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Reimagining the Fairy Tale in Angela Carter's Earlier Fiction
Bachelor’s Diploma Thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
I would like to thank my supervisor for his kind and valuable advice, Mathew and my family for their love and support. And last but not least, I would like to thank my beloved friends.
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Introduction

After dying of cancer, aged 51, in 1992 Angela Carter was pronounced by *The Times* one of the 50 best postwar British writers and “became the most read author on English university campuses” (Peach, 1). However, not much recognized by the general public; she is acknowledged by the academic world for her unique style of using language. Although her work is regarded as fantastic or magical realism, it is accompanied by her naturalistic and realistic critic of female and thus male gender.


Her suggestive writing explores human mind and sexuality, in particular, from the gender issues perspective, and examines male towards female sexual behavior and vice versa. As has been stated above, Carter’s style of writing is hard to define and in her works while analyzing the female and male relationship, she incorporates several techniques and styles which can be labeled as postmodern, feministic, utopian, subversive, gothic, mythical, magical, metaphorical, bizarre, pastiche, surrealistic, and also as fairy tale and magical realism. Lorna Sage in her introduction to a collection of essay *Flesh and the Mirror* states that “though she had always taken the line that fantasy was not the shadow-side of a binary
opposition, but had a real life history. Being was marinated in magic, and (conversely) imaginary monsters had no separate sphere” (1).

As Jeff Vandermeer proposes, Carter’s writing was first of all strongly influenced by the fact that “all of her immediate female relatives were strong women of striking candor and pragmatism. And yet, paradoxically, Carter fought to overcome teenage anorexia caused by low self-esteem”. Such influence can be seen in Carter’s reoccurring analyses of the mother figure and studies of the feminine. However, one of the turning points was her studies of English literature at Bristol University where she “became familiar with European Art, the French Symbolists and Dadaists are an obvious influence on her writings;” above all, in her revisiting of fairy tales one of her inspirations was the French fin de siècle movement (Peach 18). Through all her work, there are apparent allusions to the work of Shakespeare, to whom she was drawn while she studied English literature, in particular, the medieval one. Later in her work she “became more conversant with European critical theorists especially the poststructuralists and the feminist psychoanalysis” (Peach 18).

Angela Carter’s style of writing cannot be compared to any of the contemporary authors. However, some critics suggest her inspiration by the highly appraised Latino writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez whose name is synonymous to Magical Realism, giving Carter such label makes it even more difficult since Magical Realism is rich in themes and different authors employ a diverse number of elements (including fantastic, hybridity, or history and post-colonialism), narrative strategies, thus in its broader sense it is an indefinable ‘mode of writing’ (Peach 7). In Carter’s work one can find traces of many literary authors of the past, and among the many, she admired Shakespeare and his work became her life-work inspiration. An inspiration by Shakespeare is apparent in her last novel Wise Children where the main characters are identical female twins that were born on the wrong side of the river. Paul Baily, in his introduction to an interview with Angela
Carter only few weeks before she died, suggests that “some knowledge of Shakespeare and particularly the plays of his final years add to one’s appreciation of the book”. In the same interview Angela Carter admits her admiration for Shakespeare and the great influence he was for her while writing the book: “everywhere you look into Shakespeare there are twins, I’ve never been able to understand his obsession with twins, dabbling… There are just twins all through Shakespeare and they never actually do anything and they just stand there being similar”. Shakespeare’s work can be also seen in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* where she often implies metamorphosis, with which I will deal later in the first chapter of this thesis.

In my thesis I would like to argue that Angela Carter uses fairy tale to portray gender issues of the contemporary society and I would like to analyze whether and how she employs different literary elements such as feminism, gothic and myth in her rather subversive reimagining of fairy tales to examine the nature of female and thus male sex and their interaction. Further, I would like to analyze the manner in which she subverts the fairy tale to challenge the contemporary gender and sexual issues of the feminine and how she uses the fairy tale and myth as a foundation to explore the various means of escaping the presumed gender roles.

In the first chapter I would like to deal with main literary elements that significantly influenced Carter’s writing, and as she was influenced by many I will especially deal with those that play a role in the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Firstly, I will comment on postmodernism as it is the literary era in which Carter wrote and which covers the literary strategies used by her and her generation. Since Angela Carter is called one of the most influential feminist authors of the Postwar Britain, it seems necessary to comment briefly on the feminist literary theory to be able to analyze the different aspects of her writing. I will briefly comment on the history of feminism, in particular, the one in Postwar
Britain; postmodern feminist theories and later on Carter’s rather subversive take on the radical feminism. Secondly, I will mention what it is gender in general and how it is connected to feminism in literary criticism and texts. I will comment on Carter’s play with the gender, her incorporation of it in her writing. Closely connected to the gender element is Carter’s frequent inclusion of metamorphoses in The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories, and therefore I would like to comment on Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* which is compiled of myths and was a considerable influence on Shakespeare and thus on Angela Carter.

Thirdly, I would like to introduce the subject of fairy tale, its history, development and influence on post-modern writers. Also I would like to discuss the difference between the German tradition of the Brothers Grimm and the French tradition - Charles Perrault as both were a great influence on Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Lastly I would like to reflect on what is gothic as a literary genre and its development, especially, in the postmodern literature.

In the second chapter I will analyze in what way Angela Carter subverts Charles Perrault’s Blue Beard. I will analyze the title short story of the collection “The Bloody Chamber” considering Carter’s analysis of Marquis de Sade *The Sadeian Woman*, since she wrote them at the same period of time and were both published in 1979. They both deal with sexuality, desire and the male usurpers of innocent and sometimes naïve women. I will support my analyses with Margaret Atwood’s critical essay “Running with Tigers.”

In the last, third chapter, I will deal with several selected short stories from the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Firstly, I will discuss the two cat stories, “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” in comparison to “The Tiger’s Bride”, which both are rewritings of the French novelist of the eighteen century Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont’s *Beauty and the Beast*; however, both are seen from different perspectives which I will analyze, contrast and compare. Further, I will discuss three wolf stories “The Werewolf” and “The
Company of Wolves”, which are rewritings of Grimm’s *Little Red Riding Hood*. 
Chapter 1 – Literary Influences

In this chapter I would like to comment on the main literary influences that affected Angela Carter’s work. Since in her writing she was inspired by an uncountable number of diverse influences, I would like to focus primarily on those that played a significant role in her short stories, especially in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories.*

Postmodernism developed in the postwar years as a reaction to modernist ideas and not as the prefix post- rather suggest a continuation to a new era. The spring of postmodernism is connected with the death of the two main protagonists of modernism: Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, both of whom died in the year of 1941. On the contrary, postmodernism does not have any leading authors and therefore it is difficult to state whether it has ended or rather if it is lingering on. Postmodernism has spread over the whole literary world and among the internationally acclaimed authors are Vladimir Nabokov, Kurt Vonnegut, Umberto Eco, Margaret Atwood and Haruki Murakami. In British literature, postmodernism is associated with Salman Rushdie, Graham Swift, Ian McEwan and Martin Amis. Angela Carter is identified with many genres; her implications and merging of different genres make her one of postmodern authors. Nicole Jouve states that if the word postmodernism hasn’t been around “someone would have to invent it for Angela Carter”, since her writing has a “considerable amount of gut” (149). Postmodernism is a combination of many literary themes and techniques that are often used together, among which I will comment on those that are connected to Carter’s work. Postmodernism is affiliated with experimental writing; authors use self-reflective techniques and discuss writing-within-writing in close connection with intertextuality, frequently used by Carter.

Intertextuality is a technique that merges two or more texts together, in Carter’s case – the interweaving of a fictional story within a fairy tale. Mary Kaiser differentiates between
intertextuality and allusions stating that “the stance of the speaker—the “thetic”—is significantly altered when intertextual transposition takes place, while allusion merely gestures towards another text without taking on its entire context”, claiming that “intertextuality was embedded into the history of the fairy tale when Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers, and other compilers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries transposed oral folk tales into fairy tales”. However, some critics have stated that such dealing with texts shows lack of originality and tendency to cliché. Carter, however, situates her stories carefully within the genres and the “defined cultural moments” to explore the feminine desires and sexuality (Kaiser).

Fragmentation is an aspect of postmodernism often used by Angela Carter, for example, in her short story “Flesh and the Mirror” about a young girl visiting Tokyo; while telling the story about the girl’s experience Carter fragmentizes it with exploration of the girl’s mind and thoughts. Though, she did not employ this technique on *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Pastiche is related to postmodern intertextuality meaning “a literary, musical, or artistic piece consisting wholly or chiefly of motifs or techniques borrowed from one or more sources” (*Dictionary.com*); Carter using this technique combines different genres creates a unique style. Magical Realism combines different themes to depict pictures and characters in a rather surrealist manner. Postmodernism combines different narrative techniques and themes, in addition to the above stated: metafiction, hyperreality, fabulation, irony and paranoia; investigates desire and sexuality and thus creates space for uniqueness of each author writing in the period.

This thesis does not intend to deal with feminism in Carter’s work in particular. Carter has been characterized as a one of the most significant feminist British postwar author and as one who also declared herself as one, and it seems necessary to comment briefly on the feminist literary theory to be able to analyze different aspects of her work. It is not hard to
see why Angela Carter is so closely connected to feminism as she grew up in the bleak fifties of the British feminism, through the radical 60s she studied at Bristol University and in the second half published her first novel *Shadow Dance*. Most of her work, including *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, was written in the 70s, when the second wave of feminism sprang, and in the 80s. In the mid 1980’s the third wave of feminism gradually began, in which the feminist literary critics started focusing on gender issues and deconstruction of the existing one gender supremacy, in contrast to the second wave which mainly dealt with feminism in politic terms.

Angela Carter’s feminism revolves around the constant challenge of the stereotypical accounts of the feminine subject and reinvention of the alternatives. Isobel Armstrong in her introduction to *New Feminist Discourses* claims that feminist criticism takes for granted the importance of the founding category of gender, and in order to explore further its importance has responded to psychoanalysis, Marxist thought and cultural theory, post-structuralist thought, linguistic and the new semiotic disciplines. But this interdisciplinary confidence eschews eclecticism. Feminism is highly self-conscious about the sexual politics and the politics implied in different forms of thought. (2)

However, this does not apply to Angela Carter as she was always well aware of the weaknesses and faults of the female sex and as such she challenged and portrayed them stripped of all the feminist subjective prejudice. She uses the above stated theories to support her ideas of the representation of the female body and desire. She was not a feminist in the sense it is commonly understood, in fact, she enraged many of the radical feminist by her critical re-reading of Marquise de Sade in *The Sadeian Woman*, where she suggested that women should pursue liberation themselves, even through such work where they are subordinates to men, e.g. prostitution; and thus claims that Sade in his work was a
determined supporter of the liberation of the female sex and that it “enables a recuperation of Sade’s sadism for the liberation of the objects of his oppression” (McDonagh 229).

Carter’s growing up among strong-willed women later combined with her struggle with anorexia had an impact on her later writing in which she challenges the generally appraised presumptions of women, as one would say, from rather a male point of view, breaking down the contemporary feminist’s beliefs.

She started out writing as a kind-of male impersonator with a strong streak of misogyny which is very much of the period and which, since it’s directed against the taste of proper little lady, the educated daughter of the bourgeoisie or the Welfare State, is preserved in her later writing as an assault on the confining codes of ‘femininity.’ (Jordan 119)

Jordan states, that although Carter was a self-claimed feminist, she chose a different way of portraying women and regarded them from a rather male perspective.

The Dictionary.com defines ‘gender’ as a “sexual identity, especially in relation to society or culture” including “the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex.” The subject of gender plays a role not only in the feminist literary theory but also in the fairy tale and myth. Shakespeare’s fascination with metamorphoses and frequent implication of it in his comedies emerges from his study of Ovid’s Metamorphosis. He portrayed the falling in love as a transformation of a character. Special treatment of gender have the postmodernist authors including Angela Carter, who incorporates it into her revisions of fairy tale and often uses the metamorphosis of gender and form as a mediator for the movement of the course or the conclusions of the action.

The genre of story-telling has been given many labels e.g. the myth, fairy tale, folk tale and wonder tale among others. According to the Grimms, Märchen (a dimunitive of Mär [an account]) meant simply a “fictional tale.”
The Grimms included a variety of narrative types [...]. There were tales of magic and marvels, humorous stories, animal tales, saints’ legends and pious tales from the Middle Ages. All were considered Märchen and, as the Grimms’ title suggest, “family fare”. (Roemer, Bacchilega 8)

The Russian formalist and structuralist Vladimir Propp used “the term ‘wonder tale’ from the German Wundermärchen, to embrace both fairy tales and folk tales”, whereas Marina Warner in her work prefers to use the term fairy tale as she concentrates on “the stories that have always been called by that term, even though they do not feature any fairy characters” (Warner XIV). Susan Sellers, on the other hand, in her introduction to a collection of essays Myth and the Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women’s Fiction explores the difference between myth and a fairy tale and comes to the conclusion that there is “no distinction between a myth and a fairy tale as the terms seem currently synonymous, [however, she continuous] to see a happy ending as the peculiar province of fairy tale” (16). This vagueness of the term springs from its long history, development and mixing of different origins.

The fairy tale tradition came long before they were written down. Story-telling or the oral tradition is as old as mankind and was passed down not written, but rather told from generation to generation. The concept of ‘old wives’ tales’ originates from Apuleius “who used it on the lips of his hoary-headed crone of a story-teller; and it remained so, in the very act of authenticating the folk wisdom of the stories by stressing the wise old women who had carried on the tradition” (Warner 19). In English and other languages, including Czech it remained as a phrase that describes a nonsensical statement.

Modern French tradition of telling tales started in Paris by a group of educated and accomplished women of the bourgeois in the second half of the 17th century, among those was Madame d’Aulnoy who ascribed the term ‘contes de fees’ – to English translated as the
fairy tale. For these women and later men “there was also good reason for these authors to mediate their social commentary through the veil of fantasy” (Roemer, Bacchilega 11).

Charles Perrault was one of the founders of the French Academy of Science and was the first to start writing down the tales that were orally told. Later in the 17th century, after losing his post as a secretary of the French Academy he dedicated himself to collecting old children stories and published them in a collection of *Mother Goose Tales* (*Contes de ma Mère l'Oye*, 1697). It includes one of the world’s best known fairy tales: ‘Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper’, ‘Tom Thumb’, ‘The Sleeping Beauty’, ‘Red Riding Hood’, ‘Bluebeard’, and ‘Puss in Boots.’ Charles Perrault with the collection created a path for the new emerging literary genre.

Some hundred and fifty years later Brothers Grimm published a two volume collection of fairy tales, which also included some reworked tales by Charles Perrault. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were German academics and linguists, together they compiled the first German dictionary and Jacob Grimm established the first systematic sound change in linguistics called the Grimm’s Law published in *Deutsche Grammatik*. The collections were firstly published in 1812 and since then they published another seven editions, the last one in 1857. The additions vary as some tales were removed and some added, some were also changed and some sexual references were removed, while violence increased.

The Grimms were also responsible for “changing the wicked mother figure in many tales to a wicked stepmother character as not challenge prevailing beliefs about motherhood” (Roemer, Bacchilega 10). The changing of a wicked mother to stepmother relates especially to two well known tales: *The Snow White* and *Hansel and Gretel*, where the protagonists are banished by their stepmothers from homes to a forest where they are supposed to die. The Grimm Brothers also created a kind of a German variation of the bourgeois Parisian salon where they frequently met with their friends and old-wives’-tellers
to record their tales. However, the Grimm Brothers tried to retrieve “a vernacular, traditional and national literature” (Warner 192), the resulting tales were not “primarily indicative of peasant values but those of the German middle class” (Roemer, Bacchilega, 10), which was caused by the arising prejudice toward local dialects seeming to vulgar for some scholars.

Definitions of the fairy tale are quite indefinite, considering the origin of the term. As I have stated before, the name comes from a literal translation of the French term ‘contes de fees’- fairy tale. However, fairy tale need not involve fairies or any fantastic creatures and as Marina Warner proposes “more than the presence of fairies, the moral function, the imagined antiquity and oral anonymity of the ultimate source, and the happy ending […], metamorphosis defines the genre” (XVI). Although all the stated elements help to define the category of fairy tale it is the shape shifting that specifies the genre. It is the cut off hand that eventually grows back, the pumpkin that changes into a carriage, a frog that changes into a charming prince after a kiss, Pinocchio whose nose grows every time he pronounces a lie, and the beast that by virtue of love becomes a handsome prince. The shape shifting element frequently occurs in Carter’s rewritten fairy tales, for example, in “The Company of Wolves” the wolf takes a form of a handsome hunter, in “The Werewolf” a cut off wolf paw changes into a hand of a grandmother, or in “Erl-King” caged birds change into beautiful virgins after their usurper is killed by one of them.

The Gothic as a literary genre developed in Britain and most of its emergence falls into the period of Romanticism and has significantly developed from its first occurrence in literature. It is generally believed that the first novel of the genre was The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole in 1764, later followed by the Romantics, such as the poets Coleridge and Keats; Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and Polidori’s The Vampyre (1819). In the Victorian period, the popularity of the Gothic genre declined; however, it was beginning its
most creative period in which published, among others, Edgar Allan Poe – *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1842). One hundred years later in America emerged pulp magazines which reprinted some of the popular Gothic tales from the Victorian period; they were successors to the penny dreadful and dime novels. Gothicism is also apparent in the work of the Brontë sisters: *The Wuthering Heights*, 1847 - by Emily Brontë, and Charlotte Brontë who in her novel *Jane Eyre* added a new element to Gothic fiction: ‘the mad woman in the attic’ often studied by contemporary English literature students and scholars. Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* is a Georgian parody of the genre, in which the heroine, a reader of Gothic novels, applies the Gothicism of the novels on her life, for example, seeing a villain in General Tilney who has not committed crime.

Gothicism is characterized by features mainly dealing with the sublime, which relates to sacred gothic architecture; and supernatural, however, it is underlined by the real world. Despite the development, there are elements that have been associated with the genre throughout the time. The stories are often situated in fantastical and terror evoking settings, for example dark ghostly castles or mansions surrounded by haunted forests occupied by invisible, though sometimes only assumed creatures. Another element of Gothicism is a villain main character settling in the haunted castle and whose violent history is either caused by some malevolence or his own fall from grace. The protagonists are willingly or unwillingly isolated and there is a sense of mystery about them. These features have not been changed and remain one of the crucial characteristics of the genre in the contemporary literature, and “have seeped into all literary movements, including postmodernism, filling a small but significant role in providing an outlet for social and imaginative energy” (Beville 21).

In the twentieth century the approach toward the Gothic genre changed under the influence of other literary streams including postmodernism; in opposition to “the old
Gothic [, which] even in the eighteen century was itself an anarchic, popular and indeed ‘camp’ recycling of the past” (Sage, Smith 1). Gothic has, however, kept the tone of being anarchic and popular and in the contemporary media is largely over-used and misunderstood. Maria Beville in her work on Gothic-postmodernism argues that “popular culture and its critics alike seem to have immersed themselves in a romantic notion of Gothic as a style” (8). Although it is rather problematic to define Gothic as a literary stream in contemporary culture, in general, postmodern authors lay stress on the element of terror, and Gothic as well is “the clearest mode of expression in literature for voicing the terrors of postmodernity” (Beville 8). Beville also claims that

Gothic-postmodernism as a new and distinct literary genre include: the blurring of the borders that exist between the real and the fictional, which results in narrative self-consciousness and an interplay between the supernatural and the metafictional; a concern with the sublime effects of terror and the unrepresentable aspects of reality and subjectivity: specific Gothic thematic devices of haunting. (15)

Thus it is the element of terror and supernatural, most importantly among others, that appears in Carter’s writing, in particular The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman and The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories. Both of these works are considered examples of the usage of Gothic in Postmodernism.

Gothic is a genre that allows an instant parody of itself and which “tends to imply a critical relation between the present and the past”, thus opens a space and tempts authors to playfulness and to a creation of their unique world (Sage, Smith 1). Carter related to Gothicism in the story “Bloody Chamber”, because it allowed her to combine the seemingly contradictive genres- the fairy tale and pornography. “Gothicism as a blend of fairy tale and pornography most obviously shows the replacement of the ontological by the
iconographic” (Neumeier 149). Carter does not treat the Gothic genre routinely and therefore there are no materialized creatures evoking terror like the monster in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Stroker’s vampires which “materialize as product of self and invasion of self respectively and become real”, Carter’s terror is rather anticipated.
Chapter 2 – “The Bloody Chamber”

In this chapter I would like to analyze in which manner Carter subverts Charles Perrault’s *Blue Beard* considering the postmodernist, feminist and gothic influence; in the title story of the collection “The Bloody Chamber”. Carter’s “The Bloody Chamber” follows quite exactly the original tale of *Blue Beard* (*La Barbe Bleue*, 1697), with some slight differences which are, however, crucially important to analyze the subversive method of the text. Carter published the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* in the same year, in 1979, as *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*, which is an analysis of the work of Marquise de Sade. Some critics, including Margaret Atwood, see a parallel between her reworking *Blue Beard* and *The Sadeian Woman*. Margaret Atwood states that *The Bloody Chamber* “may be read as a ‘writing against’ de Sade [and] a talking back to him” suggesting that it can be “understood as an exploration of narrative possibilities of de Sade’s lamb-and-tiger dichotomy” (120). Carter in “The Bloody Chamber” and also in the stories that will be discussed in the third chapter challenges the presumed gender behavioral characteristics.

According to Atwood “The Bloody Chamber” “gives us two carnivores and two herbivores”, where the two carnivores are the Marquis and the nameless heroine’s mother, and one of the herbivores is the virginal heroine, the other a blind piano tuner with whom she falls in love and eventually lives a happily-ever-after life (122). The general supposition of the division of gender is male being carnivores and female herbivores, thus tigers and lambs. However, Carter portrays woman representing a tiger who hunted down another tiger; and in opposition a man of lamb qualities. Though the characters are capable of these qualities only through experience- the “eagle-featured indomitable” mother spent her girlhood in Indo-China, “outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates; nursed a village through a visitation of the plague, [and] shot a man-eating tiger with her own hand” (“Bloody” 112).
The pianist takes the weak, lamb’s side due to his blindness, which makes him incapable of fighting the cruel Marquis, the tiger.

Marquis, in his “heavy, fleshy composure”, is an impersonation of the patriarchy usurpation (“Bloody”113). The heroine is able to sense him with her smell just like a prey senses the attacking beast. She perceives him as a wild beast from the animal world as in the dark his dark mane takes shape of leonine head and “[her] nostrils [catch] a whiff of the opulent male scent of leather and spices”. Despite his size, similarly to big wild cats, he is capable of silent movement “as if his shoes had soles of velvet, as if his footfall turned the carpet into snow” (“Bloody” 112). Marquise fits the archetype of the male sex.

His strange, heavy, almost waxen face [is] not lined by experience. Rather, experience seemed to have washed it perfectly smooth, like stone a stone on a beach whose fissures [have] been eroded by successive tides. […] With the heavy eyelids folded over eyes [with] absolute absence of light, seem to [be] like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he [has] led […], as though that face lay underneath the mask. Or else, elsewhere. (“Bloody” 112)

The still-like and waxen facial features bear resemblance of dead embalmed person displayed for mourning before the actual burial. His features evoke terror emanating from vampire characters in Gothic novels. His lips are described red and wet as the vampire lips are from constant consumption of blood. However, it is not stated that he feeds on the dead wives’ blood, his dreadful deeds lead to such assumptions.

Marquis gives the young virginal bride a necklace, in form of two inches wide chocker with “flashing crimson jewels […] bright as arterial blood”, as a wedding gift (“Bloody” 115). Despite its beauty, the heroine does not grow fond of the necklace since it is “cold as ice and [chilling]” and reminds her of “an extraordinarily precious slit throat”
(“Bloody” 114), while she starts feeling jealousy towards the rubies as “he [kisses] them before he [kisses her] mouth” (“Bloody”, 121). It seems to her as a coiled “snake about to strike” (“Bloody” 140). The chocker is part of Marquis’s heritage coming from the early days of Directory, [when] the aristos who [escaped] the guillotine had an ironic fad of tying a red ribbon round their necks at just the point where the blade would have sliced it through, a red ribbon like the memory of a wound. And his grandmother, taken with the notion, had her ribbon made up in rubies. (“Bloody” 115)

This history anticipates heroine’s fate Marquis is planning for her. When he discovers that she has made the mistake of entering his secret room he orders her to “prepare [herself] for martyrdom” by putting on her white dress she wore at Tristan, along with the necklace that “prefigures [her] end” (“Bloody” 139). Twice in the text the heroine is stripped of all her clothing wearing just the ruby necklace, once in her wedding bed and secondly at the time of her decapitation.

Marquis is “rich as Croesus” (“Bloody” 114). The train, “the might of iron and steam,” stops “only for his convenience,” because he is “the richest man in France” (“Bloody” 116). His wealth and inheritance is enormous being a descendant of influential aristocratic family, a descendant of Catherine of Medici, the spouse of Henry II, the King of France. Carter uses various allusions to express his wealth as well as his cultural knowledge and education. Marquise often quotes de Sade and Baudelaire, smokes Havana cigars Romeo y Julieta and takes pleasure in listening to Wagner, especially his Tristan und Isolde. On the walls of his castle hang paintings by famous authors and his library is rich in books, however most of them are graphic pornography books and magazines. For his ugliness he charms his wives, including the nameless narrator, by various precious gifts, for example, the fire opal wedding ring from his ancestor Catherine de Medici which “will serve him for
a dozen more fiancées”; or by taking them to Opera and introducing them dressed in lavish robes to the society.

Perhaps being a descendant of a long aristocratic family whose ancestors married within the blood line, has had an impact on his sexual deprivation leading to torture and murder. Moreover, it is told that one of his predecessors, a Marquis, “used to hunt young girls on the mainland; he hunted them with dogs, as though they were foxes”, as well he “pulled a head out of his saddle bag and showed it to the blacksmith while the man was shoeing his horse: ‘A fine specimen of the genus, brunette, eh, Guillaume?’ And it was the head of the blacksmith’s wife” (“Bloody” 135). Perhaps, due to these supposed old wives’ tales Marquis now “must travel as far as Paris to do his hunting in the salons” (“Bloody” 135). The account of his wives is quite checkered including a “sumptuous diva”, his first wife, who sang Isolde, thus probably started his passion for the opera; in her glory, he strangled her to death (“Bloody” 114). His second wife, a muse of Parisian painters supposedly doomed by absinthe, died in martyrdom. The third wife, the most burlesque of all, a Romanian countess, whose name is an allusion to the first female vampire novella- Carmilla, is described by the nameless narrator as a “sharp muzzle of a pretty, witty, naughty monkey; [having] such potent bizarre charm, of dark, bright, wild yet worldly thing whose natural habitat must have been some luxurious interior decorator’s jungle filled with potted palms and tame squawking parakeets” (“Bloody” 114). She found her dead in the Iron Maiden “pierced by hundred spikes, this child of the land of vampires” (“Bloody” 132). Her death resembles the times when the dead person’s heart was pierces by an oak stake as prevention from turning into a vampire. Given such account, his last wife, the nameless narrator, seems an improper choice.

Marquis’s wealth, composure, ancestry, supposed vampirism, sexual mistreatment, abuse, torture and murder reflect his exercise of patriarchal power.
The story opens with the nameless narrator, a young, seventeen year old virgin, an object of Marquis’s interested, a lamb trapped lion’s claws. She

[lays] awake in the wagon-lit in tender, delicious ecstasy of excitement, [her] burning cheek pressed against the impeccable linen of the pillow and the pounding of [her] heart mimicking that of the great pistons ceaselessly thrusting the train that [bears] her through the night, away from Paris, away from girlhood, away from the white, enclosed quietude of [her] mother’s apartment, into the unguessable country of marriage. (“Bloody” 111)

Despite her age and innocence, she is “not naïve” and from the very first day of their marriage she doubts and wonders why “after those others” (“Bloody” 117), after the checkered list, he chooses one so different, young and penniless. The only reason that meets his presumed measures, apart from her virginity, is that she is a very talented piano player “whose mother [sold] all her jewelry, even her wedding ring, to pay the fees at the Conservatoire” (“Bloody” 117). In the solitude of the castle she finds soothing in her music room playing the Bechstein piano. Later, after entering the bloody chamber she “[opens] the lid of the piano; perhaps [she thinks her] own particular magic might help [her], now, that [she] could create a pentacle of music that would keep [her] from harm” (“Bloody” 133), using her piano as a therapy thinking if she is able to play “all Bach’s equations […] without a single mistake – then the morning [will] find [her] once more a virgin” (“Bloody” 134). Throughout the text the nameless heroine thinks only of her piano being properly in tune for it being her only inanimate friend in the castle of terror.

The life of the nameless narrator is in many ways similar to the unfortunate life of de Sade’s Justine in Justine, or the misfortunes of Virtue (1791), who is alike beautiful and penniless, yet an orphan. She is
the living image of the fairy tale princess in disguise but a Cinderella for whom the ashes with which she is covered have become part of the skin. She rejects the approaches of a fairy godmother because the woman is a criminal; she falls in love, not with a handsome prince, but with a murderous homosexual who sets his dogs upon her and frames her for a murder he has himself committed. She is the heroine of a black, inverted fairytale and its subject is the misfortunes of unfreedom. (Sadeian 44)

Justine is an archetype of the lamb female; she is a prey who believes that with honesty and acts of grace she can escape her usurpers and thus redeem her freedom. On the contrary, the nameless heroine in her innocence and poverty soon discovers her “rare talent for corruption” (“Bloody” 124). The vision of herself as a Marquise makes her forget of her husband’s ugliness and the terror that emanates from him perceiving rather the bright future in wealth. She sells her body in return of high social status. She is willing to replace her freedom with jewels, hundreds of lilies, ermine and sable furs, everyday feasts of various exotic dishes and gold bath taps; however she claims that she “had never been vain before [she] met him” (“Bloody” 116).

She is easily corrupted not only in wealth matters but in sexually, too. Although the wedding night is beyond the grasp of her imagination, she is aware that her night dress will be “voluptuously deferred until [they] lay in his ancestral bed (“Bloody”112). She imagines thus as she lays in the train compartment while her “satin nightdress [has] just been shaken from its wrappings; it [has] slipped over [her] young girl’s pointed breasts and shoulders, supple as a garment of heavy water, and now teasingly caressed [her], egregious, insinuating, nudging between her tights as [she] shifted restlessly in [her] narrow berth. Unlike Justine, the nameless narrator in her virginity is curious about her sexuality. Justine is a constant object of rape, but her constant refusal of seduction makes her, according to Carter, strong,
“nevertheless, the limitations of her sexuality are the limitations of her life” (Sadeian 56).

Justine believes she can protect her femininity by refusing seduction, the nameless heroine believes, the contrary, she will strengthen hers by submitting herself to Marquis.

The course of Marquis’s seduction and observation of his new wife fairly resembles the manner in which the cat plays with its mouse, or rather a tiger playing with his lamb, his prey. The first time the heroine “[senses] in [herself] a potentiality for corruption” it is when in the opera she sees him “watching [her] in the gilded mirror [of the opera] with the assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab” realizing that she has never seen “that regard of his before, the sheer carnal avarice of it” (“Bloody” 115). In this manner he observes her severally as if inspecting whether she suits perfectly the fate he has chosen for her. Later, in his castle he strips her as “if he is stripping the leaves off an artichoke”, however, she claims that this “artichoke is no particular treat for the dinner nor is he yet in any greedy haste” (“Bloody”118). The first time he disrobes her not to take her virginity but to examine if she meets his requirement stripped of her luxurious robes.

Marquis’s excitement arouses when he surprises her in his library after she discovers his collection of pornographic magazines, which includes some “rare collector’s [pieces]” (“Bloody”120). The nameless heroine browses the pictures captioned “Reproof of Curiosity” or “Immolation of the wives of the Sultan” with disgusted curiosity as he approaches her with a “curious mixture of mockery and relish”: “My little nun has found the prayer books, has she? Have the nasty pictures scared Baby?” and while laughing at her he lectures her: “Baby mustn’t play with grown up toys until she’s learned how to handle them, must she?” (“Bloody”120). He abuses the heroine’s confusion and startle and in broad daylight he thrusts her into the bedroom and when she foolishly mutters that “they they “have not taken luncheon yet” he answers using the wolf’s word from Little Red
Riding Hood: “All the better to see you”, again evoking a cat playing with its treat (“Bloody” 121).

The sexual act alone bears resemblance to the later planned act of decapitation. He orders her to fasten the ruby chocker around her neck and twins her hair into a rope so that her shoulders are bare, this time, as the heroine presumes, so that he could better kiss her. Later, he does the same so that the blade of the sword can slice her neck. Carter argues that intercourse “fraud is regular practice between the sexes” (Sadeian 66), while the heroine perceives their intercourse as “one-sided struggle” (“Bloody” 121), in which she has seen her husband’s “deadly composure shatter like a porcelain vase flung against the wall; [she has] heard him shriek and blaspheme at the orgasm; [she has] bled. And perhaps [she has] seen his face without its mask, and perhaps [she has] not” (“Bloody” 121). To Marquis their intercourse is just another impaling of another of his wives; however, it brings her to tears as she is “infinitely disheveled by the loss of [her] virginity (“Bloody”121). Though later, when Marquis leaves for his pretended business trip, she lies in bed and “longs for him”, despite her disgust she wishes him to penetrate her again (“Bloody” 125). The Marquis claims that they live in civilized times, thus [they] do not hang the bloody sheets out of the window”( “Bloody” 122). However, he has a telephone line in his castle, a car with a chauffeur and business based in New York, such claim seems ironic in the view of his inhuman tortures and murders which he practices in a medieval manner.

Marquis and the nameless heroine are archetypes of the so-called tiger-lamb dichotomy. The heroine in her, however denied, naivety leaves the safety of her mother’s apartment to upgrade her social level and bestows her upon his malevolence. In return she expects recognition and worship of her femininity; nonetheless, Marquis perceive worship of the feminine sex in Sade’s eyes and believes that “the annihilation of the self and the resurrection of the body, to die in pain and to painfully return from death, is the sacred
drama of the Sadeian orgasm” (Sadeian 176). Carter treats the nameless heroine as a foolish girl who deserves to suffer the immaculate terror of Marquis’s love and thus claims that “this holy terror of love that we find, in both men and women themselves, [is] the source of all opposition to the emancipation of women” (Sadeian 176). The nameless heroine after experiencing the terror of Marquis’s love finds her emancipation and freedom in the comforting lamb-like character of a blind piano tuner.

The blind piano tuner is Carter’s attempt to explore whether it is possible for male gender adopt the feminine-lamb behavior. The heroine’s passion for pianos creates space for the occurrence of a young piano tuner, “blind, of course” (“Bloody” 126). His features, described by the heroine, are in contrast to Marquis’s. He is “young, with gentle mouth and grey eyes fixed upon [her] although they could not see [her]” and the heroine considers him “most satisfactory” (“Bloody” 126). In a particular contrast to the heathen Marquis, is the tuner’s connection to church where he is a chorister, and where the “good priest [has] taught [him] a trade so that he could make living” (“Bloody” 126). His Christian believes urges him to be kind to his fellowmen, while his blindness makes him vulnerable. These qualities together create a perfect archetype of lamb.

In contrast to the blind pianist Carter explores the possibility of creating a woman of tiger qualities. The heroine’s mother is a strong and distinct character who has “outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates; nursed a village through a visitation of the plague, [and] shot a man-eating tiger with her own hand” (“Bloody” 112). Such qualities make her capable of confronting the malevolent Marquis. The heroine regards her mother with honor and is proud to be her mother’s daughter realizing that she “[has] inherited nerves and will from [her] mother who [has] defied the yellow outlaws of Indo-China” (“Bloody” 131). Her mother being an experienced woman doubts her daughter choice of husband asking her
whether she “[is] sure [she loves] him” receiving a pragmatic answer: “I’m sure I want to marry him” (“Bloody” 111). She does not reply, she just

[sighs], as if with reluctance that she might at last banish the spectre of poverty from its habitual place at our meager table. For [she also herself has] gladly, scandalously, defiantly beggared herself for love; and one fine day, her gallant soldier never returned from the wars, leaving his wife and child a legacy of tears that never quite dried, a cigar box full of medals and the antique service revolver that [she ], grown magnificently eccentric in hardship, [has] kept in her reticule, in case – how [the daughter has] teased her – she was surprised by footpads on her way home from the grocer’s shop. (“Bloody” 111-112)

Although her mother herself is not fond of Marquis considering her experience she understands her daughter’s wish to marry him as she herself wishes to flee their poverty.

Carter proves the heroine’s mother capable of “moral mothering, the care and education of children [which] should be left to those who have shown themselves competent at it” (Sadeian 141), when she alters Perrault’s brother, who save the heroine in the original story, with the nameless heroine’s mother. The mother comes to save her daughter because through her “maternal telepathy” she feels that her daughter is at danger (“Bloody” 143) after the heroine calls her crying “because of gold bath taps” (“Bloody” 143). She enters the castle

her hat seized by the winds and blown out to the sea so that her hair [is] her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked around her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while other [clasping the heroine’s] father’s service revolver and behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the witness of a furious race. (“Bloody” 142)
The mother in her fury with her white mane is portrayed as a lion, a carnivore. Without “hesitation she [raises] … the gun, [takes] an aim and [puts] a single, irreproachable bullet through [the heroine’s] husband’s head” (“Bloody” 142). And thus a carnivore-like-herbivore kills a carnivore. Here on this example Carter proves that no male power is needed to punish the violent and perverse Marquis. A woman, supposedly a lamb, is competent of confronting a tiger and thus proves her tiger character.
Chapter 3 – Herbivores and Carnivores

In this chapter I would like to analyze several selected short stories from the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. In particular, in which manner Carter subverts the original tales to reflect on female sexuality. Firstly, I will discuss the two cat stories: “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” in comparison with “The Tiger’s Bride”. Both of the stories are rewritings of the French novelist of the eighteenth century Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont’s *Beauty and the Beast*; however, they are seen from different perspectives. Further, I will discuss the two wolf stories “The Werewolf” and “The Company of Wolves” which are rewritings of Brothers Grimm’s *Little Red Riding Hood*.

“The Courtship of Mr Lyon” is a classical rewriting of *Beauty and the Beast* quite following the original story line and resembles the famous Disney’s version. Carter sets it in the contemporary England. The story opens with Beauty’s father entering the Beast’s mansion as his car stops working. After he has solved his car problem his sets off for home and in his poverty he steals a white off season rose for his Beauty as it is the only present she wishes him to bring from his business trip hence thinking “how could his host, so mysterious, so kind, deny Beauty her present?” (“The Courtship” 146). However, such inadequate reaction to his hospitality makes the Beast furious calling him in roars a thief. As the father shows him in apologies his daughter’s picture, the Beast falls in love with “the look she [has], sometimes, of absolute sweetness and absolute gravity, as if her eyes might pierce appearances and see your soul. When he [hands] the picture back, the Beast [takes] good care not to scratch the surface with his claws” (“The Courtship” 147). Later, they make deal that the Beauty will stay with the Beast and in return the father receives help with his business, becomes rich again and takes his Beauty back to live with him. Beauty, in her innocence, “[learns] at the end of adolescence how to be a spoiled child and that pearly skin of hers [plumps] out, a little, with high living and compliments” (“The Courtship”
151), forgetting all about the promise she has made to the Beast that she is to come back “before the winter is over” (“The Courtship” 150). The Beast is dying because “since [she has] left him, [he has] been sick. [He is not able to] go hunting, [he has] found out [he has] not the stomach to kill the gentle beasts” (“The Courtship” 153). His terror evoking beastliness changes under the influence of the tender love and the innocence of Beauty, thus by her kiss and her tears which fall on his

“face like snow and, under their soft transformation, the bones [show] through the pelt, the flesh through the wide, tawny brown. And then it [is] no longer a lion in her arms but a man, a man with an unkempt mane of hair, and how strange, a broken nose, such as the noses of retired boxers, that [gives] him a distant heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts.” (“The Courtship” 153)

The Beast changes into a man by virtue of love and the heroine’s conscious realization and regret of a broken promise.

Carter in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” stays true to the original story of Beauty and the Beast, in contrast to the following story “The Tiger’s Bride”, in which she subverts not only the original ending. “The Tiger’s Bride” is too a “Beauty-and-the Beast story, with the same virginal heroine, the same carnivorous hero” (Atwood 124), however, Beauty is “lost to The Beast at cards” (“Tiger’s” 154). Her father loses her in his vanity and foolishness of a gambler as he has lost her mother who “[has not blossomed] long; [she barters] for her dowry to such a feckless spring of Russian nobility that she soon [dies] of his gaming, his whoring, his agonizing repentances” (“Tiger’s” 155). The father does not trade his daughter in his good will to help them from the endless poverty, but for his own gain as she is his only property, the only thing he can stake. Realizing the mistake he has made foolishly cries out that “[he] has lost [his] pearl, [his] pearl beyond price” (“Tiger’s” 157), thus making The
Beast furiously lecture him that “[if he is] so careless of [his] treasures, [he] should expect them to be taken from [him]” (“Tiger’s” 157).

The heroine is “since [she] could toddle, always the pretty one, with [her] glossy, nut-brown curls, [her] rosy cheeks. And born on the Christmas Day – ‘her Christmas rose,’ [her] English nurse [has] called [her]. She is beautiful, virginal and in terror what might be hidden under The Beast’s masks. In her naivety, lost to The Beast, she half trusts her nurse’s stories and wonders what “might be the exact nature of his beastliness” (“Tiger’s” 158); though she is aware that the stories about “the tiger man [her nurse] saw in London, when she was a little girl, [that] the tiger-man will come and take [her] away” if she does not behave (“Tiger’s” 158) are just old wives’ tales, “nursery fears” (“Tiger’s” 159), they very much resemble her actual fate.

The Beast, in his solitude, demonstrates his power by changing the original deal of keeping the heroine to his only desire which is “the sight of a young lady’s skin that no man has seen before” (“Tiger’s” 163). After she has obliged his wish “she [is to be] returned to her father undamaged with bankers’ orders for the sum which he lost to [The Beast] at cards and also a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses” (“Tiger’s” 160). Such demand is an insult to Beauty’s feminine sexuality and rightfully wishes herself to have “rolled in the hay with every lad on [her] father’s farm, to disqualify herself from this humiliating bargain” (“Tiger’s” 163). Her virginal lamb-like innocence functions as a market item that can be sold by the patriarchal power of her father. In contrast to “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” where the Beast longs for Beauty out of love and her absence brings him almost to death, The Beast in “The Tigers Bride” longs for Beauty out of solitude, sexual desire and deprivation.

After the nameless heroine has rejected him twice, The Beast realizes that equitably he should expose his beastly body, his “great, feline, tawny shape whose pelt [is] barred with a
savage geometry of bars of the color of burned wood. His doomed, heavy head, so terrible he must hide it. How subtle the muscles, how profound the tread. The annihilating vehemence of his eyes, like twin suns” (“Tiger’s” 166). Thus he gains satisfaction of his only desire and the heroine in return is willing to submit to his wish, although “[she blushes] a little, for no man [has] seen [her] naked and [she is] a proud girl” (“Tiger’s” 166). However, she is, despite her innocence, conscious of the consequences of long sexual deprivation and fears that she might not be “grand enough to satisfy his expectations … [which] might have grown infinite during the endless time he [has] been waiting” (“Tiger’s” 166), she shows “his grave silence [her] white skin, [her] red nipples … then The Beast [lowers] his massive head” (“Tiger’s” 166). Although she has satisfied his wish, thus the deal is concluded and she is free to leave for her father, “she rebels” as Atwood claims, and “strips herself of all her clothing – that of her former daughter role – that of her present sex-object – down to her ‘real’ nakedness, that of herself as a subject rather than object” (123) when she returns to her parlor and decides to sent her father her clockwork maid dressed in her clothes instead of herself knowing he needs nothing but her artificial presence, since he has already sold her soul.

The heroine and the tiger alike realize that “love can occur only freely and between equals” (Atwood 126) and because “the tiger will never lie down with lamb… the lamb must learn to run with the tigers” (“Tiger’s” 166), she submits herself again to his appetite which “need not be her extinction” but a new beginning (“Tiger’s” 168). The tiger starts licking her and “each stroke of his tongue [rips] off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and [leaves] behind a nascent patina of shining hair. [Her] earrings [turn] back to water and [trickle] down [her] shoulders. [She shrugs] the drops of [her] beautiful fur” (“Tiger’s” 169). And thus the herbivore, the innocent lamb in her sexual desire becomes a carnivore, the tigers equal. In contrast to the original story, Carter does
not transform the beast into humanity but gives the story another dimension by transforming the human inferior to the powerful beast.

*Little Red Riding Hood* is a classical fairy tale which has been significantly changed throughout the literary history and its themes have been interpreted in many ways; for example, the red color of the hooded cloak, sometimes just a cape has been given a symbolic significance and according to some interpretations it symbolizes the girl’s maturity. It is generally acknowledged that the red hooded cloak, which has given the fairy tale its name, is a detail introduced by Charles Perrault in *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (1697), which is considered to be the first printed version. Perrault’s version does not end in happy ending, in comparison to the later versions of Brothers Grimm’s in which the little girl is either saved by a huntsman at the time of the wolf’s attack, or she is eaten and later saved from his stomach.

“*The Werewolf*” is a Little-Red-Riding-Hood story in which the wolf is not in grandmothers disguise but he is the grandmother herself. In the original story the little girl goes to visit grandmother, “who has been sick” (“Werewolf” 210), bringing her some oatcakes in a basket. Angela Carter gives to the sickness a new dimension, since it is not the old man’s sickness grandmother has been in bed with, but lycanthropy. The grandmother transforms into a wolf that is “a huge one, with red eyes and running, grizzle chops” (“Werewolf” 210), however the little girl is “mountaineer’s child [who does not die] of fright at the sight of it” (“Werewolf” 210). She comes from “a northern country [where] they have cold weather, they have cold hearts” and where they have “wreaths of garlic on the doors to keep out the vampires” (“Werewolf” 210). Such surroundings supply the girl with an ability to deal with such situation in a level-headed manner and thus as soon she sees the wolf.
she [seizes] for her knife. It [goes] for her throat, as wolves do, but she [makes] a great swipe at it with her father’s knife and [slashes] off its right forepaw. The wolf [lets] out a gulp, almost a sob, when she [sees] what happened to it; wolfs are less brave than they might seem. (―Werewolf‖ 210)

The cut-off paw, after the girl has reached to the grandmother’s cottage, changes into a human hand “toughened with work and freckled with age” (“Werewolf” 210). With the wedding ring and wart on it the girl recognizes her grandmother’s now missing hand and when she has along with the neighbor’s destroyed the werewolf, the witch, the “child [lives] in her grandmother’s, [and] she [prospers]” (“Werewolf” 210). She prospers because she is a good child. According to Atwood being a good child does not only mean to be good; it means “to be a competent child, to know how to recognize danger, but to avoid being paralyzed by fear, to know how to use your father’s hunting knife to defend yourself against those who also hunt” (Atwood 130). The girl in her strength to confront and denounce her own grandmother a witch saves the neighborhood and thus deserves to inherit the property, however inappropriate it may seem to the reader.

“The Company of Wolfs” is one of the well known Carter’s works as it was made into a film by Neil Jordan in 1984. This story has been by many critics analyzed as an allegory of a girl’s sexual maturity.

The story is set in midwinter at Christmas Eve when is “the worst time in all year for wolves” for there is nothing for the wolves to eat “in this savage country (“The Company” 215). Despite the setting, the “strong-minded child insist she will go off through the wood” to visit her grandmother’s cottage with a basket “packet with cheeses … a bottle harsh liquor distilled from brambles; a batch of flat oatcakes baked on a heathstone; a pot or two of jam” (“The Company” 215). The nameless child heroine, in contrast with the savage country where
“there are no toys for [the children] to play, is the youngest of her family, a little late-comer, [has] been indulged her mother and the grandmother who [has] knitted her the red shawl that, today, has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow. Her breast have just begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her forehead; her cheeks are an emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her woman’s bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month. (“The Company” 215)

This child in her innocence, so different from the other children, sets off on the dangerous path of her own sexual maturation, which she is to encounter after she has crossed the forest which closes “upon her like a pair of jaws” (“The Company” 215). She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing. (“The Company” 215)

Carter’s stressing of the heroine’s innocence makes the reader think it is her naivety that makes her stubbornly brave and thus the journey through the forest is significantly important for the girl to blossom into adulthood completely.

In the forest after hearing freezing distant howl she meets instead of a wolf incarnate or a werewolf, a hunter, “a fully clothed one, a very handsome young one, in the green coat and wideawake hat of a hunter, laden with carcasses of game birds… she has never seen such fine fellow” (“The Company” 215-216). This young fellow impresses her greatly as he is charming, full of jokes, laughs a lot and even offers her to take her basket, so she is not opposed to the idea of a bet with him; however, it seems ridiculous to her. He claims that
he has no fear of wolves, his compass will lead him through the dark forest safely, he will arrive at grandmother's house first and for such heroic act he deserves to be kissed.

When the heroine reaches the cottage she discovers that she has lost her bet. However, the wolf tries to camouflage that he has eaten the girl's grandmother, she recognizes that she is “in danger of death” instantaneously (“The Company” 218), since the Bible lays closed on the table [and] the tick of the clock [cracks] like a whip” (“The Company” 218), quite oppositely, from what she has been used to at her grandmother's. Although this “wise child” is in a great danger, she “[ceases] to be afraid, since her fear [does] her no good” (“The Company” 219) as the heroine in “The Tigers Bride” does. She confronts the now fearful wolf, who, similarly to the Tiger, has not expected such a brave confrontation, and she [bundles] up her shawl and [throws] it on the blaze, which instantly [consumes] it. Then she [draws] her blouse over her head; her small breasts [gleam] as if the snow [has] invaded the room. … The thin muslin [goes] flaring up the chimney like a magic bird and now off [comes] off her skirt, her woolen stockings, her shoes, and on to the fire they went, too, and [are] gone for good. (“The Company” 219)

She seductively undresses knowing that this is the only way to escape her relentless destiny as he is a “carnivore incarnate” and longs for her flesh (“The Company” 219). However, this wise girl knows that she is “nobody’s meet” (“The Company” 219). Although it might seem that Carter undermines feminist beliefs when she undresses the girl in front of her usurper, she creates an upright woman who is able to survive anything, even a wolf attack, with the right approach.

When she laughingly approaches and undresses him, she knows that he, in his nudity, fears her because she behaves in unexpected manner. She imagines “she will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice
into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage
ceremony” (“The Company” 219). As in the Tiger’s Bride it is not the beast that
transforms and adapts but the virginal heroine who “sweet and sound sleeps in granny’s
bed, between the paws of the tender wolf” (“The Company” 219). However, here Carter
leaves us in doubts whether the girl has really transformed into a wolf or whether the wolf
has transformed into a tender, handsome hunter. The metamorphosis does not consist of
the shape shifting, but rather of shifting the approaches and behaviors of the protagonists
and their mutual reconciliation.
Conclusion

In the previous two chapters I have discussed five short stories which I have found suitable for the analyses of Carter’s subverting of fairytales. In this last section, I would like to draw the conclusion of my thesis and summarize my findings.

In my thesis I have argued that Angela Carter subverts fairy tale to portray gender issues. In the original story of Bluebeard, the representatives of the strong carnivore gender are Marquis and the heroine’s brothers, and the representatives of the weak herbivore gender are the heroine and her sister. Whereas Carter subverts the presume genders and gives us, instead of the brothers and sister, a mother who proves herself a strong tiger character after she has confronted the Marquis, and a blind piano tuner, who in his blindness and kindness represents the archetype of the lamb-like female gender. In “The Tiger’s Bride”, Carter uses metamorphosis for the nameless heroine to escape her presumed gender role. She transforms the lamb-like virginal heroine into a tiger, a carnivore and therefore presumably a male gender, so that she becomes the beast’s equal. In “The Werewolf” it is not the heroine who transforms but her grandmother; however here the transformation does not serve as an act of reconciliation, but rather as an initiator of action. The weak, ill, and presumably harmless grandmother takes form of a werewolf, a kind of a patriarchal usurper. Thus is killed by her innocent grandchild, who by performing such a supposedly cruel deed matures into strong woman. In contrast, the wolf in “The Company of Wolves”, to disguise his beastly character of a usurper, takes form of a young, harmless, and handsome hunter to confuse the heroine. In this story Carter uses the female sexuality of the just-started-to-bleed heroin to confront the aggressor and thus to escape her destiny. However, she does not state whether there has been some transformation in shape, she transforms their character: his beastliness to innocence and vice versa, to their mutual consent.
To conclude, Carter explores the possibilities of the fairy tale characters to determine the roles of innocence and beastliness in their behavior. In her short stories she portrays the archetypes of gender and challenges the possible ways to escape these archetypes; for example, in “The Bloody Chamber” the mother escapes them via her experience, the piano tuner via his physical disability; in “The Tiger’s Bride” the innocent heroine transform into a beast, similarly to the werewolf grandmother; and in the last discussed story “The Company of Wolves”, the heroine uses her sexuality to change hers and the hunter’s character. On these subverted fairy tales she illustrates that it is possible to escape the presumed gender roles and their contemporary issues, however, there needs to be a vindication for it.
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Resume

This thesis attempts to analyze in what manner Angela Carter subverts the fairy tale to portray and challenge gender issues of the contemporary society, and in what manner she examines the nature of female and thus male sex and their interaction. In the first chapter, I have commented on the main literary influences that affected Angela Carter’s work. Since in her writing she was inspired by an uncountable number of diverse influences, I have focused primarily on those that played a significant role in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), such as postmodernism, feminism, Gothic, myth and the fairy tale. In the following two chapters, I have focused on the manner in which Carter subverts the fairy tales in the selected short stories to challenge the gender archetype behavioral characteristics and the possibilities to escape their presumed gender roles.

Resumé

Tato práce se pokouší zanalyzovat, jakým způsobem Angela Carterová přetváří pohádky, aby vykreslila genderové problémy současné společnosti, a také jak zkoumá podstatu ženského a mužského pohlaví a jejich vzájemnou interakci. V první kapitle komentuji na hlavní literární vlivy, které ovlivnili práci Angely Carterové. Vzhledem k tomu, že její psaní bylo ovlivněno mnoho různými vlivy, soustředila jsem se pouze na ty, které měli vliv na psaní *Krvavé komnaty a jiných povídek* (1979), na příklad postmodernismus, feminismus, gotika, mýtus a pohádka. V následujících dvou kapitolách jsem se soustředila na to, jak ve vybraných povídkách, Carterová přetváří pohádky, aby vyzvala zaběhnuté genderové role, jejich charakteristické chování a možné způsoby, jak těmto předepsaným rolím uniknout.