

Angela Carter's Deconstruction of Traditional Tales

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Abstract

Like Helene Cixous, Virginia Woolf and Miriam Robins Dexter, Angela Carter is also one of the writers attempting to back up the struggles of women, by her fictional and non-fictional dense metaphorical prose. She supports their endeavor to change women's destiny and to demolish their traditional role of being the 'angel in the house'. In order to emancipate them from the stereotypical identity of the social order, Carter sometimes shifts the protagonists' function by transfiguring them into victimizers, instead of portraying them as victims. She tries to break the shackles that imprison the authentic woman in the image of a 'chaste and virtuous stereotype' or 'a second-class individual in need of a dominating male figure'. Thus, the analogy and distinctness between Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and other short stories in *Burning Your Boats* provide a crucial insight into Carter's mentality and intentions together with her writing style. To compare and contrast the protagonists' behaviors, their attitudes towards the situations they face, and how they use their sense and reason to overcome certain issues, reveal Carter's disagreement with women's predetermined place and status in the social order. Moreover, women's objectification and terms like 'wisdom', 'reason' and 'experience' offer further clues in relation with existentialist worries for a deeper understanding of Carter's methods and purpose. Additionally, the protagonists' struggles to survive also hint at their search for creating the authentic individual and their need to accomplish their maturation and individuation process, free from the stereotypical qualities like 'chastity' and 'perfection' attributed to them.

Keywords: *Stereotype, Objectification, Wisdom, Reason, Existentialist Worries*

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Angela Carter'in Geleneksel Masallari Dekonstrüksyonu

Öz

Helene Cixous, Virginia Woolf ve Miriam Robins Dexter gibi, Angela Carter da kadınların mücadelelerini ve kaderlerini değiştirmek için ve geleneksel 'evdeki melek' olma durumlarını yıkmak için verdikleri çabaları kurgusal ve kurgusal olmayan yoğun metaforik yazılarıyla desteklemeyi amaçlayan yazarlardan biridir. Carter sosyal düzenin basmakalıp kimliğinden kurtarmak için hikaye kahramanlarının rollerini onları her zaman 'kurban edilen' olarak tasvir etmek yerine bazen de 'kurban eden'e dönüştürür. Özgün kadını 'iffetli ve erdemli bir stereotip' ya da 'dominant bir erkek figürüne ihtiyaç duyan ikinci sınıf birey' imgesine hapseden zincirleri kırmayı dener. Angela Carter'ın *Burning Your Boat*'taki *The Bloody Chamber* ve diğer kısa hikayelerinin benzerlikleri ve farkları yazı stiliyle birlikte onun düşünce yapısına ve hedeflerine önemli bir ışık tutmaktadır. Hikaye kahramanlarının belirli durumlara karşı gösterdikleri davranış ve tutumlarının birbirleriyle karşılaştırması ve bazı problemlerin üstesinden gelmek için algılarını, mantık ve zekalarını nasıl kullandıkları Carter'ın kadının sosyal düzendeki yer ve durumuyla uzlaşmazlığını ortaya koymaktadır. Buna ek olarak kadının nesneleştirilmesi ve 'bilgelik', 'akıl yürütme' ve 'deneyim' gibi terimler, varoluşsal endişelerle birlikte Carter'ın metotları ve amacına dair daha detaylı ipuçları sunmaktadır. Ayrıca kahramanların hayatta kalma mücadeleleri, onların özgün bireyi yaratma, kendilerine atfedilmiş 'iffetlilik' ve 'mükemmellik' gibi basmakalıp özelliklerden kurtulmuş, olgunlaşma ve bireyselleşme sürecini tamamlama ihtiyaçlarına bir göndermedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Basmakalıp, Nesneleşme, Bilgelik, Akıl Yürütme, Varoluşsal Endişeler*

Introduction

In most of her works Angela Carter draws attention to the patriarchal society and the imposed norms and values over women by using a radical, acentric and gothic style and depicting the setting, hero and heroines' outlook and emotions in detail to arouse curiosity and awareness. According to Seago, Carter identifies her own style through these statements: "most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (Seago, 1999). Thus, she clarifies her intention by defending and justifying the reasons for re-writing the old texts in order to reveal their function in the social order. She draws attention to the repressive functions of these old tales that attempt to create patterned behaviors and stereotypes and the metamorphosis of female identity rejecting the old boundaries and repression. Thus, the expression of "making the old bottles explode" is a very stunning expression indeed, revealing her genuine purpose of encouraging women to destroy their boundaries and establish new, authentic and more powerful identities. According to Farmisano, this struggle is against the degrading representation of women in the social order (Farmisano, 2010). Carter criticizes women's traditional role and the stereotypical women, sometimes by mocking, sometimes by empowering them exaggeratingly. Farmisano refers to Anna Catasavos's interview with Angela Carter in which Carter points at the negative representation of women, the imperfect role that doesn't please or glorify them. She adds her opinions stating that through fairy tales, Carter aims to encourage women to rise up and fight against negative images, oppression and claim their equality (Farmisano, 2010). Additionally, according to Jan Susina, Carter aimed to give a new life and meaning to the original tales in order to change their structure and original characters (Susina, 2001).

Masculinist Representation and Contradictory Images

In Carter's short stories, various contradictions such as beauty and beast, rich and poor, experienced and inexperienced, rational and irrational and victim and victimizer are employed simultaneously. Many of her stories refer to fairy tales like *Bluebeard*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Beauty and The Beast*, which are in fact the deconstruction of these tales. In most of her tales, the heroines don't have their economic freedom and experience, sometimes they lack reason or wisdom, and thus usually become victims. In *The Snow Child* for instance, the Wife of the Count is jealous of the

young, innocent and beautiful virgin, the Snow Child, who represents the Count's libidinal instincts and desires together with the criteria of the collective male fantasy. The Countess is afraid of losing her husband which means losing the wealth and power he offers. But despite her beauty and youth, as the Snow Child lacks wisdom, reason and experience, she loses the battle against the Countess since she fights through the agency of her intelligence. This story aims to emphasize the superiority of experience, wisdom and reason over pure beauty and inexperience. In the *Courtship of Mr. Lyon*, *The Tiger's Bride* and *The Bloody Chamber*, we encounter the typical economically powerful male figure together with the heroine's objectification. Mr. Lyon, the Marquis and Milord are all powerful and wealthy landlords who have big manors, but the families of the heroines are poor and receive help from them. This is a satirical reference to the society's stereotypical model of the ideal male figure of the high ranks that we come across in many literary works as well as in real life. But again, we witness the protagonists' empowerment by turning a tragic case into a beneficial situation by employing reason.

According to Patricia Brooke; Carter's style of narrative is sometimes troubling because on one hand she works against the masculinist representation of women and on the other hand, she reinforces it through its representation (Brooke, 2004). This occurs in *The Lady of the House of Love* where the Countess is the heiress of the vast domains and the only ruler of the haunted village and the surrounding forest, who victimizes the opposite sex. Hence, it is obviously seen that the female figure is sometimes empowered by dominant male features. Even though violent manners mostly relate with male conduct, the way the heroine leads the men to her bedroom to accomplish her purpose is also another evidence for a stereotypical man feature carved into the female identity of the heroine. The masculinist qualities of the Countess are a reference to Carter's disagreement with the patriarchal myths and her opposition to the established stereotypes for maintaining the social order. In *The Bloody Chamber*, there is again a masculinist representation of a mother figure empowered through male qualities, depicted as a warrior to save her daughter in a heroic way.

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized back by the winds and blown out to see so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle leg exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked round her waist, one hand on the reins of the revolver and, behind her, the breaks of the savage, indifferent sea, like witnesses of a furious justice (Carter, 1996, 142).

Hair as mane association empowers the mother protagonist with a reference to male lions that have a mane to attract the opposite sex. The gun she grasps is also an attribute of male power and sovereignty together with the way she rides and controls her horse. Hence, the heroic way the mother rescues her daughter is another blending of the male behavior with female conduct, empowering her through the features of the opposite sex over and over again.

The element of white snow that represents innocence, purity and hardship can also be associated with “concealing or deceiving” as it hides the true shapes and forms (Anderson, 2017). In many of Carter’s short stories, it is frequently noticed as a symbol that can also be associated with ‘inexperience’ and ‘lacking wisdom’ together with a hint at the deceiving and threatening sides of the antagonists. In the first line of *The Snow Child*, winter is depicted as invincible and immaculate, immaculate just like the Snow Child. She symbolizes the ideal female beauty with white skin, red lips, black hair, youth, innocence and virginity. This female figure of the Count’s imagination is in fact identical to those fantasies of many men, and it is associated with the predetermined and imposed aesthetic conceptions. Interestingly, the Snow Child never utters a single word, but the Count makes all the decisions for her. Her muteness also associates with the usual complaints men make about women’s scolding, to emphasize what an ideal figure she is for manly desires. Her inability to express herself is also a hint at her failure in establishing her identity and accomplishing her individuation process. When the Countess asks the Snow Child to give the gloves she has dropped, the Count answers: “I’ll buy you new gloves” (Carter, 1996, 193) which emphasizes his authority and dominance. The Countess has more demands from the girl which the Count rejects, except the final one. As her wishes are declined, she slowly becomes more and more naked, thus, less powerful, turning the furred and booted Snow Child into a mightier figure (Carter, 1996, 193). She sees the girl as a rival, threatening her position and power that is sourced from her

husband. Thus, in order to get rid of her, she employs her intelligence and makes another demand and asks the girl to pick a rose for her which her husband does not reject this time (Carter, 1996, 193). Thus, she indeed still has an influence over her husband to some extent. When the thorn pricks her finger, the Snow Child falls and bleeds, which represents her first menstruation and thus her maturation and becoming ready for 'sexual intercourse'. The Count commits crime mainly caused by his desire to prove his power due to his extremely animalistic libidinal instincts. His determination of abusing the girl before she disappears also represents the Count's ambition and greed for the Snow Child's assets like beauty and youth and his objectification of the girl. Consequently, this crime also points out the ignominious characteristics of a male figure who even has necrophilia, as he rapes the corpse of a dead girl, objectifying her once again (Carter, 1996, 193). Being so happy that she could manage to get rid of the Snow Child, the Countess doesn't even care to see her husband raping an innocent dead girl right in front of her eyes and thus she commits a subordinate crime. We notice similar necrophilia tendency attached to the Colonel of the young soldier in *The Lady of the House of Love* (Carter, 1996, 207) and a different type to the Marquis in *The Bloody Chamber*. All of these protagonists portray the weak and abnormal sides of the antagonists and display a degraded representation of a male figure, who constantly tries to victimize women in order to gain and prove their power. Thus, Carter focuses on the strength, potency and even the supremacy of the female protagonists who overcome the issues they face due to their intelligence and despite the power of the antagonists.

The Snow Child is an unrealistic, imaginary figure who represents unreason, but on the other hand, the Countess is real and therefore represents reason. This antagonism shows similarity with the inexperienced young soldier and the much more knowledgeable Countess opposition in *The Lady of the House of Love*. Even though the Countess is mighty, her unreal portrayal illuminates the surreal qualities that deprive her of power, just as the Count in *The Snow Child* loses his power and validity by victimizing an innocent and weak young girl. "Weeping, the count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl" (Carter, 1996, 193). This statement also shockingly points out how passive and submissive women like the Snow Child can be victimized outrageously both by male and female conduct. Stating: "wrapped in the glittering pelts of black foxes

...” (Carter, 1996, 193) Carter elevates the Countess by suggesting that her evil intelligence helps with her high economic standards. With her experience, she gains her power back, opposite to the Snow Child who is left all naked and inexperienced. Her pathetically immaculate state also leads the way to her annihilation in the end. Thus, another antagonism is utilized to stress the weak-strong contradiction as the ‘snow and fox’ symbols. Opposite to snow which refers to the innocent girl, fox is the symbol of cleverness and slyness that basically refers to the Count’s wife. Thus, the victimized girl disappears leaving: “a feather a bird might have dropped; a blood stain like the trace of a fox’s kill on the snow; and the rose she had pulled off the bush” (Carter, 1996, 193). The blood stain also associates with the society’s destructive attitudes and fascistic behaviors leading the way to the annihilation process of the inexperienced, thus the weakest entity. After she melts away, the Countess gets her clothes back and regains her power. “With her long hand, she stroked her furs” (Carter, 1996, 193,194) indicates her ambition and determination for securing and keeping her position. She even becomes more dominant than her husband as she succeeds in disqualifying her rival, the Snow Child whom her husband longs to validate. Hence again we can witness the triumph of reason over unreason.

On the other hand, when the Countess wants to have a rose from the bushes, the Count cannot resist anymore and replies: “I can’t deny you that” (Carter, 1996, 193) encouraging the Snow Child to give the rose to his wife. This very flower causes the Snow Child’s death and proves her intentional victimization. On the other hand, after taking part in the victimization process of the Snow Child, the Countess also turns into a victim since she also becomes a part of the crime by ignoring the assault that her husband commits upon the innocent girl. Moreover, the flower’s biting the Countess represents her sense of guilt and her feelings of sorrow for the Snow Child.

The theme ‘white rose’ that grows out of season in snow, is again introduced in *The Tiger’s Bride*, signifying inexperience related with purity. As both snow and white rose are symbols of innocence, in many of these works, Carter points out the demand of virginity in relation with patriarchy. The Beast’s echoing voice, on the other hand, shows similarity to the sonorous voice of the Countess in *The Lady of the House of Love*,

hinting at the protagonists' ability in expressing themselves strongly. The way Carter depicts both of the protagonists is more or less identical as they both lack a natural, humanistic aspect. They all live in big, dark, castle-like houses in solitude with large gates and their own vast domains. In *The Bloody Chamber*, the Marquis is also depicted as mysterious, with waxen-like face reflecting no emotions and dark eyes lacking any spark of light, again lacking a natural and humane look. Even though he's not young, there are no wrinkles or lines of experience on his face, but just "streaks of pure silver in his dark mane" (Carter, 1996, 112) which she finds unnatural. Their mysterious features together with the threat and fear these protagonists evoke, arouse feelings of discomfort and irritation due to their uncanniness. These features are observable in almost each story of this collection as Carter prefers to employ magic realism in her works to raise concern and to increase the attention in order to convey her message more effectively.

Death, Sexuality and Empowerment Through Dense Metaphors

Flowers take an important role in these short stories. In *The Bloody Chamber*, lilies which are used in funerals symbolize the "restored innocence" of the soul after death ("Lily Flower Meaning & Symbolism | Teleflora," n.d.) and suggest death. There are lots of lilies put in the heroine's bedroom that she associates with the Marquis, white and staining and with the heroine's first sexual experience since these flowers also symbolize sexuality and eroticism as the long pistils relate with "male productivity" and the pollen is the symbol of "fertility" ("Lily Meaning and Symbolism of the Lily on Whats-Your-Sign," 2018). They also represent virtue, purity and chastity which is associated with young brides in fairy tales and the impositions of society and culture. Carter frequently gives the protagonists some hints about the enemy through certain symbols like the lily, and lets them solve their issues by employing their inner sense and intelligence. For instance, the girl has a sense of unease and anxiety when she says "A repugnance I could not stifle, for his white heavy flesh that had too much in common with the armfuls of arum lilies that filled my bedroom in great glass jars, those undertakers' lilies..." (Carter, 1996, 119). Carter points at the potential intentions of the Marquis, and she gives some clues about the upcoming threat and menace through metaphoric symbols by stating how the girl likens these flowers to the lilies of undertakers. In *The Lady of the House of Love*, red roses are depicted as: 'inducing', 'outrageous',

‘obscene in their excess’, and depicted with the expression: “faintly corrupt sweetness” (Carter, 1996, 200). Thus, the flowers are associated with lust, immorality and power as they prompt libidinal compulsion. Like the heroine in *The Bloody Chamber*, the soldier has a similar sense of unease, as the setting: the garden and the mansion reminds him of his childhood memories when he and his brothers and sisters told each other ghost stories taking place in such places. Later when his bike –the symbol of reason- is taken away by the crone, and when he sees the interior of the house, his sense of unease increases. Entering the room of the Countess, he comprehends that something is wrong with her, and he decides to take her to some doctors, but as he is a reasonable man, the possibility that the house could be haunted doesn’t even cross his mind. Hence, the doctor also represents logic, cure and solving the problems through reasoning.

In most of her stories Carter avoids giving names to the heroines, but employs titles like the Countess, the Marquis or sometimes simply names them after the features they have, like Beauty or the Snow Child. These titles also have a metaphoric function, serving for more evidence on the protagonists. Her purpose is to make these heroines represent women with common features in general, to encourage and support the female identity. It is also a hint at the individuation process of the heroines and their immature state before their struggles, when they lack sexual experience as well. The ‘nameless identity’ also associates with the fictional aspect of the protagonists who lack realistic qualities, and thus represent ‘otherness’. Both in *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Tiger’s Bride* the heroines are the narrators who are empowered by their dominance over the events. The heroine’s mother in *The Bloody Chamber* who is likened to Medusa saves her daughter in the end and changes her dreadful destiny in a heroic way also by employing mythological reflections in her actions. Opposite to the mighty female images, we notice two weak father figures in these fairy tales, as the reasons of women’s objectification. First in *The Tiger’s Bride* there is the father who has lost his daughter to the Beast at cards, and second in *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon* there is another paternal figure, who had to bring his daughter to the Beast in exchange for a white rose. Hence, he loses his daughter to the Beast in return for a white rose he stole from his garden. Considering power relations, as Carter portrays two opposite parent images, one as a strong rescuer and the other as a victimizer, the empowerment of the female figure is manifested once again, elevating the

young inexperienced heroine through her relation with a mighty mother. Another strong female figure is the heroine in *The Werewolf*. In order to empower her even more, the setting is portrayed as a haunted forest and is depicted in a very penetrating way as: "Cold; tempest; wild beasts in the forest" (Carter, 1996, 210). Here, we note Carter's rhetoric as stunningly overwhelming to baffle the reader by equipping the protagonists with enigmatic qualities mostly peculiar to antagonists, just as she applies eccentric depictions in her stories like: "The Devil holds picnics in the graveyards and invites the witches; then they dig up fresh corpses, and eat them" (Carter, 1996, 210). The protagonist in this tale has a high level of self-confidence together with rather masculine representation. She takes her knife and sets out to take her grandmother some oatcakes. She is not afraid by virtue of her wisdom, which is a further evidence for Carter's emphasizing the significance of reason and wisdom as we perceive from the quotation: "She knew the forest too well to fear it" (Carter, 1996, 210). On the contrary, her grandmother, a huge werewolf, with running red eyes and grizzled chops, is a fictional creature representing unreason and irrationality as the fearless young girl with her omniscience represents the power of reason and logic. Thus, there is again the triumph of reason over unreason emphasized, as in the end she lives in her grandmother's house and prospers. Similar to the young soldier's bicycle in *The Lady of the House Love* which is the symbol of reason, the horses of Milord in *The Tiger's Bride* are depicted as 'wise, with a rational restraint of energy', again the symbol of reason. Thus, we can state that just like the young soldier, Milord -even though having unreal and fictitious features- is also a reasonable character who finally accepts and even welcomes his state by unveiling his face and body to the heroine. In *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon*, the heroine talks about the long hours passed by without being aware, chatting with the Beast. She hints at his wisdom and intelligence by suggesting that he is a kind of man to whom talking is in fact a pleasure or even a privilege. It also demonstrates his influence over the heroine, proving the power of wisdom as the protagonist starts to fall in love with him. On the other hand, the newly-wed couple in *The Bloody Chamber* don't have much in common to talk over, but just the physical attraction they share. Thus, their relation is obviously superficial and unstable. Farmisano states that: "The sexual desires of Carter's male antagonists, often in some beastly form, are symbolic of the females' sexual desires. Therefore,

when the women engage in these sexual actions, she is claiming her own desires” (Farmisano, 2010, 2). Thus Carter hints at the taboos on women’s sexuality and its association with deviance when it is vocalized. She also emphasizes the necessity of expression to establish an autonomous and authentic identity, with all her attributes and dispositions.

The Marquis’ bloody chamber shows similarity with the bedroom of the Countess in *The Lady of the House of Love* with its dark and gruesome features. There is a catafalque at the center and funerary urns in the corners of the Marquis’ room. Both of the rooms’ walls are wet, one because of the rain coming from a neglected roof and the other probably due to the moist air coming from the sea. Ironically, water symbolizes higher wisdom and the girl’s wisdom comes from exploring the chamber, whereas the soldier’s wisdom is sourced from an experience; a night spent in the bedroom of the countess, as the light filling the room represents illumination. Just like lilies, the red roses in the garden of the Countess promise death since they live on blood. The house of the Erl-King is similarly dark and moist like the bloody chamber since it is depicted as “a pelt of yellow lichen” and “Grass and weeds grow in the mossy roof” (Carter 1996, 187-188). Likewise, it is the place of annihilation for the victims trapped in cages. Hence, grass relates with experience and the passing time that matures individuals as the keys that reveal many secrets and offer wisdom.

Transformation of the Protagonists, and their Fictional and Non-Fictional Qualities

There are certain transformations of the heroines in these fairy tales associated with their maturation attempts and individuation. The heart shaped blood stain on the forehead of the protagonist in *The Bloody Chamber* relates with her turning into a more experienced, wiser woman through the tragic realities she experiences. Thus, as she gets wiser, she also becomes stronger. Hence, the blood stain becomes the symbol of her maturation as well as her illumination. Giving music lessons, she also becomes a productive and authentic woman and saves herself from objectification. Her earlier portrayal, on the arm of the Marquis, wearing the jewelry and clothes sponsored by her future husband, disempowers and deprives her of freedom and her identity. Her life after marriage turns her into a more passive and submissive, unproductive figure. At the beginning of the tale, having no purpose or plans for the future, the heroine in fact

rejects life and refuses to take an existentialist stance on the issues implied in the narration. She even denies taking responsibility for the results of her actions, but later, with experience, illumination, and the assistance of her mother, she manages to grip life. Moreover, just being a wife turns her into an ordinary, dependent and inauthentic female persona. Her searching for the truth and discovering the real identity of her dangerous husband through the bloody chamber makes her wiser, just like the girl in *The Werewolf* who also discovers the truth about her grandmother before she gains more wisdom. Moreover, it is also the narrator protagonist telling *The Erl-King* who is empowered by discovering the Erl-King's intentions through reasoning to overcome her desires. In both *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Erl King*, there are stains left from the experiences of the protagonists, one in the shape of a red heart on the forehead and the other a crimson imprint of a bite on the throat, functioning as symbols of maturation and experience. In both of these tales, the heroines have to overcome their libidinal drives to defend themselves and defeat the enemy. Thus, their individuation is also accomplished as a consequence of their struggles within themselves. In these deconstructed tales, the heroines have contradictory feelings about the heroes. In *The Bloody Chamber*, the heroine is attracted and disgusted by her husband, whereas the Erl-King consoles and devastates the heroine at the same time. And in *The Lady of the House of Love*, the young soldier is both attracted by the Countess and repelled by her whore-like mouth. These oppositions re-emphasize the reason-unreason conflict, indicating that instinctual urges may lead to annihilation unless logic and reasoning are not employed. In these fairy tales, the protagonists feel that there's something wrong, something deceptive about the characters they are facing, who from time to time give obscure clues about their intentions. When the Erl-King likens the protagonist to a skinned rabbit (Carter 1996, 190), or as the Marquis decorates their bedroom with an excessive number of lilies that reminds funerals (Carter, 1996, 118), the mysterious and evil side of these characters are revealed. Moreover, as the Marquis gives the heroine a choker of rubies as a wedding present that once belonged to his grandmother who escaped from the guillotine, his destructive intentions are connoted once again (Carter, 1996, 115). On the other hand, in *The Lady of the House of Love*, the Countess reveals her purpose by suggesting: "You have such a fine throat, like a column of marble" (Carter, 1996, 204). She even confesses her real identity by declaring that she is

condemned to solitude and darkness (Carter, 1996, 204). Beside the hero's enlightenment, there is also the illumination of the Countess as she sees her own blood for the first time with "awed fascination" (Carter, 1996, 207). The blood represents her confrontation with her own identity for the first time. It is in fact a hint at her becoming aware of her authentic self, free from the reflections of her ancestors and the influential maternal figure whose wedding gown she cannot take off as she keeps on wearing the dark glasses. Hence, the dark glasses are broken due to her contact with the young soldier and her exploring her identity. Briefly, the Countess's confrontation and interaction with reason leads to her transformation.

Like the protagonist in the Werewolf, the Erl-King also knows a lot about the forest and thus, represents experience and wisdom. He is very successful in doing the household chores, thus is blended with some female characteristics that empower his dominant character even more. Hence, here we see the opposite of 'female empowerment through male features' since Carter prefers to present female representation this time through a male character. These female qualities don't make the Erl-King look weak, on the contrary they empower him. His wisdom is reemphasized in the way he is depicted as an omniscient figure as well, knowing every detail about the forest with his ability in ruling the animals of the forest which also illuminates his authority. His wisdom is the source of his freedom and independence only in the woods, but on the contrary, he looks like a prisoner trapped in that forest, as Carter suggests: "His eyes are quite green, as if from too much looking at the wood" (Carter, 1996, 187). So, as the Countess in *The Lady of the House of Love* captures the bird that reminded her of how hopelessly she is trapped in that half-dead body, the Erl-King also captures girls after turning them into birds and puts them in cages- which probably reminds him of his own imprisonment in the forest. He feeds them, looks after them well, but still they are trapped and captured. Their imprisonment also represents patriarchal society, its norms and women's traditional place as being confined in the boundaries of their homes, turned into home-bound creatures. Just as the Erl-King rules all the animals in the forest, he establishes his absolute sovereignty over the girls fascistically. It is also ironically emphasized that traditional marriage deprives women of their freedom, making them lose their ability to make decisions about their own lives, which are controlled by their husbands. Carter depicts women's state in a relationship or marriage as: "Your green

eye is a reducing chamber. If I look into it long enough, I will become as small as my own reflection, I will diminish to a point and vanish. I will be drawn into that black whirlpool and be consumed by you” (Carter, 1996, 191). She reflects women’s objectification and how she is consumed until she has no authentic identity, likening them to a cageful of birds becoming similar to each other.

At the end of *The Erl-King*, the first person narrative turns into a dialogue as if the narrator refers directly to the Erl-King, before she saves herself from becoming one of the victims. Through her dialogue with the antagonist, she becomes more powerful and vocal towards him as she expresses herself freely and without limitations. Then there is again a shift, but to third person narrative this time, in order to obtain two different subjective narrations and thus reflecting an objective point of view. The bow plays discordant music on the violin, the strings of which is replaced with the hair from the Erl-King’s mane, that cries out “Mother, mother you have murdered me” (Carter, 1996, 192). Even though this engrossing statement promises an extremely interesting end, it functions as the closing of the story as existentialism, as it is the narrator’s reasoning and desire to live that saves her in the end. It can also be associated with a baby that restricts the woman due to her predetermined function as a ‘homemaker’ and her main traditional role as the ‘angel in the house’ by the social order. Moreover, it can also be interpreted through Jung’s anima-animus theory which relates with The Erl-King and the narrator’s being two counterparts of the same identity. While the female component represents the more emotional and sentimental side, the male constituent relates with the more logical and reasoning phase. The identity is stronger when both of the counterparts work in harmony. Thus, the female component murders her male side, keeping the necessary qualities like reason, logic and determination to take action, to empower herself and other ‘anima’s or ‘female qualities’ in the cage.

As Anny Crunelle-Vanrigh suggests, there is the issue of “Otherness and difference” (Crunelle-Vanrigh, 1998) in all of these tales in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* which is also a reference to the female gender that has been ignored or identified with ‘otherness’ throughout the centuries. There are also physical transformations of the protagonists, some turn into beasts like creatures, whereas some become more human. In *The Tiger’s*

Bride, Milord denies his identity and tries to be a human instead. On the other hand, the heroine turns into a beast after having a sexual intercourse with Milord, and is empowered by installing animalistic and authentic characteristics in herself together with experience.

Robin Ann Sheets states that to Carter, myths are the “extraordinary lies” produced in the human mind to deprive people of their freedom (Seago, 1999,77). She thinks of the history of literature as a wide field where traditional deceits are connected or based upon one another where language becomes the means for creating a culture and establishing authority (Seago, 1999, 78). She also suggests that Carter defends Sade because he treats all sexual reality as a political reality and because he thinks that just like men, women also have the right to have sexual intercourse violently and tyrannously. Thus, even though we basically notice the heroines’ libidinal needs and behaviors as more commonly male representations, they in fact function to prove the peculiarity of these tendencies to both genders. We even notice masochistic inclinations blended in some of the characters in Carter’s tales (Crunelle-Vanrigh, 1998) that associate them with more realistic attributes, apart from perfectionist representations, as where the heroine in *The Bloody Chamber* states: “I heard those voluptuous chords that carry a charge of deathly passion” or when she suggests that she has seen a look in his eyes like “a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh” (Carter, 1996, 115), or a housewife inspecting cuts on the slab, she feels the lust in him and this evokes her desires because she says that “she feels a potentiality for corruption” (Carter, 1996, 115) even though he is “deliberately coarse, vulgar” (Carter, 1996, 118). The Beast in *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon* also acts in a masochistic way, representing an imperfect but realistic identity, since after the heroine leaves him he can’t eat anything and suffers from her absence so much that he almost dies. Considering the myth that associates virginity with innocence, Melinda Fowl tries to support her interpretation that the Countess gains her sexual maturity after she is used by a man, by pointing at the article of Patricia Duncan: *Re-imagining the fairy tales: Angela Carter’s Bloody Chamber*. Regarding Duncan’s article as a reference, Fowl states that the blood stain on the heroine’s forehead represents the symbolic breaking of her hymen i.e. virginity. She adds that according to Duncan there is the pornographic cliché of ‘sex and death’ (Fowl, 1990, 78) which also relates with the end of inexperience and the emergence of a new, wiser identity. Thus, even

though the protagonists in these tales sense the threat they are about to face, as their transformation depends on the problematic developments, they do not withhold themselves from contributing to the dramatic and even macabre events.

One of the most significant symbol of expression and thus the manifestation of identity is one's own voice as it involves originality and distinguishes the individual from others. We can note various descriptions of voices belonging to the protagonists in these tales; 'sonorous or resonant voice' in *The Lady of the House of Love* depicting the voice of Countess, or "The voice that seemed to issue from a cave full of echoes" in *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon*, in *The Bloody Chamber* belonging to the Marquis, there is the voice 'like soft consolations of the sea and in *The Tiger's Bride*, Milord's voice emphasizes the abnormality of his roaring-like speech, and the illusiveness of his character. But on the other hand, even though Milord's face is hidden under a mask, it reflects more of himself than the Marquis' unveiled face can. Despite his unrealistic voice, Milord is able to transfer his emotions more like a human than the Marquis is capable of in *The Bloody Chamber*. Hence, Carter points out that it is their emotions and behavior that transfigure entities into human beings, together with their wisdom, experience and reasoning. Merely logic, reasoning and rationality on the other hand, are not sufficient to turn a being into a human creature.

Conclusion

Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories in Burning Your Boats* and her creative writing style, exhibit the potential power of women when they portray an authentic identity, employing their reason and determination in their actions. Carter's protagonists who struggle for their lives despite their inexperience reveal how Carter elevates the female identity and how she encourages women to rise up and struggle for their rights and for their dreams. Furnishing her stories with existentialist concerns, Carter tries to influence women to survive in male-dominant milieu by employing their intelligence and manifesting their identity to overcome segregation and limitation. She tries to alter the stereotypical female roles and supports women to become dominant, leading characters, sometimes even a warrior instead of being passive and submissive. As a writer with a witty feminist style, she frequently stresses the terms 'wisdom', and 'reason' in her prose to emphasize the importance of intelligence. She

attempts to influence women to break their chains and gain the position they deserve in the social order and in their own lives. Carter's stories are also concerned to draw attention to the victimization and objectification of women, but with a more positive perspective to outline them as individuals who are capable of making their own choices and decisions in order to change their doom.

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