THE POSTMODERN TRANSFORMATION OF THE GOTHIC
IN ANGELA CARTER’S COLLECTION OF STORIES THE
BLOODY CHAMBER
BA THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis “The Postmodern Transformation of the Gothic in Angela Carter’s Collection of Stories The Bloody Chamber” is to study the stories, chosen from Angela Carter’s collection of stories The Bloody Chamber and analyse their impact on the change of the modern Gothic by means of postmodernist deconstruction of established traditional fairy tale narratives and feminist criticism of the patriarchal system. The thesis analyses the overall development of the Gothic throughout history, its influences from past aesthetics such as the medieval era, and certain historic events, like the French Revolution, slavery in the United States, XX century postmodernist movement that formed the genre’s character and identity. In the collection of stories The Bloody Chamber Angela Carter discloses her views, which closely align to feminist philosophies, ideals, and criticisms of her contemporary mid-late XX century society, cultural ideas of the patriarchal system, authority and misogynistic views.
INTRODUCTION

Angela Olive Carter (1940 - 1992) is a notable English literary author known for her works in the Gothic genre. Her writing style is recognised for its original approach to literary conventions and what was considered uncommon until the mid XX century. As a novelist of the postmodern Neo-Gothic movement, her works are difficult to categorise in a single rigid, established literary genre, category. Angela Carter’s novels and stories such as the ones contained in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) contain various aspects and features of fantasy, science fiction, romance, drama and magical realism. Her style is considered widely recognised for its versatility and capability to maintain cohesion in the narratives.

Angela Carter is established as a re-teller of classic, traditional tales. Her works, most notably the collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* is an influential compilation which explores the latent themes and motifs of established XVII century and older stories such as *Bluebeard, Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood* and others. What additionally made her stand out from other novelists of the mid to late XX century was her position as a critic of hierarchical and patriarchal ideologies. Angela Carter took traditional tales and adapted them to her contemporary second wave feminist views of a changing western society, addressing and further developing ideas of gender equality and liberty of oneself that were to be found in the narratives.

Angela Carter used the XX century Neo-Gothic as a means to explore and present her ideas, philosophies through means of horror. In its classic terms, the Gothic was a literary genre significant for its ability to portray and criticise issues of society and culture with the use of horror elements. Angela Carter used conventions of Gothic literature to deconstruct and criticise societal perceptions, making the stories more forthright and emotionally poignant.

Since the Gothic is focused on the revival of past aesthetics and their progression, the research will focus on the identification of postmodern elements and their relation to the change of Gothic writing. The aim of the research is to study the elements of Gothic literature and analyse its postmodern transformation in Angela Carter’s collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* with a focus on its impact on gender politics, human identity, and inner-duality. The collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* contains in total ten stories, of which seven have been chosen for analysis. The seven stories - *The Bloody Chamber, The Courtship of Mr Lyon, The Tiger’s Bride, The Lady of the House of Love, The Werewolf, The Company of Wolves,* and *Wolf-Alice* have been chosen over the other stories because of their relevance to the topicality of Angela Carter’s focused themes of society’s view on gender, its duality, exploration of the inner-self. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:
• To analyse the Gothic movement as a whole and reveal its significance to the current state of literature.
• To explore the concepts of human, gender identities and self-ness through postmodernist deconstruction.
• To study and interpret Angela Carter’s feminist criticisms found in the collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* and disclose their relevance in the change of Gothic literature.

Data sources: Angela Carter’s collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*.

The **qualitative method** was used in the investigation:

• Textual (content analysis) was used when analysing and interpreting Angela Carter’s collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*.
• Postmodernist deconstruction was used to interpret Angela Carter’s feminist ideas and society’s criticisms found in the collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*.

The following steps were carried out in the research:
1) Ideas and features of Gothic literature were analysed using internet sources or scientific literary articles.
2) Ideas and features of postmodernism were analysed using internet sources or scientific literary articles.
3) The collection of stories in Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* was analysed and had its aspects of identity deconstruction and feminist criticisms identified.

Relevance and significance of the research: The thesis will analyse Angela Carter’s collection of Stories *The Bloody Chamber* and have its concepts of feminist criticism accentuated. The thesis will contribute to university students further investigating, studying Angela Carter’s works, ideas and how they influenced the Gothic.

The theoretical part introduces the literature review of Gothic literature, its main themes, stylistic aspects, influences and its impact through the use of horror. Additionally it will explore postmodernist ideas of identity transformation. The practical part of the research will analyse several chosen literary works from Angela Carter’s collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*, interpret their aspects, themes and expand upon their significance in the change of the Gothic. The conclusions will sum up all the important information that was collected throughout the research.
1. DEFINING THE GOTHIC

1.1. Historical relevance of early Gothic literature

In the late XVIII century Europe, the Gothic was part of the Romanticism era, which established emotions and authenticity as key components of artistic merit. The Gothic literary genre is believed to have originated in 1764 by the English author Horace Walpole, with his novel The Castle of Otranto, which combined aspects of infatuation with the past and a contemporary understanding of horror. The novel had brought the Gothic fiction genre into popularity inspiring authors of the late XVIII century such as Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeve to the XXI century. Gothic and Romanticist literature were part of the revival movement of antique, past aesthetics. For Gothic literature, its particular point of focus is the medieval era, for the time period is associated with death and romance. The black plague throughout the mid XIV century caused a large amount of deaths, which lead to the era becoming associated with themes of decomposition, inevitability and despair. Nevertheless the idea of chivalry was overtly romanticised until the XIX century, which additionally led to the medieval age be attributed to times of romance and courtesy. Although the two aspects are constantly at odds with each other, the strange, unusual merge is what made it so appealing to Romanticism and the Gothic.

The Gothic genre is no stranger to controversy, for its fundamental aim was to liberate the readers’ imagination and their views on traditional values, established politically correct ideas, opinions. What helped the Gothic in establishing its own identity in Romantic literature was its distinct writing and fascination with the extreme expressions of immorality, negativity and irrationality. The genre started to be associated as a synonym for the supernatural, fantastic, grotesque. From the XIX century onwards, the Gothic has been fixated with the portrayal of darkness, evil latently hiding under the surface of the physical, the literary genre sought out to criticise and deconstruct social, cultural, political issues.

Mary Shelley (1797 - 1851) was an English novelist and an essential part of the Gothic’s development throughout the XIX century. Her work such as Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus is an emblematic example of the Gothic’s controversial fascination with forbidden cultural, social themes and topics. The novel focuses on various themes of galvanism, chaos, irrationality and deviation from common theological ideas, such as the concept of God’s role. In it, Frankenstein’s monster takes the role of the rebel archetype, testing the creator’s authority by defying it. Additionally the narrative focuses on many of the Gothic’s environmental aesthetics like castles, mansions, brooding nature, and portrayal of emotions such as pain, suffering, loss and loneliness in the form of a violent monster.
Edgar Allan Poe (1809 - 1849) was also a contemporary writer of XIX century American Gothic literature and poetry. Poe explored rather the darkness within the human subconscious. In his works such as The Black Cat, Edgar Allan Poe explores the evil of humanity and how it corrupts one to enact violent deeds. Additionally in The Telltale Heart, explore the psyche with an additional focus on the resulting feelings of and misery and regret. “It negates. It denies. It buries in shadow that which had been brightly lit, and brings into the light that which had been repressed.” (McGrath, 1997, 156). The sense of malevolence can be seen as the Gothic’s take on one’s internal repression and trauma, a theme of sadness, melancholy that comes with it, persisting in Gothic literature.

Because the Gothic is not attributed to any movements of rational, analytical criticism such as the enlightenment movement, it does not offer any ultimate solutions or explanations for its explored topics, subjects. Nonetheless, the Gothic possesses the quality of versatility, being able to reflect aspects of one’s personal internal struggles, cultural, social issues and political injustice in its themes and narratives. As people’s understanding of horror, terror shifts, portrayal of antagonists, environments adjust to it as well, but the main motifs of the Gothic’s admiration for the past’s aesthetics remain.

1.2. The sublime and terror

In his work, XVIII century philosopher Edmund Burke studied aestheticism and speculated about the relationship between emotional and instinctual responses, and how one’s perception is affected by different stimuli. Edmund Burke explored the notions of beauty and the sublime, the latter of which is a part of the imaginary, subconscious mind, the irrational. “For Burke, the category of the Beautiful was characterized by its smallness, smoothness, delicacy and gradual variation. It evoked love and tenderness in contrast to vast, magnificent and obscure objects which produced awe and terror, or the Sublime.” (Raškauskienė, 2009, 17). The sublime encompasses a general attraction to associations of death, disease, and most importantly – fear, inciting people to perceive them as a form of excitement and artistic allure. “The passions, therefore, which are conversant about the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and danger, and they are the most powerful of all the passions.” (Burke, 1759/2009, 51). Edmund Burke acknowledged the impact that fear and terror had over other emotions, because of the way human instincts were designed to react to a possible physical, emotional threat. The Gothic incorporates an element of the sublime and explores its possible uses in literary works, and because of its fixation over the irrational, subconscious, it was at cross with the XVIII century enlightenment era, which focused on the analytical, objective.

During the end of the XVIII century, major events had formed a wave that had an impact on how the Gothic will be viewed in the future. The enlightenment era had European societies
undergo a profound intellectual and cultural shift in their general structure, promoting modern liberal ideas, new philosophies, over traditional values and religion. In 1789, the French revolution had a notable historical impact by showing the change of a society through fundamental alteration of the political, social landscape. The main conflict was induced over the possession of authority between the people of wealth and of poverty - the upper and middle, lower classes. It was an example of how the older, established patriarchal upper-governments can be brought down by the lower class - the weak and feeble. As the revolution was escalated, it started to advocate violence, leading to beheadings of those monarchs, aristocrats and promote disorder within the society. Andrew Smith (2013, 3) remarked that during the 1790s into the XIX century, works of Gothic fiction writers and poets sprung into popularity due to international fears, anxieties incited in Europe from the French revolution. English Gothic writers were inspired by the event in portraying their thoughts and opinions through the lens of fear and uncertainty, which was very much akin to the emotions felt at the time by people of different walks of life. “In particular, the Gothic facilitated “the exercise, release, and containment of personal and social anxieties.” (Hutchisson, 2011, 11). The genre possessed the property of catharsis within its sublime writing, artistic direction which was necessary for people to cope with the current events.

1.3. Themes and features of early Gothic literature

Gothic literature was becoming more established as a substantial part of culture. The genre was most prominent from the end of the XVIII cent., to the start of the XIX century, in England, later - in other European countries and the US. It is essential to consider the certain distinct stylistics of the Gothic fiction through the historic background and events during its conception. Because of the end of the Enlightenment era and how the French revolution developed before spiralling into uncontrolled violence, many writers started focusing on decay, fear and chaos inducted irrationality and passion over rationality and reason – the cornerstones of enlightened philosophies. “As the century proceeded, the aesthetic tastes of the society were changing rapidly as well. A clear preference was developing for the irregular – even the disorderly and wild.” (Raškauskienė, 2009, 8). The Gothic’s principal purpose was to elicit terror through mystery and a variety of horrors found beneath the rational side of one’s psyche. “However, although the Gothic often shares in such anti-Enlightenment ideas (because it focuses on thoughts and feelings), it is important to acknowledge that the early Gothic appears to be highly formulaic, reliant on particular settings, such as castles, monasteries, and ruins, and with characters, such as aristocrats, monks, and nuns who, superficially, appear to be interchangeable from novel to novel.” (Smith, 2013, 3p).

The Gothic possesses qualities of an aesthetic, generated and found in different genres as well as national, social and cultural contexts. In a historical sense certain major events that have had
an impact on a society such as the French revolution revealing humanity’s repressed sense of “darkness” and bleak nature. Later, mid to late XIX century in other parts of the world such as the United States – abolition of slavery made an impact in the formation of the American Gothic. The literary works of the genre revealed concerns over racial prejudices within people that persisted in the country. American culture has a reputation, known for concepts of liberty and democracy throughout its formation. The idea of freedom and infinite possibilities is coined by the phrase “the American dream”, according to the Cambridge dictionary is the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful and happy if they work hard. The image of a developed society is disrupted when delving into its people’s actions and historical events of racial bigotry and violence. “Put another way, the Gothic reconstructs the façade of history in order to reveal its fractures, usually to remind us of hidden or repressed forces”. (Faflak, Haslam, 2016, 3). England was also associated with national imperialism and chauvinist acts, however because American culture was put on a pedestal as the ideal society, Gothic literary works and criticisms had a visceral impact in exposing its flaws and malevolent past, which had to be addressed and learned from, not to be repeated.

The appearance of the devil, ghouls and other demonic, metaphysical entities are common objects and clichés in various literary works that represent the concept of evil. Although the general concept of evil has stayed consistent, its magnitude and interpretation changed throughout history together with societal norms and culture for its portrayal and notion is related to the terror of the human condition. Jeffrey Burton Russell (1988, 242) argues that because of the prevailing secular ideas since the XIX century, the perception of evil as an entity began to alter and took a more symbolic, non-literal meaning. Famous psychologists such as Sigmund Freud, who considered theological and supernatural figures to be a part of the human psyche, an expression of the unconscious mind or a personification of the repressed self. People in general have been using the trope of a “villain” to objectively embody their understanding, view of evil, make it seem real and tangible. The concept of evil was additionally used to portray the oppressors possessing more power over others, false, misguided ideologies, philosophies or problematic traditions. The Gothic had the term “evil” used in literary works interchangeably, as a means to alleviate the sense of helplessness and inescapable dissatisfaction with the reality of their lives.

Another case of the emotional climate of the Gothic and its imaginative peculiarities is the compulsion with the melancholic. Cynthia Sugars (2014, 49) acknowledges that the ambience of the Gothic writing is formed through confusion and deep-seated-sadness. This sense of malaise is reinforced through regret of past events, and the way the present holds, creating a haunting, uncanny feeling. The Gothic features appearances of ghosts, spectres, phantoms and the theme of spirituality and decay in its writing. The supernatural, whilst being an exaggerated emotional part of
a story, is a symbolic representation of the grapple with oneself, self-pity and self-flagellation. The feeling of melancholy and its aimlessness is a strong and common part of Gothic writing for it is undoubtedly one of the more common experiences people encountered since the beginning of time. It only became more prevalent when philosophers and even common people started to consider and become accustomed to secular ideas, concepts, leaving them in search for meaning in life.
2. THE GOTHIC AND ITS CHANGE

2.1. Mid XX century postmodernism

John Barth is a notable XX century American novelist and fiction writer known for his literary criticism and postmodernist philosophies. In the year 1967, John Barth wrote an essay – *The Literature of Exhaustion*, as a public statement of guidelines making up postmodernism’s core ideas and values. In it, he argues that literature as a whole is in a creative rut, having most themes, subjects, approaches becoming banal and cliché, as the name suggests – “exhausted”. However, forms of art such as pop art, mixed genres, media and deconstructionist works are to be the possible continuation of modern literature. John Barth states that postmodernism, the reuse of old, established means and arts is a form of rebellion, revolt against traditional conventions. By design, postmodernist works are not as much focused on creating something new and original as they are about the process. The analysis of the technique through which one forms a statement might garner more appreciation for the depth and approach to their ideas. Themes start to encompass broader concepts, since postmodernist deconstruction focuses on one’s choice of aesthetics and how the author defines everything.

John Barth expressed his admiration for Jorge Luis Borges’ works such as *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*, in which he implemented parts of Miguel de Cervante’s original work, and created reinterpreted stories, retellings. Barth considered the interpretation to be an example of how most if not all “original” art is a reuse of already established story patterns, plotlines and character archetypes. What differentiates them from becoming works of plagiarism is acknowledgement of their predecessors, what assists in them having an identity of their own is their unique, technical approach and message. Postmodernism possesses the ability to examine and rightfully assess current topics and issues found in society through a transformative and ultimately original experience.

In 1980, John Barth wrote a follow-up essay *The Literature of Replenishment*, as a companion piece for the essay *The Literature of Exhaustion* and its established ideas. In the essay, John Barth explores directly postmodernism’s meaning and definition, which share close resemblance to Irmtraud Huber’s (2014, 2) argument that postmodernism in and of itself is ultimately unknowable for it is designed to be abstract in meaning, difficult to be categorised. However, Barth asserts that debates and discussions over the movement’s term and ideas are partially what define postmodernist deconstructionist ideals. Criticism is enacted through the focus on identity by means of subverting expectations. This type of writing is common in Angela Carter’s collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*, where the modes of understanding common Gothic
tropes and traditional XVII century stories such as Little Red Riding Hood are subverted to express a focus on identity and feminist ideas of gender equality.

2.2. The Gothic and postmodernism. The Neo-Gothic

Andrew Smith (2013, 141) claims that what made the Gothic influential and important to the development of literature and other aspects of culture is its focus on aesthetics. Gothic’s descriptive nature and focus on environmental aesthetics can be attributed to analysis and criticism of historical events, social issues and also epitomise the human condition. Both postmodernism and the Gothic explore different perceptions of reality and its relations to people’s experiences. Both possess a transformative quality, ability to force or point out specific narratives that can be found and interpreted in already established, traditional works and ideas. Postmodernism had a notable influence on Gothic literature by having it focus on the “meta” aspect of fiction. Gothic fiction is known for its distinct aesthetic and descriptions of confusion and haunting environments. The postmodernist “meta”, or self-aware style of writing is used in adding a critical voice and character to a work of fiction, an intentional comedic tone and to disorient the reader. Postmodernism’s ideals are more applicable to the Gothic Revival’s need for an identifiable and detailed environment which can provide with a grander narrative.

The Neo-Gothic is a relatively recent take on Gothic revivalism, dating in the mid XX century. The further developed genre can be viewed as a reaction against the philosophies of the Enlightenment and instead sought to admire and idealise its past reiteration with aspects of romanticism. Whereas the Enlightenment revered the conscious mind and reason, romanticism focused on the occult, mysticism and the subconscious. Whilst using aesthetic clichés of death, madness and humanity’s degradation associated with the genre’s past iterations, the Neo-Gothic additionally explores the more subtle prospects of psychological examination as a response to the growing popularity of psychoanalysis and other psychology studies during the XX century. For example, critics such as Jeffrey Burton Russell (1988, 242) cite psychologist Sigmund Freud as an influence on how people started to analyse the symbolic relevance of the devil - as a portrayal of a person’s inner-repression and trauma. A subsection of the Gothic revival is known as Gothic Romance, which in particular focused on events in a domestic context, idea, with a historical setting and the presence of a supernatural, bestial being. Gothic Romance is commonly attributed to the title of “Female Gothic” for it is written predominantly by women authors like Angela Carter, about stories containing female heroines dealing with their inner struggles - it is a vehicle for the feminist artistic expression.
3. ANGELA CARTER’S WORKS AND INFLUENCE

3.1. The inclusion and shaping of feminist ideas in Gothic literature

During the XIX-XX centuries many women writers like Angela Carter began to contribute to the cause of the feminist movement through their literary work and criticism. Benjamin A. Barbon and Stephanie Genz (2007, 5) argue that notable female writers of the XX century told stories of women’s fears, powerlessness, imprisonment within the patriarchy, through the conventions of horror and mysticism found in Gothic literature. The oppressor - oppressed dynamic makes a consistent appearance in Gothic literature to criticise and condemn historical events, problematic cultural, societal norms. In most categories of art, such as architecture, painting and literature - the Gothic, like postmodernism, is associated with the revival of past aesthetics and forming statements of change and revolutionary ideas – a significant quality in feminist criticism. The Gothic works as a vehicle for self-expression and a means of channelling the voices of the one’s that were once silenced through oppression.

“From the late eighteenth century, women writers, aware of their exclusion from traditional historical narratives, have used Gothic historical fiction as a mode of historiography which can simultaneously reinsert them into history and symbolise their exclusion.” (Wallace, 2013, 1). When analysing previous works of Gothic literary authors, it is pragmatic to address not only their time period but also the relevance and relation of their gender to their work. In most western societies, women had presupposed specific gender roles, built on prejudicial assumptions of their abilities, competence, and purpose, thus they had a different life experience of history. “This type of criticism helps to decode Gothic symbolism in order to reveal the covert presence of patriarchal plots, and to examine the relationship between aesthetics and gender.” (Smith, 2013, 8).

Karen Harvey (2012) claims that the need for exercising authority on others was stemming from internalised male insecurity and unsettlement. Masculinity, a man’s worth was measured by their fulfilment within the family composition and function of being a husband, father - the head of the household. Consequently, women had their participation relevancy diminished and reduced to the role of subordinates. Men were considered the intellectual, moral and hard-working force whilst women were the sensitive, maternal, delicate and beautiful – in turn objectifying a population of people by their gender. Neo-Gothic writers like Angela Carter took different approaches in displaying the imbalance of the domestic structure either through accentuating it to the point of absurdity, making the female characters powerless to the outside powers or doing the exact opposite – fighting cultural standards and expectations by empowering them. Most of these narratives exemplify the societal discrimination by portraying it as a supernatural evil force lurking under the
veil of darkness, ravaging the current ideals of “purity” and traditional values of the time. Gothic writing was and continues to be an outlet for the outcasts of society and “the underdog” ideal.

3.2. Angela Carter’s writing – the Neo-Gothic romantic and postmodernist ideals

Angela Carter’s stories in The Bloody Chamber are applicable to Neo-Gothic revivalism as she explores the Gothic’s antique aesthetic with themes of romanticism, rejecting the Enlightenment’s traditional conventions, through the lens of postmodernist writing. Although postmodernism in a Neo-Gothic setting is known for its ability to tackle social, cultural, philosophical issues in a broader context, it is also the crux that pushes individual experiences over homogeneity. “Therefore, instead of seeing women as a homogenous group, postmodernism challenges the feminist construction of the universal category of women.” (Morley, Macfarlane, 2012, 692). Angela Carter’s works, like many postmodern feminist writing, were breaking the mould of tradition through subversion of certain social expectations.

Key evidence showcasing Angela Carter’s postmodernist style is her body of work – The Bloody Chamber, a collection of classic, traditional fairy tales such as Little Red Riding Hood, Alice in Wonderland, Bluebeard, Sleeping Beauty, which were adapted from the XVII century and older to the XX century. In her work, Angela Carter attempted to reveal the latent relevance of gender found in the chosen traditional stories and used them to criticise her contemporary society that spread misogynistic views of women, marginalising them, making it completely transformative. “This type of self-conscious critical rewriting also makes visible one of the most significant issues about the Gothic: that it should not be read as a form which passively replicates contemporary cultural debates about politics, philosophy, or gender, but rather reworks, develops, and challenges them.” (Smith, 2013, 8). Angela Carter used the postmodernist approach to reconstruct, remodel the Gothic’s aim of criticism and applied it in a broader, more universal context. In her work, Angela Carter celebrated the Gothic’s themes of inner-darkness, deviance, desires and used them as expression of womanhood’s repression and diminishment of their capabilities throughout history. She challenges society’s traditional views on gender politics and the understanding of self-ness, individuality through postmodern deconstruction. “There is an energy of rebellion and liberation evoked in the challenges to aesthetic conventions and social norms, an energy associated with the political and sexual movements of the 1960s, the period in which Carter began writing.” (Botting, 2008, 39). In The Bloody Chamber Angela Carter used means of gender reversal to elaborate on the possible prominence of feminine individuality being portrayed in literary works, resulting in changes within society in favour of gender equality.
Within Angela Carter’s narratives in *The Bloody Chamber*, the idea of romance becomes warped and twisted in nature. Through Gothic imagery and plots, she focused on the feminine sexual experience and intimate desires. “As in the work of Carter, however, she also uses bestial characters to draw attention to ferocious appetite, be it for food or sex” (Armitt, 2011, 97). During the early to mid XX century the portrayal of women’s sexuality was objectively considered controversial and distasteful, but Angela Carter sought to test and eventually manage to extend the limits of what was considered socially acceptable. Through this type of writing she subverted not only the original tales’ such as *Little Red Riding hood* or *Alice in Wonderland* plotlines, but also what used to be considered acceptable to write about in previous generations. “Although controversial, the Gothic allowed her and many twentieth-century writers the opportunity to extend the limits of social acceptability through extending the physiological and psychical limitations of the human form.” (Horner, Zlosnik, 2016, 70). Carter took a postmodern approach to transformative writing in Gothic literature to emphasise aspects of sexuality, identity in womanhood which were previously not addressed by ignorance or patriarchal culture standards.

Angela Carter, as author whose work, such as The Bloody Chamber can be attributed to Neo-Gothic writing, focuses on portraying the grotesque and the horrific in a classic Gothic aesthetic with a postmodernist approach. Maria Beville (2009, 15) described the connection between the Gothic and postmodernism as a means to embody the more relevant, current postmodern ideas, philosophies and understanding of horror, through a heightened use of terror in Gothic literature. As a representative of postmodernism, Angela Carter uses the common tropes and clichés of the duality of good and evil, feelings of entrapment and fear found in Gothic literature and exaggerates them to the point of parody, reaching the limits of grotesqueness. However, the excessive portrayals of the Gothic’s tropes were not used in order to diminish the importance of her messaging, rather accentuate it. Her style of writing satirised the class system in western societies, the relations between the two genders using overtly theatrical, absurd narratives. Portrayal of contemporary social anxieties and feminist issues which originated from traditional ideas and values were portrayed on the physical body, having it mutilated, wounded or transformed. The relation between absurdist writing and Gothic aesthetics assisted in ultimately portraying contemporary society, culture, in its true nature.
4. THE ANALYSIS OF ANGELA CARTER’S COLLECTION OF STORIES THE BLOODY CHAMBER

4.1. THE BLOODY CHAMBER

The Gothic’s puts a lot of attention on the idea of authority. The genre had a fascination with the medieval age, having mentions of chivalry, environments, historical events, and the feudal system – kings, queens, and other forms of aristocracy. Additionally the late XVIII century French revolution and slavery of African Americans in the United States had an impact on gothic writers, shifting the narratives’ focus on societal, historical criticism. But even before the start or popularisation of the Gothic genre, most western societies lived by a misogynistic system. Through tradition, the idea of a patriarchal system and domination of the masculine has shunned women from taking part in the way societies worked or even controlling their own lives. According to Connell, R. W. (2005, 77), throughout history, hegemonic masculinity, the practice that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of the common male population and women, and other marginalized ways of being a man, has forced itself into the norm through cultural, societal acceptance that it is the way life should be. In several Angela Carter’s stories such as The Bloody Chamber, The Werewolf, The Company of Wolves, lies a theme of domestic structure in which the father figure, paternal bond is missing, not present throughout the duration of the stories. The cliché of the absent or deceased father is not new and quite common in classic fairy tales such as Snow White, Cinderella and others. Additionally some tales like Bluebeard where fathers, other masculine characters are in one way or another, in control of the family’s function, enabling arranged marriages, prohibiting the female characters from doing something. Angela Carter uses these tropes as a means to explore and criticize the traditional domestic family structure, patriarchal authority and autonomy.

In The Bloody Chamber the family structure is altered from the original fairy tale the story is based on – Bluebeard. Instead of being married to a fearful nobleman, in the retelling by Angela Carter, the protagonist is described to be in love with the charming, older gentleman – the Marquis and exercises her autonomy by marrying on her own terms. The story’s heroine, whilst assuring her mother and herself that it is her own choice in marrying the Marquis “’Are you sure you love him?'; 'I'm sure I want to marry him,' I said.”, Angela Carter slips in factors as to why the protagonist’s choices are that of a lack of options. Because of her family’s majority of life spent in poverty, she is partially forced into situations in order to survive and provide for her family. Out of sheer need and desire for a better livelihood, she is subjected to marrying a person of wealth, even though she lacks
the feelings of true, honest compassion for the person, constantly reasoning with herself through ignorance and naivety. The female protagonist, whilst seeking a new, better opportunity, adheres to the system of patriarchal superiority and the need to be saved by a higher-up male. Angela Carters criticises the victim complex, ingrained in society that, impedes in women’s development and establishment of their autonomy, self-reliance. As the heroine marries and gives in to the Marquis, she is later punished for her ignorance, realising her error only when looking back on the events that had ensued, reflecting.

In the story, the protagonist’s father died in a war, having the mother the sole-provider for the family. The female character is soaked in tragedy and loss, having to take up a non-traditional role of domestic authority. In the beginning of the story, the mother is constantly questioning her daughter’s decision of marriage, not as much in disapproval, as much as in worry for the protagonist’s well-being. Angela Carter exemplifies how the family structure without the sense of toxic masculinity, or ego can have a healthy and supportive family dynamic without becoming authoritarian. On the other side of the spectrum, the Marquis could be interpreted as a portrayal of the toxic, authoritarian force of past, obsolete values. The female protagonist’s doubts of her own choices and actions are further confirmed through her descriptions of her newlywed husband, who is characterised with qualities that of a creature, a beast rather than human. For his age, the Marquise is described as being strong, romantic, experienced yet also crude, forceful and lewd, Carter detailing the heroine’s and her husband’s loving, erotic interactions as an act of a predator ravaging its prey. In The Bloody Chamber, Angela Carter manages to criticise the customs of matrimonial life by encapsulating it as a long-standing tradition of husbands’ ownership over their spouses. “And, in the midst of my bridal triumph, I felt a pang of loss as if, when he put the gold band on my finger, I had, in some way, ceased to be her child in becoming his wife.” Carter applies alterations in the Bluebeard’s original narrative by making the antagonist more charismatic, mysterious, and beloved by the protagonist, later accentuating the social issue of the patriarchal system with additional realism and horror to the revelation of terror that is to unfold. Later, after the protagonist was left alone, she finds the hidden bloody chamber which was used by the Marquis to execute his previous wives. Angela Carter uses the retelling of the scene to portray the realisation of one living within the enclosure of a misogynistic system. In the narrative, the bloody chamber is used for protagonist to show her need to disobey against the orders of the authoritative Marquis, exercising her autonomy. The authoritative nature of the domestic dictatorship or the Marquis is accentuated by him deciding to condemn the protagonist to death. In the end of the fairy tale, the mother, an exemplary model for the positive authority model, is the one who manages to destroy the manifestation of the destructive patriarchal authority - “Now, without a moment's hesitation, she
raised my father's gun, took aim and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head.”

The theme of authoritative subversion is further highlighted through the narrative’s aspect being from the main female protagonist’s point of view. A traditional fairy tale narrative perspective most commonly takes that of a detached third person view, which Carter seeks to halt for its practice of neutral politics. Neutrality as much as it is a useful means of conveying unbiased truth and honesty, it additionally promotes inaction and stagnation in societal change for appeasing to the largest common denominator does not cause change for improvement of people’s livelihoods. The Gothic, postmodernism and many other various facets of art focus on its transformative nature, for it better reflects on the ever-changing society and culture. Carter attempts to criticise the traditional narrative structure by dismissing conservative dismissal of change found in the classic fairy tales and liberate it with feminist ideas, criticisms. The narrative being of the Gothic horror genre, having the events, plot lines described through the heroine’s, a young girl’s, perspective makes the story more personal, intimate, increasing the impact of horrific events that ensue as the story continues, which might have been otherwise ruined or had a lesser impression by the passive third person view. The stylistic choice is especially effective because of the preconceived notions of what the readers are to empathise with when reading stories, especially fairy tales that being a fragile, helpless young girl, a damsel in distress, an idea, which is later also subverted. Having the main female protagonist take charge in retelling the events that had taken place empowers her as a character that is able to reflect upon her mistakes further highlighting her intelligence, insight and awareness.

Angela Carter uses eroticism and descriptions of intimate acts to portray gender inequality and a power struggle of dominance between the heroine and the Marquis. In common traditional fairy tale writing, the theme of virginity, its implications, literary interpretations are a presupposed part of culture and society’s misogynistic views of women. Virginity in literary works is generally understood as a means to portray innocence, fragility, youth. Angela Carter instead of removing or changing the presupposed notions of virginity, she implies that from it stems the main female protagonist’s characteristics being of naïve, ignorant nature, highlighting her lack of experience. Because of it, she is merely a powerless and unassuming prey for the Marquis. As the heroine is still intact with her innocent self, she is still a submissive to the dominating notions of masculine authority. In The Bloody Chamber Angela Carter depicts a story of a young, inexperienced woman’s journey of discovering one’s sexual prowess and striving for equality in the male dominated, patriarchal world.

As the heroine becomes entranced and seduced by the Marquis’ charisma, promised ideas of sexual adventure into adulthood, transition into womanhood, when she arrives at his residence, a
huge, antique castle, the mood of the story becomes increasingly bleaker. The Gothic in all of its artistic forms is a revival of past aesthetics that at one point fell out of popularity or became obsolete. Historical references to medieval castles, towers, cursed manors, became focal points in the Gothic’s narrative backgrounds. In *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter uses the Marquis’ castle to embody a mysterious palace of solitude. As castles are associated with the dark middle ages, medieval times, the architecture takes up a meaning of feudal aristocracy, authority. As the castle in-and-of-itself is seemingly a largely ambiguous place, associated with wealth and possible future prospects, it feeds into her unsuspecting naivety. Nevertheless, the environment acts as an eerie warning for the female protagonist and the reader of the castle’s unfamiliar, hidden rooms depicting the Marquis’ self-ness, sense of the enigmatic. The idea of a castle renders feelings of unease, creepiness as it foreshadows the antagonist’s latent, dark intentions, predicting her being in danger later in the story. Angela Carter uses the passage of time that being November, slowly approaching winter and its relevance to further push the idea of inevitable decay, death, yet also, that of change and newly gained strength if one manages to survive. Nevertheless, in the beginning, the environment and all of its parts are described as suspended in time, like the ideas of established traditionalism, which Angela Carter criticises in the collection of stories; it portrays the Marquis as a proponent of conservative conventions and philosophies. As the castle is surrounded by sea, whilst being compared to that of a fantasy world, “...that castle, at home neither on the land nor on the water, a mysterious, amphibious place, contravening the materiality of both earth and the waves, with the melancholy of a mermaid who perches on her rock and waits, endlessly, for a lover who had drowned far away, long ago. That lovely, sad, sea-siren of a place!” The romantic allusion to sirens and mermaids further suggest the idea of impeding danger, as the methodological beings are associated with seduction leading towards death, devouring. The ancient building is trapped in a limbo of neither reality, nor reverie, much like the characters are imprisoned in a system of past, antique beliefs.

Angela Carter, as a writer of the Neo-Gothic and a proponent of feminist ideals, subverts the overall concept of a happy ending in a story, especially that of a fairy tale retelling. The main female protagonist does not end up as anticipated, after marrying a man of immeasurable wealth, realising his unjustifiable flaws and evils, she falls in love and marries a blind resident piano-tuner. The heroine declining a life of luxury, moving as far away from the castle as possible, shows her overall change, growth of the story, her reaching ultimate enlightenment of what is right for her.

As the main female protagonist begins her journey of entering womanhood, she is first perceived by the Marquis, a proponent of traditional, culturally regressive ideas, as “something” that is conquered, a commodity to obtain, through means of sexual domination, putting into submission. Because of her upbringing and social standing in the world being partially against her
odds, she participates in the misogynistic system to gain stability and safety, only later to realise her error in judgment. As the Marquis is the embodiment of toxic masculinity and patriarchal control, he expected his new wife to continue being a docile puppet to project his own ideals upon, disguised as a quality of faithfulness and love. The main female protagonist’s moment of enlightenment comes as an act of exercising autonomy through sheer curiosity and desire to rebel. After finding out about the heroine’s disobedience, acts against his orders, such as uncovering his horrific secrets in the bloody chamber, he seeks to punish her, condemning her to death, leading to a shared fate of his previous deceased wives. Even in possibility of danger and death, the heroine recognised that she needs to refuse to participate in a system, built against her own personal wants, needs; her qualities of intelligence and desire for liberty highlight the change, transition into actual adulthood. Angela Carter emphasises how the idea of trust in a loving relationship and other spheres of needing for one another, can be exploited to favour one side over the other, like a type of cover up used for manipulation. “He would trust me with the keys to his office, although I was only a baby; and the keys to his safes, where he kept the jewels I should wear, he promised me, when we returned to Paris.” As the main heroine’s view of trust has become distorted, it made her a more cautious character. Because of her harrowing experiences with the Marquis, her marrying a blind young piano tuner exemplifies that protagonist learning to value personal qualities in a human being. She chose to spend her life with a person who cannot in any way view through misogynistic views as an object to be conquered, and who will not exploit her for his own gain.

Angela Carter describes the ending of the story and its overall message as a cautionary tale for women. Although her life is spared from the grasp of death, the female protagonist is left with a scar on her forehead as an equivalent to “the mark of Cain” from the Marquis. The mark was burned into her from the key that the Marquis entrusted her with, opening the bloody chamber, making it a sign of her disobedience and act of autonomy. Yet the female protagonist feels shameful over the scar and what it stands for, because although she is saved, the circumstances could have been avoided if not her youthful nature and naivety. “No paint nor powder, no matter how thick or white, can mask that red mark on my forehead; I am glad he cannot see it--not for fear of his revulsion, since I know he sees me clearly with his heart--but, because it spares my shame.” The scar is burned in as a reminder, for how she was exploited for her feminine qualities, in favour of a patriarchal world. The heroine has learned to value her own self-ness and independence over monetary values, sexual desires, need for validation of others.

4.2. THE COURTSHIP OF MR LYON

In The Courtship of Mr. Lyon, Angela Carter attempts at making a critical statement of exposing the confines of the patriarchal regime by deviation from the common portrayal of gender
expectations. Within the narrative’s beginning, the protagonist Beauty, when in comparison to other Angela Carter’s retellings, is a more conventional heroine, conforming to traditional story telling ideas and characterizations. Nevertheless as the story advances, the character of Beauty begins to deviate from the original fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast by breaking away from the patriarchal ideas of the custom, traditional fairy tale structure, which she wasn’t able to do in the beginning. “Dinner was eggs Benedict and grilled veal; she ate it as she browsed in a book she had found in the rosewood revolving bookcase, a collection of courtly and elegant French fairy tales about white cats who were transformed princesses and fairies who were birds.” The protagonist’s interest in reading fairy tales shows how because of her family’s financially poor upbringing and life in deficit has her wishing for a simpler life, that of the clichéd happy ending. Angela Carter exemplifies how social standing, status has an effect on people’s experience with the patriarchal western culture and their desire for escapism from reality. In the reinterpretation, a white rose takes part in conveying Beauty’s purity and innocence – a portrayal of traditional feminine values, additionally found in Carter’s particular descriptions of the environment, setting – “Nothing has passed that way all day; the road is white and unmarked as a spilled bolt of bridal satin.” In the beginning of the story, Angela Carter implies that the protagonist’s fate is to adhere to what is expected of her by tradition – maintaining her societally accepted quota of femininity and becoming married. The female protagonist is forced into a corner by certain bigoted societal expectations, which she opposes by showing her own individual personality, showing boredom, not feeling the need to satisfy the beast, caring for her loved ones and autonomy. “Do not think she had no will of her own; only, she was possessed by a sense of obligation to an unusual degree and, besides, she would gladly have gone to the ends of the earth for her father, whom she loved dearly.” Beauty showed that by adhering to the beast’s demands, she showed a level of autonomy and a surprising amount of maturity in her choice as a fight against ingrained conventions. In the end, she manages to achieve prosperity and happiness on her own terms, conditions.

In The Courtship of Mr Lyon, Angela Carter expresses her feminist views of gender equality through the retelling of the classic fairy tale Beauty and the Beast, exploring ideas of individuality and rejection of misogynistic notions. The author chose to form deviations from the original tale’s narrative by altering the way Beauty and the Beast portrayed each prevalent character’s reflection of each other, examining how it affected the overall message and themes. The story of Beauty and the Beast displays a stark contrast between the characters Beauty, depicted as a stand in for concepts of femininity, kindness, beauty, purity, and Beast, characterised as the disorderly, grotesque and masculine – the protagonist’s antithesis. As it was common in conventional writing of traditional fairy tales, not a lot of room was left for building complex characterisations, having them as models for teaching certain cultural values, thus leading to
narratives with “black and white” concepts. Angela Carter accordingly implemented more ambiguity into the original story’s characters. The retelling of Beauty and the Beast – The Courtship of Mr. Lyon begins the narrative with drawing major similarities to the original’s essence of having one side providing for the other in aspect that each is lacking, before Angela Carter began defying the conventional structure. The character of Beauty receives a different arc of development, starting as a young, destitute girl who becomes imprisoned by a wealthy supernatural being – Beast, becomes more defined and competent as the story progresses.

Beast does not tailor to common fairy tale tropes and portrayal of a monstrous character. Although, like Beauty, he is described in a similar manner as in the original story - aggressive, frightful, the embodiment of dominance, forcing Beauty’s father into having the characters meet is when Angela Carter reveals Beast’s more concealed humane features. When both portrayals of feminine and masculine forces met, they began expressing their true latent nature not hiding behind a façade of their clichés, exemplifying Angela Carter’s idea of realistic character trait ambiguity. Both characters defy expectations by not being abundantly defined according to their assumed appearances. Angela Carter creates a partially absurd, yet essential role reversal between the characters, the female protagonist being the saviour, whilst Beast – the one needing the rescue from himself. Beast has the added feelings of insecurity, loneliness, sensitivity, that by the end of the narrative are what led to him becoming immobile, wanting to not live without the protagonist, who up to that point had also began to lose a part of her own real identity and happiness. Both major characters whilst possessing ambiguous, interchangeable traits associated with the mixture of both masculinity and femininity, they manage to complete each other as true equals. As Beast transforms into human form, Beauty takes his name Lyon not as a lesser submissive partner, but as an equal counterpart in their marriage. As much as the characters are portrayed as their visible attribute forms of femininity and masculinity, they also possess the qualities of their partner’s.

In The Courtship of Mr. Lyon, Angela Carter utilizes the imagery of specific environments to subvert one’s expectations and to emphasize a contrast between how people perceive gender norms and traits attributed to them. The imagery of an abandoned mansion adds not only sense of mystery, suspense for the horrific reveal of the supernatural, monstrous character, but it also adds to the element of melancholy, sadness and tragedy later in the story, for as Beauty familiarizes herself with Beast, it is revealed that the monster suffers from loneliness. Even though his household displays the amount of wealth and influence that he has, the seemingly monstrous in actuality can still be more susceptible, sensitive than it is expected of him.

In various literary works, the idea of “the city” usually can be attributed to darker themes of masculinity, malfeasance, corruption, whilst “the countryside” is untouched, pure and beautiful. However, Angela Carter uses these established literary ideas, views to criticize perceptions of
gender. As the two major characters are separated from each other, Beast continues to live in his mansion, desolate, whilst Beauty received her freedom, living in the city. But as time passes, the two characters begin to lose parts of their essence that made them fulfilled, as Beast’s isolation led to him not being able to eat, and Beauty living in the city had led to her growing more superficial, spoiled, both characters became dissatisfied with their lives. According to Angela Carter, to be content with life, one needs to be able to access both their inner femininity and masculinity.

4.3. THE TIGER’S BRIDE

A particularly exceptional aspect of Angela Carter’s horror writing is the portrayal of suppression, having the female character lacking any real control over her life in a world of unjust male dominance. In The Tiger’s Bride, Angela Carter exemplifies the relationship between misogynistic views and the patriarchal utilitarianism by having the story focus on the story’s heroine struggle against the masculine upper-structure that has control over her livelihood. The story is narrated by the main female protagonist as her father, after losing all of their finances and belongings to a rich lord, accommodating them—the Beast, gets put in as part of the overall bet in a card game. “My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards”. The female protagonist is essentially, much like a slave, being auctioned off in order to satisfy the father’s addiction to gambling. The narrator describes gambling as “a sickness”, a precursor that led to the heroine’s mother’s early passing. Angela Carter exemplifies the selfish nature of the patriarchy, having it derive from recognizing one side, the masculine, whilst putting down the other, the feminine, forming an oppressive dichotomy between the two genders. The heroine is both in literal and figurative senses being objectified as a material asset rather than an equal person. The Tiger’s Bride, like The Courtship of Mr Lyon is also partially based on the story of Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve’s Beauty and the Beast. Nevertheless, Angela Carter shifts around her characters and takes a different direction in portraying the surrounding male characters in The Tiger’s Bride, having most of them, like the father, depicting the issues of insecurity and fear that led to toxic masculinity, misogyny being normalized in culture, society. Similarly to The Courtship of Mr Lyon, a rose is taken from the original story by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve as a catalyst for the father to give away his daughter to the monstrous Beast for attempting to steal a rose, either out of fear, or lack of options. The Tiger’s Bride diverges from the previous aforementioned tales by portraying the father as careless, irresponsible for his own family accentuating the latent themes of misogyny, found in traditional storytelling.

Angela Carter criticizes the patriarchal system for it encourages a superiority complex amongst males. Instead of nurturing their humanity, cultivating their own individuality, they use various means of denigrating those that are of otherness, not of their kind. “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.” Feminist writers, such as Carter, note the way that proponents of the patriarchy belittle the female gender, disenfranchise certain women for their refusal to align to their standards, ideas of what is morally pure. When the heroine is riding on horseback with the Beast and its valet, she raises an assertion, made by men in general, having her compared to that of animal by an attributed quality of being soulless like the beasts. In the short story, the idea of morality and moral purity is addressed through the idea of having a soul, which the author addresses as values, attributed to people that are morally abiding to tradition, ingrained ideas of how the domestic, marital structures, gender attributes can or should be. The narrator criticizes this implication of self-righteousness and moral-policing by discrediting its importance, belittling its proponents the way that she is. “If I could see not one single soul in that wilderness of desolation all around me, then the six of us mounts and riders, both could boast amongst us not one soul, either, 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.” Rather than continuing on with the cycle of large scale societal bullying because of people’s gender, identity, the female protagonist refuses to accept their irrational requirements, wishing for a “soul”. Instead the heroine maligns the misogynistic ideals of women, using their close-minded vernacular of superficial belittlement, unlike them, in actual substantial criticism. As she sees the sympathetic approving reaction of her companions – Beast, the valet and their horses, making her feel for a rare instance secure and comfortable to share her emotions and intellectual insights without the fear of being discouraged or downplayed.

The protagonist receives a mechanical servant for company in the form of a soubrette from an operetta. Angela Carter specifically assigns a type of female character – the soubrette, which is usually designed to be lively and flirtatious to criticise misogynistic qualities attributed to that of a presupposed woman. As the soubrette is the heroine’s servant, she is the exemplified embodiment of the cultural view of submissive femininity, in the story being used to care for the female protagonist, specifically powdering her cheeks to be like hers. The main protagonist refers to it as a “clockwork twin”, sharing a resemblance in physical appearance to the actual doll, toy. Angela Carter uses the mechanical soubrette as a means of having it represent the impact of cultural misogyny by means of creating an inanimate object, a caricature of the perfect, accommodating woman, created to charm and fulfil men’s desires. “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?” Even when provided with a mirror to see the soubrette’s work on her make-up, the female protagonist sees her father, having her embellished appearance accommodating to societal standards of beauty associated with the patriarchy and the pain it has inflicted on her. Carter uses
absurdist imagery and ideas to make her feminist ideas and criticisms appear more direct yet more impactful. In order to function and serve, the soubrette is to be winded up, enabling her to carry out her main duties. The idea of winding the mechanical idea of a woman up is used to further push the view that society and culture of most western countries used and still continue to believe of women; portraying them as mindless beings, unable to think and or act on their own. As the story continues and the heroine begins to rebel against the ways of societal pressure, misogynistic ideals, expectations, she becomes less akin to the soubrette. When she rejects adhering to the unwanted, self-serving male ideals of womanhood, she sends out her soubrette to impersonate her and live under the heroine’s father household, as a means to distance herself from the patriarchal system that she had to live in until she managed to oppose it. Carter accentuates how problematic, misogynistic views of women have a toll on their lives, restricting them from meeting their own needs, desires. As the female protagonist establishes herself as an autonomous person, capable of expressing her selfhood, personal identity, she becomes able to live without fear of outside forces.

In *The Tiger’s Bride* the main female protagonist becomes aware of how men treat her as a lesser being, attributed to a soulless animal, an inanimate soubrette, viewed as a mere imitation of the superior male gender. Nevertheless as she encounters the Beast, he is, like the heroine, an imitation, pretending to be a man by disguising himself in a suit, a mask, having the valet translate his speeches. The female protagonist disdains the Beast for his mask of an ideal man embodies masculine perfection, superiority over others. Accordingly, as she has learned from past experiences of interacting with men, that she does not seek to be further viewed as an object, a lesser, and so she tries straying further from the Beast, believing that he too is of the patriarchal system. As she receives diamond earrings from the lord, the heroine dismisses them, throwing them into the corner of the room as a rejection of materialism, that comes attached to misogynistic ideas of women being bought in exchange of favours. Nevertheless in the story the Beast is no more of otherness than the female protagonist, as he, like the heroine, seeks equality and just treatment.

*The Tiger’s Bride* contains themes of self-doubt, hatred, which both characters, the Beast and the heroine, need to overcome in order to no longer fall into the confines of social chastising. As the cultural norms, misogynistic views are a part of life in society, the Beast lives in a seemingly wealthy house, which in actuality is almost as if abandoned, showing his distancing from unjust, traditional cultural values. The protagonist herself was moving away from Russia with her father, seemingly trying to escape from the established society’s norms, but like the snow that had followed her into Italy, she couldn’t escape it as she was with her father, a proponent of traditional masculine values, viewing his daughter as an asset. Nearing the end, the characters decide to renounce their humanity, accepting their animalistic instincts, inner true-selves, so they could break away from the normalised social gender construct, ingrained assumptions of what a woman and
man should be. Angela Carter pushes the idea of women needing to liberate themselves of their socially built up facades of womanhood, ingrained ideas of the subservient woman, and instead accepting their needs, desires, qualities of strength, self-ness. “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.” As the female protagonist is referred to as a lamb, Carter acknowledges the effect that social pressures and culture has on women, leading them to view themselves as lesser people. So the female protagonist had to fight her own presupposed views on women and herself as prey, and dismiss them. Starting as a lamb, she is later revealed to be a tigress like the Beast himself, only after she managed to accept her true nature and ferociousness, which was latently hidden under her surface humanity. Unlike in the original tale of Beauty and the Beast, in The Tiger's Bride both main characters are not portrayed as opposites, but rather united as proponents for acceptance and true equality.

The only way that the main female protagonist manages to liberate herself from societal repression is by undergoing a literal and figurative transformation. Sexuality and desire lead to the heroine metamorphosis into an actual animal, a beast. Unlike in the original tale of Beauty and the Beast, or another story by Angela Carter The Courtship of Mr Lyon, where the character of Beast transforms back into his human form, instead the heroine of The Tiger’s Bride undergoes the shift of her physical appearance into that of a beast. Angela Carter alters the major aspect in the narrative to emphasise the idea, of women, being able to defy cultural expectations and instead tap into their inner-selves. Additionally, the character of Beast is also opposing societal expectations by not turning into man, like in the aforementioned original tale and its reinterpretation, acting out a new role, a proponent of negating ideals of toxic masculinity. From the beginning of the overall narrative, the main female protagonist seeks to free herself from established, traditional views of women by means of confronting supporters of the patriarchal. As the female protagonist is lost in a bet, leading to her being given away to the Beast by her own father, he asks for her to grant him a white rose, associated with purity, innocence, good, as a means of her forgiveness. However before handing out the rose, she pricks herself, dabbing it in blood, not only to emphasise her disobedience in not showing actual honest forgiveness, but additionally to display her undergoing change by the act of sacrificing her virginity, purity, which is valued in women by men. Nevertheless, the heroine’s transformation is not prompted by any act of sexual expression, rather it is the notion of having choice in willingly expressing her carnal desires and the need to be sexually intimate. The main female protagonist is offered an opportunity of release if she is to show her nude body to the Beast. Considering from the heroine’s position of being a young woman in a patriarchal society, she assumes that he is a part of it, granting her prizes in an exchange of male pleasure, letting him express dominance over her. She refuses to strip naked in front him and mocks him, hurting him,
without understanding their similarities and the Beast’s actual intentions. The Beast merely seeks acceptance of the heroine by not desiring to satisfy voyeuristic cravings, but rather enabling them to express their latent self-ness.

In *The Tiger’s Bride* the heroine’s and Beast’s undressing and sexual embrace of each other is an act of both erotic intimacy and resurrection of their latent identities. As she finally decides to undress for the Beast, she acknowledges herself developing a change in being. Nevertheless, to complete the metamorphosis, the heroine requires her counterpart’s – the Beast’s assistance; having him through acts of sexuality, intimacy, ravage away her surface physical appearance, so she too would not need to comply with society. “And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs.” By fulfilling their sexual desires, the female protagonist is transformed and thus reborn into a tigress. Instead of favouring men’s sexual desires, in this instance, the act of sex is shown to be synergetic, without any prejudice. Angela Carter shows that the heroine’s choice of staying together with the Beast proves their equality portrayed by their shared animal species that was unravelled through liberation of their identities.

4.4. THE LADY OF THE HOUSE OF LOVE

The Gothic was closely related to the inception and popularization of secular art after the Renaissance era. Many XX century authors, such as Angela Carter, used the depiction of supernatural forces – vampires, demons, ghouls as a means to depict one’s struggle with their inner personal suffering, instead of them being perceived in a literal sense. In *The Lady of the House of Love* Angela Carter explores the duality of the rational and irrational exemplified by the exemplifying it through the relations of Gothic aesthetics, fantasy and real life. The narrative is partially related to traditional fairy tale story of *The Sleeping Beauty*, popularized by Perrault and Brothers Grimm, and legends, fiction writings about vampires. Irrationality, its essence is depicted by the character of the Countess, a direct descendant of the most infamous vampire in literature Nosferatu. As she is an offspring of the legendary vampire, the Countess is too of the living dead, thus opposing notions of reality and time. In contrast, reason possesses the implication that no one thing is eternal, everything abides to certain laws of reality and is bound to cease to exist, and she defies it by being eternal. Nevertheless, vampires are known to die from being exposed to light. Carter uses vampirism and its immortality, weakness to lightness to describe notions of change and ultimate enlightenment. As vampires, the living dead are of the eternal, they are cursed to be unable to explore the reality of the world during daylight. Thus the Countess is condemned to a life of seclusion, inability to realise her pure desires, without having them be tarnished by her beastly nature. Her life of the irrational, whilst providing her with power, is destined to be of misery.
Angela Carter uses tropes of Gothic literature as a means to bring an emphasis on the world surrounding the characters, having the Countess live in a castle, separated from humanity, in solitude. Descriptions of the setting be dominated by qualities of darkness and desolation depict the Countess’ as mysterious. The ambiguity can be diminished by examining her inhabitant, living in a castle, surrounded by ghosts of the past, whilst locking her-self away in a drab, isolated room, full of decay. Additionally Carter accentuates the Countess’ conundrum of living in irrationality by an ironic, yet tragic parallel between her and her pet Lark, which is, like the character herself, trapped in a cage, a prisoner - “Sometimes the Countess will wake it for a brief cadenza by strumming the bars of its cage; she likes to hear it announce how it cannot escape.” Like the Lark, the Countess is destined to live a life of uncertainty, without a foreseeable future.

The character of the soldier depicts the rational, reason and acts as an opposing counterpart to the Countess’ depiction of liminality, the irrational. The British soldier that meets the Countess is unlike any other of her previous human encounters. Angela Carter references the First World War to invoke the male character’s naivety and innocence in the face of an upcoming war, which is known to be infamous for its death count and other inflicted horrors on unsuspecting people, such as soldiers and civilians. Additionally the author uses the Great War as a means to depict the soldier as a man of change, passing of time, the opposite of the Countess. Nevertheless, as the soldier enters the Countess’ castle, the setting of stagnant time, he is left unharmed by her for the soldier possesses rationale, making him not fearful of the supernatural that the Countess inhabits, abiding to laws of fantasy. “This lack of imagination gives his heroism to the hero. He will learn to shudder in the trenches. But this girl cannot make him shudder.” As the soldier exemplifies values of logic, reason, he is able to traverse the world during different weather, time of day, making him an enlightened being. His sense of enlightenment overwhelms the Countess, making her wear glasses for protection, yet still being unable to harm him in order to satisfy her uncontrollable craving, immoral desire. During the climax of the narrative, the soldier’s presence overpowers the Countess, having outside light enter her bedroom. At this moment, both worlds of the rational and irrational are at clash, leading to the Countess’ life of Gothic fantasy to dissolve proving her existence to be fictitious, but an illusion in reality. As the Countess becomes exposed the light of reason, her world view and overall life starts to crumble, falls apart, but in return she is alleviated of her suffering, unwanted life of malicious vampirism, forced to live off others’ vitality. The Countess, in death, becomes human, a depiction of rationale. However, Angela Carter notes that the irrational has a place in the real world, as the soldier receives a rose from the Countess, he manages to revive it and have it prosper. In Carter’s work, liminality and ambiguity push the idea that no one explanation or side is invalid, further implying ideas of equality in a world of uncertainty.
Additionally, Carter uses references to *Sleeping Beauty* to emphasise the obliqueness within the story’s correlated use of violence and sexuality. As the Countess is a vampire, a corrupt fantasy monster that drinks people’s blood, she is depicted as a force of evil, maliciousness. Nevertheless, as the soldier kisses her, the female character’s inner, latent humanity spruces out as the rise of her enlightenment. This sense of enlightenment is further achieved when the Countess collects new experiences, such as when she cuts her finger and for the first time notices her-self bleeding. “*He gently takes her hand away from her and dabs the blood with his own handkerchief, but still it spurts out. And so he puts his mouth to the wound. He will kiss it better for her, as her mother, had she lived, would have done.*” As the soldier comforts her and intimately kisses her wound, the female vampire, Nosferatu’s descendant – the Countess experiences a liminal shift from a monster that feasts on others’ life force, an act of self-interest, into an enlightened being that is able to give in, grow. Nevertheless, as the Countess is incapable of perceiving intimacy, real erotic desire, the soldier is not her romantic interest, nor a chivalrous knight. Instead, Carter depicts both characters as counterparts that complete, complement each other.

As the Countess is of the undead, cursed for a life of timelessness, she is unable to participate in copulation. Her vampirism leads to possession of bloodlust, an uncontrollable destructive nature, making her other desires and needs implausible to gratify, “*however hard she tries to think of any other, she only knows of one kind of consummation.*” Angela Carter uses themes of sexuality in a narrative containing vampirism to depict the notion of one’s inner, latent repression. The fictional creature is immortal and the environment of the castle is stagnant, stuck in time. Carter highlights how conservative ideals have pushed people to act out, participate in something that they wouldn’t condone if it were their choice, but are instead trapped in their position out of sheer tradition, certain expectations. The soldier is, like the Countess, intact with his virginity, he is of purity and naivety, whilst she possesses a twisted view of sexuality, having no understanding of it, even when the soldier is lured into her bedroom to be consumed. Angela Carter emphasises the theme of sexual repression having the female vampire be oblivious to intimacy, adding absurdity and comedy in horror fiction. The Countess using the language associated with romance – French, tells the soldier about his impeding devour, calling him “prey”, only to be misunderstood as flirtation. Near the end, as the Countess is enveloped in the soldier’s light of rationale, she becomes human, mortal and thus perishes before she could experience intimacy, erotic desire by losing her virginity. Instead a rose is left behind, as a symbol of the Countess’ wasted opportunity to fulfil her inner self’s desires, equating it to a flower to mourn. “*And I leave you as a souvenir the dark, fanged rose I plucked from between my thighs, like a flower laid on a grave. On a grave.*” Angela Carter uses the notion of virginity drawing a parallel between the Countess having it as a depiction of her deficiency, trauma from her ancestral patriarchal authority.
enforcing it onto her, and the soldier, making him naïve, oblivious to possible threat, and yet additionally a source of his power. “He has the special quality of virginity, most and least ambiguous of states: ignorance, yet at the same time, power in potencia, and, furthermore, unknowingness, which is not the same as ignorance.” Unlike the Countess, the soldier is acknowledged to be full of potential and prowess because of his innocence, lack of experience, unlike his vampire female counterpart, who had her potential taken away before she could express her autonomy. Angela Carter highlights the prolonged gender injustice, discrimination found in society, depicting womanhood being heavily influenced, or controlled by outside forces, separating life’s experiences according to one’s gender. Much like in the tale of Sleeping Beauty, there is an aspect of the male saviour that finds the princess under a curse, later to wake her up by means of showing affection, thus proving a point of salvation brought by a male hero. Angela Carter altered the cliché by having the Countess find the soldier, not the other way around, by means of seduction. Nevertheless, the Countess’ encounter with the soldier showed his ultimately transformative ability of turning the female character onto reason by kissing her, an act of empathy and compassion rather than showing dominance over the female gender, like in the original tale of Sleeping Beauty. Although the Countess has her physical die and deteriorated, she ultimately escapes the seemingly inescapable confinement of the patriarchal system, making the act of providing reason good and loving.

Angela Carter references traditional fairy tales such as Sleeping Beauty, Benjamin Tabart’s Jack and the Beanstalk to highlight the portrayal and themes of opposing sides at strife. In the narrative, there is an underlying motif of opposing forces interacting together, only to have one overpower the other; be it life and death, rational and irrational, reality and fantasy. The Countess is depicted as a being that opposes mankind, feasting on human flesh and blood. Much like the Giant from Jack and the Beanstalk, the female makes references by quoting the man-eating monster - “Fee fie fo fum; I smell the blood of an Englishman.” Angela Carter uses the reference to the classic tale to criticise its morality, understanding of heroism. In Jack and the Beanstalk the main protagonist Jack retrieves from the giant its valued possessions, killing the giant whilst trying to escape, later to prosper. When analysing the original tale, the giant was demonised and perceived as a villain because of its otherness, when the protagonist had the option not to disturb it. Many authors of traditional tales such as Jack and the Beanstalk used limited perspective and vilification of the abnormal to draw its heroes and villains. Yet Angela Carter uses ambiguity, the Countess being a vampire makes her part real human the other part fantastical monster, physically possessing qualities of beauty, seductiveness, whilst causing dread and death unto its victims. The narrative’s sense of morality is obscured as the Countess’ character is built on clashing ideals creating a sense of ambiguity throughout the story.
4.5. THE WEREWOLF

However, according to Angela Carter’s narratives, the power structure of the family dynamic is not being placed in anyone’s favour – not patriarchal, nor are they matriarchal. The paternal is not portrayed as the centre of conflict, villainous or irresponsible. A notable amount of popular fairy tales follow trends and formulas, some of which had an effect of stifling female characters. “Damsel in distress” is a trope appearing in literary narratives especially since the Gothic’s romanticised medieval era. That specific historical period is associated with acts of chivalry, which fell out of popularity since the XIX century. The trope in its essence portrays a fair female character needing of saving, rescue by an honourable male saviour. In popular culture, the trope has been noted for being derogatory or simply ill-creative. Nevertheless, its use throughout history has had an impact that in the long run led to people popularising the notion of women’s frailty and lack of autonomy. In the collection of stories The Bloody Chamber, Angela Carter actively avoids or deconstructs the cliché when retelling classic tales that had previously utilised the trope. Instead of being individuals like their male counterparts, they are “used” as a means of representing a cautionary tale for women to obey and or act a certain way, or optionally a reward for the male protagonist. Angela Carter criticises the long-standing gender and social inequality found in western cultures using major alterations of her stories’ characters.

In The Werewolf, the little girl is described as a partial reinterpretation of Little Red Riding Hood, having her clothing alluding to the original tale’s protagonist being frail and innocent: “The child had a scabby coat of sheepskin to keep out the cold, she knew the forest too well to fear it but she must always be on her guard.” However, Angela Carter made changes and focused on conflicting, multi-layered morality within the tale, giving the character, which previously was considered a “blank page” built on a cliché, questionable qualities and beliefs, having her during the encounter with a werewolf, be shown to be no lesser of a threat than the beast itself, using her knife and managing to fight it off. The idea of a protagonist having ambiguous morality comes in when she realises at the end that the werewolf was her own grandmother. Nevertheless, it did not stop her from having the grandmother stoned by the neighbours and taking over her household. In the narrative that exists in the world of the supernatural, there are no clearly defined villains – "to these upland woodsmen, the Devil is as real as you or I.” In the original tale, the readers are made to empathise with the protagonist for her powerlessness against the clearly defined idea of evil, an antagonist – the wolf. Instead Carter provides with hints and explanations of her core ideas, criticisms within the environment, which was built on societal fears and prejudices. The story ends in a murder of a family member with no sight of grief or remorse. The readers are not forced into empathising with protagonist or demonising the werewolf for the lines between actual concepts of
good and evil are not as clear as they are in reality. Angela Carter added depth to the character, implementing a different type of horror of people becoming desensitised to violence as criticism of society conditioning people to certain views and ideas.

In postmodernist writing, subversion of expectations is used for an effect of catharsis, shifting established structures and ideas for a strong emotional effect and a way to criticise traditional philosophies, perceptions. However, Angela Carter’s works might be criticised for her written female characters, protagonists, for their absurd measure of competence, perfection and likeability. A case could be made by critics, grouping the protagonists into “Mary Sue” type of characters, overtly powered female heroines, acting as wish-fulfilments for the author. Nevertheless, Angela Carter manages to not simply incorporate strong heroines, such as the one in *The Werewolf*, but rather build them through their upbringing, environment, or just having realistic qualities, which are all explained and expanded upon, unlike for the reason as to why the trope is common in amateurish writing is because Mary Sues are conceived in their perfection.

In *The Werewolf* the little girl uses her father’s knife as a means of self-defence. However the knife takes up several meanings, in classic tales “a father’s knife” is wielded by sons to portray the powerful nature of masculinity, also the tradition of passing on virility and experience onto the male offspring. In the Angela Carter’s fairy tale, the traditional understanding of the cliché is subverted, by having the family portrayed through a matriarchal point of view, where the maternal figure gives valuable guidance to the child. “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.” Additionally the father’s hunting knife is passed on to the protagonist by her mother. “Here, take your father's hunting knife; you know how to use it.” In this instance, the parent figure is portrayed as a model of trust, projecting confidence in their offspring.

The Gothic genre puts significant importance to the aesthetics of its environments, usually pertaining aspects of the melancholic, causing feelings of disorientation and malaise. In the collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter uses descriptions of environments to achieve several stylistic goals in her writing. She pertains to the traditional use of Gothic’s tropes of castles, bleak nature, and ruthless weather; however in the collection of fairy tale retellings, they are not only stylistic, but also functional in character reveal and or development. Angela Carter created these worlds of danger and menace, to additionally exaggerate character qualities, having them more authoritative, dominating, whilst still providing explanations and reasoning for their traits.

In *The Werewolf*, the first half of the narrative is used for world-building, which establishes the social climate of the country’s residents and the existence of the supernatural, how it affects them. The portrayal of the environment passes on to the people living in it – “It is a northern country; they have cold weather, they have cold hearts.” The forest in the narrative is present as an
illustration on how people have been led to live in a constant state of fear and paranoia of the unknown, what they do not understand such as supernatural forces, described through absurd superstitions of vampires dreading garlic, how one can find a witch and others. The way that Angela Carter deviates from the original tale of Little Red Riding Hood is by altering the main protagonist’s powerlessness into the completely opposite direction. Because of the environment conditions, the fact that the seemingly fragile little girl is capable of wielding a hunting knife, knowing her way in the dangerous forest, and fighting off a beast it is not entirely unconvincing or absurd. The environment and how one is brought up in the narrative’s world through influence on the importance of survival have led to the protagonist to overtake her own grandmother’s household and “prosper”, symbolizing how the new generation, after adapting to the gruelling environment, growing calloused and hardy, is able to “overthrow” the previous one.

4.6. THE COMPANY OF WOLVES

The Company of Wolves is a partial companion piece to The Werewolf as both stories are moderate retellings of the same tale - Little Red Riding Hood. In the story, Angela Carter puts significant importance in subverting the traditional portrayal of intimate relationships and self-acceptance. Near the end of the story, the protagonist’s grandmother is consumed by 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 precise and vivid descriptions of the monster’s appearance and obscene, yet oddly comedic sexual imagery, illustrates the horror of facing something that one may not understand. Carter criticises the way that conservative values are mostly against change, yet are bound to eventually reconcile with modern, liberal ideals for it is an inevitable course of change, continuously taking place in societies. By means of postmodern criticism, it implies that having strong traditionalist views is in-and-of-itself seemingly inconsistent, for nothing is eternally the same. Up to that point, the werewolves were portrayed as an evil force, a menace to society’s livelihood; and yet the encounter between the female protagonist and the depiction of corruption incarnate does not lead to a violent end. The girl felt that she might be in danger as she entered the house, being trapped inside with the supernatural beast; and she seemed indifferent about her own grandmother’s murder by the werewolf, emphasizing Carter’s ideas of an existing preconditioned rivalry between women, and the disassociation between the different generations. Like in The Werewolf, Angela Carter draws a parallel between the old, previous generation and the new, contemporary and their battle of differing values, ideas of what should, should not be considered acceptable if not completely understood. “The flames danced like dead souls on Walpurgisnacht and the old bones under the bed set up a terrible clattering but she did not pay them any heed.” In the context of the grandmother’s demise, her rattling bones, an equivalent to the omniscient narrator
of the first part of the story, act as red flags, alarms of sorts, warning the female protagonist of the possible dangers if she was to indulge in interacting with the supernatural force. Nevertheless the remnants of the past generation do not understand that by understanding and accepting the outcast part of one self’s inner desires leave them invulnerable. The author makes a point of illustrating how avoiding of certain cultural ideas, outsider views and instead exploring, looking after one’s own desires, and true inner-intuitions may lead to self-discovery, contentment in life.

The overall narrative structure is sectioned into two different parts that are closely related and enhance the importance of the author’s message of autonomous decisions towards self-discovery. Unlike other Angela Carter’s works in the collection of stories The Bloody Chamber, employing a type of perspective which could be attributed as detached, neutral; The Company of Wolves possesses one that is biased towards a belief – that werewolves are the external embodiment of corruption and evil – “The wolf is carnivore incarnate and he’s as cunning as he is ferocious; once he’s had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do.” The first half of the reinterpreted tale uses a lot of precise details, adjectives, several stories describing the supernatural beings as the most horrific of predators that there are. Much of the negativity persists even when describing the werewolves as they were part human, persuading the reader to not feel any compassion for them, as they are no better in either form. There is an implication that their curse of lycanthropy is brought upon them, condemning for their wickedness. “That long-drawn, wavering howl has, for all its fearful resonance, some inherent sadness in it, as if the beasts would love to be less beastly if only they knew how and never cease to mourn their own condition.” The assertion implies that the ones of vicious, wicked nature are able to eventually regret their past actions, considered evil, for it left them with only sadness and despair.

In The Company of Wolves, the main female protagonist is first introduced by her qualities of purity, virginity and naivety which are common attributes in traditional fairy tale writing. Angela Carter explores the use of these traits associated with innocence, inserting the type of character in an environment of hardships, cold and death - “Children do not stay young for long in this savage country”. Whilst making a reference to little red riding hood’s physical apparel of a red shawl, Carter makes a point in highlighting the importance of the female protagonist’s coming of age, the entering into womanhood; Having her shawl be associated with “...ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow.”, and mentioning images of menstruation, physical change. Within the majority of the narrative, there is an implication of downgrading masculinity as a part of wickedness and source of negativity. Having the female protagonist’s apparel be associated as “...her scarlet shawl, the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses...” presents an idea, that she exists in an environment, a society, which perceives the female gender as a submissive to the patriarchal system. It is even exemplified through the retelling of an occurrence from the original
tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*, where the werewolf entraps the female protagonist, waiting for her to give in, enabling to be consumed. However, the protagonist chooses to approach the terror in a seductive, sexually liberating manner - undressing, burning away her and his apparel and embracing one another. As the wolf assumes that the heroine is giving in out of resignation, as a form of sacrifice, she denies the assumption through her own determination, assessing her own dominance – “*The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat.*” The narrative, expecting for the young woman to be devoured by the embodiment of what is corrupt and evil, is subverted as the protagonist uses the act of giving in as a form of liberation of the system and her own self. The concept of sacrifice is commonly used in literary works to not necessarily appease any side, but rather the act is used in the name of tradition and its ideas, usually by means of religious, theological, spiritual imagery. Angela Carter uses the horror of brutal sacrifice to criticize established biased ideas that were implemented into everyday life and culture such as misogynous views, regarded as facts, the societal norm. Through this realization, the female protagonist manages to embrace sexual lust and needs, sensuality, and retaining them as her own, no one else’s. “*See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf.*” The heroine discards her status as a human, a part of everyday society and accordingly does not get devoured. Instead she accepts the werewolf for what it is, becomes a part of them - not as a victim, not a predator, but as an equal. As an autonomous act against the narrative itself, which was forming her ideas and understanding of her surroundings and those within its radius, she is left unharmed, embracing otherness and opposing societal views by her own decisions.

4.7. **WOLF-ALICE**

Angela Carter used the portrayal of beastliness and shape-shifting to approach themes of otherness and criticising established, traditional views. Similarly like in *The Company of Wolves*, Carter criticises the way the majority of the populous with certain pertaining traditional views react to change of times and have drastic reactions to concepts that they do not understand. In the story *Wolf-Alice* the main heroine is a human being that was brought up by wolves outside of civilization or human society. As the female protagonist is a manifestation of both what is human and inhuman; her physical appearance is that of a human whilst her mind and experiences are primal are at odds and form a conundrum as her existence cannot be applicable to either sides. Through this basic narrative idea, Angela Carter seeks to explore the duality of what is considered human, and its rhetorical antithesis; whether they do in actuality clash in concept. Throughout the narrative of the story, aspects, defining the human experience, are separated into several key events that made the character realise her individuality of a person; Perceiving the notion of time, feeling embarrassment, humiliation, and realizing one’s influence on everything around. However these concepts were
introduced and established in her development only when she had encountered everyday human life and objects within it, such as a mirror, which she used to play with her reflection, simulating a human interaction, a wedding dress, which she wore to cover herself, and a castle inside of which she lived. Having humanity defined by these standards can be considered absurd when the idea of a society is in-and-of-itself a construct. Angela Carter makes a point about how without established cultural ideas and ethic customs, humans are nothing more than carnal beasts. The aspect of horror that the author explores is humanity avoiding its true primal nature. In fairy tale writing the strife between nature and society has exemplified the developed fear of humanity’s past iterations, its primal self for all of its deficiencies and inadequacies. Angela Carter uses the fear of one self’s inner nature to comment on and criticise the traditional structure of society, how fragile it is and how modern ideas can overrule the norm.

The female protagonist is the encapsulation of raw human essence, one that is unbiased and indifferent towards the idea of what is right and what is wrong, much like a new-born. As the heroine is found, by hunters, lying near a shot wolf, which was nursing her as an infant, she is brought into a covenant, where the nuns attempt at raising her. However, even with their greatest endeavours of clothing her, teaching how to walk, lecturing about table manners, all efforts were mostly for naught. As much as the character is lacking in clothing, manners, speech, and understanding so are her experiences, and views on perceived human existence. In Angela Carter’s narratives, especially in the collection of stories The Bloody Chamber, theological references and religious imagery portray the established norm, tradition, conservative views. The connection is made for most prominent religions such as Christianity have aspects of obedience to a form of an authority. During the postmodernist movement of the mid-XX century, Gothic authors used religion, its references to deconstruct and criticize traditional values, patriarchal ideology based authority. Additionally, in secular art and philosophy, religion in-and-of-itself is believed to be a product of culture, defined by people’s need to connect with each other and conform. Angela Carter uses the covenant as a means to emphasize people’s need to comply with certain, specific standards. The covenant’s eventual resignation of assimilating the heroine into human society shows how restrictive the idea of total compliance and acceptance of otherness is. As the female protagonist is feral and non-conforming to society, she is considered an outsider.

However, her outsider view assists in experiencing the world from an objective perspective, showing how ignorance and naivety can open one’s eyes up to authenticity. Angela Carter shows how ignorance of society’s approval and instead understanding, reflecting on one self may lead to a truer form of self-ness. As the character possesses a keenness for curiosity and learning, she manages to discover herself despite being disfavoured by both humans and nature. The story Wolf-Alice is a partial reinterpretation of Through the Looking Glass (1871), by Lewis Carroll,
which focuses on a female heroine, entering a fantasy world, which is very-much unfamiliar to her. An important item in the story is a mirror, used in the original Lewis Carroll’s story for the protagonist Alice to enter the other side of her reflection, exploring and experiencing all of the adventurous experiences it had to offer. Angela Carter borrows the idea of the mirror and implements it, similarly to the original tale, as a means for the protagonist in Wolf-Alice to express her curiosity, child-like wonder and desire to explore. However, instead of exploring a new, fantasy world, Carter focused on themes of self-discovery from which originates enlightenment. As the heroine believes that her own reflection in the mirror is a friend to play with, she finds solace in isolation, during which she begins experiencing the passage of time and human affairs such as menstruation, making her feel embarrassment, need to wear clothes, clean up after her-self. Nevertheless, even after realising that the cast image in the mirror is her own reflection, not a companion, she becomes enlightened, beginning to perceive her influence over the environment, everything within her vicinity and is thus feeling empowered.“A little moisture leaked from the corners of her eyes, yet her relation with the mirror was now far more intimate since she knew she saw herself within it.” By means of literal and figurative reflection on herself, the story’s heroine experiences a transition from going by wild instincts, animalistic, reactionary tendencies into cerebral human comprehension, rational thinking. Reason as to why outside influence, such as the covenant, couldn’t teach the female protagonist human nature is because only developing one’s individuality through reflecting leads to actual human growth.

Angela Carter uses the idea of a mirror’s reflection to emphasise the juxtaposition between that what is human, rational and what is animalistic, beastly, and irrational. However, the story Wolf-Alice, like other Angela Carter’s narratives, such as The Werewolf, The Company of Wolves, The Courtship of Mr Lyon additionally highlight a peculiar set of narratives, in which there is a variety of neither human nor animal, rather an in-between - half-beings, usually in her writing portrayed as werewolves, other similar supernatural beasts. In Wolf-Alice the female protagonist is a human who was first brought up by wolves, to be later taken in by humans, making her an outcast. Nevertheless the character of the Duke, a werewolf, who feasts on both humans and beasts, and takes in the heroine to live together, is also a character of otherness; whilst belonging to both sides, he is condemned by everyone. In the narrative, a human quality, ability is to recognise oneself in their reflection, whilst animals, wildlings do not, nevertheless the werewolf Duke does not appear in them at all - “nothing can hurt him since he ceased to cast an image in the mirror.” And so this distinction of the three kinds of beings is used to illustrate a confusing state, in which the Duke and the female protagonist find themselves in, of belonging nowhere. In Wolf-Alice the main heroine manages to snap out of this state of liminality by recognising her own reflection and realising her inner humanity, whilst the Duke is a partial antithesis. The Duke, unlike the heroine, lives in a
vicious cycle of bringing havoc, terror to everyone that comes near him, he is the embodiment of the disorderly, and vicious, thus casting no reflection at all, since there is barely to no humanity within him to reflect upon - “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.”

Angela Carter augments the story’s ambiguity by implementing different levels of reality and elements of fantasy. For the Duke, as a half-being of both animal and human, is stranded in a form of existential purgatory between fantasy and reality, “… locked half and half between such strange states, an aborted transformation, an incomplete mystery…” He is able to cause harm whilst also being unable of casting an image in a mirror, an idea mostly associated with traditional horror story monsters, such as a vampire in Dracula, other supernatural beings of evil nature. Because of that, the ending of the story becomes more elevated. In a world where the Duke is not understood, hated and viewed as a malicious being, the female protagonist’s transition from a liminal state of ignorant wild being into a rational human manages to also change the werewolf from an ambiguous state into a complete, definite one. During the peak culmination of the story, as the townsfolk set to end the Duke’s life, he becomes heavily wounded, and seemingly helpless. The main female protagonist, as a half-being, perceives perspectives differently. In the story, the people try to hunt down and kill the werewolf for his differences, acts of cruel savagery, and although she too is human, she understands the Duke’s wild instincts and his irrational, uncontrollable needs, desires for she too has experienced these ravenous senses. Her persisting animalistic side shows her understanding of the misunderstood supernatural being, whilst the humane side gives her the capability to feel pity for the beast. Throughout the narrative, there is a progression of the female protagonist’s self-discovery and an establishment of identity, becoming more human but additionally, managing to maintain a part of her previous, animalistic, wild side, for it is the quality that gave her enough grace and compassion to save the werewolf. Angela Carter expresses an idea, as the characters are of ambiguous identity, liminal existence; they need to fill in the answers autonomously to make it truthful. As the protagonist and the Duke belong to both humanity and the animal world, they are of otherness and thus are wanted by no one. Nevertheless, they form a balance between both worlds, and their individual experiences of both realities complete each other. For however different they are from one another, both characters complement each other’s lacking qualities of being wild and being cultured, reflecting on each other making them equal.
CONCLUSIONS

The thesis focused on the collection of stories *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter and what impact it had on the Gothic genre as a whole through the author’s postmodernist deconstruction of established literary conventions. Throughout the research, Angela Carter was established as an author of the Neo-Gothic, as her beliefs, opinions pertain to feminist writing, focusing on gender-based cultural issues and modern reinterpretations of the Gothic’s tropes being represented in mid-late XX century literature.

Angela Carter took traditional tales of Brother’s Grimm, Charles Perrault, Charles Dodgson, others, and adapted them to her contemporary second wave feminist views of a changing western society, addressing and further developing ideas of gender equality and liberty of oneself that had a latent presence in the original narratives.

All of Carter’s stories in *The Bloody Chamber* implemented retellings and references to traditional tales – *The Bloody Chamber* is a retelling of *Bluebeard*, *The Courtship of Mr Lyon*, *The Tiger’s Bride* partially reference *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lady of the House of Love* is a combination of *Sleeping Beauty and Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Werewolf*, *The Company of Wolves* have references to *Little Red Riding Hood* and finally *Wolf-Alice* is loosely based off of *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*.

Angela Carter incorporates Gothic imagery of medieval castles, mansions, towers to create an uneasy atmosphere within the narrative, whilst also attributing them to ideas of criticising the society’s patriarchal system, creating a parallel between past feudal, authoritative structure and the author’s current society. In *The Bloody Chamber*, the author exemplifies characters, pertaining qualities of toxic masculinity such as the Marquis to be an incarnate of past, antiquated views partially depicted by his castle.

In the collection, several stories, focus around female heroines and their struggles against the opposing forces of appropriating themselves to society’s cultural expectations and the patriarchal system. In the titular *The Bloody Chamber*, *The Tiger’s Bride*, Carter breaks away from common narrative formats by having the female protagonists as the narrators of the stories taking place, instead of a neutral, omniscient or masculine point of view, which were associated with traditional fairy tales.

Additionally, within all of the analysed stories the female heroines are written to subvert traditional ideas of portraying femininity, womanhood in Gothic literature, where female characters are commonly depicted to be of innocence, victimhood. In the collection of stories, female protagonists possess intelligence, insight, and the ability to learn, increasing their competence in fending for themselves in a terrifying world which is at odds with their personal wants, needs.
Angela Carter subverted what is expected of the Gothic literary genre by accentuating themes of indefiniteness, deviating from traditional story-telling by means of using character tropes, and instead adding more intricacy, prowess and weakness to characters. The author used themes and aspects of Gothic horror such as beastliness, fantasy found in the analysed retellings to dilute the duality found between the male and female genders and pushing feminist ideas of gender equality; additionally to indicate the latent nature of self-ness, human individuality.
**SANTRAUKA**


Bakalauro darbo tyrimo išvados: nurodau gotikos pokyčių ir Angelos Carter kolekcijos „Kruvinasis Kambarys“ apysakų analizės rezultatų apžvalgą.
LIST OF REFERENCES:


