

The Images of Women in Fairy Tales: An Analysis of The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye by A.S. Byatt and The Bloody Chamber by Angela Carter

Author

Cansu Ergin^{1*}

Affiliations

¹Master's Program in English Language and Literature, Yeditepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences, Istanbul, 34755, Turkey

*To whom correspondence should be addressed; E-mail: cansu.ergin@std.yeditepe.edu.tr.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines A.S. Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the discussion on the contemporary issues of women, a portrayal of gender in the media, and the political position of women. The study also examines the ways in which Byatt and Carter redefined prevailing traditional notions of femininity in their selected stories. In a male-dominated environment, females are presented as emotional, weak, followers, and submissive to males whereas males are presented as bold, strong, and rational beings. Reading both collections offers an intertextual approach that critique the patriarchal codes of contemporary society; thus, evoking post contemporary feminist discourses on women's issues. Byatt's and Carter's awareness of the public perceptions of sexuality and gender made it fundamental to intervene in the culture of the mainstream mass. The study also examines the images of women in the stories, the controversial elements seen in these stories, and understand the several female perspectives to untangle the figures from the restrictions of the sexist and patriarchal ideology. In addition, the study aims to identify the stereotypes in these collections, the way Byatt and Carter discussed these stereotypes, and the narrative techniques and literary devices they both used in their works.

Keywords: Fairy tales; intertextuality; Marxist feminist literary criticism; post-contemporary feminism; retellings; stereotypes; women writers.

INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales are literary fairy tales, therefore these unique stories are rewrites of earlier ones that were either literary or oral in nature. As it reworks the collective past to construct new ones that involve textual/literary crossbreeding, the idea of a literary fairy tale is typically distinguished by its many hybridities. In order to conjure ancient motifs and themes that anticipate new ideas, the story also employs antique aspects to convey the present. A literary fairy tale, which appears to be a genre that is connected to the past with a specter for creativity, is a hybrid in its mystical juxtaposition and everyday reality. Fairy tales are a literary form that allows authors to express their creativity and imagination, as evidenced by a look at its history (Mural, 2001).

Contrary to the general idea given by a collection of texts, a fairy tale is an adaptable genre, which contains a significant variety of variations within itself. Although a fairy tale sounds tautological, it contains tales that incorporate specific dimensions of the genre. This immediate referential function is essential to the fairy tale; as one of the most fundamental characteristics of the genre is that it takes a familiar form to make the readers refer back to the old well-known tales immediately that are kept in their memory. This indicates that any story must depend on the conventions of the genre; especially, when it intends to subvert these conventions. The works of Carter and Byatt invoke a sense of change in society's perception of women. Both writers helped redefining the perception of femininity through *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. They also tried to unfold the issue of misogynistic ideology and the social aspects of feminism (Baral, 2019).

This study aims to identify the images of women in fairy tales by examining A.S. Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. Moreover, the study examines Byatt's work to identify the stereotypes mentioned in her collection of tales, analyze the way Byatt highlighted these stereotypes, and identify the literary devices she implemented in her tales. The study also examines the traditional elements seen in the two collections to understand the various female perspectives and untangle the figures from the restrictions of the patriarchal ideology.

Female protagonists and narrators are not just in the submissive and usual roles; but, they become triumphant against the domination of the male with their changed masculine characters. Conventional cultural conventions are reevaluated in Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. Females were not just manipulated by males, in the past, they were confined by cultural values as well. They were also considered a beautiful angel at

home, which is associated with the observance of quietness and beauty softness. Yet, the roles of female characters are changed in these stories. In *The Tiger Bride*, from the stories of *The Bloody Chamber*, the female protagonist throws away the expensive ornaments to entice her to sexual acts. These things have been challenged and exposed by the female characters (Carter, 1995).

Namely, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and *The Bloody Chamber* both is commentary on social circumstances, which attempt to expose the intentions and meanings behind the culturally constructed positions of masculinity and femininity. Even in modern times, women are still in a subjugated role and will continue to be in this role unless they unveil the concealed agenda of the social and cultural values created by males. The stories of both Byatt and Carter have been reviewed by many readers and critics from various perspectives.

The general construct of this work follows a need to understand the feminist strategies of the authors' representations of femininity and sexuality, especially, the arguments surrounding sexuality constructions within the stories of *The Bloody Chamber*. Furthermore, both authors have gone toward shaping a complex perspective of female psychosexuality. This shows that the authors' strength lies exactly in exploring women's stereotypes as passive; therefore, invoking the spectrum of perversity and violence, which are troubling. However, to deny their existence is to incarcerate females back within a sanitized and partial image only somewhat constricted than the home's Victorian angel. This is constantly shown by both authors who give more agency to the heroines in their stories.

Feminist criticism has presented diverse and complex perspectives of the fairy tale. Nevertheless, feminist literary criticism functions to keep pace with modern fairy tales of feminism. This function aims to change the traditional stories, in which female characters are shown to be as submissive, weak, bread server, emotional, and followers of their male characters. On the other hand, males are presented to be winners, brave, strong, bold, thoughtful, and rational. Men are often put in the roles of providers, hunters, and fighters; however, the fairy tales examined in this study subvert these tendencies. These tales have shown that heroines are passionate and lovers; but, when needed, they can also be disobedient, cruel, and violent. In addition, Carter and Byatt, in their stories, present their heroines in major roles where they can act against the authoritarian and abusive male characters. The heroines are making their way for an independent and free life through ways of becoming courageous, fearless, brave, and valiant.

RESULTS

Byatt's fairy stories have managed to structure a fascinating visualization with the myths and fairytales of feminism and structure an environment of elements for that purpose. For Byatt, the main focus remains on the interaction between art and reality, and the postmodern preoccupation with the history and the past through her blatant implementation of embedded tales and intertextuality. By analyzing the five collections of short fiction and eleven novels, one can find this focus clearly, especially, in the modern world.

Byatt's writings are uniquely intertextual and this can be seen in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, which is a rich virtual collage of fairy tale motifs. With the title story and the rewritten tales, Byatt's production is an intertextual work that is about the process of storytelling as an instrument of revising and reviewing the construction of what a female is. This study describes the stories in Byatt's collection as they display various aspects of her remarkable talent for enchantment. These stories range from allegories of political tragedy to fables of sexual obsession and they draw the reader into narratives and tales that are as fascinating as dreams by guiding the reader to inhabit an imaginative environment while dazzling in the exactitude of its detail, splendor, and intellectual consistency.

The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye employs narrative framing devices to accomplish the metafictional goals; especially as a presentation of Chinese boxes that engulfs readers with tales constructed upon stories and stories descending into tales. The novel's literary aspects show Byatt's ability in mimicking the rhythms, the mind frame, and the phrasing of prose and poetry. All these characteristics are correct and seem to be seen in the text at the same time. This helps the text's interpretation as a sign of the postmodernist frame of this novel.

This study also highlights the main postmodernist feature, which is the use of intratextuality and intertextuality. Byatt continues to spin a web of allusions inside and outside the novel, both relating Byatt's fictional characters and their role that crafted a subtle net of myths and realities. While achieving such a net, Byatt succeeds in establishing a coherent fictional environment in which all seem to find a place and an answer. Within this environment, the reader is engaged like having taken part in the search for the truth that drives the novel's characters, and is taught to read the texts looking for the truth.

Therefore, this thesis provides inferences of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* to identify the stereotypes in this collection of stories, identify the way she discussed these stereotypes, and identify the literary devices she used in this novel is the primary objective of this chapter. This

will allow the chapter to show the impact of ontological flickering that can help discuss the constructed characters of these stories and places the primary plotline on the uncertain settings.

While continuing the examination after *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, this study examines Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, which presents a set of transformative short stories from tales of innocent children into adult stories with deliberate themes of subjugation and liberty. Carter's novel opens different horizons in criticism because of the conclusions of these stories, which result in the heroines' epiphany and not the heroes; therefore, announcing the feminist roles and voices.

This thesis also highlights Carter's perception and argument that focus on the challenges facing women in society. Carter constantly attempts to emphasize the relativity of the circumstances and ideas regarding the variations in gender. She also deliberately promotes and reflects her beliefs and arguments on discrepant concepts among genders. Analyzing *The Bloody Chamber* shows that Carter does not use her fiction to the service of a particular concept of feminism; using her writings as a tool for propaganda and agitation. However, she writes about the circumstances of her gender in life and culture to define the ground women are standing upon incessantly.

The study also shows Carter's use of the fairytale structure as a method to explore female desire, power, and sexuality. The females in her work have actual voices, which did not nearly exist in the original tales; therefore, she helps transport the tales to the confines of contemporary society and considers actual problems such as the limitations of gender and the representation of women. This shows that Carter is rewriting the conventional narratives and tales in a newly constituted and modified form.

Carter understands the interaction between reading and writing many genres to integrate them into their fictional narration; thus, creating an existential dimension for the female characters in her works to identify the female's quest for role and identity.

DISCUSSION

Literary criticism with a feminist perspective is referred to as feminist literary criticism. Based on feminist philosophy and politics, it is a feminist analysis. It is a critical analysis that looks at literature from a distinct ideological perspective. In other words, this kind of criticism takes a feminist stance while examining the language, organization, and essence of literature. Women can study literature and express themselves in the social, political, economic, and psychological

aspects of it thanks to feminist literary critique. In order for women to voice their needs, ideals, and viewpoints, womanism developed. In reaction, women began to consider how to achieve long-term goals and take action in literature.

In order to further marginalize the feminine gender over the masculine gender, feminist literary criticism uses the ideology of womanism to examine the language of literature as well as how other elements support patriarchy and gender norms. The feminist literary critique carries the torch for the 1960s women's movements that demanded equal rights and sought freedom and opportunity for women. The tyranny of male-oriented beliefs and roles over women was a major theme in the emergence of the feminist movement (Benjamin, 2020).

Marxism, which holds that social class battles have dominated human history, is the foundation of the Marxist feminist literary theory. Marxism was used to oppose capitalism, where a small group of people, the elites, control the factors of production while the majority of the population provides labor for salaries. Marxism contends that class fights will continue until society achieves a classless society. This justification that women have traditionally been oppressed by a male-dominated system was used in second-wave feminist literary critique. According to Marxism, the two classes of people battle because of oppression. It was obvious that the movement would grow. It was just a matter of time until it became clear that women were the downtrodden group in a society where men were in charge. Marxist feminist literary criticisms are thus ideologies and perspectives that have evolved due to the merging of Marxist and feminist ideologies.

In order to put Marxist feminism into perspective, Engels maintained that the creation of capitalism was the catalyst for the emergence of women's oppression and placed the causes of this oppression on historical and social events. In a capitalist sense, capitalism resulted in oppression through the division of labor among the sexes. Engels made a comparison between the division of work in agrarian and hunter-gatherer societies, which shows how oppressed women are. "The division of labor inside the family had regulated the division of property between the man and the wife" in hunter-gatherer tribes (Engels, 1978).

If second-wave feminism is closely examined, it becomes clear that the shortcomings of radical feminism, liberalism, and Marxism led to the development of Marxist feminist literary critique. Marxist feminism concentrated on the patriarchy in a capitalist setting, whereas radical feminism focused on the patriarchal system. However, it shares radical feminism's primary objective, which is the liberation of women. Marxist feminist literary theory is said to have been

sparked by Engels' analysis of how women are oppressed as a result of capitalism and the emergence of private property. This idea contends that radical feminism's critique of patriarchy is nebulous. It's important to comprehend the effects of patriarchy historically and economically (Watkins, 2001, 223).

The Marxist feminist literary theory not only examines the economic relationship between men and women but also the power dynamics in society. These can include sexuality, personal relationships, identification, pleasure-seeking modes, moralities, child-raising, and the distinction between public and private in a capitalist system. For instance, in the 1970s, the Marxist feminist literary theory shifted its focus from labor wages to domestic labor. They condemned unpaid domestic labor attributing it to the effects of capitalism, focusing on liberal feminism principles but with an individual choice, advocating for fair competition for everyone regardless of their sex. The Marxist feminist literary theory evolved to cover women's oppression that Marxism had left out. As stated earlier, early literature was male-dominated, and women were often overlooked.

Marx also left out women and their oppression in explaining the effects of capitalism. Women had been ignored historically, and their economic oppression was a manifestation of the continuation of the effects of a male-dominated society. When the movement became popular in the 1970s, it was tasked with connecting economics and gender (Armstrong, 2020, 36). Capitalism had been sexualized, which saw women stay at home while men worked and were sole breadwinners. Therefore, the movement aimed to explore these complex historical relations, examining the control patriarchy exerts on women. Besides, they could also explore the oppression working-class women experienced in the wage gaps. The movement sought to explore the female culture detailing its effect on the economy and society.

Marxist feminist literary theory defined women as integral to an economic system. The theory demonstrates women as the source of human beings and responsible for the means of existence, including tools of production, clothing, food, and shelter. Women are therefore responsible for the continuation of the human species. As a result, they should not be seen as less significant when it comes to factors of production. Despite these, the agrarian society saw a rise in private property and ownership rights, which bound commodities inheritance. As a result, economic power was bound to male bloodlines setting precedence for a male-dominated society.

The Djinn In The Nightingale's Eye by A.S. Byatt

For Antonia Susan Byatt, fairy stories created a mesmerizing imagination from reading fairytales and myths to her freedom and delights of establishing an environment of creatures and surroundings. This can be seen in the author's particular focus on the interaction between art and reality appearing in her work; such as *Possession*, which is her most widely acclaimed work. This novel examines the postmodern preoccupation with history and the past through the author's blatant implementation of embedded tales and intertextuality (Unzicker, 2007). By writing five collections of short fiction and eleven novels, Byatt remains one of the most distinguished writers from Britain of the contemporary age. While analyzing the relationship between the fantastic and the real, Byatt's fiction is preoccupied with several important issues such as historiographic metafiction, empowerment of women, and literary representation (Dobrogoszcz, 2020).

While discussing this unique relationship with a significant combination of affection and knowledge, the stories in Byatt's collection display various aspects of her remarkable talent for enchantment. These stories range from allegories of political tragedy to fables of sexual obsession; they draw the reader into narratives and tales that are as fascinating as dreams by guiding the reader to inhabit an imaginative environment while dazzling in the exactitude of its detail, its splendor, and its intellectual consistency (Dobrogoszcz, 2020).

In *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, the author employs narrative framing devices to accomplish the metafictional goals; especially as a presentation of Chinese boxes that engulfs readers with tales constructed upon stories and stories descending into tales. The author shows the impact of ontological flickering to discuss the constructed characters of these tales and places the plotline in uncertain settings (Pereira, 2012).

Heroines in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*

Gillian Perholt, a narratologist and a reader of the traditional fairy tales and myths from many sources from literature and cultures. In the novel, Perholt rewrites the texts she reads to identify the place and role of females in literature and reality. Therefore, with its emphasis on this process, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* narrates the quest of the older protagonist for a meaningful identity as a female, which would relieve her struggle against her concerns about futility and death. Gillian, who is a mother of two adult sons, was brought up in the traditional environment of the 20th century, which created the need for her to affirm her identity as a narratologist and as a woman. The fear of death is the primary motive behind her rewriting and reading about females' intellectual production and lives; as she acknowledges herself by stating

that: "lately I've had a sense of my fate - my death, that is - waiting for me, manifesting itself from time to time, to remind me it's there" (Byatt, 1994).

This protagonist is portrayed throughout the narrative as a distressed woman who battles with the reality of her mortality and cannot reconcile the notions of death and fate. The protagonist's need to avoid and even beat death can be seen in line with her desire to affirm her identity since she has experienced a metaphorical death that felt like "a being of secondary order" (Byatt, 1994) as a female in the literary circle. For many scholars, Gillian sees herself as a woman of secondary order because the fiction she re-enacts shows the cognitive function of retelling and rewriting (Maack, 2001).

While working as a narratologist, Gillian managed to make herself visible and heard again, and make sense of her reality, especially after being deserted by her children and husband; therefore, denied the roles of a mother and a wife, to which she did not reconcile with; as she was unable to place herself in a post-modern reality. In *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, Gillian shows this need for self-affirmation, which makes her begin a journey for a literary meeting about females' lives, which transforms into a metaphorical expedition to her inner reality as a female (Byatt, 1994).

The fact that the history of literature has depicted females either as a monster or an angel is a fundamental aspect of the gender construction process and it has affected the way females see themselves to a significant extent. Patriarchal reality wanted women to act and be like angels since this meek feature easily establishes a man's control over the woman. This desire of males to control females shows an excessive concern for the autonomy of females. Females can give birth, which allows them to control life; thus, arousing fear among males. This means that females' fear is seen as a rejection of their incapability and weaknesses (Gilbert & Gubar, 1984a). In Gillian's experience within the tale, it is clear that men's fear of women, particularly, the infantile fear of maternal autonomy, has objectified itself in the denigration of women. This projection of fears onto the opposite sex caused Gillian to have a negative sense of self; as she tried to obliterate her selfhood seen as evil and sinful: "like ... a weapon, a sharp sword, I couldn't handle" (Byatt, 1994).

In another tale from the collection is "*The Story of the Eldest Princess*" where *Eldest Princess* and the *Old Woman*, shows the role played by fairy tales in the narrative works of Byatt. The *Old Woman* explains their ability to bring together the stories of the past and spin the threads of the narrative by themselves. This makes the princess aware of this ability by stating that: "we

collect stories and spin stories and mend what we can and investigate what we can't, and live quietly without striving to change the world" (Byatt, 1994: 31). Within the reality of intertextual connections, she rests her understanding of freedom on the power to play with the current stories and the consciousness of narrative connections found within them: "We have no story of our own here, we are free, as old women are free, who don't have to worry about princess or kingdoms, but dance alone and take an interest in the creatures" (Byatt, 1994: 31). Gillian, who is nearly the same age as this *Old Woman*, also has this freedom.

The Eldest Princess questions the problem of narrative freedom with the emphasis on the protagonist's conscious interruptions - a Scheherazade-like character - within the story. The heroine in the tale, for Byatt, goes beyond the boundaries confining this heroine by refusing to follow the traditional plotline and structure of the tale itself. Females' life stories can be modified and the construction of gender revised. The heroine attempts to change and fight the narrative standards and conditions of such traditional stories.

The heroine of "*The Eldest Princess*" is the eldest daughter of a Queen and King, and her conversations with the *Old Woman* highlight the tale's main concerns. Byatt integrates other fairy tales within the storyline and the princess is given the part of a narrator that collects these stories, and her own, in the novel's narration.

The protagonist and heroine, *the Eldest Princess*, draws the image of an untraditional princess who is not a traveling princess but a reader. This heroine is viewed as an enthusiastic reader that knows all about princesses and princes in fairy tales. The heroine's extensive act of reading provides her with enough knowledge about the tales' patterns; as she knows that pattern decrees the heroine in the storyline to fail in her Quest and be punished by being placed in prison until she is saved by somebody, usually a prince. Moreover, the heroine, who is the family's eldest daughter, is set to fail in this Quest for the silver bird (art), and she realizes that she has no control over the story's construction (Byatt, 1994).

Here is also the main postmodernist feature, which is the use of intratextuality and intertextuality. Byatt continues to spin a web of allusions inside and outside the novel, both relating Byatt's fictional characters and their role that crafted a subtle net of myths and realities. While achieving such a net, Byatt succeeds in establishing a coherent fictional environment in which all seem to find a place and an answer. Within this environment, the reader is engaged like having taken part in the search for the truth that drives the novel's characters, and is taught to read the texts looking for the truth.

Therefore, both narratives are to identify the stereotypes in this collection of stories, identify the way she discussed these stereotypes, and identify the literary devices she used in this novel is the primary objective of this chapter. This will allow the narration to show the impact of ontological flickering that can help discuss the constructed characters of these stories and places the primary plotline on the uncertain settings.

Marriage in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*

By focusing mainly on stories where females are the locus of a challenge to transcend what is represented as the prison of their own bodies, seeking a reality outside the compelling state of motherhood and marriage into a reality of creativity and rationality has been Byatt's path in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. Tales, such as *The Glass Coffin*, take readers to a fantasy life where females long for freedom away from an incarcerating cycle of childbearing and marriage by way of metamorphoses, which might turn them into stone or ice (Bulamur, 2011).

Starting with "once upon a time," Byatt's story changes the fairy-tales conventions by starting with reflections of Gillian on her marital frustrations during her journey to Ankara, Turkey. Gillian's husband's holiday with his young mistress in Majorca and his message that informs Gillian that he is not coming back to their home show the stories' artificiality that represents a wedding or a marriage as a happy ending for females. The stories with white gowns, flowers, and wedding cakes do not engage with the marriages' complexities that end in separation or divorce.

For Kolbenschlag (1988), women are significantly disillusioned when the marriage process fails to meet their fantasies and ends in some form of loss and separation. As for Byatt, the author rejects the representation of marriage as the ultimate way of joy in a woman's life by comparing her female heroine to a newly born female after her separation.

Gillian, as a storyteller, is taken in ironically by the romantic standards of marriage and fairy tales; as she feels "redundant as a woman, being neither wife, mother nor mistress" (Byatt, 1994). However, the heroine wishes for the lives of the married beautiful princesses in tales that she condemns for associating femininity with submissiveness and passivity. Gillian ends her speech on Chaucer's tale of "Patient Griselda" by stating that: "the stories of women's lives in fiction are the stories of stopped energies" (Byatt, 1994).

The Independent Woman in Byatt's Works

Critics, such as Franken (2001), who analyzed the works of Byatt, such as Melusine in *Possession* as well as Wallhead (2007) who examined the storyline in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, all agree that the incorporated myth narratives are often symbolic expressions of the presiding motifs of the bigger narratives.

Despite her attempts of denying being a feminist author; as she does not accept some feminist approaches of analysis and perspective on the way to be a female author, the female heroines (characters) of Byatt are considered in her range of interest. Byatt is mainly concerned with females' rights to study, freedom, and be as independent as anyone else; as she constantly calls for equal opportunities (Vaňharová, 2009). In addition, the short stories of Byatt have their typical standard heroines who are middle-aged female intellectuals imprisoned between affirming their own identity and submitting to social and cultural dictates of behavior and beauty. These heroines must face the outcome of their aging, and even if they are highly intelligent, their suffering continues from the normative structures of a woman's body as maternal, beautiful, and biological in a patriarchal sphere that cannot help being affected by the mass stereotypical images of femininity in the culture and its style of body modification. Nevertheless, Byatt frees her heroines by using the power of fantasy to change the bodies that violate the conventions of health, performance, and beauty, and also constitute a revolt against the imposed boundaries by external and internal factors (Sabine and Franková, 2004).

After following Byatt's work and essays, female characters in her novels are the most important element. Other works by Byatt create independent heroines, such as *The Virgin in the Garden*, who plays a self-confident, knowledgeable, and independent female with strong perspectives on the significance of literature and education in human lives. This attracts important interest in Byatt's heroines who are interesting as females and as social beings within the frame of modern fiction.

The Narrative Techniques and Literary Devices in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*

The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye presents a rich text with motifs taken from the fairy tale and story plots. While the novels include references to narratives of Oriental sources, such as the Tales from Arabian Nights, the works of Shakespeare and Chaucer, and the ancient myth of Cybele or the epics of *Gilgamesh*, *The Story of the Eldest Princess* and *The Glass Coffin* present several elements and themes alluding to the conventional fairy tales gathered by the male characters in the stories. Byatt reads through the whole collection and made a kind of patchwork or jigsaw tale out of all the motifs that are the most moving and exciting. This helps analyzing

the way Byatt transforms and uses these traditional plots, motifs, and characters from old tales to give her heroines more strength over their own lives and tell their own stories (Sacido-Romero and Lojo-Rodríguez, 2018).

The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye presents a romantic and lush tale about a middle-aged scholar who attends a conference in Istanbul and purchases a charming glass bottle that contains a *djinn*. This storyline uses enchanting and sensual devices to convey a woman's awareness of herself. This can be seen when Byatt refers to the remote control as "the black lozenge"; while laying amongst the crimson and creamy roses. Such techniques immerse the readers in a reality of shops and hotels that is clearly painted while integrating scenes from *Arabian Nights* stories of many decades ago. *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* continues to describe the contemporary ages told in a fairy tale way by using the structures outlined in the short stories. These structures detect the several elements belonging to fairy tales and romance as well as the ironic allusions that identify the gothic tales, stories, and modern fiction of romance (di Laurea, 2012).

Overall, Byatt presents a metafictional indication to the reader with the novel's structure and the choice of epigraphs. This created the author's starting point, who chose to include many versions of the tales' vision of romance, power, and femininity.

***The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter**

Angela Carter's career helped her develop a multifaceted structure of writing in the work she created. Carter employs an argumentative approach in her work; especially as she focuses on the concept of challenging and disrupting the long-established, ordinary, and quotidian notions. Carter also presents the alternative options in realizing these notions such as sexuality, gender, and multifarious concepts, which were engraved into society. Having examined the strife of the oppressor and the oppressed, she elaborates upon these challenges by challenging the way society tries to bind her within a structured frame of mind and body.

While continuing the examination after *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, this part examines Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, which presents a set of transformative short stories from tales of innocent children into adult stories with deliberate themes of subjugation and liberty. Carter's novel opens different horizons in criticism because of the conclusions of these stories, which result in the heroines' epiphany and not the heroes; therefore, announcing the feminist roles and voices. *The Bloody Chamber* also presents the wealthy Marquis who buys his impoverished and beautiful pride to control, to engulf her, and devour her pureness and innocence through

perversion. This novel offers the inclusion of *dues-ex-machina* that helps the heroine dispense with the complex circumstance to reach freedom, equality, and self-determination.

The Narrator Heroines in *The Bloody Chamber*

Desire and its destruction, the way women connive and collude with their condition of enslavement, and their self-immolation are all elements that formed *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. As an attractive young girl, the narrator marries a wealthy, yet, older French Marquis, who saw her at a tea party while she was playing the piano. Though delighted she got married, her governess notes the Marquis got married three times before, and all of the women who wed died in mysterious events. The Marquis takes the new bride to his castle on the coast of Brittany; where the bride discovers the Marquis's collection of pornographic paintings and engravings. He is pleased that she is embarrassed and, in a bedroom filled with mirrors and white lilies, they consummate their marriage that night (Carter, 1995). With this short introduction of the clear situation that the bride finds herself in, Carter focused on changing the traditional perceptions of society and transforming dominant understandings in its culture, especially of gender (Aktari, 2010).

By revisioning the ancient narratives of heroes, the author questions the concepts that these old texts tried to convey. As these ingrained concepts are familiar to society, Carter aims to estrange them from the text it read by changing the "*grand narratives*". In this sense, none of Carter's fiction is socially realistic, which is the reason she de-familiarizes and puzzles the reader via her non-realistic fiction. She deals with the daily issues and raises them above the level of the automatic and obvious by rewriting the unshaken and common narratives (Lyotard, 1984).

Carter's heroines play a fundamental role in the de-familiarization and rewriting process in non-realistic fiction and offer the reader different insights into the way society is created, insights into the forces behind it, and insights into the way society is organized serving the interests of special powerful groups. With a contextual sense and stylistic issues, the heroines blur the boundaries of genres and change the social structures between narratives (Peach, 1998). Therefore it is significant to examine the spectrum of modes that involve the heroines' circumstances in these stories and highlight the various genres and styles intertwining with each other.

The New Bride in *The Bloody Chamber*

The Bloody Chamber is mainly based on the folktale *Bluebeard* in which the narrative offers a response to the feminist discussion in the 1970s concerning the aspects of female sexuality and the role of a woman in pornography while focusing on discussing the right of a female to be submissive. The story progresses in the same structural model as the source tale; as the setting, characters, and story's atmosphere are more sophisticated than its counterpart *Bluebeard* (Sheets, 1991).

The new bride, the author's seventeen-year-old protagonist, lives life in modest conditions with her mother, the new bride is easily fascinated by the elderly Marquis and his manners, which made her accept his marriage proposal. Despite her economic insufficiency and young age, the bride does not surrender herself to the happy dreams and wealth of marriage after the wedding; as she is alert to the situations occurring around her and this awareness is not just out of curiosity. She wonders and questions the answers to her questions in her endeavor to make sense of the mutual and new life she has just got into.

So far, and since the tale is narrated in the first person, it is clear that the bride is not murdered by the Marquis. Yet, the tale's progress is more essential than the finale in terms of the change the bride has faced. This nameless heroine is trapped between two personalities: a wife and a daughter. The ring, which is gifted by the Marquis with "*fire opal the size of a pigeon's egg*" (Carter, 1995: 4), can be seen as a symbol of change in the heroine's life since she "... *in some way, ceased to be her child in becoming his wife*" (Carter, 1995: 1).

The relationship between the heroine and the Marquis is passionate on the surface; however, as the tale progresses, the mutual interests of the wife and husband are shown. The poor piano player with "*twice-darned underwear, faded gingham, serge skirts*" (Carter, 1995: 5) thinks that she is fascinated by the Marquis while carried away by his affluent and wealthy lifestyle. Yet, it appears that the marriage is a commercial one, especially as the heroine receives luxurious dresses, expensive pianos, massive houses, and the stature of being married to "*the richest man in France*" (Carter, 1995: 8). Furthermore, the Marquis indirectly buys the bride like a commodity, entraps her into his remote castle to be a household's mistress, and compels her to play a domestic life. Thus, she relinquishes the chance of being an economically independent professional piano player by choosing to be a passive and docile wife.

Since the relationship between the heroine and the Marquis is established on benefits of which the heroine is completely unaware of, the heroine thinks that those gifts, sexual desire, and genteel manners are the main elements of their relationship. Yet, in this tale, the true nature,

aims, and features of the Marquis are identified. The Marquis is seen as the other character in terms of his intense qualities and, as the name suggests, the *Bluebeard* has a blue beard that makes him look outlandish and bizarre, which does not help him attract women whom he desires to wed. However, unlike *Bluebeard*, Marquis is like an ideal individual and well educated, devotee of opera, wealthy, a collector of paintings and books, and an admirer of Baudelaire, all of which seem without any fault (Sheets, 1991). On the other hand, for the poor, ordinary, and uninteresting teenagers like the heroine, the Marquis, with his knowledge, social status, and appearance is a figure who is entirely the other that, with the help of his prestigious position and qualities as the other, preys on and traps his wives.

The Girl in *The Tiger's Bride*

Based on *The Beauty and the Beast*, a woman moves in with a masked and mysterious individual called Milord, *The Beast*, after the woman's father loses her in a card game to him. *The Beast* eventually manifests as a Tiger and the tale's heroine transforms into a glorious tiger at the end who is the suitable mate to the Tiger, who will be true to his nature from now on without hiding from others (Carter, 1995).

The tale is quite different from the previous rewriting stories with its themes, structure, and narration. Although it is a repetition of *Beauty and the Beast*, it also appends and substitutes for it in improving the classical fairy tale (Brooke, 2004).

In this fairytale, the author changes her strategy in rewriting, in which the parody of "*Bride*" is not performed by ironic narratives or amplifications as it is seen in "*Mr Lyon*", but directed the elements reversals and harsh criticism in the source tale. Crunelle-Vanrigh (2001) confirms the fact that "*what "Mr Lyon" merely adumbrates, "Bride" brings to the fore*". Carter transforms the narrative voice, from the third person perspective to a first-person singular by making the story sound like a journey. Therefore, the reader listens to the tale from the tale's heroine and sympathizes with *The Girl in The Tiger's Bride*. *The Girl's* story begins as *The Girl* suddenly states that: "*My father lost me to The Beast in cards*" (Carter, 1995: 58).

Similar to the stories of *The Bloody Chamber*, the commodification of women is plainly problematized and since the addicted father has nothing to give to *The Beast*, the exchange of *The Girl* is not unintentional; yet a cruel decision. Likewise, as Aras (2008) states that "*the role of woman as an item in an economic system of exchange and her struggles to be out of that system are overtly seen*" in the story. *The Beast* does not want *The Girl* to be his prisoner or spouse. His only wish is to look at "*the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress ...*

only for the one time" (Carter, 1995: 67), after that the father will have his money back along with other presents.

The Girl, who is considered the central point of this deal, highlights the imbalance of both sides in this cruel equation. When the equation between the money and the naked body of a woman is scrutinized, one can also say that the father prostitutes his own daughter, in a way, to *The Beast*. Still, the problematic matter of women's victimization in this economic-emotional construct is not just hinted at in the tale, it is declared and highlighted by the tale's heroine herself.

As the story progresses, *The Tiger's Bride* reaches a conclusion with an ultimate union between the *Beast* and the *Beauty*, which is an alternative finale similar to the "happily ever after". Although *The Tiger's Bride* is a rewritten parodic version of the original story "*Beauty and the Beast*", it attains equal ground successfully for human/animal and man/woman favoring neither one. Shrugging off the anthropocentric and sexist limitations, *The Girl* and *The Beast* reshape the entrenched elements of fairy tales into more politically correct elements. Also, underlining the animalistic and heterosexual desire of female heroine characters, the author critically reflects the comfortable patriarchal order of a relationship through her ironic narration and, at the same time, rejects the imposed patriarchal solutions and categorizations of the French original (Tiffin, 2009). In conclusion, with differences and repetitions, Carter shows that a tiger can lie down with a lamb, in her feline stories, and the lamb can also learn the way to run with the tigers.

The Heroine in *The Erl-King*

The fifth fairytale in the collection has a similar title as the German folklore tale *The Erl-King*, in which the plot takes place in the wood, which is described as having some human features (Mehulic, 2018).

The heroine enters the woods in October and admires nature's beauty. Already she is trapped, though she does not realize it yet. The heroine hears two birds and is irresistibly drawn forward; reaching *The Erl-King's* house. Still, she does not come to the fact that the wood is her enemy. While being in his garden, *The Erl-King* is playing his pipe and surrounded by wild animals, all of which made the heroine come in. As the narrative flows, she moves in with *The Erl-King* when they fall in love even as she is "at the mercy of his huge hands" (Carter, 1995: 104) and naked while *The Erl-King* is dressed. *The Erl-King* plays his pipe to lure the animals and birds; as the heroine assumes that *The Erl-King* captures the birds and controls the winds. She

describes her "*embracements*" (106) with *The Erl-King* and the way he undresses her "*like a skinned rabbit*" (107); she feels that she is drowning constantly in him when they join the bed. The forest grows colder while she is enchanted by the eyes of *The Erl-King*: "*what big eyes you have*" (108). She fears the fact that she is trapped and *The Erl-King* will cage her with the other birds; especially, as she realizes that these caged birds were once women and she grows fearful though she is still in love. One day, the heroine combs out the *Erl-King's* long hair and strangles him with it; then, she frees all the birds and they turn back into women. She fixes the strings of the old fiddle using the hair of the *Erl-King* and plays music on it (Carter, 1995).

In this fairytale, the metaphorical cannibalism is manifested both through sexuality and food and sexuality and violence. *The Erl-King* and the woods are both perceived as cannibals. In this context, a male character has a partner in the metaphorical cannibalization and objectification of the female heroine. The wood can also be seen as a cannibal because the heroine feels, throughout the tale, that the wood is going to devour her and she fears everything inside it; yet, she decides to enter this magical environment because of its charm. As she enters the wood, she says that it "*swallows you up*" (101) and transforms itself into a private and separate estate. It also seems that the wood's wildlife waits only for the moment when she enters its magical territory to devour her. The wood also symbolizes a type of society or prison; where the females do not have the freedom or the power to express themselves. The elements of consumption and food relate mostly to the wood; while the elements of sexuality and violence relate to *The Erl-King* and the approach he treats tale's the heroine.

While being in the cages, the birds are a symbol of the imprisoned women caged in their own surroundings; unable to enjoy or practice the freedom given to others. In this tale, the birds symbolize all the oppressed females and *The Erl-King* is the society's male representative that has power and dominion over women. Even at the inception of the tale, the heroine realizes that *The Erl-King* will abuse her; still, she does not want to leave him or the surrounding wood. In this tale, the heroine has a similar attitude to the heroine from "*The Bloody Chamber*"; as they both feel intimidated by the male characters but choose to remain submissive (Carter, 1995).

Carter starts to shift the scene of her tales into a woodland environment; where *The Erl-King*, in old German folklore, is a king of fairies. The tale's title character takes his name from a folklore figure called an erlking who is a mischievous elf or sprite that traditionally lures the young with the intent of murdering them. The protagonist and narrator of the tale is aware of these tales as she says: "*The Erl-King will do you grievous harm*" (102). This shows the reader

that this protagonist/heroine is fully aware of the danger she faces; thus, is considered complicit in her own fate (Carter, 1995). The caged birds are presented first as symbols and metaphors of the objectification of free souls, exactly like the tale's heroine who is seduced by *The Erl-King*, and once again, the motifs of the sex and pornographic encounter as a form of abuse return. However, as with the heroine of "*The Bloody Chamber*", the heroine accepts her objectification at first and submits to *The Erl-King* (Katarina, 2018).

The descriptions of this tale are incredibly precise and sharp. This abundance of detail and descriptions combined with scarce discourse directs the readers to follow the internal reality of the protagonist/heroine carefully. The tender mockery of this strong male character as "*an excellent housewife*" (104) or "*the tender butcher*" (105) is interwoven with the manifestation of the heterosexual desire of a female. The protagonist surrenders herself to *The Erl-King*, not because she is compelled, but because she wants to do that. In the end, the heroine's solution to murder *The Erl-King* supplants the domination of the male with the domination of the female.

The Married Woman in *The Bloody Chamber*

From *The Bloody Chamber* to the *Other Stories*, these stories often feature women who are either powerless or in need of redemption by a masculine hero. Feminist theory has a lot to say about this issue. Typically, the images of women in female fairy tales are problematic for feminist and Marxist critics because they emphasize the idea that beauty is synonymous with goodness and innocence; as women are passive objects who need a man to save them. While these images may be enjoyable for children, they ultimately reinforce harmful stereotypes about women (Nogueira and Silva, 2019).

It is essential to deconstruct these narratives and create new ones that empower women instead. According to feminists in, for instance, *The Bloody Chamber*, the traditional narrative structure of fairy tales asserts the idea that men are the heroes and women are the villains. This view is inaccurate but it also serves to limit women's potential and reduce their agency (Matko, 2019). This is the reason feminist critics have often turned to fairy tales to examine the way gender inequality works in society.

In *The Bloody Chamber*, the Marquis's wife is innocent and looks forward to meeting her future husband. Ideally, marriage is marked by deception and corruption by many of the married characters within the playbook. According to the courtship for *Mr Lyon*, it seems that marriage gets motivated by the financial power behind the man. The woman who gets controlled and owned is being passed to other masculine males to control her again. Here, one can conversely

involve Rubin's theory; as the practice goes back a long time ago when all the women's belongings became man's property upon marriage (Rubin, 1975). For instance, the young girl, the daughter of the Russian nobleman, gets harassed by the beast when he asks her to strip off naked for her father's wealth and freedom. This act makes the girl depressed but eventually agrees for the father's sake.

In his book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels (1978) discusses family origins and private property as he argues that these concepts emerged from the need to cope with society's limitations. Engels believes that the family is the first form of organization that humans developed, which is essential for developing private property and the state.

In *The Bloody Chamber*, though the feminine protagonist is potentially a dupe to masculine pornography and opposes male attributes at first, she is skillful to excel in this severity and realize her own efficacious for unbridled sexuality. Moreover, the Marquis's victimization of females gets demolished and he gets conquered by the mother and daughter. The traditionally ancient, domestic enchantment co-mother who solves all the problems in enchantment tales, the strong hero, or futurity sweetheart who delivers the day, gets transmuted in *The Bloody Chamber*. Incorrect feminist execution, it is the brave protagonist who ambles to the release while being in a turbulent event, edge in close around her waist as if she had been the hero. This interposition of the mother is uncommon in *The Bloody Chamber* and in Carter's other works; where mothers are typically preoccupied with the plan. The different stage in a heap includes either an alienated mother or no mother at all (Bryndová, 2016).

The Independent Woman in *The Bloody Chamber*

Olive Schreiner, who wrote *Women and Labor (1911)*, stated that they had various aversions of gender stereotypes and discrimination against women within the social institutions. Schreiner's message of feminist freedom rhymed with Carter's thoughts on feminism, especially as Schreiner argues that women should work in any field they choose not just as a homemaker and a mother. Schreiner faced much resistance at that time similar to the one that faced Carter's ideas that challenged gender stereotypes. Carter was criticized by many people who believed that women were not suited for work outside the home. On the other hand, Schreiner continued to stand for women's rights and her book helped change attitudes towards women in the labor force.

In *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter is interested in showing a process of oppression and victimization more than in martyring women. Throughout the tale, Marquis is trying to

manifest himself in a dominant position without giving the heroine a chance to reject him; thus, infantilizing her symbolically and verbally while turning her into a toy by clothing her with the dress he prefers.

Carter discusses the complicated issues of female desire and morality through the narrator; as the narrator is conflicted on the matter of her sexual identity and curiosity. Carter does not totally reject Western society, but she distances herself by refusing to follow any of the feminist theories regarding female identity and sexuality. While she permits the heroine to look for submission, she clearly criticizes the cultural roles of the patriarchal society and the devastating effect of a female body's objectification in pornography and the media. *The Bloody Chamber* shows the author's perception of the complications of female sexuality, which she does not differentiate from the social position. By following the politically incorrect female sexuality, Carter challenges the readers' perspectives on the needs of a subjective woman, compelling them to accept the potential of the submissive sexuality independently existing on the individual's treatment in the community. In the same way, she treats the Western values and perceptions, admitting the modern world's progress, he highlights its insincerity in enforcing conventional values, based on the historically determined and fated abuse and oppression.

The Narrative Techniques and Literary Devices in *The Bloody Chamber*

In classical erotica, such a particular style of narration offers a pornographic experience as it dismisses social politics and concepts of the sexual intercourse between the tale's characters and concentrates on the readers' consumerism. Carter (1979) reverses such a trope with a consciousness stream given to the main character to reflect on the heroine's miserable condition. Carter manipulates *Bluebeard's* original motives to support her antimythic way and show the problematic aspects of the classical narrative to subvert the folk tale's conventional perception. The fairy tale has changed its moral essence through history, from the warning before an unwise relationship to the abusive male, to punishing the curiosity of women. While she holds on to these motives, Carter puts them into more relatable and realistic circumstances and uses them to criticize performative masculinity, gender roles, and patriarchal society (Sheets, 1991).

The heroine of this reworked tale is not an innocent prey of society, she is unexpectedly decadent in her perspective on sexuality as she connects it with violence and death, and she chooses the Marquis willingly, possibly for his massive wealth.

Carter also transforms the tale by using the present tense to show the narrators' experience with the characters, which is made to be ongoing, immediate, and something that readers can

experience through the present tense; therefore, pulling the reader to these characters just as the narrator is. In addition, the physical description of the surrounding settings creates images of the castles, the piano, and the characters' impressions as being good matches. Also, the liminality of the environment between the seasons sets the tale as if no particular time exists and the concept of entrapment in a relationship mimics the way the narrator is constantly facing difficult choices.

The corruption of innocence and sexuality presents another important notion that Carter keeps exploring; as she examines female sexual freedom and challenges the perspectives on the way a female should behave.

CONCLUSION

For Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* collection contains themes of woman victimization and the absence of the male as the primary social issue in reality. Carter brilliantly manages to maximize the fairytales of children and transform them into adult tales with child's innocence and spontaneity while showing the wickedness and bestiality of adults. This is similar to Byatt's work, which tackles daily life with constant creeping into the fictional to scathe society's sickness and confirms their individuality as feminine authors.

Carter's and Byatt's stories are not written to children or written to convey informative purposes like the old fairytales; however, these stories discuss a more mature perspective of this reality. The reality is neither completely realistic nor phantasmagoric. This reality moves and lies between fiction and reality, goodness and villainy, consciousness and sub-unconsciousness. Thus, fiction is engaged not to flee reality but to uncover its harshness. The fictional writings of Byatt and Carter present a distinctive philosophy where literature and reality are both made one through fiction.

Following these tales, it is clear that Byatt was among the generations of female and male authors, who made us see the indication of her metafictional method in writing. For example, in the kingdom fairytale of *The Eldest Princess*, "a pale flat green" replaced the blue beautiful sky (Byatt, 1994), a transformation that appears to be linked with the transition of the three princesses from girlhood to womanhood. Rather than holding the responsibility to a knight, the queen and king decide to send their eldest offspring; even though it is again unclear the reasons behind choosing her for this journey. While reading many fairytales, the *Eldest Princess* comes to know that she is part of a narrative approach "in which the two elder sisters, or brothers, set

out very confidently, failed in one way or another, and were turned to stone, or imprisoned in vaults, or cast into magic sleep" (Byatt, 1994).

On the other hand, and in the prime of second-wave British feminism, the short story was the main site of the wave's contestation. In this context, Carter's production of short fiction is an extremely influential and revealing case in the progress of short fiction and its role as an instrument of female resistance to the patriarchal approach. This analysis shows the way Byatt and Carter read this work and rewrite it in their own narratives; thus, comprehending their perception of themselves as writers and as women in a social culture that has long been under the influence of patriarchal traditions and values.

Both Carter and Byatt offer active roles to the female characters. For example, *The Bloody Chambers* offers a fine balance between the masculine and feminine traits of the female heroine; where the heroine is both a very caring spouse to the second piano tuner husband and a rebellion against her abusive partner.

Similarly, *The Tiger Bride* shows that the submissive daughter and obedient spouse turn out to become the bride of the Tiger. The heroine presents herself more ferociously and violently to tackle her husband's violence; thus, revealing again the way females can harness their masculine characteristics when they need it for their own protection. Furthermore, in *The Erl-King*, the narrator is seduced first by the lustful king; yet, she is manifested as an intelligent individual who can make sense of her environment and can judge the situation properly. She is clever and tactful enough to strangle the powerful *Erl-King* who is otherwise violent.

This analysis shows that both authors have deployed the female characters in both rebellious and modern roles with all masculine characteristics that are capable of existing with all soothing and feminine roles as mothers and lovers. Therefore, gender roles are subject to alteration as determined through cultural and social assignments as well as determined by personal needs. This context relates to female writing and reading in the presence of other writers; thereby, assessing their own identities as women in line with other women.

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