts so much that it is not even recognizable that they are beings anymore. Therefore, the character of werewolf or wolf is a good choice as Carter closes the collection with joining of both people’s parts, the human and animal one. The tale “The Company of Wolves” serves as an example of this comparison, too.

There is a significant difference between the traditional character and Carter’s female character in “The Company of Wolves”. The young girl resembling the well-known protagonist Little Red Riding Hood is not as chaste as she seems to be because she knows how to deal with wolfs. The female makes a man from the wolf which means that she entirely alters his animal parts and forces him to forget his animal instincts. In my opinion, it shall demonstrate that women also have the power to wake up the humans in absolutely wild savageries as the wolf is. Then, the

¹⁵⁸ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 110.

¹⁵⁹ Makinen, “Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonisation of Feminine Sexuality,” 30.

female protagonist in the story is the one who is going to seduce the wolf by which she reaches his change as she invests human features into the animal, which could be for some readers rather unexpected development of the fairy tale. Carter's heroine does not want to play the role of victim but she desires to become the leader of the situation.

This story also resembles the fable, which is typical of tales in *The Bloody Chamber* in general:

[i]n all of the tales in *The Bloody Chamber* it is existing social constructions that repress and misrepresent an animal energy shared equally between the sexes. One of the morals of all these tales is that we have to strip away existing cultural definitions of sexuality in order to reach a base level from which to begin building representation anew.¹⁶⁰

There is a high resemblance between this tale and "The Tiger's Bride". In both these tales Carter intends to strip the main protagonists of their cultural background to reach the nature inside them. The main plot in "The Company of Wolves" is very similar to the plot of Little Red Riding Hood, and the background and the motif of this tale has much more in common with "The Tiger's Bride". Both female protagonists fight against their fear because they want to rescue themselves. "Fear had to be conquered. Nothing sacred. Fear it is that makes predators of our wolves and tigers."¹⁶¹ Both of them win over their fears and that is the reason why they also win over the men (beasts) in both of the stories.

The story "The Company of Wolves" starts nearly the same as in the case of Little Red Riding Hood, the young little girl sets out for a journey to fulfil her task, her order and therefore Carter keeps Propp's structure as well. Nevertheless, there are some nuances in Carter's version of this known tale. "[T]he just-menstrual, virginal, innocent but tough Little Red Riding Hood makes her way through the forest."¹⁶² Atwood's claim represents a difference between both the tales as in the original one, the author does not describe the sexuality of the girl (even though there can be some motifs also found). Carter's attitude shows that she wants to be different immediately from the beginning of the story. The girl here meets a wolf in

¹⁶⁰ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 147.

¹⁶¹ Jouve, 145.

¹⁶² Atwood, 130.

a disguise as a hunter, who she is racing with, having a bet who will be the first one at the grandmother's house. The man, being a wolf in a fact, eats her grandmother. He makes trickery and causes the harm to girl as he murders her grandmother. In this way, Carter again keeps Propp's structure and original tale.

The wolf intends to grumble the girl as well until she starts to laugh at him. She is absolutely sure that she is not going to be eaten as her plan is to seduce him and rescue herself without any other necessary help. There is no hunter who would be in the function of helper to save the young girl but she is able to take care of herself personally. She does not express her fear, but she feels it. Nevertheless, she overcomes her fear and gets what she intends as the last sentence of this fairy tale confirms. "See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf."¹⁶³ Anne Cranny-Francis claims that "[i]nstead of being intimidated into passivity by sexual potency of the aggressive male, and so being eaten (i.e. destroyed) like her granny, the girl asserts herself sexually and so is freed from the wolf's domination; they live peacefully together."¹⁶⁴ Angela Carter totally reverses the traditional tale and makes her protagonist sexually active to prove the wolf that they are equal and she is not going to be eaten. Aidan Day notices, "[j]ust as the girl refuses to be 'meat', refuses to play the part simply of object of consumption or victim, so the wolf, traditionally solely the aggressor, is described at the last as 'tender'.¹⁶⁵ The girl demonstrates her courage as she does not succumb to her fears and becomes heroine. As Nicole Ward Jouve mentions, "[g]irl's fearlessness delivers man from his beastliness."¹⁶⁶ These words confirm Carter's thoughts about the female strength and power to change the men. Of course, the girl could fight with the wolf and she did not have to seduce him, but I assume that the wolf would definitely eat her. He was accompanied by his "friends", which was dangerous enough for her. "Ten wolves; twenty wolves – so many wolves she could not count them, howling in concert as if demented or deranged. Their eyes reflected the light

¹⁶³ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 118.

¹⁶⁴ Anne Cranny-Francis, *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 93.

¹⁶⁵ Day, "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)," 149.

¹⁶⁶ Jouve, 145.

from the kitchen and shone like a hundred candles.”¹⁶⁷ Therefore, the young girl was smart enough to adapt to a new role of sexual object that saved her life.

Consequently, I see the female protagonist fighting for her life by knowing that erotic behaviour and seduction is the way how to save oneself. “Angela Carter depicts a girl who outwolves the wolf, who takes the weapons of patriarchy into her own hands and succeeds.”¹⁶⁸ Bristow and Broughton point out that “.... she became sexually defiant young woman”¹⁶⁹ in order to rescue herself. Carter uses eroticism and sexuality as a way of escaping from the problems, but I would say that Carter also applies this way of thinking because she addresses the contemporary society. She addresses men’s way of thinking that the women are still very often considered as sexual objects but she also attacks women that they sometimes cause it themselves as it is expressed and approved in this tale. Nevertheless, the reader should be still aware of the fact that due to using of the tool of sexuality the protagonist finally survived.

Carter fights against stereotypical ideas about women and she transforms her protagonist into a stronger object because women can be also very manipulative. Christina Britzolakis claims that there is “.... a shift in Carter’s fiction between the early heroines, who are often ‘puppets of male-controlled scripts’, and the later ones who ‘use theatricality and masquerade to invent and advance themselves’.”¹⁷⁰ This second phase of Carter’s writing is obvious not only from the tale “The Company of Wolves”, but also from “The Tiger’s Bride”. Therefore, Carter’s new character of Little Red Riding Hood is also ready to play her role in order not to die:

Carter’s self-aware and sexually active young woman defuses the nightmarish situation by recognizing the beast in herself and the man in the beast. In this story, Little Red Riding Hood does not find the werewolf – the customary figure of sexualized horror – either terrifying or potentially engulfing. Together, both her sense of sexual power and her fine sense of humour undercut his status as a mythic figure of horror.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 117.

¹⁶⁸ Cranny-Francis, 93.

¹⁶⁹ Bristow and Broughton, 13.

¹⁷⁰ quoted in Bristow and Broughton, 14-15.

¹⁷¹ Wisker, “Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter’s horror writing,” 125.

Carter mocks the traditional roles of men and women and she creates a new heroine who becomes the stronger and wilder one than the beast in this case. Carter does not directly express if the girl represents the good or evil side, as it is typical of fairy tales, she mixes both the opposites into one character as it is normal in everyday life because everybody has the dark and bright side which Carter acknowledges.

This fairy tale "The Company of Wolves" is then the next example of Angela Carter's favourite technique of reversing conventional female and male roles. It is similar as in "The Tiger's Bride" because the wolf becomes tender (due to use of female sexuality) and he is finally more frightened than the girl. He is not used to this way of female assured performing, he knows women as victims not as the "rulers" and heroines. In "The Company of Wolves," status of the characters is unusual as "... established male-dominated order is ironized."¹⁷² Little Red Riding Hood (in Carter's version) is the one who gains control over the situation and the male figure. Margaret Atwood notices:

As with all of Carter's would-be steaks and chops, this 'wise child' wins the herbivore-carnivore contest by refusing fear, by taking matters into her own hands, by refusing to allow herself to be defined as somebody's meat, and by 'freely' learning to – if not run with the tigers – at least lie down with them. Whether she has become more wolf-like is anybody's guess¹⁷³

It could raise a question if the girl has changed or retained her nature by doing this act, if she just did it on the purpose to rescue herself or if there were also some other hidden motifs. Nevertheless, "[s]uch a refusal to be cast in the role of victim is her salvation" as Carter's heroine has "the motivation to survive by any means necessary."¹⁷⁴ Gamble again comments on it by claiming that Carter's heroines have something in common and that is "the stubborn refusal to be victims", which "... causes patriarchal structures to collapse under the weight of their own aggression."¹⁷⁵ It depends on the reader's assumption whether the heroine fights

¹⁷² Wisker, "Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter's horror writing," 125.

¹⁷³ Atwood, 130.

¹⁷⁴ Sarah Gamble, "Something Sacred: Angela Carter, Jean-Luc Godard and the Sixties," in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 55.

¹⁷⁵ Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*, 68.

for her life, but in my opinion, her aim is to protect herself and not to change entirely as Beauty did in “The Tiger’s Bride”. She is shrewd but her astuteness saves her life.

Carter’s “The Company of Wolves” was produced for the radio. Carter adapted this version which was based on the existing story from the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* and she reformulated it as the radio play. Later on, there was also the film version of this story also called “The Company of Wolves”.

5.7. Other tales

In this part, I am going to deal with other fairy tales from *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* that have not been analysed above. Some of these stories have more space and some of them are just briefly mentioned. It does not mean that some tales are not important or are minor ones. The length of their analysis depends only on their relation to previously mentioned issues that are core in above analysed tales and on my own understanding, and significance of individual tales from this collection. Therefore, I concentrate more on Carter’s thoughts rather than on their structures.

“Puss-in-Boots” is one of the stories that belong to the witty tales from this collection. It is preceded by “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride” and from the beginning there is an essential difference between these two stories as Carter comes with funny and relaxing fairy tale, which is not typical of the rest of the collection. Although it is in some sense a filthy story, on the other hand it is also amusing. “It is above all a hymn to here-and-now common sensual pleasure, to ordinary human love, to slap-and-tickle delight – not as an object to be won, achieved or stolen, nor to be reserved by the rich and privileged for themselves, but available to all, tabby cats as well as young lads and lasses.”¹⁷⁶ There is absolutely different mood from the other tales that Carter incorporates into this collection. Here, sex means fun and joy, which serves as the opposite to other tales with their more or less serious conception of plots.

¹⁷⁶ Atwood, 126.

Figaro, the cat portrayed in this tale, helps his owner to get to the spire to meet with his dreamed princess to enjoy playful and relaxing sexual pleasures, which is described here as a natural process to fulfil ordinary needs of the man. What is more, it appears that princess enjoys this sexual freedom even more than the man, which again confirms Carter's ideas about women and their open sexuality. Furthermore, this tale is written in such a cheerful way that the reader can grasp that sex represents a normal thing in everyday life opposite to the tales where people fight against prejudices as Angela Carter usually writes about the fighting between male and female world. "Puss-in-Boots", on the other hand, amusingly and nicely serves the purpose that men and women can get along very well and share the same thoughts and desires. This story eases the atmosphere in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and still incorporates lots of social issues that are crucial for Angela Carter. This short story also belongs to those that were later reformulated for the radio in the form of radio play.

The story "Erl-King" belongs to the series of tales that contain rather sad atmosphere and where "[t]he return to a state of nature isn't always for the human being."¹⁷⁷ It means that this story highlights that the cycle of nature brings a death instead of life. Therefore, this tale is melancholic and Carter states that our life is made of cycles that are leading to death, the unavoidable end for all of us. Carter creates a great contrast to the previous tale which is celebration of life, sexuality and emotions. However, in "Erl-King" Carter warns the readers that our time is fleeting. I would say that Carter purposely puts both these tales in this order to portray the comparison between life and death. Even though the female protagonist kills the villain in the story, the reader does not feel it as the triumph of the girl but the mood of sadness prevails to the end.

"The Snow-Child" rewritten version of "Snow White" is a following and very short story in this collection. As Lucie Armitt states, "[w]e are confronted with the image of a young woman who exists as the fantasy creation of a King."¹⁷⁸ The Count riding on the horse with his Countess dreams about having a daughter according to his unusual wishes. "As soon as he completed her description, there she stood,

¹⁷⁷ Atwood, 127.

¹⁷⁸ Armitt, 91.

beside the road, white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked; she was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her. The Count lifted her up and sat her in front of him on his saddle but the Countess had only one thought: how shall I be rid of her?"¹⁷⁹ The Queen, in this case the Countess, is jealous of the girl that fulfils the man's fantasies about the woman (even though the Count projects the daughter, which is even more controversial and perverse). Therefore, the Countess tries to do her best to get rid of her. Also in this tale, as in the original version, she fulfils her intrigues but here the girl dies by picking the rose, pricking her finger and finally she bleeds to death. In the traditional tale, the reader expects that the girl will be saved, but in Carter's version, we meet with absolutely different development of the story. "Weeping, the Count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl. The Countess reined in her stamping mare and watched him narrowly; he was soon finished."¹⁸⁰ This is the shocking scene that Carter uses to the end of this tale and creates an essential contrast to the traditional story.

In my opinion, this magic tale belongs to the most perverse tales as the Count has a sex with the dead Snow-Child. Taking into consideration that the Countess was watching him, it is even more controversial story. Angela Carter writes this tale overtly and shows the world also from the other side. She demonstrates very sincerely that people have their darker natures hiding their perverse and strange desires. After violating the girl, she slowly melts leaving the rose on the snow. The Count gives the rose to his jealous Queen and the last words of the fairy tale are said by the Countess, "[i]t bites."¹⁸¹ Therefore, the fairy tale "The Snow Child" has a dramatic character and as the story is very short and dynamic, it belongs to those tales that reader probably remembers the most. Angela Carter again proves her talent for creating the real tension in the story and also very important eventfulness. The core theme in this tale is jealousy that is firstly introduced by Carter in this collection. The Count imagines his own version of the perfect woman and the Countess hates it. The Count produces the image of girl's beauty, her excellence and he is projecting this picture to make her alive.

¹⁷⁹ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 92.

¹⁸⁰ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 92.

¹⁸¹ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 92.

Nevertheless, this young girl finally melts down as Carter expresses that there is nothing like perfect woman and nothing is stable.

The following story about the female vampire called “The Lady of the House of Love” is the next one from this rather gloomy sequence of tales and it perfectly closes this series of three stories. In this tale Angela Carter proves that women are full of their sexual needs and even though the female vampire longs for the human blood, she also longs for the intimacy and tries to suppress her thirst because of her sexual delight. Lady has to fight with her natural senses and instincts, with her body that is dying without blood and her mind that wants more than just drinking blood from young fellows passing by her castle haunted by ghosts of Lady’s ancestors and full of dark corners. Therefore, in this story, there are reversed gender roles again even though now it is the woman who is fighting with natural instincts.

The topical theme in this tale is again female sexuality. However, being the vampire causes that it is much more difficult for her to fulfil her desires as she is condemned to solitude:

She herself is a haunted house. She does not possess herself; her ancestors sometimes come and peer out of the windows of her eyes and that is very frightening. She has the mysterious solitude of ambiguous states; she hovers in a no-man’s land between life and death, sleeping and waking, behind the hedge of spiked flowers”¹⁸²

Lady yearns for being rid of her burden, she wants to be the human and get rid of her dammed life, and she longs for having intimacy with the man. Therefore, Carter engages the young fellow coming across Lady’s mansion without being frightened as he plays the role of First World War soldier. Nevertheless, Lady finally dies because of her weakness for this above mentioned young guy who enters into her castle. Lady becomes human and melts down because she lets him to suck her blood from her finger. It is obvious that “The Snow-Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love” has one common motif, both the female characters melt down and a fanged rose appears in the final scene of both these tales. As Margaret Atwood says “[i]t is a rose of death.”¹⁸³ Both of the female protagonists die as this symbol

¹⁸² Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 103.

¹⁸³ Atwood, 129.

demonstrates. The rose usually represents the symbol of danger, especially thorns that are grown up on it. However, comparing to the fairy tale "Sleeping Beauty", here is nobody saved and the women's common destiny is their death.

In "The Lady of the House of Love" there is also another motif that resembles the story from the collection, concretely "The Bloody Chamber", and it is the chamber itself. Lady also stays in the chamber having the old female keeper who has an appearance similar to the witch and who does not even speak. Therefore, her taciturnity highlights Lady's loneliness, which is even more highlighted by the appearance of Lady's house that is perfectly described by the eyes of the soldier passing by:

He was surprised to find how ruinous the interior of the house was – cobwebs, worm-eaten beams, crumbling plaster; but the mute crone resolutely wound him on the reel of her lantern down endless corridors, up winding staircases, through the galleries where the painted eyes of family portraits briefly flickered as they passed, eyes that belonged, he noticed, to faces, one and all, of a quite memorable beastliness.¹⁸⁴

This arresting description skilfully evokes the mood that is penetrated thorough the entire house and Lady's chambers. Here again, in this story, the reader comes across the same feelings as in "The Bloody Chamber". However, "[i]n this case it is not the chamber that contains and thus constraints the woman (who then becomes a terrified victim), but the woman herself who takes control as the body of excess."¹⁸⁵ Therefore, as Lady tries to free herself, she finally causes her own death. Originally, Carter inspired herself to write this story by her radio play "Vampirella" that served also as the material for "The Lady of the House of Love".¹⁸⁶ This was the main source for this tale together with the know story "Dracula".

The sorrowful story is followed by the next tale from the sequence of above mentioned wolf-eaters. Contrary to the tale "The Company of Wolves" that is analysed above in the chapter, there is another fairy tale that retells the story of "Little Red Riding Hood", which is called "The Werewolf". However, even though in this story there are reversed roles again, it is an absolute contrast to "The Company

¹⁸⁴ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 100.

¹⁸⁵ Armitt, 92.

¹⁸⁶ Crofts, 27.

of Wolves” because “... the wolf here is not disguised as the grandmother, it *is* the grandmother.”¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the innocent and good young girl is able to attack her grandmother, calls her to be a witch and finally kills her. According to Margaret Atwood, there are two morals in this story, “[w]omen can be werewolves too. Other moral: to be a ‘good child’ does not mean you have to be a victim. to be a good child is to be a competent child, to know how to recognize danger but to avoid being paralysed by fear, to know how to use your father’s hunting knife to defend yourself against those who also hunt.”¹⁸⁸ I would say that Atwood proposes the idea that Angela Carter wants to show that to be virtuous does not necessarily mean to stop fighting with the evil surrounding us because even when the people are good, they can show their strengths and courage in order not to allow others to play with them. The next important thought is that grandmother can also be a werewolf and not necessarily play the good and wise character as it is typical of traditional tales.

The girl is said to be strong from the beginning of the story as her mother tells her, “... take your father’s hunting knife; you know how to use it.”¹⁸⁹ These words confirm that this female protagonist has the father who is hunter and as this story is introduced by description of harsh, cold weather, the reader knows that this girl does not fear to use her knife because she is used to it. The place where she lives is surrounded by dark and unpleasant winter, therefore she is the right heroine to fight with evil without fear. Her mother gives her instructions about the possible dangers but the reader can feel that she is not afraid of her daughter because she is able to care for herself. The final scene is the proof of it. “Now the child lived in her grandmother’s house; she prospered.”¹⁹⁰ By her bravery to kill her grandmother who functions as a witch here we can meet with new Carter’s heroine, the one who is not paralysed to kill her grandmother because the girl realizes that she has evil inside her. The girl is “... declaring her readiness to grow up.”¹⁹¹ She is not afraid of killing grandmother, gain her house and she stays there because she is sure that she deserves it. Therefore, “... the girl usurps the power and influence of the male

¹⁸⁷ Atwood, 129.

¹⁸⁸ Atwood, 129-130.

¹⁸⁹ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 109.

¹⁹⁰ Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 110.

¹⁹¹ Rose, 225

(active subject) role; she owns property, and prospers.”¹⁹² The heroine then plays the role of the man who usually represents the owner of property. Carter comes with the new image of woman in society again.

The last tale from this collection “Wolf-Alice” does not simply imitate one story but there are many stories incorporated into this one. It means that the reader can find several features of different tales. Aidan Day says that “[a]s such, the tale acts as a kind of summary of the collection’s preoccupations and perspectives as a whole.”¹⁹³ Margaret Atwood also claims:

.... “Wolf-Alice”, is the most grotesque of the lot, featuring as it does a strange alliance between two misfits, a woman who was raised as a wolf and is therefore not fully human - – and an undead ghoulish werewolf, who feeds on corpses and casts no reflection in mirrors. These characters are the carnivore in its least attractive mode. Wolf-Alice has none of the stately mobility of lion or tiger.... . As for the awful Duke, he isn’t even beautiful, like the vampire of the House of Love. He is gaunt and filthy, a carrion-eater rather than a beast of prey.¹⁹⁴

Alice is brought up by wolves, she grew up with them, and therefore she is totally different. Her feelings and habits are affected by her independent childhood in a significant way. In this way, this tale differs from the other tales in Carter’s collection a lot as it says that women can also have wild roots because there is usually the male represented as the wild one, the beast, but in this case it is opposite, Alice is the kind of beast. Alice has to deal with the world she is not used to and repress her violent and animalistic habits, which is such a hard task for her. She serves Duke because he is the one who resembles her the most. Alice is not able to behave the same way people do, therefore, villagers send her away. “Taken to a convent where she learns some hygiene but rejects the ritual of grateful prayer, she eventually becomes the servant of an outcast werewolfish Duke.”¹⁹⁵ Consequently, Duke and Alice live together because they are not afraid of each other and Alice is not shocked and upset by looking at Duke who is eating parts of corpses. They are similar. “What he and Alice have in common is their dual nature;

¹⁹² Cranny-Francis, 92.

¹⁹³ Day, “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979),” 162.

¹⁹⁴ Atwood, 131.

¹⁹⁵ Bacchilega, 64.

she is both wolf and human and so is he.”¹⁹⁶ For Alice it means that she can behave naturally and nobody will judge her which is much better than living with nuns who tried to civilize her.

In this fairy tale it could be seen that Carter also wants to portray a female character that is wild from the beginning of her life and tries to learn to some customs and manners according to which women should behave as it is required by society. It is very difficult for Alice, nevertheless, finally she is able to get used to some ‘customs’. When Duke is wounded and is going to die, she does everything to rescue him. “She licks him into a new being, as the tiger does the tiger’s bride; he becomes human through love, as does Mr Lyon. But it is not sexual love that so transforms him, this time; instead it is a different kind of love: instinctual, merciful, maternal.”¹⁹⁷ Atwood’s words prove that Alice finally feels human morals and her licking, even though it is the manifestation that she is still wild, demonstrates at least some change into her own version of human being. “Excited from the company of both wolves and humans, she begins to ‘invent’ her own subjectivity.”¹⁹⁸ Carter ends this collection with the female protagonist who is neither wolf nor human, therefore, she stays somewhere in the middle. I would say that Carter intends to portray the society that is also standing a lot of times somewhere between what is believed to be good (as humans are) and bad (as wolves are).

Coming to the last remarks about all the above analysed tales, what I find very interesting is the opinion expressed by Lucie Armitt in her essay:

.... *The Bloody Chamber* functions less as a collection of individual short stories and more as a single narrative which uses the short story medium to work and rework compulsive repetitions It seems that there is really only one central male protagonist who, beginning as a lion, passes through a variety of predatory masculine metamorphoses before ending up as a wolf who is simultaneously both man and woman It is unsurprising that, with the exception of perhaps “The Bloody Chamber”, “The Company of Wolves” and “The Lady of the House of Love”, one of the major problems facing the reader of these ten stories is that they always seem to be dissolving into each other.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Rose, 226.

¹⁹⁷ Atwood, 132.

¹⁹⁸ Bacchilega, 64.

¹⁹⁹ Armitt, 96-97.

I have mentioned many times through this thesis that Angela Carter uses lots of themes from previous stories in order to engage in them in the following tales to offer the wider vista for her readers. However, the point of view expressed by Lucie Armitt is definitely interesting as in her interpretation Carter deals with one male character that is changing his roles and appearance in order to end as a werewolf, Duke. Then, it again confirms the idea that was mentioned at the beginning of this thesis that Angela Carter as a writer is skilfully playing not only with the language but also with the main characters and plots of the stories. Also Christina Bacchilega points out that “the stories reflect on each other through the work of repetition against itself The construction of each reading is shaken by the emerging of another tunnel, another underground chamber, another story, another audience.”²⁰⁰ Taking into account Armitt’s and Bacchilega’s statements, Carter is really inventive female writer and her tales are deeply interwoven to indicate more perspectives of tales and their possibilities. Carter “.... refuses to privilege one reading, one version of self or event.”²⁰¹ And Carter offers the same options to her readers as she likes “.... yoking together opposites – of self/Other, good/evil and so on.”²⁰² Therefore, this indicating is a great technique as nothing is expressed directly and reader can find whatever mission he or she wants.

As I have already mentioned, Carter’s way of writing is exceptional. “She found fairy tale a productive form for her own demythologising project because its roots in the oral tradition might offer a way to circumscribe the phallogocentric, patriarchal constructions of gender which had become inscribed in the fixed literary versions.”²⁰³ All Carter’s tales suggest the troubles with the gender division that is typical of society. Therefore, Carter approaches her tales in her own way but greatly expresses that everything does not necessarily have to be solved according to the rules people are accustomed. Angela Carter leaves space for own reader’s creativity and attitude to life.

²⁰⁰ Bacchilega, 141-142.

²⁰¹ Wisker, “Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter’s horror writing,” 193.

²⁰² Wisker, “Revenge of the living doll: Angela Carter’s horror writing,” 193.

²⁰³ Crofts, 41.

6. Conclusion

This diploma thesis focuses on the collection of rewritten fairy tales *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) written by Angela Carter. The aim of this paper is to provide the reader with the analysis of Carter's feminist thoughts that are projected and incorporated into her tales. All the fairy tales are dealing with the gender question as Angela Carter focuses on the equality between men and women concerning the dominance in the relationships, their sexuality and attitude to it, and the female rights for the same conditions in society in general. Therefore, her tales engage in the female characters, their nature and their gradual changes thorough the tales due to the story's development. Her tales usually start with the description of female protagonist who is in the position of the weak character and has to obey the rules of man or beasts, represented by lions, tigers, wolves and werewolves, the characters that play the strong role at the beginning of Carter's tales. Thorough the story the roles start to reverse and the woman that was weak becomes strong. This Carter's technique is typical of her fairy tales as she intends to emphasize women hidden abilities and to prove that both of the sexes can be on the equal level.

The Bloody Chamber includes ten stories that are deeply interwoven as they are affected by one another. In the most of the stories Carter lets her female characters develop into the dominant position and she lets them survive if they wake up their wilder side of nature as for Carter it is the only way how characters can be rescued because they have to behave self-confidently and strongly. Therefore, Carter wants women in her literature to fight against the myths about men superiority and female submission, and to prove that these myths are not valid any more. Angela Carter manages to deconstruct this traditional way of thinking as also critical sources support. Nevertheless, in the middle of the collection she also lets her female characters die in order to demonstrate the contrast between previous and following stories where female bravery, openness in sexuality and their development from lambs to tigers are celebrated. In these two magical tales "The Snow Child" and "The Lady of the House of Love" the females always lose their

fight in order to show that if women are not strong enough in contemporary society, they will be defeated as well.

All Carter's tales intend to provoke as their content is mostly controversial, thrilling and erotic, which is not typical of classical fairy tales. Carter's tales offer her readers many perspectives and points of view and they do not end with the final resolution telling the reader what is right and wrong. They offer possibilities how we can understand them. It is obvious that Carter incorporates her feminist thoughts into her tales as she is not satisfied with the gender roles in the society. Her collection is affected by the work of Michel Foucault, Marquis de Sade and by her own literature as well, especially by her treatise *The Sadeian Woman* which was published in the same year as *The Bloody Chamber*.

In this thesis I focused on the collection with the respect to important critics whose opinions are mentioned and highlighted in order to support the main ideas of this paper. Respected authors such as Margaret Atwood, Aidan Day, Sally Keenan, Merja Makinen, Jack Zipes, and others are introduced. The work of Vladimir Propp is also foregrounded because his structural division of fairy tales served as a support material for analysis of Carter's fairy tales as the genre itself. The critics mentioned thorough this thesis also focus on the thoughts that represent Carter's interest the most. Therefore, their support was necessary for proving the fact that Carter as an author of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* uses her fairy tales for expressing her opinions about female sexuality, rights and potential. Angela Carter does not attack men but she comes with the fresh attitude to understand the female psyche in a better way, and she offers this possibility to society in general because not only men but also women are still affected by the myths about women in general. Therefore, the genre of fairy tale is the best choice for her deconstruction of these traditional myths as her tales are inspired by the classical fairy tales that Carter rewrites.

To conclude this thesis, Angela Carter reaches her aim as in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* all her feminist thoughts are incorporated into the plots of the tales, and it is obvious from the development of the stories that Carter intends to provoke the public way of thinking. I analysed her feminist ideas with the support of critical authorities. Therefore, it was proved that Carter's tales were

affected by the feminist thoughts and also by the time when she published them as it was in the eighteens of last century when these thoughts were essential and still new for the society. Nevertheless, Angela Carter as an author is still debated writer and her literature and achievements can serve as an inspiration for the contemporary artists and society in general as well. For me, Angela Carter deserves a lot of respect because she was not afraid to write overtly about her progressive ideas even though she was also criticized a lot.

This paper can function as the research to Angela Carter's rewritten fairy tales and their deeper meaning and mission for the readers and society in general, as Carter incorporates crucial social thoughts into her tales which is confirmed by this thesis.

7. Shrnutí

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na postmoderní autorku Angelu Carterovou a její přepracování tradičních pohádek, které vydala ve svém díle pod názvem *Krvavá komnata a jiné povídky* (1979). Vzorem pro sbírku Angely Carterové byly známé pohádky jako "Červená Karkulka", "Kráska a Zvíře", "Kocour v Botách", a jiné pohádky od Charlese Perraulta a Madame Leprince de Beaumontové. Angela Carterová klasické pohádky přepsala tak, aby mohla vyjádřit své nesouhlasné názory se společností a jejími limity týkající se především postavení mužů a žen ve společnosti.²⁰⁴ Cílem této práce je tedy potvrdit fakt, že přepracované pohádky od Angely Carterové jsou ovlivněny feministickými myšlenkami usilujícími o rovnocenná práva mužů a žen, o stejné možnosti a postavení ve společnosti a hlavně také o fakt, že ženy a jejich sexualita by neměla být brána jako tabu, ale jako přirozený proces v jejich životech.

Analýza dokazuje, že Angela Carterová, autorka literárních děl, pracuje s těmito myšlenkami. Jako podpůrný materiál slouží názory uznávaných kritiků, jejichž eseje a postoje jsou do této diplomové práce zakomponovány právě proto, aby dokázaly, že Carterová a její pohádky jsou prostoupeny idejemi vyjadřující stanovisko, aby se změnil nejenom náhled společnosti na ženy, ale aby i ženy změnily náhled na sebe samy vzhledem k tomu, že i ony jsou obětí mýtů, které se tradují a kterým podléhají a věří. Angela Carterová tedy neútočí na muže, což je důležité zmínit, ale chce dokázat, že jak muži, tak i ženy podléhají mýtům, které provázejí naši společnost, a proto využívá žánru pohádek, aby na nich dokázala, že ne všechno musí být tak, jak se zdá.

Vcelku se tedy práce zabývá sbírkou pohádek *Krvavá komnata* a její hlubší analýzou. V diplomové práci je představena Angela Carterová jako autorka, je rozebírán její přístup v dílech a její feministické myšlenky ve zmiňované sbírce pohádek, která je srovnávána s dalším dílem Angely Carterové, a to konkrétně s pojednáním nazvaným v originále *The Sadeian Woman* (1979). Vzhledem k tomu, že obě díla byla vydána ve stejném roce, je zřejmé, že se ovlivňovala navzájem, což je

²⁰⁴ Je důležité brát v potaz skutečnost, že kniha byla vydána v osmdesátých letech dvacátého století.

dalším zmiňovaným prvkem při analýze postmoderních pohádek od Carterové. Důležitým materiálem v této práci je také rozebrání pohádky jako žánru samotného, proto jsou využity podklady od Vladimira Proppa z jeho díla *Morfologie Pohádky*, a některé z jeho postupů jsou aplikovány v díle Angely Carterové. Nejenom Vladimír Propp ale i další autoři rozebírající žánr pohádky jako například Jack Zipes a Christina Bacchilega jsou v této části uvedeni. Je ale důležité zdůraznit, že pohádky Angely Carterové nepředstavují tradiční pojetí, proto není možné všechny postupy Vladimira Proppa aplikovat.

Angela Carterová je autorka, která ráda svými díly šokuje a zaujímá pozornost svých čtenářů. Její díla jsou kontroverznějšího rázu, protože Carterová se nebojí otevřeně psát o ženské sexualitě a potěšení žen z intimního aktu. Například její přepracování tradiční pohádky “Kocour v botách” dokazuje, že ženy mohou mít evidentně mnohem větší potěšení z prožití sexuálního vztahu, než je společností připouštěno. Přesto by čtenář měl mít na paměti, že sbírka pohádek vyšla v osmdesátých letech, kdy toto téma vyvolalo více nesouhlasu, než je tomu dnes. Proto tato pohádka představuje jeden z příběhů v této sbírce, kde Carterová vnáší do příběhu vtip, humor, komično ale také téma sexuality, která je zde brána jako naprosto přirozené vyústění vztahu dvou lidí.

Krvavá komnata obsahuje deset pohádek, první z nich se stejným názvem je spíše vyobrazením adaptace hororové povídky nazvané v originále “Bluebeard”, přesto i tady je znát názor Angely Carterové, že slabé ženy nemají ve společnosti šanci. Tento názor je zakomponován i do dalších dvou nadcházejících pohádek, a to konkrétně “Námluvy pana Lva” a “Tygrova nevěsta”, kde Carterová apeluje především na ženy a jejich submisivnost. Autorka se snaží ženám dokázat, že probudit v sobě své přirozené pudy, není špatné, ale právě naopak to pro ně může být přínosem. Také se snaží dokázat, že nejenom ženy mohou změnit svůj přístup a projevit svoji přirozenost, ale že i muži se také mohou změnit v závislosti na jejich vztahu k ženám. Po pohádce “Kocour v botách” následuje sekvence tří spíše pesimistických a melancholických pohádek. Jedná se o příběh “Král duchů”, “Sněhulka” a “Paní z domu lásky”. Především “Sněhulka” a “Paní z domu lásky” mají společné vyústění, a to smrt hlavní protagonistky. Angela Carterová tak naznačuje, že pokud jsou ženy příliš slabé, jejich osud jim nebude příznivě nakloněn. Tyto tři

příběhy slouží jako kontrast k předchozím a nadcházejícím pohádkám, kde jsou ženy charakterizované spíše jako silné a ve většině případů získají to, o co usilují. Poslední tři povídky, které uzavírají sbírku *Krvavá komnata*, se nazývají "Vlkodlak", "Mezi vlky" a "Vlčice Alenka". První dvě z nich jsou adaptací na známou pohádku "Červená Karkulka" a Angela Carterová znovu naznačuje, že pokud je žena dost vynalézavá a odvážná, dokáže zlo obrátit v dobro a má se lépe než předtím. Poslední povídka o Alence, je důmyslným ukončením této sbírky, protože Alenka figuruje jako charakter, který byl vychováván vlky a nyní se musí adaptovat na společnost lidí, což pro ni není lehký úkol a co víc, dokazuje to, jak těžké je potlačit zásadní zvířecí instinkty, které v sobě lidstvo má už od pradávna.

Pohádky Angely Carterové prostupují vždy charaktery, které mají blízko ke zvířatům nebo jsou zvířata sama. Účelem této typologie je ukázat čtenáři, že lidé jsou ovlivněni svými základními instinkty a v některých situacích by se neměli bát je projevit, protože jim to může zachránit jejich život. Především ženy by se neměly nechat ovlivňovat okolím a měly by projevit svoji přirozenost, což je opakujícím se tématem v dílech Angely Carterové. Carterová také ve své sbírce vyzdvihává ženskou sexualitu a zdůrazňuje, že žena by se neměla bránit otevřenosti i vůči tomuto tématu. Muži v pohádkách Angely Carterové jsou ve většině případů reprezentováni napůl lidskými a napůl zvířecími bytostmi z toho důvodu, aby se také nebáli přiklonit k jedné straně, v jejich případě zase naopak spíše k té lidské. Carterová vyzdvihuje fakt, že pokud se ženy stanou suverénní, muži jsou z toho více překvapeni než ženy samy, ale pokud je muži přijmou takové, jaké jsou, prospěje to oběma. Angela Carterová přichází s myšlenou, že je třeba hledat kompromisy jak v mužském, tak v ženském světě.

Angela Carterová ve sbírce *Krvavá Komnata* poukazuje na nedostatky společnosti a na mýty o ženách jako takových. Zdůrazňuje, že společnost by měla ustoupit ve svých dogmatech a otevřít se novým možnostem. Kritici jako například Margaret Atwoodová, Aidan Day, Merja Makinenová, Saly Keenanová, Jack Zipes, a další, jsou v této práci uvedeni a jejich názory a eseje přispívají k potvrzení základní hypotézy, že Carterová opravdu koncipuje své pohádky takovým způsobem, aby šokovala veřejnost obrácením mužských a ženských rolí ve svém díle, a dokázala, že vše je možné a uskutečnitelné.

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9. Anotace

Příjmení a jméno: Vašíčková Marcela

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Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zabývá dílem Angely Carterové *Krvavá komnata a jiné pohádky* (1979), které představuje přepracované verze klasických a tradičních pohádek, a zásadními prvky v této sbírce rozebírající postavení žen ve společnosti. Analýza se tedy zaměřuje na práva žen a záměrně jde proti známým mýtům ohledně jejich submisivnosti a poslušnosti. Vyzdvihovány jsou především autorčiny nové typy hrdinek, které mají zdůraznit feministické přístupy Angely Carterové hlásané formou pohádek. Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na analýzu těchto myšlenek v uvedeném díle a zmiňuje mnohé známé kritiky, kteří přispívají k validitě této práce. Jsou tedy analyzovány také názory respektovaných osobností, jejich přístupy k pohádkám Angely Carterové a teoretické podklady k žánru pohádky jako takovém.

10. Annotation

Surname and name: Vašíčková Marcela

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Abstract

This diploma thesis focuses on the work of Angela Carter *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), which deals with the new versions of classical known fairy tales, and on the fundamental issues in this collection concerning the position of women in the society. Therefore, the analysis is interested in the interpretation of women rights and Carter's attitude to her work in order to evoke the controversy by reversing traditional roles of men and women, and by attacking the myths about female submissiveness and obedience. Special emphasis is put on writer's introduction of new female heroines who are to highlight Carter's feminist ideas in the form of fairy tales. This diploma thesis focuses on the analysis of these thoughts in the work of Angela Carter and represents the opinions from other famous critics, who contribute to the validity of this work. Therefore, the ideas from respected authors concerning Carter's fairy tales are mentioned and the theoretical material is introduced in order to analyse the genre of fairy tale itself.