



CENTRO INTERNACIONAL DE ESTUDOS  
DE DOUTORAMENTO E AVANZADOS  
DA USC (CIEDUS)

TESE DE DOUTORAMENTO

**METAMORPHOSIS AND HUMAN-ANIMAL  
RELATIONSHIPS IN ANGELA CARTER'S FAIRY TALES:  
LIMINAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN *THE BLOODY CHAMBER*  
*AND OTHER STORIES***

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ESCOLA DE DOUTORAMENTO INTERNACIONAL

PROGRAMA DE DOUTORAMENTO EN ESTUDOS INGLESES AVANZADOS: LINGÜÍSTICA,  
LITERATURA E CULTURA

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

2019



## DECLARACIÓN DO AUTOR/A DA TESE

Metamorphosis and Human-Animal Relationships in Angela Carter's  
Fairy Tales: Liminal Subjectivities in *The Bloody Chamber and Other  
Stories*

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Fairy Tales: Liminal Subjectivities in *The Bloody Chamber and Other  
Stories*

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the analysis of the female characters and human-animal relationships in Angela Carter collection of fairy tales *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and examines how Carter's reassessments of traditional fairy tales address the construction of women's identity in its full complexity, thus departing from reductionist, binary oppositions by offering a satisfactory communion between animality and humanity. Hence, I here argue that the use of liminal metamorphosis and animal transformation in Carter's narratives serve the purpose of deconstructing the traditional gender roles present in literary fairy tales in order to create an idiosyncratic conception of female subjectivity and sexuality.

As such, the different formal and ideological possibilities of the short story genre are explored in connection to Carter's postmodern rewritings. I here look into the characteristics of the genre which allow Carter to create a feminist, transgressive, deconstructive project, departing from Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" (1986), and Achilles and Bergmann (2015) and Drewery's (2011) reassessment of the anthropological concept of "liminality". The brevity and hybridity of the short story allow Carter to explore the construction of the fluid and liminal self. I here contend that the use of animal metamorphosis in Carter's stories functions as a vehicle of hybridization and animalization, questioning Western patriarchal boundaries between human and non-human animals. This dissertation is also informed by significant findings in the fields of animal studies and posthumanism. Specifically, Kenneth Saphiro and Marion Copeland's three-fold analysis (2005) serves as the basic structure for my analysis of Carter's narratives. Thus, in order to critically examine the stories, I draw on short story criticism, fairy tale approaches, literary human-animal studies, Gothic criticism and gender studies, as well as on specific critical works on Angela Carter.

*Keywords:* Angela Carter, fairy tales, metamorphosis, literary human-animal studies, short story, liminality, feminism, monsters.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Laura María Lojo Rodríguez for her continuous support, her commitment with my research, her patience, motivation and help. Her invaluable advice and guidance made this dissertation possible. Secondly, I am also grateful to Dr Jorge Sacido Romero for his insightful recommendations and suggestions.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistant of the Competitive Reference Research Group DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY (GRC2015/002, ED431C 2019/001, GI-1924, Xunta de Galicia) for its financial and scientific support. This dissertation has also been written within the framework of the research project “Intersections: Gender and Identity in the Short Fiction of Contemporary Women Writers” (FEM2017, 83084-P), funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (AEI, FEDER). I would also like to express my gratitude to all the members of the Department of English and German Philology at the Faculty of Philology (USC) and, by extension, to the University of Santiago de Compostela.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the constant help and support of my whole family. My most sincere gratitude to my parents David, Paula and Andrés for all their love and for supporting me in everything I do and in encouraging me to continue with my research. They are always there when I need them. Thank you for your positivity, for motivating me to follow my dreams and believing in me. I would also like to thank my grandparents; for their affection and education, most especially, my grandfather Gonzalo, who unfortunately passed away before the culmination of this dissertation. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my closest friends who stand by me in good and bad moments. Thanks to Chave, Regina, Daniela, Iván, Cecilia, Noelia, Cristina, Martha, Fernando, Noa, Miguel, Lúa, Sara, Nerea, María, Milagros, Javier, Asun, and Alex for their positive attitude and confidence. They were the moral force that helped me to finish this work and face the difficulties of these years.



*En memoria do meu avó Gonzalo, quen me ensinou o valor da literatura popular.*





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## INTRODUCTION

Angela Carter is one of the most celebrated authors of the second half of the twentieth century, and her work has been acclaimed both by the general reading public and by scholars, who have translated and analysed her *oeuvre* from a wide variety of critical perspectives. Despite the numberless critical works on Carter's narratives which are published every year, my dissertation aims at offering a new perspective to the already existing readings of her seminal collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories* (1979), which combines critical attention to the short story genre and to its formal and aesthetic possibilities with the new identitarian proposals which posthumanism and animal studies offer.

My initial interest in Carter's work was fuelled by my particular inclination towards the fairy tale genre as a "common reader". Being fascinated by the tales of Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm since my childhood, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* seemed to me both inspiring and critically appealing, since her "tales"—as the author chose to call them—combine elements from different traditions, such as mythology, folklore, Gothic literature and fantasy. As I engaged in my critical attention to Carter's tales, however, my initial focus of attention shifted to the writer's productive use of metamorphosis in her collection: I was intrigued to examine how such human and non-human animal transformations affect the subjectivity and individuality of her women characters, the writer's feminist commitment, her use of pastiche and the baroque and hyperbolic poetics in this collection.

This doctoral dissertation tackles a variety of issues pertaining to human and non-human identity in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories*, a collection which signalled a turning point both in Carter's development as a writer and in contemporary reassessments of the fairy tale as a genre. *The Bloody Chamber* is the culmination of the writer's process of feminist radicalization: her deconstructive and subversive project openly establishes a dialogue with her philosophical and ethical ideas about sexuality

and pornography as shown in, among others, *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), significantly written alongside the stories of *The Bloody Chamber* and published in the same year. Carter's rewritings of traditional fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* unveil a conjunction of her own interest in the short story form, psychoanalysis (especially through Bruno Bettelheim's readings of folk narratives), fairy tales—as shown in her fairy tales translations, articles on the genre and children's literature prior to the publication of *The Bloody Chamber*—and the connection between Gothic and pornography, in whose reassessments the author paid especial attention to monsters and women's sexuality. Carter's particular use of the short story form, Gothic imagery and metamorphosis to explore gender and identitarian issues entails an expression of resistance *within* the dominant system, questioning patriarchal assumptions by exposing a daring conception of female subjectivity. For these reasons, *The Bloody Chamber* has been discussed from a variety of perspectives since its publication, in such a way that there seems to be, indeed, little to say about it which has not been suggested so far. However, the departing point of this dissertation springs from the need to re-examine *The Bloody Chamber* against the backdrop of contemporary critical outlooks, such as short story criticism, posthumanism and literary human-animal studies, intersecting those with the concept of “liminality” as understood, most notably, by Jochen Achilles and Ina Bergmann (2015).

Furthermore, some critical readings of Carter's oeuvre have pointed at the presence of metamorphosis in her work, as is the case of the studies published by, among others, Anna Kerchy, Rebecca Munford, Marina Warner, Cristina Bacchilega, Alison Easton, Kimberly Lau and Laura Mulvey. However, the presence of metamorphic bodies received superficial attention and had been rarely examined in detail in Carter's short stories, with the exception of Ana Pasolini's *Bodies That Bleed: Metamorphosis in Angela Carter's Fairy Tales* (2016), the only extensive critical work which focuses on this specific topic to this date. Nevertheless, while Pasolini primarily focuses on the question of the body by intertwining Judith Butler's concept of “performativity” with Rosi Braidotti's “cartographic approach”, my dissertation adds to Pasolini's approach other critical reflections which are the outcome of intersecting short story criticism and literary human-animal studies.

Thus, by paying especial attention to the connections between gender and genre and to how the origins of literary fairy tales and the symbolism of animals helped Carter to use shapeshifting and metamorphosis with a political intention, I here argue that the

author created different identitarian possibilities by questioning Western patriarchal boundaries between human and non-human animals, presenting animalistic, liminal and/or monstrous subjectivities in tune with the writer's postmodern taste, which best crystallize in her particular use of the short story form and the literary fairy tale tradition.

Carter's tendency to use fantastic genres which challenge more conventional representations of reality eventually questions boundaries between "popular" and "high culture"—exemplified in the collection in her conglomeration of Gothic tropes and atmospheres, the pervasive presence of folklore, oral traditions and fairy tales—in an ideologically transgressive attitude which, formally speaking, comfortably sits with her particular conception of the "tale", as famously explained in the "Afterword" to *Fireworks*. Here, the writer established a distinction between what she considered the inherent poetics of the "short story"—in Carter's view, a manifestation of realistic modes of daily life and representation as exemplified in the modernist prose of James Joyce or Virginia Woolf—and the "tale"—which she connected with the oral, folkloric tradition of fantasy and supernatural phenomena, heir to Edgar Allan Poe's short story poetics (Carter 1996, 449). By aligning herself with the "tale", Carter engaged with a literary tradition of fantastic and Gothic fictional modes, folklore and orality, distancing from what she termed the "realistic" modes of the modernist short story. Nevertheless, despite of the author's own proclaimed detachment, I argue in this dissertation that her collection is a representation of the postmodern short story cycle which both draws and deviates from the oral fairy tale tradition, constructing an inspiring tension where postmodern refinement, pastiche, fragmentation and intertextuality intertwine with both "high" and "popular" culture.

I here contend that the use of metamorphosis in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* functions as a vehicle of hybridization and animalization with a double goal: on the one hand, to deconstruct the articulation of traditional gender roles as present in traditional fairy tales and, on the other, to create alternative identitarian possibilities which defy heteropatriarchal constructions and binary oppositions separating human from non-human animals. By creating a physical, mental and emotional connection between women and non-human animals, Carter suggests strategies of female empowerment: in so doing, she not only reaches back to the oral tradition of fairy tales but also elaborates on a radical conception of subjectivity. Her postmodern fairy tale rewritings put forward an empowering discourse for women

located at “a threshold in which our preconceptions of the world are questioned, augmented, and often changed with lasting effects” (Achilles and Bergmann 78). It is precisely this in-betweenness of the short story—and, more specifically, of Carter’s “tales”—which allows for the emergence of a feminist, emancipatory discourse of aesthetic and ideological resistance within the social structure.

This dissertation is primarily informed by Carter’s own views on these questions as articulated in her journalist articles, interviews and essays—such as the quintessential *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), the “Introduction” to the *Angela Carter’s Book of Fairy Tales* (2005) or her “Afterword” to *Fireworks* (1974), among others. There she addressed topics such as human-animal relationships, fairy tales and their compilers or Gothic literature and its tropes, all of which is overtly conditioned by Carter’s radical feminist agenda. These different sources are core to understand the interdisciplinary work on the fairy tale which the author was undertaking during the same period, such as her translations of Perrault and Madame de Beaumont, her journalism on Andersen, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, her work as editor of fairy tales for Virago, the publication of *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* or her radio plays and the subsequent film *The Company of Wolves* (1984), whose script she herself wrote. In addition to these sources, I have also closely examined the only existing biography on the author to this date, which sheds light on essential data regarding the stories’ writing process. In this respect, Edmund Gordon’s testimonies and his experience as editor of Carter’s work have illuminated my understanding of *The Bloody Chamber* as a short story cycle, which unveils not only a complex network of intertextual references, motifs and themes that produce a unity of global meaning, but also a progression towards a continuum of women’s identity.

In addition to this, the dissertation is informed by an eclectic intersection of theoretical concepts which I apply to my reading of Carter’s short stories: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of “minor literature” and Achilles and Bergmann and Claire Drewery’s reassessments of the term “liminality” were essential to examine the intersections between orality and the written tradition, as well as the tensions between “high” and “low” forms of culture.

Likewise, Carter’s consistent exploration of women’s voices within the dominant system required the use of feminist literary theory and gender studies to

theoretically approach the author's feminist commitment and her deconstructive project, which denounces patriarchal binary systems which oppress, objectify and vilify women and animals alike. In tune with this idea, she also re-evaluated the Gothic tradition in order to examine gender issues, sexual freedom and patriarchal hegemony by means of the use of the supernatural and the fantastic. This conjunction between gender and genre will be also informed by some key concepts in Gothic and monster studies—Fred Botting, Xavier Antich and Manuel Asensi and Asa S. Mittman have been essential—which relate Carter's characters with concepts such as liminality and monstrosity, here used by the writer to offer multiple identitarian possibilities that escape reductionist, heteropatriarchal binary systems of gender roles and identities by suggesting the possibility of fluent and nomadic subjectivities.

As a collection of fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber* establishes an important intertextual dialogue with the fairy tale tradition, which required the examination of key critical studies on the genre, as is the case of the work of Bruno Bettelheim, Cristina Bacchilega, Marina Warner, Jack Zipes or Maria Tatar, to name a few. Carter's fairy tales provide a liminal space to explore the non-human and human-animal relationships, serving the purpose of deconstructing traditional gender roles and the phallogocentric discourse present in traditional fairy-tale narratives. In this sense, her use of metamorphosis and shapeshifting as aesthetic devices connects with classical strategies present in the fairy tale tradition: for this reason, I here draw from, among others, Francisco Vaz da Silva's chromatic study of the natural components of "Snow White", Kimberley McMahon-Coleman and Roslyn Weaver's study of the werewolf, Erik Butler's approximation to the vampire and Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos's general studies on metamorphosis and shapeshifting, combined with Pasolini's examination of metamorphosis in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*.

Finally, this dissertation is also informed by significant findings in the field of animal studies in order to deal with the symbolic and empirical treatment of animals and women through anthropomorphism and zoomorphism, which bring to the fore questions relating to agency, empathy and the predator/prey dichotomy. To do so, I here rely on David Aftandilian, Roman Bartosch, Susan McHugh and Cary Wolfe, among many. Specifically, Kenneth Saphiro and Marion Copeland's three-fold analysis (2005) serve as the basic structure for my critical reading of Carter's short stories,

allowing me to approach her treatment of the subject as a hybrid, liminal, animalistic, nomadic being.

Different animals are chosen by Carter in these stories to question the traditional boundaries that divide human and non-human animals: felines like tigers, lions or cats; birds, and canines, such as wolves. In *The Bloody Chamber* the author offers the possibility of producing hybrid identities whose animality connects with corporeity. By focusing on women's metamorphic bodies, Carter re-examines the dynamics of sexual relationships and gender categories, testing the extent to which metamorphic bodies affect both male and female identity. In this sense, the examination of human and non-human relationships inspired the structure of this dissertation, which analyses eight of the narratives collected in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, leaving aside "The Bloody Chamber" and "Puss-in-Boots", where no metamorphic elements are present. As a result, this dissertation is divided into six different chapters, which move from a general overview of theoretical concepts and their relevance to a critical examination of the eight selected short stories.

Chapter one, "Angela Carter and the Short Story", explores the different formal and ideological possibilities of the short story genre in connection to the author's aesthetic motivation and the narratives themselves. I here inspect the characteristics of the genre which allow Carter to create a transgressive enterprise, departing from Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" as articulated in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986). The three characteristics which Deleuze and Guattari assign to minor literature—deterritorialization, political dimension and collective importance—bring to the fore the nature of Carter's collection as a formulation of resistance within the dominant system. Likewise, Achilles and Bergmann's (2015) and Drewery's (2011) reassessment of the anthropological concept of "liminality" unveils how the brevity, flexibility and hybridity of the short story allow her to articulate the mentioned feminist project and to explore the construction of a fluid and liminal self.

The second chapter, "Angela Carter and the Fairy Tale", focuses on the development of the fairy tale as a liminal literary genre, tracing its historical evolution and discussing the innovations and changes introduced by major anthologists from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. I here explore the writer's relationship to the genre and her position regarding gender roles, as well as the fairy tale's connection to

psychoanalysis, most notably through Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), with which Carter confessed to have quarrelled when writing *The Bloody Chamber*. Furthermore, this chapter also examines the didactic nature of literary fairy tales, connecting this with her opinions on the relationship between humanity and animality: in this sense, Carter's exploration of the relationship between species was here informed by literary animal studies, which allowed sharp focus on the symbolic treatment of non-human animals as well as on their empirical representation, agency and subjectivity.

Chapter three, "Angela Carter and *The Bloody Chamber*", focuses on the author, her work and her connection to the fairy tale genre in every possible aspect. Critical examination of Carter's preference for the short story form after her years in Japan unveils the relevance of her feminist pursuit, which is here read against the backdrop of *The Sadeian Woman* and of her interest in the fairy tale tradition and its ideological repercussions for the construction of women's subjectivity. Chapter three thus functions as a bridge between the previous methodological chapters and my critical discussion of the corpus, whose structure here responds to her classification of female characters metamorphosing into different animal categories. For my examination of the eight short stories I follow Saphiro and Copeland's three levels of analysis (2005): as such, the first level searches for the deconstructive portrayal of non-human animals and women in heteropatriarchal societies by looking into agency and voice, empathy and the presence or absence of feelings. The second level centres its attention on the empirical and symbolical portrayal of both animals and women through the use of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism. Finally, the last level of analysis deals with the relationships between human and non-human animals by the evaluation of the classical dichotomies of predator/prey, the importance of the gaze and sexuality and animalization.

Chapter four, "Felines", encompasses Carter's two rewritings of "Beauty and the Beast", "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride", marked by the presence of animal metamorphoses from humans to different felines. The importance of the "Beauty and the Beast" oral folktales and their cultural predicament in sexual behaviour is here examined in terms of women's internalization of the tales' meanings, largely responsible for female education, morality and socialization as entailed in Madame Villeneuve and Madame Beaumont's versions of the tale. Felines are found in different works by Angela Carter, but these animals are the protagonists of her two rewritings of

“Beauty and the Beast”, which present an overt intertextual connection with these fairy tales, in which Carter distances herself from them to create her own.

The fifth chapter, “Birds”, gathers three short stories—“The Erl-King”, The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”—with different folk and fairy tale traditions, whose origins and significance I here explore in terms of the presence of birds, which metaphorically relate to women’s subjectivity. This chapter also focuses on the trope of the vampire, being the protagonist of “The Lady of the House of Love” an intersectional creature between Sleeping Beauty—symbolically represented as a bird—and a vampire. The vampire trope—widely used by Carter in her journalism, short fiction and in her radio play *Vampirella*, the genesis of her short story “The Lady of the House of Love”—metaphorically tackles the impossibility of escaping patriarchal gender roles, resulting in the imprisonment of women as objects of the male gaze, who are either symbolically or empirically transformed into birds.

Finally, chapter six, “Wolves”, analyses “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice” and examines the historical evolution of the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” and its various meanings in its different versions, while also providing an analysis of female identity from a psychoanalytical perspective. The chapter also looks into the origins of the oral fairy tale “Red Riding Hood” as both an erotic narrative and as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. To these well-known connotations Carter adds her psychoanalytically inspired reflections—most notably after her reading of Bettelheim—to connect psychoanalysis, sexuality and the figure of the wolf. Paying attention to the wolf’s empirical and symbolical representations—especially to the portrayal of the monstrous werewolf and its connotations—the chapter offers a connection with the author’s thoughts and ideas about this non-human animal and its impact on history and culture. This chapter closes with critical considerations on the female protagonists in these narratives, which function both as independent texts and as a sample of a network of references in which the complexity of the female protagonists progressively increases as the collection advances towards its closure.

## 1. ANGELA CARTER AND THE SHORT STORY

This dissertation aims to explore the formal and ideological possibilities of Carter's short stories. To do so, in this chapter I will examine how the brevity and condensation inherent to the short form allowed Carter to explore different options and meanings, suggesting a variety of alternatives that enabled her to leave behind realist narratives in order to position herself at an intersection between orality and the written form, folklore and the most innovative literary techniques, tradition and subversion. Carter used the transgressive power of the short story to deal with issues of identity, sexuality and gender roles from a variety of points of view, suggesting the creation of a metamorphic, fluid and animalistic subjectivity. I will approach Carter's famous distinction between short story and tale, the existent connection between gender and genre and I will use Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" as well as Achilles and Bergmann's and Drewery's concept of "liminality" in relation to the short story applied to Carter's stories. Furthermore, I will establish how the presence of Gothic imagery and monsters in Carter's short fiction as a means of creating new possibilities of female identity.

Angela Carter wrote four collections of short stories: *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974), based on her experiences in Japan; *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), a reassessment of the fairy-tale tradition; *Black Venus* (1985), in which Carter reimagined some literary and historical figures and *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (published posthumously in 1993), which deals with both American and European folklore. In 1995 Carter's collected short stories were published under the title *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories*.

Before the publication of *Fireworks* Carter was already a reputed writer, having won the Maugham Somerset Award in 1969 with her novel *Several Perceptions* (1968). However, Carter's experience in Japan triggered her development as a short story writer in detriment of her production of longer narratives: "Significantly, before *Fireworks* Carter had published

half a dozen novels [...], whereas from 1974 onwards she produced four short story collections, edited three anthologies for Virago [...] and published her translations of Charles Perrault's fairy tales, while her novelistic output decreased dramatically" (Sacido-Romero and Lojo-Rodríguez 7).

In her "Afterword" to *Fireworks* Carter overtly pointed at her discovery of the aesthetic and ideological possibilities of the short story as a genre, whose condensation she relates to the physical space she inhabited while living in Japan:

I started to write short pieces when I was living in a room too small to write a novel in. So the size of my room modified what I did inside it and it was the same with the pieces themselves. The limited trajectory of the short narrative concentrates its meaning. Sign and sense can fuse to an extent impossible to achieve among the multiplying ambiguities of an extended narrative. (Carter 1996, 449)

Carter's collections of short fiction—and, most notably, *The Bloody Chamber*—have been examined from a variety of perspectives and critical slants. However, relatively little attention has been given to Carter's assessment of the short story genre as such, as Adrian Hunter has perceptively suggested:

As one might expect of so celebrated a work, *The Bloody Chamber* draws with it a now lengthy comet's tail of scholarly criticism and commentary, ranging from narratological and anthropological studies to readings conducted through the lenses of feminist, Gothic and psychoanalytic theory. By a curious critical oversight, however, the book is rarely, if ever, considered in the context of short story writing in the twentieth century. Given that Carter's text makes so much of its own intertextual dependencies and departures, it is surprising to find it cut off in this way from the history of literary form. (Hunter 125)

### 1.1. SHORT STORIES OR TALES?

Carter manifested her opinion about what she defined as a "short story" and how this differed from a "tale" in the "Afterword" to *Fireworks*. For her, the short story reflects aspects of daily life and, as such, relates to realism, while the tale clearly implies a connection to orality, folklore and fantasy:

Formally the tale differs from the short story in that it makes few pretences at the imitation of life. The tale does not log everyday experience, as the short story does; it interprets everyday experience through a system of imagery derived from subterranean areas behind everyday experience, and therefore the tale cannot betray its readers in false knowledge of everyday experience. (Carter 1996, 449)

By drawing such a distinction, Carter engages in a debate pertaining the representation of reality in short fiction that had begun with Edgar Allan Poe,<sup>1</sup> relating to the distinction between the literary short story and oral tales, which combined “the suspenseful intrigue and plot-based intricacy of the traditional tale with the elliptical austerity of a modern realist narrative technique” (Hunter 23). The connection between the tale and the fantastic, the Gothic and other supernatural phenomena, and folklore, present in Poe’s short fiction, is what Angela Carter rescued and nurtured, distancing her tales from what she termed the “realistic” modes of the modernist short story.

On the other hand, the literary short story, due to its formal freedom and elasticity, became an apt vehicle to convey new approaches to fiction at the turn of the twentieth century, as was the case of the short stories by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf or Katherine Mansfield, who explored and experimented with the form, the “which distinguished the short story proper from the mass-market popular tale”, thus paving the way “for its absorption into modernism in the early decades of the twentieth century” (Hunter 8-9).

Nevertheless, authors such as Thomas Hardy or Charles Dickens “retained the appearance of a direct connection to oral narrative traditions” (Hunter 27). In affirming that “I was writing, therefore, tales” (Carter 1996, 449), Carter positioned herself in a particular narrative tradition which aligned itself with fantasy, non-realist fictional modes, folklore and orality: “The tale has relations with subliterate forms of pornography, ballad and dream, and it has not been dealt with kindly by literati” (Carter 1996, 449).

However, and despite Carter’s emphasis on the distinction between “short story” and “tale”, a clear-cut distinction between the two is difficult to draw, especially if taking into account how postmodern narratives often incorporate formal strategies from popular culture and other artistic expressions which often blur boundaries between high and popular culture. And that is the case of Angela Carter’s short stories in *The Bloody Chamber*. As Paul March-Russell has suggested, both the tale and the short story are to be regarded as mutually complementary since both short forms are interconnected: if we trace the origins of the short story, it is possible to see the oral tale as its prehistoric form (March-Russell 2009, 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Poe’s review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales* published in 1842 opened a discussion about what characteristics the short story should have and “[it] was certainly at the forefront of the first wave of scholarly debate on the short story” (Young and Bailey 1).

Departing from folklore, the meanings of “story” and “tale” are confused and used as synonymous terms until very recently (March-Russell 2009, 2).

Significantly, the fairy-tale genre which Carter has in mind had its origins in oral, popular tales, yet its development into the written fairy tale in the French court during the seventeenth century is actually conditioned by a “growing discourse surrounding modernity and enlightenment”, in such a way that the tale becomes a vehicle for moral and social instruction, and, in so doing, “the fairy tale is gradually removed from its folk origins” (March-Russell 2009, 8), a fact which becomes the more complex because of the “short story’s ambiguous relationship to the folktale, since in another sense internal contradiction echoes the mutability of storytelling, and in particular the twinning of the oral and romance traditions during the twelfth century” (March-Russell 2009, 167).

Despite Carter’s adherence to the tale in the “Afterword” to *Fireworks*, it is clear that in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* she did not strictly follow the traditional form of the literary fairy tale of Perrault, Madame d’Aulnoy or the Brothers Grimm. Instead, Carter clearly uses the contemporary short story form—more sophisticated and complex than the oral, traditional story—to deal with the contents and themes of the classical fairy tales while simultaneously exploring multiple ideological possibilities to suggest, rather than to explain, different meanings.

In fact, Carter’s short stories could be argued to adhere to a “postmodern” worldview in her challenge to “existing modes of thought, economic ideology, and political assertions” (Iftekharrudin et al. 1), as well as in her particular “re-evaluation of history, culture and politics” (Iftekharrudin et al. 4). Carter engaged in the postmodern reaction against the modernist emphasis on reality: significantly, a relevant body of Carter’s literary production moved towards fantastic genres, which ultimately questioned assumed premises relating to the representation of reality and fantasy. The postmodern British short story—as represented in the works of Angela Carter, Ian McEwan or Salman Rushdie, to name just a few—is characterised by pastiche, fragmentation, hybridity and intertextuality, which often signalled a return to the folk tradition of its origins (March-Russell 2009, 229) while simultaneously showing a complexity of form and content in “a variety of styles including parody, self-conscious fictionality, grotesquerie, and fantasy” (Iftekharrudin et al. 20).

The connection between intertextuality, pastiche and rewriting is explicitly addressed by Carter herself in her famous interview with Haffenden (1985), where she reiterated her preference for the word “tales” to “short stories”—following her argument in *Fireworks’* “Afterword”—and explained that her intention in writing *The Bloody Chamber* was “not to do ‘versions’ or, as the American edition of the book said, horribly, ‘adult’ fairy tales, but to extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories” (Haffenden 84). In this sense, the idea of “rewriting” is core to Carter’s writing impulse by using elements from fairy tales, myths, legends and other sources to explore the hidden aspects, topics and strategies of the oral tradition that literary fairy tales have suppressed.

Carter’s preference for the short story is connected with an ethical and useful dimension of literature, especially in the case of her short fiction. The short story was the perfect tool for Carter to subvert traditional and patriarchal values, to deconstruct gender roles and fixed identitarian categories. The ideology and purpose behind Carter’s short fiction is connected to what she called the “moral function”, inherited from the Gothic, a literary genre which made an impact on her: “Its only humour is black humour. It retains a singular moral function—that of provoking unease” (Carter 1996, 449).

For Carter, the ethics of the short story connects with its possibilities of subversion. By adding pastiche, symbolism and hyperbole to the short story and the Gothic—a literary genre which often deals with unconscious, repressed desires—the genre thus becomes the perfect vehicle to “provoke unease” on the reader and to question heteronormative standards: “The fear of powerlessness, though, is paradoxical since it is also equated with sexual desire: the masochistic pleasure of becoming a plaything. It is in this tension between the subject and the object, fear and desire, that the Gothic has the potential of a political discourse” (March-Russell 2009, 126-127).

## 1.2 GENDER AND GENRE

In “Notes from the Front Line”, collected posthumously in a volume called *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings* (2013), Carter reflected upon what to be a woman meant to her, and also discussed the connection between her feminist thoughts and her career as a fiction writer:

Yet this, of course, is why it is so enormously important for women to write fiction *as* women—it is part of the slow process of decolonialising our language and our basic habits of thought. I really do believe this. It has nothing at all to do with being a “legislator of” or anything like that; it is to do with the creation of a means of expression for an infinitely greater variety of experience than has been possible heretofore, to say things for which no language previously existed. (Carter 2013, 52)

In the above-quoted passage, Carter advocates the urge to produce a feminist literary discourse if a decolonisation of modes and habits is to be successfully achieved. Carter’s intention to forge a feminist discourse may be in tune with the possibilities which the short story offered by resisting dominant meanings and suggesting a multiplicity of ideological implications. The formal freedom of the short story, its flexibility and its condensation, which allows for a very specific interplay between the text and its readers, may explain why the short story has been consistently used by marginalised groups to convey dissidence and resistance. In the case of women writers, the short story offers a space where to articulate a voice of their own while also dismantling traditional hegemonic modes of thought: “Contemporary British women writers also turn to the short story because the genre preserves its potential as a vehicle for the expression of female experience that is often critical with reality and dominant patriarchal ideology” (Sacido-Romero and Lojo-Rodríguez 2).

As previously mentioned, it is no coincidence that Carter’s consistent turn to the short story genre, in detriment of longer narrative forms, took place during her stay in Japan, where she confessed that she “learnt what it is to be a woman and became radicalised” (Carter 1982, 28). Carter’s ideological “radicalisation”, as she put it, went hand in hand with a formal “radicalisation” of narrative modes, and her discovery of the formal and ideological possibilities which the short story conveyed is integral to her new concerns.

The ability of the short story to deal with problematic issues, to question established values and standards and to create a space for resistance with an emancipatory discourse within the hegemonic system is the nucleus of its subversive power. It is precisely this connection between the short story and women writers’ demand of a voice and a space of their own what is so appealing to Carter. In *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, Carter deconstructed received ideas about gender roles, female identity and sexuality present in Western folklore and fairy tales, as she herself suggested: “I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles to explode” (Carter 2013, 46). Such an “explosion”, forged in the tension between the text and the

readers' appreciation of it, connects with the insurgent power of the genre and its mechanisms to accomplish the creation of a fluid, hybrid identity and to bargain with "uncomfortable questions" (Sacido-Romero and Lojo-Rodríguez 3).

Carter's ideological position of resistance, along with her declared intention to produce an emancipatory discourse for women in fiction, accommodates in the short story as the expression of dissonant voices out of tune with mainstream culture. Authors such as Adrian Hunter (2007) or Paul March-Russell (2009; 2018), among others, have emphasised the power of the short story as a vehicle for subversion and transgression by applying Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature—as articulated in their seminal work *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986)—to the short story and, by doing so, distancing themselves from O'Connor's idea of the genre as a marginal form of expression (1963). According to Deleuze and Guattari, "a minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 16). By applying Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature to the short story, Hunter and March-Russell actually undermine prior conceptions of the genre as the expression of marginality, since "minor literature", though the expression of a cultural, sexual or racial minority, is actually placed at the centre of discourse through the use of a major language. Carter herself was also well aware of how through language and discourse social and power relations are established: "It is all applied linguistics. But language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation" (Carter 2013, 53).

Deleuze and Guattari also attribute to minor literature a political dimension, to the point of arguing that "everything in them is political. In major literatures, in contrast, the individual concern [...] joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background" (Deleuze and Guattari 17). Carter explains in "Notes from the Front Line" how behind her *oeuvre* there is a political agenda: "Do I 'situate myself politically as a writer'? Well, yes; of course" (Carter 2013, 45). She specifies she is a feminist in every aspect of her life: "I would regard myself as a feminist writer because I'm a feminist in everything else and one can't compartmentalise these things on one's live" (Carter 2013, 46).

The last characteristic that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to minor literature is its collective importance: “In it everything takes on a collective value. Indeed, precisely because talent isn’t abundant in a minor literature, there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that ‘master’ and that could be separated from a collective enunciation” (Deleuze and Guattari 17). Carter’s collective importance rested upon her political agenda, especially regarding feminism and her function as a political women writer, not only present in her words but also in her actions by engaging feminist publishing houses like Virago and working with other women: “For some reason, I’ve almost always worked with women editors at my various publishing houses, and even, when one is dealing with a woman with zero feminist consciousness, there *is* a difference” (Carter 2013, 48).

Thus, the fact of addressing Carter’s short fiction as an example of minor literature allows doing away with ideas relating to marginality and alienation, which is certainly not the case of *The Bloody Chamber*, already part of the English literary canon. Rather, the collection could be argued to entail an expression of resistance *within* the dominant system, not outside from it or even articulated from its margins. *The Bloody Chamber* can be read as a transgressive collection reversing traditional assumptions relating to the fairy-tale genre or, as March-Russell put it, as a postmodern return to the oral folkloric origins of the tales:

Carter’s work is not an act of subversion [...] but an act of inversion. [...] Carter inverts what readers commonly understand to be the fairy tale in order to reveal the sex and violence that was always already present. Although Carter is often presented as a transgressive writer, her inversion of the fairy tale points [...] to the limits of transgression and, instead, to the ultimately curtailing influences of power and ideology. (March-Russell 2018, 65)

In this sense, recent approaches to the short story have emphasised the genre’s transgressive potential, its ability to articulate a particular position of resistance within the system and inscribed in the literary canon, thus undermining prior theoretical approaches to the genre influenced by, most notably, O’Connor’s idea of marginality.

The concept of liminality and its relationship with the short story is yet another example of such recent approaches to the genre, as articulated by Claire Drewery (2011) and, most notably, by Achilles and Bergman (2015). As a concept, liminality is originally related to the field of anthropology as posed forward by, among others, Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner. Turner’s definition of liminality expanded from anthropology and it is found in many different fields related to a variety of topics:

[it] refers to any “betwixt and between” situation or object. It is evident that this understanding opens up space for possible uses of the concept far beyond that which Turner himself had suggested. Speaking very broadly, liminality is applicable to both space and time. Single moments, longer periods, or even whole epochs can be liminal. Liminal places can be specific thresholds; they can also be more extended areas, like “borderlands” or, arguably, whole countries, placed in important in-between positions between larger civilizations. Liminality can also be applied to both single individuals and to larger groups (cohorts or villages), or whole societies, or maybe even civilizations. These various dimensions of liminality can be spelled out very simply. (Thomassen 16)

When discussing the intersections between liminality and the short story, Achilles and Bergmann affirm that it is “the liminal genre *par excellence*. The short story occupies a middle ground in many respects as it develops out of, and mediates between, essay and sketch [...], poem and novel [...], narration and discourse [...], and elitist and popular culture [...]” (Achilles and Bergmann 4). This in-betweenness is precisely what allows the genre to create the possibility of an emancipatory discourse which emerges out of liminal situations, characters or topics in conflict in the narrative:

On account of its very brevity and often episodic structure, the generic liminality of the short story privileges the depiction of transitional situations and fleeting moments of crisis or decision. The liminality *of* the short fiction as an aesthetic and generic phenomenon goes along with liminality *in* short fiction, which emerges as moral, cultural, and political crises resulting from the clash of different normative systems. (Achilles and Bergmann 22)

Carter’s particular use of the fairy tale in her short stories represents the union of oral and literal traditions. The existing hybridity between the teller/writer and listener/reader, its threshold moments and its rites of passage are a demonstration of the genre’s liminal status, as Carter herself suggested a propos of Perrault’s fairy tales:

Archaic patterns of ritual initiation; forbidden thresholds; invitatory incarnations of pubertal rites [...]; virgin martyrs and sacrificial victims [...]: all the elements that our more barbarous times rejoice in for their own sakes as part of the rarest show of the unconscious, are subsumed by Perrault into a project of worldly instruction. (Carter 2013, 555)

In the quotation above, Carter emphasises the fairy tale’s constitution as a liminal genre, “subsumed” by Perrault’s didactic agenda, as well as her ideas concerning the construction of the self towards a fluid, changeable, hybrid identity, which brings Carter close to critics such as Soja concerning subjectivity: “The key point being raised by Golding and others is that identity, sexual or otherwise, is unstable, shifting, multiplicitous, situational, refractory, hybridizable, always being negotiated and contested, never static or fixed” (Soja 113).

Additionally, the liminal status of the short story as a genre—with its potential to address complex issues with an immediacy of response, coupled by its formal freedom and elasticity—has been consistently used by women to explore identity concerns out of tune with hegemonic, patriarchal thought, thus articulating a position of aesthetic and ideological resistance: “Liminality differs in that it exists *within* social structure itself, but in its interstices; the cracks falling between pre-existing social norms, classifications, and conventions” (Drewery 3).

Regarding characters in the collection, Carter rescues Gothic liminal tropes such as werewolves, vampires and animal monsters. This teratological repertoire helps to reinforce the connection between liminality and identity in the writer’s intention to blur opposites and cross borders: in fact, *The Bloody Chamber* is inhabited by feline and birdie women, female vampires and she-wolves. Carter uses Gothic tropes and liminal figures as well as animal metamorphosis to deconstruct the heteropatriarchal values of female identity and to create the possibility of the apparition of a hybrid, fluid, nomadic individual.

Consequently, reading Carter’s short fiction through the lens of minor literature and liminality allows to depart from a traditional understanding of the short story as the expression of marginalization and, instead, to argue for a literary expression within a major literary tradition which is, however, critical with and resistant to dominant ideological discourses. Carter’s subversive short stories defy and deconstruct patriarchal ideals of femininity while creating a revolutionary discourse about identity. Carter uses the short story form in order to explore spaces that are liminal ones, both physically and psychologically speaking. In Carter’s tales, characters are in a limbo between childhood and adulthood, humanity and animality, and this in-betweenness leads to the suggestion of a fluid, metamorphic liminal subjectivity.

### 1.3 GOTHIC LITERATURE, WOMEN WRITERS AND THE SHORT STORY

Gothic imagery in Angela Carter’s *oeuvre* is ever present, marked by gloomy atmospheres and monstrous, metamorphic characters. Gothic impregnates every aspect of her tales, as Fred Botting has suggested:

Angela Carter’s fiction, self-consciously mixing different forms, including fairytale, legend, science fiction and Gothic, shows the interplay of narratives

shaping reality and identity, particularly in relation to the production of meanings for sexuality. [...] “The Bloody Chamber” (1979), like other stories in the collection of the same name, plays with the ways fairytales, legends and Gothic fictions construct identities, fantasies, fears and desires, particularly in terms of female sexuality and desire. (Botting 1996, 169)

In particular, Carter was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe’s figures and images (Munford 180), as well as by Gothic imagery and atmosphere in general. In the *Fireworks*’ “Afterword”, she famously postulated that “we live in Gothic times” (Carter 1996, 460), alluding not only at the permanence of the genre in present times, but also to its flexibility and capacity of adaptation, both formally and ideologically speaking, from its origins at the end of the eighteenth century to the decade of 1970s, which witnessed an important revival of the Gothic. By so doing, Carter aligns herself with a whole tradition of women writers in this fashion, who used Gothic narratives to portray particular views of femininity and female sexuality:

Gothic modernity turns on the question of femininity, feminism turns on modern gothic. It is a critical commonplace to note how women in gothic fictions are represented as objects of pursuit, imprisonment, violation [...]. At the same time, [...] gothic fictions allow a greater space for female authorship [...]. These are the contours of “female Gothic”. (Botting 2008, 153)

Peach clarifies that Carter’s writings are completely different from the early Gothic texts by women writers, in which the female protagonists are essentially portrayed as passive individuals. On the contrary, her works “present a critique of Gothic in a form which is not so much feminist Gothic as [...] “post-feminist Gothic” (2009, 183). Taking into account Carter’s interest in the body and in sexuality—even though she belonged to the second wave of feminism during the decade of 1970s—the author was ahead of her time, presenting female protagonists who struggle with sexual and identity issues and, by means of Gothic conventions, they fight for an active role as sexual subjects and for assertiveness. Carter’s intersection between female sexuality, the Gothic and animalistic behaviour may anticipate the “third wave of feminism” of the 1990s, and even what is termed today as “post-feminism”, as Peach mentions. Carter’s thoughts on gender issues should be contextualized in the feminist framework and the many different critical positions that took place within the movement since the last thirty years. Carter’s work is located “in contrapuntal relationship’ with feminism’s constantly evolving and internally conflicted history” (Easton 3).

Gothic literature in the United Kingdom started in the eighteenth century with the novels of Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis. Since the genre's inception, there was a clear connection between the Gothic and women, being predominantly women both major consumers and prominent authors of the genre: names such as Clara Reeve, Mary Shelley or the Brontë sisters are well-known examples of women writers of the Gothic. Their works, frequently referred to as "female gothic" since Ellen Moers coined the term in *Literary Women* (1976), dealt with women's anxieties and fears, often depicting a social situation relegated to the domestic sphere and confined within the house walls. This reaction against patriarchal hierarchies, together with fear of bodily female experiences such as the loss of virginity or death by childbirth and passive, powerless gender roles in society led to the use of the Gothic and its tropes—being the ghost one of the most relevant ones—to represent women's fears, concerns and anxieties. However, the Gothic tradition settled down as well with the short story format.

The rise and establishment of the short story form in the British literary tradition was connected to the social phenomenon of the periodical press, which offered a way out of censorship and allowed a progressive path for social dialogues through literature: "The short story's contemporary written form did not emerge alongside the establishment of the novel, but rather flourished through the medium of the periodical, it is this serial structure that most clearly impacted the development of the short story" (Krueger 11). Women writers of the short story, such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Rhoda Broughton, "produced formally unique fiction; all of them also crucially penned gendered narratives of transgression" (Krueger 11).

Ghost stories belong to the oral tradition and folklore and have been present throughout history in many different forms. Nevertheless, it was during the nineteenth century when they began to be associated with both the Gothic and the short story genre: "It is no coincidence that the ghost story, like science fiction, was a product of the early nineteenth century and the impact of industrial capitalism. [...] Although descriptions of ghostly visitations occur in many cultures, the ghost story did not emerge as a distinct literary genre until the 1820s" (March-Russell 2009, 179). This association was marked by an increasing interest during the Victorian period in the supernatural and the occult, as well as by the above mentioned rise of periodicals and magazines, which favoured the expansion of the short story, particularly by women writers: "A spike in interest in a variety of supernatural phenomena in

the Victorian period, including mesmerism, spiritualism, and communication with the dead via a variety of media, contributed to the rise of the spectral as ‘one of the most popular topics in short fiction’ which were read as ‘narratives of the paranormal tinged with fact’” (Krueger 64-65).

British modernist women writers adapted the nineteenth-century Gothic ghost story to the new environment of the twentieth century and modified this subgenre to engage with a feminist agenda:

Women writers explored the transformative potential of these transitions while taking a more sceptical approach to other changes, exploiting the story’s Gothic heritage, for example, to dramatise tensions between “progress” in the shape of advances in science and technology and the persistence of the past (often represented by spectral hauntings). The short story was also used to map the new modalities of gender and sexuality associated with the energies of the Suffrage movement and to map the sensorium of modernity from a gendered perspective. (Hanson 194)

Writers such as May Sinclair, Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Bowen or Daphne du Maurier rewrote the traditional ghost story by using liminal female narrators to “explore gendered reactions to uncanny manifestations of modernity. [...] Sinclair’s work is revealing of the ways in which she deploys the dead wife narrative to comment on women’s erotic desire, and the exclusion within the domestic space” (Liggins 33). Both the Gothic and the ghost story specifically became a space for female freedom which encouraged women writers to express themselves, discussing patriarchal hegemony, identity problems, traditional gender roles and sexuality by using the supernatural and the fantastic. Formally, the brevity and condensation of the short form was the perfect vehicle not only for these British female writers but also for women writers all over the world, most notably in what is often referred to as “Southern Gothic”, of particular interest to Carter.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe are often claimed to be the founders of the Gothic tale in the United States during the nineteenth century, the genre was consolidated due to the female tradition. American women writers also engaged with the Gothic short-story tradition in the twentieth century and their contribution was so relevant that critics often refer to “Southern Gothic” as a subgenre of Gothic literature, as is the case of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Eudora Welty and Flannery O’Connor, among others. The great majority of these authors used Gothic elements to write about the Southern situation after the American Civil War and the changes experienced by the traditional Southern society, focalising on women’s experiences. Problems of identity, idealization of the past and impossibility of adaptation in the new established order are core to these texts, in which the key element is often the grotesque. The big family houses or mansion becomes the perfect scenario for these settings portraying the uncanny non-familiar within the familiar. Postmodernist writers such as Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, Alice Munro or Joyce Carol Oates absorbed the Gothic substratum and rewrote this literary tradition in a pastiche of feminist ideology, fairy tales, short fiction and intertextuality to deal with, parody or deconstruct heteropatriarchal preconceived ideas about female subjectivity.

Even though Carter did not belong to the tradition of the “Southern Gothic” for obvious reasons, we can find some traces of it in her collection of short stories *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993). Besides, in the “Afterword” to *Fireworks*, the author herself connected her ruminations on the difference between “tales” and “short stories” with the Gothic tradition that comes from Edgar Allan Poe:

Though it took me a long time to realise why I liked them, I’d always been fond of Poe, and Hoffman—Gothic tales, cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious—mirrors; the externalised self; forsaken castles; haunted forests; forbidden sexual objects. (Carter 1996, 459)

Carter here declares her intention to write forms linked to folklore and the oral tradition, to be interspersed with Gothic elements which will provide her *oeuvre* with the moral function and ethical dimension she seeks to convey, namely, provoking a sense of unease in her readers:

The Gothic tradition in which Poe writes grandly ignores the value of systems of our institutions; it deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism. Character and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions. Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural – and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the world as fact. (Carter 1996, 459)

As Carter explains, she particularly values Poe’s disregard of established moral systems and institutions—what she calls the “profane”, which are “unnaturally” exaggerated beyond reality in the Gothic mode, a genre which questions verisimilar and factual experience. *The Bloody Chamber* thus entails an appropriation of the grotesque style of the Gothic, its “unnatural” surfaces and its powerful symbolism to deconstruct received ideas of female subjectivity.

The very title Carter chose for the collection emphasises the gothic inheritance of these narratives: the evil aristocratic characters and vampires in “The Bloody Chamber” and “The Lady of the House of Love”, the metamorphic women and werewolves in “The Tiger’s Bride”, “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice”, all set in gloomy, decadent scenarios (such as dark, enchanted forests) where supernatural events and phantasmagorical appearances often occur. In this collection, Carter also used the Gothic tradition to suggest how traditional fairy tales have perpetuated traditional gender roles, which the author questions by presenting alternatives in the Gothic mode. Indeed, and as Fred Botting has convincingly argued, Gothic “excess” dramatizes a “fascination with

transgression and the anxiety over cultural limits and boundaries” (Botting 1996, 2). The Gothic, a proteic genre, adapts itself to the different concerns over time and constitutes the site where fears and anxieties return to the present.

Carter reiterates the proximity between the Gothic tale and pornography—first expressed in the “Afterword” to *Fireworks*—in her article dedicated to H.P. Lovecraft titled “The Hidden Child”, where she also discusses the adaptability and persistence of the Gothic tales: “So the ‘tale of terror’, like pornography, with which it has much in common, represents a carefree holiday from ethics. That is the source of its enduring charm. The tale of terror, horror movie, the horror comic, are genres which show positively vampiric longevity” (Carter 2013, 544). As Carter herself suggests, Gothic literature (inasmuch as pornography) is characterised by a “carefree holiday from ethics” or by the persisting presence of what she defined as the “profane”, which entails an utter disregard for conventional morals, received ideas and institutions in an “unnatural” discursive mode ultimately aiming to dismantle binary oppositions by offering different liminal, in-between possibilities:

Embracing liminality in short fiction [...] is particularly pertinent to the relish for the unexplained supernatural in women’s ghost stories, as the ambiguity of the endings, and the “threshold states” occupied by liminal female narrators, can enable more liberating accounts of female social and sexual identity that in realist fiction. (Liggins 34)

Angela Carter’s short stories present a diversity of possibilities of female subjectivity by using Gothic liminal devices and tropes. Carter’s reassessments of the classic fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber* address the construction of women’s identity in its full complexity, thus departing from reductionist binary oppositions by offering a satisfactory communion between the female body and mind, creating new possibilities of identity: liminal, animal, hybrid, fluid and metamorphic beings. In this endeavour, Carter places special emphasis on monstrous figures as examples of an interstitial body and a fluid subjectivity which defy traditional categorizations.

The monster, one of the Gothic’s principal elements, is connected to metamorphosis, and is virtually present in many different cultures. The monster embodied the fears that humanity had about itself and also posed questions relating to “normality” and what deviated from the norm: “También el monstruo, como lo animal, ha sido un dispositivo de alterización durante siglos. Y es que la cuestión de lo monstruoso, junto con la cuestión de lo animal,

constituye el marco liminal frente al que, desde Aristóteles, se ha pretendido la definición de lo humano” (Antich 17).

Monsters, located in a threshold position regarding humanity, animality and technology, are traditionally regarded as “failed subjects” and, as such, they have an “ideal and intimate relationship with the concept of posthuman”, which ultimately questions “humanity” as a social construction (MacCormack 293-4) by emphasising its uncanny nature: “The monster is neither a total stranger nor completely familiar; s/he exists in an in-between zone. I would express this as a paradox: the monstrous other is both liminal and structurally central to our perception of normal human subjectivity” (Lykke and Braidotti 141).

Female monstrosity has been used by patriarchal societies to exemplify what deviates from the patriarchal codes of behaviour for women. Transformed into revulsive and grotesque creatures, she-monsters often fulfil a role of villains in folklore and literature—in mythologies, medieval epic, fairy tales or gothic and science fiction—punished, hunted and eventually killed by the male hero. Their grotesque female body, exemplified in a mixture of fragmented human and animal bodily parts, connects them to sexual and corporal aspects:

Monstrosity is taking into consideration in the milieu of English literature, mainly in the various forms that it assumes in Gothic fiction. Gothic is the realm of the uncanny, expressing itself [...] via figurations of monstrosity, and subsequently with latent links to sexual themes. (Castagna 58)

Women writers have consistently re-worked monstrosity by “deconstructing the dominant gaze at the woman-monster” (Castagna 59), and the use of the carnivalesque and the grotesque opens up the path for new identity possibilities, rather than representing the expression of vulnerability (Castagna 59).

By producing such hybrid identities and interstitial women characters, Carter establishes a powerful connection between women, corporeality and gender, probing the extent to which these affect identity. Carter draws on traditional patriarchal images of liminal, monstrous, animalistic women in a transgressive manner, serving the purpose of destabilising binary inherited from folklore and fairy tales, which are ultimately a source of women’s empowerment.

## 2. ANGELA CARTER AND THE FAIRY TALE

The aim of this chapter is to focus on the fairy tale as a liminal genre, to trace its historical evolution and to briefly mention different critical approaches to such a genre, which are preliminary steps to move on to Carter's own position regarding the controversy about gender roles and sexuality that had characterised classical fairy tales. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the concept of metamorphosis as a liminal literary device, connected with mythology, folklore and fairy tales, core to debates on human-animal relationships and philosophical questions of subjectivity from Descartes to present posthuman approaches. Twentieth-century writers of fantasy, Gothic or magical realism have consistently used shapeshifting and animal metamorphosis as a strategy to deconstruct pre-existing ideas of gender roles, nationality, identity and sexuality, and Carter is no exception.

The fairy tale has its origins in the oral tradition as part of the human folklore at large, but fairy tales were especially relevant in Europe, where the oral folk tales and stories were part of the lives of the "ordinary men and women whose labour created our world" (Carter 2005, xi). Fairy tales were generated from these folk oral stories that "contained popular motifs, which were thousands of years old" (Koshy 37). It is important to bear in mind that fairy tales were not originally meant for children but for an audience both adults and children alike, and the major aim of these tales was entertainment, as Carter points out in her introduction to the *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales*: "Fairy tales are dedicated to the pleasure principle, although since there is no such thing as pure pleasure, there is always more going on that meets the eye" (2005, xiv). Its orality implies a sense of collectivity, a communal act in which tellers and listeners participated together in the creation of entertainment.

In their enlightening approach to the liminal nature of the short story, Achilles and Bergmann (2015) define liminality as "a concept of both demarcation and mediation between different processual stages, spatial complexes, and inner state"

(2015, 3), thus applicable to numerous topics and literary genres. The fairy tale is a liminal genre per excellence due to its inherent in-betweenness: it is situated in between the oral and written traditions, it can be found in terms of popular and highbrow culture, it addresses both the individual and the community and it is itself a mixture of genres with threshold moments and rites of passage for its characters. In Bacchilega's words, "as a hybrid or transitional genre, the fairy tale also magically grants writers/tellers and readers/listeners access to the collective [...], an access that allows for an apparent limitless, highly idiosyncratic re-creation of that 'once there was'" (1997, 5).

Fantasy is an integral element to these narratives, often dealing with settings placed in far away, imaginary countries, depicting characters like fairies, magicians, beasts, animals and metamorphic creatures: "Animal metamorphosis and changeable bodies on the one hand, and the binding power of promises and curses on the other, govern the logic of the plots" (Warner 2014, 31). Core to fantasy genres, shapeshifting, or metamorphosis, has been a resource that can be traced back to the earliest mythologies of humankind and is present in legends, folktales and fairy tales: "Metamorphosis in fairy tales has a clear relation with myth, and fairytale variants spin twists on the tradition: for example, the 'witch duels', or battle sequences of ever-changing metamorphoses [...] pick up the struggle of shape-shifters like Thetis against Peleus" (Warner 2014, 34).

In this sense, it is important to bear in mind that the fairy tale is a complex genre, used in many different ways throughout history with opposite ends in view, both to emphasise and reinforce heteronormative patriarchal values and to deconstruct them: "El cuento de hadas es un subgénero complejo, pues funciona como un discurso oficial y como un texto subversivo. [...] Ha sido utilizado con fines éticos, políticos, sociales y sexistas [...]. En esta segunda mitad del siglo XX, los elementos feministas no han podido ser menos que esperados en el cuento de hadas" (Pérez Gil 120).

These oral and anonymous narratives began to be collected and written down at the end of the Renaissance by Italian writers such as Straparola and Basile:

Bottingheimer provides instead a book-based history that traces the canon of Perrault and Grimm back to the sixteenth- and seventeenth – century Italian authors Giambattista Basile and Giovan Francesco Straparola. [...] Most fairy-tale scholars now taking the view that fairy tales are a provocative and confusing mixture of oral and literary tradition [...]. (Kidd 29)

This process of the creation of the literary fairy tale—the written form—was accelerated thanks to the invention of the printing press, as Carter herself notes: “Since the introduction of cheap printing processes in the seventeenth century, stories have moved in and out of the printed world” (2005, xvii). The fusion of oral traits like repetition or formulaic expressions on the one hand, and literary written forms on the other, has established the fairy tale as a liminal, hybrid literary genre: “The ‘classic’ fairy tale is a *literary* appropriation of the older folk tale, an appropriation which nevertheless continues to exhibit and reproduce some *folkloric* features. As a ‘borderline’ or transitional genre, it bears the traces of orality, folkloric tradition and socio-cultural performance” (Bacchilega 1997, 3).

After having its written beginnings in Italy, the fairy tale moved to France and became extremely popular. In this process of production of literary fairy tales and their subsequent compilations, the characterization of women suffered a substantial transformation, as along with the genre itself:

The fairy tale has always been associated with women [...] and as such they are connected to the notion of “women’s persuasive speech” [...]. However, feminist criticism has repeatedly characterized the depiction of women in fairy tales as clichéd [...]. Although initially spread orally and shaped my matriarchal culture and their peasant origin, [...] most of the folktales were adapted to the *zeitgeist* on their time once they were written down. The French fairy-tale tradition of the *contes des fées*, which preceded Charles Perrault’s collection *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697), and originated in the salons of the 1630s, was predominantly female. (Gruss 195)

A number of French women writers of the fairy tale, like Madame d’Aulnoy, continued to address female concerns through the tales in their literary salons: “Although there is much debate over the oral roots of the fairy tale, [...] its communal origins are undeniable. The literary fairy tale [...] with the tradition of the *contes des fées*, the tales of the fairies, [...] addressed the issues which were of primary concern to women” (Kerchy 18). The oral fairy tales were full of sexual and scatological references due to their function as an act of entertainment. However, from Perrault to the French literary salons, the tales suffered a series of transformations to fit in the manners of the nobility and high class of the French court. In this respect, the domestication of the genre pertained a process of refinement of those elements that were not suitable for young female noble readers, thus becoming a moral guide for their audience.

Madame d'Aulnoy coined the term “fairy tale” as a literary genre at the end of the seventeenth century, and through her *contes* it is possible to appreciate the impact that Antoinette Galland's translation of the *Arabian Nights* had in fairy tales, especially regarding metamorphosis and animalization, a characteristic that continues to be present in current retellings: “D'Aulnoy shows the influence of the *Arabian Nights*, in which animal metamorphoses are elaborate, involving numerous adventures” (Warner 2014, 26).

Despite the prominence of women as writers and compilers of fairy tales, nowadays the most well-known writers of this genre are male: Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, Andrew Lang or Italo Calvino, among others. These collectors modified the tales in order to make them more suitable for their audience, and women's voices and opinions were recreated through the male writers (Kerchy 165) that began to establish two genre models, targeting a male and female readership, respectively:

Perrault's fairy tales which “elevate” heroines reveal that he had a distinctly limited view of women. His ideal “*femme civilise*” of upper-class society, the composite female, is beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, properly groomed, and knows how to control herself at all times. If she fails the obedience test, she is punished, as in Red Riding Hood's case. (Zipes 1991, 25)

The French bourgeois writer Charles Perrault published *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé* in 1697, known in its translation into English as *Tales of Mother Goose* (1702). Mother Goose, a European fictional character that embodied the role of the female storyteller, is commented upon by Carter as represented as an old woman who is spinning and sitting by the fireside (2005, xiii). Bearing connotations which relate to error, lack of judgement and superstition, Mother Goose is described by Carter as teller of “all the ‘old wives’ tales’ [...] that is, worthless stories, untruths, trivial gossip, a decisive label that allots the art of storytelling to women at the exact time as it takes all value from it” (2005, xiii).

Significantly, this collection inaugurated what was later to become a prominent gender division, as Zipes notes: “If we regard the seven prose fairy tales in *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé* as providing behavioural patterns and models for children, then they can be divided into two groups based on gender. *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Blue Beard*, *The Fairies* and *Cinderella* are aimed directly at females” (1991,

23). Perrault's fairy tales reveal an ideology which concerns absolute female submission to the male, first to the father or brother and then to the husband. In addition, Perrault insisted on the fact that women needed a male to temper them and to "behave civilly or live happily. Even when given the power of reason, or rather, particularly when given the power of reason, the female is dangerous" (Zipes 1991, 34). For Perrault, coquetry and intelligence were marks of female independence and, as a consequence, his female characters lack wit, courage and strength:

As we have seen, the heroines of the tales are very pretty, loyal, dedicated to their household chores, modest and docile and sometimes a little stupid insofar as it is true that stupidity is almost a quality in women for Perrault. Intelligence could be dangerous. In his mind as in that of many men (and women) beauty is an attribute of woman, just as intelligence is the attribute of man. (Zipes 1991, 25)

Perrault was particularly interested in preserving such a conservative model, and his female characters are characterised as patient and expectant "until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her. She lives only through the male and for marriage. The male acts, the female waits. [...] If she is allowed to reveal anything, it is to demonstrate how submissive she can be" (Zipes 2002, 25). The impact of Perrault's rewritings has been enormous in cultural terms, since he is generally regarded as the most prominent fairy-tale male writer for children. However, Perrault, who lived in the court of the French king Louis XIV, wrote his tales for adults, even though "they were subsequently appropriated, and directed, towards the exertion of a civilizing influence on the children of the upper classes" (Kerchy 50).

Similarly, German linguists and folklorists Jacob Ludwig and Wilhelm Carl Grimm, commonly known as the Brothers Grimm, were involved, from a cultural perspective, in the Romantic nationalistic movement during the nineteenth century and in the inception of the European nation-state as a concept, as Carter herself notes: "The great impulse towards collecting oral material in the nineteenth century came out of the growth of nationalism and the concept of the nation-state with its own, exclusive culture; with its exclusive affinity to the people who dwelt therein" (2005, xvii).

According to Carter, the Brothers Grimm compiled German folk and fairy tales aiming to "establish the cultural unity of the German people via its common traditions and language [...] Their work in collecting fairy tales was part of the nineteenth-century struggle for German unification, which didn't happen until 1871" (2005, xvii-xviii). The fairy tales portray a proto-nationalist collective past for German culture, which explains

why the genre was so valued and appreciated: “In the nineteenth century in and around nationalistic movements, scholars and collectors considered folktales expressions of the folk soul or psyche [...]” (Kidd 4).

The Brothers Grimm published their first collection of tales titled *Children’s and Household Tales* (1812) in two volumes compiling two hundred and ten fairy tales with softened versions of *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Snow White*, and were also responsible for the “happy ever after” endings of the stories, as well as for the tales’ instructive morality: “Didactic intentions have influenced fairy tales increasingly strongly since the nineteenth century; the Brothers Grimm led the way, as they re-edited and reshaped successive editions of their famous *Household Tales* to improve their message” (Warner 1994, 294).

Even though Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm claimed to be the true creators of such fairy tales, it is clear that they omitted the tales’ real origins to reinforce German nationalism, thus being, like Perrault, mere collectors:

Not only did the Grimms borrow their most famous tales from educated women rather than illiterate sources, they [...] further adapted the tales when they were published and revised for the various editions of *Die Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812-1857). In the 1970s and 1980s, several critics explored this dynamic between oral and literary fairy tales from a feminist perspective. (Kerchy 163)

At the end of the nineteenth century Scottish folklorist Andrew Lang, together with a group of women writers including his wife Leonora, collected, translated and published in English a series of twelve books of fairy tales, sometimes called *Andrew Lang’s Coloured Fairy Books* (1889-1910), each of which is distinguished by its colour, which are one of the first fairy tale collections in English, becoming extremely popular:

The coloured *Fairy Books* sequence has been of inestimable influence: [...] they redefined for Victorians and their successors the scope and flavour of fairy tale itself as a genre. They were also hugely influential in their premise that a universal human imagination generated narratives that resembled one another far more closely than they differed. (Warner 2014, 70)

As a folklorist, Lang was inspired by national heritage, but he also drew from his own knowledge of and experience with Scottish borderline folklore and fairy tales. Lang’s sources vary from Madame D’Aulnoy to the Brothers Grimm, and he extensively discussed his role as a collector and translator in the different prefaces to the books:

The tales have been translated, or, in the case of those from Madame d'Aulnoy's long stories, adapted, by Mrs. Hunt from the Norse, by Miss Minnie Wright from Madame d'Aulnoy, by Mrs. Lang and Miss Bruce from other French sources, by Miss May Sellar, Miss Farquharson, and Miss Blackley from the German, while the story of 'Sigurd' is condensed by the Editor from Mr. William Morris's prose version of the 'Volsunga Saga'. (Lang 1909, Preface, np)

Lang's literary project was in tune with the Grimms' nationalistic creation of a literary past. By mixing different literary traditions and translating them into English, Lang's project helped to create a sense of national literature. Lang's fairy tales became part of a substratum of children's literature in the United Kingdom and his influence extended to contemporary writers, Carter being no exception: "Angela Carter acknowledged their impact on her when she was young" (Warner 2014, 70). Carter herself expressed her gratitude towards Lang's collection in her introduction to the *Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990):<sup>3</sup> "The collection has been consciously modelled on those anthologies compiled by Andrew Lang at the turn of the century that once gave me so much joy" (2005, xvi).

Twentieth-century postmodern Italian writer Italo Calvino—influenced by Russian formalist Vladimir Propp—wrote his compilation of Italian fairy tales, *Italian Folktales*, in 1956 after two years of research. His editor, Giulio Einaudi from his publishing house Einaudi, asked him to find the Italian equivalent for the Brothers Grimm, which articulated Calvino's point of inception for his research on nineteenth-century collections in different dialects, which he translated into Italian. Calvino, following Straparola's work, looked into Italian traditional folklore in search of a common historical ground: "In 1950s, Italo Calvino embarked on doing for Italian literature what the Grimms had done a century before in Germany" (Warner 2014, 73). Calvino changed the tales to make them more suitable to the reader, and explained his decisions in his introduction: "My work had two objectives: the presentation of every type of folktale, the existence of which is documented in Italian dialects; and the representation of all regions of Italy" (Calvino xx). His exuberant, meticulous writing style also inspired Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*.

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<sup>3</sup> Carter edited two volumes of world fairy tales for the Publishing House Virago Books in 1990 and 1992, which were posthumously compiled by Virago in 2005 under the title *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales*. Virago used Carter's introduction to the first volume to introduce the 2005 compilation.

## 2.1. FAIRY TALES AND THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE

The intended target audience of fairy tales has prompted a large critical debate. Some critics, such as Sellers (2001), Koshi (2010), Kerchy (2011) or Kidd (2011) consider that the genre may address an audience which would include both children and adults, having in mind that the genre was originally intended for mature readers: “The fairy tale is perhaps *not* so representative of children’s literature; not all fairy-tale scholars see it as a children’s genre” (Kidd 2). Others, such as Bettelheim (1976) and Zipes (2002), clearly defend that these could be classified as children’s literature, especially those versions which the Brothers Grimm refashioned.

The connection between the fairy tale and the dream world is what lead Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalysts to interpret the tales as children’s literature. Freud’s interest on explaining the function of the human mind by using fairy tales meant a revival of both the genre and the debate during the twentieth century:

But though the serious study of children’s literature began with Freud, we may also say that psychoanalysis developed in part through its engagement with children’s literature. Psychoanalysis used children’s literature to articulate and dramatize its themes and methods, turning first to folklore and the fairy tale and then to materials developed during child analysis and children’s literary texts [...]. (Kidd viii)

From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, folklorists and critics have approached the fairy tale from varied perspectives, as is the case of Russian formalist Vladimir Propp with his seminal study *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), who focused on the formal aspects and motifs inherent to the genre, while also establishing common patterns that define the Russian fairy tale with respect to other European fairy tales. Thus, Propp became a model to formalist approaches to the fairy tale, followed by other critics, such as British author J.R.R. Tolkien, who also engaged in the discussion about the fairy tale as a literary genre and its connection to children in his *On Fairy-Stories* (1949):

The common opinion seems to be that there is a natural connexion between the minds of children and fairy-stories, [...]. I think this is an error; [...]. Actually, the association of children and fairy-stories is an accident of our domestic history. Fairy-stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the “nursery” [...]. But in fact only some children, and some adults, have any special taste for them; and when they have it, it is not exclusive, nor even necessarily dominant. (11-12)

On the other hand, Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) meant a milestone in fairy tale criticism by stepping aside the formalist approach and introducing new readings based on the exploration of the latent symbolic meaning of fairy tales. Following Freud's psychoanalytical approach, Bettelheim focused on children's processes of development through fairy tales:

Applying the psychoanalytic model of the human personality, fairy tales carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious mind [...]. By dealing with universal human problems, [...] these stories speak to his [the child] budding ego and encourage its development. (6)

According to Bettelheim, through fairy tales and their dark aspects children could deal with their interior fears and anxieties, believing that fairy tales could serve as a catharsis which would enable them to handle universal issues: "These tales [...] start where the child really is in his psychological and emotional being. They speak about his severe inner pressures in a way that the child unconsciously understands, and [...] offer examples of both temporary and permanent solutions to pressing difficulties" (6). Bettelheim's theories have generated followers and detractors at the same time; Angela Carter herself recognises her struggle with Bettelheim's theories in her interview with Haffenden:

When I wrote my book of fairy tales, *The Bloody Chamber*, I had read Bettelheim, and I was interested in the psychoanalytic content of the stories. Everyone knows that Bettelheim is terrific with children, but I think he is sometimes wrong [...]. But some of the stories in *The Bloody Chamber* are the result of quarrelling furiously with Bettelheim. (82-83)

In Bettelheim's wake, some scholars also agreed with the fact that oral folk tales were primarily targeted at adults, yet the process of compilation of fairy tales from the eighteenth century onwards produced a split between folk tales—that were created for an adult audience—and fairy tales, specifically conceived as children's literature (Kidd 3).

However, numerous critics dissent from Bettelheim's consideration of fairy tales as primarily addressed to children, as is the case of Susan Seller's *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (2001), who disagrees with Bettelheim in regarding "that fairy tales speak primarily to children, I do believe that they can impact on adult life with all the resonance and force childhood memories produce" (12). Similarly, Anne Susan Koshy in her book *The Short Fiction of Angela Carter, Margaret*

*Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi: A Study in Feminism and Fairy Tales* (2010) also positions herself in favour of a broader audience: “The origin of the literary fairy tale in the tenth century by aristocratic women as a type of parlour game where both men and women participated clearly reveals that fairy tales are not intended exclusively for children” (143).

Bettelheim’s psychoanalytical approach to fairy tales will be a major point of departure for contemporary critics on the fairy tale, such as Jack Zipes, who agrees with Bettelheim in regarding fairy tales as primarily children’s literature, yet disagrees on other major questions: “Bettelheim’s book disseminates false notions about the original intent of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and about the literary quality of fairy tales and leaves the reader in a state of mystification” (2002, 181). Zipes’s seminal *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*—published in 1979, coinciding with Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* and Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert’s *The Madwoman in the Attic*—articulates major points of departure from Bettelheim: “When I first wrote the following essay in 1977, I was greatly angered by what I felt to be the authoritarian tone and fallacious arguments of Bruno Bettelheim’s *The Uses of Enchantment*” (Zipes 2002, 179).

Kidd establishes an apt connection between the protagonists of the fairy tales and the importance of rites of passage from childhood to adulthood, which, in his view, justifies the need to contemplate the fairy tale as targeted to a wider audience:

In writing for adolescents, gender demands and assumptions about sexuality are intimately bound up with the interiorist tendencies of the protagonist. [...] the adolescent character’s struggle of selfhood, often symbolized by creativity, though, and other ostensibly psychological and private activities, is often staged around or against expectations about gender and sexuality. (158)

Adolescence, in itself a liminal moment in the life of human beings, is a remarkable element present in fairy tales through the coming-of-age factor. The stories present young characters that throughout the narrative become adults through a series of events that function as rites of passage, since the young protagonists leave their childhood behind to become mature individuals in a liminal experience of the individual to join the collective as a new member: “In ritual passages, liminality is followed by reintegration rituals that re-establish the order of the new personality as a part of the social order that

he or she re-enters with a new role, stamped by the formative experience. This is a critical passage, but without reintegration liminality is pure danger” (Thomassen 22).

As argued above, the fairy tale is considered a liminal genre for reasons which extend to various levels: formal aspects, especially in what concerns the intersections between orality and written narratives, the dialogue between the writer/teller and the reader/listener, the existing debate concerning its target audience, the spaces and the characters involved in the narrative and the maturation processes they suffered, and the ambiguity of its ideology, as both reinforcement or deconstruction of Western patriarchal thought:

Expanding Arnold van Gennep’s theories, Victor Turner’s *The Ritual Process* (1969) specifically identifies a kind of liminal experience undergone by audience/participants when engaged in the brief liminality provided by carnival, drama, and film. [...] the literary *Märchen* in particular hold the capacity to provide liminal spaces for scrutinizing social process through the reader’s exposure to new information contained within the narrative. Thus, the act of reading a story can become a small initiation [...]. Typically, a fairy tale revolves around the protagonist’s journey outward beyond the limen, or threshold [...]. Besides [...], the literary *Märchen*, or the written version of a fairy tale [...] encompasses a further liminal dimension. Roemer sees the particular intertextuality inherent in the narrative form of the literary *Märchen* as necessarily liminal. (Roemer and Bacchilega 95)

## 2.2. GENDER ROLES AND SEXUALITY

In the process of fairy-tale rewriting, some collectors from different countries and at different historical moments presented similar ideologies underlying the tales (Zipes 1991, 31). This genre progressively became a useful tool to reproduce models of behaviour for courtly men and women first and for those related to upper-class and bourgeois readers later, especially with Perrault and the Brothers Grimm’s compilations. In their narratives, the male character is invariably presented as the brave, wealthy hero, the king or prince who leads the action, while the female protagonist’s only goal in life is gaining social status by marrying him:

Todas las heroínas se contentan con regalos [...] y con la tranquilidad que confiere la protección de ese héroe unas veces fuerte y guapo, otras valeroso, pero, indefectiblemente, rico o poderoso. Atraparlo garantiza el ascenso y la consideración social de las protagonistas, cuya suerte dependerá de quien las salve. (Bengoechea 41)

These fictional female protagonists are passively waiting to be discovered, chosen and asked to accept marriage by men, as would be expected from women in

society in the real world (Bengoechea 40). Through the tales, male and female identities, as well as family relationships, are constructed as a model to be followed. Thus, we find the female in need of masculine protection; the male hero who saves her; the punishment of female curiosity; marriage as the ultimate goal for women in life and maternity as the only possibility for women's happiness (Bengoechea 40).

Fairy tales were thus regarded as a good vehicle to expand ideas pertaining to proper female behaviour and, as a result, their female protagonists evidence two particular models of femininity in terms of either their departure from or adherence to such models: the witch and the princess. The representation of women as monsters is a recurrent construction in patriarchal societies since Ancient History: different mythological traditions have constructed she-monsters—as animal hybrids—in the role of villains who fought against male heroes, such as Medusa, the Sphinx, the sirens, Harpy, selkie or Lamia, to name just a few: “Queens of the night demand our obedience; ogres threaten; witches infest the woods. [...] evil-doers also occupy the heart of the home: the wicked mother, the queen, and the fabled stepmother return again and again, in one story after another, as the agents of potent and lethal spells [...]. Females dominate fairy tale evil” (Warner 2014, 24). These female villains are punished because they do not comply with patriarchal standards, and, curiously enough, they present some metamorphic characteristics inherited from mythology:

The enchanters and enchantresses of fairy tales [...] also have recognizable mythic counterparts. Circe, who changes men into beasts in both Homer and in Ovid, and her niece Medea, are the precursors of many fascinating sorceresses, such as the Queen of the Serpents [...] or the many evil queens and stepmothers who are equally skilled at poisons and potions and transmogrifying their victims. (Warner 2014, 34-36)

The second type of female characters is represented by those princesses fulfilling the role of beloved wives and mothers: “Las niñas de los cuentos de hadas suelen ser víctimas inocentes, personitas dependientes, sumisas, ingenuas, jóvenes, domésticas y sacrificadas; pero básicamente su hermosura es el capital más valioso” (Bengoechea 40-41). This dichotomy, based on Western patriarchal duality, divides women in terms of beauty and power: “The good women, usually the heroines are invariably beautiful, passive and powerless, while the bad ones usually witches or stepmothers are very often ugly, bad-tempered and powerful” (Koshy 80).

In this way, women began to be confined to this passive role and their sexuality was denied, as it was regarded as sinful and dangerous for them. Perrault and the Brothers Grimm helped to change the way in which sexuality was seen: from a natural and accepted view of it in the oral tales to “restriction and revulsion” (Zipes 2002, 33). If sexual behaviour was more or less directly mentioned in Perrault’s fairy tales, he did so with a moral intention of warning: “Human sexuality has not been static and, [...] there was an important shift in European attitudes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so that the open display of sex and bodily functions gradually became curtailed” (Zipes 1991, 33).

During the twentieth century, both male and female writers showed an interest in the fairy tale genre and started to rewrite the well-known stories from different perspectives, often with a feminist and deconstructive slant:

En este último cuarto de siglo docenas de mujeres y hombres se han afanado en deconstruir los cuentos tradicionales. Sin embargo, el cuento de hadas parece formar parte más indisoluble del sustrato del pensamiento colectivo femenino que del masculino. Lo prueba la enorme y variadísima cantidad de menciones, alusiones y reescrituras que de ellos encontramos en la literatura femenina. (Bengoechea 42)

In the case of women writers, there is a clear connection between the urge to deconstruct fairy tales and feminism: “Las mujeres escriben en general, y aún sin quererlo, desde una perspectiva feminista. Parecen ser infinitamente más conscientes (y críticas) de las repercusiones de los cuentos en la configuración de los roles de género” (Bengoechea 42). Such rewritings offer different options and open endings which resist traditional readings of the tales: “Today, the ‘happy ending’ no longer ends in marriage. Instead, a largely female group of writers are examining alternatives, community first and foremost in fact as well as in fiction” (Kerchy 23). One of the most substantial changes in these modern reassessments pertain to the presentation of women characters, often more complex and with a deeper personality than their folktale equivalents: “Contemporary fairy tales complicate the interconnections between skin and other fairy-tale themes further by the fact that they are conscious revisions, and thus the authors, audiences, and sometimes even the characters display a metanarrative awareness of the genre’s features” (Kerchy 279). Many of these women writers also recovered and approached the connection between women and nature and the body from varied perspectives: Angela Carter is, of course, a prominent example, in her use of fantastic and grotesque elements (Palmer 26).

Angela Carter's reassessment of traditional fairy tales has become a landmark both in postmodernist approaches to the genre and in challenging received assumptions of female propriety and sexuality. Significantly, Carter draws from traditional patriarchal images of liminal, animalistic women in a transgressive manner, serving the purpose of destabilising binary oppositions related to gender, sexual orientation or identity. The feminist use of this subversive imagery is a source of female empowerment that provides Carter's characters with strength, complexity and unity. In order to do so, Carter uses Gothic monstrosity and grotesque, liminal figures, threshold states and animal metamorphosis to deconstruct the heteropatriarchal values of female identity and to create the possibility of the apparition of a hybrid, fluid, nomadic individual.

### 2.3. METAMORPHOSIS

In constructing literary possibilities for the existence of a fluid, nomadic subjectivity, Carter heavily draws on the formal and ideological possibilities which the metamorphic body may convey, especially in what relates to the opposition nature *versus* culture and the female body.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "metamorphosis" refers to "the action or process of changing in form, shape, or substance; especially transformation by supernatural means" (cf. OED s.v. metamorphosis, n.), which may also entail a transformation of personality, aspect or circumstances of a person, and thus becoming a "protean term or principle" (Gildenhard and Zissos 4).

Metamorphosis is intrinsically related to physical and psychological threshold and liminal states, since it implies a transformation from one state to another and creates a compound of both, a proper hybrid; its changeability permits to invert the transformation, thus creating a sense of fluidity and it is used to defy established orders, identities and conceptions by destabilising notions of boundaries and fixed identities (McMahon-Coleman and Weaver 108).

As previously mentioned, shape-shifting and gender appear closely related in classical mythology and folk narratives, and she-monsters or metamorphic female characters are most often presented in negative terms. Deprived of a voice of their own,

these female creatures overtly represent non-normative female behaviour in patriarchal societies and shape-shifting was often the outcome of female transgression. By using monstrosity and animalization, heteronormative patriarchal discourses distorted female identity to maintain their status quo. However, a number of contemporary women writers—such as Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood or Michèle Roberts—have reassessed the relationship between monstrosity and women’s bodies by presenting it as a source of female empowerment by deconstructing “the dominant gaze at the woman-monster” (Castagna 59). Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* is a perfect example of the writer’s appropriation of animal metamorphosis and monstrous female figurations as a source for female empowerment. Carter’s unique blend of Gothic elements, the fairy tale and metamorphic creatures from folklore serves the purpose of transgressing and subverting patriarchal ideals of femininity firmly rooted in those literary traditions, in such a way that “monstrosity might be considered not so much as an expression of the vulnerability of the subject, rather as an instrument of self-affirmation and acquiring of autonomy of women, as in the case of Angela carter’s short stories with the recurring, vampire-like, Gothic vein” (Castagna 59).

Shapeshifting, or metamorphosis, has been a resource that can be traced back to the earliest mythological accounts and it is present in legends, folktales and fairy tales from all over the world: “Of course, the figure of the shapeshifter is an international one, present in many cultures: the fox in Japan, tiger and crocodile in China, various jungle animals in tropical regions, and the bear in Canada and northern Japan” (McMahon-Coleman and Weaver 6). In its origins, metamorphosis is linked to totems, deities and creation myths, being one of its most important attributes the character’s fluidity (McMahon-Coleman and Weaver 85).

In the Western tradition, the metamorphosis of human beings into animals or plants comes to us through “ancient Greek myths of metamorphosis (and their Near Eastern antecedents), including the occasional instance recorded in the Old Testament; and it continues today in science fiction and other genres that explore such topical issues as gene mutation and hybridization” (Gildenhard and Zissos 2-3). During the Greek period, writers created a sense of animal-human continuum in the universe, where gods transformed themselves into animals and hybrid fantastic creatures coexisted with humans and anthropomorphised animals (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. ‘Introduction to part I’). Western thought has inherited the division between body and

mind, which often relates women or animals to the body and men to the intellectual sphere (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction to part I”). As a result, the body becomes the focus of attention, it “is the site of transformation and we find issues of control and discipline at work” (McMahon-Coleman and Weaver 120). In this sense, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* uses shapeshifting as a unifying thematic element, thus establishing transformation and reshaping at the basis of a flexible, nomadic relationship between humans and animals, as its opening lines suggest: “*In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora*” (My intention is to tell of bodies changed/ To different forms” (Ovid 2-3). Many of the stories are sexual encounters between different characters, which sometimes transform themselves in order to consummate their love, or just the opposite, characters who are transformed to avoid sexual encounter, thus establishing an explicit connection between the body and sexuality. Unlike Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass* (c. 124 c.170 AD) rather focuses in the reversible effects of metamorphic change, which establishes a difference between permanent transformations and temporal ones, which will be present in future references.

Generally speaking, in Christian and Judaic thought metamorphosis is often relegated to the “pagan” folklore and engaged with shapeshifting in ways less connected to the natural world (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction to part II”). During the Middle Ages, Christianity reduced shapeshifting to the condition of demonic figures at the service of the devil: “The scandalous behaviour of the deathless but nevertheless superseded gods cast a long shadow on the Christian iconography of good and bad behaviour; their protean energies of transformation and sexuality were translated into hellish imagery. In medieval eschatology, metamorphosis by almost any process belongs to the devil’s part” (Warner 2002, 35). The Renaissance’s renewed interest in classical mythology brought about a change pertaining to the use of metamorphosis, from being an instrument for explaining the world to a means of dealing with human subjectivity:

The second domain in which metamorphosis has continued to resonate in what could be labelled the modern ‘post-metamorphic’ age of disenchanted nature is ‘the self’. Petrarch’s use of Ovid to explore a proto-modern subjectivity in the pursuit of worldly fame [...], heralded a shift from the divine to the human as the (self-) transformer par excellence. (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction to part II”)

As earlier mentioned, at the end of the Renaissance the literary fairy tale appeared due to the work of Basile and Straparola. The liminal literary fairy tale nurtured from the oral tradition, myths and metamorphosis, and dealt with bodily issues, transformations and shapeshifting characters to the point of becoming a “connective tissue of communications between cultures” (Warner 2002, 17).

The end of the early and beginning of the Modern period testifies to the apparition of French literary fairy tales, such as those produced by Madame d’Aulnoy (1690s), Charles Perrault (1697), Madame de Villeneuve (1740) and Madame de Leprince du Beaumont (1770). Metamorphosis is a recurrent literary device in a large proportion of the tales, both as a real event or symbolically (Warner 2014, 31), and goes down the line of Apuleius in the eventual restoration of humanity. In the case of the “animal groom” or “animal husband” cycle tales, a beautiful young woman has a beast as a future husband, who finally metamorphoses into a beautiful man. The most well-known of these tales is “Beauty and the Beast”, written by both Villeneuve and Leprince du Beaumont. In these fairy tales, the male hero is transformed into a beast or monster, sometimes an animal-hybrid creature, which eventually concludes with the reversal transformation from beast to prince:

By contrast with animal fables, where something of an animal’s observable, actual character helps make the point [...], the beast of fairy tale romance comes in fantasy shape – mythological creatures such as a dragon, a snake, a yellow dwarf [...] and they belong in a world of romance and psychology rather than satire and practical wisdom. Monster bridegrooms can also take the form of animals that used to pose a very real threat – wolves and bears and pigs and warthogs. (Warner 2014, 28)

Around 1800, however, metamorphosis had already become established as a “key concept in two spheres of endeavour: science and conceptions of the human self” (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction to part II”). In this enlightened world, tales of shapeshifting flourished in popular literature, conforming “bubbling spate of fables, dramas, romances, fantasies, and harlequinades in which animals turn into human beings and vice versa” (Warner 2002, 26), which consolidated in the nineteenth century as a literary tradition of romances and gothic narratives which questioned an exclusively rational approach to experience by offering alternative understandings of the world through the presence of shapeshifting creatures and metamorphic monsters, threatening to dissolve in their liminality ontological boundaries.

Although metamorphosis is a consistent element in Carter's *oeuvre*, it acquires specific relevance in her famous collection of short stories *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), which is the major focus of this doctoral dissertation. It is my contention that the use of metamorphosis works in Carter as a vehicle of hybridization and "becoming-animal" in Deleuzian terms, serving the purpose of, on the one hand, deconstructing the traditional gender roles present in fairy tales and, on the other, putting forward a new sense of subjectivity. By virtue of the use of metamorphosis as a liminal literary device and by mixing hybrid literary genres like fairy tales or gothic narratives, Carter blurs the traditional opposition between animal and human aiming at female empowerment and at a radical conception of subjectivity.

#### 2.4. ANGELA CARTER AND ANIMALS

Angela Carter also reflected upon the relation between humans and animals in her journalistic articles, in some of her interviews and in her fiction. She openly spoke about the relation of dominance between the species and the question of beastliness and monstrosity. Her interest in animals was clearly reflected in her work; in an interview for *Marxism Today* in 1985, Carter declared herself to be a "follower of Darwin's theories" in relation to our biological condition as animals and our erroneous moral superiority as human beings over the rest of the *animalia*:

Well, we are animals, after all. [...] I realise I'm sentimental about furred and feathered beings but they're never dull. I have a minor but quite passionate interest in natural history, I'm a Darwinian. I like animals and I'm interested in animals. I'm also interested in human beings' projections upon animals of negative qualities, which very often the animals don't have. (1985, 21)

Her article "Animals in the Nursery", published in *New Society* in 1976, is a thoughtful reflection on the connection between animals and children and how adults use and explore that link to the human benefit with questionable didactic purposes: "All fictional animals are imaginary animals. Adult writers take an unfair advantage of child/beast solidarity to perpetuate animal fables that are really systems of moral instruction" (2013, 367).

In a similar vein, Carter's article entitled "Little Lamb, Get Lost" (1978) draws on Blake's trope of the tiger to deal with the question of bestiality, the difference between animals depending on the level of jeopardy and what humans think of them.

Blake's famous collections *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* (1789) articulates the lamb figure as the epitome of innocence in opposition to the tiger, emphasising animality, exoticism, danger and experience, which Carter would famously reassess in "The Tiger's Bridge", in which she moves from a representation of the tiger as with a dangerous carnivore beast to the harmless herbivorous lamb (2013, 374).

According to Carter, Western thought has traditionally used bestiality to symbolically deal with the darkest aspects of humanity, such as corporeity and sexuality while, conversely, transferring human characteristics and adequate behavior and conduct to some animals, thus anthropomorphizing them:

It is one of the more insinuatingly baleful effects of Judaeo-Christianity that we can't treat beasts as, in any sense, equals, but persist in projecting on them either our own beastliness or our fantasies of innocence. In other cultures, beasts may have to bear a heavy burden of myth. But they are not forced to be exemplary. (2013, 374-375)

Carter cleverly pointed at the negative effects of this supposed male human superiority, denouncing the power structures inherent to the relationships established among humans, who disregard animals as "inferiors" and "others" together with women: "People treat animals they have in their power according to their expectations of their treatment by people who have power over them. (As, indeed, men do their wives)" (2013, 375). She was also well aware of how the Western world has created a division between human and non-human animals, thus engaging in the binary system that has dominated Western philosophical thought since Plato:

I'm interested in the division that Judo-Christianity has made between human nature and animal nature. None of the other great faiths in the world have got quite that division between us and them. None of the others has made this enormous division between birds and beasts who, as Darwin said, would have developed consciences if they'd had the chance, and us. I think it's one of the scars in Western Europe. I think it's one of the scars in our culture that we have too high an opinion of ourselves. We align ourselves with the angels instead of the higher primates. (1985, 21-22)

Carter here criticises the animal/human divide as a clear outcome of the Judo-Christian tradition, which has erected artificial barriers—"scars"—and hierarchical structures which have been recently questioned by animal studies and posthumanism. In a sense, Carter's reflections on the relationships of dominance between humans, animals and the natural world anticipate the focus of these two interconnected disciplines, which

explore how such a division affects both our idea of humanity and the conception we humans have of animals and the natural environment.

In *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, the human-animal boundary is blurred and presented, rather than as a barrier, as a spectrum, aiming at a fluid conception the self. Departing from the characterization of woman as a liminal figure in patriarchal societies, Carter's female protagonists move from one liminal state to another as hybrid, nomadic subjects, avoiding stasis. In Carter's work, animals become more than symbols, and she uses metamorphosis not only to connect to the traditional fairy tale, but also to deconstruct binary oppositions and gender identities.

## 2.5. ANIMAL STUDIES AND POSTHUMANISM

Animal studies is a relatively recent cross-disciplinary field of research (Marvin and McHugh 3), intimately related to ecocriticism, which explores the connections between human and non-human animal relations in order to understand animals as beings with an agency and subjectivity of their own. Among the many different approaches, I here focus on literary human-animal studies which “contribute, in reading closely and analytically through the ways of human-animal entanglements in texts and cultural contexts, to a reformulation of nothing less than the concepts of *human* [...] *identity*, as well as of what we and our profession think of as humanism and the humanities” (Bartosch 2016b, 235; emphasis mine).

This approach is based on a process of deconstructing major binary oppositions which have articulated Western thought, as Bartosch (2016a) explains: “Literary and cultural animal studies thus contribute to the project of questioning the dualisms of subject and object, nature and culture, and reality and imaginative discourse” (Bartosch 2016b, 234-235). Put differently, this discipline is attuned with the manners in which this binary system separates not only gender categories of men versus women but also the connections between men and reason, on the one hand, and women and nature on the other, an aspect fairly explored and criticised by ecofeminism as well:

A cohort of ecofeminists [...] embarked several decades ago on the project of challenging deeply embedded humanist assumptions concerning gender and animality. Broadly speaking, these include the notions that women and animals are linked together as avatars of nature; that they are similarly debased by their shared association with body over mind, feeling over reason, object rather than subject status; that men are rational subjects, who therefore naturally dominate women and animals alike; that masculinity is

produced in contradistinction to the feminine, animal, bodily, emotional, and acted upon; that degree of manliness is correlated to a degree of distance from these and other related categories. (Fraiman 99)

Since ancient times, and especially from Descartes and Enlightened philosophy onwards, Western subjectivities are conditioned by the binary opposition human/animal: “Now Western thought, as is well known, drives an absolute division between the contrary conditions of humanity and animality, a division that is aligned with a series of others such as between subjects and objects, persons and things, morality and physicality, reason and instinct, and above all, society and nature” (Gross 10). This segregation of categories creates a space for motionless which impregnates the Western conception of the self: the static condition of the subject niched the idea of female identity in a category of inferiority, together with animals.

After Deleuze and Guattari, who advocated a radical transformation of the definition of the subject by questioning an *a priori* divide between human and non-human animals, French philosopher Jacques Derrida continued this debate by posing forward the “idea of ‘destroying’ the Western tradition of thought” by means of deconstruction, “a term that he consciously borrows from Heidegger and reinterprets” (Gross 267).

Similarly, Carter’s narratives aim to deconstruct such binary oppositions between human and non-human animals by putting forward the conception of a fluid, porous hybrid chain of liminal states. Carter’s female protagonists in *The Bloody Chamber* undergo a series of changes that allow an emancipatory discourse about identity and sexuality to take place, breaking heteropatriarchal divisions and binary systems. Carter’s metamorphic women characters defy traditional conceptions of subjectivity by deconstructing established ideas of gender roles as presented in classic fairy tales. In fact, in most of Carter’s short stories in *The Bloody Chamber*, the protagonists present animalistic metamorphosis, especially women: “Reading Carter’s fairy-tales as her female protagonists’ confrontations with desire, in all its unruly ‘animalness’, yields rich rewards” (Makinen 11).

Angela Carter was captivated by the “animal groom” cycle in traditional fairy tales, as described by Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment*—an aspect which will be explained in detail in chapter four entitled “Felines”. In this “animal groom” cycles, fairy tales dealt with uncanny elements that are the unconscious expression of human desires, being beasts a representation of women’s desires and pleasures, especially in

patriarchal societies in which women are defined as male property (Easton 28). Beasts, monsters, metamorphic creatures and anthropomorphic animals inhabit the fairy-tale realm and they offer the possibility to explore the dark side of humanity and to break the established norms, especially in what pertains to sexuality (Carter 2013, 376). As an example—which will be developed in depth in chapter six—, Carter departs from Bettelheim’s psychoanalytic idea of placing the *id* on the “carnivorous animal” incarnating the “pleasure principle” in the wolf who personifies “the dangerous seducer who, if given in to, turns into the destroyer of the good grandmother and the girl” (Bettelheim 172).

However, traditional fairy tales are in general quite conservative, since in nearly all of them those transgressive elements (the monster, the animal) which have upset the established order are eventually removed from the narrative, and the initial and presumably harmonious *status quo* is eventually re-established. In the case of the “animal groom” cycle, the animalistic male character is eventually domesticated and humanised at the closing of the narrative, while the she-monsters or women with animalistic behaviour are punished or killed. By deconstructing the idea of the wild beast domesticated by the maiden and the punishing of the she-monster, Carter’s rewritings merge the wilderness of animality with female identity, especially regarding sexuality, and her Beauties, Little Red Riding Hoods and Sleeping Beauties are metamorphosed into animalistic Gothic monsters, however in control of their own sexuality.

Thus, metamorphosis became an instrument for writers, artists and philosophers at the turn of this century to muse upon the quick changes that the twenty-first century has brought about regarding the connections among humans, nature and technology. In this sense, Posthumanism was originated as a reaction against those dualisms which articulate Western thought and anthropocentrism (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction to part III”), and it was connected to the apparition of cybernetics and technological progress, being Peter Sloderdijk one of the most representative figures. In this sense, posthuman thinkers and critics, such as Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Cary Wolfe or Donna Haraway, distance themselves from classical humanism in its anthropocentric worldview, and assign humanity back to the animal world, thus aiming to establish a horizontal relation or a continuum between human and non-human animals.

As an example, Braidotti uses the concept of “feminist figuration” to “materially embody stages of metamorphosis of a subject position towards all that the phallogocentric system does *not* want it to become [...]. They are hybrid and in-between social categories for whom traditional descriptions in terms of sociological categories such as ‘marginals’, ‘migrants’, or ‘minorities’ are [...] grossly inadequate” (2002, 13). Braidotti also refers to the posthuman body as “the transformation of the human organism through human–machine hybridization” (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction to part III”). Departing from Deleuze’s philosophical concept of “becoming”, Braidotti defines the subject as a fluid being, constantly in change, and blurs the separation among body, mind and emotion (Lykke 38). Examples of feminist figurations are Haraway’s “cyborg” and Braidotti’s “nomadic subject”. Thus, within this frame of mind, the nomadic subject “aims to become, to split at the seams the neatly formatted version of Man as ‘rational animal’, to explode its in-built contradiction” (Braidotti 2002, 136). Braidotti’s ideas of nomadization lead to the configuration of the contemporary subject as a fluid self, and also as a reaction against sedentary static Western philosophy. Regarding the divide between human and non-human animals, the nomadic subject trespasses the category of otherness in which every identity different from the heteronormative one is doomed to be considered monstrous:

The dialectics of otherness is the inner engine of humanist Man’s power, who assigns difference on a hierarchical scale as a tool of governance. All other modes of embodiment are cast out of the subject position and they include anthropomorphic others: non-white, non-masculine, non-normal, non-young, non-healthy, disabled, malformed or enhanced peoples. [...] All these ‘others’ are rendered as pejoration, pathologized and cast out of normality, on the side of anomaly, deviance, monstrosity and bestiality. (Braidotti 2013, 68)

By doing so, Braidotti reconceptualises categories such as monsters and liminal others and places them in the subject position. Braidotti herself refers to the proliferation of monstrous, liminal, animalistic others in many different literary and artistic representations of the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century, including Carter’s work:

Quite significant is also the contemporary trend for borderline or liminal figures of sexuality, especially replicants, zombies and vampires, including lesbian vampires and other queer mutants [...]. This is not only the case as far as ‘low’ popular culture genres are concerned, but it is equally true of relatively ‘high’ literary genres, as testified by authors like Angela Carter. (2002, 179)

As previously mentioned, Carter's postmodern taste agglomerates elements from orality, folklore, popular culture, Gothic literature, fairy tales and surrealism, thus opening up the path for the exploration of different possibilities of female identity. It is precisely this pastiche which makes her *oeuvre* unique regarding subjectivity and the construction of the self. Her female characters—animalistic hybrid liminal others—reject their position as objects and search for subject positions.

Braidotti's conception of the "nomadic subject" partially aligns itself with Haraway's "cyborg", a term coined in 1960 as the abbreviation for "cybernetic organism", which is a "kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code" (Haraway 2016, 33). Defined as a hybrid of human, animal and machine, Haraway's cyborg is a useful tool to account for women's experiences in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. The power of the cyborg resides precisely in questioning boundaries between well-established and differentiated categories in patriarchal Western societies: "The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. [...] Cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling. Bestiality has a new status in this cycle of marriage exchange" (Haraway 2016, 11). As a concept, the cyborg brings to the fore questions pertaining to identity, power dominance and language: "Cyborg politics are the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism" (Haraway 2016, 57). Significantly, Haraway's "struggle for language" aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's "deterritorialization" and their concept of minor literature in so far as language, connected to power structures, has to be reclaimed by minorities. Angela Carter proposed an interesting reassessment of language in connection with the realization of female identity in "Wolf-Alice", one of the short stories in *The Bloody Chamber* that I will analyse in chapter six "Wolves".

Furthermore, Haraway affirms that her feminist figuration of the cyborg "is not just literary deconstruction, but liminal transformation" (2016, 58), a new kind of liminal subjectivity which unifies divided concepts and resists binaries and, as such, it represents a transgression of limits and boundaries. It is by virtue of writing that Western dualities may be deconstructed, as well as preconceived ideas regarding the marginalised and colonised other, as she argues:

The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture. We have all been colonized by those origin myths, with their longing for fulfilment in apocalypse. [...] Feminist cyborg stories have the task of recoding communication and intelligence to subvert command and control. (2016, 55)

For Haraway, there is a necessity of questioning the received truths and ideas that Western culture has established through myths and folklore, which created the substratum of our static, binary conceptions of subjectivity. Such a process of questioning received truths becomes especially acute in feminist writing: in that sense, Carter's fairy tales could be regarded as a major example of how feminist writing may serve the purpose of destabilising such binary oppositions.

Thus, animal studies and posthumanism reformulate the traditional idea of the subject by taking into account biology, technology and animality in order to put forward the multiplicity of the self: "Deleuze and Guattari's distinctions aim to underscore that the figure of the animal, properly understood, is a privilege figure for the problematic of the subject in the most general sense because here we are forced to confront the reality that the subject is always already multiple" (Wolfe 170).

In her tales, Carter openly reassesses traditional conceptions of female identity and sexuality, not only by reversing Perrault and Grimm's ideology inherent to their versions of the tales, but also by taking sexuality to the edge when using animalistic images and metamorphosis: "Carter [...] stood firm; she practised through her writing a constant stretching of the permitted, of the permissible. Taboo was her terrain, nothing was sacred [...] and comedy was one of her ways of entering it" (Warner 1994, 196). Nevertheless, instead of using binary oppositions which draw a clear divide between human and non-human animals, Carter presents the construction of women's identity in its full complexity. Thus, a satisfactory communion between the human and the non-human animal is presented in *The Bloody Chamber*, which allows female characters to move freely from one direction to the other:

The first three stories, "The Bloody Chamber", "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride", are cat family narratives, where Merja Makinen (1992) argues the wild felines signify "the sensual desires that women need to acknowledge within themselves" [...]. The last three stories of the book are the wolf family stories, concerned with a more unruly, animalistic sexuality. (Peach 28-29).

In this dissertation, the exploration of Carter's use of metamorphosis as a vehicle for hybridization in *The Bloody Chamber* to deconstruct traditional gender roles in fairy tales and to create a new sense of subjectivity which offers the readers different identity options is informed by some concepts relating to the field of animal studies, among others. For the purposes of this dissertation, animal studies prove to be a useful tool to look into Carter's portrayal of the relationship between human and non-human animals, since the latter have traditionally been regarded as the Other, as mere objects or products to human consumerism. Literary depictions of such relationships have often been addressed by animal studies, thus becoming "a special target of concern for scholars in animal studies" (McHugh 2009, 32). As such, literary human-animal studies focus on how animals are portrayed in literature, being mainly treated as mere symbols, metaphors or allegories for human subjectivity through anthropomorphism, but hardly ever addressed as actual animals, as the work of prominent scholars such as Bartosch (2016a; 2016b; 2017), Dominik Ohrem and Roman Bartosch (2017), Susan McHugh (2009; 2011), Philip Armstrong (2008), Kenneth Saphiro and Marion Copeland (2005) or Catherine Parry (2017), among others, have shown.

In this way, a large number of biologists, ethologists and some ecocritics have positioned themselves in a radical position as to the damage caused by anthropomorphism to non-human animals, which often stems from a desire to project human attributes onto animals, thus radically altering their representation and displacing them as mere objects, denying agency and voice in favour of humans: "The allegation of anthropomorphism itself derives from an anthropocentric and ethnocentric understanding about what agency is. A reconceptualization of agency [...] might facilitate a mode of analysis that does not reduce the animal to a blank screen for the projection of human meaning" (Armstrong 3).

Some scholars—such as Bartosch, McHugh or Saphiro and Copeland—are more open to the possibility of analysing animals in literature from both a symbolical and a realist perspective, which, in their view, offers the possibility of breaking boundaries between humans and animals in order to create a space for animal agency:

When employed as a strategy or motif in literary writing, it was seen as exactly that by critics and theorists: A *strategy* or *motif* that must point to some meaning other than literal likeness: Animals became anthropomorphized so that they could be domesticated as symbols or stand-ins for humans. However, if anthropomorphism "provides us with a unique

opportunity to bridge the conceptual and moral gulf that separates humans from other animals” (Serpell 2005, 132), it works, I would like to argue, as a *story* rather than a strategy or motif, and it is from the totality of the story—its coherence, narrative trajectory, and aesthetic qualities—that we may judge the pertinence of anthropomorphic thinking. (Bartosch 2017, 155)

As Bartosch mentions, it is in the narrative, its formal construction as well as in its wholeness, where the relevance of anthropomorphism relies. And it is precisely that analysing the “totality of the story” which permits to see whether the text—and consequently the author—present anthropomorphism as a means for animal agency. The necessity to acknowledge the different strategies of anthropomorphic thought in its totality is central to its process of deconstruction. The text as a whole creates a space for dialogue between species and hybrid identities, in which anthropomorphism and zoomorphism are used to deconstruct preconceived ideas of identity and subjectivity, both human and animal. My argument, in tune with Bartosch’s ideas, is the creation of such a space throughout Angela Carter’s collection of short stories *The Bloody Chamber*, in which metamorphosis from animal to human and vice versa functions as a coherent and unifying thread in the texts.

In this dissertation, I will analyse Carter’s texts in search for the symbolic treatment of animals (intrinsically connected with psychoanalysis) as well as for the representation of animals as such, as Bartosch suggests. By means of metamorphosis, I argue, Carter blurs the physical and imaginary borders which divide humans from animals and creates a space for hybrid identities where human and animal alterities can coexist as equals. Carter’s short stories empower both women and animals and exhort them to embrace their real nature. Thus, Carter not only uses animalistic characteristics to create different possibilities of subjectivity but also gives agency and voice both to women and animals in a predominantly patriarchal tradition which treated women and animals as objects, as is the case of classic fairy tales. Between these two factions—both represented as the Other—there is a question of empathy, being both women and animals treated as commodities to be used, exploited, hunted or consumed as meat by patriarchal Western societies which consider bodies as flesh: “Humans treat bodies as valuable, and value bodily flesh, whether of humans or of other animals, according to a complex of metaphysical, political, economic, cultural or social calculations, all of which participate in the qualification of relationships among humans, animals and objects” (Parry 112). Empathy, as understood by Lorraine Daston in Daston and Mittman’s *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (2005),

refers to the “precondition for emotional and moral sympathy. Either we understand other minds subjectively or we do not understand them at all” (54). Thinking about how humans treat animals as objects and deny their subject position allows us to sympathise with their situation and create a bridge which blurs part of the borders which separates the two categories, creating “emotional and affective engagements between humans and other animals” (Armstrong 2).

In order to break the borders and frontiers of the great divide which separates animals from humans, Carter uses liminal times and spaces, hybrids from the Gothic imaginary and metamorphosis to reach the physical and imaginary frontiers that prevent them from developing subject positions. In Carter’s narrative, liminality appears related both to animals, supernatural monstrous creatures and humans, especially women. Borderline supernatural figures which are in a permanent state of in-betweenness (Aftandilian 10), as suggested by Gothic tropes such as the werewolf or the vampire, are, in Carter’s short stories, liberated from their static condition and are able to move across borders and states. In order to explore Carter’s subversive strategies in questioning traditional borders, I will follow Saphiro and Copeland’s three-folded analysis proposal. Their analysis of a literary work from a perspective need to have three parts:

1. Deconstruct reductive, disrespectful ways of presenting nonhuman animals; and 2. Evaluate the degree to which the author presents the animal “in itself,” both as an experiencing individual and as a species-typical way of living in the world. We add a third approach: that the critique includes an analysis of human-animal relationships in the work at hand. (2005, 345)

By doing so, I will exemplify the ways in which Carter’s texts deconstruct received ideas relating to both animals and women by empowering her characters through sexuality and bodily aspects. I will also examine how Carter—who expressed her own ideas about the connection between psychoanalysis and the symbolic meanings of some animals like the wolf, as mentioned earlier—deals with Bartosch’s two possibilities of representing animals in her fiction, namely, as symbols for human self-conception and as actual animals. Finally, I will explore the connections between Carter’s female characters and animals and how they relate to each other, searching for a common empathy between both, being the animal in equal terms, “the fruit of which is a common project, a shared world” (Saphiro and Copeland 345).

### 3. ANGELA CARTER AND THE BLOODY CHAMBER

#### 3.1 ANGELA CARTER

English writer Angela Carter (1940-1992) occupies a prominent place in twentieth-century British literature due to her unique and exuberant style and her feminist commitment, and her *oeuvre*, a quite extensive one despite her untimely death, has been extensively analysed by literary critics. Carter worked as a journalist throughout her whole life, an activity which she combined with fiction-writing and University lecturing in Creative Writing. As a fiction-writer, Carter published nine novels, being the most well-known *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), *Heroes and Villains* (1969), *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972), *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and *Nights at the Circus* (1984). Regarding short fiction, Carter wrote four collections of short stories—previously mentioned in chapter one—collected posthumously in a volume titled *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Short Stories*. Carter also wrote a number of essays, such as the controversial *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979), five radio plays,<sup>4</sup> participated in two television programmes,<sup>5</sup> and collaborated in the scripts of the two films based on her work, *The Company of Wolves* (Neil Jordan, 1984) and *The Magic Toyshop* (David Wheatly, 1987) and her incursions in poetry were posthumously compiled as *Unicorn: The Poetry of Angela Carter* in 2015 by Rosemary Hill. However, there are some aspects of her literary activity that are less known: she was also an editor, a translator and a writer of children's literature.

As previously argued, Carter's own experiences in Japan from 1969 to 1972 marked a turning point both in her writing career and in her life. There she could appreciate Japanese culture and its sociological order, which she described as a rigid patriarchal society characterized by cultural constraint, as shown in both her fictional

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<sup>4</sup> *Vampirella* (1976), *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* (1979), *The Company of Wolves* (1980), *Puss-in-Boots* (1982) and *A Self-Made Man* (1984).

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Family Album* (1991) and *Omnibus: Angela Carter's Curious Room* (1992).

and non-fictional writing. Her experiences as a British woman in Japan affected her ideas about feminism to the point of becoming a central topic in her writing, as the author confirmed in *Nothing Sacred: Selected Writing* (Carter 1982, 28), a collection of journalist articles which reflected her impressions during her stay in Tokyo. Her literary works influenced by her experiences in Japan are mainly her well-known novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and her first collection of short stories *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces*. As mentioned before in chapter one, Carter's literary production after Japan turned towards the short story in detriment of the novel. Attracted by the condensation of brief forms, she not only produced but also edited and translated several collections of short stories. From Japanese culture Carter borrowed a number of images, such as mirrors and dolls—taken from the theatrical traditions of *Noh* and *Bunraku*—which function as key literary elements in her work and whose relevance in *The Bloody Chamber* will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

Despite the relevance of Carter's experience in Japan, the writer's feminist agenda had already begun before her experiences in the Nippon country, as she mentioned in "Notes from the Front Line":

I can date to the time and to some of those debates and to that sense of heightened awareness of the society around me in the summer of 1968, my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a *woman*. How that social fiction of my "femininity" was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing. (2013, 46-47)

Although Carter was already influenced by second-wave feminist thought at the time, her "sense of femininity" became "radicalised" in Japan when confronting gender roles and expectations in that country, which triggered her critical analysis of gender in Western societies too: "Carter's fictional and non-fictional works on Japan represent Japan as the exact mirror image of the West" (Murai 9).

Such a process of reflexivity will fuel Carter's deconstruction and subversion of Western traditions and imagery and how these affected the construction of gender. Carter's personal quarrel with this forethought of feminist ideas and sexuality, together with her fascination with Marquis de Sade's work, led to the publication of her famous essay *The Sadeian Woman*—significantly published the same year as *The Bloody Chamber*—in which she defended some elements regarded as controversial for second-wave feminists, such as pornography and free sexuality for women, famously postulating that

the moral pornographer would be an artist who uses pornographic material as part of the acceptance of the logic of a world of absolute sexual license for all the genders [...]. A moral pornographer might use pornography as a critique of current relations between sexes. (Carter 1979, 22)

In an interview with Anna Katsavos, “A Conversation with Angela Carter”, Carter discussed Sade’s figure as a “moral pornographer”, while also being conscious of the controversy which her views may have for other feminists:

It’s not very pleasant for women to find out about how they are represented in the world. They find out much more about what their real existential status is from pornography, and it’s very unpleasant. [...] One of the things about Sade is that he did know he was a pervert [...] and I think that he was upset about it. [...] He proselytizes a little bit for his perversion, and suddenly he realizes he’s doing something dreadful. But moral pornographer was a phrase that got me into a lot of trouble with the sisters, some of the sisters. (Katsavos 17)

Carter’s equation of the term “moral” with Sade’s pornography originated a heated debate among a large number of feminists. In the middle of the nineteen seventies, second-wave feminists were immersed in discussions about how women were portrayed in the world and how they were seen through the male gaze and, consequently, objectified. For many feminists, pornography was an obvious exemplification of such masculine appropriations of the female body, used as an object of male desire, as Carter expressed in her essay: “This is true for woman also, perhaps, especially so, as soon as we realise the way pornography reinforces the archetypes of her negativity and that it does so simply because most pornography remains in the service of the status quo” (1979, 19). A large number of second-wave feminists were divided regarding this issue, being one faction against pornography—such as Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, Adrienne Rich and Susan Griffin—while the other demanded a change in women’s role and portrayal inside the pornographic world—like Ellen Willis or Gayle Rubin. Carter’s defence of Sade and of his role as a “moral pornographer” placed her in the spotlight of this debate, since she positioned herself in the pro-pornography side, which provoked some furious reactions in some of her contemporaries. Carter’s demands of equal rights for both sexes to enjoy sexuality by changing the passive role of women and by allowing them to actively engage in the sexual act changed the perspective of the male objectification of women, as she appreciated in Sade’s female characters: “Sade [...] urges women to fuck as actively as they are able, so that powered by their enormous and hitherto untapped sexual energy

they will then be able to fuck their way into history and, in doing so, change it” (1979, 31).

Numerous references to female sexual empowerment and to the erotic play of gazes are found in *The Bloody Chamber*: “The fairy tales collected in *The Bloody Chamber* [...] powerfully fictionalise the theoretical stances expressed in the critical essay *The Sadeian Woman* [...] and because they introduce experiments with metamorphic themes, which will be expanded upon in Carter’s following work” (Pasolini 13). Carter’s Beauties and Red Riding Hoods, for example, reject their position as mere objects of male sexual desire and take control of their own sexual impulses, accepting their bodies and exploring their sexual identity. As mentioned before, Japan was crucial not only in triggering Carter’s radicalisation as a feminist, but also in permeating her imagination with a wide store of images that she would use in the short stories she wrote afterwards.

Carter showed an interest in fairy tales since her childhood, as the author herself reveals in her journalistic articles “The Better to Eat You With” (1976), “The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm” (1981) and “Milorad Pavic: *Dictionary of the Kazars*” (1989). As a child, she was thrilled by Andersen: “Please, God, make it stop, I used to say when they read Hans Christian Andersen’s stories to me at bedtime. Is there no end to human suffering?” (Carter 2013, 553). Carter was also fond of Andrew Lang’s collections of folk tales and admired Italo Calvino’s work, as previously mentioned in chapter two, and as an adult she used Perrault’s fairy tales to practise her French:

I sweated out the heatwave browsing through Perrault’s *Contes du temps passé* on the pretext of improving my French. What an unexpected treat to find that in this great Ur-collection [...] all these nursery tales are purposely dressed up as fables of the politics of experience. The seventeenth century regarded children, quite rightly, as apprentice adults. (2013, 554)

Carter translated Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé avec des Moralités* (1697) under the title *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (1977) and “found the experience revelatory” (Gordon 266). The tales published there are not straight translations, since Carter modernises language and allusions and subtly distorts Perrault’s original morals. Revealingly, Carter underwent these translations while simultaneously drafting *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Her second volume of fairy-tale translations was titled *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales* (1982), an anthology of twelve French fairy tales—ten from the ones she has translated

before in her previous book and the other two by Madame Leprince de Beaumont. The book includes Carter's own reflections about both Perrault and Madame de Beaumont in a short essay at the end of the anthology:

Perrault added an ad hoc collection of morals to his tales, from which his readers could choose the one they liked best. He applauded the ingenuity of a quick-witted con man like Puss in Boots. The boy who ran away from school admired inventiveness. Madame de Beaumont is not like that. In her lovely stories, we see the fairy tale melting into both a magical art, and also into the kind of abstract moralising that would dominate nineteenth century stories for children. (1982, 128)

Carter was particularly appealed by the fairy tale, which she used herself as a genre in *The Bloody Chamber* in an overt manner and in a more subliminal way in novels such as in *The Magic Toyshop* (1967). Carter's own interest in the fairy tale also coincided with a critical revival of the genre, as entailed by Bruno Bettelheim or Jack Zipes' seminal studies, and it is no coincidence that most of her articles on the genre, her translation of Perrault and her masterpiece collection were written at the end of the nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties, when Bettelheim and Zipes's critical works were also published.

Moreover, the author herself participated as an editor of two volumes of fairy tales from all over the world for the Publishing House Virago, *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990) and *The Second Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1992). These two collections of less-known stories compile tales from Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. Despite their varied provenance, all these tales emphasise the connection between the genre, female characters and folklore. Both volumes were posthumously compiled by Virago in 2005 under the title *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales*. The fairy tale is also present in Carter's children's literature: *The Donkey Prince* (1970), based on the fairy tale *The Donkey* by the Brothers Grimm; *Miss Z, the Dark and Young Lady* (1970), where a strong female protagonist finds herself in a fairy-tale quest; *Moonshadow* (1980), in which a boy follows his shadow to a place with magic creatures; and *Sea-Cat and Dragon King*, published posthumously in 2000.

A common element of Carter's fairy-tale work is her focus on strong female protagonists, portrayed as active, witty, independent, resourceful characters. Carter's feminist agenda can also be appreciated in her role as editor of fairy tales, as translator and as a writer, which encourages readers to consider the genre from a different

perspective. Yet the fairy tale's subversive potential is nowhere more conspicuous than in *The Bloody Chamber*, which presents liminal identities in interstitial places through the liminal genre per excellence, the short story.

### 3.2. *THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES*

Carter's research for her translation of Perrault's fairy tales, together with Bettelheim's 1976 seminal study on the genre, led her to her own production of fairy tales, initially entitled "The New Mother Goose":

This was the first flash of *The Bloody Chamber*. The finished book would also include versions of "Bluebeard" [...], "Snow White" and "Puss-in-Boots", as well as "The Erl-King" and "The Lady of the House of Love", both of which Angela redrafted to echo more sharply the collection's themes. The "Cinderella" material was eventually absorbed into "Wolf-Alice", which also draws on "Red Riding Hood" and "Beauty and the Beast". Most of the stories feature young girls discovering their sexuality, and there's no shortage of erotic and menstrual imagery, but Angela never thought of *The Bloody Chamber* as a crusading feminist book in the manner of *The Passion of New Eve* or *The Sadeian Woman*. (Gordon 267-268)

Alongside her own reassessment of traditional fairy tales, Carter also considered introducing in her stories her lifelong interest in vampires which—thanks to her friendship with Christopher Frayling (Gordon 231)—took the form of a radio play named *Vampirella* in 1975. This play was later to be used for "The Lady of the House of Love", thus eliminating references to literary vampirism and exaggerating Gothic elements, as Carter herself pointed out: "The Lady of the House of Love" is a Gothic tale about a reluctant vampire; the radio play, *Vampirella*, is about vampirism as a metaphor" (Gordon 256). "The Lady of the House of Love", together with "The Erl-King", were the first stories to be written for *The Bloody Chamber*. The latter was based on German and Scandinavian folklore, namely the *Erlkönig* legend, but also on Goethe's related poem "Der Erlkönig", thus emphasising Carter's urge to combine high culture with folklore and oral narratives.

Carter's research at the University of Sheffield Library was the point of inception of her tales pivoting on "Red Riding Hood" (Gordon 272), written between 1976 and 1977, being "The Werewolf" the first of them, and followed by "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice". On the other hand, "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride" were based on "Beauty and the Beast": "By the spring

of 1977 Angela had begun writing the ‘Beauty and the Beast’ sequence for her New Mother Goose tales. ‘Man & beast: benevolence & strangeness of the beasts,’ she wrote in her journal. ‘Beasts as other.’ She looked at Madame Leprince de Beaumont’s version of the tale” (Gordon 278). “The Bloody Chamber”, Carter’s reassessment of “Bluebeard”, was the longest of all the stories and the one which would give its title to the collection: “She [Carter] spent the beginning of the summer working on a long story inspired by ‘Bluebeard’. She felt that Perrault’s original tale had a ‘curious flavour’” (Gordon 279). Carter’s “The Snow Child” is a tale which derives from an obscure Germanic variant of “Snow White” in which “a count and countess are riding through a wintry landscape, the count wishing for a girl, who soon appears, only to be murdered by the countess, and then have her corpse defiled by the count” (Gordon 293-294). Finally, Carter wrote a story based on a mixture between the fairy tale “Puss in Boots” and Pierre Beaumarchais’ play *The Barber of Seville*: “Angela gave Figaro’s personality to her Puss—he’s ‘a cat of the world, cosmopolitan, sophisticated’—in a story whose plot is much closer to that of Beaumarchais’ play than that of Perrault’s fairy tale, and which has the bawdy, buoyant mood of opera buffa” (Gordon 281).

As such, the stories are intertextually connected, among themselves and with other narratives, and appear intertwined as a Russian matryoshka doll: “Her [Carter’s] intertextual parading [...] extends to her own work, especially her early stories and title heroes: ‘The Erl-King’ and ‘The Werewolf’, or ‘The Courtship of Mr Lyon’, ‘The Tiger’s Bride’ and ‘Wolf-Alice’, all from *The Bloody Chamber*. By establishing such relations, the story-teller appears to be also the reader of her own stories [...]” (Kerchy 245). The author herself asked her literary agent Deborah Rogers to place the stories in a specific order regarding the evolution between the human and animal relationship:

She hurriedly sent it off to Deborah, with the instructions that it [Puss-in-Boots] was to go in between COURTSHIP OF MR LYON and THE ERLKING. (The logic of this being, a lion-man, a superhuman cat and a non-human genius loci, juxtaposed in a collection that is about metarelations between humans and animals. No, honestly. The stories are planned as a whole & echo & reflect each other all the time). (Gordon 281-282)

Some of the short stories of the collection were published individually “in magazines, to build up momentum, before she [Carter] sent them out to publishers. ‘The Courtship of Mr Lyon’ appeared in *Vogue* in April 1978, and ‘Wolf-Alice’ appeared in *Stand* that winter” (Gordon 282). Besides, a radio version of the “The Company of Wolves” was

released at the end of 1979 and eventually, Carter co-wrote the script of Neil Jordan's film "The Company of Wolves" in 1983, based on Carter's wolf stories.

As shown above, Carter meticulously arranged the stories in *The Bloody Chamber* in a specific order: although they can be read autonomously and, in fact, some of them had been first published independently in different journals, Carter carefully planned the collection as a unified whole, whose components were designed to echo and reflect one another, as Carter's biographer noted (Gordon 282). In this sense, *The Bloody Chamber* could be argued to represent an example of a short-story cycle, "so linked to one another that the reader's experience of each other is modified by the experience of the others" (Ingram 1971, 13). Although each story has its own degree of autonomy—"not one of the stories at play in *The Bloody Chamber* can be said to signify in itself, though it can be enjoyed on its own" (Crunelle-Vanrigh 139)—Carter's placement of the narratives in this specific order raises relevant issues in terms of themes, motifs and in articulating female identity, as March-Russell (2009) points out: "Themes and motifs progressively develop, so that while the stories can be read both individually and as part of a whole, the act of reading becomes the accumulated perception of successive orderings and repeated patterns" (104). Carter's narratives in *The Bloody Chamber* are both self-sufficient and interrelated, creating an effect which could not be achieved in a single story.

"Echoes" and "reflections" in *The Bloody Chamber* work at many different levels. Regarding motifs, the characters' metamorphosis runs throughout the collection, coupled with negotiations with female desire and the problematization of the gaze. In terms of metamorphosis and animalization, the collection opens with "The Bloody Chamber", whose evil Marquis is described in symbolic leonine terms, followed by two reassessments of "Beauty and the Beast" which present the characters' evolution already implicit in their titles: "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" delves on the symbolic cattish characterization of the female character, transferred in the second narrative, "The Tiger's Bride", to a real metamorphosed woman, a female tiger. Finally, both narratives flow into "Puss-in-Boots", the anthropomorphised Figaro-esque cat. Regarding sexuality and female desire, Carter's protagonists deal with the author's above-mentioned ruminations from *The Sadeian Woman* in search for the path to explore their own libido. Carter's protagonists struggle to understand their own roles as women in patriarchal societies, sometimes accepting their true individuality by means of animalization and

sexuality, sometimes quarrelling, unable to escape their established position as objects. Carter's female protagonists move from one liminal state to another, offering different possibilities for female subjectivity while searching for their active position concerning sexual desire:

If the wild felines have signified the sensual desires that women need to acknowledge within themselves, the three fictive figures signify the problematics of desire itself. 'Erl-king' is a complex rendering of a subjective collusion with objectivity and entrapment within the male gaze. [...] "Snowchild" presents the unattainability of desire, which will always melt away before possession. No real person can ever satisfy desire's constant deferral. 'Lady of the House of Love', with its lady vampire, inverts the gender roles of Bluebeard, with the woman constructed as an aggressor with a man as the virgin victim. In this tale the overwhelming fear of the cat tales, that the protagonist might be consumed by the otherness of desire, is given a new twist. [...] The three wolf stories also deal with women's relationship to the unruly libido, but the werewolf signifies a stranger, more alienated otherness than the cats, despite the half-human manifestations. (Makinen 11)

Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* had a large impact in both readers and critics and Carter herself "knew that these stories were among the best things she had written. [...] she had begun to produce the work on which her place in literary history rests" (Gordon 272). In fact, Carter's collection went beyond a reassessment of fairy tales, since it also put forward a daring conception of subjectivity and women's agency: her stories are proportionately perturbing and shocking because of their eroticism, sexual violence and complexity (Gamble 111).

In "Notes from the Front Line", Carter specifically interwove the fairy-tale genre with what she defined as "the reality of sexuality" and its particular construction in folklore and later reassessments:

[I] relaxed into folklore with a book of stories about fairy stories, *The Bloody Chamber*, in 1979. It turned out to be easier to deal with the shifting structures of reality and sexuality by using sets of shifting structures derived from orally transmitted traditional tales. Before that, I used bits and pieces from various mythologies quite casually, because they were to hand. (2013, 47)

Carter's particular interest in myth and folklore relates to particular constructions of subjectivity, often aimed at presenting "extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree" (Carter 2013, 47). To this respect, Carter famously postulated that "all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the demythologizing business" (2013, 47).

As previously argued, the decade of 1970s witnessed a progressive attention to the fairy tale genre, and Perrault and Grimm's versions of the tales began to be questioned. Postmodern transformations of these tales often entailed a "struggle out of the strait-jackets of history, ideology and biological essentialism. Carter, while convinced of humanity's potential for transformation, is acutely aware of the precariousness of binary oppositions in any alternative performances of femininity [...]" (Kerchy 53).

As suggested, Carter's decision to go back to orality and folklore is connected to a desire to vindicate the sexual aspects of the fairy tales that had been tamed or suppressed in the literary tradition, as she openly expressed: "Since it was, therefore, primarily through my sexual and emotional life that I was radicalized [...] I found myself, as I grew older, increasingly writing about sexuality and its manifestations in human practice. And I found most of my raw material in the lumber room of Western European imagination" (Carter 2013, 49). Carter's "radicalization" also entailed the revision of the human/animal divide in the fairy tale, especially in connection with women's subjectivity, thus daring "to look at women's waywardness, and especially at their attraction to the Beast in the very midst of repulsion" (Warner 1994, 308).

In *The Sadeian Woman* Carter not only expressed her particular conception of sexuality but also raised the issue of how pornography affects women's construction of identity. Carter's argument in favour of free equal sexuality for both sexes goes beyond criticizing classical male pornography and claims pornography for women: "The moral pornographer [...] would not be the enemy of women, perhaps he might begin to penetrate to the heart of the contempt for women that distorts our culture even as he entered the realms of true obscenity as he describes it" (Carter 1979, 22). Carter's controversial statement regarding the "moral" quality of pornography relates to her anxiety to bring to the fore women's sexual desire, also present in different ways in the collection, especially in "The Bloody Chamber", "The Tiger's Bride", "Puss-in-Boots" and "The Company of Wolves".

Even in these extreme expressions of female desire, Carter contemplated a source of empowerment and liberation for women in terms of "successful sexual transactions [...] founded on an equality and the transforming powers of recognizing the reciprocal claims of the other" (Easton 28). To do so, Carter appropriated the

representation of women as monsters and subverted this traditional ideology, liberating her she-monsters and allowing them to explore their sexuality. As a result, *The Bloody Chamber* presents a series of female protagonists that undergo a concatenation of physical and psychological changes: shapeshifting from human to animal and vice versa is, for Carter, a resource to describe different identity possibilities by drawing on liminal women characters who have to face their sexuality, animality and inner selves. The result is the creation of a fluid nomadic subjectivity, in which the limits between humanity and animality are dissolved as part of the deconstruction process.

The major themes that appear in these stories can also be read as postmodern, feminist versions of some traditional fairy tales. Carter deals with women's different roles in society; she reforms and deconstructs them, subverting the typical stereotypes of the *femme fatale*, the villain or the beautiful but passive princess. But in order to reassess women's subjectivity, Carter sees also necessary to articulate in her narratives a revision of male identity too, and she often questions their traditional roles by opposing the fierce appearance of male characters with a traditionally feminine behaviour. By doing so, Carter lays bare patriarchal assumptions which pinned traditional narratives by focusing on corrupted and corrupting human relationships and marriage.

In what follows, I will be examining Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* by paying special attention to the human-animal divide in the collection as integral to Carter's deconstruction of both male and female subjectivity and to her project of posing forward a daring, yet more inclusive, conception of gender. The human/animal dichotomy in Carter's work has already been discussed by, among others, Ana Pasolini in her work *Bodies That Bleed: Metamorphosis in Angela Carter's Fairy Tales* (2016), the first specific study exploring the use of metamorphosis in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Nevertheless, Pasolini focuses primarily on the question of the body taking into account both Braidotti and Butler's ideas of the "cartographic approach" and "performativity", respectively. In this dissertation, however, more attention will be given to the short story genre and its connection with gender, as well as to those aesthetic devices targeting the construction of a liminal perspective, such as metamorphosis and shapeshifting as the means to produce a new kind of subjectivity—liminal, multiple, hybrid and animalistic. In addition to this, concepts such as Deleuze and Guattari's "minor literature" and Achilles and Bergmann's "liminality" will be applied to Carter's work in general, and to this collection in particular, focusing on the

formal and ideological strategies which Carter deploys in constructing postmodern short stories.

It is my contention that the use of metamorphosis, anthropomorphism and zoomorphism serves the purpose of deconstructing traditional gender roles present in fairy tales and putting forward a new sense of subjectivity which blurs the Western human-animal division. Liminality appears related to non-human animals, supernatural monstrous creatures and humans, especially women. In order to explore Carter's subversive strategies in questioning traditional borders, I will follow Saphiro and Copeland's three-folded analysis proposal (2005), paying attention to the empirical and symbolic treatment of women and non-human animals, as well as the relationships between species, as previously mentioned in chapter two.

My analysis of Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* will focus on the eight stories in which the human/animal divide articulates the narrative, less conspicuous in "The Bloody Chamber" and "Puss-in-Boots", which will thus fall out of my discussion for the sake of thematic coherence. However, "The Bloody Chamber" already signals Carter's intention to depart from traditional fairy tales by rewriting Perrault's "Bluebeard". By doing so, Carter questions the traditional emphasis on female disobedience and punishment in order to focus on the dual characterization of the Marquis, both the wealthy and refined aristocrat and the heartless murderer who produces ambivalent and controversial feelings in the first-person, unnamed narrator of the story. By doing so, Carter reassesses the conventions of the Gothic *Doppelgänger*, which also extend to setting and characterization in the narrative, thus constructing "a resemblance to both the mythical Hades and the Bluebeard of folklore" (Tatar 2004, 115). In this gloomy atmosphere, the forbidden chamber—hardly described in Perrault's tale—symbolically represents in Carter the transgression, liminality and excess which Gothic fiction has traditionally entailed. The Chamber's torture tools, the rack, the wheel and the Iron Maiden, are symptomatic of patriarchal violence and domination exerted on women's bodies and sexuality. However, and unlike Perrault—who uses the protagonist's brother to save the protagonist from an imminent death—Carter puts forward a female alternative to male domination by foregrounding the mother-daughter bond: the protagonist's mother comes in her rescue and removes the Marquis's threat by symbolically possessing the phallus: the sword used to decapitate the murderer.

On the other hand, “Puss-in-Boots” entails a rewriting of the eponymous fairy tale, also reminiscent of Beaumarchais’ play *The Barber of Seville* and Basile and Perrault’s fairy tales. Puss, the Figaroesque cat, plays the role of the cunning servant which helps his master to gain the affection of the beautiful woman he loves (Pasolini 31). Puss and his master planned the way to access to Signor Panteleone’s young wife, who is kept locked inside as the princess in the tower. In this narrative, women are portrayed as possessions of the male villain, but the unnamed lady gains freedom and a voice of her own while, significantly, when experimenting her first sexual encounter. However, Carter’s real protagonist of the short story is the cat, which offers a comic, parodic vision of human relationships, demythologising “sex with humour and gusto” (Makinen 11).

Despite the evident interest of these stories in foregrounding sexuality as a major resource of women’s empowerment, I will focus my analysis on the remaining eight stories in Carter’s collection, since they approach from a variety of angles the division between humanity and animality and the relevance of metamorphic bodies. To do so, my analysis will be divided in series of animal groups: chapter four, entitled “Felines”, entails a discussion of Carter’s rewritings of “Beauty and the Beast”; chapter five, “Birds”, examines Carter’s versions of “Snow White”, “The Erl-King” and “The Sleeping Beauty”; and finally Chapter six, “Wolves”, focuses on Carter’s versions of the “Little Red Riding Hood” stories.



## 4. FELINES: “THE COURTSHIP OF MR LYON” AND “THE TIGER’S BRIDE”

This chapter deals with Angela Carter’s two rewritings of “Beauty and the Beast” in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*: “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”, placed respectively in the second and third position within the collection. My decision to examine them alongside is motivated not only by the stories’ debt to “Beauty and the Beast”, but also by the presence of animal metamorphoses from humans to felines, and vice versa. In this chapter I will briefly explore the origins of this fairy tale and its most important versions, as well as the psychoanalytical connotations which the tale presents in relation to femininity. Furthermore, I will track the importance of felines in literature and culture and in Carter’s stories, which will be examined against the theoretical backdrop of animal studies.

### 4.1. “BEAUTY AND THE BEAST”

“Beauty and the Beast” has been classified by Bruno Bettelheim as belonging to the “animal groom” or “animal husband” cycle (1976, 282) in which a beautiful young woman has to marry a beast whom she falls in love with, and after going through some adversities, her love metamorphoses the monster into a man whom the maid eventually marries, thus living “happily ever after”. As such, this plot is present in many different narratives which go back to Greek mythology in “Eros and Psyche” or the Rumanian oral fairy tale “The Enchanted Pig”, which became a source of inspiration for Straparola’s “The Pig King”.

These traditional tales examine female reactions towards sexual arousal and use literary fantasy creatures like monstrous beasts as the symbolic element to exemplify the unexperienced maid’s fear of sexual encounters: “Tales which—without any reference to repression which causes a negative attitude to sex—simply teach that for love, a radical change in previously held attitudes about sex is absolutely necessary” (Bettelheim 282). The importance of the “beauty and the beast” folktales is its cultural predicament in sexual behaviour through the internalization of the tales’ meanings, especially for women, largely

responsible of education, morality and socialization: “The symbolical cultural pattern of matriarchy, which designated the female as initiator of human action and integration, experienced constant changes over the course of centuries in both the oral and literary tradition” (Zipes 1991, 34).

However, the symbolic meanings of the “Beauty and the Beast” folktales began to change from the seventeenth century onwards due to their transition from oral forms to written narratives in France. The tales became very popular among the French noblewomen in King Louis XIV and King Louis XV’s courts which adapted the oral folktales to their times:

If we compare those oral folk tales about the animal bridegroom, which stem from matriarchal societies, with those literary fairy tales about “beauty and the beast” at the end of the seventeenth century, it becomes evident that the transformations in the portrayal of sexual configurations and cultural patterns were connected to significant changes within the civilization process itself. (Zipes 1991, 33)

As a result of such sexual configurations, the new female protagonist of “Beauty and the Beast” sacrifices herself “to a man in his house or castle, symbolical of submission to patriarchal rule” (Zipes 1991, 34) because of her filial love and obedience to her father (Bettelheim 283). Two good examples of this are the versions of the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* written by Madame de Villeneuve in 1740 and Madame Leprince de Beaumont in 1756, two “didactic discourses on manners, morals, and social class” that try to validate the aristocracy over the bourgeoisie (Zipes 1991, 38).

In Beaumont’s tale, Beauty, the youngest daughter of a rich merchant, saves her father by accepting to live with the Beast and, in so doing, she accepts that her role is a domestic one, whereas her sisters are punished “for forming their own desires as well as for rejecting the obligation of feminine altruism” (Kerchy 450). Beauty progressively falls in love with the Beast to eventually realize that “she is willing to marry him. Suddenly he is transformed into a handsome prince” (Zipes 1991, 38). In this version of the tale, the two male characters—Beauty’s father and the Beast—represent the economic and political power upon which the female protagonist depends. The tale targets young women “who fully expected to be given away by their fathers to men who might well strike them as monsters” (Warner 1994, 278), thus becoming a reward-story for women, compensating qualities like dependence, submission and filial duty with promises of love and a happy marriage:

The mark of beauty for a female is to be found in her submission, obedience, humility, industry, and patience; the mark of manliness is to be found in his self-control, politeness, reason and perseverance. [...] It became clear that the female

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character could only assume her “civil” form if she were willing to sacrifice herself to a beastlike male. By denying herself, she could obtain what all women supposedly wanted and want – namely marriage in the form of male domination. (Zipes 1991, 41)

Interestingly, Bettelheim explains how the “animal groom” cycle tales depart from an immature view which posits the individual as divided between animal and mind which, however, in “process of maturation, these artificially isolated aspects of our humanity must become unified” (1991, 308). However, the tale’s original emphasis on sexuality and maturation was transformed by the French courtly ideology that portrayed sexuality as restricted to marriage, which “made sex permissible [and] changed it from something animal-like into a bond sanctified by the sacrament of marriage” (Bettelheim 283). As a result, both Madame Villeneuve and Beaumont’s versions of the tale contemplate a vision of sexuality as a consequence of marriage, while also encouraging women not to fear an arranged marriage. Significantly, metamorphosis is at the core of the tales, symbolically expressed for the female character, who changes into an “ideal of virtue and graces”, and in more literal terms for the male character, transformed into an ideal husband as a result of the heroine’s love and submission (Saxena 194).

Both Villeneuve and Beaumont draw on the rose symbol as an objectification of Beauty as a possession which passes from the father to the husband-to-be:

In “Beauty and the Beast”, the fateful events are brought about by a father’s haven stolen a rose to bring to his best-loved youngest daughter. His doing so symbolizes both his love for her and also an anticipation of her losing her maidenhood, as the broken flower—particularly the broke rose—is a symbol for the loss of virginity. This may seem of both father and daughter as if she would have to suffer some “beastly” experience. (Bettelheim 306)

In this sense, Bettelheim reads “Beauty and the Beast” as an instrument to confront childhood fears, such as “the creations of his [the child’s] anxious sexual fantasies; and what while sex may at first seem beastlike, in reality love between woman and man is the most satisfying of all emotions” (306). Unlike Bettelheim, Zipes (1991, 33) reads “Beauty and the Beast” as a prescriptive tale which sets the standards for sexual and social conduct.

Carter’s particular deconstruction of this traditional fairy tale brings to the foreground the connection between womanhood and monstrosity (Saxena 194), and her choice of felines to depict the Beast—which relates to a savage and magnificent power outside humanity (Easton 29)—as well as other animal allusions such as the lamb, evidences controversial

debates about the position of animals and women as others in patriarchal societies. Carter's short stories based on "Beauty and the Beast" are a powerful deconstruction of the human-animal divide, reinserting the human into the natural world.

#### 4.2. ANGELA CARTER AND FELINES

The lion and the tiger are powerful cultural icons, which appear in numerous literary works, such as Aesop's fables, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and in Asiatic folklore—loosely connected with the European literary tradition of "Little Red Riding Hood" in tales such as "The Tiger Grandmother" or "Grandaunt Tiger" (Orenstein 251)—where the "weretiger" is the equivalent shapeshifting figure for the European "werewolf". Furthermore, felines are found in Medieval European heraldry, being a symbol of courage, dignity and magnificent, a fact that Carter uses in one of her stories as evidence of the male protagonist's identity. In English literature, these non-human animals immediately recall, in the case of the lion, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) by L. Frank Baum and *The Chronicles of Narnia* saga (1950-1956) by C.S. Lewis, while Blake's poem "The Tyger" in *Songs of Experience* (1794), along with Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) or Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* (1926) regarding the tiger.

Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges—who also drew on tigers as one of his main obsessions—is one of Carter's most significant influences regarding this feline as a symbol. Borges's work on tigers comprise a wide range of poems and short stories, such as poems like "El Otro Tigre" (*El Hacedor*, 1960), "El Oro de los Tigres" (*El Oro de los Tigres*, 1972) or "El Tigre" (*Historia de la Noche*, 1977) and the short story titled "Tigres Azules" in *La Memoria de Shakespeare* (1983). Carter's acquaintance with some Latin American authors, especially Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges, consolidated in Japan, and their influence can be appreciated both in *Fireworks* and *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*:

García Márquez is widely seen as the father, and Borges as the grandfather, of "magical realism" [...]. The term has often been used to describe Angela Carter's work, and *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman* is perhaps the book of hers that it most comfortably fits. (Gordon 176)

Carter met Borges at the James Joyce centenary celebration in Dublin in an event with many different writers that gathered on Bloomsday, 1982. Such an event signalled an important moment in Carter's life, since in 1989 "she gave the Jorge Luis Borges Memorial Lecture of

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the Anglo-Argentine Society at the Royal Society of Arts. Focussing mainly on *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, Borges’s vivid and eccentric bestiary of fictional creatures” (Gordon 392). Carter’s journalism also witnessed her attraction to these Latin American authors, as can be appreciated in her two of her articles on the topic. In “Jorge Luis Borges: *An Introduction to English Literature*” (1974) Carter reviewed Borges’s approach and in “Latin Rhythms” (1979) she dealt with Borges’s *The Book of Sand* and Márquez’s *Innocent Erendira and Other Stories*. Towards the end of her life, Carter worked on *Expletives Deleted* and asked her editorial assistant Mark Bell to “remove from the selection a negative review she’d written in 1974 of Borges’s *Introduction to English Literature* ‘[...] because ‘I don’t think it’s fair to the grand old man to whom I owe so much” (Gordon 407).

Carter’s journalistic articles about non-human animals—some of them previously mentioned in chapter two—also deal with some of the writers above named. In “Animals in the Nursery” (1976) Carter reflected upon Kipling’s feral animals: “The animals in Kipling’s *Jungle Books*, who are allowed uncommon amounts of magnificence, ferocity, maturity, law, justice and sensibility, nevertheless conspire to bolster the esteem of the human child” (2013, 366). Carter’s awareness of the problematic relationship between human and non-human animals and the great divide that separated them positioned herself at the centre of a debate that a few decades later animal studies and posthumanist thinkers would address: “Yet the arbitrary division between man and beast obliterates the fact that man himself is only another animal with particularly complex social institutions” (Carter 2013, 367). Carter’s “In the Bear Garden” (1977) comments on different bears of the British imaginary, from Paddington Bear to A.A Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh*, while in “At the Zoo” (1976) she wrote about zoo treatment of wild animals such as monkeys and tigers. Carter was impressed by one zoo in particular, which awkwardly presented the animals’ perspective regarding human behaviour:

There was a lovely zoo in Verona, though, that seemed to have been designed by people who saw the beasts’ side of things almost completely. At the entrance was a notice: “Attention -- this is the only chance most animals have to observe the behaviour of human beings. Make sure they receive a good impression” [...] Next to a somnolent tiger, another notice announced didactically: “When a man kills a tiger, we call it sport; when a tiger kills a man, we call it ferocity”. (2013, 363)

Significantly, Carter’s thoughtful insights on “Little Lamb, Get Lost” (1978) began with Blake’s tiger and psychoanalysis:

Also, I wonder if Blake had ever actually seen a live tiger. The fussy beast that illustrates “Tyger, Tyger” in the *Songs of Experience* looks as if he should have a zipper down his back and a pair of pyjamas inside him. [...] But of course, he is not talking about tigers at all. He is talking about something blind, furious, instinctual, intuitive, savage and *right*. If Blake’s placid and didactic horses are delegates from the Fabian Society of the superego, his tiger is the representative of the unrepressed subconscious, even the id. (2013, 373)

Carter used Blake’s iconographic duality to explain human behaviour towards different animals, thus fearing and demonising carnivores such as the tiger and condescending herbivores like the lamb: “‘Little lamb, who made thee?’ It is a sufficiently fatuous question to ask a lamb. But would Blake, who (however intermittently) possessed a sense of the ridiculous, have dared submit this poser to a grown sheep?” (Carter 2013, 374).

Felines are found in different works of Angela Carter: in her novel *Heroes and Villains* (1969), in “Lizzi’s Tiger” in her collection of short stories *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993), *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and in her translation of Perrault and Beaumont’s fairy tales *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales* (1982). Apart from lions and tigers, Carter has a special preference for cats, as her children’s literature demonstrates.<sup>6</sup> However, felines are the absolute protagonists of her short stories about “Beauty and the Beast”, which nurtured from the tradition of the representation of felines (the lion and the tiger in particular) and the lamb in relation to them, as well as from folklore and oral traditions.

### 4.3. ANGELA CARTER’S “FELINE” SHORT STORIES

Angela Carter’s two reassessments of the traditional “Beauty and the Beast” fairy tale, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”, are both to be understood as part of a sequence, in which their order within the collection becomes especially significant, as Carter herself stated (Gordon 281-282). Despite the apparent differences between these two stories in terms of narrative strategies, there is a clear connection between them that also links them to the rest of the stories in *The Bloody Chamber*, being both directly concerned with issues of monstrosity and identity: “The first story [...] parodies Beaumont’s story and fairy-tale

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, *Moonshadow* (1980), *Sea-Cat and Dragon King* (2000) and *Comic and Curious Cats* (1979).

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conventions by its ironic and self-conscious references to gender and matrimony. It needs to be read along with ‘The Tiger’s Bride,’ the darker version that follows it” (Saxena 198).

The purpose of having two or more stories based on the same fairy tale—as is the case of these two stories as well as of the three rewritings of Red Riding Hood at the end of the collection—is due to, as Aidan Day (1998) explains, a double purpose of deconstruction on the one hand, and the creation of different subjectivities on the other:

Angela Carter in *The Bloody Chamber* is concerned not simply to point out what is wrong with conventional representations of gender; she is concerned at once to offer different representations, different models. These two concerns may be apparent simultaneously in a single tale. Sometimes the two concerns emerge most clearly in the counterpointing between two different tellings of the same tale. This is the case, for example, with Carter’s two Beauty and the Beast tales. (134)

Carter’s stories present an overt intertextual connection with both Madame de Villeneuve and Madame de Beaumont’s fairy tales, but at the same time Carter distances herself from them and creates her own versions by producing “a double textuality”, relying on both imitation and insistent differentiation (Gruss 224-225). On the other hand, Carter also questions in her work major academic readings of traditional fairy tales, such as Bruno Bettelheim’s psychoanalytically inspired interpretations, which regarded these stories as a “natural” dramatization of a young woman’s love transference from father to husband. However, Carter thought that the way in which the Beast manipulates Beauty’s feelings “was anything but healthy, and that her sudden interest in him at this stage suggested deep reserves of masochism” (Gordon 278). In her interview with Haffenden (1985), Carter further exposed the latent blackmail in this fairy tale:

It seems to me important that “Beauty and the Beast” does not come out of oral tradition [...] and it was intended as a perfectly tuned moral tale. Actually it’s an advertisement for moral blackmail: when the Beast says that he is dying because of Beauty, the only morally correct thing for her to have said at that point would be “Die, then”. (83)

As mentioned before, both tales are interconnected by relying on a process of gradual deconstruction, to the extent that that the two “distinct worlds of Beauty and the Beast are gradually contaminated by each other, as are the protagonist themselves up until the final metamorphosis” (Crunelle-Vanrigh 132). In both of them the protagonists suffer a process of metamorphosis into a feline: in the first tale, Carter’s Beast is shapeshifted into a man and Beauty suffers a symbolic transformation, while in the second one the unnamed female protagonist physically becomes a tiger. Non-human animals and their Otherness are an

important element in the stories, both as symbols and empirical animals, offering the space between human and non-human animal worlds where both can be subjects with an agency of their own. Angela Carter's *Beauties and Beasts* acknowledge both similarities and differences between species and it is a mutual understanding what enables them to coexist in a liminal space in the margins of humanity and animality. In this sense, the titles of both texts present a continuum, beginning with "The Courtship of Mr Lyon"—in which Carter laid the foundations for what she presented in her next tale—and ending with "The Tiger's Bride":

What "Courtship" merely adumbrates, "Bride" brings to the fore. There the female narrator's father is no good old man plagued by ill-luck, but a drunkard "in the last stages of debauchery" who plays –and loses – his daughter at cards. Carter reverses the child's willingness to sacrifice all, child and wife, to his mad egotism and childish pleasure-seeking. Whereas Beauty accepted, [...] the narrator of "The Tiger's Bride" recalls how her own mother was "bartered for her dowry to such a fleckless sprig of the Russian nobility that she soon died of his gaming, his whoring, his agonizing repentances. (Crunelle-Vanrigh 138)

Carter here erases moral instruction, and, by doing so, frees her characters from social conventions. By making Beauty accept her animal side—sometimes in symbolical terms, sometimes becoming a true animal—Carter blurs binary oppositions and creates a state of fluidity that questions the static patriarchal system by posing forward alternatives to constructed gender roles by advocating equality, both in social and sexual terms.

By representing both women and animals as the Other in patriarchal societies, Carter subverts and deconstructs Cartersian dualistic thought, breaks the barriers between human and non-human animals and locates them in a subject position, thus recognising in them agency and voice: "Thus the other—either the woman as object of the gaze or the beast as animal—is no longer perceived as 'object', and both characters are allowed to become subjects of the gaze" (Pasolini 52). In fact, it could be argued that Carter's whole collection entails a reconsideration of the Other from different angles; first, in regarding animals, monsters and women in opposition to the category of men; secondly, in regarding Cartesian divisions of the rational versus the emotional or the corporeal:

The image of the animal "Beast" signifies not just Otherness but specifically the Otherness of the instinctual human body, repressed and feared by its Enlightenment opposite, the rational mind. The volume interrogates, among other things, a cultural vision in which animals and the body are not merely useful but commodified and consumed. (Webb and Hopcroft 32)

#### 4. Felines: “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”

As previously mentioned, she-monsters were traditionally constructed as hybrid figures whose monstrosity derives from their grotesque, liminal bodies and in their roles as violent, powerful sexual entities. Unlike Beaumont or Villeneuve’s “Beauty and the Beast”, Carter’s short stories empower Beauty with a degree of monstrosity and sexual appetite, whereas “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride” dramatize Carter’s treatment of the subject as a hybrid being.

My examination of Carter’s short stories will follow Saphiro and Copeland’s (2005) three steps of analysis in the field of literary human-animal studies. The first level looks into the ways in which Carter’s texts deconstruct traditional portrayals of non-human animals and women in patriarchal societies, paying attention to questions such as empathy, animal and female subjectivity, agency and voice and how the narratives lead towards eventual female empowerment. In the second level of analysis, I will focus on how Carter portrays animals as symbols, on the one hand, and as animals *per se* on the other—empirical animals—and even as hybrids with both a symbolic and real dimension. To do so, I will draw from major psychoanalytic readings of fairy tales as well as from Carter’s connection with Bettelheim’s theories, which use animals as the representation of human desires and sexualities. The last level of analysis focuses on the relationship between humans and animals, and in this chapter I will pay special attention to how the characters of Beauty and the Beast, respectively, interact with each other in Carter’s two rewritings of the tale, breaking established boundaries and dualisms by forging a space for mutual understanding.

##### 4.3.1 “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”

This tale, the second one within the collection and the first of the two reassessments of “Beauty and the Beast”, establishes significant parallels with Beaumont’s version of the fairy tale. The story opens up with a description of Beauty’s father at the Beast’s mansion, who steals a rose and is punished for it. Despite the obvious parallels with Beaumont’s story in terms of plot, Carter’s narrative technique in the opening lines already hints at her deconstruction of the traditional fairy tale.

The narrated events are alternatively focalised through the vision of the story’s major characters, whose reflections are intertwined in free indirect speech, thus offering a composite of varying reflections and perspectives which radically transform the traditional fairy tale. The

story opens with the voice of a third-person omniscient narrator, whose control over the narrative will progressively disappear to offer the subjective perspective of each character, culminating with Beauty's reflections in the first person:

Outside her kitchen window, the hedgerow glistened as if the snow possessed a light of its own; when the sky darkened towards evening, an unearthly, reflected pallor remained behind upon the winter's landscape, while still the soft flakes floated down. This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same, inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made all of snow, pauses in her chores in the mean kitchen to look out at the country road. Nothing has passed that way all day; the road is white and unmarked as a spilled bolt of bridal satin.

Father said he would be home before nightfall.

The snow brought down all the telephone wires; he couldn't have called, even with the best of news.

The roads are bad. I hope he'll be safe. (Carter 1996, 144)

By doing so, the story's opening scene already establishes an intertextual connection with, on the one hand, the fairy tale tradition, not only in terms of themes and motifs, but also in the narrator's initial control over the narrated events, which gradually dissolves into Beauty's focalization and finishes with the reproduction of her own thoughts. On the other, the opening scene already anticipates subsequent stories in the collection, such as "The Snow Child": "This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same, inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made all of snow, pauses in her chores in the mean kitchen to look out at the country road" (144). By doing so, Carter not only establishes intertextual connections with the fairy-tale tradition, but also states the textual strategies she will be using to deviate from it by means of her progressive abandonment of narrative control in favour of the characters' focalization and agency.

Beauty's passivity aimlessly waiting for her father to return contrasts with her father's movement in a car, which eventually breaks down in the midst of a snow storm. The narrative, now focalised through the perspective of Beauty's father, shows how he thinks of his daughter in possessive terms, as his "girl-child" and as a "pet", in an objectification process which culminates with Beauty's "exchange between her father and the Beast" (Day 137). The story's opening already suggests how Carter draws a parallel between women and animals as commodified objects in patriarchal traditions. For her father, Beauty is also the "one white rose she said she wanted" (Carter 1996, 144), which connects with Beaumont and Villeneuve's fairy tales while, simultaneously, departing from them in its constitution of the rose as a commodity and, as a result, as an object of exchange which runs through the narrative, from the rose bushes in the Beast's gardens to the roses Beauty sends to the Beast

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during her absence: “She sent him flowers, white roses in return for the ones he had given her” (150). As happens in the traditional fairy tale, Beauty’s father arrives to the Beast’s mansion, and his focalization presents the situation until he leaves the scene and Beauty’s perspective dominates the narration after meeting the Beast: “Although her father had told her of the nature of the one who waited for her, she could not control and instinctual shudder of fear when she saw him” (147). By doing so, Carter gives Beauty the control over the main part of the narrative, not only opening the path to the next story’s first-person narration, but also signalling Beauty’s progressive agency in terms of voice and perspective.

Carter also introduces in the narrative a female spaniel, “a liver and white King Charles spaniel crouched with head intelligently cocked, on the kelim runner” which wears “a diamond necklace” (145). The dog “barks and gruff murmurings, of whimpering and relief” (151) and she has two main functions in the story: as companion species and as a guide for humans. Although Carter does not anthropomorphise the spaniel, she also engages with the literary fairy tale and folk traditions of animals as helpers or saviours (Herzog and Galvin 80). The dog guides Beauty’s father in the Beast’s mansion, where he eats,<sup>7</sup> drinks and finds a solution for his broken car, showing him the moment of departure: “Then the spaniel appeared again, with his hat in her careful mouth, prettily wagging her tail, as if to tell him it was time to be gone, that this magical hospitality was over” (Carter 1996, 146). When Beauty is living in the Beast’s mansion, it is the spaniel which keeps Beauty company as a pet and with which Beauty tries to communicate: “Has master gone a-hunting? Beauty asked the spaniel. But the spaniel growled, almost bad-temperedly, as if to say, that she would not have answered, even if she could have” (149). Language is one of the main barriers which divide human from non-human animals and situate the former above the rest of the categories (Berland 440). Significantly, this does not apply to all animals in the story, since the leonine Beast possesses the ability of speech. By introducing this point of conflict, Carter begins to develop her deconstruction strategy of division which will reach its climax in the last story of the collection, when the human character cannot speak, yet language is no longer a problem to create a communion between human and non-human animals.

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<sup>7</sup> Intertextuality is also found in references to, among others, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)—which Carter celebrates in the last story in the collection, “Wolf-Alice”—when Beauty’s father finds food at the Beast’s table which says “*Drink me*” and “*Eat me*” (Carter 1996, 145).

Furthermore, the spaniel chaperones Beauty in her encounters with the Beast: “And she would talk with the lion, under the patient chaperonage of the brow-eyed dog” (Carter 1996, 150). The spaniel is endowed with some fantastic abilities from the fairy tale tradition and appears in London alone, performing the moral function of remembering Beauty her broken promise through a non-verbal mutual process of communication: “Quickly, quickly, urged the spaniel soundlessly; and Beauty knew the Beast was dying” (151). Upon Beauty’s arrival to the mansion, she notices that the dog’s aspect also changes, reflecting her owner’s decadence: “Yet where was the well-brushed, jewelled dog who had sat beside her embroidery frame in the parlour [...]? This one’s fringed ears were matted with mud, her coat was dusty and snarled, she was thin as a dog that has walked a long way and, if she had not been a dog, she would have been in tears” (151).

The Beast, a real lion in the narrative, does not focalise any of the narrated events in the story, but possesses the ability to talk: “You will come back to me? It will be lonely here, without you” (150). Significantly, both the Beast and the dog’s feelings are shown in the narrative when the Beast is shy enough to hide from Beauty or when the dog responds unfriendly to Beauty’s inquiry. When the dog’s sadness and despair are shown at the end, it is revealed that the Beast is dying, who, in turn, uses with Beauty emotional blackmail: “‘I’m dying, Beauty,’ he said in a cracked whisper of his former purr. ‘Since you left me, I have been sick. I could not go hunting, I found I had not the stomach to kill the gentle beasts, I could not eat. I am sick and I must die; but I shall die happy because you have come to say goodbye to me’” (153).

Interestingly, the narrative shows how Carter’s human female characters are able to feel empathy towards the non-human animals as objectified beings of the patriarchal systems, thus mirroring their same condition and establishing a parallelism as alienated subjects. In “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, Beauty faces the Beast to discover his loneliness and alienation, which arouses feelings of empathy and affection in her. Even though Beauty does not understand his alterity—“it was in her heart to drop a kiss upon his shaggy mane, but though she stretched out her hand towards him, she could not bring herself to touch him of her own free will, he was so different from herself” (150)—she is able to connect with him in a certain manner: “Yet wild things have a far more rational fear of us than is ours of them, and some kind of sadness in his agate eyes, that looked almost blind, as if sick of sight, moved her

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heart” (147). Beauty’s perspective entails an emphatic reflection about the damage humanity has inflicted upon animals, even to the wild carnivorous beasts which, like the lion, instead of being individuals are regarded as objects in Western thought. As a result, this short story offers the first step towards a full understanding between species, as will be shown in the analysis of “The Tiger’s Bride”.

In this story, Carter also presents animals as such “with some measure of autonomy, agency, voice, character, and as a member of a species with a nature that has certain typical capabilities and limitations” (Saphiro and Copeland 345). As previously argued, in this story the female spaniel dog appears as a “real” animal, performing her roles as a pet and as a guide. Endowed with some fantastic characteristics from the fairy tale tradition, this dog also represents animal individuality: although she does not speak, she is able to communicate with the rest of the characters in a non-verbal manner.

However, when focusing on the two main characters, Beauty and the leonine Beast, questions related to anthropomorphism and zoomorphism inevitably arise, which brings to the fore whether the symbolic use of animals is a fair representation of human and non-human animals. In Gross and Vallely’s *Animals and the Human Imagination. A Companion to Animal Studies* (2012), Wendy Doniger engages in this debate, emphasizing the importance of learning about animals through both zoomorphism and anthropomorphism:

Animal symbolism works in two directions, anthropomorphism – projecting human qualities upon animals – and zoomorphism – imagining humans as animals. Anthropomorphism, though more common than zoomorphism, tells us comparatively little about animals; an anthropomorphic text assumes a basic identification, such as lion as king, and then, although the object of discourse is, theoretically, an animal, the text imagines the animal as behaving the way the human does, betraying the fact that the interest lies more in kings than in lions. Zoomorphism is more complex: although this time a human being is the explicit object, the bestial qualities imputed to the human usually reveal an observation of animals more detailed [...] than anthropomorphism, and the text teaches us simultaneously what sort of person it thinks that sort of animal is like and what sort of animal it thinks that sort of person is like. (350-351)

Doniger’s analysis of the dynamics of zoomorphism and anthropomorphism is particularly pertinent to discuss the characterization of Beauty and the Beast in Carter’s narrative, since the Beast is anthropomorphised, while Beauty is described in zoomorphic symbolic terms. The Beast is depicted as a hybrid character, both used as a real animal and as a symbol. His characterization begins even before he appears in the narrative: Beauty’s father notices a

particular door “equipped with a knocker in the shape of a lion’s head, with a ring through the nose; as he raised his hand towards it, it came to him this lion’s head was not, as he had thought at first, made of brass, but, instead, of gold” (Carter 1996, 145). These omens anticipate the eventual presence of the Beast, which appears when Beauty’s father steals the rose: “Not now distant but close to hand, close as the mahogany front door, rose a mighty, furious roaring; the garden seemed to hold its breath in apprehension. [...] At that, every window of the house blazed with furious light and a fugal baying, as if a pride of lions, introduced his host” (146). This prelude precedes the presentation of the male protagonist, the Beast, whose appearance terrifies Beauty’s father:

The being who now confronted Beauty’s father seemed to him, in his confusion, vaster than the house he owned, ponderous yet swift, and the moonlight glittered on his great, mazy head of hair, on the eyes green as agate, on the golden hairs of the great paws that grasped his shoulders so that their claws pierced the sheepskin as he shook him like an angry child shakes a doll. (146)

Carter here emphasises the Beast’s animalistic appearance, thus deviating from traditional versions of the tale, in which the Beast is “a mere monster” (Crunelle-Vanrigh 130). Although the Beast is presented as a “real” feline—“head of a lion; mane and mighty paws of a lion; he reared on his hind legs like an angry lion yet wore a smoking jacket of dull red brocade” (147)—his hybridity connects him directly to the category of monstrosity: the Beast is described as the Other when Beauty realises the lack of human domestic service, as for “a constant human presence would remind him too bitterly of his otherness” (147). Apart from his physical appearance as a lion, the beast behaves like a human being, dressing in human clothes, has the ability of speech and walks on two legs. His anthropomorphic characteristics give him a liminal or hybrid aspect in between human and animal, “for a lion is a lion and a man is a man, though lions are more beautiful by far than we are, yet they belong to a different order of beauty and, besides, they have no respect for us: why should they?” (147). However, as a real animal, the Beast naturally walks on four legs: “Then, without another word, he sprang from the room and she saw, with an indescribable shock, he went on all fours” (149). Beauty’s amazement springs from the Beast’s hybrid nature, whom she first considers a danger as a wild animal to gradually empathise with him after their acquaintance. The Beast’s final metamorphosis into a man—following the tradition of the classical fairy tale in which the monstrous Beast represents sexuality and marriage—inverts his hybrid nature, giving him the physical appearance of a human while maintaining his wild and fierce nature.

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On the other hand, in this tale Carter presented a human Beauty living with a beast in order to save her father’s life. Her filial submission is what is expected from her as a woman in a heteropatriarchal world, following the tradition of both Beaumont and Villeneuve’s versions: “She was possessed by a sense of obligation to an unusual degree and, besides, she would gladly have gone to the ends of earth for her father, whom she loved dearly” (148). Carter’s penchant for parody and irony crystalizes in Beauty’s personality, who is very aware of what is required of women and, as such, her behaviour has to follow the patterns of good conduct, passiveness and submission: “‘The Courtship’ presents Miss Lamb as she plays the role of Beauty, the fairy-tale maiden” (Saxena 198). Likewise, Crunelle-Vanrigh also emphasizes the narrative’s similarities with Beaumont’s story:

“Courtship” is a tale about the harmonious passage from oedipal attachment to mature love marked by the metamorphosis of the Beast into a man. It holds a special place in the collection, referring back to the best-known version of “Beauty and the Beast” and preceding “The Tiger’s Bride”, its dark twinpiece. (Crunelle-Vanrigh 128)

In Carter’s tale, Beauty is indeed “Miss Lamb”<sup>8</sup>—as the narrator calls her—who consciously performs the ideal of female propriety by accepting her role as a commodity in the marriage market. Beauty compares the Beast’s carnivorous instinct with her own role to play: “When she saw the great paws lying on the arm of his chair, she thought: they are the death of any tender herbivore. And such a one she felt herself to be, Miss Lamb, spotless, sacrificial” (Carter 1996, 48). In so doing, Beauty represents the symbolic treatment of non-human animals since the narrative’s beginning, being objectivised, called a “pet” by her father and envisioned like a “lamb”, which clearly establishes a connection between both categories as men’s properties.

Despite the fact that Beauty is quite glad of living with the leonine Beast (150), when her father’s fortune is recovered she leaves him with the promise of coming back in spring, which, however, does not bring her about the expected relief from the Beast’s presence: “She experienced a sudden sense of perfect freedom, as if she had just escaped from an unknown danger, had been grazed by the possibility of some change but, finally, left intact. Yet, with this exhilaration, a desolating emptiness” (150). Carter here emphasises Beauty’s ambivalent feelings and such emancipatory impulse is the first step for Beauty to develop a new sense of

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<sup>8</sup> The image is a clear reference to William Blake’s poem “The Lamb” in *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and the representation of this animal as a symbol of innocence and sacrifice.

subjectivity, a nomadic and animalistic one. However, this hesitating moment is quite ephemeral: soon she becomes accustomed to this wealthy social life to the point of forgetting her promise to the Beast by flinging herself into “a mad whirl of pleasure with her father” (Crunelle-Vanrigh 131), thus becoming vain, superficial and whimsical: “She smiled at herself with satisfaction. She was learning, at the end of her adolescence, how to be a spoiled child and that pearly skin of hers was plumping out, a little, with high living and compliments” (Carter 1996, 151). By doing so, Carter actually replaces old stereotypes of femininity, present in traditional fairy tales, by new ones in tune with the pleasures and evils of a consumerist society.

Beauty’s experience at the castle ignites in the character a process of symbolic animal metamorphosis, from the “spotless, sacrificial” Miss Lamb (148) and the girl who buys herself expensive furs (151) to the more mature woman whose “face was acquiring, instead of beauty, a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite expensive cats” (151). Significantly, such a process of transformation and metamorphosis is triggered by Beauty’s sexual awakening, thus casting aside her passive role as a martyr. By means of zoomorphism and animalization, Carter gives this female human character agency: Beauty’s new sense of self springs from her rejection of traditional women’s roles as a sacrificial daughter or wife, signalled in her symbolic metamorphosis into a feline.

The last level of my analysis focuses on the human-animal relationship and, as such, it deals with the interactions between the main characters regarding previous issues, such as the recognition of the other’s agency and voice, which reinforces the notion that “animal agents are recognizable as such only when they are presented as deeply integrated with human forms or presences, and vice versa” (Marvin and McHugh 6). It is by acknowledging the existence of the other that both characters are recognised as an entity, with a subjectivity of their own.

Carter’s use of the carnivore/herbivore dichotomy overtly reaches back to Blake’s work, but it also appears in her journal article “Little Lamb, Get Lost” (1978), as previously analysed. Carter’s animalistic characterization in this story opens up the path for what is developed in the next tale, namely; the interrogation of boundaries and the construction of a liminal space for both species to coexist and develop at the same level. Miss Lamb is sacrificed to her father’s fortune, objectified and converted into a transaction between two men, father and husband-to-be, a topic which runs through the whole collection:

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Specifically, the patriarchal institutions openly addressed and contested by Carter in both texts are marriage (particularly in “The Bloody Chamber” and “Puss in Boots”), the commodification of women through bargains between fathers and husbands (in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”), rape and sexual violence (which are hinted at—more or less overtly—in most of the stories). (Pasolini 43)

However, the narrative suggests that, despite their apparent opposition, Beauty and Beast are individuals “intertwined through cultural discourse on femininity and its close association with monstrosity” (Saxena 195), which explains the tension between the fascination and abhorrence which Beauty feels towards the Beast: “Fascinated, almost awed, she watched the firelight play on the gold fringes of his mane; he was irradiated, as if with a kind of halo, and she thought of the first great beast of the Apocalypse, the winged lion with his paw upon the Gospel, Saint Mark” (Carter 1996, 149). In turn, the Beast’s monstrosity is also questioned when the ponderous animal is, as a matter of fact, frightened of the girl (148), and has to “forced himself to master his shyness, which was that of a wild creature, and so, she contrived to master her own” (149).

It is Beauty who eventually becomes the dominant agent, ultimately revealing an awareness of her own sexuality that transforms her from the timid girl at the story’s opening to the “mistress of the sexual game” (Crunelle-Vanrigh, 131): “She felt his hot breath on her fingers, the stiff bristles of his muzzle grazing her skin, the rough lapping of his tongue and then, with a flood of compassion, understood: all he is doing is kissing my hands” (Carter 1996, 149). As previously mentioned, animality and sexuality go hand in hand in Carter’s fairy tales: in fact, when Beauty’s perception of the Beast’s monstrosity is exchanged for compassion, she “found herself yawning: she discovered she was bored” (Saxena 199) and goes back to her father, who has just recovered his fortune and lives in London.

Beauty’s sacrifice initiates a physical transformation in the Beast, which springs from Beauty’s intense gaze: “His eyelids flickered. How was it she had never noticed before that his agate eyes were equipped with lids, like those of a man? Was it because she had only looked at her own face, reflected there?” (Carter 1996, 152). For the first time, Beauty recognises humanity in the agonising eyes of the lion and the necessity of the other’s gaze for self-recognition is so important that it marks the beginning of the Beast’s metamorphosis (Pasolini 53).

As in the traditional fairy tale, Beauty's kiss and her tears break the spell, thus transforming the Beast into a man: "Her tears fell on his face like snow, and under their soft transformation [...] it was no longer a lion in her arms but a man, a man with [...] a broken nose [...] that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts" (Carter 1996, 153). Despite the fact that humanity is restored to the Beast, Carter retains in him a "heroic resemblance" to the lion, which emphasises his hybrid nature. By choosing a half human-half animal identity, Beauty accepts the animal side of humanity, both for herself and for her husband. Beauty and the Beast become Mr and Mrs Lyon in an ending which parodies the "happy ever after" fairy tale closure, while simultaneously departing from it by virtue of the characters' animal transformations: Beauty is as much a "lion as he is but where he wears his past on his body, she wears it in words. His skin becomes her name" (Kerchy, 208), thus deconstructing the fable of "virtue rewarded and humanity restored" (Saxena 200) and anticipating Beauty's radical metamorphosis in the next story. "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", one of the first narratives in Carter's collection, entails a first step towards the deconstruction of the human-animal divide.

#### 4.3.2. "The Tiger's Bride"

Whereas "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" remains close to Beaumont's fairy tale, "The Tiger's Bride" deviates from it in search for a different approach, thus being a story about the objectification of women and changing the focus of the traditional tale towards the creation of a liminal space for human and non-human animals to coexist as equal partners.

Following Saphiro and Copeland (2005) analysis, it is possible to see how agency and voice are important elements in this short story to the eventual deconstruction of simplistic treatment of both animals and women. Whereas "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" is mostly narrated in the third person, "The Tiger's Bride" purposely shifts to the partial first-person experience of the unnamed female protagonist, thus contributing to provide female characters in classic fairy tales with a voice of their own and a space for them in history and literature. The narrative radically opens with this Beauty's crude affirmation of her objectification: "My father lost me to The Beast at cards" (Carter 1996, 154). The narrative's opening represents a drastic departure from Villeneuve and Beaumont's plot.

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The unnamed narrator also affirms to come from the North, from “countries of cold weather” arrived at the “blessed plot where the lion lies down with the lamb” (154) which, according to Carter herself, is identified with Mantua, Italy (Gordon 278). More significantly, the “blessed plot” reaches back to the Bible (Isaiah 11:6-7), which has been often read as a prophetic description of the Messianic Age after Apocalypse, in which the wolf and the lion will live with the lamb in harmony. In a sense, the opening scene already anticipates the character’s transformation and her radical hybridization. Unlike Carter’s Beauty in the previous narrative, the unnamed narrator is unsexed by luxury or glamour, pitying “women whom circumstances force mutely to witness folly”, which recalls her own mother, a victim of her husband amoral and ruinous life: “My mother did not blossom long; bartered for her dowry to such a feckless sprig of the Russian nobility that she soon died of his gaming, his whoring, his agonising repentances” (Carter 1996, 155). Rather than quietly accepting her father’s wishes, the narrator openly expresses her disgust and indignation for her father’s weakness and lack of self-control, which leads her to become a bargain in the Beast’s possessions: “Gambling is a sickness. My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards” (156). This narrator is, as was Miss Lamb in the previous tale, aware of the “patriarchal power that objectifies her beauty and her body into a commodity” (Laskoski 34): “‘Che bella!’ Since I could toddle, always the pretty one, with my glossy, nut-brown curls, my rosy cheeks. And born on Christmas Day – her ‘Christmas rose,’ my English nurse called me” (Carter 1996, 155). Beauty is also called “my pearl” by her father when he loses her at cards (157). Cynically, Beauty understands her entrance in adulthood as the moment in which she envisages her body “as my sole capital in the world and today I’d make my first investment” (159).

Apart from Beauty’s first-person narration, the other characters of the story express their agency in different manners. The Beast’s voice, so imperceptible for the narrator, needs the translation of the valet, who transmits his wishes: “His masked voice echoes as from a great distance as he stoops over his hand and he has such a growling impediment in his speech that only his valet, who understands him, can interpret for him, as if his master were the clumsy doll and he the ventriloquist” (156). Even though the narrator is unable to understand that she is in front of a real animal which does not speak, the reader decodes the different clues that Carter exposes, for example the tiger’s animal’s sounds: “the Beast bayed; laid down all three remaining aces” (157).

Inversely, the valet reproduces human speech and the reader has access to his words. The valet, speaking for himself and for his master, is the one which interact the most with Beauty. He is in charge of taking care of her and convincing her of fulfilling the Beast's desire. He exchanges with Beauty two similar dialogues—repetition inherited from the fairy tale tradition—in which she threatens to commit suicide or escaping and the valet appeals to her sense of honour: “‘Oh no,’ said the valet, fixing upon me a wide and suddenly melancholy eyes. ‘Oh, no, you will not. You are a woman of honour’” (161). The unnamed valet is presented as a liminal uncanny Other, characterised by his mutter: “The valet, ticking and clucking to himself, hastily ushered me out of the room” (161) and nervousness, as a representative of the Beast's commands.

With respect to empathy, the recognition of animals' feelings and emotional and affective connections between non-human and human animals (Armstrong 2) is also present in Carter's tale. The non-human animal's feelings are a constant throughout the text. Starting with the horses as empirical animals, their function is to lead the carriage or serve as mount for the protagonists. Since the first scene in which they appear—when the valet takes Beauty to the Beast's *palazzo*—the female narrator establishes an empathic relationship between the animals and herself, mentioning Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and the intellectual superiority of the horses:

The Beast's carriage, of an elegant if antique design, was black as a hearse and it was drawn by a dashing black gelding who blew smoke from his nostrils and stamped upon the packed snow with enough sprightly appearance of life to give me some hope that not all the world was locked in ice, as I was. I had always held a little towards Gulliver's opinion, that horses are better than we are, and, that day, I would have been glad to depart with him to the kingdom of horses, if I'd been given the chance. (Carter 1996, 157)

Her condition as a commodified object in a patriarchal society leads her coalition with non-human animals, especially with horses, to which she reclaims reason as is the case in Swift's narrative. Beauty's search for rationality—an attribute reserved only for men and excluded from women—aligns herself with categories such as animals or monstrous liminal creatures, the traditional objectified Others in Western patriarchal traditions (Webb and Hopcroft 315). This understanding between her and the black horse is also clearly appreciated when she goes for a ride in the woods: “I always adored horses, noblest of creatures, such wounded sensitivity in their wise eyes, such rational restraint of energy at their high-strung

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hindquarters. I lirrured and hurrumphed to my shining black companion and he acknowledged my greeting with a kiss on the forehead from his soft lips” (Carter 1996, 164). The non-verbal communication between horses and Beauty helps to reinforce the connection among them, an interspecies relationship of mutual understanding: “The mare raised her dripping muzzle and looked at me keenly, as if urging me” (166). Apart from the importance of Beauty’s empathic inclination towards these animals, they are given an important location to stay by the Beast and, instead of occupying the stables, the horses remain inside the abandoned house in a space normally used for human gatherings:

The little black horse trotted smartly through the figured bronze doors that stood open to the weather like those of a barn and the valet handed me out of the carriage on to the scarred tiles of the great hall itself, into the odorous warmth of a stable, sweet with hay, acrid with horse dung. An equine chorus of neighings and soft drummings of hooves broke out beneath the tall roof, where the beams were scabbed with last summer’s swallows’ nests; a dozen gracile muzzles lifted from their mangers and turned towards us, ears erect. The Beast had given his horses the use of the dining room. The walls were painted, aptly enough, with a fresco of horses, dogs and men in a wood where fruit and blossom grew on the bough together. (159)

The valet, an ambiguous animalistic individual, expresses his feelings in multiple occasions. The narrator appreciates his indecorous behaviour as a servant and his attitude towards her: “The valet darted me a reassuring glance from his brown, eloquent eyes, yet a glance with so much queer superciliousness in it that it did not comfort me, and went bounding ahead of me on his bandy legs, softly chattering to himself” (160). His arrogance is transformed into shame and perturbation when he expresses the Beast’s desire:

Now, in the face of my impassivity, the valet twittered, his ironic composure gone, for the desire of a master, however trivial, may yet sound unbearably insolent in the mouth of a servant and his role of go-between clearly caused him a good deal of embarrassment. He gulped; he swallowed, at last contrived to unleash an unpunctuated flood. (160)

Thus, his relationship with Beauty will change from disdain at the beginning of the narrative to mutual appreciation towards the end, when the three main protagonists reveal their natural selves in front of the others.

As for the Beast, he expresses his annoyance with the lament of Beauty’s father’s regarding animal sounds, decoded by the valet: “At that, The Beast made a sudden, dreadful noise, halfway between a growl and a roar; the candles flared. The quick valet, the prim hypocrite, interpreted unblinkingly: ‘My master says: If you are so careless of your treasures,

you should expect them to be taken from you” (157). His shame—as the narrator understands it, it is important to bear in mind that this Beauty does not comprehend the Beast’s animal subjectivity and due to his disguise she thinks of him as a man—is shown by his avoiding eye-contact (161) and hiding his head in his arms: “And then he moved; he buried his cardboard carnival head with its ribboned weight of false hair in, I would say, his arms” (163). At the end, after revealing himself being a tiger, he actually is afraid of her: “He went still as stone. He was far more frightened of me than I was of him” (169). When the Beast shows his true nature, the narrator has to come to terms not only with his alterity but to with her own as well. Carter deconstructs preconceived ideas of humanity and animality at this point through the ruminations of Beauty.

Regarding the second aspect of this analysis, Carter presents animals both as empirical and symbolic as in the previous short story, but in a more obscure manner. In this tale, the symbolic aspect is more oblique and it is connected with the division of the artificial-natural binomial present in the modern Western world: “A profound separation between humanity and the natural world was instituted, resulting in the alienation of modern citizens from a working engagement with nature, [...] the artificiality of contemporary relations to animals, and the degradation of the non-human world by industrial technologies” (Armstrong 2). Anthropomorphism is also a relevant element of the story, but to a different degree, when compared with the previous text. The horses and the tiger represent the animals “by themselves”, especially the first ones, as previously mentioned. They function as companion species and act as “real” horses, emitting animal sounds. There are different scenes in which the horses appear, first leading the carriage which brings Beauty to the Beast’s *palazzo* and then the riding moment through the woods:

Our horses, saddled and bridled, beasts in bondage, were waiting for us, striking sparks from the tiles with their impatient hooves while their stablemates lolled at ease among the straw, conversing with one another in the mute speech of horses. [...] The little black gelding who had brought me here greeted me with a ringing neigh that resonated inside the mist roof as in a sounding box and I knew he was meant for me to ride. (Carter 1996, 164)

Nevertheless, the Beast is a more complex character. He is, on the one hand, a real tiger which makes animal sounds—it roars and purrs—unable to produce human speech; his smell corresponds to an animal and naturally walks in four legs: “He was pacing backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, the tip of his heavy tail twitching as he paced out the

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length and breadth of his imprisonment between the gnawed and bloody bones” (168). On the other hand, Carter uses anthropomorphism in his characterization as a human being. The Beast, a real tiger, is performing the role of a human animal and he is perceived as such by Beauty, who describes him as a peculiar man “so big look so two-dimensional, in spite of the quaint elegance of The Beast, in the old-fashioned tailcoat that might, from its looks, have been bought in those distant years before he imposed seclusion on himself” (155).

Since the narrative’s opening, the Beast’ connection with the tiger appears in his heraldic emblem—“*La Bestia*”—was it to do with the heraldic signature” (155)—perceived as extravagant by the narrator, who emphasises his animality which a mask on his face cannot fully disguise: “He throws our human aspirations to the godlike sadly awry, poor fellow; only from a distance would you think The Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man’s face painted most beautifully on it. Oh, yes, a beautiful face” (156). The mask, used to hide his animal nature, provides the Beast with an “uncanny” appearance, due to the “formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny” (156), which recalls the tiger’s “fearful symmetry” in Blake’s poem “The Tyger” in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), yet perceiving him as “a deformed human rather than an animal” (Webb and Hopcroft 327). The Beast’s artificiality is further emphasised by his wig, gloves and by the fact that he uses his valet as an interpreter, thus encouraging a sense of otherness and alienation (Laskoski 46), as well as his difficulty to stand in two legs: “He has an odd air of self-imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop down on all fours” (Carter 1996, 156).

The unnamed protagonist reflects upon the monstrous condition of her host: “Lost to The Beast! And what, I wondered, might be the exact nature of his ‘beastliness’?” (158). Without knowing his true self as a tiger, Beauty remembers her nurse’s advice—which she considered “old wives’ tales” and superstitions—about weretigers, hybrid creatures that were half-man and half-tiger, and unconsciously connects them with the Beast’s nature:

My English nurse once told me about a tiger-man she saw in London, when she was a little girl, to scare me into good behaviour [...]. If you don't stop plaguing the nursemaids, my beauty, the tiger-man will come and take you away. They'd brought him from Sumatra, in the Indies, she said; his hinder parts were all hairy and only from the head downwards did he resemble a man. And yet The Beast goes always masked; it cannot be his face that looks like mine. But the tiger-man, in spite of his hairiness, could take a glass of ale in his hand like a good Christian and drink it down. (158)

Carter's play of references and connections among the different stories in the collection are numerous. In this story the narrator mentions another monstrous liminal character in relation to the weretiger, the Erl-King, a mythical creature which causes fear in children, also the male protagonist of the next story in the collection, "The Erl-King"—analysed in chapter five—: "Then the tiger-man would [...] hire the Erl-King's galloper of wind and ride through the night straight to the nursery and—Yes, my beauty! GOBBLE YOU UP!" (158).

It is possible to consider this characterization as symbolic anthropomorphism if we compare the two Beasts in Carter's short stories: while in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" the leonine Beast behaves and speaks like a human animal as a real anthropomorphic creature, his counterpart in "The Tiger's Bride" imitates human life but does not present human features.

The valet, on the contrary, reveals himself an animalistic creature camouflaged as a human servant with clothing proper of his condition, who is characterised by sharp intelligence:

The valet [...] forgot his station sufficiently to scratch busily beneath his white periwig with an over-supple index finger as he offered me what my old nurse would have called an "old-fashioned look", ironic, sly, a smidgen of disdain in it. And pity? No pity. His eyes were moist and brown, his face seamed with the innocent cunning of an ancient baby. He had an irritating habit of chattering to himself under his breath all the time as he packed up his master's winnings. (158)

His functions vary from translator to housekeeper, being in charge of Beauty. After the climax of the story, when both Beauty and the Beast cast aside artificiality in favour of their true nature by accepting both themselves and the other's bodies, the valet also engages the deconstruction of patriarchal artificial demands by revealing his own body:

Then the wind blew the valet whirling along the passage. He must have decided that, if one should go naked, then all should go naked; without his livery, he revealed himself, as I had suspected, a delicate creature, covered with silken moth-grey fur, brown fingers supple as leather, chocolate muzzle, the gentlest creature in the world. (168)

Carter introduces a liminal animalistic individual, an anthropomorphic animal which wears human clothes, speaks and acts like a human. His description, however, does not reproduce any non-human animal in particular, just animal traits in general; nevertheless, together with the narrator's reflections of his behaviour and his way of walking throughout the text, it may be possible to see a slightly resemblance with an ape. Clearly, the valet exhibits symbolic meaning, becoming a metaphor for the margins of humanity and animality conveyed in this character, a monstrous liminal creature, half human but also half animal. He represents a

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connection between the two worlds—humanity represented by Beauty and animality by the Beast—a bridge which reaches Western dualities.

In turn, Beauty is a woman character who is metamorphosed into a real tiger at the end of the story. Beauty is seen both as real and an allegory, a woman who frees from the patriarchal society’s restraints and artificiality and embraces her sexuality. Carter’s subtle subversion of the tradition of classical fairy tale presented at the end of the previous short story reaches its full expression on this one by the deconstruction of the fairy tale ending of humanity restored, thus inverting the metamorphosis and transforming the woman into a tiger. As a woman, Beauty not only is conscious of what is expected from her but also expresses her disconformity with her assigned role. However, the binary structure which has constructed her world prevents her from liberating herself from restraints and, consequently, she fails to recognise the Beast and the valet’s alterity until the end.

The whole story deconstructs Western Cartesian dualisms and the static vision which affects Beauty’s understanding of the world, incapable of coming to terms with the hybrid aspects of subjectivity. Beauty is surrounded by a consumerist society of artifice which produces rigid strictures for women, reflected in the narrative through Carter’s reference to the construction of artifice from natural elements, which eventually produces the tiger’s “fearful symmetry”. For this reason, the Beast’s tears, transformed into diamond earrings, recover their original shape when both Beauty and Beast accept their true selves: “My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders” (169). However, one of the most prominent examples of this Western dichotomy is embodied in the figure of the doll at the Beast’s palace, which reduplicates the narrator’s personal appearance as a recreation of the gothic *Doppelgänger*. She is an artificial mechanism which imitates human life and fulfils the role of the lady’s maid which helps Beauty to be prepared:

A knocking and clattering behind the door of the cupboard; the door swings open and out glides a soubrette from an operetta, with glossy, nut-brown curls, rosy cheeks, blue, rolling eyes; it takes me a moment to recognise her, in her little cap, her white stockings, her frilled petticoats. She carries a looking glass in one hand and a powder puff in the other and there is a musical box where her heart should be; she tinkles as she rolls towards me on her tiny wheels. ‘Nothing human lives here,’ said the valet. My maid halted, bowed; from a split seam at the side of her bodice protrudes the handle of a key. She is a marvellous machine, the most delicately balanced system of cords and pulleys in the world. (162)

The mechanical maid represents both artificiality and the passive female role in patriarchal systems, paradoxically evoking Beauty's essence and humanity yet being inhuman, or even posthuman, recalling Haraway's concept of the "cyborg", "creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted" (Haraway 2016, 6). The inert liminal doll imitates life, reproducing and echoing the patterns of conduct expected of women in a patriarchal society, helping Beauty to deal with her own role as a commodified element: "I certainly meditated on the nature of my own state, how I had been bought and sold, passed from hand to hand. That clockwork girl who powdered my cheeks for me; had I not been allotted only the same kind of imitative life amongst men that the doll-maker had given her?" (Carter 1996, 165). After confronting the Beast's own nature and her own sexuality, Beauty realises she does not want to be part of the society she knows, where her main function is reduced to an object of male desire. Thus, she decides to dress the mechanic doll as herself and send her to her father in her place and choosing her true animalistic subjectivity free of social conventions and established roles:

It is significant that the girl herself is the agent here: she uses the clockwork maid as a device to escape her father and her father's view of her as an object. In staying with The Beast, she is choosing an alternative life and an alternative self, achieving the change toward which so many fairy-tale protagonists aspire—but not according to the socioeconomic norms implied in those tales. Transformation here is a mechanism not for success in the patriarchal and hierarchical world but for escape from it. (Webb and Hopcroft 331)

The last level of my analysis deeps into the human-animal relationships, based on the influence and impact they have on each other. As I mentioned before, the connection between the female narrator and the horses establish a mutual understanding based not only in parallelisms but also in empathy, while her relation with the valet evolves from suspicion to mutual understanding. As for Beauty and the Beast's development, Carter's story opens with Beauty's knowledge of her role as a woman in a Western heteropatriarchal society which "drives an absolute division between the contrary conditions of humanity and animality, a division that is aligned with a series of others such as between subjects and objects, persons and things, morality and physicality, reason and instinct, and above all, society and nature" (Gross 10).

It is precisely this static clear-cut division of the world and being conscious of her role as a commodity, the narrator learned not only how to behave but also what to be expected from her. This Beauty, expected to be treated as an object and to be sexually abused, could not

#### 4. Felines: “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”

accept the situation she faced in the Beast’s *palazzo*, when the valet mentions that the Beast’s intentions towards her are just looking: “My master’s sole desire is to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress and that only for the one time after which she will be returned to her father undamaged with bankers’ orders for the sum which he lost to my master at cards and also a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses” (Carter 1996, 160). Beauty refuses to be treated as a mere sexual object, defying this situation by forcing the Beast to turn her in a doll/mannequin to be seen and be the object of public ridicule, trying to turn the situation to her own advantage:

You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once. After that I must be driven directly to the city and deposited in the public square, in front of the church. If you wish to give me money, then I should be pleased to receive it. But I must stress that you should give me only the same amount of money that you would give to any other woman in such circumstances. However, if you choose not to give me a present, then that is your right. (161)

Carter takes from traditional folklore and fairy tales repetition as a pattern. Three times is Beauty will be asked, twice will she negatively answer. As a consequence, she is threatened to see the Beast’s nudity instead, which eventually reveals the male character’s true self as a huge tiger:

The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers. A great, feline, tawny shape whose pelt was barred with a savage geometry of bars the colour of burned wood. His domed, 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. I felt my breast ripped apart as if I suffered a marvellous wound. The valet moved forward as if to cover up his master now the girl had acknowledged him, but I said: "No." The tiger sat still as a heraldic beast, in the pact he had made with his own ferocity to do me no harm. He was far larger than I could have imagined. (166)

This passage draws on an intertextual dialogue both with Carter’s previous story and with William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, a collection of poems that represents both contrary yet mutually dependant states of the soul, or a progression from childhood innocence to adult experience, represented, respectively, by the lamb and the tiger. Carter’s Miss Lamb from “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” becomes a wild creature in this tale. Like Blake, Carter’s idea of experience is not conceived only as an opposite state of innocence, but as a natural progression in which both complement each other:

It is Carter's contention that a certain amount of tigerishness may be necessary if women are to achieve an independent as opposed to a dependent existence [...]. But their change from lamb to tiger need not be a divesting of all 'feminine' qualities, as it is for de Sade; also, although society may slant things so that women appear to be better candidates for meat-eating, the nature of men is not fixed by Carter as inevitably predatory, with females as their 'natural' prey. Lambhood and tigerishness may be found in either gender and in the same individual at different times. (Gamble 122)

It is possible to appreciate how agency and subjectivity are gained through animalization. After her confrontation with the natural animal world which escapes from the binary restraints of Western societies, she is no longer the Other, the woman, the alienated, treated as a sexual object, a bargain who should vow to filial obedience. Beauty begins to develop a sense of empowerment by accepting her body and the tiger's alterity. In this sense, Beauty finds the courage to eventually remove her clothes, showing "my white skin, my red nipples [...]. Then the Beast lowered his massive head (Carter 1996, 166).

It is only when both characters dare to expose their natural selves to the other without artificial disguises that they come to truly understand and respect each other. There is no coincidence in the selection of scenario: the natural space of the woods is the location where "a profound sense of strangeness slowly began to possess me. I knew my two companions were not, in any way, as other men" (165), which marks the narrator's awareness of both the Beast and the valet's alternative nature:

I knew they lived according to a different logic than I had done until my father abandoned me to the wild beasts by his human carelessness. This knowledge gave me a certain fearfulness still; but, I would say, not much. . . I was a young girl, a virgin, and therefore men denied me rationality just as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all their unreason. [...] since all the best religions in the world state categorically that not beasts nor women were equipped with the flimsy, insubstantial things when the good Lord opened the gates of Eden and let Eve and her familiars tumble out. (165)

For Beauty, accepting her own nudity represented freedom—"I felt I was at liberty for the first time in my life" (166)—and she realises the artificiality of the world, contrary to the authenticity of her true self through her naked body:

I was unaccustomed to nakedness. I was so unused to my own skin that to take off all my clothes involved a kind of flaying. I thought The Beast had wanted a little thing compared with what I was prepared to give him; but it is not natural for humankind to go naked, not since first we hid our loins with fig leaves. He had demanded the abominable. I felt as much atrocious pain as if I was stripping off my own underpelt and the smiling girl stood poised in the oblivion of her balked simulation of life, watching me peel down to the cold, white meat of contract and,

#### 4. Felines: “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”

if she did not see me, then so much more like the market place, where the eyes that watch you take no account of your existence. (168)

The question of the gaze is more complex in this story than in the previous one. It is through the gaze that subjectivity is comprehended in both sides, since “reciprocity leads to the representation of an instance of female identity development which is linked to the male other as it needs the other’s gaze in order to awaken self-awareness, but at the same time is not entirely defined, nor conditioned by the other” (Pasolini 55). The first time the characters see each other, the narrator only appreciates the Beast’s yellow eyes strayed through the mask (Carter 1996, 155). The second time they see each other’s eyes, he is ashamed of his own petition and eventually evades hers: “During this interview, my eyes were level with those inside the mask that now evaded mine as if, to his credit, he was ashamed of his own request even as his mouthpiece made it for him” (161). The third time, the Beast’s gaze is portrayed as the “annihilated vehemence” which reveals himself as a tiger. After facing each other’s nudity, Beauty sees her reflection in the mirror but hardly recognises herself, until the final moment of identification takes place and she sees herself reflected in his golden eyes: “I was now within the field of force of his golden eyes” (169). Instead of being objectified by the male gaze, Beauty is self-affirmed, embracing the otherness of the monster and the otherness in herself by blurring the existing boundaries that divide categories such as human or animal, male and female (Laskoski 64).

After this episode, Beauty confronts her sexuality by embracing her inner animalistic naked self, aware of her animal side. Departing from Carter’s use of the carnivore/herbivore binary from the previous text, the end of “The Tiger’s Bride” evolves into a subversion of these categories, not only by inverting the roles but by blurring the established limits between animal and human identities. When Beauty approaches the tiger, she breaks free from her fears of sexual desire, transmitted in superstition and legends—as well as from “Beauty and the Beast” fairy tales—about women being eaten by a beast:

He will gobble you up. Nursery fears made flesh and sinew, earliest and most archaic of fears, fear of devourment. The beast and his carnivorous bed of bone and I, white, shaking, raw, approaching him as if offering, in myself, the key to a peaceable kingdom in which his appetite need not to be my extinction. He went still as stone. He was far more frightened of me that I was of him. (Carter 1996, 169)

The passage recalls subsequent narratives in the collection, such as “The Company of Wolves”, where Red Riding Hood realises she is “nobody’s meat” (219). In fact, as the

narrator mentions, the “carnivore” monster is actually an evolution of the shy, scared male from the previous story.

The beast eventually loses his fear while approaching the narrator and, most significantly, by detecting her own animality as a feline: “He growled at the back of his throat, lowered his head, sank on to his forepaws, snarled, showed me his red gullet, his yellow teeth. I never moved. He snuffled the air, as if to smell my fear; he could not. Slowly, slowly he began to drag his heavy, gleaming weight across the floor towards me” (169). By doing so, the tiger acknowledges a “reciprocal pact” with the lamb and, in recognition of his acceptance, he begins to purr.

The narrative’s climax occurs when Carter’s Beauty is metamorphosed “under the Beast’s caresses, into a furry, naked creature like him” (Warner 1994, 310) in a highly erotic scene. Carter “portray[s] female sexual desire as the making of a monster” (Saxena 201) at the moment the Tiger’s tongue starts to lick her:

He dragged himself closer and closer to me, until I felt the harsh velvet of his head against my hand, then a tongue, abrasive as sandpaper. “He will lick the skin off me!” 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 shiny hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur. (Carter 1996, 169)

As such, the human-animal divide is blurred by reinserting the human in the natural world. Carter presents a hybrid and metamorphic self when Beauty accepts her instincts and her animalistic body: “Most notably, her metamorphosis, as the one advocated by Braidotti, is not an individual act: it requires the presence of the other—in this case of the Beast—to be fully enacted and achieved” (Pasolini 95). In so doing, Carter suggests a world of gender equality in which both men and women can not only freely enjoy their sexuality, but also develop alternative relationships “beyond just the human” (Laskoski 59). As a result, Beauty leaves her clothes aside—symbolic representations of the social conventions—and accepts her animal nature, a necessary step to become a complete individual:

The heroine of “The Tiger’s Bride” moves almost naturally from one layer of identity to the next as she divests herself of her clothes. She moves from clothes to skin to fur [...]. Dressing-gown, mask and wig are not part of the Beast, but a costume [...]. Man or Tiger, but never both, he is a prisoner of dualism, while Alice and the Tiger’s bride are representatives of another, feminine, plural economy. (Crunelle-Vanrigh 140)

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Carter’s Beauties play with the Beast since they feel excited by his animalistic self and this fact unleash their desires (Warner 1994, 308). “The Tiger’s Bride” commemorates the “perverse desirability of indeterminacy and liminality, the erotic but dangerous fascination of multiplicity” (Crunelle-Vanrigh139) through the female protagonist’s transformation. The protagonist’s final metamorphosis is the epitome of her reciprocal pact with the tiger, ceasing to be the lamb and becoming something more powerful and less sacrificial: “Running with the tigers means self-assertion, but not at the cost of simply of devouring the other” (Day 147). It is for this reason that “The Tiger’s Bride” culminates by exorcising “the stereotypical gendered paradigm of matrimony. Beauty equals the Beast in her fleshly nature and appetite as she disregards the fairy-tale superstitions of beasts gobbling up young girls. As the Beast removes the mask of the handsome man, Beauty discards the codes by which she has been living” (Saxena 200).

In both tales, Carter used metamorphosis as an empowering strategy, indirectly suggested in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and fully explored in “The Tiger’s Bride”. While in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” Carter presents a semi-humanizing ending for Beauty and her husband, now converted into a man, “The Tiger’s Bride” inverts the process and shows how the female protagonist leaves her human side to become a real tiger, as her partner: “In the last lines, Mr and Mrs Lyon, the ordinary bourgeois married couple who were once Beauty and the Beast, walk ‘in a drift of fallen petals’ [...]. “The Tiger’s Bride” [...] concludes not, by contrast, in the socialization and humanization of the Beast, but in her accepting her inward, deepest, essential Beastly nature and becoming transformed herself [...].” (Munford ix).

Carter’s two rewritings of the classic fairy tale of “Beauty and the Beast” address the construction of women’s identity in its full complexity, thus departing from reductionist binary oppositions by offering a satisfactory communion between body and mind, human and animal, a fluidity state in nature. Carter employed animalistic imagery to deconstruct patriarchal roles, sexuality and Western division between nature and artifice:

But Carter sets out to explore ways of amending and changing them through the redefinition—or, in some instances, the rejection—of the confines between the human and the animal, which begins with blurring the boundaries between their bodies. In order to dismiss the negative definition of the animal and its association with woman, animality must be redefined in positive terms, so that when woman chooses to turn into a beast, it becomes a willing act of empowerment and liberation. (Pasolini 90)



## **5. BIRDS: “THE ERL-KING”, “THE SNOW CHILD” AND “THE LADY OF THE HOUSE OF LOVE”**

This chapter focuses on the three short stories of Carter’s collection in which the presence of birds is entangled with human female subjectivity. Each one of the stories belongs to a different rewriting, being “The Erl-King” the only text in the collection which is based on a medieval Germanic folktale with an eponymous name. “The Snow Child”, the shortest of them all, is a reassessment of a dark Germanic variant of “Snow White” and, finally, “The Lady of the House of Love” is a Gothic vampiric subversion of “The Sleeping Beauty”. These three stories, placed exactly in this position and in between the feline and wolf trilogy, are marked by the presence of different birds and human-animal metamorphosis. The first two stories introduce metamorphic women who are transformed into birds, while the last one addresses an important difference: “The Lady of the House of Love” presents no birdy transformations but a female vampire instead. Even though the Countess is a beastly animalistic monster with claws, her description does not correspond to any animal in concrete. My choice to examine the text in the framework of this chapter is justified by the analogies between an empirical bird and the vampiric Countess: the character’s symbolic situation is reflected through the bird’s confinement, as will be subsequently analysed.

I will briefly examine the origins and variants of the three tales to see the connection with Carter’s short stories, paying especial attention to issues pertaining to female identity and sexuality. I will also explore the connections between Angela Carter’s works in general with birds, vampires and their cultural and literary representation. Finally, the analysis of the three stories based on Saphiro and Copeland’s guidelines will occupy the major focus of attention.

### **5.1. “THE ERLKING”**

Angela Carter’s short story “The Erl-King” is the only text in the whole collection of *The Bloody Chamber* which is based on a figure from folklore, legends and folktales instead of the fairy tale realm. In the Scandinavian folklore, the Erlking represents the king of the elves.

This trope—or one of its female variants—is also found in Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic traditions, being one of the earliest texts a Danish ballad from the sixteenth century in which the character of an elf maid appears as a female evil monster.

From the Scandinavian countries, these legends permeate the Germanic oral stratum in the form of folktales, Medieval German romances and ballads: an evil elf or goblin torments passengers, villagers and children who go through the Black Forest. These folktales became very popular in the German Romantic tradition, exemplified in Johann Gottfried von Herder's ballad "The Erlking's Daughter" (1778), based on a Danish poem about the elf maid and transformed it into a story about the elves' king's daughter, a female evil spirit who takes revenge on a groom—a man who refused to dance with her—by killing him.

Gottfried von Herder's version also influenced a Goethe's poem "The Erlking" (1782). However, Goethe's ballad goes back to the male trope of the Erlking in detriment of the female characters, who are almost absent. In his poem, a father is riding a horse with his child and the boy is haunted by the evil Erlking, who causes his death at the end. Goethe's ballad also influenced Franz Schubert who, in turn, created his lied "Erlkönig" in 1815 with the same infanticidal plot:

Los originales más conocidos de la historia del encuentro con el rey elfo son la ballada de Goethe, "El rey elfo" ("Der Erlkönig"), la adaptación musical de Schubert y la traducción de Johann Gottfried von Herder de un poema danés, "La hija del rey de los elfos" ("Erlkönigs Tochter"), en la que se basara Goethe. En todas estas versiones la figura femenina queda al margen de la historia principal relatada de un modo u otro. (García Domínguez 62)

As such, the figure of the Erlking is considered an omen of death in line with other folkloric counterparts, taking into account that both in Goethe and Schubert's works it is only the child who sees the Erlking, not his father.

In the seventh edition of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* edited by Dinah Birch (2009), there is an entry about the Erlking and how this folklore figure appeared in the British literary context during the Romantic period:

**Erl-King**, the German *Erlkönig*, subject of a famous ballad by \*Goethe (1782). The name derives from a Danish word meaning king of the elves, but Goethe may have associated the word with *Erle* or alder tree. In the ballad, introduced into England by Matthew \*Lewis's translation, he is a sinister figure who lures a child to his death. Lewis brought it to the notice of Walter \*Scott, who also produced a translation. Goethe's ballad was the basis of one of Franz \*Schubert's best-known

## 5. Birds: “The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”

settings (1816). Erl-King is also the subject of a ‘ghost’ story by the Dublin writer John Connolly which was broadcast by the BBC in 2000. (347)

Carter used these different approximations as hypotexts in her short story “The Erl-King” but presenting an important change: the woman is the clear protagonist and narrator of the events. Carter’s claiming for women’s voice and identity, present in the whole collection, acquires in this particular story more strength and importance due to the narrator’s struggle for subjectivity (Rodríguez Salas 2010, 225).

### 5.2. “SNOW WHITE”

The origins of the “Snow White” fairy tale are found mainly in Europe but also in America, Africa and Asia Minor. However, the different tales and stories do not present common features until Giambattista Basile’s work, an Italian poet and folktale collector who lived in different Italian courts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Basile’s fairy-tale compilation, initially entitled *Lo Cunto de li Cunti overo lo Trattenimento de Peccerille—The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*—and also known as *Il Pentamerone* later on, was published posthumously in 1634. His tale “La Schiavottella” (“The Young Slave”) is considered the early literary retelling of this fairy tale and entails reminiscences of “Sleeping Beauty”, “Cinderella” and “Snow White” (Shojaei Kawan 327). Basile’s “The Young Slave” introduces a magical conception of a child, Lisa, the blessings of the fairies she receives and the final curse which leads to the girl’s death. Lisa’s childish body is placed in seven glass coffins while time passes and her body grows up. Years later, she is awakened and finally marries her uncle (Bacchilega 1997, 30). Even though Basile’s fairy tale differs from the main plot of the Brothers Grimm’s tale—the most popular one nowadays—the main common points relate the “Snow White” tradition with an apparently dead innocent girl lying in a glass coffin and the female rivalry theme for the male figure’s affection between a more mature woman and the younger girl.

The fairy tale of “Snow White” became very popular in its oral versions, especially in Germany where, centuries later, the Brothers Grimm dug into folklore to select some renderings for their *Household Tales*. Bettelheim collects some of the German folk versions which the Grimms finally dismissed. In one of them, the protagonists are a count and a countess riding through the woods while the count expresses his desire of having a girl “white

as snow, red as blood and black as a raven's feather", while in the Grimm's version, it is the mother's desire to conceive a girl in such terms:

As they drove on, they encounter a girl as white as snow, as red as blood, and with hair as black as the raven; and she was Snow White. The count immediately made her sit in the coach and loved her, but the countess did not like it and though only about how she could get rid of her. Finally, she dropped her glove and ordered Snow White to look for it; in the meantime the coachman had to drive on with great speed. [...] A parallel version differs only in the detail that the couple drive through a forest and Snow White is asked to descend to gather a bunch of beautiful roses. (Bettelheim 200)

Interestingly, Angela Carter based her short story "The Snow Child" in these actual retellings rather than in the main well-known plot of the Brothers Grimm with the stepmother, the mirror and the dwarves. As previously mentioned, Carter meant to use the core of the fairy tales to create her short stories with a deconstructive purpose and, as such, these two dark accounts concentrate the sexual violent aspects essential for Carter's subversion.

However, the fairy tale "Little Snow White" or "Snow Drop" is well-known today for the Brothers Grimm's story, collected in *Children's and Household Tales* (1812). The Grimms rewrote the fairy tale in different occasions modifying the content replacing "the mother for the stepmother in the second edition after having already substituted, in the first (1812), the motif of the compassionate hunter for the mother leaving her daughter behind during a ride in the forest" (Shojaei Kawan 334). In their final version, after pricking her finger, the Queen sees her drops of blood in the snow and wishes to have a daughter "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony" (Vaz da Silva 243) and dies at childbirth.

The importance of the three colours—black, red and white—of the fairy tale are found in literature in different works throughout many centuries. This is one of the most indispensable features of the "Snow White" tale in its many variables due to the influence of Basile's tale "The Crow":

Twelfth-century Chrétien de Troyes has famously let us know that the sight of three drops of blood on snow reminds Perceval of his sweetheart [...]. Five centuries later, the complete chromatic trio surfaced in a fairy tale. Giambattista Basile's tale 4.9, "The Crow" [...]: 'Would that I could have a wife as red and white as this stone, and with hair and eyebrows as black as the feathers of this crow'. (Vaz da Silva 242)

As such, the trinomial is essential for the Grimm’s retellings of the “Snow White” and, consequently, for the subsequent versions, including Angela Carter’s short story. Nevertheless, the Grimms—who found the tricolour reference in the second version of their tale material—changed the reference of black as a raven’s feather considered “an image of very ill omen, a foreboding of death, which they also knew from Basile’s *Cuorvo* [...] and medieval Celtic literature” (Shojaei Kawan 335) for a dark wood such as ebony. Francisco Vaz da Silva (2007) has pointed out the importance of the chromatic aspects of the tale and their symbolic representation regarding sexuality. While white represents the purity and innocence of the immature girl, red symbolises her sexual maturation:

The whole point of Snow White’s sleep in the glass coffin is that she still has “pretty red cheeks [...]. In sum, the purity of whiteness is there to be tinted. [...] this is a theme of passage from the purity of infancy (white) to the mature realm of procreation (red). In both perspectives, the red-on-white stain embodies a threshold. (245-246)

Black is contrasted with the two previous colours, meaning death and enchantment “primarily in the shape of an otherworldly bird (crow, raven) that has been killed” (Vaz da Silva 246). Da Silva also mentions N. J. Girardot’s comments of the importance of the three-colour symbolism of the tale that frames the female protagonist, who represents “the idea of a union of the red (menstrual blood) and white (semen) through the agency of the black (the ritual ‘death’ involved in the initiation and marriage union)” (247).

This is in tune with Bettelheim’s approach on the psychoanalytic aspects of the fairy tale, who establishes how “sexual innocence, whiteness, is contrasted with sexual desire, symbolized by the red blood. Fairy tales prepare the child to accept what is otherwise a most upsetting event: sexual bleeding, as in menstruation and later in intercourse when the hymen is broken” (202). Bettelheim’s view of this fairy tale concerns the oedipal conflict between the mother and the daughter: the competition for the father’s affection and the jealousy plot between the (step)mother and the girl (Bettelheim 202) and the girl’s successful resolution of the conflict. However, other literary critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar focus on the patriarchal role models that the fairy tale establishes through the girl as the “angel-woman” opposite to the Evil Queen the “monster-woman” (Bacchilega 1997, 31). This binary code for female behaviour in patriarchal societies is present in the majority of the literary fairy tales, as earlier observed. The passive, beautiful Snow White is compensated with marriage for all the suffering she has to endure, while the evil Queen is cruelly punished to dance at

Snow White's wedding with a pair of red-hot iron slippers until she dies. While the evil antagonist represents a powerful role, the princess remains speechless: "Snow White rarely has a voice of her own, and when she does speak, she merely accepts things as they are" (Bacchilega 1997, 35). It is important to remark the creation of the girl following the mother's desire as a representation of the ideal of womanhood, mimicking the role model the mother adopted for herself: the mother's acceptance of her passive role as an "angel" is passed to her child, exemplified in the three-colour symbolism.

"Snow White" became one of the most popular fairy tales all over the world, also due to Walt Disney's film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), as Tatar (1999) points out: "Disney Studios bears the responsibility for turning Snow White into a cultural icon, making her the best known fairy-tale character in this country" (77). The film reinforced gender roles in a male-dominated culture portraying the naïve passive girl mainly doing the chores at the dwarves' house or singing waiting for her prince.

In contrast with the Grimms' fairy tale and Disney's sugary version, Angela Carter's short story, "The Snow Child", goes back to the darkest and violent retellings to deal brutally with female rivalry in an exaggerated patriarchal society which not only objectifies women but also creates the fantasy of the ideal of womanhood.

### 5.3. "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY"

The basic elements of "The Sleeping Beauty" can be traced back to Ancient times. Its common features were found in Greek mythology, in Indian tales, and were very popular in Europe during the Middle Ages, in connection to the chivalry literary tradition. All these versions share points in common as regards to the plot: a man—a god, a rajah, a king, a prince or a hero—is captivated by a sleeping maid's beauty and rapes her. In most of the versions there is another female character next to the man—the evil wife or mother—who feels envy and tries to kill the young woman and her children. The Sleeping Beauty remains passive until the man restores peace and punishes the envious woman, rewarding the young one.

Critics like Ester Zago asserted the origins of the fairy tale in an Indian oral tale titled "Surya Bai", collected and published by a British woman called Mary Frere in 1868. The

sleeping Surya Bai is found by the rajah who wakes her up after raping her, then he marries her, and both have children. At palace, his first wife feels envy of Surya Bai and kills her. The story presents a happy ending in which the protagonist is resurrected, the first wife is killed and Surya Bai lives happily with her husband and children (Fernández Rodríguez 21). Since the earliest versions, we find the theme of the female rivalry, a fact that will be present until the twenty-first century adaptations of the tale. Greek mythology figures such as Persephone, Leto or Thalia—from Aeschylus’s lost tragedy *Women of Aetna*—are also connected with the Sleeping Beauty theme:

*Las Etneas*, en las que se cuenta el modo en el que Zeus, casado con Hera, conquistó a Talía [...] y tuvo con ella dos hijos. [...] Es indudable que existen puntos en común entre este mito [...] y posteriores versiones de “La bella durmiente”; en concreto, la proximidad mayor se da con respecto al cuento de Basile, cuya protagonista se llama asimismo Talía. Pero, además, el motivo del rapto y la heroína que engendra dos gemelos, permaneciendo escondida hasta el nacimiento de sus hijos, se repite en los relatos de Basile y Perrault. (Fernández Rodríguez 26)

The theme of the sleeping woman is also representative of the Icelandic mythology in the thirteenth century through the *Volsunga Saga*, from which the Middle High German epic poem *The Song of the Nibelungs* was created. This poem, in turn, was the basis for Richard Wagner’s opera *The Ring of the Nibelung* (1848-1874). Wagner dealt with this plot in his second part, *The Valkyrie*, where Brünnhilde interprets the role of the Sleeping Beauty, being surrounded by a ring of fire until the hero comes to wake her up. Regarding the medieval European tradition of the fairy tale, the sleeping maid tales were very popular, being one of the most representatives a French prose romance titled *Perceforest*, published in 1528 and characterised for its humoristic tone.

However, the three most important accounts of the fairy tale are from Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. Basile’s fairy tale is based on the motif of “Sleeping Beauty”, and is called “Sun, Moon, and Talia”. Talia, the daughter of a nobleman, is destined to be killed by a splinter of flax. This sleeping maiden is found by a king who, engaging with the tradition of the tale, reproduces the raping, marrying and punishing plot. The typical fairy tale division between good and evil female characters is also found in Basile’s tale: Talia, as a passive woman who accepts her horrible fate with resignation and the evil King’s wife, a Machiavellian woman who plans to kill Talia and her children. The King embodies the traditional hero, the saviour who rescues the sleeping maid and, thanks to him,

she can fulfil her role as a mother and a wife. He can enjoy his sexuality to the point that he abuses and rapes a sleeping woman lacking her will to decide:

Son ellos los que disfrutan de la libertad sexual absoluta [...] y, también en relación con ellos, aparece una tendencia de carácter necrófilo [...]. Por otra parte, el episodio de la violación de Talía ofrece un ejemplo más de la violencia sexual que construye [...] uno de los rasgos característicos de los cuentos de hadas. (Fernández Rodríguez 35)

Female identity in “The Sleeping Beauty” is seen in binary, opposite terms of good and evil, as previously mentioned. The evil female antagonist is the powerful one, while the protagonist is a beautiful foolish naïve young woman lacking any power. It is precisely her lack of power what seduces men: “‘La bella durmiente’ [...] se rodea de un aura de atractivo en el momento en el que se halla completamente desposeída de toda fuerza y de cualquier poder: cuanto más desvalida y más a merced de los abusos y las crueldades de otros seres, tanta más fascinación ejerce a los ojos del hombre” (Fernández Rodríguez 57). The meaning of the tale implied a model of behaviour in the patriarchal order for women as patient, uncomplaining, passive and quiet in order to get a reward: marriage and motherhood. No matter how hard life treats women and the many miseries they experience, they should remain silent to be rewarded. Basile’s version of the “Sleeping Beauty” will inspire Perrault and the Brothers Grimm in the following centuries (Bettelheim 227).

Perrault included a version of this fairy tale, entitled “The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood” in his collection *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé*. Perrault modified Basile’s story plot but maintains its main symbolism. He begins his tale in a kingdom in which the monarchs cannot have a child. After a long time, the queen gives birth to a child and they invite seven fairies to the girl’s baptism, but an uninvited, jealous fairy appears and curses the girl: she will prick her finger with a spindle and she will die. The seventh fairy softens the curse with her gift; the girl will not die but sleep deeply for a hundred years and will be awakened by a prince. After the awakening, the princess marries her rescuer and they have two children, Dawn and Day. In the second part of the story, Perrault changed the male figure’s wife for a mother, an evil ogress who does not like her daughter-in-law but maintained the “happily ever after” ending. Regarding female characterization and identity, it is important to bear in mind Basile’s division of good and evil women, which Perrault continues:

En el plano arquetípico las narraciones de Basile y Perrault apenas se distinguen entre sí. [...] La mujer es ángel o demonio: la primera está caracterizada por una belleza sin igual y por ser joven, pasiva y virgen al llegar al matrimonio [...]; la segunda, en cambio, es una mujer mayor [...] que tiene poder [...]. Se ha cambiado el parentesco que une a ambas mujeres con el monarca, pero el arquetipo de la rivalidad femenina permanece intacto. (Fernández Rodríguez 40)

The Brothers Grimm incorporate the “Sleeping Beauty” fairy tale titled “Little Briar Rose” in their collection *Children’s and Household Tales* in 1812 and they modified the tale in the many revisions they did (Tatar 2014, 147). They based their tale mainly in Perrault’s version but they introduced a few important changes: they present twelve fairies instead of seven; the curse affects to everybody at the princess’s fifteenth birthday; the spell is broken by the prince’s kiss; and the biggest change was eliminating the whole second part of Basile and Perrault’s tales in order to portray the prince as a virtuous man, the perfect chivalric Prince Charming. The Brothers Grimm’s Sleeping Beauty is again a silent, inactive, lifeless woman whose reward is a married life with the perfect prince.

During the nineteenth and twentieth century, many different adaptations of the story have been made taken from both Perrault and Brother Grimm tales, such as poems, ballets, retellings, and some Disney’s films. In Tchaikovsky’s ballet (1890) the Sleeping Beauty is called Aurora—in Perrault’s version, however, Aurora was her daughter whereas she remained unnamed—and from that moment until now, the different adaptations named her as such.

In his psychoanalytically inspired reading of the tale, Bettelheim places the emphasis on the protagonist’s sexual awakening due to its symbolism. The maid is often locked in a room waiting for a man who will break the curse which, in Bettelheim’s view, represents in dreams the female sexual organs and a key turning it its lock could symbolise sexual intercourse (Bettelheim 233). Furthermore, the young woman from Perrault and the Brothers Grimm’s versions bleeds when she pricks her finger with the spindle which signals her not being prepared for sexuality: “Bleeding, as in menstruation, is for the young girl [...] an overwhelming experience if she is not emotionally ready for it” (233). However, Bettelheim’s theory is based on a “period of passivity” in which the child or adolescent is inactive until she is mature enough for sexual intercourse. The kiss in the fairy tale is what triggers this sexual awakening, being the female character able to abandon her inactive narcissist period to join a man in a relationship that allows her complete female fulfilment. However, as Fernández

Rodríguez (1998) points out, there are female critics that rejected the kiss as a negative aspect in the tale regarding female subjugation to male desire: “el beso del príncipe está cargado de connotaciones negativas. Para ella, la mujer que vive esperando recibir el beso de su “príncipe azul” ha perdido la capacidad de ser autónoma e independiente y se construye a sí misma de acuerdo con el deseo de otro, nunca del suyo propio” (67). Curiously, for Bettelheim “male and female figures appear in the same roles in fairy tales” (Bettelheim 226).

Zipes’s approach to the “Sleeping Beauty” fairy tale focuses on the portrayal of the female protagonist, and how the fairy gifts at the beginning of the tale influence her female identity. Both in Perrault and the Brothers Grimm’s stories, the fairy godmothers give the little princess beauty, grace and abilities for dancing, singing and playing instruments—these were the requirements for an upper-class ideal of femininity. Contrary to Bettelheim, Zipes deals with the traditional division of gender roles in the fairy tales and how these patriarchal stereotypes functioned as didactic models for women:

In *Sleeping Beauty*, the princess is actually endowed with the following ‘gifts’ by the fairies: beauty, the temper of an angel, grace, the ability to dance perfectly, the voice of the nightingale, and musicality. In other words, she is bred to become the ideal aristocratic lady. Further, she is expected to be passive and patient for a hundred years until a prince rescues and resuscitates her. [...] Then she must demonstrate even more patience when her children are taken away from her by the ogress. Such docility and self-abandonment are rewarded in the end when the prince returns to set things right. Perrault then added a verse moral which sings a hymn of praise to patience. (Zipes 1991, 24)

#### 5.4. ANGELA CARTER AND BIRDS

Birds in general have been used as symbols for centuries. They are present in many different cultures and mythologies, being each type of bird a representation of a particular meaning. In religion and myth in Ancient times, birds were considered messengers from the deities, for example corvids—ravens, crows and other similar scavenger birds—were portrayals of bad omens or prophetic elements in Scandinavian and classical folklore: “For Greeks and Romans alike, the bird was the augural animal par excellence. Birds provided signs to humans not only through complex actions, which required interpretation, but more frequently by the mere appearance of a particular species in a particular position in the sky” (Gildenhard and Zissos ch. “Introduction Part I”). Some birds were adored as deities—such as the peacock in India or the hummingbird in the Mesoamerican cultures—or regarded as mythological monsters, like

the Roc. The owl was the emblem of Greek mythological goddess of wisdom, Athena; the dove is the representation of innocence and the Holy Spirit in the Biblical tradition and swans embodied innocence and love in Irish mythology—the legend of children of Lir— and in Greek and Latin cultures.

Greek and Latin authors include birds in their works, for example Aesop’s fables or Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in which we found elements such as birds’ feathers in one of the most representative and well-known classic myths, Daedalus and Icarus, the myth of Tereus and Philomela transformed into birds and the myth of Leda and the Swan. Angela Carter’s novel *The Magic Toyshop* (1967)—and her eponymous film in 1987—is a postmodernist twist of this last classic myth together with Yeats’ reformulation of the same: “The myth of Leda and the swan has inspired numerous male interpretations [...], but it has also appealed to women artists [...] [like] Angela Carter, in one of her early novels, *The Magic Toyshop*, consciously revisited the Yeatsian foundation myth” (Warner 2002, 113).

Birds have been also related to poetry: Medieval works such as “The Owl and the Nightingale” or Chaucer’s poem *The Parlement of Foules* (1350-1400) initiated this tradition, which continued throughout the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. These non-human animals were also a key element in fairy tales: they are present in Basile’s tale “The Crow”, in some Germanic versions of “Cinderella” in the figure of the dove and in “Snow White” with the crow’s feathers, in Brothers Grimm’s *Children’s and Household Tales* through “Little Snow White”, “The Raven”, “The Three Crows”, “The Goose Girl” or “the Six Swans”, in Andrew Lang’s “The Crow” from *The Yellow Fairy Book*, or in Andersen’s “The Ugly Duckling”, among many others.

However, there was an important increase in the use of birds as symbolic elements in poetry during the Romantic period with authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798), William Wordsworth’s “To the Cuckoo” (1807), John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” (1819), or Percy Shelley’s “To a Skylark” (1820), among others. The singing bird became an important trope for these male Romantic poets:

More so than their mere presence, however, it is the similarity perceived between songbirds and poets that gives this class of animals an important place in literary history. The lyric power of birds has made poets look to them for inspiration. This

conventionally assumed connection was of central importance for the Romantics, who gave pride of place to birds both in their poetry and poetics. (Egbert 9)

This fact is important to understand Angela Carter's short story "The Erl-King" and its connection to the Romantic male lyrical tradition and the silenced position of women in their poetry, as will be argued later in this chapter.

Gothic and fantasy literature and culture also nurtured from the trope of the bird, as clearly demonstrated in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845) and Daphne du Maurier's story "The Birds" (1952), which inspired Hitchcock's eponymous film.

Angela Carter dealt with birds in many different manners throughout her work. In her journalistic articles, she wrote generally about birds in "Animals in the Nursery" (1976), by contemplating the interspecies relationships which appear particularly in children's literature:

Most writers for children latch on to and vulgarise that Garden of Eden world of wise, talking beasts, sentient flowers, sermonising stones, that children appear to inhabit effortlessly. Sexual unawakenedness is a feature of this primitive world, where extraordinary miscegenations take place. An owl can marry a pussy cat, for example. A mouse, a bird and a sausage set up a *ménage à trois*. (Carter 2013, 365)

In "Little Lamb, Get Lost" (1978), Carter also discussed William Blake's poem "Auguries of Innocence" (1863) and the differentiation in the symbolic meaning of different types of birds. Carter ironized Blake's preference for prototypical icons of innocence such as the robin and the dove by demanding the same status in the literary tradition for other birds less appreciated, as the vilified scavengers which are associated with death and bad omens:

But I do not wish to appear hard on Blake, who in spite of these irrational projections, in general had a sound if sentimental line on animals. (If a robin red-breast in a cage put all heaven in a rage, one hopes heaven would be similarly aflutter at the caging of less attractive birds such as those vultures with the appearance and the habits of hanging judges). (Carter 2013, 374)

Minor references to birds also appear in "All Creatures Great and Small" (1979) where Carter criticised a BBC's natural history series, *Life on Earth*, and its main (human-animal) protagonist, David Attenborough, and also "In Pantoland" (1991) by the figure of Mother Goose, a female character interpreted by a man which is clearly connected with issues of storytelling and the embodiment of female identity:

The Goose in Mother Goose is, or so they say, the Hamlet of animal roles, introspective and moody as only a costive bird straining over its egg might be.

## 5. Birds: “The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”

There is a full gamut of emotion in the Goose role -- loyalty and devotion to her mother, joy and delight at her own maternity; heartbreak at the loss of egg, fear and trembling at the wide variety of gruesome possibilities which might occur if, in the infinite intercouplings of possible texts which occur all the time in the promiscuity of Pantoland, one story will effortlessly segue into another story, so that Mother Goose twins up with Jack and the Beanstalk, involving an egg-hungry ogre; or with Robin Hood, incorporating a goose-hungry Sheriff of Nottingham. Note that the Goose, like the Dame, is a female role usually, though not always, played by a man. But the Goose does not represent the exaggerated and parodic femininity of Widow Twankey. The Goose's femininity is real. She is all woman. Witness the centrality of the egg in her life. [...] Because of this, and because she is the prime focus of all attention, the Goose in Mother Goose is the premier animal role, even more so than... (Carter 2013, 483)

Birds appear in Carter's novels such as *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) regarding the myth of Leda and the Swan and *Nights at the Circus* (1984) with Fevvers and her feathers. Carter also used parrots in one of her children's books, *Miss Z, The Dark Young Lady* (1970). Nevertheless, birds are an important recurrent element of her short stories, being in her collection *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993) with “Ashputtle or The Mother's Ghost”—Cinderella's dead mother transformed into a dove—“Alice in Prague or The Curious Room”; in two of her uncollected short stories: “The Scarlet House” and “The Snow Pavilion”; and in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) with “The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”, three stories with noticeable Gothic atmosphere connected to the birds.

### 5.5. ANGELA CARTER AND VAMPIRES

Angela Carter's female protagonist of “The Lady of the House of Love” is an intersection between Sleeping Beauty, metaphorically personified in the encaged bird, with the female vampire trope. However, this story is not the only vampiric account in the work of the author.

In the preface to *The Vampire Book*, Melton reproduces the vampire's definition in the common dictionary as “a reanimated corpse that rises from the grave to suck the blood of living people and thus retain a semblance of life” (1994, xxii). The vampire is a literary figure presented in some different ways through mythological creatures in the folklore since old times and present in the great majority of the cultures of the world. Focusing on Europe, the development of the literary vampire in the nineteenth century is based on the image taken from the Slav countries and from Greece, as Botting (1996), argues: “The origins of the vampire were explained the fears of the Plague, thought, since the Middle Ages, to have emanated from the East” (146). As such, vampires were often related to social hysteria,

especially in the East of Europe since 1670 up to 1770 (Melton xxxiii-xxxiv), coinciding with the witch hunts and witchcraft trials in the West of Europe. In order to defeat and kill a vampire, the tradition establishes that a stake should be driven into the heart, beheading him or her, burning the body and spreading the ashes, as explained in Augustine Calmet's *Traité sur les Apparitions des Esprits et sur les Vampires*, published in 1751. In this sense, Elizabeth Bathory, a descendant of Vlad the Impaler, is probably regarded as the most popular of historical female vampires. In the sixteenth century, she was accused of being a vampire due to the numerous victims, whose blood had been drained from their bodies, found in her castle and, as such, Bathory became part of the Gothic imaginary, as Carter accounts in her journal article "Through a Text Backwards: The Resurrection of the House of Usher" (1988): "Just as the Countess Elizabeth Bathory, the Hungarian vampire, was by the baths of blood she used to take long ago, in Transylvania, in a benighted mansion not unlike this one" (Carter 2013, 591).

Vampires have been characterised in literature as metamorphic and liminal creatures who present human aspect changeable into animals—there are many references to the transformation into cats or bats: "The shape-shifting potential displayed by our monster is why the vampire has become a beloved trope of literary criticism" (Butler 6). Even though vampires are not exactly a representation of animals in literature, the animalistic features this kind of monster presents, together with its metamorphic condition, made possible the analysis of the trope from the perspective of literary human-animal studies, as Tønnessen and Kadri mention in their study *The Semiotics of Animal Representations* (2014): "Animal representations may also involve fantasy creatures with vaguer or fuzzier ancestors in real life terms" (6). As such, I decided to include the vampire in the analysis of this dissertation and the connection between the bird and the vampire countess in Carter's short story "The Lady of the House of Love".

This trope embodies categories relating to monstrosity, precisely due to its liminality: vampires blur boundaries between human and non-human animals, while also questioning other borders, such as life and death or male and female dichotomies: "The vampire is neither wholly dead not entirely alive. By right, it belongs to death, yet it does not respect the boundaries that should keep it dead [...]. Instead, the vampire passes from one realm to another, transgressing the laws of God and Man, religion and science, and suspending the borders structuring the universe" (Butler 11).

Because of the vampire’s transgressive potential, they have been often used as vehicles to explore sexual and identitarian questions, since their “decadence, nocturnal existence and indiscriminate desires distinguish vampires as a particularly modern sexual threats to cultural mores and taboos” (Botting 1996, 148). Metaphorically speaking, the vampire clearly relates to sexuality, present in the monster’s exchange of fluids and its long, sharp fangs as phallic elements penetrating the skin. Additionally, female vampires were often regarded as the embodiment of danger and threat to the patriarchal masculine order, “unnatural” creatures which reproduce the patters of the *femme fatale*, the sexual predator relating to the paradigm of the “whore”. Additionally, writers—as is the case of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*—have consistently used the female vampire to deal with issues concerning female sexuality or women’s emancipatory movements, as my analysis of “The Lady of the House of Love” will demonstrate.

In Carter’s article “Through a Text Backwards”, the writer developed her idea of the vampire as a metaphor for sexuality, whose attributes Carter will use to construct the Countess in “The Lady of the House of Love”: “The vampire. Especially, the female vampire, the *femme fatale*, epitomising the fear and longing for sexuality, symbolising sex and femininity as compulsion and disease. She is the woman who takes by force the blood and life and potency of a man. A metaphor. [...]. The vampire is a tacky theatrical device, too” (Carter 2013, 598-599).

The figure of the vampire was quickly adapted within the Gothic literary tradition that consolidated in the eighteenth century and that persisted until nowadays, from Coleridge’s poem *Christabel* (1797-1800), Polidori’s *The Vampyre* (1819), Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” compiled in *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) to the most famous vampiric text of all times, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Despite their differences, vampires have been commonly regarded as evil, monstrous creatures to be destroyed (Melton 163).

Carter used the figure of the vampire, especially the female vampire, in different works and formats. Beginning with her short story “The Loves of Lady Purple” from *Fireworks* (1974), her first collection of short fiction, Carter indirectly portrayed the female protagonist, Lady Purple, as a dichotomy between the puppet and the vampire: the first symbolises passivity and submission, whereas the second represents aggressiveness, sexuality and perversion. Carter went back to the vampire for her radio play *Vampirella* in 1975, which

became the genesis of her short story “The Lady of the House of Love”. In an interview with Anna Katsavos, Carter connected both short stories with the debate of a predestined behaviour or free will, an idea present in the puppet’s repetition of patterns and in the Countess’s predatory impulses:

How do we know what is authentic behavior and what is inauthentic behavior? It’s about the complex interrelation of reality and its representations [...] There’s a story in *The Bloody Chamber* called “The Lady and the House of Love,” part of which derives from a movie version that I saw of a story by Dostoyevsky. And in the movie, which is very good, the woman, who is a very passive person and is very much in distress, asks herself the question, “Can a bird sing only the song it knows, or can it learn a new song?” Have we got the capacity at all of singing new songs? It’s very important that if we haven’t, we might as well stop now. Can the marionette in that story behave in a way that she’s not programmed to behave? Is it possible? (Katsavos 17)

The established connection between the representation of women as either a puppet or a *femme fatale*, as well as the parallelism with the bird in relation to the repetition of patterns of behaviour will be central for my analysis of the text.

As previously mentioned in chapter three, Angela Carter erased the references to literary vampirism in the radio play for her short story, thus deviating from conventional vampiric narratives and, in doing so, producing an exaggerated parody of Gothic conventions (Gordon 256). Carter’s short story “The Lady of the House of Love”, published in the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, presents a female vampire descendant of both Nosferatu, the protagonist of Murnau’s 1922 eponymous film, and Vlad, the historical Romanian prince that inspired Stoker into writing *Dracula*.

## 5.6. ANGELA CARTER’S “BIRD” SHORT STORIES

The three short stories here categorised as “bird” narratives mark the equinox of Carter’s collection, and the three are brought together by virtue of the symbolical meaning attached to birds. “The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”, however, present common features, such as the characters’ impossibility of escaping traditional gender roles in patriarchal societies and the imprisonment of women as objects of desire of the male gaze, who are either symbolically or empirically transformed into birds.

“The Erl-King” opens this trilogy, presenting a young woman who struggles to maintain her own identity, which implies control of her sexual desire and rejection of her confinement, both physically and metaphorically speaking. The character’s inability to escape the dichotomic patriarchal representation of women as either the passive object or the active monster is evident in her replacement of categories, assuming the predator role and placing her lover in the prey/object position: “Psychologically unable to conceive a manner of preserving identity intact while merging with the Erl-King, lacking a cultural model that offers a means of matching his androgyny or constructing a complementary self, she fears her own complicity in falling subject to his entrancing gaze” (Linkin 316).

The second story, “The Snow Child”, moves a step further in the critique of women as objects. The girl, literally the outcome of the Count’s male desire, is deprived of a voice and identity of her own, and once her role is fulfilled, she is dissolved into the main elements which compose her. Carter’s ironic tone reveals the cruellest aspects of the traditional fairy tale by highlighting female rivalry for men’s desire and, as such, the unequal social and economic power structures between genders in patriarchal societies: “The presence of the female evil in the story is not offered as a challenge against the male evil, they are not involved in a power struggle. They are hand in hand to destroy the innocence through the pervert practice of necrophilia” (Aytül Özüm 7).

The third short story of this chapter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, represents the ambivalence of women’s fate in both representations of patriarchal female roles. The Countess, clearly symbolising the powerful *femme fatale* and the monstrous Other who defies the *status quo* of the heteropatriarchal order, wishes to become the embodiment of the accepted, exemplary women’s role as the passive heroine or the Angel in the House through romantic love. What the story’s conclusion reveals—which applies to the three narratives examined in this chapter—is the impossibility of fulfilling an identity of one’s own inside the patterns of behaviour and gender roles established by Western traditions, organised in terms of binary oppositions such as human/non-human animal, men/women, predator/prey or lover/beloved.

## 5.6.1. “The Erl-King”

This short story follows Carter’s two reassessments of “Beauty and the Beast”, being the first of the three tales about birds and located in the middle point in linear reading experience of the collection. As previously mentioned, Carter’s story is a rewriting of the Germanic folktales and legends about the “Erlking”, also establishing a dialogue with Gottfried von Herder’s ballad, Goethe’s poem and Franz Schubert’s lied. Departing from the Germanic Romantic versions of the tale, Carter questions the traditional emphasis on the male voice in order to focus on women’s situation. Thus, the protagonist of Carter’s story is a woman with a voice and a sexuality of her own, who finds herself, however, trapped by the Erl-King. Carter’s tale transforms the Germanic victim from child to young woman and the infanticidal haunting of the Erlking into the female protagonist’s desire of projection, since she is unable to escape the binary scheme of patriarchal role models.

As if eager to match different narrative traditions and compelling narrative modes, “The Erl-King” combines several narratological strategies, departing from an unknown female first-person narrator who changes into second and third person:

“El rey elfo” se inicia, como todo relato del encuentro con el depredador, en lo más profundo del insondable bosque. Allí, la narradora comienza su relato debatiéndose constantemente entre la primera, segunda y tercera persona del singular. Tras la descripción de un fondo otoñal, decadente y opresivo, la narración adopta la primera persona y relata cómo un día la joven inocente encontró al rey de los elfos sentado a la entrada de su rústica morada, rodeado de todos los animales que acudían a su amorosa llamada, proveniente de un humilde flautín de saúco, y cómo se inició así un apasionado idilio entre ellos. (García Domínguez 61)

These changes in the narrator reveal the female protagonist’s problematics of maintaining her own identity and her struggle for a subject position in a patriarchal society which encapsulates her in the role of the desired one. The narrative’s shift of narrators thus signals women’s search for a voice. Furthermore, Carter’s contextualization of the story in the autumnal forest recalls the lyrical Romantic tradition of nature and the poet. However, being women characters often silent objects of desire in Romantic poetry, Carter’s protagonist tries to resist objectification: “Rewriting the text of nineteenth-century poetry by substituting female for male in the family romance to ensure her passage into maternal voice, the protagonist of ‘The Erl-King’ imagines the fiercest of defences against the devouring consummation the male canon inscribes” (Linkin 309).

However, the shifts in the narrator’s positions also reveal her unreliability, since the reader’s knowledge of the events comes through her lenses (Pasolini 37). At the beginning of the story, the narrator addresses the audience by using the vocative “you”, which introduces the reader to the uncanny and oppressive atmosphere of the woods, a metaphorical sign of the character’s entrapment:

The woods enclose. You step between the fir trees and then you are no longer in the open air; the wood swallows you up. There is no way through the wood any more, this wood has reverted to its original privacy. Once you are inside it, you must stay there until it lets you out again for there is no clue to guide you through in perfect safety. (Carter 1996, 186)

The liminal condition of the woods and the transitional moment between autumn and winter in which the narrative is set create an atmosphere of entrapment, a claustrophobic space which mirrors the narrator’s emotional states. In the midst of this oppressive setting, the narrator refers to herself in the first person to describe her encounters with the Erl-King in the woods, tinged by her ambivalence between her emotions towards him and her inability to balance her individuality with her role as the beloved:

Una vez consciente del peligro que corre, la narradora se detiene y vuelve a comenzar el relato de los eventos antes referidos, sólo que la protagonista se erige como víctima involuntaria y pasiva del destino. [...] Aterrorizada, teme las consecuencias de haberse convertido en el objeto de la mirada del rey elfo y decide invertir esta dinámica: si ha de liberarse de su influencia, debe matarlo, aunque lo ame profundamente. (García Domínguez 61-62).

However, by retelling the story from a different perspective at the heart of the narration, the female protagonist distances herself from the previous events—in which she freely chooses to stay with the Erl-King and to enjoy their relationship—to explain her situation as a conjunction of ill fate and the Erlking’s allure through his music: “How sweet I roamed, or rather, used to roam; once I was the perfect child of the meadows of summer, but then the year turned, the light clarified and I saw the gaunt Erl-King, [...] and he drew me towards him on his magic lasso of inhuman music” (Carter 1996, 190). It is in this second version of her story when the narrator addresses the Erl-King not only in the third person but also, and more directly, by using the second person: “I feel your sharp teeth in the subaqueous depths of your kisses” (190). When she finally decides not to be trapped in the patriarchal representation of object of desire, her narration uses the future tense, eventually closing the narrative in the third person: “The narrator (unusually shifty, even for Carter) vacillates between speaking of herself in the third person and owning her story in the first, speaking of

the Erlking in the third person and apostrophizing him in the second, rhetorically involving the reader and self-absorption, present and future tenses” (Pollock 49-50).

The whole text dramatizes the narrator’s inner debate to maintain her subjectivity, as well as her “refusal to enact one of the constituent master plots of nineteenth-century masculinist poetry, which relegates women to the silence” (Linkin 307). On the contrary, the Erl-King has no voice of his own and the text does not offer his inner thoughts either; the reader only knows what the female narrator says about him and his opinions through indirect speech: “He said the owl was a baker’s daughter; then he smiled at me” (Carter 1996, 188). He is portrayed as the King of the Woods who acts both as a housewife and as a sexual predator.

Additionally, the narrative presents other main agents, most notably, the birds of the woods which interact with both protagonists. The lack of voice is also present in the bird’s singing while being jailed, as well as in the female narrator’s changing perception of them as the narrative progressed towards a metaphor, in a dialogue with the mentioned myths, such as Ovid’s Tereus and Philomela transformed into birds. The birds answer the Erl-King’s call—he uses the flute to produce a particular sound which attracts both birds and the female protagonist (Carter 1996, 191)—and obey him, losing their will and being encaged: “His kitchen shakes and shivers with birdsong from cage upon cage of singing birds, larks and linnets, which he piles up one on another against the wall, a wall of trapped birds” (188). The birds’ resulting lack of freedom and imprisonment is seen as a metaphor for the narrator, who positions herself in a parallel situation with respect to the male figure. As such, the narrator believes that the bird’s choirs correspond to the crying of other girls like her, who were transformed into birds and locked up in cages when they lost their way out of the forest: “I don’t know what kind of tunes you might play on it, if it were strung again; lullabies for foolish virgins, perhaps, and now I know the birds don’t sing, they only cry because they can’t find their way out of the wood, have lost their flesh when they are dipped in the corrosive pools of his regard and now must live in cages” (192).

Animals, in contrast, are fascinated by the Erl-King and his music: he is the indisputable king of the forest and the animals act according to that premise. Particularly, the Erl-King attracts many different types of birds with his tune: “He makes his whistles out of an

elder twig and that is what he uses to call the birds out of the air – all the birds come; and the sweetest singers he will keep in cages” (189). Initially, and like those birds, the female narrator feels an irresistible attraction towards the male figure. However, after realising her role in the relationship, her erotic desire mixes with desolation and despair—“his touch both consoles and devastates me” (190)—developing a sense of fear of the significance of her relationship: “When I realised what the Erl-King meant to do with me, I was shaken with a terrible fear and I did not know what to do for I loved him with all my heart and yet I had no wish to join the whistling congregation he kept in his cages although he looked after them very affectionately, gave them fresh water every day and fed them well” (191). As such, the narrator uses the symbolic meaning of the birds to refer to that “vertigo”:

But I am not afraid of him; only afraid of vertigo, of the vertigo which seizes me. Afraid of falling down. Falling as a bird would fall through the air if the Erl-King tied up the winds in his handkerchief and knotted the ends together so they could not get out. Then the moving currents of the air would no longer sustain them and all the birds would fall at the imperative of gravity, as I fall down for him, and I know it is only because he is kind to me that I do not fall still further. The earth with its fragile fleece of last summer’s dying leaves and grasses supports me only out of complicity with him, because his flesh is of the same substance as those leaves that are slowly turning into earth. (189)

The whole narration is mediated by the female narrator’s partial vision and perspective, which implies a sense of detachment from the Erl-king and sympathy for his victims, which include both the narrator and the caged birds: “How cruel it is, to keep wild birds in cages! But he laughs at me when I say that; laughs, and shows his white, pointed teeth with the spittle gleaming on them” (188).

The second level of Saphiro and Copeland’s analysis is marked by the representation of empirical and symbolical animals. “The Erl-King” is the short story which offers the largest variety of wild animals in the whole collection: being the woods the setting of the tale, the first pages are full of animal references which interact with the Erl-King. Their function as vassals and companions emphasise the natural atmosphere and the connection between the Erl-king and nature. By so doing, Carter reverses the Romantic tradition, especially in what relates to the relationship between women and nature: in this story, the Erlking is more closely related to nature and also is also portrayed as an “excellent housewife” (188). Symbolically, Carter’s Erl-King acts like the ruler of the woods, thus reminiscent of the character in the Scandinavian and Germanic folklore. This ambiguous, animalistic being is

characterised as spirit from the natural world, a liminal hybrid between human, non-human animal and plant: “His skin is the tint and texture of sour cream, he has stiff, russet nipples ripe as berries. Like a tree that bears blossom and fruit on the same bough together, how pleasing, how lovely” (190). He is the godly creature who governs the Edenic yet claustrophobic forest, as well as the flora and fauna which lives there: “He seemed so much the spirit of the place I saw without surprise how the fox laid its muzzle fearlessly upon his knee” (189-190). The narration—full of Biblical references—pays especial attention to his hair—“When he combs his hair that is the colour of dead leaves, dead leaves fall out of it; they rustle and drift to the ground as though he were a tree and he can stand as still as a tree” (189)—which will be an important element in the final development of the female narrator’s plan, being the homicide weapon for killing him and thus alluding to Samson and Delilah’s story (Rodríguez Salas 2010, 229). In an intertextual reference to the wolf trilogy stories—I will analyse the importance of the green phosphorescence eyes as a mark of lycanthropy in the next chapter—Carter emphasises the alterity and monstrosity of the Erl-King through his green eyes: “His eyes are quite green, as if from too much looking at the wood. There are some eyes can eat you” (Carter 1996, 187). His gaze will be important to the power dynamics of his relationship with the female narrator.

The Erl-King’s ambiguity is partly produced by the narrator’s subjective view of the character, in such a way that her portrayal oscillates between a benevolent housewife who lives peacefully in the woods and the sexual predator he becomes. This animalistic character also presents vampiric tendencies, specifically connected with his role as a sexual predator; he is the master of seduction who introduces the female protagonist into sexuality and who bites her with his peculiar vampire-like teeth, which, in turn, connect the character with Eros and Thanatos (Rodríguez Salas 2010, 227): “And now – ach! I feel your sharp teeth in the subaqueous depths of your kisses. [...] you sink your teeth into my throat and make me scream” (Carter 1996, 190). However, apart from his role as lover, the reader cannot distinguish danger or peril in his acts, as the narrator suggests. This ambiguity, connected with the narrator’s unreliability, questions the whole story: “There is no proof in the story that the larks and linnets are not enchanted girls, but there is also no proof that they are. The Erlking may be a sexual predator, he may be an innocent, or he may be an innocent predator; there is no way for the narrator to know, and the reader is no wiser, like the other stories in the collection” (Pollock 51).

## 5. Birds: “The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”

The birds of the narrative, on the other hand, are hybrid characters both used as empirical animals and as symbols. They appear since the beginning of the story, attracted by the music played by Erl-King, who chooses the best singers and encages them, metaphorically suggesting women as “publicly silenced, transmuted into caged birds whose voices sing out for the private pleasures of their owners” (Linkin 309-310). Here the narrator’s observation of the Erl-King’s locked birds, together with her fear of losing her identity, leads her to the conclusion of the metamorphic transformation of his previous female lovers into the birds:

La joven observa cómo su amado teje unas bonitas jaulas de mimbre con las que adorna su cabaña y en las que encierra a los mejores cantores de entre los pájaros que acuden a su llamada en busca de su afecto y su cuidado. Ansiosa por identificar la amenaza que presiente en el rey elfo, la narradora concluye que en esas jaulas están encerradas sus antiguas amantes y que, del mismo modo, está fabricando una jaula para ella. Esta nueva idea marca el ecuador de la narración. (García Domínguez 61)

However, and as suggested above, there is no textual evidence (other than the narrator’s biased perceptions) of the Erl-King’s malevolent transformations. Carter’s use of the Romantic setting and the intertextual references to Goethe, could be interpreted as a critique of the abusive use of birds in literature—particularly singing birds—as simply metaphors for human conditions, as literary human-animal critics such as McHugh suggest: “Reading animals as metaphors, always as figures of and for the human, is a process that likewise ends with the human alone on the stage” (2009, 24).

Connected with the idea of shapeshifting women, the unknown female protagonist presents symbolical zoomorphism by representing a human who is convinced of her future metamorphosis into a singing bird. Her knowledge of the limited roles for women in Western societies as a commodified (sexual) object leads to her vision of herself as a future passive bird in a cage. Since the beginning of the story, the female narrator establishes a series of similarities and differences with the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” by representing herself as a “young girl would go into the wood as trustingly as Red Riding Hood to her Granny’s house” (Carter 1996, 186) and having patriarchal cultural assumptions from the fairy tale’s morals and warnings against the dangers of the woods. However, the text warns the reader about the character’s unreliability as a narrator: “She will be trapped in her own illusion because everything in the wood is exactly as it seems” (186). The narrator’s unreliability connects with her ambivalent feelings towards the Erl-King, who arouses sexual

desire in her and, by doing so, represents the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood through sexuality. However, her fears of the consequences of sexual desire and the encapsulation of women's behaviour into patriarchal binaries prevent her from enjoying her relationship freely:

El aleccionamiento cultural de la protagonista parece ser demasiado profundo, demasiado completo para que pueda liberarse de sus temores. Esta cultura, con sus historias de la mujer perdida por el deseo, tomada, devastada y abandonada por el hombre, se ha asegurado de que las incursiones femeninas sean tentativas fallidas. Es la pérdida de la autonomía como sujeto, la disolución de la entidad propia subsumida bajo la figura del sujeto deseante y, por tanto, la pérdida absoluta de poder, lo que la joven teme [...]. En una sociedad que no concibe las relaciones humanas como simbióticas, sino como desiguales relaciones de poder, una mujer apenas consciente de estas estructuras que han ido apoderándose de su pensamiento hasta el punto de darles forma jamás será capaz de liberarse de sus invisibles ataduras, o concebir final mejor que el de invertir el rígido patrón patriarcal y destruir al Otro en el intento de erigirse en sujeto, en la voz recuperada del silencio. (García Domínguez 63-64)

Taking into account the analysis of human-animal relationships, the Erl-King represents the sexual predator who encages birds and tames all different type of herbivores and, in the narrator's opinion, also women: "He is therefore presented as the predator, while women perform the role of perfect bird-like victims" (Rodríguez Salas 2010, 227).

Carter's Erl-King establishes a dialogue with the three last stories of the collection, representing the "carnivore incarnate" characterization of the wolf that I will analyse in the last chapter of this dissertation. His parallelism with the werewolves relies on the power of the gaze, mentioned several times in the story: "Eyes green as apples. Green as dead sea fruit. [...] What big eyes you have, Eyes of an incomparable luminosity, the numinous phosphorescence of the eyes of lycanthropes" (Carter 1996, 191). The narrator is captivated by his persona, and especially by his powerful predator eyes which evidence his animalistic identity. However, she acknowledges the dissolution of her own identity by succumbing to his gaze and becoming the object of his desire: "Eat me, drink me; thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden, I go back and back to him to have his fingers strip the tattered skin away and clothe me in his dress of water, this garment that drenches me, its slithering odour, its capacity for drowning" (191).

Instead of being the gaze the means to assert individuality and subjectivity to accept the other's alterity—as was the case in the previous stories—for the narrator the Erl-King's

his gaze is so powerful that it also means her annihilation, her dissilience into his, her loss of subjectivity and individuality:

I am afraid I will be trapped in it for ever [...]. Your green eye is a reducing chamber. If I look into it long enough, I will become as small as my own reflection; I will diminish to a point and vanish [...] I shall become so small you can keep me in once of your osier cages and mock my loss of liberty. I have seen the cage you are waving for me; it is a very pretty one and I shall sit, hereafter, in my cage among the other singing birds. (191)

In opposition, the female narrator is here portrayed as prey to his sexual desire and aligns herself with the passive singing birds which live at his mercy, or with the rabbits he hunts: “I always go to the Erl-King and he lays me down on his bed of rustling straw where I lie at the mercy of his huge hands. He is the tender butcher who showed me how the price of flesh is love; skin the rabbit, he says! Off come all my clothes” (189).

By assigning the Erlking the villain role, the narrator justifies her fears and her actions, while also engaging with the warning tradition of the dangerous male carnivores in the woods—from the literary fairy tale of “Red Riding Hood” and other warning tales for women—mentioned at the beginning of the short story:—“Erl-king will do you grievous harm” (187)—and repeated at the end by the narrator in the first person: “But in his innocence he never knew he might be the death of me, although I knew from the first moment I saw him how the Erl-King would do me grievous harm” (191-192).

Unable to find a satisfactory answer to the binomial victim/victimizer, the narrator eventually becomes herself the active carnivore by killing the Erlking: “My hands shake. I shall take two huge handfuls of his rustling hair as he lies half dreaming, half waking, and wind them into ropes, very softly, so he will not wake up, and softly, with hands gentle as rain, I will strangle him with them” (192). By doing so, the narrator is able to preserve her “self” intact, unable to imagine any way out of “the binary opposition of gender that shapes the entire feminist project” (Linkin 321). With the excuse of discovering her master’s plan to transform her into a bird and engage her with the rest of the singing birds—which the narrator believes being metamorphosed women—Carter’s female protagonist resists this confinement in the object of desire and takes an active role by planning to murder her captor and liberate the other birdie women: “Then she will open all the cages and let the bids free; they will

change back into young girls, every one, each with the crimson imprint of his love bite on their throats” (Carter 1996, 192).

By doing so, the female narrator represents an act of resistance towards the patriarchal rule on women, typographically reflected in the narrative’s shift from first-person to third-person narratives, the narrator’s use of “she” to refer to herself and of the future tense, which indicate an uncertain possibility.

This protagonist, in contrast with the female protagonists of Carter’s feline stories, is unable to come to terms with her own sexual desire and falls back into the patriarchal categories of prey and predator eventually becoming the predator. The symbolic representation of the broken fiddle (189) which the narrator dreams of fixing with the Erlking’s hair after killing him signals an inversion of the power structure in the narrative, in which “the rule of the Father is over; now we are in the new era of the Mother, who has murdered her husband, a new Clytemnestra who will liberate generations of bird-women” (Rodríguez Salas 2010, 229).

#### 5.6.2. “The Snow Child”

“The Snow Child” is the shortest story of the whole collection and one of the three tales in which birds are an essential element. It is located in between “The Erl-King” and “The Lady of the House of Love” and marks the equinox of Carter’s compilation. As previously explained, this story is a rewriting of a particular Germanic version of “Snow White”, a dark account of the fairy tale in which a count and his wife go riding through the woods.

The events of this short narrative are filtered by a third-person omniscient narrator who formally emulates the literary tradition of the fairy tales and introduces the inert, desolate setting of the woods and in the liminal timing of the changing of season:

Midwinter ritually marks the end of a cycle and the beginning of another, thus externalizing and generalizing a specific event from “Snow White”: the Queen must die for Snow White to be born. By setting her tale in midwinter, Carter invokes this strong symbolic resonance, but her narrative will soon question how “immaculate” and “invincible” this mythic winter actually is in terms of human practice. (Bacchilega 1997, 36)

This snowed forest in midwinter also makes reference to the last three stories in Carter’s collection, where the gloomy isolated atmosphere is intertwined with the presence of wolves, and the white setting is contraposed with the reddish characteristics of the girl—related to menstrual blood and virginity. The chromatic symbolism of red and white is present both in “The Snow Child” and in the three wolf stories which close the collection.

The third-person narrator filters the voice and the inner thoughts of the married couple. The text offers the voice of the Count and the Countess which interact in dialogue, but never the girl’s worlds, whose voice is silenced, only mentioned at the moment of her death: “bleeds; screams; falls” (Carter 1996, 193). The animalistic girl is deprived of agency and of a voice of her own, thus becoming an object without identity. Curiously, none of the three characters of the story have a name, but the narrator addresses the married couple by referring to their aristocratic titles, while their female offspring remains unnamed. The importance of flat characters present in this story—which contrasts with the emphasis on inner thoughts, and the psychological development of the rest of the characters in the collection—has to be understood in accordance with Carter’s intentions of creating an exaggerated version of the fairy tale which simultaneously parodies and criticises gender relations in patriarchal societies: “Carter’s characters are flat, her protagonist is silent and passive, her Countess’s jealousy is sufficient motive for wanting to kill the rival, and her Count’s words and acts have a logic all their own” (Bacchilega 1997, 38).

The short story presents the power structure in a heteropatriarchal society where the authority position is occupied by the male character while the females are relegated to the object of his desire. Animals, as well as women, are commodities or elements to the disposal and use of the Count, as exemplified in the countess’ furs and in the animalistic metamorphic girl. Carter brings to the core the problematics of gender roles by addressing the theme of female rivalry already present in the literary tradition of “Snow White”, according to which the young daughter replaces her mother in both beauty and relevance in her father’s consideration. In this sense, the Countess’s accommodated situation is thus destabilised by the apparition of the naked daughter in the form of an object of desire, which inverts her social position, signalled by the symbolic use of clothes and furs in the narrative, as Bacchilega has argued: “Any shift in the Count’s affections is immediately reflected in the relationship of the two women, whose socioeconomic fortunes mirror each other in reverse—as the one gains,

the other loses—and depend entirely on the Counts’ words” (1997, 37). As such, the Countess “was bare as bone and the girl furred and booted” (Carter 1996, 193). With the dissolution of the girl after having completed her purpose, the Countess recovers her belongings as symbol of economic welfare and social status, showing how women are powerless and passive objects at the mercy of men’s demands.

The crudity of the theme is emphasised by the absence of empathic relationships in the narrative. Carter uses the inert setting to portray the crude reality of Western heteropatriarchal relationships between genders and its power structures by eliminating any sympathetic interaction amidst the natural and the cultural world, represented in the cruel and jealous human countess and the animalistic passive daughter. Despite the fact that the Count is said to “feel sorry for his wife” (193), his actions reveal no concern for women’s roles and positions, displacing his wife and using his own daughter as a means to fulfil his own desire. In this way, the narrative portrays the Count as the master who uses women to satisfy his sexual impulses and the natural and animal setting to create the object of that purpose.

As happens with other brief narratives in the collection such as “The Werewolf”, this condensed narrative piece barely pays attention to the empirical non-human animals and rather focuses on their symbolical portrayal. As such, the horses are treated as merely mounts which do not interact with the riders—“The Count and his wife go riding, he on a grey mare and she on a black one” (193)—and their importance resides in the chromatic continuum which darkens the character of the countess as the incarnation of the evil female antagonist, present in many fairy tales. Lastly, a raven appears “perched on a bare bough” (193) as the empirical scavenger bird which also serves as part of the enchantment to create the girl.

On the other hand, the strong symbolism attached to different animals is one of the major characteristics of this short story. As such, the countess is a woman who wears foxes’ furs as clothes, representative of the social status and the economic power of the couple: “She wrapped in the glittering pelts of black foxes; and she wore high, black, shining boots with scarlet heels, and spurs” (193). As opposed to the animalistic zoomorphism present in the furs of “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, the countess of “The Snow Child”, however, never transcends patriarchal gender roles and remains acting as a jealous wife. Thus, the physical appearance of the Countess is described more in detail than any other character (Aytül Özümlü 7) and Carter uses the black colour to emphasise her role. Taking into account Vaz da Silva’s

approach to the chromatic importance of the fairy tale of “Snow White”, blackness “connotes enchantment as well as death. In fairy tales the two notions are intertwined. Enchantment is something like reversible death, and death itself appears in tones of enchantment” (2007, 247). As such, the Countess’s description of her black clothes which pass from her on to her daughter would symbolically anticipate her death.

The narrative’s non-human animals—such as the raven and the fox’s prey which leaves a trail of blood, together with the snow—are the symbols of the metamorphic creation of the girl, taken from the fairy tale tradition of “Snow White”. This human girl, created metamorphically from natural elements—a zoomorphic woman with female body who blurs the established limits between animal and human identity—is the personification of animal representation. The character is created out of a projection of the Count’s male sexual desire, who wishes a girl but never a daughter: “‘I wish I had a girl as white as snow’, says the Count. They ride on. They come to a hole in the snow; this hole is filled with blood. He says: ‘I wish I had a girl as red as blood.’ So they ride on again; here is a raven, perched on a bare bough. ‘I wish I had a girl as black as that bird’s feathers’” (Carter 1996, 193). Parallel to the literary fairy tale tradition, the girl is dreamed up by the three chromatic natural elements: “The Count’s three wishes mirror his surroundings [...]. Mirroring in reverse what we have come to think of as Snow White’s legitimate origin—the mother’s wish—the Count’s appetite for this ‘child of his desire’ is instantly satisfied, mimetically and aesthetically” (Bacchilega 1997, 37). The girl has to fulfil the role she was created for: “As soon as he completed her description, there she stood, beside the road, white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked” (Carter 1996, 193). She is unable to escape the confinements of patriarchal conventions and roles which pigeonhole her in the “masculine fantasy, an image of ‘woman’” (Bacchilega 1997, 37). After being used for the male’s sexual appetite, she is dissolved into the three primitive elements, thus completing the circular process from a natural to an artificial creation and returning to the natural world.

The last level of Saphiro and Copeland’s analysis questions the relationship between humans and animals, being more symbolically present in this short story than in other tales of the same collection. The Count and Countess is a married aristocratic couple that epitomises the traditional power and gender structures of the patriarchal societies, according to which the Count represents economic authority whereas the Countess passively complies with this

*status quo*. However, the Countess's social welfare is threatened by the creation of a younger girl who is destined to replace her as the object of her husband's affection:

While in "The Snow Child" she draws out the hidden patriarchal structure of the Grimm Brothers' original, and in particular its treatment of the vindictive, wicked queen [...] Carter transforms the source text's unquestioning portrait of female jealousy into an exacting study of the dynamics of female powerlessness in a male-dominated culture. (Hunter 128)

Carter's exuberant rewriting of "Snow White" strikingly brings to the front issues of jealousy and female rivalry for (re)gaining male's attention and, in consequence, all the goods, commodities and privileges that accompany such social position: "She was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her" (Carter 1996, 193).

As already explored in chapter two, literary fairy tales—particularly Perrault's and the Brothers Grimm's tales—emphasised how women are eventually compensated for all their misfortunes with marriage and social position, thus making matrimony the sacred ultimate goal in a woman's life. Departing from this premise, the Countess's jealousy is justified in so far as the new daughter allegedly threatens her position: "The Count lifted her up and sat her in front of him on his saddle but the Countess had only one thought: how shall I be rid of her?" (193). In such a patriarchal society in which women are defined in terms of their relationships with men, the relationship among women is often "one that re-produces itself as rivalry, as struggle to survive at the other woman's expense. Within this initiatory and narrative cycle no possibility for human growth and transformation exists" (Bacchilega 1997, 38). Following the Germanic oral tradition of the fairy tale, Carter here explores the different options in which the Countess considers murdering her own daughter in three repetitive moves, thus mirroring the fairy tale tradition of "Snow White". Firstly, the Countess plans to leave the girl behind in the woods: "The Countess dropped her glove in the snow and told the girl to get down to look for it; she meant to gallop off and leave her there but the Count said: 'I'll buy new gloves'. At that, the furs sprang off the Countess's shoulders and twined round the naked girl" (Carter 1996, 193). The pattern is repeated with her diamond brooch in an "ice of a frozen pond" (193) which ends with the removal of her boots, and the final petition, the rose, which signifies the death of the girl. The whole text entails a game of mimicking and reflection which references the role of the mirror in the classical versions of "Snow White":

In "The Snow Child" Carter's strategy is to take the politics of disenchantment to its extreme in the intertwined coercive cultural and exposing narrative norms which

the authority of the mirror has magically made us think of as natural therefore “true”. There is no mirror in her telling of the tale and yet “The Snow Child” represents the authority of the mirror as *movens* of the traditional “Snow White” quite accurately and explicitly by utilizing mirroring as a narrative ploy, in other words, by “playing with mimesis”. (Bacchilega 1988, 16)

By doing so, Carter overtly denounces the limited social options for women and the impossibility of creating a sorority in a static, patriarchal system which advocates male domination and female’s social and sexual subjugation. The lack of alternatives to escape female oppression prevents the existence of empathy among women and favours a permanence of dualistic conceptions of femininity. In tune with “The Erl-King”, this story further illustrates the difficulties of breaking patriarchal codes of behaviour, while also standing in clear opposition with the open possibilities offered by Carter in the feline stories addressing female independence and acceptance of their own sexuality and subjectivity.

Carter’s story focuses on the projection of masculine sexual desire and, by doing so, denounces the objectification of women and their submission to the male gaze. The Count here represents the carnivore predator who uses women as prey for satisfying his sexual appetite:

The lack of reciprocity stemming from the conception of a woman entirely out of a man’s desire proves to be perverse (as the motifs of incest and necrophilia insinuate) and to prevent the peaceful absorption of the other, who is destined to die, to utterly be consumed by the desire of the predator—the Snow Child, indeed, in the end melts back into the elements which originated her body. (Pasolini 123)

The Count’s power position demands the existence of the girl as a sexual object, which reveals an artificial idea of womanhood. After being created, seated on his horse and dressed up with the Countess’s clothes, she pricks her finger with the thorns of the rose and dies. In a necrophiliac and violent act, the Count “got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl” (Carter 1996, 193). Carter here explores the cruel and brutal aspects of fairy tales such as “The Sleeping Beauty” and the indiscriminate use of women’s bodies as commonplace for heteropatriarchal traditions. It is remarkable how Carter here uses the gaze to highlight the submissive role of women when faced with the pornographic masculine world. The Countess, who “reined in her stamping mare and watched him narrowly; he soon was finished” (193), is accomplice to the Count’s horrid actions, becoming a “female aristocratic voyeur” (Aytül Özüm 7) who submissively consents to the male figure’s authority and abusive behaviour.

After fulfilling her role, the animalistic girl dissolves into the three natural elements: “Then the girl began to melt. Soon there was nothing left of her but a feather a bird might have dropped; a blood stain, like the trace of a fox’s kill on the snow; and the rose she had pulled off the bush” (Carter 1996, 193). Carter here uses metamorphosis to shift the focus of the traditional fairy tale by drawing attention to male desire and power over women and their bodies. His daughter’s transformation through the raven’s feathers further reinforces the motifs introduced in “The Erl-King” relating to the symbolic use of birds as the representation of women’s situation under patriarchal control. On the other hand, the presence of blood is associated with the symbolic use of the rose and the sexual implications taken from the literary tradition of the fairy tale:

On the side of fairy tales this implies two things. First, Briar-Rose—or, rather, the thorny rose she impersonates—expresses the ambivalence of feminine blood. The bloom metaphor of womb blood affirms this medium is fruitful, whereas the use of pricking thorns to designate a blood condition implies marital unavailability. (Vaz da Silva 245)

As such, when the girl pricks her finger with the rose—intertextually addressing other fairy tales like “The Sleeping Beauty” and Carter’s own short stories “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, “The Tiger’s Bride” and “The Lady of the House of Love”—symbolically becomes sexually mature, yet her menstrual blood “fulfils her function as passive object of the Count’s desire. In this case, however, the shallowness of this initiation which amounts to her death, rape, and fetishizing becomes painfully visible” (Bacchilega 1997, 37-38).

Carter ends the tale by offering the restoration of the initial *status quo* and the Countess’s recovering of her position as a consort through the symbolism of her clothes: “Now the Countess had all her clothes on again. With her long hand, she stroked her furs” (Carter 1996, 193-194). After the brutal use of the girl’s body and her dissolution, the Count’s attention returns to his wife, to whom he offers the thorny rose: “The Count picked up the rose, bowed and handled it to his wife; when she touched it, she dropped it. ‘It bites!’ she said” (194). The rose, a token connected with femininity, sexuality and beauty, is used by Carter as the embodiment of the *vagina dentata* which “bites” the Countess, thus establishing a connection with the following short story of the collection, “The Lady of the House of Love”:

In multiplying the possible meanings of the biting rose, Carter plays with the traditional fairy-tale motif and the common Romantic trope that associates rose and

girl, transforming Blake’s sick rose into nature’s mouthy assault. Resisting closure and containment, Carter’s enchanted rose is also the vagina dentata, a paranoid male fantasy of women’s supposed anger at their castration and an image Carter returns to in “The Lady of the House of Love.” In both stories the biting and fanged rose outlives the girl it seems to signify, implying that the patriarchal fantasies through which she is constituted endure well beyond her living, material being. (Lau 2015, 99)

### 5.6.3. “The Lady of the House of Love”

Angela Carter used some of the major elements of “The Sleeping Beauty” for her tale “The Lady of the House of Love” and intertwined it with Gothic imagery. The seventh story in the collection has an intermediate position which bridges the bird narratives and Carter’s wolf trilogy of the “Red Riding Hood” tales. The short story, based on Carter’s radio play *Vampirella* (1975), owes its creation to Carter’s friend Christopher Frayling, who introduced the author into the vampire folklore (Gordon 231-232). In this case, the Sleeping Beauty is transformed into a female vampire, Countess Nosferatu, who lives in her chateau in Romania and feeds on animals and men, to her own uneasiness. Her existence is troubled by the arrival of a young and handsome British army officer, who comes in his bicycle to town and her servant brings him to her. However, a drastic change in the events prevents the Countess from killing the soldier and, in a reversal of her Gothic role, he sucks her blood and breaks the “immortality spell” transforming the Countess into a human, mortal woman in an opaque reminiscence of the fairy tale: “For the Countess in this story is not only a vampire but there are several motifs that point to similarities with Sleeping Beauty: the Countess is a somnambulist, the castle where she lives has a rose bush in the garden, and the Countess also pricks her finger in the end of the story, however, not on a spindle but on broken glass” (Karjalainen 5).

As earlier mentioned, my choice of locating “The Lady of the House of Love” under the analysis of birds is marked by the particular metaphorical use of the singing lark in relation to the vampiric Countess. In opposition to the two previous short stories, the female protagonist is not here presented as an encaged woman who will be metamorphically transformed into a bird as in “The Erl-King”, nor is she created from the bird’s feathers as “The Snow Child”. However, even though the Countess is here represented both physically and psychologically as a predator and as a carnivorous animal, it is possible to identify her with her own encaged herbivorous bird, as will be shown.

The story presents three interconnected narrative modes, predominantly narrated in the third person: “The bridegroom is come, he will go into the chamber which has been prepared for him” (Carter 1996, 204) but alternating its focalisation according to the two main characters—the Countess and the British soldier—who offer their vision, reflections and inner thoughts in free indirect speech. As such, the Countess, by using first person, offers her perspective about her own situation through her ruminations, sometimes using the vocative “you” as to refer to the soldier:

I do not mean to hurt you. I shall wait for you in my bride’s dress in the dark [...].  
I am condemned to solitude and dark; I do not mean to hurt you.  
I will be very gentle. [...]  
See, how I’m ready for you. I’ve always been ready for you; I’ve been waiting for you in my wedding dress, why have you delayed for so long. . . it will all be over very quickly.  
You will feel no pain, my darling. (204)

This paragraph, which reproduces the Countess’s thoughts in the first person, dramatizes the character’s inner struggle with, on the one hand, her seductive predator role and, on the other, her wish for a romantic relationship in which she will be the beloved. The countess’s thoughts ironically contrast with her actual words in her dialogue with the soldier:

‘Welcome to my chateau. I rarely receive visitors and that’s a misfortune since nothing animates me half as much as the presence of a stranger...This place is so lonely, now the village is deserted, and my one companion, alas, she cannot speak. Often I am so silent that I think I, too, will soon forget how to do so and nobody here will ever talk any more.’ (203-204)

As opposed to this, the focalization of the British soldier is intertwined with the Countess’s, which unveils the soldier’s naïve rationality which, he believes, will protect him against superstition and danger:

To ride a bicycle is in itself some protection against superstitious fear, since the bicycle is the product of pure reason applied to motion. Geometry at the service of man! Give me two spheres and a straight line and I will show you how far I can take them. Voltaire himself might have invented the bicycle, since it contributes much to man’s welfare and nothing at all to his bane. (199)

Carter’s ironic parody emphasises the inefficaciousness of the soldier’s rational mind, while simultaneously questioning dichotomies which normally align women with sentimentality against men and rationality, being, in this case, the soldier’s rational mind insufficient to understand the complex liminal and animalistic subjectivity of the Countess.

The narrative presents the Countess as the “beautiful queen of the vampires” who, using her mother’s wedding dress, “sits all alone in her dark, high house under the eyes of the portraits of her demented and atrocious ancestors, each one of whom, through her, projects a baleful posthumous existence” (195). As such, her vampiric, liminal status obliges her to live as a predator, hiding from the sunlight and hunting at night. However, the Countess is trapped in her condition as a vampire, which she refuses but cannot avoid, since “nothing can console her for the ghastliness of her condition, nothing” (197). In fact, the Countess’s only wish is “to be human” (197). The narrator explains her origins as a descendant from a vampiric male lineage—from Vlad de Impaler to her father, Count Nosferatu—to which her fate is bond: “The only survivor of an aristocratic family, Countess Nosferatu still suffers from the imposition of sexist social rules instead of being able to live according to her free will” (Sousa 5).

The Countess’s submission to her male inheritance is symbolically signalled by her daily use of Tarot cards, which introduce “the concept of determinism to show that women’s fate in patriarchy is pre-set” (Rodríguez Salas 2008, 122). The Countess’s subjugation is also mirrored in the presence of her caged singing lark, condemned to repeat the same song and deprived from its freedom: “She draws her long, sharp fingernail across the bars of the cage in which her pet lark sings, striking a plangent twang like that of the plucked heartstrings of a woman of metal” (Carter 1996, 195). The narrative clearly establishes a parallel between the empirical bird, locked up in a cage inside the walls of the Countess’s chateau, and Countess’s own jail, deprived of their individuality, both are doomed to endlessly repeat their function which separates them from humanity:

The bird and the vampire are trapped not only by their animal nature but also by a concept of time that only permits cyclical repetition. [...] The paradox of Carter’s story, however, is that in revisiting the vampire tale she writes it afresh: Gothic, it seems, is not doomed to cyclical repetition, but perfectly capable of change and variation. (Spooner 2007, 43)

As such, the Countess questions her own free will by using the metaphor of the bird, which constantly repeats the same tune: ““Can a bird sing only the song it knows or can it learn a new song?”” (Carter 1996, 195) and through her inner debate about killing or sparing the soldier: “(And could love free me from the shadows? Can a bird sing only the song it knows, or can it learn a new song?)” (204). In this sense, Carter aligns the Countess with the non-human animal in detriment of humanity that appears in the two previous short stories,

expressed through the “immobility of her condition, the impossibility of changing, which is the reason why she strives for becoming human and persists in staging her identity even if she is doomed to fail” (Pasolini 83).

In opposition, the soldier’s focalization unveils a scientific mind wishing to change the Countess’ nature to fit in the role of the passive, beautiful heroine of the fairy tale in order to eliminate her predator aspect:

The young man - and potential romantic hero or fairy tale prince of the tale – is not able to acknowledge her otherness and the potential threat she represents. [...] Comparing her to flowers and prostitutes, he proves that he can only see and assess her and her condition through the inner-mediary lens of patriarchal constructions of femininity in which women are either saint or whore – but never both at the same time. (Gruss 207- 208)

The soldier’s vision of the Countess falls into the dual depiction of women in patriarchal societies: on the one hand, he sees a sweet innocent young woman who needs to be rescued and, on the other, he is able to appreciate her as the embodiment of sexuality. His incomprehension towards her liminal animal subjectivity creates an attempt to locate her in the two patriarchal female roles, the passive heroine or the prostitute (Carter 1996, 202).

Nevertheless, the unexperienced soldier feels uneasy when approaching the Countess’s chateau, which the cloying of the roses and the gloomy decadent Gothic atmosphere enhance: “The sense of strangeness that had been growing in him since he buried his head under the streaming water in the village, since he entered the dark portals of the fatal castle, now fully overcame him. Had he been a cat, he would have bounced backwards from her hands on four fear-stiffened legs, but he is not a cat: he is a hero” (205). Despite his instinctive sense of alarm, the soldier’s rational mind dismisses the danger and blinds him again.

Such a sense of Otherness and uncanny feelings is in the narrative reflected in the reaction of different animals, such as the cat’s fear, which “bounces away from an intangible on four fear-stiffened legs” (195) or the alignment of a particular typology of animals with the figure of the vampire, which Carter rescues from the literary and folkloric traditions:

She is the hereditary commandant of the army of shadows who camp in the village below her chateau, who penetrate the woods in the form of owls, bats and foxes, who make the milk curdle and butter refuse to come, who ride the horses all night in a wild hunt so they are sacks of skin and bone in the morning, who milk the cows dry and, especially, torment pubescent girls with fainting fits, disorders of the blood, diseases of the imagination. (197)

The animalistic Countess feels lonely and struggles between what she would like to be—and how she would like to react towards her preys, both animals and men—and her vampiric murderous instincts which demand to be satiated: “She loathes the food she eats; she would have liked to take the rabbits home with her, feed them on lettuce, pet them and make them a nest in her red-and-black chinoiserie escritoire, but hunger always overcomes her” (198). Her carnivorous identity cannot come to terms with her herbivorous victims, towards which she develops an empathic connection, until her craving for food is too powerful to overcome. This also occurs with the British soldier, but her hunger is increased by the man’s beauty and his role as saviour and lover. However, her sympathy does not apply to her lark, even sharing a parallel destiny. She not only encages the bird but also makes it sing and takes delight in assuring how the bird is also resigned to its imprisonment (196).

The soldier’s lack of empathy for the Countess’s monstrous condition contrasts with his sympathy for the bird’s confinement and decides to set it free:

He got to his feet, coaxed the lark on to his wrist and took it to the window. At first, it exhibited the reluctance for the sky of a long-caged thing, but, when he tossed it up on to the currents of the air, it spread its wings and was up and away into the clear blue bowl of the heavens; he watched its trajectory with a lift of joy in his heart. (208)

The bird’s liberation can be seen as a metaphor for the Countess, who at the same time was released from the patriarchal subjugation of the vampire male tradition and flew away, but only to end in the inevitable consequences of humanity, death, thus, suggesting the impossibility of escaping the binarism of patriarchy.

The second level of Saphiro and Copeland’s analysis points to the treatment of symbolical and empirical animals. In this short story, the female servant and the British soldier represent humanity, while the Countess incarnates symbolical zoomorphism—the intersection between an animalistic liminal creature and a woman—and the bird is presented as the conjunction of the empirical non-human animal embedded with strong symbolic meaning, a metaphor for the Countess’s situation. Carter subverted the traditional gender roles of fairy tales in the characterization of her protagonists. In this tale, the narrator presents the male protagonist as “a young officer of the British army, blond, blue-eyed, heavy-muscled [...]. 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. He is more than he knows [...]. Although so young, he is also rational”

(198-199). By bestowing him with the original attributes of the traditional Sleeping Beauty in Basile, Perrault and Brothers Grimm tales, Carter subverts the roles of the tale, conferring the male character innocence while transforming the female one into the predator.

At the same time, the characterization of the soldier is intertwined with traditional representations of Prince Charming, who breaks the spell by, in this case, sucking the Countess's blood in a reversal of her gothic vampiric role. His function as the fairy tale hero is emphasised through the intertextual references in the narrative to the traditional fairy tale of "Sleeping Beauty"—"A single kiss woke up the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" (199) and "(One kiss, however, and only one, woke up the Sleeping beauty in the Wood)" (205)—both anticipating the denouement of her vampiric identity. It is very important the emphasis that Carter makes in pointing out the male character's rationality as a hero, his arrival on a bike and his incompetence to understand the situation, thus becoming the "ambassador of a rationalistic age, who enters the stage of gothic romance quite prosaically on a bicycle instead of a horse. Carter's tale is also the depiction of a gender-clash, a clash of a gothic [...] and a rationalistic [...] discourse in which the female vampire becomes the symbol of a declining age" (Gruss 208).

The Countess, on the contrary, is the realization of the identitarian possibility between and animalistic being and a woman, representing symbolical zoomorphism. Carter here significantly departs from traditional portrayals of Sleeping Beauty by transforming the Countess into a vampire, a monstrous character inherited from the Gothic tradition, a liminal creature, the monstrous Other—neither human nor animal, neither alive nor dead. The monstrous condition of Carter's Sleeping Beauty aligns her with other monstrous female characters from the literary tradition of the fairy tale, as the ogress in Perrault's account. As such, Carter's text creates a dialogue with the tradition of the fairy tale incorporating Gothic motifs, elements and tropes to highlight her interest in subverting and deconstructing Western dichotomies and binaries. The Countess's monstrosity is also connected with the idea of a corpse without a soul, being a marionette which reproduces pre-established patterns of behaviour and, as such, characterised by a "double abjection: that associated with the female body and its reproductive functions and that linked to the corpse and the body without soul" (Pasolini 105). Carter mixes the figure of the vampire with the marionette, as she previously had done with "The Loves of Lady Purple", emphasising the lack of will and the predestined

role the Countess fulfil. The soldier compares her to a doll, in an intertextual reference with “The Tiger’s Bride” cyborg-machine:

She is like a doll, he thought, a ventriloquist’s doll, or, more, like a great ingenious piece of clockwork. For she seemed inadequately powered by some slow energy of which she was not in control; as if she had been wound up years ago, when she was born, and now the mechanism was inexorably running down and would leave her lifeless. This idea that she might be an automaton, made of white velvet and black fur, that could not move of its own accord, never quite deserted him; indeed, it deeply moved his heart. (Carter 1996, 204)

The vampiric condition of Carter’s Countess, who possesses “the mysterious solitude of ambiguous states; she hovers in a no-man’s land between life and death, sleeping and waking, behind the hedge of spiked flowers, Nosferatu’s sanguinary rosebud” (205) is also presented with the typical physical appearance of a vampire:

The white hands of the tenebrous belle deal the hand of destiny. Her fingernails are longer than those of the mandarins of ancient China and each is pared to a fine point. These and teeth as fine and white as spikes of spun sugar are the visible signs of the destiny she wistfully attempts to evade via the arcana; her claws and teeth have been sharpened on centuries of corpses, she is the last bud of the poison tree that sprang from the loins of Vlad the Impaler who picnicked on corpses in the forests of Transylvania. (196)

Countess Nosferatu, described as the beautiful queen of vampires, shares with her fairy-tale counterpart her beauty, rendered by the narrator as uncanny, a demonstration of her monstrosity: “She is so beautiful she is unnatural; her beauty is an abnormality, a deformity, for none of her features exhibit any of those touching imperfections that reconcile us to the imperfection of the human condition. Her beauty is a symptom of her disorder, of her soullessness” (196).

In addition to this, this female vampire is depicted in animalistic terms, “catlike even, and is on several instances in the text referred to as not human” (Karjalainen 13). Her animalistic features are more obviously represented in her claws and her teeth, as well as in her instincts when she hunts at night: “The Countess will sniff the air and howl. She drops, now, on all fours. Crouching, quivering, she catches the scent of her prey. Delicious crunch of the fragile bones of rabbits and small, furry things she pursues with fleet, four-footed speed; she will creep home, whimpering, with blood smeared on her cheeks” (Carter 1996, 197). Sharing some characteristics with the Duke in “Wolf-Alice”—as will be analysed in the next chapter—her eyes glow with a reminiscence of the werewolves: “The eyes of this nocturnal

creature enlarge and glow. All claws and teeth, she strikes, she gorges” (197). The Countess represents a continuum between the human and the animalistic self, breaking the barriers of patriarchal static identities, and “despite her human appearance, “her ravenous hunger and her hunting instincts being beastly” (Pasolini 107). The Countess’s monstrous condition relates to her description as a *femme fatale*, a sexual depredator chained to her fate as an undead. She is the seductress, the predator carnivorous woman both sexually and bodily, feeding on human meat.

As argued above, the Countess represents one of the two categorical gender roles for women from patriarchal societies (the whore/lover, the powerful, monstrous *femme fatale*) and wishes to become the other (the passive, innocent, the wife, the object of desire, the beloved). As such, this reassessment is the culmination of the three bird short stories regarding the negative effects of such binary role system for female subjectivity: in “The Erl-King” the female protagonist fears to become entrapped in the role of the beloved and, instead, becomes the predator; in “The Snow Child”, however, the girl is created to fulfil the role of the object/commodity, whereas in “The Lady of the House of Love” the Countess shifts her role from predator to prey, thus inverting the trajectory of the “Erl-King”.

Finally, the bird represents the hybrid possibility of treating animals both as “real” birds and symbols at the same time. The lark is an empirical animal which functions as a pet and as a metaphor for the Countess. Although Carter does not anthropomorphise the bird, she also continues with the literary fairy tale traditions of animals as the princess’s pets (Herzog and Galvin 80). In this case, the bird’s song allegorically represents the repetition of patterns of behaviour which the figure of the Countess represents. Both destinies are intertwined in the intermediation of the soldier, who puts an end to the immortality of the countess and sets the bird free.

Regarding the relationships between human and non-human animals, the animalistic Countess is the master of the singing lark, the metaphorical representation of her confinement, until the double liberation of the soldier, who sets the bird free and confers the eager Countess her mortality. Her connection with birds is also emphasised by the soldier’s fascination and awe with her claws, which he compares with a bird of prey, strengthening the similarities between the Countess and these non-human animals: “He was struck, once again, by the birdlike, predatory claws which tipped her marvellous hands” (Carter 1996, 205).

The Countess embodies the carnivore and sexually predator—in line with other characters of the collection such wolves or “The Erl-King”—and her preys are herbivore animals (rabbits) or men (compared with the herbivores): “When she was a little girl, she was like a fox and contented herself entirely with baby rabbits [...]. But now she is a woman, she must have men” (198). Despite being sexually active, the Countess cannot enjoy her sexuality or a reciprocal positive relationship with men. Her affirmation of her active role immediately subjugates the other, reduced to the victim position. However, her predator condition is going to be reversed when the Countess finally acquires mortality.

Thus, the Countess’s predator nature is also revealed in her gaze. However, Carter ironically introduces the glasses with the pretext of her affliction to the light, “an enormous pair of dark green glasses, such as blind beggars wear” (203) in which the soldier sees himself reflected: “Her blind spectacles gave him his handsome face back to himself twice over; if he resented himself to her naked face, he would dazzle her like the sun she is forbidden to look at because it would shrivel her up at once, poor night bird, poor butcher bird” (204). Such a reflection mirrors “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, when Beauty sees her reflection twice in the Beast’s eyes before acknowledging her own identity and, in a different way, “The Company of Wolves”, when Granny recognises the huntsman as a werewolf through his eyes, as will be analysed in the following chapter. Ironically, the soldier’s identity is reflected on the vampire’s glasses who, in turn, does not possess a reflection in the mirror (197).

With respect to sexuality and animality, in the Countess’s construction as a *femme fatale*, the symbolic use of the roses stands prominently in the story. Carter creates a wall of rose bushes surrounding the chateau, intertextually addressing the “Beauty and the Beast” fairy tales. The soldier is both asphyxiated and overwhelmed by the roses’ odour, which creates a gloomy atmosphere and anticipates the fatal destiny of those men who expose themselves to the Countess’s voracious appetites:

A great, intoxicated surge of the heavy scent of red roses blew into his face as soon as they left the village, inducing a sensuous vertigo; a blast of rich, faintly corrupt sweetness strong enough, almost, to fell [sic] him, Too many roses. Too many roses bloomed on enormous thickets that lined the path, thickets bristling with thorns, and the flowers themselves were almost too luxuriant, their huge congregations of plush petals somehow obscene in their excess, their whorled, tightly budded cores outrageous in their implications. (200)

The rose garden, inherited from the Countess's mother (197), becomes in the narrative a symbol of the female identity, along with the negligée and the wedding dress the Countess inherits from her. As such, the roses in Carter's tale establish a clear connection not only with sexuality but also with the vampire's appetite and, ultimately, with death (Fernández Rodríguez 137), as the narrative overtly shows: "And I leave you as a souvenir the dark, fanged rose I plucked from between my thighs, like a flower laid on a grave" (Carter 1996, 208). Here Eros and Thanatos are, once more, intertwined, being the symbolic rose the emblem of the Countess monstrous sexuality and of her role as *femme fatale*, but also of her menstrual blood and death, thus extending the *vagina dentata* motif presented in "The Snow Child".

The Countess's incessant rituals of sex and death are, however, put to an end when she accidentally breaks her glasses and pricks her finger with its fragments, which recalls the well-known motif in fairy tales: "She has never seen her own blood before, not her *own* blood. It exercises upon her an awed fascination" (207). The soldier takes her finger and sucks her blood, breaking the spell and metamorphosing the animalistic monstrous creature to a human passive mortal woman. Significantly, however, such a process of metamorphosis does not bring about the Countess's liberation, since her newly-acquired humanity means, in her case, death, which comes attached to passive compliance with the role of the beloved: "How can she bear the pain of becoming human? The end of the exile is the end of being" (207).

By discarding her true vampiric nature—imposed on her by her patrilineal inheritance—the Countess dissolves her agency in favour of the soldier's rationality and action, which eventually may suggest that "monstrosity is inescapable unless metamorphosis is embraced as a positive force" (Pasolini 112). By doing so, Carter deconstructs the traditional happy ending of fairy tales, since neither the Countess nor the British soldier "recognize that her own otherness makes her powerful" (Gruss 208). Carter's female protagonist denies her true identity by rejecting her vampiric condition in search of a true human love, which makes her vulnerable and will eventually bring about her own destruction.

## **6. WOLVES: “THE WEREWOLF”, “THE COMPANY OF WOLVES” AND “WOLF-ALICE”**

The last chapter of this dissertation examines Angela Carter’s three rewritings of “Little Red Riding Hood”, which are also the last short stories of the collection: “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice”. Here I will briefly explore the origins of this fairy tale and its most important versions, paying special attention to the psychoanalytical implications found in the tale regarding female sexuality. Moreover, I will look into the connections between Angela Carter’s works in general with wolves and their cultural and literary representation, in order to move on to closer examination of the last three stories from the perspective of animal studies.

### **6.1. “LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD”**

The fairy tale “Red Riding Hood” has its oral origins in the late Middle Ages. The story of a young peasant woman with a red cap—although not all the tale’s versions make reference to this piece of cloth—and a wolf appears firmly rooted in France as early as the tenth century and consolidated in Italy during the fourteenth century, being also very popular in many different European countries. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the story became extremely well-known due to “the great superstitious belief in the werewolves and the great witch hunt” (Zipes 1991, 28-29) which I will refer to in detail in the next section of this chapter.

In this well-known fairy tale, a young woman sets off to see her grandmother and crosses a forest, where she meets a (were)wolf and is tricked by him to arrive to the grandmother’s house earlier by taking a shortcut. The wolf devours Granny, dresses in her clothes and deceives the young woman, who is invited to eat and drink something—her grandmother’s flesh and blood—and to go to bed together. The oral tradition presented two different endings: either the woman is devoured by the wolf or escapes “by pretending she

needs to go outside to answer the call of nature” (Bacchilega 1997, 54) thanks to her cunning attitude.

It must be noted that the earlier oral versions of this tale were highly erotic and full of sexual references, already signalled by the protagonist’s “red” cap. Sexual intercourse between male and female is not explicitly mentioned, though indirectly implied: if the wolf does not eat the girl when both first meet in the forest, it is due to his sexual hunger (Bettelheim 175). In its origins, “Little Red Riding Hood” was a tale about female identity and sexuality. The tale’s focus here lies on whether the young woman character is prepared to accept it and become an adult, as Bettelheim’s psychoanalytic reading suggests: “Little Red Cap is very much a child already struggling with pubertal problems for which she is not yet really emotionally because she has not mastered her oedipal conflicts [...] Little Red Cap wishes to find out things, as her mother’s cautioning her to peek indicates” (171-172). Bettelheim further argues that the protagonist’s most characteristic trait consists in her humanness and in her inner fight between her “conscious desire to do the right thing and the unconscious” (174), and even though her body is ready for sexual intercourse, she is yet emotionally immature. In order to support this argument, Bettelheim explores the symbolism of the red colour and the importance of the adjective “little”:

All through “Little Red Cap,” in the title as in the girl’s name, the emphasis is on the color red, which she openly wears. Red is the color symbolizing violent emotions, very much including sexual ones. The red velvet cap given by Grandmother to Little Red Cap thus can be viewed as a symbol of premature transfer of sexual attractiveness, which is further accentuated by the grandmother’s being old and sick, too weak even to open a door. The name “Little Red Cap” indicates the key importance of this feature of the heroine in the story. It suggests that not only is the red cap little, but also the girl. She is too little, not for wearing the cap, but for managing what this red cap symbolizes, and what her wearing it invites. (Bettelheim 173)

Unlike Bettelheim’s reading, Zipes’s approach focuses more extensively on the protagonist’s process of maturation. In Zipes’s view, the successful replacement of the grandmother seems to contradict Bettelheim’s theories: “She crosses the border between civilization and wilderness, goes beyond the dividing line to face death in order to live. Her return home is a move forward as a whole person. She is a wo/man, self-aware, ready to integrate herself in society *with awareness*” (1991, 30; emphasis in original). This adult Red Riding Hood does not have any oedipal problems, but instead presents knowledge of the world, of herself, of her identity and also of men and sexuality. The tale has often been read as

a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood described in terms of cannibalism: “By eating the flesh and drinking the blood, the young girl incorporates the grandmother’s knowledge and takes her place” (Bacchilega 1997, 56). Through the process of cannibalism, the young woman is able to find her place in the world as an adult, and subsequently accepts replacing her grandmother in her role (Zipes 1991, 29).

Although the portrayal of the female character as strong and self-determined should also be taken into account, further reassessments of the tale radically altered not only the attributes of this character, but also other relevant elements. Perrault and the Brothers Grimm transformed this come-of-age story of a brave woman into a moral lesson, a punishment for disobedience in a patriarchal society: “Such tales as “Cinderella”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, “King Thrushebeard”, and “Rapunzel” are decidedly biased against females who must either be put in their places or have their identity defined by males” (Zipes 2002, 154).

Charles Perrault was the first author to collect the story in the volume *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé* in 1697 and he was not only responsible for the narrative’s literary transformation, but also for introducing many changes that would affect the tale until nowadays. Firstly, Perrault introduced the adjective “little” as applied to the protagonist while preserving her as a young woman, transforming the oral initiation rite story into a didactic one, in which cruelty is used to teach a lesson to those women who succumb to temptation. Although the narrative’s erotic meaning is here still present, it rather appears as a moral caveat:

Little Red Riding Hood, the only warning tale of the volume, which ends on an unhappy note, still provides a model of behaviour for girls. By giving expression to her fancy, she brings about both her grandmother’s downfall and her own. [...] In fact, the moral tells us that young girls, who are pretty, well-bred, and courteous, should never talk to strangers or let themselves go. Otherwise, they will be swallowed by wolves. In other words, they must exercise control over their sexual and natural drives or else they will be devoured by their own sexuality in the form of a dangerous wolf. (Zipes 1991, 24)

Perrault also changed the courageous young woman of the oral stories into a passive, gullible and dependent female character who is unable to face danger (Zipes 1991, 29), adapted to fit in Perrault’s own society in which both bourgeois and aristocratic women were characterised by these qualities. The cannibalistic scene is erased due to its inappropriate content and, conversely, morality and didacticism are emphasised, with the subsequent neglect of female character’s process of initiation in womanhood.

The Brothers Grimm's version of this tale, "Little Red Cap", was first published in *Children's and Household Tales* in 1812 is based on two different sources:<sup>9</sup> the Italian oral tradition and Perrault's *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*. Their version is far more innocent and less erotic, transforming the female protagonist into a young child, thus clearly targeting children as an audience. The Brothers Grimm further perpetuated Perrault's passive representation of women by presenting as a character a foolish girl unaware of the dangers of life or of the consequences of disregarding her mother's advice. The character's curiosity and naivety stray her way and she finds herself in trouble with the wolf: "The girl is stripped of her wits and courage, the grandmother's knowledge and body are robbed of their nurturing possibilities, and the flesh is deprived of its life and blood" (Bacchilega 1997, 58). Their tale has two different happy endings: they used for the first time the figure of the huntsman as the rescuer, thus depriving the girl from the capacity to save herself: "Devoured or domesticated, charged with sin or in charge of the feminine hearth, in the literary fairy-tale tradition Red Riding Hood is subjected to the laws of one deliberative masculine body" (Bacchilega 1997, 58); the alternative ending offers a brave Granny as saviour, following the Italian oral tradition.

Interestingly, both Perrault and the Brothers Grimm's versions share the confusion between the wolf and the grandmother. The young woman or child is unable to recognise the wolf, disguised in her grandmother's clothes. In a symbolic manner, this fact signifies the mixture of both identities, and thus both Grandmother and wolf would represent the same self. This point will be relevant for my analysis of Carter's trilogy of wolves:

From the point of view of Mother Goose's symbolic identity and its connection to women's persuasive speech, Perrault's retelling continues an important aspect: the possibility of confusing wolf and granny. In Perrault's version, the wolf cannot be clearly distinguished from Red Riding Hood's beloved grandmother: that is the crucial collapse of roles in his story. (Warner 1994, 181)

In relation to the male figures of the narrative, Bettelheim suggests that the female protagonist experiences different aspects of the male identity in her relation to both the wolf and the huntsman: "It is as if Little Red Cap is trying to understand the contradictory nature of the male by experiencing all aspects of his personality: the selfish, asocial, violent, potentially destructive tendencies of the id (the wolf); the unselfish, social, thoughtful, and protective propensities of the ego (the hunter)" (Bettelheim 1972). While the wolf represents a lover, sexual temptation and evil, the huntsman embodies the figure of the saviour. Angela Carter

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<sup>9</sup> Both brothers edited and revised the tales several times, modifying them. The last and final revision of their "Little Red Cap" was published in 1857.

herself, probably due to Bettelheim’s influence, deals with the connection between psychoanalysis, sexuality and the figure of the wolf, as I will explain in detail in the following section. Carter’s “Little Red Riding Hoods” struggle to find their place in the world, by deconstructing reductive binary categories such as humanity and animality and accepting sexuality as an empowering source for individual achievement.

## 6.2. ANGELA CARTER AND WOLVES

The wolf as a wild animal is present in many different mythologies all around the world, but it is predominant in Eurasian and North American legends and folklore. In totemic cultures as well as in Germanic folklore, the wolf represented the warrior. In literature, the presence of the wolf or its shapeshifting counterpart is found since Ancient history, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to Greek and Roman literature, mainly in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*—with the legend of King *Lycaon* transformed into a werewolf by Jupiter (Gildenhard and Zissos 15)—the legend of Romulus and Remus being cared by *Lupa Romana* and Aesop’s fables. As such, the wolf has had a particular influence on human beings throughout history:

A plethora of images and texts have portrayed the wolf in many different shapes around the world. Wolves have been feared and hated, adored and admired. They have been considered malicious and evil as well as associated with pristine wilderness. [...] The image of the fairytale wolf is deeply rooted in our cultural consciousness and fear wolves is still common [...]. (Masius and Sprenger 1)

Since Antiquity, this animal was connected to supernatural elements such as hellhounds and werewolves. The word “werewolf”, derived from the Anglo Saxon, reflects the hybrid identity of “man” and “wolf”, exactly as the Ancient Greek word “lycanthropy”, clearly referring to a masculine liminal monster, half human, half animal: “The werewolf is perhaps the most fully hypermasculine figure, ironically because of its hybrid animal status: it is hairy, strong, aggressive, and driven by primal urges for food and sex. The prefix “wer-” itself derives from the Old English word for “man”, not the term for human or person” (Oswald 348). In popular culture, this shapeshifting creature metamorphoses from man to wolf under a full moon and recovers humanity by putting clothes on or, on the contrary, remains in his animal state forever by burning them. Besides, in some of the legends and tales from northern Europe werewolves were described as “STALKING beasts by the light of a full moon. Medieval stories featured the corpse-eating werewolf, which the French called a *loup-*

*garou*, source of the nursery tale ‘Little Red Riding Hood’” (Snodgrass 216). Angela Carter was certainly inspired by these folkloric elements to produce her own version of these tales, as will be later argued.

The werewolf as a folkloric motif acquired great popularity during Middle Ages thanks to French romance poem *Guillaume de Palerme*. The figure of the Big Bad Wolf originally came from Aesop’s fables and influenced a few tales like “Three Little Pigs”, “Peter and the Wolf”, “The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats” and, of course, “Little Red Riding Hood” (Masius and Sprenger 2). However, though it is mainly a masculine trope, there is also a she-wolf present in folklore, especially during the witch trials in Europe, when the figure of the wolf was associated to witchcraft and evil supernatural forces and many women were accused of being not only witches but female werewolves as well:

Because the history of werewolves in the sixteenth century is intertwined with that of witches, most of the texts deal primarily with sorcery. Whereas the writings of medieval theologians condemn as infidels those who believe in werewolves, the majority of sixteenth-century writings on sorcery and lycanthropy stress the reality of witches and metamorphosis and label as heretics those who do not believe that they exist. (Sconduto 5)

As such, both the empirical wolf and the figure of the werewolf were demonised and criminalised, being real wolves hated and persecuted (Masius and Sprenger 5). This often meant that the figure of the werewolf embodied the predator, the carnivorous, bloodthirsty, wild animal which threatened human existence.

Like the vampire, the werewolf represented not only evil qualities but also sexuality: “[...] werewolves have also been linked to animal desires. [...] A large number of shapeshifting texts focus on sexual relationships involving supernatural characters” (McMahon-Coleman 68). It is, therefore, not surprising that Gothic literature often appropriated the trope of the lycanthrope and invested it with power: “One metamorphosis lead to, or melts into, another without much restraint. Thus, the figure of the wolf, werewolf or she-wolf can also be rendered in classical Gothic mode, as demon, vampire or satanic lover” (Braidotti 128). In addition to this, the symbolic power of its shapeshifting quality seems to “resist more stereotypical or traditional depictions of male-female roles to inhabit a new space” (McMahon-Coleman 41).

From the close of the nineteenth century onwards, literature has consistently drawn from the tropes of the wolf and the werewolf, being an important element of Gothic, science-fiction or fantasy genres. Wolves in literature include Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* (1894), Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) or Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild* (1903) among others, while the werewolf is mostly known by Guy Endore’s *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933).

Angela Carter often drew from the representation of both empirical and symbolical wolves in her work. In her journal articles—some of them previously mentioned here—Carter dealt with the demonization and vilification of the wolf, the psychoanalytical dimension of the trope, the conditions of real feral children and the fairy tale of “Little Red Riding Hood”. In “The Better to Eat You With” (1976) Carter analyses Perrault’s adaptations and moralities with irony: “The wolf consumes Red Riding Hood; what else do you expect if you talk to strange men, comments Perrault briskly” (Carter 2013, 554). Her interpretation of Perrault’s intentions clearly focuses on the predator-prey binary system of the Western world, which will be essential to her three short stories and to my analysis:

And what a craftsman Perrault was! Little Red Riding Hood is a classic of narrative form. The plot arises from the interaction of the wolf and his hunger, and the child and her ingenuity. The suspense springs from our own knowledge of the predatoriness of wolves and our perception of Red Riding Hood’s ignorance of it. No child reared on these austere and consummately constructed narrative forms is going to be easily fobbed off with slipshod stream-of-consciousness techniques, or overheated poetic diction. (Carter 2013, 556)

Carter here mentions the reader’s complicity, already acquainted with both the wolf’s evil characterization and the girl’s naivety, who serves as a warning example for the audience, in contrast to earlier versions of the tale, in which the female protagonist is active, intelligent and brave.

Carter’s impressions on how literature has portrayed feral children in detriment of reality are found in “Animals in the Nursery” (1976), where she compared the godly status Mowgli receives from wild animals in Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* to real feral children and criticised the prestigious condition of the human animal in opposition to the non-human animals in Kipling’s short stories. Carter denounces the didacticism of such literature and the use of animals as mere objects to reinforce the *status quo* in heteropatriarchal societies:

Mowgli’s apprenticeship among the wise beasts turns him into a perfect Noble Savage. Kipling gives him an exemplary fate very different from the sad and

terrible ones of the real wolf children, like Kasper Hauser, described by Lucien Malson. “Children deprived too early of all social contact -- those known as feral or “wolf” children -- become so stunted in their solitude that their behaviour comes to resemble that of the lower animals.” Those wolf children the Reverend Singh painfully repatriated into human society were mute and brutish for a long time. The acquisition of a reasonable competence as a wolf is all a human being brought up as a wolf can reasonably hope to achieve. Kipling’s animal impersonators are all the more spurious because of their furry clothing is so lifelike. Real wolves or panthers do not venerate us at all. All fictional animals are imaginary animals. Adult writers take an unfair advantage of child/beast solidarity to perpetuate animal fables that are really systems of moral instruction. (Carter 2013, 367)

In “Little Lamb, Get Lost” (1978), Carter addresses the implications of psychoanalytic readings of the wolf figure, as also evident in Bettelheim’s examination of this motif in popular tales. Here Carter uses Bettelheim’s ideas to express the ferocity of the imaginary wolf from the fairy tale tradition and its vilification, as well as its sexual symbolic meaning. Departing from the wolf functioning as *id*, Carter, however, is able to see beyond animal representation and the Cartesian division between humanity and animality, which she identifies in separate categories of predator and prey:

We return [...] to the notion of the carnivorous animal as *id*. Look no further than the connotations of the word, “wolf”. In the wild, wolves have impeccable domestic institutions. Not only they are fine mothers but, as Mowgli, Romulus and Remus will attest, also excel at fostering. They are certainly less sexually voracious than the rabbit, but if Red Riding Hood had found a bunny in granny’s bed, all it would have meant was it was Easter. Yet, the wolf is virtually synonymous with “*id*”, and with a particularly bestial type of ravening lust. All wolves do, to acquire this reputation, is simply be prone (if they get half a chance) to bite us. If they are not quickly stopped, they will then, as will any dog whose teeth aren’t rotten, gobble you up. Nobody likes to be reduced to the status of the comestible. But there is more to it than the indignity of turning into a factor in the prey-predator triangle when we thought we were half-way between ape and angel. (Carter 2013, 376)

Starting from the representation of wolves, Carter here addresses two different approaches of the characterization of these animals. By doing so, Carter brings to the fore the tradition of the wolves and feral children from classical mythology to British literature and how this relationship portrays wolves as a family group, emphasizing the nurturing aspects between species. On the other hand, fairy tales, such as “Red Riding Hood”, helped to vilify wolves by investing them with sexual connotations and carnivorous appetite.

“In Pantoland” (1991)—a parody of Disneyworld, published as a journal article for the *Guardian* in 1991 and posthumously as a short story in *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993)—Carter intertextually referred to the fairy tale of “Little Red Riding Hood”

(Carter 2013, 482) and fictionally reflected upon the relationship between human and non-human animals: “When Pantoland was young, and I mean really young, before it got stage-struck, in the time of the sky wolf, when fertility festivals filled up those vacant, dark, solstitial days, we used to see no difference between ourselves and the animals [...] when we thought we could talk to the animals, to remind us how once we knew that the animals were just as human as we were, and that made us more human too” (Carter 2013, 485). Taking into account Carter’s parodic intentions and her satirical comments on the commercialization and performance of the fairy tale realm into a massive product, it is important to highlight how Carter again mentions the relations between humanity and animality going back to folklore and orality, a time when these categories were not so distant.

Apart from Carter’s journalism, the figure of the wolf/werewolf is found in her short story “Peter and the Wolf” in *Black Venus* (1985), and the wolf trilogy from “*The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*”: “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice”. Carter published separately “The Company of Wolves” in *Bananas* magazine (1977) and “Wolf-Alice” in *Stand* (1978). Together with the short stories, Carter made also a radio version of the “The Company of Wolves” in 1979 and worked with Neil Jordan on the film script for *The Company of Wolves* in 1983 (Gordon 307).

### 6.3. ANGELA CARTER’S “WOLF” SHORT STORIES

Carter rewrote the tale of “Little Red Riding Hood” in the three short stories that close the collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. The first of them is “The Werewolf”, followed by “The Company of Wolves”, to conclude with “Wolf-Alice”.<sup>10</sup> Such a specific order responds to the invisible net that unifies all the stories of the collection as a whole, as Carter’s biographer explains: “In fact, she put the material to immediate use in a sequence of improvisations on ‘Red Riding Hood’. She composed the first two stories between October 1976 and January 1977. ‘The Werewolf’ came first” (Gordon 272). Even though the texts function as independent short stories, the interconnection among them creates a network of references which links them as a whole. From “The Werewolf” to “Wolf-Alice”, the complexity of the female protagonists increases as readers reach the end: “Carter revives the lost voices of “Red Riding Hood” by negotiating story with story (were)wolf with (girl)wolf.

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<sup>10</sup> The name of the narrative and the protagonist is an obvious reference to Lewis Carroll’s Alice.

But this transformation works only if we are willing to read these stories intertextually [...] (Bacchilega 1997, 66). Carter's first Red Riding Hood obtains her freedom and is able to live by herself; the second protagonist moves a step further and experiences her sexuality freely from the old order's morality. Finally, Wolf-Alice experiences a complete discovery, both generally speaking as a human being and, more particularly, as a woman. Carter's female characters benefit from their encounter with the wolf by acquiring power, independence and a personality of their own, and they even help the werewolf to control himself—in the case of "The Company of Wolves"—and to recover his soul, as is the case in "Wolf-Alice". After the pessimist portrayal of the impossibility of escaping from patriarchal restraints and its binary role model for women in the previous chapter, the last three stories of the collection engage with the feline tales in a dialogue for the deconstruction of such premises and an alignment between human and non-human animals.

Carter modified and adapted some formal and thematic aspects of the classical fairy tale in order to emphasise women's subjectivity quest. In these three stories, as well as in the rest of the collection, Carter employed identity changes and mobility as literary resources for her feminist rewritings of such a conservative genre as the bourgeois fairy tale. Her stories go back to the oral tradition of "Red Riding Hood" and, as such, sexuality and the absence of the male rescuer are core to the stories. Carter's acquaintance with both Perrault and the Brothers Grimm's versions of Red Riding Hood is clear in the numerous intertextual references, parodies and subversions of the so-called wolf trilogy. However, Carter questions these bourgeois reassessments of the oral tales by recovering many elements that had been superseded in these accounts, which are accompanied by an atmosphere celebrating, in terms of language and narrators, oral narratives and storytelling.

By means of metamorphosis and shapeshifting, Carter addresses the process of identity and defied traditional Western divisions between human and non-human animals. Animals and their Otherness are an important element in the stories, both symbolically and empirically, offering a space between human and non-human animal worlds where both can be subjects with an agency of their own. Angela Carter's Red Riding Hoods and the wolf acknowledge both similarities and differences between species, and their mutual understanding is what enables them to coexist in a liminal space at a crossroads of humanity and animality. Carter deconstructs the Cartesian dichotomy by presenting liminal, hybrid subjectivities which question established categories by posing forward different identity

possibilities, thus recognising in them agency and voice: “Even though in Carter’s fairy tales male and female animals and their transformations are tackled in different ways, their bodies share a fundamental feature: openness, which signifies a collapse of the confines between the human and the animal” (Pasolini 90).

Carter’s emancipatory discourse is accompanied by the subversion of traditional gender roles in her short stories, giving a disturbing and postmodern twist to the famous fairy tale in which female naivety and curiosity were punished. Carter used the symbolism of menstruation and female blood—the chromatic symbolism of red and white in connection with female sexuality has been previously analysed in “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love”—with a subversive purpose in the three last stories; far from regarding menstruation as a source of contamination, Carter deploys this as the starting point of womanhood and a source of empowerment for women: “So too is the economic and symbolic revaluing of women’s menstrual and birth blood essential to the transformation of the heroine’s subjectivity. [...] In patriarchal economies, women [...] are exploited because both profit and pleasure require the spilling of their blood. [...] These stories defiantly represent lifeblood as empowering” (Bacchilega 1997, 66). References to menstruation are found both in “The Company of Wolves” and in “Wolf-Alice”: “By invoking both Alice and Little Red Riding Hood, Carter is able to present a more complex vision of female sexual awakening under patriarchy, its pleasures as well as its genuine risks and sufferings” (Schanoes 30).

In the first story, Red Riding Hood is empowered by possessing her father’s knife—a clear phallic element that gives her, in a symbolic manner, an active male role—which is also signalled by the fact that the character has biologically become a woman. Childhood and its fears are left behind in this narrative, and now the character will have to come to terms with her own sexuality. In “Wolf-Alice”, the feral girl who does not have any social knowledge about identity, gender, sexuality or menstruation faces her first bleeding as a natural biological aspect of female human beings, not as “a loss of innocence” as is often considered in the Western world. Carter’s insistence on female blood connects directly with the oral tradition of the fairy tale and the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood for the protagonist. Furthermore, female blood functions as a connecting element through the collection, which gives unity and coherence to the subversive bodily subjectivities offered in the short stories since the first to the last: “Within the collection, the blood linked to female

metamorphosing body as a site of abjection and threat to the established order is also that which is spilled through the loss of virginity” (Pasolini 103).

Along with the fairy tale tradition, the presence of gothic elements is also found in Carter’s tales. Supernatural and mythical creatures construe a frame narration for the stories and connect the plot with the oral origins of “Red Riding Hood”. Folklore and superstition are mixed with reality and fairy tales: therefore, the presence of werewolves, vampires and witches both in “The Werewolf” and in “The Company of Wolves” and the figure of the Duke in “Wolf-Alice” connect Carter’s stories with a common European past which shares similar folk traditions—and intertextually references back to her own work, by connecting the Duke’s vampiric characterization in line with the Erl-King’s behaviour and Countess Nosferatu’s vampire condition. Interestingly, Carter establishes an overt connection between the aforementioned supernatural creatures and female sexuality by identifying the figure of the wolf with her female protagonists: “De los cuatro cuentos de Carter en los que aparecen lobos, en tres de ellos la mujer o niña protagonista se convierte e loba: bien por haber sido criada por la manada, bien porque mata a la abuelita/lobo, que es una bruja, bien para usurpar el cuerpo del lobo que tiene a la abuela dentro” (Bengoechea 49).

Gender subversion is clearly linked with sexuality and animality: departing from a tradition in which males were often presented as sexual predators and often symbolically attached to a carnivore animal, Carter engages with Bettelheim’s psychoanalytic ideas: ““The animal is repressed sexuality—“the beast in man”,’ Angela wrote in her journal” (Gordon 267). Only through sexuality and animality Carter’s Red Riding Hoods are able to reconcile both sides and create a complex and complete identity, thus casting aside traditional stereotypes of femininity and animality:

La hija de las reescrituras de Carter no mata a su ser demoníaco y monstruoso (la abuela) para preservar el angelical, sino que su parte angélica, una vez reconoce su sexualidad animal, canibaliza a la abuela para adoptar su personalidad, usurpar su cuerpo, su posición su libertad (hay que recordar que es una mujer que vive fuera de los límites del pueblo). Con ello Carter no sólo desconstruye los estereotipos de ángel y el monstruo, sino que además logra la concordia entre la Hija y las Otras mujeres, las que han optado por el sendero prohibido por el patriarcado. (Bengoechea 50)

However, in her texts Carter deconstructs such divisions—humanity against animality on the one hand, and prey and predator on the other—by presenting male predator characters that

result in shy and sweet hybrids, and carnivorous women who unleash their desires, as I will analyse in depth in each of the stories.

In tune with the above said, Carter also deconstructs the “happily ever after” ending of the fairy tale genre: her wolf trilogy does have a happy ending, yet it consistently deviates from the traditional male figure that rescues the endangered female protagonist by also punishing the evil wolf. Interestingly, the figure of the Grandmother acquires a new position in Carter’s trilogy within the framework of Carter’s new “happy ending” style. This character is present in “The Werewolf” and “The Company of Wolves”, where both characters eventually die. In the first tale, Granny—representing the animalistic, liminal hybrid who lives at the margins of society—has to be eliminated to propel Red Riding Hood’s survival and prospering. However, in the second story the grandmother is swallowed by the werewolf as in the original tale, but for the sake of her granddaughter’s sexual development: if the grandmother had remained alive, the girl and the wolf would not have seduced each other. Carter’s characters ignore their elder’s advice, for Carter’s emphasis is placed on their freedom and ability to live by themselves. As a result, disobedience is for Carter the solution to get rid of patriarchal ideology, not a reason for punishment or shame. However, and despite the fact that Granny represents the old order, she is also a female figure that enjoys the independence and empowerment that her granddaughter will inherit from her. Therefore, in Carter’s narratives Granny becomes a versatile and ambiguous character, key to Red Riding Hood’s development as an individual.

In order to explore Carter’s subversive strategies in questioning traditional borders, I will follow Saphiro and Copeland’s three-folded analysis proposal: the first level examines Carter’s deconstruction of heteropatriarchal reductive portrayals of animals and women, focusing on animal and female subjectivity, agency and empathy. The second level focuses on the portrayal of human and non-human animals as either symbolically or empirically represented, or as hybrids. The third one centres on the relationships between species, especially how the women characters in these stories and the wolves interact with each other and break established boundaries and dualisms by forging a space for mutual understanding.

### 6.3.1. “The Werewolf”

In Carter’s first and shortest wolf story, the reader is introduced to a world of folklore and superstition, as the reference to the mythical figure in the narrative’s title indicates. In this narrative, Carter not only draws from well-known elements from myth and folklore, but also emulates a story-telling situation by having a first-person narrator, the communal voice of the story-teller, addressing an audience: “To these upland woodsmen, the Devil is as real as you or I. More so, they have not seen us nor even know that we exist [...]. Anyone can tell you that” (Carter 1996, 210).

The conventions of oral narratives are also recalled by the narrator’s use of short sentences, vague references to place and time which reinforce the tale’s archetypal dimension and the use of the simple present, which strengthens the mythical dimension of the oral versions of “Little Red Riding Hood”, later overshadowed by the literary versions of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. The narrator, who assumes a story-teller persona addressing a community, reproduces the words of Red Riding Hood’s mother, who encourages the girl to visit Granny:

Go and visit grandmother who has been sick. Take her the oatcakes I’ve baked for her on the hearthstone and a little pot of butter. The good child does as her mother bids – five miles’ trudge through the forest; do not leave the path because of the bears, the wild boar, the starving wolves. Here, take your father’s hunting knife; you know how to use it. (210).

Carter’s setting of this story is precisely a wild landscape in which both human and non-human animals are denied a voice for their own, emphasising a sense of alienation which separate even more both categories and prevents empathic relationships between species from taking place. The agency of both human and non-human animals in this wild setting is similar to the behaviour of wild animals living in an indefinite “northern country; they have cold weather, they have cold hearts. Cold; tempest; wild beasts in the forest. It is a hard life” (210). Thus, the narrator mentions the bears coming into town in search for food, which indicates the harsh climate conditions for both human and non-human animals. In such a setting, there is no room for empathic relations between species and, on the contrary, Carter presents a particularly superstitious, violent society. By introducing witch hunting as a theme in the

narrative, Carter presents animals—in particular the black cat—as the Other, as the uncanny element connected to the supernatural (evil) world:

Wreaths of garlic on the doors keep out the vampires. [...] When they discover a witch -- some old woman whose cheeses ripen when her neighbours do not, another old woman whose black cat, oh, sinister! *follows her about all the time*, they strip the crone, search her for marks, for the supernumary nipple her familiar sucks. They soon find it. Then they stone her to death. (210; my emphasis)

This reference anticipates the ending of the story, not only by predicting the death of the grandmother but also by establishing a connection between witches—female monstrous outcasts—and animals such as the black cat. As for the animal’s feelings, the narration offers a sole moment when the wolf’s pain is visible after being cut off its paw: “The wolf let out a gulp, almost a sob, when she saw what had happened to it; wolves are less brave than they seem. It went lolloping off disconsolately between the trees as well as it could on three legs, leaving a trail of blood behind it” (211). The importance of the lack of representation of feelings and the few existing references to the empirical portrayal of animals is directly connected to the condensation of this short story. As happened with “The Snow Child”, the brevity of the narrative leads to the symbolical treatment of animals—wolves in particular—in connection to human characters due to Carter’s inclination for highlighting some extremely dark and violent aspects of the tale to her deconstructive purpose.

As such, regarding the degree in which Carter portrayed animals as “real” animals, the “leg of a pig hung up to cure” (210) clearly indicates the presence of nonhuman animals as meat, while the cat functions as a pet and the bear, the boar and the wolf embody empirical wild animals living in a harsh climate. These succinct accounts favour the symbolic meaning of animals in which human superstitions align the black cat and the wolf with witchcraft with evil forces. Thus, the wolf is here seen both as a real animal and as a metaphorical trope. The werewolf, understood as an uncanny gothic element, combines the mixture of the alien and the familiar due to its human and beastly nature, emphasizing the red eyes of the creature: “It was a huge one, with red eyes” (210). Acting like a wild animal—with some reminiscences of vampirism—“it went for her throat, as wolves do, but she made a great swipe at it with her father’s knife and slashed off its right forepaw” (211). After arriving to the grandmother’s house and finding the sick old lady in bed, the girl realises the metamorphic liminal aspect of Granny: “And the wolf’s paw fell to the floor. But it was no longer a wolf’s paw. It was a hand [...], she knew it for her grandmother’s hand” (211).

Carter here deconstructs the traditional meaning of this male creature by identifying the grandmother with the werewolf, which implies “her drawing on a lesser-known werewolf tradition against a vast popular history of werewolves as specifically male” (Lau 2008, 82). As previously mentioned, Bettelheim’s analysis of the tale already established an identification between wolf and grandmother which Carter echoed in her own narrative: “The child truly experiences Grandma as two separate entities—the loving and the threatening. She is indeed Grandma *and* the wolf” (Bettelheim 67). However, the figure of Granny is quite ambiguous: on the one hand, she represents the old order and its conventions, but she is simultaneously an empowering figure, transformed in Carter’s tale into both a witch and a werewolf, the ultimate example of liminal and monstrous hybrid subjectivities.

The female protagonist is in this narrative an independent girl who is sent by her mother to Granny’s. The story’s opening thus draws from the fairy tale tradition by also referencing the hunter in the allusion to the father’s knife and melting both characters into one, yet removing him from the scene by empowering the girl with the capacity of saving herself: “But the child was strong, and armed with her father’s hunting knife” (Carter 1996, 211). This brave and courageous protagonist is not gullible or naïve, but extremely conscious of the dangers she has to face and she prepares herself for them: “She knew the forest too well to fear it but she must always be on her guard” (210). She bravely cuts off the wolf’s forepaw and takes it with her as a hunting trophy, thus showing that she is not afraid of carnivore wolves and of what they represent: “Sus [Carter] niñas no temen al lobo salvaje, ni a separarse de su madre ni a convertirse en su abuela porque ellas han aprendido a aceptarse en el lobo y la abuela, ya son el lobo y ya son la abuela” (Bengoechea 51). Carter deconstructs the traditional representation of Perrault and Brothers Grimm’s “Red Riding Hood” and portrayed her protagonist with intelligence and bravery.

The third level of analysis, concerned with the interpretation of the human-animal relationships in the narrative, reveals a primitive society which treats animals as meat, companions or threats to humans. Carter uses this setting to exemplify how superstition portrays animals as Others, alienating them by building a divide between animality and humanity. Such vilification of animals prevents human characters from feeling empathy towards non-human animals, an even towards those humans who do not adjust to the norms. In this sense, the grandmother not only performs here the role of the wolf as predator, but also challenges the moral intentions of the punitive tale. The girl and the neighbours identify the

grandmother as a witch—“they knew the wart on the hand at once for a witch’s nipple” (Carter 1996, 211)—and, as a result, they kill her: “They drove the old woman, in her shift as she was, out into the snow [...] until she fell down dead” (211). Despite the apparent cruelty of such an action, the girl does not show any remorse: the grandmother is seen as a threat to the patriarchal community and has to be sacrificed, following the superstitious rituals mentioned at the beginning of the story. Yet Carter introduces another motivation for the Grandmother’s removal from the narrative, namely, the girl’s freedom:

Other three tales seem to counterbalance this impossibility of amending the allocation of victimhood and of circulating power within the relationships between the sexes in order to enable the accomplishment a different kind of consummation. “The Werewolf” is all about feminine predatoriness; the werewolfish Grandmother, indeed, is violently killed by her niece, which grants the latter’s survival and prosperity. (Pasolini 124)

By doing so, Carter reverses the happy ending of the Red Riding Hood traditional versions of the tale: “Now the child lived in her grandmother’s house; she prospered” (Carter 1996, 211). The abrupt and ambiguous open ending brings to the fore the oral tradition of “Red Riding Hood”, where the girl becomes a woman through her grandmother’s flesh and blood. Carter’s subversion of the rite of passage—by drinking and eating Granny’s flesh and blood—lies in a “scapegoating ritual that ensures her own livelihood. She replaces the old woman [...] through a violent severance that reproduces the wolf’s ferocity” (Bacchilega 1997, 61). By killing the grandmother and having the girl to own the grandmother’s house, Carter establishes the fall of the old order ruled by Granny and the beginning of a new one. Symbolically, Red Riding Hood gets her freedom through grandmother’s possessions: “Little Red Riding Hood can inhabit her grandmother’s house, can thrive in an alternative fairy-tale ending, a heroine who separates from her family only to live alone, able to protect herself, prosperous” (Lau 2008, 83). The grandmother’s predatory status is replicated in the girl’s violent response. What remains unclear is whether the girl also inherited lycanthropy along with Granny’s house and position in the community.

### 6.3.2. “The Company of Wolves”

The second wolf story is a good example of Carter’s subversion of gender roles and human and non-human animal stereotypes in traditional fairy tales. Through this rewriting of “Little Red Riding Hood” the author moves beyond Perrault and Grimm’s warning against naiveté

and curiosity: Carter reassessed the tale by emphasising the female character's enjoyment of sexuality. For this purpose, Carter used components from different literary traditions:

For “The Company of Wolves”, she re-imagined familiar tales in a spiny, springing prose which borrows elements from Symbolism and pornography, Gothic romance, street slang and Parnassian preciousness all at once, to conjure young girls' sexual hunger and the lure of the wild. The wolf stirs desire here far more profoundly than would the pattern of princes. (Warner 1994, 309)

In “The Company of Wolves”, Carter unfolds a large number of elements introduced in the preceding story, “The Werewolf”. As in the previous narrative, with which “The Company of Wolves” establishes an intertextual dialogue, Carter recreates an atmosphere of ancient storytelling and orality, as her biographer notices: “The Company of Wolves” is “narrated in the voice of an ancient country storyteller” (Gordon 273) or Mother Goose, the impersonation of popular knowledge and ancient wisdom, in tune with Carter's initial plan to call the collection *The New Mother Goose*, which emphasises the oral quality of the fairy tale tradition in her collection.

As such, “The Company of Wolves” presents a bipartite structure: while the first section relates to a series of warnings about the dangers of the wolf (or werewolf) as entailed in the literary fairy tale of “Little Red Riding Hood”—as happened in the previous text, “The Werewolf”—, the second part of “The Company of Wolves” subverts the previous warnings. In this sense, the first part of the short story introduces a series of legends and superstitions related to werewolves which are key to understand the subversive message entailed in the second section, such as the werewolf's cycles—“Seven years is a werewolf's natural span but if you burn his human clothes you condemn him to wolfishness for the rest of his life” (Carter 1996, 214)—or the process of their metamorphosis: “Before he can become a wolf, the lycanthrope strips stark naked” (214).

As a reassessment of “Little Red Riding Hood”, “The Company of Wolves” provides some intertextual links with the traditional tale. The young female protagonist goes to her grandmother's house in the middle of the forest—“the girl would take these delicious gifts to a reclusive grandmother so old the burden of her years is crushing her to death. Granny lives two hours' trudge through the winter woods” (215)—and finds a werewolf in the woods, which comes to Granny's house and devours her. The narrative also draws from the popular question-answer pattern present in the traditional fairy tale: “What big arms you have. All the

better to hug you with” (219). However, the girl’s rejection of superstition allows her to overcome fear by being “nobody’s meat” and embracing her hybrid subjectivity.

The characters of the story express their agency and voice in different manners. The girl and the wolf maintain different conversations: the wolf uses his human form and acts like a man, but the text offers readers some clues to reveal his nature as a werewolf. He deliberately flirts with Red Riding Hood and plans to kill the grandmother, thus fulfilling his double role as a wild carnivorous and sexual predator—as previously analysed in the figures of My Lyon, the Beast, the Erl-King, the Count of “The Snow Child” and Countess Nosferatu. While the interaction between Granny and the wolf merely reproduces the brief dialogue from the fairy tale, Carter transcends the tale by creating a violent and aggressive scene and by opposing the grandmother as “aged and fragile, granny is three-quarters succumbed to the mortality the ache in her bones promises her and almost ready to give in entirely” (217) to the vision of the werewolf: “The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was a young man, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her bed. The Wolf is carnivore incarnate” (217). Furthermore, the passage signals an identification between the predator behaviour of empirical wolves and male sexuality. Granny, here a “pious old woman”, recognises evil in this man through his gaze—in a reversal of the inability of the soldier to identify Countess Nosferatu’s ferocity and carnivorous instincts in “the Lady of the House of Love”—and tries uselessly to cling on to her Christian beliefs for protection:

You can tell them by their eyes, eyes of a beast of prey, nocturnal, devastating eyes as red as a wound; you can hurl your Bible at him and your apron after, granny, you thought that was a sure prophylactic against these infernal vermin. . . now call on Christ and his mother and all the angels in heaven to protect you but it won’t do you any good. (2017)

After killing Granny, the werewolf dresses in her clothes and waits for the girl to satisfy his appetite. Granny’s destruction—who represents the morality and didacticism of the fairy tale tradition—signals the end of an era: she is removed from the earth becoming just old bones, left under the bed while her granddaughter frees herself from the patriarchal chains: “And the old bones under the bed set up a terrible clattering but she did not pay them any heed” (219). Thus, the old order and its rules is here rejected by the young woman, who embraces animality. Granny, the dependent female character of Perrault’s tale, is defeated by Carter’s Red Riding Hood, a young active woman who defies traditional female roles.

Nevertheless, and considering Carter's wolf stories as a sequence in progression, it is also possible to read Granny either as heir to the Italian fairy tale tradition—in which the independent old woman who lives in a liminal place, the woods, alone and separate from the village, eventually rescues her granddaughter from the wolf—or as descendant from the oral traditions where cannibalism was a rite of passage for transmitting female power and wisdom from old generations to new ones. Either as a representative of the old patriarchal order or of female empowerment, Granny's death is a requisite for Red Riding Hood's freedom, as had also been the case in "The Werewolf".

Red Riding Hood, however, clearly deviates from the traditional fairy tale in its characterization. Carter subverts the original plot by making Red Riding Hood *wanting* to go to Granny's house against the recommendations: "this strong-minded child insists she will go off through the wood. She is quite sure the wild beasts cannot harm her although, well-warned, she lays a carving knife in the basket her mother has packed with cheeses" (215). The girl imposes her will because of her condition as "the youngest of her family, a little late-comer, had been indulged by her mother and the grandmother" (215) and takes advantage of her father's absence to do so: "Her father might forbid her, if he were home, but he is away in the forest, gathering wood, and her mother cannot deny her" (215). Prepared for the encounter with a wild beast and armed with her father's (phallic) knife, she deliberately slows down her pace and forgets "to be afraid of the beasts, although now the moon was rising, for she wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager" (216). In her encounter with the werewolf at Granny's, Carter's female protagonist moves from fear to eventual rejection of the victim role and, by doing so, is empowered by her own sexuality, as will be later argued.

As the previous story also emphasised, the setting of this story also suggests the existence of problems deriving from a harsh climate and the scarcity of food. Among the non-human animals of the story, wild creatures and farm animals, Carter focuses on the wolf, described several times in the story as the "carnivore incarnate" (217). Even though they act as empirical animals, wolves are vilified by the narrator: "That mourning for their own, irremediable appetites, can never move the heart for not one phrase in it hints at the possibility of redemption; grace could not come to the wolf from its own despair" (214).

The narrator's position of fear and lack of empathy for the wolves—dramatizing the voice of superstition and fear of wolves in the community—is opposed to Red Riding Hood's

inclination to sympathise with these famished animals, especially when hearing their howling, which unveils covert references to Red Riding Hood’s sexual desire: “It is very cold, poor things, she said; no wonder they howl so” (219).

As for the animals’ feelings, the text offers descriptive moments where the wolves appeared famished and undernourished: “wolves grow lean and famished. There is so little flesh on them that you could count the starveling ribs through their pelts, if they gave you time before they pounced. Those slavering jaws; the lolling tongue; the rime of saliva on the grizzled chops” (212). Carter’s emphasis on the difficulties of living in an isolated place with a harsh climate for both human and non-human animals—as in “The Werewolf”—not only creates a cyclical effect of frame narration for the three stories but also calls attention to the division between Red Riding Hood and the rest of the human characters in the story regarding empathic connections between species. While for the patriarchal community wolves—in their empirical or symbolical form—are a threat, especially for proper female behaviour, it is Red Riding Hood’s alignment with wolves which distances her from humanity, thus moving towards an animalistic subjectivity.

The second level of Saphiro and Copeland’s analysis examines the depiction of animals as either empirically or symbolically depicted. As previously mentioned, farm and wild animals—especially wolves—are portrayed in the text as empirical, nonhuman animals, acting and behaving as expected from them. The wolves interact with humans in search for food; they live in the woods, which serves as a liminal place where the boundaries between humanity and animality cross.

In the story, the well-known character of the hunter intersects with the figure of the werewolf and, as such, it is invested with symbolic meaning. The werewolf—described ironically as the hunter in Carter’s tale—speaks and acts like a human, laughing and flirting with the girl:

Is it a bet? he asked her. Shall we make a game of it? What will you give me if I get to your grandmother’s house before you?  
What would you like? she asked disingenuously.  
A kiss.  
Commonplaces of a rustic seduction; she lowered her eyes and blushed. (216)

He wears the hunter’s clothes, but his physical description reveals his dual identity. On the other hand, here the werewolf responds to the typical mythology of these Gothic creatures, representing male sexual power: “The werewolf contributes a more explicit sexual theme that is only implicitly present in the moralizing versions of the tale. In this sense, the modern

young girl's interior confusion of desire and anxiety links back directly to the grandmother stories of werewolves" (Mulvey 250). In Carter's portrayal, the werewolf is presented in a virile and powerful manner, later the more evident in his metamorphosis: "He strips off his shirt. His skin is the colour and texture of vellum. A crisp stripe of hair runs down his belly, his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit [...]. He strips off his trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are. His genitals, huge. Ah! Huge" (Carter 1996, 217). Carter introduces a liminal, animalistic individual, a zoomorphic human animal which is transformed into a wolf at will. In this sense, "the bestial qualities imputed to the human usually reveal an observation of animals more detailed (if no more accurate) than that of anthropomorphism" (Doniger 2005, 17). In tune with this, it is important to highlight how Carter's narrative is abundant with clues about the hybrid nature of the hunter: he is hairy, his eyes glow and he presents carnivore behaviour by eating raw meat, as wolves do. Carter here emphasises the hunter's liminal animalistic appearance, a zoomorphic creature, and its representation is related to animalistic identity and sexual desire.

On the other hand, the human girl represents symbolical zoomorphism. While being always a human animal, the character symbolically develops an animalistic individuality by embracing both her sexuality and the werewolf's identity. The girl's experience with the hunter and her empathic connection with the wolves ignite in the character a process of a symbolic animal metamorphosis. Significantly, such a process of transformation and metamorphosis is triggered by Red Riding Hood's sexual awakening, thus casting aside her passive role as the victim. By means of zoomorphism and animalization, Carter gives agency to this female human character: the girl's new subjectivity springs from her rejection of traditional women's roles as sacrificial ones and her empowerment through sexuality, signalled in the narrative through her virginity and subsequent sexual awakening: "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" (Carter 1996, 215). The flirting moment with the hunter signals the character's control over the werewolf during their sexual intercourse along with her acceptance of her own carnivorous self.

As for the relations between human and non-human animals, the text establishes a clear-cut divide between humans and wolves, which reproduces the Cartesian dichotomy

“reason” versus “nature”. The narrator uses superstition to reinforce such differences and to indoctrinate in fear towards wolves, in tune with the superstitious atmosphere of the traditional tale. However, in the second part of the narrative, Carter defies such assumptions by introducing an unexpected turning point in the relationship between Red Riding Hood and the wolfish huntsman. The carnivore/herbivore dichotomy which had created a tension between both species with the reiteration of the wolf as the “carnivore incarnate” is now challenged by the female character’s reaction at the possibility of being devoured by a beast: “The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody’s meat. She laughed at him full in the face” (219). By doing so, the initial binary opposition evolves into a subversion of both categories which eventually questions established boundaries between animal and human identities. Red Riding Hood’s approach to the hunter also implies her removal of her fears of sexual desire, transmitted in superstition and legends.

In the narrative, the wolf’s glowing eyes evince Granny’s dangerous hybridity, as also happened with Countess Nosferatu’s predator eyes analysed in the previous chapter. After Granny’s death, however, Red Riding Hood continues facing these dangerous eyes: “His eyes were fixed upon her -- huge eyes that now seemed to shine with a unique, interior light, eyes the size of saucers, saucers full of Greek fire, diabolic phosphorescence. What big eyes you have. All the better to see you with” (218). However, here the huntsman’s gaze is proof of his animalistic identity and, as such, it unleashes her desire, inducing in her sympathy and understanding. By means of this empathic connection, Red Riding Hood eventually comes to terms with her sexual identity and her own desire, since “her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid” (Carter, 219). By doing so, the female character undergoes a symbolic metamorphosis by embracing the liminal subjectivity represented by the werewolf, as Aftandilidan suggests:

Liminality attracts liminality. This is perhaps best illustrated by the danger humans face from the supernatural when in a transitory phase of a rite of passage. When we as humans pass from one social category to another [...], we enter an in-between stage [...] and become liminal, but only *temporarily*. During the time we spend in that middle ground, though, we are at a heightened risk of danger from the supernatural. We draw it to us by being similar to it, and superstitions and protective customs cluster around these liminal points of transition in people’s lives. It is as though when we become liminal, we have stepped into the supernatural realm and opened ourselves to attack from creatures that hold permanent residency there and usually cannot reach us so easily. (2007, 9)

This tale reaches back to the origins of “Red Riding Hood” as exemplary of a rite of passage from childhood to womanhood, dramatizing “the internal fantasies of a young girl at

the moment of her adolescence and in the face of her first intimations of sexuality” (Mulvey 248). In Carter’s story, the girl’s sexual awakening is performed in three main steps. The first one focuses on the biological mutations of the female body into adulthood: “Her breasts have just begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her pale 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” (Carter 1996, 215). As a result of such biological changes, the female character experiences sexual awakening in a second moment in the narrative, dramatized in the flirting scenes with the hunter in the woods, which leads to the final culmination, signalled by Red Riding Hood’s control over the hunter, ultimately becoming “a sexual agent” (Lau 2008, 86). Red Riding Hood is inflamed by his powerful presence and uses her sexuality to control him and enjoy sex freely:

“The Company of Wolves” [...] es el viaje de Caperucita al encuentro del sexo. Lejos de amedrentarse ante un hombre lobo, el deseo que por él se le enciende determinará a Caperucita a tomar la iniciativa [...]. Lo afrontará, con osadía y sin miedo a las consecuencias, reconociendo su propio impulso sexual, ya desreprimido, y rehusando ser tanto víctima como objeto pasivo de la sexualidad masculina [...] Con lo que lo domesticará con su propia sexualidad y ternura. Ternura y sexo animal que aparecen asimismo en “Wolf-Alice”. (Bengoechea 49)

The female protagonist plays an erotic game with the werewolf, reversing the traditional question-answer sequence of the fairy tale by removing, first her clothes and then the hunter’s:

She closed the window on the wolves’ threnody and took off her scarlet shawl, the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses, and, since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid. What shall I do with my shawl? Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won’t need it again. She bundled up her shawl and threw it on the blaze, which instantly consumed it. Then she drew her blouse over her head; her small breasts gleamed as if the snow had invaded the room. What shall I do with my blouse? Into the fire with it, too, my pet. The thin muslin went flaring up the chimney like a magic bird and now off came her skirt, her woollen stockings, her shoes, and on to the fire they went, too, and were gone for good. The firelight shone through the edges of her skin; now she was clothed only in her untouched integument of flesh. This dazzling, naked she combed out her hair with her fingers; her hair looked white as the snow outside. Then went directly to the man with red eyes in whose unkempt mane the lice moved; she stood up on tiptoe and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt. (Carter 1996, 219)

In a symbolical act, Red Riding Hood burns their clothes, which implies a rejection of the traditional prevalence of human over non-human animals by choosing her bestial and animal identity. As opposed to Perrault’s admonitory tale, Red Riding Hood’s self-assurance

prevents her from being eaten, both in symbolical and literal terms, which implies her eventual salvation, removing the character from “the realm of patriarchal pornography—the dominant tropes with which Carter first describes her and resituates her in what Carter calls ‘the world of absolute sexual license for all the genders’” (Lau 2008, 87).

By doing so, the narrative questions the binary system which structured Perrault’s short story. In this sense, the werewolf, traditionally construed as a sexual predator who eats the grandmother, is here transformed into a gentle wolf after satiating his sexual appetite with an equal partner, which allows them to live in the grandmother’s house in freedom and peace: “See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf” (Carter 1996, 220). Carter’s conclusion for the story thus advocates a reinsertion of human animals in the natural world.

### 6.3.3. “Wolf-Alice”

“Wolf-Alice” is not only the last story of the wolf trilogy, but also the one which closes the collection and, as such, it has a special significance. Unlike the previous wolf narratives in Carter’s collection, “Wolf-Alice” does not present such a clear connection with the fairy tale rewritten by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm which is, in a sense, unnecessary, since intertextuality has been previously established by the two preceding narratives. Carter’s choice of the hyphenated title ingeniously combines “Red Riding Hood” with Lewis Carroll’s famous female protagonist in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), and such an unexpected association defies the reader’s expectations. Carter’s Wolf-Alice shares with Carroll’s protagonist the desire of discovering what is beyond the reflecting surface of the mirror, leading Carroll’s Alice to a reversal world and Carter’s wolf girl to the exploration of her own identity out of the symbolical order. As is the case in the preceding stories, Carter here recreates a story-telling situation by introducing “shifts in the temporal position of the narrator, and a frequent use of ‘you’ and ‘we’ to foster a didactic complicity with the reader, as if to accentuate the voice of a storyteller persona” (Ryan-Sautour 2012, 3).

In this short story, Wolf-Alice is a feral human child who is found living among wolves in the forest, following the folkloric tradition of Romulus and Remus previously mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The girl is taken to a convent where the nuns have unsuccessfully tried to teach her how to behave like a human: “She learned to recognize her

own dish; then, to drink from a cup. They found that she could quite easily be taught a few, simple tricks but she did not feel the cold and it took a long time to wheedle, a shift over her head to cover up her bold nakedness” (Carter 1996, 222). Although Alice is able to learn some mechanical habits related to human behaviour, she is unable to completely discard her wolfish nature and “arched her back, pawed the floor, retreated to a far corner of the chapel, crouched, trembled, urinated, defecated – reverting entirely, it would seem, to her natural state” (222), to the nuns’ desperation.

In the context of this story, Wolf-Alice’s animality is emphasised by her inability to acquire human speech, traditionally regarded as the ultimate sign of socialisation, used by Enlightened philosophers, such as Descartes, to justify the human-animal divide: “Following Descartes, English philosophers (for example John Locke) and natural historians (for example John Ray) and scientists (for example Edward Tyson) would agree in defining language as a distinguishing marker of human reason” (Armstrong 18). As an exclusively human feature, language reinforced the superiority of the human race in Western thought. However, literary human-animal studies and the ecocritical approach in general have vindicated subjectivity and agency for non-human animals, demanding the recognition of non-human communication through “body language territory, scent, sound and other registers” (Berland 440). Significantly, Carter here establishes the possibility of developing a sense of humanity and identity without the possibility of speech, “a point Carter makes in the story’s opening sentence” (Lau 2008, 89).

In a more symbolical dimension, patriarchal societies have often denied women the possibility of speech with a voice or place of their own. Carter’s feminist agenda advocates the necessity of female empowerment and the existence of an emancipatory discourse by reclaiming language against silence and oppression. Thus, in her work based on fairy tales—and in *The Bloody Chamber* collection in particular—Carter recovered an oral tradition of narratives which had been manipulated, obscured or ignored by male collectors, as she explained in the “Introduction” of *Virago Book of Fairy Tales*: “That I and many other women should go looking through the books of fairy-tales heroines is a version of the same process – a wish to validate my claim to a fair share of the future by staking my claim to my share of the past” (Carter 2005, xviii).

In “Wolf-Alice” Carter introduces a female protagonist who develops a sense of individuality and acquires a degree of humanity through different means, excepting language.

In this sense, Carter questions the human animal divide by creating a new subjectivity in a hybrid, metamorphic self. Although Wolf-Alice does not use human speech, she is able to communicate by many other means, as non-human animals would do: “But she cannot speak, although she howls because she is lonely” (Carter 1996, 221); she does not walk like a human but imitates animal pacing: “She never walks; she trots or gallops. Her pace is not our pace” (221) and uses her animalistically developed sense of smell: “Her long nose is always aquivering, sifting every scent it meets” (221). Her behaviour at the beginning of the story reveals her own self-knowledge as a non-human animal. However, and as Day has suggested, “Wolf-Alice” is also a narrative which addresses the girl’s “independent discovery of her humanity” (164), which she develops, revealingly, along with a sense of time and its regularities from her menstrual periods.

Feelings of empathy and sympathy are also present in the story. Although the nuns treat Wolf-Alice with a certain kindness, the moral superiority of the human animal towards an animalistic creature prevents real communication from taking place. Carter here establishes a comparison between animals and women as the inferior Other in patriarchal societies, as developed in her journal article “Little Lamb, Get Lost” (Carter 2013, 375). Unlike the lack of understanding with the nuns, real empathy characterizes the relationship between the girl and her foster wolf family:

When she curled up among the cinders, the colour, texture and warmth of them brought her foster mother’s belly out of the past and printed it on her flesh; her first conscious memory, painful as the first time the nuns combed her hair. She howled a little, in a firmer, deepening trajectory, to obtain the inscrutable consolation of the wolves’ response, for now the world around her was assuming form. (Carter 1996, 225)

When the nuns realise that their task to humanise Wolf-Alice is fruitless, they decide to take the girl to a nearby castle inhabited by a Duke, also an outcast who lives alone in a “gloomy mansion”, outside the psychoanalytical symbolic order, structured by language and signalled by the entrance in the mirror stage which, in his case, no longer reflects his image: “nothing can hurt him since he ceased to cast an image in the mirror” (222). Like Wolf-Alice herself, the Duke also suffers bodily transformations which turn him into a vampire, and is forced to perform animal rites: “At night, those huge, inconsolable, rapacious eyes of his are eaten up by swollen, gleaming pupil. His eyes see only appetite. These eyes open to devour the world in which he sees, nowhere, a reflection of himself; he passed through the mirror and now, henceforward, lives as if upon the other side of things” (222).

Despite belonging to different species, both the human animalistic girl and the monstrous liminal Duke express their feelings and emotions in diverse manners, which reach a climax at the end of the narrative. Wolf-Alice uses her animal instincts to protect the Duke, thus establishing bonds of empathy and affinity with him: “And if her nostrils flare suspiciously at the choking reek of incense and his do not, that is because she is far more sentient than he. She will, therefore, run, run! when she hears the crack of bullets [...] Poor, wounded thing... [...]. Then, she was pitiful as her gaunt grey mother” (227).

The second level of Saphiro and Copeland’s analysis focuses on the portrayal of animals empirically or symbolically in Carter’s narrative. The wolf pack where Wolf-Alice is found is an example of empirical non-human animals, together with the few references to cattle and pets in the village, threatened by the Duke’s bloody appetite, which makes “the cows low fretfully in the byre when he goes by, the whimpering dogs sink their noses in their paws” (223). Carter’s use of language and communication in human and non-human animals ranges in the collection from the silent tiger in “The Tiger’s Bride” to the non-verbal feral girl in “Wolf-Alice”. Both are considered “different”, but their difference is no impediment for mutual empathy and understanding.

Carter’s use of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism in this story relates to the acceptance of the Other and the recognition of one’s alterity as a mechanism to question the division between human and non-human animals. In this narrative, Wolf-Alice represents symbolic zoomorphism: she is a human girl who starts behaving like a wolf and eventually acquires humanity through her sexuality, self-recognition in the mirror and human clothes. Her feral condition reflects a liminal state between the wild and the domestic sphere, the human and the non-human animal, being the embodiment of this crossing-border, a porous subjectivity, thus posing forward the existence of a space “between our definitions of species life, that is, into the vital practices of embodying while at the same time sharing spaces that unite all life” (Marvin and McHugh 7). Wolf-Alice progressively acquires a certain conscience of her own humanity, which does not imply a rejection of her animal nature (Sage 78), signalled by Alice’s failure to recognise her own image in the mirror:

First, she tried to nuzzle her reflection; then, nosing it industriously, she soon realised it gave out no smell. She bruised her muzzle on the cold glass and broke her claws trying to tussle with this stranger. She saw, with irritation, then amusement, how it mimicked every gesture of hers when she raised her forepaw to scratch herself or dragged her bum along the dusty carpet to rid herself of a slight

discomfort in her hindquarters. She rubbed her head against her reflected face, to show that she felt friendly towards it, and felt a cold, solid, immovable surface between herself and she —some kind, possibly, of invisible cage? In spite of this barrier, she was lonely enough to ask this creature to try to play with her, baring her teeth and grinning: at once she received a reciprocal invitation. She rejoiced; she began to whirl round on herself, yapping exultantly, but, when she retreated from the mirror, she halted in the midst of her ecstasy, puzzled, to see how her new friend grew less in size. (Carter 1996, 224-225)

Eventually, Wolf-Alice acknowledges that what she sees is her own reflection: “A little moisture leaked from the corners of her eyes since she knew she saw herself within it” (226). As Lau suggests, Carter both draws and departs from Lacan’s well-known theory of subjectivity related to the mirror stage as entrance into the symbolic order, structured, according to Lacan, by language:

Wolf-Alice recognizes herself in the mirror not as the ideal coherent self of Lacan’s mirror stage (for Lacan, a misrecognition) but rather as shadow, as reflection, and it is this different recognition that keeps her from entering into the symbolic, maintains her subjectivity outside of language. (2008, 91)

Once this conscience of her own identity is acquired, the character shows an interest in other forms of socialisation, as her need for clothes indicates. Playing innocently with human dresses without knowing their use, finally Wolf-Alice uses a dress as a means to cover her body:

She trotted out in her new dress to investigate the odorous October hedgerows, like a debutant from the castle delighted by herself but still, now and then, singing to the wolves with a kind of wistful triumph, because now she knew how to wear clothes and had put on the visible sign of her difference from them. (Carter 1996, 226)

Clothes, their presence or their willing removal from the characters’ bodies run through the collection as a powerful motif, charged with symbolic meaning. In this story, clothes not only work as an element of humanity but also as an intertextual connection with the Countess’s dress in “The Lady of the House of Love” and the biblical reference to Paradise and Adam and Eve (223): their shame at their nakedness and subsequent need to clothe their bodies signals not only Adam and Eve’s loss of innocence and expulsion from Eden, but also their entrance into humanity. In the story, Wolf-Alice finds women’s clothes at the castle, old ball dresses from the Duke’s family, but also his victims’ burial clothes and nightdresses (224). Alice’s choice of a white dress from a bride killed by the Duke echoes a similar motif in “The

Lady of the House of Love” and the protagonist’s dead mother’s wedding dress, “simultaneously signifying purity and sexual readiness” (Schanoes 32).

Nevertheless, the most important fact for Wolf-Alice’s recognition as a woman is the movement from childhood to womanhood. In that sense, the character’s first menstruation is what signals her entrance into the symbolic, as this enables her to acquire a sense of her own subjectivity in terms of time, related to her biological cycles as a woman:

Wolf-Alice was surprised into bleeding again and so it went on, with a punctuality that transformed her vague grip on time. She learned to expect these bleedings, to prepare her rags against them, and afterwards, neatly bury the dirtied things. Sequence asserted itself with custom and then she understood the circumambulatory principle of the clock perfectly, [...] so that you might say she discovered the very action of time by means of this returning cycle. (Carter 1996, 225)

Curiously, the Duke is also depicted in the story as a metamorphic character, whose body changes and transforms into a breed of werewolf and vampire, a zoomorphic liminal creature taken from folklore and Gothic literature: “The Duke is sere as old paper; his dry skin rustles against the bedsheets [...] He sleeps in an altered bed of dull black wrought iron until the moon, the governess of transformations and overseer of somnambulists, pokes an imperative finger through the barrow window and strikes his face: then his eyes start open” (222). As a vampire, the Duke feeds on dead corpses found in the churchyard at night, and his face is described as “white as leprosy” (223), while his wolfish nature shows in his paws—“he will leave paw-prints in the hoar-frost when he runs howling round the graves at night in his lupine fiestas” (223). His secluded life, sleeping during day and hunting at night, accentuates his alterity and inhumanity, represented in the vampiric non-reflection in the mirror. In this sense, the Duke’s nature is akin to the sacrilegious predator, the “carnivore incarnate” in the preceding story: “At night, those huge, inconsolable, rapacious eyes of his are eaten up by swollen, gleaming pupil. His eyes see only appetite. These eyes open to devour the world in which he sees, nowhere, a reflection of himself” (222). Although the narrative is never explicit in categorising the Duke as a vampire, Carter overtly uses vampiric iconography, such as garlic, the holy cross and water or silver bullets, with an ironic intention, since these are all inefficacious to fight back the threat that the Duke represents: “If you stuff a corpse with garlic, why, he only slavers at the treat: cadavre provençal. He will use the holy cross as a scratching post and crouch above the font to thirstily lap up holy water” (223). The

Duke is completely alienated from the rest of the world and the abandonment of Wolf-Alice at his castle signals their ostracism and animality: "He lives in a gloomy mansion, all alone but for this child who has as little in common with the rest of us as he does" (222).

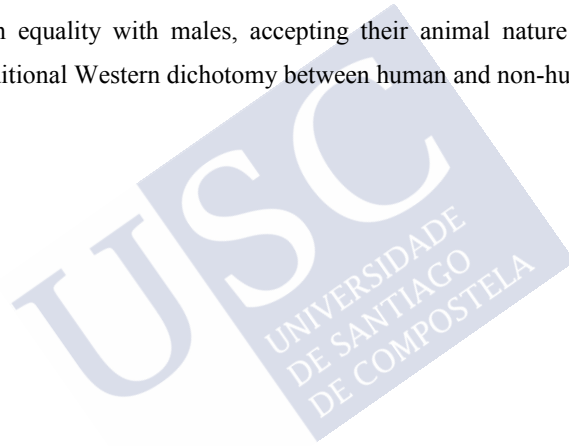
The last level of my analysis focuses on the interactions between human and non-human animals, paying attention to the carnivore/herbivore dichotomy, the importance of the gaze and identity recognition. Carter's subversion of the carnivore/herbivore binomial is developed throughout the three stories, reaching its climax in "Wolf-Alice", where these interrelations are more complex. In the narrative, Carter questions categories such as prey and predator: although the girl thinks of herself as a wolf (221), she is not a predator. The Duke, however, finds himself in trouble due to his carnivorous and necrophiliac taste and is unable to prevent the villagers' attack. Wolf-Alice, however, is alert and can save herself, partly due to the preservation of her animal instincts, "thus recalling the Freudian association between feminine sexuality and the olfactory" (Lau 2008, 89).

The climax of the story puts forward a final moment of sympathy between Alice and the Duke, in which she tries to reverse the effects of the Duke's wounds: "She prowled round the bed, growling, snuffing at his wound that does not smell like her wound. [...] She leapt upon his bed to lick, without hesitation, without disgust, with a quick, tender gravity, the blood and dirt from his cheeks and forehead" (Carter 1996, 227). The communion between animal and human traits in Wolf-Alice results in her empathy and in her urge to heal the Duke. Revealingly, the girl's empathy restores the Duke to his former humanity, signalled in the narrative by the recovery of his reflection in the mirror: "Little by little, there appeared within it [...], first, a formless web of tracery, the prey caught in its own fishing net, then a firmer yet still shadowed outline until at last as vivid as real life itself, as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally, the face of the Duke" (228).

In this tale, Wolf-Alice discovers her ability to heal and cure others only after a process of maturation, both physical and psychological, in which "the subject cannot only see itself in the other but also recognizes the other within" (Jennings 99). The power of the gaze as an instrument for recognition and understanding is developed throughout the collection and expressed in the last story by the Duke's reflection in the mirror, which entails Wolf-Alice's acknowledgement of the Duke as a subject. Carter ends both the trilogy and the collection

with this story, which entails a message of female empowerment, achieved through acceptance of alterity and as a result of empathic relationships.

Saphiro and Copeland's analysis applied to Carter's three reassessments of "Little Red Riding Hood" unveils how Carter deconstructs traditional gender roles in fairy tales and folklore by questioning didacticism and reductive portrayals of non-human animals by means of metamorphosis, anthropomorphism and zoomorphism. Instead of using binary oppositions which draw a clear divide between human and non-human animals, Carter here presents the construction of women's identity in its full complexity. Thus, a progressive connection between the human and the non-human animal is presented through the stories, which allows female characters to move freely from one direction to the other. Carter's Red Riding Hoods learn to co-exist in equality with males, accepting their animal nature and, by doing so, questioning the traditional Western dichotomy between human and non-human animals.



## CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has aimed to examine the formal and ideological repercussions of Angela Carter's use of human/animal metamorphosis as core to *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories* in the creation of different identitarian possibilities. I have here argued that shapeshifting paves the way for new modes of subjectivity in Carter's short stories through the articulation of a liminal, hybrid and nomadic identity which defies received constructions of the Western heteropatriarchal world. By using this literary device, Carter's collection deconstructs and subverts the gender roles present in the literary tradition of the fairy tale while simultaneously questioning the boundaries that divide humanity and animality. The short stories from *The Bloody Chamber* can be seen as a thematic, ideological and formal unity, conforming a short story cycle which explores the physical and emotional connection between women and non-human animals—often marginalised, commodified and treated as the Other—in an inspiring search for female empowerment and liberation from the real and symbolical constraints which are often applied to women and animals as categories.

As previously seen, the radical division between species is a Western construction which directly touches upon gender issues. As such, this dissertation has attempted to show how Carter inverted gender roles in her narratives by questioning both gender and non-human animal stereotypes as understood by the compilers of some traditional fairy tales, such as Charles Perrault, Giambattista Basile or the Brothers Grimm. In order to do so, Carter subverted traditional portrayals of womanhood and animality in the fairy tales of "Beauty and the Beast", "Snow White", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Little Red Riding Hood" and in the folktale "The Erlking". To serve this purpose, Carter employed metamorphosis, Gothic and monstrous animalistic imagery as devices to endow female characters with self-knowledge, independence, agency and control of their own sexuality, with different degrees of success and empowerment in the various narratives of *The Bloody Chamber*.

The application of Saphiro and Copeland's analysis to the eight short stories in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* has revealed how Carter's use of metamorphosis aims at

articulating the possibility of a liminal nomadic subjectivity in most of the texts, yet such a proposal is not always effective in the narratives here examined, as the three “bird” stories demonstrate. The author employs different subversive strategies which question the Western human-animal divide with an emancipatory discourse, which entails, formally speaking, Carter’s particular use of the short story form and the portrayal of liminal, metamorphic and monstrous characters. Ideologically speaking, Carter puts forward subversive possibilities by emphasising agency in women and non-human animals alike, empathic relationships between species and the relevance of the gaze as an empowering force and the enjoyment of sexuality. In *The Bloody Chamber*, liminality works as a structural resource which functions in different levels: on the one hand, metamorphosis and the presence of metamorphic bodies are obvious liminal states. On the other, liminality is used in a formal sense by the choice of the short story form and the fairy tale, also literary genres which are located at the threshold of different narrative modes.

Being defined as the liminal genre par excellence by Achilles and Bergmann (2015), the short story has been consistently used by women to explore identity concerns, thus defying patriarchal assumptions. As a liminal genre, the short story’s formal and ideological in-betweenness is in tune with Carter’s use of pastiche in *The Bloody Chamber*, blending and reassessing the conventions of the fairy tale with those of the postmodern short story, while also exploring the intersections of oral and literary traditions which eventually question the “high” versus “popular” culture divide. In Carter’s short stories, liminality not only applies to themes, atmospheres and characters, but also to other formal and ideological structures, such as to Carter’s particular conception of the fairy tale and to metamorphosis as a structuring device in the collection. In this sense, Carter’s use of the short story connects with her feminist and deconstructive project, not only in denouncing women’s submission but also in posing different alternatives to the binary system of gender roles by vindicating nomadic and animalistic subjectivities.

In Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*, liminality also extends to her conception of characters, often conceived of as hybrid and/or monstrous figures, such as the breed of man and lion in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride”, the tigerish women characters in the “feline” stories, the spirit of the woods in “The Erlking”, the woman

character made of natural elements and the female vampire in the “bird” narratives and, finally, the breeds of vampires and werewolves in the wolf trilogy.

Hybridity and liminality in Carter’s construction of women characters aim at giving voice and agency both to women and non-human animals. I have here explored the ways in which Carter’s two feline reassessments of “Beauty and the Beast” offer the possibility of non-human agency and empathic relationships between species. The positive attitude of these two narratives with respect to agency, voice and sympathy between women and non-human animals or animalistic, hybrid, metamorphic creatures is, however, opposed to the results in the three next stories examined in chapter five and “in “The Werewolf”. “The Erl-King” presents the changeable and partial vision of a female narrator who searches for a voice of her own, using the metaphor of the locked birds for her confinement in the role of the object. In a similar vein, the female protagonist of “The Snow Child” is completely deprived of both voice and agency, since her creation and subsequent death respond to the male character’s commands. “The Lady of the House of Love” offers a female protagonist doomed to repeat her role as predator—inherited from her male vampiric ancestors—against her will and her search for agency leads to an inversion of roles in which she becomes the prey and eventually dies. In “The Werewolf”—which functions as a bridge from the previous negative vision of the “bird” narratives and the last two “wolf” ones—agency and voice are denied for both human and non-human animals; however, it offers a possibility for positive relationships between species by means of the story’s ambiguous end. Despite its apparent negativity, however, the first “wolf” narrative opens the path for the productive change which occurs in the last two stories of the collection, which brings to the fore the conscious choice of the bestial, carnivorous and animalistic identity made by the female protagonists.

In *The Bloody Chamber*, women’s agency relates to the establishment of empathic relationships between species. Both women characters in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” and “The Tiger’s Bride” understand their position as commodified objects, yet they both defy such assumptions by empathising with non-human animals and animalistic, liminal hybrids. Similarly, the female protagonists of “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice” establish an empathic, caring and erotic relationship with the male werewolves, feeling sympathy and pity for their empirical counterparts—which is, in itself, a defiance of the traditional distinction between humanity and animality.

Carter's character reassessments employ both empirical and symbolical non-human animals. In this dissertation I have considered animal symbolism—mainly anthropomorphism and zoomorphism—a good instrument to critically approach non-human animal's agency and identity in literature. By means of the symbolic treatment of animals, Carter deals with the construction of hybrid identitarian possibilities which question clear-cut patriarchal dichotomies of male/female, human/non-human animals. Revealingly, women's agency goes hand in hand with their own animalization in most of the narratives: in the chapter entitled "Felines", I have examined the importance of empirical and symbolical non-human animals, which evoke anthropomorphism and zoomorphism in an inverse situation. The symbolic treatment of non-human animals is clearer in the last three stories of *The Bloody Chamber*: wolves are here portrayed both as real animals and as tropes. "The Werewolf" presents a transgressive choice of gender through the figure of the werewolf; "The Company of Wolves" addresses the process of a symbolic animal metamorphosis in the woman character through the sexual relationship with the werewolf, whereas "Wolf-Alice" is a vindication of the threshold position of both categories of human and non-human animals, represented, respectively, by the female character and the Duke.

In tune with women's agency and emancipation, Carter's use of the gaze becomes central to most of the narratives as an empowering and positive force, which here encompasses women's recognition of the otherness in themselves and in monsters, eventually defying the human and non-human animal divide and gender roles alike. In this sense, in Carter's two feline stories "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride", her Beauties become aware of the necessity to cast aside patriarchal artificiality and social conventions in order to find their own identity, accepting the Other's alterity and their own sexuality. In "The Company of Wolves", the gaze triggers sexual desire between the female character and the werewolf, while in "Wolf-Alice" the protagonist's empathy towards the Duke, together with the power of gaze as a catalyst for recognition, reinstates humanity in him. As such, Wolf-Alice's acknowledgement of the Duke as a subject is accompanied by her own process of acquiring a hybrid identity.

Women's enjoyment of their own sexuality, the interrogation of the carnivore/herbivore opposition and metamorphic transformations constitute Carter's final step towards the subversion of traditional gender roles and human and non-human animal

dichotomies. Through animality, sexuality and metamorphosis, Carter endows her female characters with agency: they embrace their animal identity—either symbolically or physically—to become equal to the animalistic males. Carter’s use of the carnivore/herbivore dichotomy in the two “feline” stories opens up the path for a struggle for liberation from the patriarchal binary in the collection: in “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, Beauty calls herself “Miss Lamb”, and ends up symbolically transformed into a feline, whereas in “The Tiger’s Bride” the protagonist finally becomes the carnivorous tiger. “The Werewolf”, though still dependant on a clear-cut division between species, challenges the traditional didacticism of fairy tales: the narrative’s reluctance to closure subverts the rite of passage of the fairy tale, offering the possibility of an emancipatory legacy for the granddaughter, which anticipates the radical possibilities at stake in the following short story. In “The Company of Wolves” the fairy tale warnings against the carnivorous (were)wolf are challenged by the erotic love relationship between the huntsman—the incarnation of the predator—and the female protagonist, whose sexual desire unleashes her animalistic, carnivorous nature. Such a progression towards self-knowledge and acceptance culminates with “Wolf-Alice”, where the protagonist is able to define herself without male assistance or didactic patterns to guide her. By doing so, the Western patriarchal dichotomy of predator/prey is thoroughly questioned: the protagonist conceives of herself as a wolf and her animal instincts prevent her from being harmed; on the other hand, the Duke—the actual carnivorous and powerful predator—is hurt as a result of his failure to detect danger.

However, the aforementioned strategies do not always function as a source of empowerment in all of Carter’s narratives, as the three stories examined in chapter five, “Birds”, demonstrate. The positive relationships between humanity and animality previously inspected do not here present a continuity and Carter’s negative portrayals reveal the existence of many women who are still unable to break free from patriarchal constraints. The unnamed first-person narrator of “The Erl-King” struggles to preserve her identity and agency, fearing annihilation in her role as the passive beloved. “The Snow Child” extends such a pessimist view regarding the lack of agency and voice by presenting a silenced animalistic woman who is created exclusively as an object to satisfy male desire. The impossibility of having agency outside the standards of male Western thought is also portrayed through the repetition of patterns of Countess Nosferatu, the animalistic vampiric protagonist of “The Lady of the House of Love”. In all these narratives, the protagonists’

symbolic attachment to birds works as a metaphor for female confinement within patriarchy, portraying the negative consequences of a repressive male gaze both on women and on non-human animals. As such, the female protagonist of the first story departs from the prey situation to become the predator representing the problematics of the oppressed-oppressor reversal; “The Snow Child” offers the protagonist’s impossibility of developing a voice of her own, thus maintaining her position as the abused victim throughout the narration. The third tale expresses the failure of the animalistic, predator vampire to reject her true identity to be transformed into the human “herbivore”, following imposed standard gender roles from which she only escapes through death.

Revealingly, Carter’s narratives seem to suggest that a mere inversion of traditional roles and categories without deconstructing them implies the permanence of the patriarchal system, if no reciprocal recognition of otherness, alterity or monstrosity takes place. In contrast to the women characters’ self-assertion found in the “feline” and “wolf” stories, the “bird” narratives fail to recognise and accept possibilities outside the traditional patriarchal binaries, preventing the female characters from establishing an equal and, therefore, positive relationship with their masculine counterparts.

Likewise, Beauty, the female protagonist of “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, represents a timid approach towards the development of female empowerment through sexuality and animalization, however offering a first step towards the deconstruction of the human-animal dichotomy. This process is completed with the unnamed female protagonist of “The Tiger’s Bride”, who not only chooses her non-human partner but also develops a non-human animal identity for herself. Metamorphosis alone is not enough to achieve agency and subjectivity beyond the barriers of Western thought, as “The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love” demonstrate. The three “bird” tales entail an expression of the cruelty of patriarchal constraints which prevent the development of a fluid, metamorphic self and empathic relations between species from taking place. However, Carter’s wolf trilogy opens the path for the possibility of developing women’s sexuality and animality outside the patriarchal domain. “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice” epitomise the choice of animalistic self-representations and the acceptance of the Other’s animalistic alterity. The first narrative suggests the possibility of the protagonist’s inherited metamorphic lycanthropy, while the second—by the symbolic act of burning the clothes and the sexual

relationship—offers a positive option for embracing the protagonist’s animalistic, monstrous identity. Finally, “Wolf-Alice” offers the embodiment of human and non-human traits in a female character who establishes an erotic and mutually caring relationship with a metamorphic breed of vampire and werewolf.

This dissertation has aimed to read Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* as an urge to acknowledge otherness and alterity through the establishment of empathic connections between human and non-human animals, in which metamorphosis and animalistic shapeshifting work to demolish patriarchal gender roles and binary conceptions of species, inviting readers to reconsider categories, received assumptions and morals in a deconstructive exercise, since, as Carter suggested in *The Sadeian Woman*, “a free woman in an unfree society will be a monster” (1979, 27).





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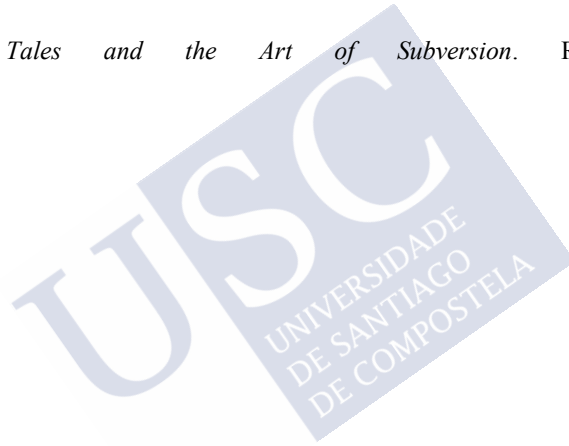
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## RESUMO EN GALEGO

Angela Carter é unha das autoras máis celebradas da segunda metade do século vinte, e o seu traballo foi aclamado tanto polo público lector en xeral coma pola crítica literaria. Esta boa acollida da crítica traduciu-se en numerosas análises desde unha gran variedade de perspectivas. A pesar dos innumerables traballos críticos que son publicados cada ano sobre a narrativa de Carter, a miña tese pretende ofrecer unha perspectiva nova ao existente abano de lecturas da súa colección seminal *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979), que combina de forma innovadora o enfoque sobre o xénero literario do relato curto—debido ás posibilidades estéticas e formais que este ofrece—coas novas propostas identitarias xurdidas desde a perspectiva posthumanista e dos estudos de animais.

O meu interese inicial no traballo de Carter foi avivado pola miña inclinación particular cara ao xénero de conto de fadas como “lectora común”. Dende a miña infancia quedei fascinada cos contos de Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen e os Irmáns Grimm, polo que a colección de Carter *The Bloody Chamber* pareceume particularmente atraínte dende o punto de vista crítico, posto que os seus “contos”—como Carter elixiu chamarlles—combinan elementos de tradicións diferentes que atopo particularmente interesantes, como a mitoloxía, o folclore, a fantasía e a literatura gótica.

A medida que fun centrando a miña atención de maneira crítica nos contos de Carter, o foco de atención inicial cambiou cara o uso produtivo que facía a autora da metamorfose na súa colección: decidín examinar como esas transformacións entre animais humanos e non humanos afectan a subxectividade e individualidade das personaxes femininas de Carter, o compromiso feminista da escritora nesta colección.

Esta tese doutoral pretende afondar nunha variedade de problemáticas relacionadas coa identidade humana e non humana en *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories*, unha colección que marcou un antes e un despois tanto no desenvolvemento de Carter como escritora como nas reescrituras contemporáneas do conto de fadas como xénero. *The Bloody Chamber* é a culminación do proceso de radicalización feminista de Carter: o seu o proxecto

deconstructivo e subversivo establece abertamente un diálogo coas súas ideas filosóficas e éticas sobre sexualidade e pornografía que aparecen, entre outros, na súa obra ensaística *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), significativamente escrita á par das historias de *The Bloody Chamber* e publicada no mesmo ano. As reescrituras de contos de fadas tradicionais de Carter en *The Bloody Chamber* descubren unha conxunción do seu interese pola forma narrativa do relato curto, a psicanálise (especialmente polas lecturas de Bruno Bettelheim), o contos de fadas— como demostran as súas traducións, os seus artigos periodísticos sobre o xénero e a literatura para nenos que escribiu antes da publicación de *The Bloody Chamber*—e a conexión entre gótico e pornografía, claramente mostrada nas reescrituras, a través das que Carter puxo especial atención á sexualidade dos monstros e das mulleres.

O uso particular que Carter fai do relato curto, das imaxes góticas e da metamorfose para explorar asuntos de identidade e xénero implica unha expresión de resistencia desde *dentro* do sistema dominante, cuestionando suposicións patriarcais e expoñendo unha concepción ousada da subxectividade feminina. Por estas razóns, desde a súa publicación, *The Bloody Chamber* foi tratada desde unha gran variedade de perspectivas, de tal xeito que parece que non hai moito que se poida dicir sobre a colección que non fora suxerido até agora. Con todo, o punto de partida desta tese sae da necesidade de reexaminar *The Bloody Chamber* desde enfoques críticos contemporáneos, como a perspectiva do relato curto e os estudos literarios humano-animais, cruzando estes co concepto de “liminality” entendido, máis notablemente, por Jochen Aquiles e Ina Bergmann (2015). Adrian Hunter (2007) mencionou a atención relativamente escasa que os contos de Carter recibiron dentro da crítica do relato curto, o cal animou a miña intención de ollar a colección en termos do uso innovador que a autora fai das formas de narrativa curta.

Ademais, algunhas lecturas críticas da obra de Carter sinalaron a presenza da metamorfose no seu traballo, especialmente en *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, como é o caso dos estudos publicados por, entre outros, Anna Kerchy, Rebecca Munford, Marina Warner, Cristina Bacchilega, Alison Easton, Kimberly Lau e Laura Mulvey. Con todo, a presenza de corpos metamórficos recibiu pouca e superficial atención, non sendo examinado detalladamente até a publicación de Ana Pasolini *Bodies That Bleed: Metamorphosis in Angela Carter's Fairy Tales* (2016), o único traballo crítico extenso que se enfoca exclusivamente neste tema específico. Mesmo así, mentres Pasolini se centra principalmente na cuestión do corpo conectando o concepto de Judith Butler de “performativity” co

“cartographic approach” de Rosi Braidotti, a miña tese engade á aproximación de Pasolini outras reflexións críticas resultado da intersección dos estudos do relato curto cos estudos literarios humano-animais.

Así, poñendo especial atención ás conexións entre xénero sexual e xénero literario e en como as orixes dos contos de fadas literarios e o simbolismo de animais axudaron a Carter para utilizar a metamorfose cunha intención política, eu argumento que autora creou distintas posibilidades de identidade para cuestionar as fronteiras occidentais patriarcais entre os animais humanos e non humanos, presentando subxectividade animalísticas, liminais e/ou monstrosas acordes co gusto postmoderno da escritora e que cristalizan no seu uso particular do relato curto e da tradición do conto de fadas literario.

A tendencia de Carter a utilizar xéneros fantásticos que retan ás representacións máis convencionais da realidade cuestiona fronteiras entre formas máis eruditas e a “cultura popular”—exemplificado na conglomeração de imaxes e atmosferas góticas e na presenza do folclore, das tradicións orais e dos contos de fadas—nunha actitude ideoloxicamente transgresora que, formalmente falando, encaixa coa súa concepción particular do “conto”, como aparece explicado no “Afterword” de *Fireworks*. Aquí, Carter estableceu unha distinción entre o que considerou a poética inherente do “relato curto”—sendo, na súa opinión, unha manifestación da representación realista da vida cotiá, como mostra a prosa modernista de James Joyce ou Virginia Woolf—e o “conto”—que conectou coa tradición oral, folclórica, sobrenatural e de fantasía herdeira de Edgar Allan Poe (Carter 1996, 449).

O feito de decantarse polo “conto” fixo que Carter se comprometese cunha tradición literaria de ficción fantástica e gótica, distanciándose do que denominou os “modos” realistas do relato curto modernista. Mesmo así, a pesar da diferenciación da autora, a miña argumentación nesta tese establece que a colección de Carter é unha representación do “short story cycle” postmoderno, posto que parte e, ao mesmo tempo, se desvía da tradición do conto de fadas oral, construíndo unha tensión onde o refinamento postmodernista, o pastiche, a fragmentación e intertextualidade entrelázanse con ambas as dúas cultura popular e erudita.

Así, establezo que o uso de metamorfose na colección de relatos curtos *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* de Angela Carter funciona como vehículo de hibridación e animalización cun dobre obxectivo: por unha banda, para deconstruír a articulación tradicional dos roles de xénero presentes nos contos de fadas, e, polo outro, para crear posibilidades alternativas de identidade que desafían as construcións heteropatriarcais e as

oposicións binarias que separan as categorías de animais humano e non-humano. Ao crear unha conexión física, mental e emocional entre mulleres e animais non humanos, Carter suxire estratexias de empoderamento feminino: deste xeito a autora non só conecta coa tradición oral dos contos de fadas mais tamén elabora nunha concepción radical de subxectividade. As reescrituras postmodernistas de Carter propoñen un discurso empoderador, emancipador de resistencia ideolóxica e estética para as mulleres dentro da estrutura social.

Esta tese está principalmente informada polas propias opinións de Carter sobre este tipo de cuestións como aparecen recollidas nos seus artigos xornalísticos, entrevistas e ensaios—*The Sadeian Woman* (1979), a “Introduction” ao *The Angela Carter’s Book of Fairy Tales* (2005) ou o seu “Afterword” a *Fireworks* (1974), entre outros—onde debateu sobre temas como as relacións humano-animais, os contos de fadas e o seus compiladores ou a literatura gótica e os seus tropos literarios, sempre dende o seu punto de vista feminista radical. Estas distintas fontes de información son básicas para entender o proxecto interdisciplinar que Carter estaba levando a cabo no mesmo período co conto de fadas, como as súas traducións de Perrault e Madame de Beaumont, o seu xornalismo sobre Andersen, Perrault e os Irmáns Grimm, as súas edicións para Virago, a publicación de *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* ou as súas radionovelas e o subseguinte filme *The Company of Wolves* (1984), cuxo guión foi escrito pola propia Carter. Alén destas fontes, examinei a fondo a única biografía existente da autora ata esta data, o que aporta datos esenciais cabo do proceso de escritura dos relatos. A este respecto, as declaracións de Edmund Gordon e a súa experiencia como editor do traballo de Carter iluminou a miña aproximación como “short story cycle”, o que revela non só unha rede complexa de referencias intertextuais, motivos e temas que producen unha unidade de significado global, mais tamén unha progresión cara a un contínuum de identidades femininas.

Alén disto, a tese está conformada por unha intersección ecléctica de distintos conceptos teóricos que aplico á miña lectura dos relatos curtos de Carter: o concepto de “minor literature” de Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari e as revisións de Achilles and Bergmann e Claire Drewery do termo “liminality” son esenciais para examinar as interseccións entre oralidade e a tradición escrita, así como as tensións entre as formas “eruditas” e a “cultura popular”.

Así mesmo, a exploración constante que Carter fai das voces das mulleres dentro do sistema dominante requiriu o uso de teoría literaria feminista e dos estudos de xénero para a aproximación teórica ao compromiso feminista da autora e o seu proxecto deconstructivo, que denuncia os sistemas patriarcais binarios que oprimen, obxectivizan e denigran tanto ás mulleres como aos animais. En relación con esta idea, Carter tamén avaliou a tradición gótica para examinar asuntos de xénero, liberdade sexual e hexemonía patriarcal mediante o uso do sobrenatural e o fantástico. Esta conxunción entre xénero literario e xénero sexual será tamén inspirada por algúns conceptos importantes en estudos da literatura gótica e dos monstros—foron esenciais os traballos de Fred Botting, Xavier Antich e Manuel Asensi e Asa S. Mittman—os cales relacionan as personaxes de Carter con conceptos como “liminality” e “monstrosity”, sendo utilizados pola autora para ofrecer posibilidades subxectivas múltiples que foxen dos sistemas reducionistas heteropatriarcais binarios de roles de xénero.

Como colección de contos de fadas, *The Bloody Chamber* establece un diálogo intertextual importante coa tradición de conto da fadas, que requiriu o exame de estudos críticos relevantes no xénero, como é o caso dos traballos de Bruno Bettelheim, Cristina Bacchilega, Marina Warner, Jack Zipes ou Maria Tatar, entre outros. Os contos de fadas de Carter proporcionan un espazo liminal para explorar as relacións humano-animais, servindo o propósito de deconstruír os roles de xénero tradicionais e o discurso falocéntrico presente nas narrativas do mencionado xénero literario. Neste sentido, o uso que fai Carter da metamorfose como recurso estético conecta coas estratexias clásicas presentes na tradición do conto de fadas: por esta razón, escollín, entre outros, o estudo cromático de Francisco Vaz da Silva sobre os compoñentes naturais de “Branca Neves”, o estudo sobre licantrópia de Kimberley McMahon-Coleman e Roslyn Weaver, a aproximación á figura do vampiro de Erik Butler e os estudos xerais en metamorfose de Ingo Gildenhard e Andrew Zissos, combinado co mencionado traballo de Pasolini.

Finalmente, esta tese doutoral tamén está composta polos descubrimentos significativos nos campo dos estudos de animais para examinar o tratamento simbólico e empírico de animais e mulleres a través do antropomorfismo e o zoomorfismo, os cales traen a colación cuestións relacionadas coa axencia, empatía e a dicotomía depredador/presa. Polo tanto, utilizo a críticos como David Aftandilian, Roman Bartosch, Susan McHugh e Cary Wolfe, entre outros. Especificamente, a análise tripartita de Kenneth Saphiro e Marion

Copeland (2005) serve como estrutura básica para a miña lectura crítica dos relatos curtos de Carter, o que me permite tratar a aproximación da autora sobre o suxeito como un ser híbrido, liminal, animalístico e nómade.

Diferentes animais son escollidos por Carter nestes relatos para cuestionar as fronteiras tradicionais que dividen os animais humanos e os non humanos: felinos como tigres, leóns ou gatos; paxaros, e caninos, como lobos. En *The Bloody Chamber* Carter ofrece a posibilidade de producir identidades híbridas cuxa animalidade conecta coa corporalidade. Centrándose nos corpos metamórficos das mulleres, Carter replantexa as categorías de dinámica de xénero e das relacións sexuais, probando en que medida os corpos metamórficos afectan tanto á identidade masculina como á feminina. Neste sentido, o exame das relacións humano-animais inspiraron a estrutura desta tese, a cal analiza oito dos dez relatos recollidos en *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, deixando á parte “The Bloody Chamber” e “Puss-in-Boots”, onde non hai presenza de elementos metamórficos. Como resultado, esta tese está dividida en seis capítulos diferentes que van desde unha perspectiva xeral de conceptos teóricos e a súa relevancia a un exame crítico dos oito relatos curtos seleccionados.

O capítulo un, “Angela Carter and the Short Story”, explora as diferentes posibilidades formais e ideolóxicas do xénero literario do relato curto en conexión coa motivación estética da autora e os seus relatos. Aquí inspecciono as características do xénero, as cales lle permiten a Carter crear a súa iniciativa deconstructiva e transgresora, partindo do concepto de “minor literature” de Deleuze e Guattari articulado en *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986). As tres características que Deleuze e Guattari atribúen á “minor literature”—detritorialización, a dimensión política e a importancia colectiva—traen ao fronte a natureza da colección de Carter como formulación de resistencia dentro do sistema dominante. Así mesmo, os replantexamentos de Aquiles e Bergmann (2015) e Drewery (2011) do concepto antropolóxico de “liminality” descobre como a brevidade, a flexibilidade e a condición híbrida do relato curto permite a Carter articular o mencionado proxecto feminista para explorar a construción dunha identidade fluída e liminal.

O segundo capítulo, “Angela Carter and the Fairy Tale”, céntrase no desenvolvemento do conto de fadas como xénero literario liminal, localizando a súa evolución histórica e tratando as innovacións e os cambios presentados polos compiladores máis importantes desde o século dezasete ata o século vinte. Aquí exploro a relación de Angela Carter co xénero

literario e a súa posición con respecto aos roles de xénero, así como a conexión entre os contos de fadas e a psicanálise, máis notablemente polo estudo de Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), co cal Carter confesou ter discrepado e debatido mentres escribía *The Bloody Chamber*. Ademais, este capítulo tamén examina a natureza didáctica dos contos, conectándoa coas opinións de Carter sobre a relación entre humanidade e animalidade: neste sentido, a exploración da autora da relación entre especies está baseada nos estudos literarios animais mencionados previamente.

O capítulo tres, “Angela Carter and *The Bloody Chamber*.”, trata especificamente á autora, ao seu traballo e á súa conexión co xénero do conto de fadas en cada aspecto posible. Un exame crítico da preferencia de Carter polo relato curto tras o período que pasa en Xapón descobre a relevancia do seu activismo feminista. Para isto, o seu traballo ensaístico *The Sadeian Woman* é lido en contraposición co interese de Carter polo conto de fadas e as súas repercusións ideolóxicas. Este capítulo funciona coma unha ponte entre os capítulos metodolóxicos anteriores e a miña discusión crítica do corpus, cuxa estrutura aquí responde á clasificación animal de Carter. Para o meu exame dos oito relatos curtos, sigo os tres niveis de análise de Saphiro e Copeland (2005): o primeiro nivel busca o retrato deconstructivo de animais non humanos e mulleres nas sociedades heteropatriarcais, prestando atención á axencia e á voz, á empatía e á presenza ou ausencia de sentimentos. O segundo nivel centra a súa atención no uso empírico e simbólico de ambas categorías a través do antropomorfismo e zoomorfismo. Finalmente, o último nivel de análise trata as relacións entre animais humanos e non humanos a través do binomio clásico depredador/presa, da importancia da mirada e da sexualidade e animalización.

O capítulo catro, “Felinos”, abarca as dúas reescrituras de Carter sobre “A Bela e a Besta”, “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” e “The Tiger’s Bride”, marcado pola presenza de distintas metamorfoses felinas. A importancia que contos orais folclóricos de “A Bela e a Besta” presentaban sobre o comportamento sexual é examinado neste capítulo, xunto coa internalización e adoutramento que as mulleres fixeron dos mesmos implicado nas versión literarias de Madame Villeneuve e Madame de Beaumont. Carter traballou con felinos tanto nas súas novelas como nos relatos curtos, mais estes animais son os protagonistas absolutos das reescrituras da “Bela e a Besta”.

O quinto capítulo, “Paxaros”, reúne tres relatos curtos—“The Erl-King”, “The Snow Child” e “The Lady of the House of Love”—pertencentes a tres tradicións literarias distintas,

cuxas orixes e importancia aquí exploro en relación coa presenza dos paxaros, que se relacionan metaforicamente coa subxugación da subxectividade feminina. Este capítulo tamén se centra no tropo do vampiro, sendo a protagonista de “The Lady of the House of Love” unha intersección entre a Bela Durminte—representada simbolicamente no paxaro—e unha vampíresa. A figura do vampiro—amplamente utilizado por Carter no seu xornalismo, na ficción curta e na súa radionovela *Vampirella*, o xerme do mencionado relato curto—implica metaforicamente a imposibilidade de fuxir dos roles patriarcais de xénero, dando como resultado o encarceramento das mulleres como obxectos da mirada masculina.

Finalmente, o capítulo seis, “Lobos”, analiza “The Werewolf”, “The Company of Wolves” e “Wolf-Alice” e examina a evolución histórica do conto de fadas “Carapuchiña Vermella” e os seus significados varios nas súas distintas versións. O capítulo tamén bota unha ollada ás orixes de “Carapuchiña” desde unha perspectiva de narrativa erótica e como rito de pasaxe desde infancia á madurez. A estas connotacións ben sabidas Carter engádelle reflexións inspiradas en Bettelheim para conectar a psicanálise, a sexualidade e a figura do lobo. Prestando atención ás representacións empíricas e simbólicas do lobo—especialmente da licantropía—o capítulo ofrece unha conexión cos pensamentos e as ideas da autora sobre este animal non humano e o seu impacto na historia e na cultura. Este capítulo acaba coas consideracións críticas sobre as protagonistas femininas destas tres narracións de lobos, as cales funcionan tanto como textos independentes como unha rede de referencias que a complexidade das protagonistas femininas aumenta progresivamente a medida que a colección avanza cara ao seu final.

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