Angela Carter's Bloody Chamber and Other Stories: The Dialectics of Themes, Modes and Genres in the Context of the Postmodern Gothic Fairy Tale

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ANGELA CARTER'S "THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES"; THE DIALECTICS OF THEMES, MODES AND GENRES IN THE CONTEXT OF A POSTMODERN GOTHIC FAIRY TALE

„KRVAVA ODAJA I DRUGE PRIČE" ANGELE CARTER; DIJALEKTIKA TEMA, MODOVA I ŽANROVA U KONTEKSTU POSTMODERNE GOTSKE BAJKE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories is a collection of short fiction by Angela Carter, first published in 1979. It contains ten stories of varying length and diverse themes, whose basis are old European fairy tales and folk tales. The latent material for this collection are Perrault's 18th-century fairy tales. The collection is described as Gothic, postmodern, erotic, surrealistic and feminist. Even forty years after its initial release it still polarises both readers and critics. The stories are called "fairy tales", but are, content-wise, far removed from the censored, child-friendly fairy tales of Perrault. On the contrary, Carter reinvents these stories, turns the fairy tales inside-out and infuses them with numerous elements of subversive, postmodern-Gothic and erotic fiction with predominantly female protagonists. Thus she creates pastiche worlds that play a double role: that of unveiling and of concealment. This duality is reflected on each individual story in a specific manner.

According to Helen Simpson, *The Bloody Chamber* is "often wrongly described as a group of traditional fairy tales given a subversive feminist twist. In fact, these are new stories, not re-tellings." (Simpson).

The central idea of this paper is to explore the wide spectrum of modes and genres attributed to this collection in order to determine the extent to which Carter's stories adhere to or reject them. The analysis will also explore the overlap between theoretical and thematic dualities that create the underlying structure of each individual story.

The first part of this paper provides the theoretical background for the collection as a whole in order to determine the extent to which it fits the genres attributed to it by relying on Todorov, Jackson and Hutcheon. The second part will provide four case studies in order to showcase that the aforementioned modes and genres are fluid categories in the context of the postmodern condition and in what manner this collection breaks, or subverts, the conventions of a marvellous narrative.

The goal of the third part is to explore the context of a postmodern Gothic fairy tale and its themes in this collection. It will also briefly discuss similarities and differences between a fairy tale and a Gothic narrative. The fourth part will discuss the role of space and locality in this

collection by relying on Foucault's concept of heterotopia and examine several exemplary heterotopias that reoccur in this work.

The fifth and final part shall analyse the role of pornography and pornographic discourse in this collection and how it empowers and emancipates Carter's female characters in the context of feminism and post-feminist theory. It will also introduce and discuss six prevalent archltypes of male and female sexual desire.

Finally, the paper will argue that Carter's collection transcends the boundaries of a specific mode and genre and that each story is an independent narrative unit set in its own world with a particular set of laws of nature and spaces that play a significant role in the structure of these narratives. It will also argue that there are six archetypes of sexual desire; two female and four male ones, and that pornography plays a major role in Carter's fairy tales.

1. THE PROBLEMATICS OF MODE AND GENRE

In order to fully comprehend Carter's worlds and themes, we must first discuss the theoretical concepts and ideas behind the modes and genres ascribed to this collection. The first issue that arises when reading the collection as a whole is the rejection of a strictly defined and codified genre in favour of the ever-shifting spectrum of genres that each individual story, dependent on its themes and underlying structure, may fit to a certain degree. Since Carter's stories are so multi-facetted and differ considerably from one another, it is nearly impossible to categorise them into one specific genre. For example, stating that the collection is Gothic, postmodern, post-feminist and magical realist would be partially correct since each story accepts or rejects these genres to a highly arbitrary degree.

Tzvetan Todorov suggests a different approach to a work of fiction by stating the following: "there is no necessity that a work faithfully incarnate its genre, there is only a probability that it will do so. Which comes down to saying that no observation of works can strictly confirm or invalidate a theory of genres" (22). In other words, literary genres ought not be viewed from a prescriptive standpoint, but should instead be observed and analysed descriptively. To clarify, genres should be viewed as ever-shifting categories with loose boundaries that may or may not be ascribed to the individual work, and not as rigorous rules imposed on it, thus limiting both the author and the reader. Furthermore, a work has the power to transcend genres and that power should not be repressed or caged. Todorov asserts that each individual work should in turn be perceived as a collection of associated genres. However, he further states that "[t]he fantastic implies, then, not only the existence of an uncanny event, which provokes a hesitation in the reader and the hero; but also a kind of reading, which we may for the moment define negatively: it must be neither "poetic" nor "allegorical." (32). It is immediately apparent that the stories in Carter's fairy tales adhere to this definition. Talking cats, vampires, beasts that turn into princes, werewolves and other mystical creatures are not an allegory, but exist within a highly heterotopic meta-world where new laws of nature are introduced. Furthermore, Rosemary Jackson asserts that "[m]odern fantasy is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance." (12)

The multitude of intertwined and interacting themes gives Angela Carter the power to transcend the boundaries of many literary genres, thus ironically creating a pastiche genre of its own that spans from horror and terror to pornography and parody.

Carter's fairy tales are built on oppositions and dualities, both theoretical and thematic. The first theoretical contrast is perceived through Todorov's concepts of the three main genres of fantastic fiction. He distinguishes between three genres: the uncanny, the fantastic and the marvellous. As Todorov suggests, the fantastic implies the hesitation of both reader and character upon encountering a supernatural event. If the laws of nature remain unbroken and the supernatural is explained, the work belongs to the genre of the uncanny. On the other hand, if the laws of nature are broken and new laws need to be introduced, then the work belongs to the marvellous.

Furthermore, he claims that "if we move to the other side of that median line which we have called the fantastic, we find ourselves in the fantastic-marvelous, the class of narratives that are presented as fantastic and that end with an acceptance of the supernatural" (61).

Rosemary Jackson suggests a different approach to Todorov's categorisation of the fantastic. She states that

> [f]or to see the fantastic as a literary form, it needs to be made distinct in literary terms, and the uncanny, or *l'etrange*, is not one of these – it is not a literary category, whereas the marvellous is. It is perhaps more helpful to define the fantastic as a literary mode rather than a genre, and to place it between the opposite modes of the marvellous and the mimetic. (39)

Furthermore, in the preface to the book *Postmodern Reinterpretations of Fairy Tales* (2011) Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère theorises the impact of fairy tales and fantasy in general:

> Thus, the fairy tale invites us to question easy oppositions and divisions as it becomes a site of artistic experimentation and theoretical reflexion.

The fact that fantasy is a highly popular mode of cultural expression today may have to do with the nature of the genre itself, as it "inherently explore(s) boundaries and challenge(s) borders, and is therefore prime territory for the emergence of intermedial (and crossover) aesthetics. (ii)

2. THE DIALECTICS OF GENRE AND NARRATIVES: CASE STUDIES

It has already been stated that the collection resides on many dualities and contrasts of theoretical and thematic nature. Since this collection is built using a spectrum of genres and narrative devices, it is impossible to define it prescriptively. The following case studies will attempt to clarify in what way Carter breaks the conventions of a fairy tale and how contrasts and dualities affect the readers' perspective of genres.

Jackson argues that fairy tales belong to the pure marvellous mode since "[t]he narrator is impersonal and has become an authoritative, knowing voice. There is a minimum of emotional involvement in the tale - that voice is positioned with absolute confidence and certainty towards events." (40) This certainty is introduced through the use of formulaic devices. Such devices exist at the opening of the story (A long time ago, in a country far away…) and at the story's end (And they lived happily ever after…). According to Jackson,

The marvellous is characterized by a minimal functional narrative, whose narrator is omniscient and has absolute authority. It is a form which discourages reader participation, representing events which are in the long distant past, contained and fixed by a long temporal perspective and carrying the implication that their effects have long since ceased to disturb. (40)

Adam Zolkover supports Jackson's conventions by stating that "[f]airy tales are specific in their non-specificity, occurring 'once upon a time' or 'far far away'. Their settings are rarely named, but they are clearly located Elsewhere." (67)

Carter somewhat contradicts this notion by setting her stories in different parts of the Old World. "The Bloody Chamber" is set in an unnamed castle in fin-de-siècle France; "The Courtship of Mr. Leon" is set in two locations: London and an unknown mansion in the North; "Puss in Boots" takes place in Bergamo, Italy; "The Company of Wolves" and "The Werewolf" are most

probably located in the wildlands of Siberia, and so on. It therefore appears that only "The Snow Child", "Wolf Alice" and "The Erl King" lack specific locations, thus supporting Zolkover's statement.

Temporality also plays a major role in this collection since all stories are set in antiquated, alternative worlds or timeframes. They are not strictly bound by history, but use pastiche to assume historicity. It can therefore be argued that time is encapsulated.

This collection plays with Jackson's conventions of a typical fairy tale since some fairy tales (e.g. "Puss in Boots", "The Tiger's Bride" and "The Bloody Chamber") are written from the first person perspective. "The Erl King" is even more extreme; the narrator is completely unreliable and shifts from person to person, there is no temporality as the time appears frozen and encapsulated. The absolute certainty of the narrator is shunned and replaced by uncertainty and ambiguity.

Contrary to the conventions, emotional involvement of both reader and character is strongly emphasised throughout the collection. There are three reasons why Carter's fairy tales still evoke such strong emotions in readers; the first one is the use of a first person narrative in some stories, particularly the titular one. The second such reason may be Carter's opulent style and Gothic themes which demand a deep emotional sympathy for the character in order to create terror or horror. Thirdly, Carter's characters are rounded, not flat. Ergo, they are no mere archetypes or representations, but living beings with their urges and emotions. It can therefore be confirmed that this work disregards all conventions of a fairy tale and a marvellous narrative itself.

This playfulness with narrative structures is driven to the extreme in "The Snow Child", a story loosely based on Snow White. A count and countess ride out and the count imagines a girl of perfect beauty. Suddenly the girl of his fantasies appears naked by the road. The countess becomes jealous and orders her to perform perilous tasks, but the count refuses to let her do it. Each time the count protects the snow child, the countess loses a piece of her attire and it magically appears on the girl. Finally the girl is asked to pick a rose from a bush and the count can't refuse. The girl pricks her finger on a thorn and falls dead; the count has sex with the dead girl and she disintegrates. As the count gives the rose to the countess, it bites her. All the

conventions of a fairy tale and the marvellous are maintained until this moment; the supernatural is introduced in the beginning and upheld throughout the story, the snow child is determined by the count's sexual desire and is therefore perfectly flat as a character.

"As soon as he completed her description, there she stood, beside the road, white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked; she was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her." (Carter 115)

By the end of the story the reader encounters one of Carter's devices for creating shock and horror blended with pornography and sexual fetishism. The convention of a happy ending is broken in the following excerpt: "Weeping, the Count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl. The Countess reined in her stamping mare and watched him narrowly; he was soon finished." (115)

Although this story belongs to the mode of the pure marvellous, it breaks numerous conventions of the fairy tale. Despite the ambiguity of space and time and the omniscient third person narrator, the story lacks the rudimentary notions of good and evil and replaces them with flat, yet morally grey, characters. Contrary to Snow White, where the seemingly dead girl is awakened by the prince, Carter's snow child has death as a prerogative for the fulfilment of the count's sexual desire. The ending is shocking and ironic, thus breaking the convention of the happy ending.

As argued earlier, this collection stretches the literary modes of fantastic fiction to their limits by introducing the supernatural through different means. "The Bloody Chamber" and "The Erl King" are great examples of this opposition within the same mode. The following excerpt from "The Bloody Chamber" reveals that the hesitation and laws of nature are broken in a manner typical of a fantastic-marvellous narrative structure. The instance belongs to the genre of magical realism:

> I knelt before him and he pressed the key lightly to my forehead, held it there for a moment. I felt a faint tingling of the skin and, when I involuntarily glanced at myself in the mirror, I saw the heart-shaped stain had transferred itself to my forehead, to the space between the eyebrows, like the caste mark of a Brahmin woman. Or the mark of Cain. And now the key gleamed as freshly as if it had just been cut. (42)

The laws of nature are broken and Bluebeard's true monstrosity, which was concealed under the mask of wealth and affluence, is brought to light. His real intentions are hinted at multiple times through the use of symbolism. Even the symbols themselves are representative of this duality, since they either conceal or reveal the truth the protagonist must face:

> And sometimes that face, in stillness when he listened to me playing, with the heavy eyelids folded over eyes that always disturbed me by their absolute absence of light, seemed to me like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he had led in the world before he met me, before, even, I was born, as though that face lay underneath this mask. (45)

The girl's transgression is unveiled as well, and the symbols prove right. The castle loses all its glamour and luxury and transforms into a tomb, Bluebeard's disguise falls off, and the exterior structure of a fairy-tale is shattered, revealing the horrors within.

This coincides with Linda Hutcheon's definition of postmodern disenchantment. According to Hutcheon, "[w]hatever narratives or systems that once allowed us to think we could unproblematically and universally define public agreement have now been questioned by the acknowledgement of differences—in theory and in artistic practice." (7)

The integrity of the fairy tale as a mode of consensus, along with the laws of nature, is broken and leaves both reader and character mesmerised and disenchanted as the consensus becomes a reflection of itself. Hutcheon reiterates Lyotard's statement that disenchantment is a direct result of the dissolution of a grand narrative and the introduction of several small narratives. It is very peculiar how Carter retains the mimetic mode up until the revelation of the bloody chamber and maintains the impression that the reader is reading a fairy tale at the same time. Ironically, all the key components of a fairy tale are laid bare and inverted, thus putting the text's status as a fairy tale into question.

The story is narrated retrospectively after the girl survives the encounter with her murderous husband. Ergo, thematic contrast follows the theoretical one in an uncanny fashion, thus shedding light on the true nature of the protagonist's transgression and Bluebeard's monstrous desire which, until then, was concealed in his torture chamber. However the

protagonist herself is, in turn, veiled and concealed by the rising tide that isolates her and her would-be murderer, as well as by her innocence. The blood stain on the key is magically transformed into a red mark on the girl's forehead, a mark that symbolizes her impending execution by Bluebeard's hand.

On the other hand, the mimetic is upheld through an altogether different technique. Carter uses reality effect by introducing references to product brands and references to music and arts in order to reassure the reader that the laws of nature and mimesis are still unbroken. For example, the dress that the girl wears to the opera is from "Poiret" and "Worth", she plays Debussy on the piano, Bluebeard smokes "Romeo y Julieta" cigars etc.

"The Erl King" is a story that begins as a pure marvellous narrative, but as the protagonist seems increasingly lost and confused, the reader's hesitation grows and the lines between reality and illusion become blurred and muddled. The plot is set in an enchanted forest with its own laws of nature. A young girl spends time with the Erl King, a feral, goblin-like being that captures young girls and transforms them into caged birds. The inspiration for this story comes from Goethe's poem "Der Erlkönig".

Mary Pollock asserts that "Goethe's victim is a passive little boy, snatched from his father's embrace as they wend their way home through the dark forest. In Carter's version, the child is a pubescent girl who wanders into the forest on her own, falls into bed with the Erlking, concludes that he intends to transform her into a caged bird, and plots his death." (49)

Monika Fludernik additionally explains the role of metaphor in the context of "The Erl King" by stating that

> [t]he fictional woods (in the mimetic and the metafictional senses of the term) therefore function as a kind of prison to the experiencer and/or reader. This links with a consistent metaphorics of imprisonment in "The Erl-King", which is already adumbrated in the "vertical bars of brass-coloured distillation", an image for slanting rain that suggests that the very sun beams bar the observer from direct access to the sunlight. (The comparison with a downpour is invoked metonymically by reference to the "gray clouds that bulge with rain"). (6)

There are three explanations of the events that transpire in the story: it could all be a surreal dream, but it could as well be a hallucination or an illusion of a mind affected by mental illness or a long-term imprisonment. The final and most terrifying possibility is that the protagonist is held captive, just like another of the Erl King's birds, and visualizes the forest as a cage. Fludernik explains that the constant shifting between first, second and third person creates the impression of ambiguity and unreliability of the narrator, which is present throughout the story. At first it appears that the story is rooted in the marvellous mode, but it gradually plays with the reader's imagination and the protagonist's fading sanity as ambiguities become more pronounced and lead to hesitation that breaks the conventions of the marvellous mode.

This story reflects on the terror of the unknown of the Gothic tradition in juxtaposition to the postmodern sense of crisis, existential dread and confusion called disenchantment. According to Jean Françoise Lyotard,

> Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. (25)

The dissolution of the metanarrative distorts the text's firm narrative structure, which leads to a sense of disenchantment and paranoia, which is in turn fuelled by the introduction of often conflicted small narratives. This is in itself a very postmodern procedure since the narration ends abruptly and the outcome is unclear. It may therefore be stated that this text belongs to the fantastic-marvellous, but is corrupted since the hesitation is introduced after the laws of nature specific to the world already exist. This is contrary to Todorov's idea that

> [a]t the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work

belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous. (53)

Another peculiarity in this particular story is the rapid change of the seasons. The story opens during Autumn: "A cold day of late October, when the withered blackberries dangled like their own dour spooks on the discoloured brambles." (101) The season changes again by the end of the story: "Now the crows drop winter from their wings, invoke the harshest season with their cry. It is growing colder. Scarcely a leaf left on the trees and the birds come to him in even greater numbers because, in this hard weather, it is lean pickings. (107)

This shift in the season indicates that the protagonist is indeed Erl King's prisoner. This story lacks moral opposition of a typical fairy tale; the Erl King is a morally grey character ruled solely by his impulses. According to Carter, he imprisons young women and transforms them into songbirds. But on the other hand he takes care of the forest and the protagonist herself. It can therefore be argued that the moral duplicity of the Erl King helps create ambiguities in the narrative itself. Pollock agrees that: "When they take note of 'The Erlking' at all, Carter's readers interpret it as a feminist commentary on the dangers of puberty for young women." (16)

Ergo, the ambiguity of narrative structure is intertwined with themes of imprisonment and transformation from girlhood to womanhood via first sexual encounters. It could also be read as a criticism of marriage in the context of a patriarchal society. This reflects, yet again, on the strong connection between theoretical and thematic dualities and contrasts in this work.

All the stories so far belong to the fantastic-marvellous or the pure marvellous mode, but are different from one another in the manner in which the narrative is realised, by both the plot and the narrative structure. This is exactly why Jackson's definition of the fantastic as a mode proves more accurate than Todorov's theory of the genres of the fantastic.

The fourth case of this duplicity of mode and genre is "Puss in Boots", another fairy tale that is in the domain of the pure marvellous, but is in fact a parody of the genre of the fairy tale. It abandons the Gothic and surrealistic imagery of the rest of the collection in favour of a humorous, picaresque and carnivalesque narrative. This story is also narrated from a first person perspective and is told retroactively, which implies that the narrator is omniscient, but also

emotionally involved. Despite the story being firmly rooted in the pure marvellous, it still questions the conventions of a fairy tale. Mikhail Bakhtin explains the term carnivalesque and introduces the ideas of a carnival idiom and carnival laughter. He proposes the following:

> During the century-long development of the medieval carnival, prepared by thousands of years of ancient comic ritual, including the primitive Saturnalias, a special idiom of forms and symbols was evolved-an extremely rich idiom that expressed the unique yet complex carnival experience of the people. This experience, opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretense at immutability, sought a dynamic expression: it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms. All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities. We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the "inside out" *(à l'envers),* of the "turnabout," of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings. (10-11)

"Puss in Boots" is not carnivalesque because the plot is set during a carnival, but it creates a carnival out of its characters and plot. Carter's heavy use of contrasts and irony, as well as innuendo and pornographic imagery, creates an environment that is carnivalesque and picaresque. The fact that a talking, worldly cat functions as a sidekick to a proclaimed rake and helps him in his sexual conquests gives Carter plenty of room to create humour and satire. The perilous tasks that the hero and his feline accomplice perform are not mandated by virtue and morality, but by the hero's desire.

The stereotype of a princess locked in a tower and guarded by a dragon is exploited; the lady is married to an old, stingy and impotent man who employs a toothless old spinster to watch over her. The lady's sexuality is repressed by two sexually frustrated people, and her pet cat Tabs is her only companion. This form of sexual repression will be analysed anon. The two parallel narratives are tied together by the fact that Figaro (the puss in boots) and Tabs are intimate and that the hag is severely allergic to cats. Carter upholds the carnival idiom by the creation of humour through Figaro's acrobatics: "He leans out, in his nightshirt, offering encouragement as I swing succinctly up the façade, forepaws on a curly cherub's pate, hindpaws on a stucco wreath,

bring them up to meet your forepaws while, first paw forward, hup! on to the stone nymph's tit; left paw down a bit, the satyr's bum should do the trick" (80).

Figaro also uses linguistic acrobatics by constantly switching between elevated dramatic language and the vernacular when describing his toilette and habits. " I went about my ablutions, tonguing my arsehole with the impeccable hygienic integrity of cats, one leg stuck in the air like a ham bone; I choose to remain silent." (87)

As the young man falls in love with the lady in the tower, Figaro plots and schemes ways in which to undermine the hag and provide him entry into the lady's bedroom. It appears throughout the story that Figaro is way smarter than his master and prevents him from foolish, irrational deeds and unrealistic ideas. The first example of this irony occurs when the young man writes a secret letter to the lady. Figaro advises him, ever so pragmatically, to abandon pathos and: "'Speak from the heart,' I finally exhort. 'And all good women have a missionary streak, sir; convince her her orifice will be your salvation and she's yours.'" (91)   :

Figaro is unconcerned with courtly love, his ideas of love are based on sexuality. Another such instance occurs shortly after their first adventure. The following dialogue shows how differently they observe their situation and how the cat is more reasonable than his owner:

"How can I live without her?"
You did so for twenty-seven years, sir, and never missed her for a moment.
"I'm burning with the fever of love!"
Then we're spared the expense of fires.
"I shall steal her away from her husband to live with me."
"What do you propose to live on, sir?"
"Kisses," he said distractedly. "Embraces."
"Well, you won't grow fat on that, sir; though _she_ will. And then, more mouths to feed." (94-95)

Figaro is a down to earth realist and thinks with his head whilst his master is prone to irrational dreams. Remarkably, the puss is personified, but has no concept of romantic love; he perceives love and emotional involvement from a pragmatic standpoint and views sex as the only possible realisation of love. This story is a parody of a fairy tale since the non-human person is

smarter than the human one. Cats are the carriers of the carnival idiom; they plot and scheme in order to crown profanity and sexual liberation and shame the agents of repression and greed disguised as conservative morality. Hence the cats in this story are deeply subversive to the point of being Machiavellian. According to Mary Pollock, "Carter's thinking about the social construction of beasts is, if not as recognizable as her discourse about race, class, and gender, still clearly linked with these other concerns." (7) The cats are not entitled to any moral code and help kill the lady's old husband. His death is prerequisite for the lovers' happiness. Ergo, the ends justify the means.

However, the most carnivalesque parts of the story occur when the cats set the stage for the young lovers' encounters. Figaro and his owner are forced to use disguises to infiltrate the tower and avoid being detected by the hag. The young man dresses up as a pest control and a doctor. The stage is always set and the cats play tricks on the hag. She is shamed and her purpose put into question. The convention of the happy ending is upheld in order to fulfil the criteria of a comedic text.

3. THE POSTMODERN GOTHIC FAIRY TALE: DEFINING THEMES AND CONTRASTS

"Gothic-postmodernist fairy tale" is one of the first keywords that appears when researching this collection. But how does one define a postmodern Gothic fairy tale? According to Jerrold E. Hogle, it is very difficult to define the Gothic, since it is a complex and highly unstable blend of many different genres (e.g. medieval romance, modern romance and even Shakespearian drama) that spans through time and space. He states that there are some constant features that have not changed over two hundred and fifty years. Jackson suggests that, from Gothic fiction onwards, "there is a gradual transition from the marvellous to the uncanny – the history of the survival of Gothic horror is one of progressive internalization and recognition of fears as generated by the self." (31)

In his introductory chapter to *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Hogle argues that "[t]hough not always as obviously as in *The Castle of Otranto or Dracula*, a Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space – be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a vast prison, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, [...]" (2). Furthermore, Hogle suggests that these antiquated settings often contain supernatural elements such as spectres, demons, monsters or other entities that haunt the characters, either physically or psychologically, for different reasons (unsolved crimes, unburied bodies of the deceased, unresolved conflicts etc.) The Gothic thus oscillates between the laws of the consensus reality and the supernatural. Fred Botting supports these notions by stating that

> [t]he main features of Gothic fiction, in neoclassical terms, are heterotopias: the wild landscapes, the ruined castles and abbeys, the dark, dank labyrinths, the marvellous, supernatural events, distant times and customs are not only excluded from the Augustan social world but introduce the passions, desires and excitements it suppressed. (19)

It is immediately apparent that the Gothic, in all its old and new forms, is so similar to a fairy tale. The antiquated, heterotopic setting helps create sensations of terror, wonder, horror and enchantment. This coincides with Zolkover's earlier claim that fairy tales reject strict boundaries of time and space, substituting them with vague ideas of localities and temporalities

such as, "a long time ago", "in a distant land/enchanted castle/magical forest", etc. Ergo, the Gothic genre itself is based upon the oral traditions of the Middle Ages.

The genre of a Gothic fairy tale is descended from the Medieval European ghost story, which precedes the emergence of the literary Gothic. Hence, fairy tales and Gothic texts share four key similarities. The first and most apparent one are theoretical and thematic dualities and oppositions. Uncanny vs marvellous, masculine vs feminine desire, past vs present, love vs death, beauty vs monstrosity, veiling vs unveiling, and human vs beastly – all these contrasts work equally well within both narrative frames. However it all comes down to the fundamental contrast of good vs evil.

The root of these stark contrasts and the Gothic's ability to create terror are based on Freudian psychoanalysis and the uncanny. As David Punter suggests, "Gothic has to do with the uncanny: the uncanny has come now to form one of the major sites on which the reinvestigation of Freud and the reinstitution of psychoanalysis can take place" (ix).

This propensity for stark contrasts and dualities is very much present in the fairy tale as well, but on a more rudimentary level; e.g. Snow White vs the Black Queen, Little Red Riding Hood vs the big bad wolf etc. The positive characters create wonder and the villains' function is to create dread and/or disgust. In Carter's case the wolf is non-human and therefore represents illicit sexual desires, being devoured by the wolf correlates to being sexually liberated from the restraints of the social norms. Thus, a creature that delivers sexual liberation to the female protagonist cannot be viewed as evil, but the agents of repression become evil themselves. Ergo, otherness does not strictly determine a character's negativity. This paradox of human and non-human desire will be referred to later.

The second point of contact is the abundance of heterotopic and symbolic worlds that their characters inhabit. Botting further explains the role of heterotopias in a Gothic narrative by arguing that "Gothic remains ambivalent and heterotopic, reflecting the doubleness of the relationship between present and past. Indeed, Gothic continues to stand as a trope of the history of the present itself, a screen for the consumption and projection of the present onto a past at once distant and close by" (21).

The third similarity is the presence of one or more supernatural elements, either benevolent or malevolent, that can aid the hero or destroy him/her. Hypothetically though, a malevolent ghost from a traditional Gothic ghost story evokes more fear than an architype of a twisted and evil fairy godmother. It is due to concealment, of course, that the ghost presents a greater mystery. Fear is constructed through unknowing, hence it is difficult to create fear in a typical fairy tale.

The fourth interconnection between a Gothic narrative and a fairy tale is that of the underlying narrative structure that is highly diversified. The Gothic deals with two major categories; horror and terror. According to Robert Miles, "[a]n explicit representation of threat induces horror, whereas terror depends on obscurity. The difference turns on materiality. Terror is an affair of the mind, of the imagination; when the threat takes a concrete shape, it induces horror, or disgust" (93).

The fairy tale is, due to its oral origins, much simpler. However, some fairy tales, due to their primary didactic purpose, display the elements of horror and terror. A good example of this gothicity of the fairy tale is "The Beauty and The Beast", since the female character must overcome her dread of the beast in order to reveal his human form. Ironically, the female protagonist must engage in a sexual or pseudo-sexual act with the male beast in order for his humanity to be revealed and restored. She must, in turn, show willingness to sacrifice a part of her humanity in order to reveal the prince that is masked by his non-human features through the medium of a malevolent witch.

This can be shown through "The Courtship of Mr. Leon" and "The Tiger's Bride". The former story retains its marvellous mode and does not break this convention. The girl kisses the beast and it turns into a man. As the narrator suggests:

> Her tears fell on his face like snow and, under their soft transformation, the bones showed through the pelt, the flesh through the wide, tawny brow. And then it was 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 gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts. (Carter 61)

The latter story inverts this transformation in the following manner: "And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur." (83)

"The Tiger's Bride" is a parody of a fairy tale since the beauty becomes a beast herself. The paradox is present in both stories, regardless of the outcome.

However, Gothic-postmodernism is a genre of its own. According to Maria Beville,

> By defining the genre, Gothic-postmodernism, it will assert the intrinsic links that tie the Gothic and the postmodern in literary and cultural terms and declare the Gothic as the clearest mode of expression in literature for voicing the terrors of postmodernity; a mode that is far from dead and in fact rejuvenated in the present context of increased global terrorism. In doing so, the message that this work seeks to communicate is that, first of all, "the Gothic" is a term that has been over-used and over-creatively interpreted in recent times. (7-8)

The reason for this overuse of the term "Gothic" occurs due to its diversification through the last three centuries, and particularly, the last three decades of its existence. It can therefore be stated that the genre grew exponentially from the publication of the first Gothic novels and poetry collections in the mid 18th century.[1]

The Gothic genre and postmodernism have a common denominator; the sublime terror. According to Beville,

> The conventions accepted here as characterising the emergence of Gothic-postmodernism as a new and distinct literary genre include: the blurring of the borders that exist between the real and

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[1] By the beginning of the 20th century the genre re-emerges through the new medium – the film. Gothic novels get their own film adaptations, thus reviving the genre and giving it room to expand. The genre grows even more by the advent of television, since the programmes that may be classified as Gothic gain much broader audience. In the early 1980s the new style of music emerges from the punk movement. Characterised by a slower tempo and the combination of rock and synth music, as well as a dark atmosphere and lyrical themes inspired by Gothic literature and drama, the new genre is soon named "Gothic rock". In the 1990s and early 2000s the genre is so diversified and omnipresent in the popular media to the point of over-saturation. The reason for this is the commodification of the Gothic in all its forms that correlates to the rise of commodity capitalism that pushes some aspects of the Gothic into the mainstream culture. Thus it reflects the past onto the present.

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, the doppelgänger, and a dualistic philosophy of good and evil; an atmosphere of mystery and suspense and a counter-narrative function. (18)

The sublime terror of the Gothic coincides with the existential dread of postmodernity. Beville further suggests that

Gothic-postmodernism is all about terror. In principle, it alludes to the unimaginable, the "unrepresentable" through terror. It too is embodied by a spirit of terror that seeks to achieve the dismantling of the modernist and realist enterprises. From a postmodernist perspective, we all exist in a world where we have limited access to "the real", and accordingly, to the unreal, to the finite or the infinite. (35)

The terror of the Gothic occurs due to hesitation between the mimetic and the fantastic, and of course, stark contrasts and mysterious, often graphic or pornographic, imagery. When it comes to postmodernism, the terror is created by the uncertainty that is left behind after the master narratives have been shunned and small narratives take their place.

In line with postmodern condition and postmodern writing, intertextuality plays a major role in both Gothic and postmodern narratives. Rebecca Munford explains that

Undoubtedly, Carter's promiscuous use of citation, appropriation and literary resonance dismantles the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms and unsettles the workings of power, legitimacy and the sacred. In this respect, it shares postmodernism's challenge to mimetic assumptions about representation by promoting narrative uncertainty, heterogeneity and dispersal. (2)

Munford further explains that Carter uses countless references to European literature, art, classical music and culture in order to create the illusion of the mimetic, i.e. to achieve the reality effect. She also uses intertextuality and appropriation to create a highly stylised "surface

pastiche" without looking deeper into the context of the many sources she draws inspiration from. Carter's critics call her a "literary magpie", since she scavenges citations and references from different sources with complete disregard for the deeper context behind them. It is also important to state that Carter's literary practices are parasitic, since they resemble the consumption of blood typical of a vampire – her favourite motif. This is why Carter's Gothic-postmodernism differs considerably from the above definition of the genre. In her book *Tactical Readings: Feminist Postmodernism in the Novels of Kathy Acker and Angela Carter*, Nicola Pitchford compares the aesthetic differences between Acker and Carter by suggesting that

> [w]hile Acker strips the mystifying aestheticism from the patriarchal narratives she retells, Carter draws on all the rich resources of literary language to induce in her readers a claustrophobic awareness of the power of the aesthetic to construct compelling worlds. Stylistically as well as thematically in Carter's novels, the beauty of imaginary worlds is a powerful force, one not to be dismissed by those who would change society. Carter is more concerned than Acker with acknowledging and investigating the allure of images offered by largely masculine aesthetic traditions, as well as the political implications of that allure. (105)

This is also true for Carter's retellings of fairy tales. Moreover, Munford explains that

> [t]he term 'intertextuality' is one that is frequently employed to describe Carter's textual practices and processes, and Carter engaged with specific theories of textuality, representation and authorship – in particular, certain strands of French structuralist and poststructuralist thinking – in both her fiction and non-fiction. (6)

Furthermore, in his article on the death drive and the Gothic in Carter's fairy tales, Gary Farnell gives his opinion on Carter's intertextual practices. He maintains that

> The result is that this practice of Gothicizing fairy tales—"Bluebeard", "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Cinderella", among others—has proved controversial to a remarkable extent. Carter is seen as doing violence to much-loved tales from childhood—if not through the Gothic, then by means

of burlesque or satire (all the while Charles Perrault, as Carter's seventeenth-century source and forebear, was himself retelling tales *he* had not invented). (271, emphasis in the original)

This "doing violence" to a fairy tale has created worlds and themes of such opulence and diversity and works to undermine the master narratives of the Perraultian fairy tale. The stories mirror their protagonists by being corrupted and this potential for corruption is what makes the Gothic fairy tale so attractive in the first place. Pitchford mentions Clark's criticism of this collection and states:

> He associates Carter's strategy with the techniques of advertising, arguing that both use floating signifiers of beauty to elicit a generalized desire—a desire that is then directed to the product at hand, be it a shampoo or a novelist.
> Clark's concerns, however, spring from an assumption that beauty can be transhistorical, that such a thing as floating signifiers of beauty—unattached to any society or any particular aesthetic tradition—can exist. (111)

Unlike traditional fairy tales, the villain in a Gothic fairy tale is a rounded character, not just a flat personification of evil fit for mass consumption. Carter does not just retell the stories, she exhumes the proverbial skeletons of fairy tales and resurrects them in her own subversive imaginary.

4. SPACES AND SYMBOLS; THE ROLE OF HETEROTOPIAS IN CARTER'S FAIRY TALES

What really defines Carter's Gothic-postmodernism is the emphasis on stark contrasts, symbols and heterotopias. Pitchford argues that "the most useful readings of allegory in Carter's work emphasize the fact that the reader cannot comfortably stay on one side or the other, reading her texts as mere fantasy or as plain historical realism; rather, the inextricable intertwining of the decorative and the material suggests that the imaginative realm is one place where real history is made." (112)

In order to understand Carter's spaces, we must first define the term heterotopia and what it implies. Michel Foucault introduced the concept of heterotopias in his seminal work from 1967 called "Of Other Spaces; Utopias and Heterotopias". He defines heterotopias as counter-spaces, stating that,

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society— which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (3-4)

Foucault argues that there is a mixed experience between utopia and heterotopia; the mirror. It provides the observer with insight into another space where he/she does not exist by reflecting the existing space. It exists in reality in order to show the observer a place where they do not exist. Foucault's notion of heterotopias relies on six key principles.

The first principle is the fact that all human societies and cultures, either primitive or advanced, create heterotopias of their own. Foucault asserts that: "Its first principle is that there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. That is a constant of every human group. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found." (4)

The second principle introduces two general categories of heterotopias: heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation. According to Foucault:

"In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e., there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." (4)

He provides the idea of a honeymoon as a perfect example of heterotopia of crisis; a woman's deflowering takes place on a train or a hotel room, i.e. a heterotopia without geographical markers. He further suggests that:

"But these heterotopias of crisis are disappearing today and are being replaced, I believe, by what we might call heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed." (4) This would include prisons, psychiatric hospitals, retirement homes etc.

The third principle of a heterotopia is that it can juxtapose and reproduce several mutually incompatible spaces in one real space. Theatres and cinemas are perfect example. Foucault states that:

> The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, […]. (5)

The fourth principle implies that: "Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time." (6) Foucault explains that time can be accumulated indefinitely in a timeless space (museums and libraries) or portioned off (fairgrounds and festivals that occur once a year).

The fifth principle refers to the mode of entrance into a heterotopia. It can be either voluntary or compulsory and may require certain rituals or procedures prior to one's entry. According to Foucault,

> Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. (7)

The sixth principle refers to the relation between the heterotopic spaces and the outer world. Foucault explains that

> The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory […]. Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. (8)

Hence, heterotopias are social constructs that appear in all cultures and time periods. However, not all principles that Foucault defined are present in this collection. Carter uses heterotopias in a particularly Gothic manner. Bluebeard's torture chamber, the ancestral bedroom, the tiger's abode in "The Tiger's Bride", the sleeping beauty's bedchamber – they all bear striking resemblances to one another, both in the aspect of opulent Gothic decor and the transformations that occur within these spaces. The imagery that upholsters this heterotopicity is influenced by European funerary tradition: the catafalque, dim illumination by candlelight, urns, incense etc. This opulent imagery is portrayed with elaborate detail.

The first such space is encountered at the beginning of the first story. In "The Bloody Chamber", the matrimonial bed is presented as a centrepiece surrounded by mirrors:

> And there lay the grand, hereditary matrimonial bed, itself the size, almost, of my little room at home, with the gargoyles carved on its surfaces of ebony, vermilion lacquer, gold leaf; and its white gauze curtains, billowing in the sea breeze. Our bed. And surrounded by so many mirrors! Mirrors on all the walls, in stately frames of contorted gold, that reflected more white lilies than I'd ever seen in my life before. (Carter 15)

The bed symbolises the protagonist's newfound sexuality and the white lilies around it reflect her virginity, but are also a premonitory sign of her upcoming death. She calls the lilies "funerary" and states that they resemble severed arms and smell like incense in the embalming parlour: "But the last thing I remembered, before I slept, was the tall jar of lilies beside the bed, how the thick glass distorted their fat stems so they looked like arms, dismembered arms, drifting drowned in greenish water" (19-20). This bed is obviously a heterotopia of crisis, since the protagonist transcends from girlhood to womanhood by being deflowered upon it. It is therefore a heterotopia of crisis with marriage as a prerequisite for entry. The gargoyles are stereotypical archetypes of the Gothic architecture of the castle itself. However the mirrors have a double role: they serve as screens on which pornography is projected and as heterotopias of their own within the heterotopia of the bedroom itself. Foucault explains the double role of a mirror as both utopia and heterotopia by stating that

> [t]he mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. (4)

It is actually very ironic since the mirror creates an image of a perfect marriage wherein Bluebeard is not a monster. The deflowering of the bride is synonymous with impalement – a medieval method of torture. Ergo, sex and defloration in the bedroom are in contrast to torture and the loss of life in the bloody chamber.

The contrasts that Carter paints are not only symbolic, but also pictorial, which enriches symbolism. There are three main colours in "The Bloody Chamber" – black, red and white. These three colours are typical of Carter's symbolism and are heavily used to portray a Gothic interior. Black symbolises the gloom of the torture chamber and death, but also salvation since the protagonist's mother wears black and rides a black horse. This coincides with Foucault's sixth principle of heterotopias; the bloody chamber is in opposition to the rest of the castle. The castle is a heterotopia of illusion since it provides the protagonist with a false sense of glamour and safety. However, the bloody chamber functions as a heterotopia of compensation since it is perfectly constructed and decorated according to Bluebeard's needs and true nature. White stands for the protagonist's virginity and the Marquis's mask. White is always contrasted with dark red; which in turn represents loss of innocence, the protagonist's transgression and the blood in the chamber. The ruby choker that she wears is associated with a slit throat and the red blood on the key morphs into a mark that symbolises her execution. It is fascinating how Carter paints with words, particularly how the torture chamber is portrayed.

The subterranean corridor that leads to the chamber is lined with paintings of rape and martyrdom and has a prophetic function. The entry into the bloody chamber is described as follows:

> And now my taper showed me the outlines of a rack. There was also a great wheel, like the ones I had seen in woodcuts of the martyrdoms of the saints, in my old nurse's little store of holy books. And--just one glimpse of it before my little flame caved in and I was left in absolute darkness--a metal figure, hinged at the side, which I knew to be spiked on the inside and to have the name: the Iron Maiden. Absolute darkness. And, about me, the instruments of mutilation. (Carter 31)

The horrors are revealed slowly and methodically, thus creating the sensation of dread in both reader and character. The protagonist unveils the instruments of torture along with the bodies

of Bluebeard's victims in short glimpses that are justified by the brief light of the matches and veiled by the gloom of the chamber. The following citation is crucial for understanding the function of the bloody chamber and is therefore cited in its entirety despite its length.

> My mother's spirit drove me on, into that dreadful place, in a cold ecstasy to know the very worst. I fumbled for the matches in my pocket; what a dim, lugubrious light they gave! And yet, enough, oh, more than enough, to see a room designed for desecration and some dark night of unimaginable lovers whose embraces were annihilation. [...] At the four corners of the room were funerary urns, of great antiquity, Etruscan, perhaps, and, on three-legged ebony stands, the bowls of incense he had left burning which filled the room with a sacerdotal reek. Wheel, rack and Iron Maiden were, I saw, displayed as grandly as if they were items of statuary and I was almost consoled, then, and almost persuaded myself that I might have stumbled only upon a little museum of his perversity, that he had installed these monstrous items here only for contemplation. Yet at the centre of the room lay a catafalque, a doomed, ominous bier of Renaissance workmanship, surrounded by long white candles and, at its foot, an armful of the same lilies with which he had filled my bedroom, stowed in a four-foot-high jar glazed with a sombre Chinese red. I scarcely dared examine this catafalque and its occupant more closely; yet I knew I must. Each time I struck a match to light those candles round her bed, it seemed a garment of that innocence of mine for which he had lusted fell away from me. The opera singer lay, quite naked, under a thin sheet of very rare and precious linen, such as the princes of Italy used to shroud those whom they had poisoned. I touched her, very gently, on the white breast; she was cool, he had embalmed her. On her throat I could see the blue imprint of his strangler's fingers. The cool, sad flame of the candles flickered on her white, closed eyelids. (31-32)

The imagery in the chamber is the unveiled mirror image of the bedroom, but this time the bed is substituted with a catafalque, the mirrors turn into the instruments of mutilation, and the lilies reveal their true purpose. The symbolic imagery is extremely vivid and the protagonist's innocence is stripped away layer by layer as she delves deeper and unveils Bluebeard's monstrosity. The sublime terror is unveiled as well, leaving only horror and the sensation of disenchantment.

This is the moment when the hesitation is introduced, just to be broken when the blood morphs into a mark on the girl's forehead. The chamber is both a heterotopia of crisis and of deviation. The crisis that occurs is the transition from life to death, from pleasure to torture, and finally from love to murder. The Marquis is the carrier of deviation; his true nature is revealed only in this chamber. His psychopathic tendencies deviate from the image of a wealthy libertine that he painstakingly builds around himself. This heterotopia has different rules of entry than the ones Foucault suggested in the fifth principle of heterotopias; only Bluebeard can enter freely. However the key to this other, forbidden place is presented to the heroine alongside other keys on the keyring and is prerequisite for entry. The chamber itself plays a double role of concealment and of unveiling; it conceals Bluebeard's true identity and reveals it to the protagonist at the cost of her life.

Time is accumulated and trapped through Medieval décor and the bodies and reflects on itself. Ergo, this heterotopia functions like a trap and the key that leads into it works as a lure. In all other aspects Bluebeard is a stereotypical serial killer; a sadistic, psychopath with a lack of empathy and pronounced egotism. Only in this space is he allowed to reveal himself and deviate from the social norms by committing torture and murder. The Marquis is a Sadeian character. From his title to his wealth and interests in fine arts, he is a stereotypical libertine. Carter refers to him as a "connoisseur of flesh", which speaks of his worldliness and perversions. He is also portrayed as a capitalist whose sole purpose is to accumulate wealth at any means, with which he buys luxury commodities, including the protagonist.

Farnell explains the use of Sade and Freud in what he calls "the death drive" by stating that

> What is to be grasped is, precisely, "The Bloody Chamber" as a type of challenge, of retelling "Bluebeard" through a strategic reordering of its fundamental discourses of sex and death in order to reverse the tale's reactionary politics and ideology. Ultimately at stake in this analysis is the death drive qua pornographic discourse, along with its overdetermined controversial nature. Sade and, in a moment, Freud are the twin proper names with which to locate this critical death drive qua pornographic discourse. (275)

To reiterate, the contrast between sexuality and death is deeply rooted in this collection. Farnell's "death drive" is opposed to sexuality in order to introduce terror and horror.

The third such heterotopia is found in "The Tiger's Bride", but its role is somewhat different than that of the first two. The tiger lives in a dilapidated Gothic palace, surrounded by automata that serve him. Unlike Bluebeard, the tiger is a benevolent monster who hides his true nature by a mask and human clothes:

> There was so little natural light in the interior of the palace that I could not tell whether it was day or night. You would not think The Beast had budged an inch, since I last saw him; he sat in his huge chair, with his hands in his sleeves, and the heavy air never moved. I might have slept an hour, a night, or a month, but his sculptured calm, the stifling air remained just as it had been. The incense rose from the pot, still traced the same signature on the air. The same fire burned. (75)

This chamber is a heterotopia of deviation. It serves a double role, that of a prison and that of a place where the protagonist's humanity is stripped away. The beast is concealed and imprisoned in it due to his otherness and ferocity; he deviates from the norm and is, as such, placed in a prison. Like in the titular story, the protagonist must be married to the tiger in order to enter the palace. The palace itself is a heterotopia of illusion since it creates an illusion of the tiger's humanity. The decrepit state of the palace implies that time is accumulated and encapsulated.

The tiger's room itself resembles an occult temple with its incense and gloom and it symbolises the tiger's god-like stature and dominance over the girl. The girl symbolises a sacrificial virgin who is about to be devoured and deflowered by the beast. The fear of losing her virginity is elevated to the fear of being devoured by the tiger. Another reason why this is a heterotopia of deviation is the girl's transformation and the stripping away of her humanity. By offering herself to the tiger, the girl renounces her humanity in order to become god-like.

When it comes to veiling and unveiling, the tiger's otherness is veiled by his mask and red cloak as well as the dark room he resides in. The naked tiger represents virility and unconstrained sexual desire. However, the girl's nudity reveals her weakness and insignificance in comparison

to the tiger. The girl's death is prerequisite for her transformation and the act of unveiling is highly eroticised. Ergo, the Gothic atmosphere in the room is indicative of the recurring themes of sexual liberation, monstrosity and death-love relations.

The fourth example is from "The Lady of the House of Love", yet another of Carter's fairy tales that belongs to the marvellous mode. At first glance it appears that it serves the same purpose as the others, but it differs considerably from the first three heterotopias:

> The walls of her bedroom are hung with black satin, embroidered with tears of pearl. At the room's four corners are funerary urns and bowls which emit slumberous, pungent fumes of incense. In the centre is an elaborate catafalque, in ebony, surrounded by long candles in enormous silver candlesticks. In a white lace negligée stained a little with blood, the Countess climbs up on her catafalque at dawn each morning and lies down in an open coffin. (118-119)

Just like the bloody chamber from the titular story, the countess's bedroom is a trap. From her standpoint it is the heterotopia of deviation, but for the boy it is a heterotopia of crisis. The boy is, in this case, a virgin for whom this room functions as a place of crisis, i.e. discovery of his sexual virility. The countess lures her victims to her bedroom in order to suck their blood. Just like her entire castle, this heterotopia accumulates time and opens in a heterochrony of bygone time perceived by a modern man. The accumulation of time is perceived in the form of decay and dilapidation of the castle. Entry into this heterotopia is voluntary and one must be invited in. However for the countess it is a prison since her otherness must not be revealed. Her residence in the castle is compulsory due to her deviant behaviour. It is also a heterotopia of illusion since everything in the room appears to be cheap and drab. As the narrator reveals, "[t]he shutters, the curtains, even the longsealed windows of the horrid bedroom were all opened up and light and air streamed in; now you could see how tawdry it all was, how thin and cheap the satin, the catafalque not ebony at all but black-painted paper stretched on struts of wood, as in the theatre." (133)

Furthermore, this story is interesting because it plays with Farnell's idea of the death drive. The gender roles are reversed; she is the vampire countess and he the human virgin. However he

treats her like a child and, at the culmination, sucks the blood from her finger. This is one more deeply ironic and parodic instance in this collection.

In "Fictional Vampires in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", William Hughes explains the critical function of a vampire. He suggests that

[r]egarded as erotic, the vampire functions as a vehicle through which criticism may advance with equal ease either psychoanalytical or cultural assertions. The sexualised vampire is thus read alternately as the embodiment of authorial neuroses and as the coded expression of more general cultural fears of which the author is, consciously or unconsciously, an observer. (199)

What really makes this story subversive is the inversion of roles; the countess is the driver of pornographic discourse and the boy shifts from victim to vampire. The medium for this shift is reverse vampirism wherein the victim, at least in a symbolic sense, becomes a vampire and the countess of the vampires becomes a victim. This shows just how deeply all the aforementioned concepts and functions are connected; the death drive, the function of the vampire, the symbolism and the heterotopic settings drive the narrative forward and create the sense of fear and ambiguity in both reader and character.

Despite the apparent similarities between these four heterotopias, they each play different roles and perform different functions in their respective narratives. This reveals how, despite their exterior likeness, each of these other spaces has its own rules that help accommodate the rules of nature in a given narrative.

5. PORNOGRAPHY AND FEMINISM: THE DIALECTICS OF CARTERIAN SEXUALITY

Pornographic discourse and erotic imagery play a major role in this collection. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter's critical study, she claims that pornography, which has been mainly associated with masculine sexual desire by feminist critics, can as well be utilised by women. Carter explains that Sade's women are liberated from the restraints of patriarchy through openness about their sexuality and active participation in pornography. In her article "Imagining the impossible: the erotic poetics of Angela Carter's 'Bluebeard' stories" Heta Pyrhönen explains that

> In *The Sadeian Woman: an Exercise in Cultural History* (1979) Angela Carter writes that she would "like to think that [Marquis de Sade] put pornography in the service of women, or, perhaps, allowed it to be invaded by an ideology not inimical to women". She describes Sade as a terrorist of the imagination who demolishes myths about femininity and maternity, rejects Christian morality, and insists on women's sexual freedom. Carter's professed feminism has made her praise of Sade baffling for critics as has the sadomasochistic characteristic of her works. (93)

However, such a stance on femininity and sexuality offends some feminist critics. In her 2012 book on decadence in Carter's fiction, Maggie Tonkin draws a parallel between myth and pornography and explains Carter's approach to pornography by arguing that

> Pornography, like all mythic notions of femininity, reduces women to 'the slaves of history, and not its makers', she argues, and since 'pornography derives directly from myth', its heroines and heroes are simply mythic abstractions, from which all individuality has been stripped away: The nature of the individual is not resolved into but is ignored by these archetypes, since the function of the archetype is to diminish the unique 'I' in favour of a collective, sexed being which cannot, by reason of its very nature, exist as such because an archetype is only an image that has got too big for its boots and bears, at best, a fantasy relation to reality. (156)

Following the publication of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) Carter faced criticism from the more radical, anti-pornography branch of feminists that her female characters

do not work to undermine the patriarchy to which they are subjected, but support it by their lack of open criticism. According to Tonkin:

> Christina Britzolakis, for example, suggests that Carter's fiction comes perilously close to participating in the masculine scenarios of fetishism that she is purportedly critiquing (53). Britzolakis claims that Carter's fetishism is enacted not only at the level of representation, particularly in representations of femininity as spectacle, but also at the linguistic level. In this sense, she argues, the objectification of women as spectacle is inseparable from the highly figurative language in which this objectification is conveyed, a language "saturated with sensuous detail, with coruscating surfaces and ornate façades" (45). (9)

Such a critique is unfounded, since Carter leaves it to the reader to derive their own ideas about gender relations from the text. On the contrary, an open rebellion against patriarchy would in turn disrupt the alleged historicity of the fairy tales and pastiche antiquity of settings and characters that creates fear and ambiguity, as well as exclude and dilute Carter's pornographic imagery so important in her aestheticism.

Despite such criticism it is evident that Carter refuses such a radical approach to masculinity and femininity in general. Carter's approach to feminism is based upon an assumption that women should be liberated from patriarchy, but without abandoning men and masculinity in general. Her form of post-feminism lays emphasis on liberation from all forms of repression; sexual, intellectual, artistic and emotional.

Carter's critique of patriarchy is further emphasised through her discourse on marriage. In "The Bloody Chamber" and "The Tiger's Bride", marriage is portrayed as a solely economic contract. Furthermore, marriage is viewed as an instrument of capitalist thought. The protagonist of "The Bloody Chamber" willingly enters marriage, whereas in "The Tiger's Bride" she is compelled into marriage by her father's loss at cards. Carter does not rebel against gender roles, but is vocally against the economic nature of marriage. Her women are empowered and emancipated through their own bravery and intelligence, not by directly opposing the antiquated, patriarchal rules of the worlds they inhabit.

According to Farnell, "the pornographic elements of 'Bluebeard' get rewritten through the prism of Sade's fiction. A pornographic story of a new type—'The Bloody Chamber' as an erotic story of its heroine becoming both sexually and economically freer—is what emerges as a result. In short, Carter gives us a glimpse of what Sade, as the personification of the moral pornographer who puts pornography in the service of women, might be said to look like." (8)

This open pornographic discourse results in six general archetypes of Carter's sexual desire in this collection; two female and four male. This discrepancy between genders is due to the fact that the majority of females are similar to one another to a great degree. The first female archetype of sexual desire can be called virginal. Since virginity is the recurring theme in this collection, it is necessary to discuss the virginal sexual desire. This archetypal form of desire is mingled with fear and unknowing, since it foreshadows the protagonist's first sexual experience and its repercussions. In this context then, virgins of this collection are still perceived as children and the fear of being deflowered and growing up is juxtaposed to the fear of death and being eaten alive. In "The company of Wolves" the narrator describes the protagonist as follows: "She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is a 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." (143)

Hence the virginal sexual desire ought to be viewed not as a form of open sexuality, but as a potential for corruption. Although it is mostly related to female characters, this virginal form of sexuality can also be found in one male character. This exception to the rule can be observed in "The lady of the house of love" where the young soldier is a virgin. Since this is an exception to the rule, it cannot be analysed as an archetype of masculine desire. According to Carter's narrator, "He has the special quality of virginity, most and least ambiguous of states: ignorance, yet at the same time, power in potentia, and, furthermore, unknowingness, which is not the same as ignorance." (121)

In both cases, virginity is viewed more as potential than as a type of desire. It has a double function; that of creating fear through unknowing and that of parodying and creating the carnival idiom. This second function is interesting because in "Puss in boots", the lady's virginity indicates her husband's impotence since the marriage had not been consumed. Carter suggests that "'Puss

had a mighty battle with the biggest beast you ever saw upon this very bed; can't you see the bloodstains on the sheets?" (98)

The lady's blood is smartly masqueraded as evidence of Figaro's work. The second archetype of female desire can be labelled as monstrous. Countess Nosferatu is a perfect example of this other, monstrous archetype. It is firstly important to emphasise that she is not human like the hag from "Puss". Her alleged promiscuity is just a tool; she lures men into her bedroom with the mute promise of sexual gratification, but through it she gratifies her own desire for human blood. Ergo, this monstrous archetype of female desire is extremely subversive since it uses sexuality as a means to the protagonist's survival. Her monstrosity originates from her otherness. Carter 's narrator explains that:

> The hobbledehoys sit with a spilling cup in one hand and a biscuit in the other, gaping at the Countess in her satin finery as she pours from a silver pot and chatters distractedly to put them at their fatal ease. A certain desolate stillness of her eyes indicates she is inconsolable. She would like to caress their lean brown cheeks and stroke their ragged hair. When she takes them by the hand and leads them to her bedroom, they can scarcely believe their luck. Afterwards, her governess will tidy the remains into a neat pile and wrap it in its own discarded clothes. This mortal parcel she then discreetly buries in the garden. (121)

One more example of the monstrous female is the hag from "Puss". Her function is that of the oppressor of the lady's freedom and sexuality. The hag's desire is monstrous since it had never been satisfied, and from that frustration it spiralled into bitterness and hatred of virility. This is, of course, linked to the first rule of the Gothic: repressed sexual desire always turns the character into a monster. Thus she renounces her womanhood, and despite her remaining human, becomes the hag and exhibits all the traits of a monster. According to the narrator: "This hag turns out to be the biggest snag; an iron-plated, copperbottomed, sworn man-hater of some sixty bitter winters who--as ill luck would have it--shatters, clatters, erupts into paroxysms of the _sneeze_ at the very glimpse of a cat's whisker." (86)

The last example of monstrous femininity is the grandmother from "The Werewolf". In her 2008 article *Erotic Infidelities: Angela Carter's Wolf Trilogy* Kimberly J. Lau argues that,

> If the Little Red Riding Hood tales consistently warn young girls to stay clear of predatory men, "wolves" in the longstanding vernacular tradition, what might Carter be saying in casting the grandmother in the traditional role of male sexual predator? Here, the grandmother is literally wolf, not just the traditional wolf in grandmother's clothing. Keeping in mind the primacy of "The Werewolf" in the wolf trilogy, its status as originary tale, I want to suggest that in writing the grandmother into werewolf, in transgendering her by aligning her with the predatory male of the Little Red Riding Hood tradition, Carter creates a phallic mother—herself. (82)

To reiterate, the archetype of the monstrous female desire can also be divided into human and other. This subdivision is exemplary of just how wide the spectrum of erotic desire is in this work.

On the other hand, male sexual desire is much more varied and may be analysed in four archetypal forms; heroic human, monstrous human, heroic other and monstrous other. The first archetype is legitimated through the character's heroism, i.e. his willingness to overcome obstacles and defeat the villain in order to achieve sexual gratification with the female character/protagonist. Two great examples of this are the piano tuner from the titular story and the young officer from "Puss in boots". It is the rule that some sort of romantic intercourse precedes the sexual one. This archetype is omnipresent in fairy tales and Gothic texts alike and it has the same function. This positive portrayal of men has been strongly criticised by feminist critics, and is therefore the singular main reason why this is a post-feminist work.

The second archetype is that of the monstrous human. It is defined by abnormal or deviant sexual desire. This, of course, includes Bluebeard and the count from "The snow child". Despite their outward human appearances, they are monstrous due to their socially unacceptable sexual fetishes and perversions. To reiterate, their monstrosity is always veiled with a false image of wealth, affluence and nobility. This archetype can also be ascribed to the old miser from "Puss" who is not strictly monstrous, but grotesque in his own turn. In the narrator's words, he is

an old dodderer with his bald pate and his goggle eyes and his limp, his avarice, his gore belly, his rheumaticks, and his flag hangs all the time at half-mast indeed; and jealous as he is impotent, tabby declares--he'd put a stop to all the rutting in the world, if he had his way, just to certify his young wife don't get from another what she can't get from him. (Carter 85)

Both he and the hag have lots of similarities, the first and most obvious being their old age. Secondly, they are both sexually frustrated and have the function of the agents of sexual repression. Finally, they compensate their frustrations with greed and avarice. Their only difference is their gender.

The third archetype implies that, despite their otherness, there are heroic male characters determined by their benevolence and gentleness. This implies Figaro the cat and the wolf from "The company of wolves". They serve a single function in relation to human characters, that of liberators in both generic and symbolic sense. Figaro orchestrates the lady's liberation from the tower and a bad marriage and the wolf, peculiarly, in the act of killing her grandmother, liberates the protagonist.

There is, however, a certain ambiguity in relation to the wolf's nature. "Carnivore incarnate," says the narrator, " only immaculate flesh appeases him." (Carter 145) Although not heroic in the classical sense, the wolf is gentle and loving: "See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf." (150)

The final archetype that will be mentioned here is that of the monstrous other. This archetype includes Mr. Leon (although not without ambiguities), the Tiger, The Erl King and the werewolf from "Wolf Alice". They are simply determined as other and monstrous and their sexual desire is driven by their monstrous nature. Regarding good and evil, these male beasts are morally grey, with the tiger being the least, and the corpse-eating werewolf from "Wolf Alice" considered the most evil. This primordial, carnal desire is deeply correlated with a thirst for blood in both literal and metaphoric sense.

6. CONCLUSION

The thesis argues that this collection is built on oppositions and dualities of both theoretical and thematic nature that overlap and intertwine in order to create the labyrinthine underlying structure of Carter's fairy tales. Carter plays with modes and genres of the fantastic and juxtaposes them to the paradigms of the postmodern condition in order to achieve subversion and point out the vagueness of borders between genres and how easily a mode can be inverted or corrupted. It has also been shown that symbolism plays a major role in this work and that it can be categorised, more or less accurately, as subversive Gothic-postmodernist fairy tales. The horror and terror are realised through unknowing and otherness which is linked to masculine desire and love-death relations.

It has also been shown that space and time play a major role in this work, since the antiquated, heterotopic settings have their own rules and functions. This yet again reflects on the ambivalence of this emerging pastiche genre. Intertextuality and parody also play major roles; the first one creates reality effect and the other breaks it and can put the whole story into question.

Regarding fetishism and pornography, it can be concluded that they are put in the service of women and function as a tool of transition from girlhood to womanhood and transgression from regulated to repressed and uninhibited desires. In agreement with the Gothic tradition, repressed sexual desire becomes corrupted and monstrous. In this light it can be stated that good and evil in this collection are narrowly linked to sexual repression and liberation, moral obligations and freedom. Ergo, a woman's emancipation from the patriarchy is equal to her state of sexual liberation. However, not all masculinity and male desire is portrayed in a bad light. This is why the term post-feminist is linked to this work.

What is exceptionally fascinating is the fluidity of Carter's tales. It is extremely difficult to apply many rules or forms of analysis to this work since every story is a metaworld of its own laws of nature and stereotypical characters, loosely connected to the other nine. The collection is, even forty years after its release, extremely fluid and resistant to analysis. It evokes a wide spectrum of emotions; from horror and terror to wonder, disenchantment, arousal and humour.

It can finally be argued that this work is, even today, way ahead of its time since it carefully avoids the pitfalls of mediocrity, and with its vivid, lude and visceral themes and imagery, continues to amaze and inspire Carter's fans and enrage moralists and feminists alike. Carter exploits in readers a potential for corruption and her rich, seductive prose is the tool for this transgression, of which the first act is opening this very book.

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ABSTRACT: *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* is a collection of short fiction by Angela Carter, first published in 1979. This paper examines the theory of genres of the fantastic, gives insight into theoretical and thematic dualities through exemplary tales, analyses the context of a postmodern Gothic fairy tale and its tropes and themes, discusses locality and setting through Foucault's heterotopias and introduces a different perspective on pornography and sexual desire in Carter's stories. This paper will argue that Carter's collection transcends the boundaries of a specific mode and genre and that each story is an independent narrative unit set in its own world with a particular set of laws of nature and spaces that play a significant role in the structure of these narratives. It will also propose that there are six archetypes of sexual desire; two female and four male ones, and that pornography plays a major role in Carter's fairy tales.