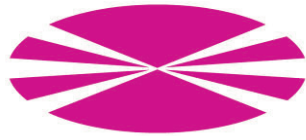

UNIVERSIDADE DA CORUÑA

FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

GRAO EN INGLÉS: ESTUDOS LINGÜÍSTICOS E LITERARIOS

“Who’s Afraid of the Big, Bad Wolf?”

The Motif of the Wolf in Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*

Vo. e Pe. da directora:

NUÑEZ PUENTE
CAROLINA -

Student: Alba Blanco Rodríguez

Advisor: Carolina Núñez Puente

Year 2022-2023

Table of Contents

Abstract iii

Introduction 1

1. Part One: Reinventing the Wolf 4

   1.1. The Wolf as Motif and Cultural Symbol 4

   1.2. Reinterpreting the Genre: Feminist Rewriting of Fairy Tales 8

2. Part Two: Wolves in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* 13

   2.1. "The Werewolf" 14

   2.2. "The Company of Wolves" 18

   2.3. "Wolf-Alice" 25

Conclusion 30

Works Cited 32

Appendix 37

Abstract

The object of study of this end-of-degree project is the wolf trilogy of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber,* written in 1979. The aims that I will pursue are two: to analyse the figure of the wolf in this work, and, by doing this, to demonstrate how the feminist rewriting of fairy tales allows Carter to focus on the aspects which remain hidden in the original versions. I will also examine aspects related to female sexuality, patriarchal conventions, identity, otherness and binary oppositions as male/female or human/animal. All of these concepts are relevant in the fields of Gender and Feminist Studies.

The methodology that I followed consisted, first of all, of an in-depth reading of Carter's *The Bloody Chamber.* After doing this, the presence of the wolf in three of the stories made me consider the possibility of studying the multiple interpretations that the figure of this animal represents in this work. As a result, before beginning my analysis, I needed to obtain information about basic aspects; therefore, I consulted different books and some articles that I found in *JSTOR* or *Google Scholar*. Consequently, I read about wolves' relevance in culture and literature—e.g. Dundes, Mitts-Smith—, about the poetics of feminist rewriting of fairy tales—e.g. Bacchilega, Sellers, Warner, Zipes—and, lastly, analysis of Carter's stories—e.g. Al-Kassasbeh, Ekmekçi, Lau. Finally, the use of dictionaries, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language* or *Cambridge English Dictionary* was also useful.

The structure of this undergraduate thesis consists of two main parts, whereas the first one includes two sections, the second one contains three. The first part examines the basic elements that need to be explained before the analysis of Carter's tales: primarily, the relevance of the figure of the wolf in culture, focusing on its presence in "Little Red Riding Hood," owing to Carter's interest in this story when writing her wolf trilogy. The second section studies the literary tendency in which the author is considered a pioneer and, thus, a referent: the feminist

rewriting of fairy tales. These renewed stories defy gender roles and unmask the hidden elements of the original versions.

The second part of this dissertation focuses on the analysis of Carter's wolf trilogy: "The Werewolf," "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice." Subsequently, this section includes three chapters, as I study each story individually. This paper finalizes with a conclusion, in which I summarize the main ideas and I ratify my aims, demonstrating that they have been met. The pages that follow will examine the motif of the wolf in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber,* a work in which the readers can find the multi-layered wolves that inhabit the author's universe: from a grandmother who is, in fact, an evil werewolf, through the attractive wolf who acts as a symbol of females' sexual liberation, and, finally, Wolf-Alice, the hybrid wolf-girl who bravely embraces her "otherness."

Key words: Angela Carter, wolf, fairy tales, female sexuality, feminism, otherness

Introduction

"I am all for putting new wine in old bottles,
especially if the pressure of the new wine
makes the old bottles explode."
Angela Carter

The wolf has always been a relevant figure in culture: from the creation of civilizations—as in the myth of Romulus and Remus—, to its importance in different mythologies and finally the famous predator of fairy tales, like the one in "Little Red Riding Hood."[1] As a result, the "Big Bad Wolf" has become one of the most feared creatures, the monsters that people need to avoid in order to be safe and sound. Nevertheless, in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), the author examines the motif of the wolf, offering new interpretations of this character and radically rejecting its traditional role; consequently, Carter provides readers with different renewed versions of wolves who play with females' sexuality or defy binary oppositions as male/female or human/animal. Next, I will explain the aims, methodology and structure of this end-of-degree project.

The main aim that will be pursued is the analysis of the motif of the wolf in Carter's wolf trilogy,[2] composed of three tales included in *The Bloody Chamber*: "The Werewolf," "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice." As a result, through the examination of this figure in these narratives, I will try to achieve a second aim: to demonstrate that in her rewriting of fairy tales, Carter focuses on unmasking the underlying (taboo) elements which are hidden in these stories, by making them explicit from a feminist viewpoint.

The methodology first required the in-depth reading of Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, at which point I decided to focus on the figure of the wolf due to its relevance in the book, as the author decides to close this work with three stories about wolves. Besides, I have also

[1] From now on, I will write "Little Red Riding Hood" or "LRRH."
[2] I will refer to Carter's three stories collectively as the "wolf trilogy," term used by Kimberly J. Lau.

consulted other works by Carter, as *Shaking a Leg* (1997) or *The Sadeian Woman* (1978) in order to acquire the writer's ideas concerning some key topics. Equally important is the use of academic works that support or defy my ideas, which I have found through sources as *JSTOR* or *Google Scholar*. Therefore, I have utilized works by Debra Mitts-Smith, which study the figure of the wolf, whereas a casebook edited by Alan Dundes allowed me to discover the different interpretations of the wolf in "LRRH." The research by authors as Christina Bacchilega, Marina Warner and Susan Sellers or Jack Zipes, which examine fairy tales from a Gender Studies perspective, provided me with crucial information for the elaboration of this BA thesis.

Furthermore, feminist studies of Carter's wolf trilogy written by scholars as Rabab Taha Al-Kassasbeh, Çekik Ekmekçi, Kimberly J. Lau and Jennifer Reid were also fundamental in my analysis of the above-mentioned three tales. In addition, I have also watched Neil Jordan's filmic adaptation *The Company of Wolves* (1984), since given that Carter was the screenwriter, it allowed me to broaden my knowledge about her reinterpretation of the wolf in her fictional universe. Finally, the utilization of different dictionaries—e.g. *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, Cambridge English Dictionary, Thesaurus.com*—was also helpful in the development of this thesis.

The structure of this project is divided in two parts: the first one—divided in two sections—explores some basic concepts that need to be explained before starting to analyse Carter's tales. Hence, the first chapter develops the figure of the wolf as a cultural symbol, from its prominence in fairy tales—focusing on "Little Red Riding Hood" due to its influence on Carter's wolf trilogy—to the female werewolves in Galician folklore or different media. The second chapter is focalized on the study of the reinterpretation of the fairy-tale genre from a feminist perspective; this kind of feminist rewriting emerged in the twentieth century with authors as Anne Sexton, Olga Broumas, Margaret Atwood, Francesca Lia Block or Angela

Carter. As a result, I explain how these female writers offer new versions of old stories by changing the characters' roles and relocating the "others,"[3] who are always in the margins, by placing them in the centre.

The second part of this BA thesis examines the motif of the wolf in the three tales that compose Carter's wolf trilogy; therefore, each chapter examines a different story, following the author's order in *The Bloody Chamber.* Thus, I start analysing the figure of the wolf in "The Werewolf," who experiments a substantial change from the menacing stranger to the grandmother-werewolf who tries to kill her granddaughter. The second chapter focuses on "The Company of Wolves," probably the author's most known piece because of its radio and filmic adaptation. Here, I explain the wolf's evolution from being considered a sexual predator to a symbol of female sexual awakening, which leads to the protagonist's liberation from patriarchal conventions. Next, I study the tale which closes Carter's *The Bloody Chamber,* "Wolf-Alice." This story examines topics as identity, gender, metamorphosis or the dichotomy human/animal. Finally, I end my end-of-degree project with a conclusion, in which I summarize the main ideas and demonstrate that the aims initially proposed have been met.

[3] The term "other" has been employed to refer to an individual (or group of people) who is different and, therefore, marginalized and considered inferior. As a result, it is a term usually frequent in discourses of power, for instance, in Postcolonial Studies, the colonizers are positioned as the centre and the colonized as "the others" who inhabit the margins. In the areas of Gender and Feminist Studies, Simone de Beauvoir identifies the "other" with females' position in patriarchal cultures, whereas men are "the Self," women are "the Other." Hence, Beauvoir explains that "[the woman] determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (6).

1. Part One: Reinventing the Wolf

The wolves portrayed in traditional fairy tales are not the same wolves which inhabit Angela Carter's universe in *The Bloody Chamber*. Thus, the author does not only offer a new version of the traditional stories, but with her narrative exercise, she also analyses and defies the canon, while providing a feminist lens. Consequently, in *The Bloody Chamber,* Carter reinvents both the stories and their characters by highlighting aspects which were hidden in the original tales (as sexuality, virginity and violence), and by giving the voice to the "others" (usually female). In this chapter, I will demonstrate the impact of the wolf as a motif and cultural symbol and, afterwards, I will explain the relevance of the feminist reinterpretations of fairy tales as a literary tendency.

1.1. The Wolf as Motif and Cultural Symbol

"All stories are about wolves," claims Margaret Atwood, with high accuracy, in her novel *The Blind Assassin* (344). The author's statement is not mistaken, as wolves have performed the role of protagonists in multiple stories of different cultures; therefore, due to their constant presence in legends, folktales and myths, they can be considered as motifs, defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language* as "a recurrent thematic element in an artistic or literary work" (4744). Furthermore, wolves are usually utilized as symbols, "something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention; a material object used to represent something invisible" (7223). I will thus continue examining the relevance of the figure of the wolf in both literature and culture.

The wolf of fairy tales is part of the cultural landscape of childhood (Mitts-Smith 959), as it is one of the first characters that infants encounter through the reading of stories as "The Three Little Pigs," "The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats" and "Little Red Riding Hood."[4]

[4] "Little Red Riding Hood" will be one of the most influential tales for Carter in *The Bloody Chamber*; in fact, the three stories that will be analyzed here portray traits of this traditional tale.

Consequently, children first learn the notion of the wolf as the worst predator who must be feared, the figure of the "Big Bad Wolf", which has always been fostered by traditional fairy tales; this is quite evident in Charles Perrault's version of "Little Red Riding Hood," hence the ending lines of its moral: "Alas! Who does not know that these gentle wolves / Are of all such creatures the most dangerous!" (qtd. in Dundes 6).

In addition, the symbolism of the wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood"—maybe the wolfish tale par excellence—has been discussed by many scholars. Some argue its relation with Solar Theories and Nordic Mythology, whereby the girl would represent the light and the wolf symbolizes the night, winter or the new year (qtd. in Saintyves 80). Contrarily, some psychoanalysts as Carl Gustav Jung or Sigmund Freud, identify the wolf as the paternal figure, establishing that the hidden content of this tale could be the "infantile fear of the father" (qtd. in Dundes 210). For Bruno Bettelheim, for instance, the wolf-father symbolizes "the danger of overwhelming oedipal feelings" (qtd. in Dundes 218), and it must not be forgotten that Perrault introduces this character as "Old Father Wolf" (qtd. in Dundes 4).

Other scholars interpret that the three protagonists of the tale are one and the same person. In this way, when the girl is in the wolf's womb, she is in her own "sleep womb" (Róheim 162), which is, at the same time, the inside of her mother. Géza Róheim continues that, by taking her out of the wolf, the hunter (representation of the father) would be seen as the girl's rival over the mother's body (162). This idea is also followed by Elizabeth Clark, who contends that in this tale, "[the protagonist], Wolf and Granny rolled into one: … the roles of victim and monster are collapsed onto one body" (28).

Notwithstanding, one of the most common interpretations of "Little Red Riding Hood"—and, actually, the one which unmasks the hidden purpose of the tale—is that the wolf

symbolizes a sexual predator. In the story, "the sexual act is described as a cannibalistic act[5] in which the male devours the female" (Fromm 240). Besides, according to Zipes, through this character, Perrault wanted to portray the "deceptive male seducers of bourgeois women" (55). I concur with Zipes that the problem with this analysis is that many consider the girl as the only guilty; that is, her natural potential to become a "witch" is fulfilled because of her disobedience, she is blamed for her own rape (55) and the wolf ends representing "natural urges and social nonconformities" (57). In consequence, this patriarchal and prejudiced vision ends provoking interpretations as Erich Fromm's: seeing "LRRH" as a "battle of the sexes" and explaining that "this fairy tale, in which the main figures are three generation of women … speaks of the male-female conflict; it is a story of triumph by man-hating women, ending with their victory" (241).

Among the multiple sexist interpretations of the tale, Eric Berne provides us with the following one:

> The mother is evidently trying to lose her daughter "accidentally" … Grandmother lives alone and leaves her door unlatched, so she may be hoping for something interesting to happen … LRRH tells the wolf quite explicitly where he can meet her again, and even climbs into bed with him … The moral of the story is not that innocent maidens should keep out of forests where there are wolves, but that wolves should keep away from innocent-looking maidens and their grandmothers; in short, a wolf should not walk through the forest alone. (44-45)

Berne, therefore, offers this ironic reading in which he shows how ridiculous it is to blame the female figures of the famous tale. Moreover, I also agree with Alan Dundes, who explains that the chauvinistic "male interpretations of this tale constitute a kind of male conspiracy to stereotype and dominate women" (220). As it usually happens in patriarchal societies, females

[5] Fromm argues that this notion is "not held by women who like men and enjoy sex" (241), whereas the reality is that the sexual act is described as "cannibalistic" because it actually is a rape. Therefore, the psychologist's attack on females stems from a sexist prejudice.

become the ones condemned in their own crime: although being victims, they are who society accuses and who must pay the consequences.

So far, I have focused upon the wolves in fairy tales, concretely, in “Little Red Riding Hood”; however, wolves and werewolves also inhabit folklore. It is interesting to analyse the figure of female werewolves (also called werewomen), used by Carter in *The Bloody Chamber*. For instance, the female werewolf is also one important character in Galician’s tradition, as the *lobismuller*[6] is a woman who becomes a wolf because she rebels against her father, who ends cursing her because of her transgression; thus, women werewolves represent the personification of darkness, evil and demonic forces[7] (*Actas* 54).

Furthermore, females werewolves are an extremely popular phenomenon in the world of TV series and cinema; thus, many have analysed their presence in this type of content. It has been established a correlation between female werewolves, the moon and menstruation cycles, as well as their link with masculinity. Clark states that werewolfism aims to destroy the patriarchal feminine inside the female, so werewomen become “queer in that they threaten a naturalized patriarchal normativity ... Gender betrayers, they present as women should not, while simultaneously breaking down the categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’ all together” (30). In addition, the hairy condition of wolves also becomes a problem when concerning females: in Western cultures, women with visible body or facial hair tend to be considered grotesque, and become a cultural taboo. Hence, Susan Basow and Amie Braman establish that the ones who do not shave are considered “less intelligent, sociable and happy (and more aggressive,

[6] The *Dicionario dos seres míticos galegos* argues that “o lobo da xente” is a special type of werewolf, in which females used to be the leaders of the pack. Besides, some of these legends involve girls that become wolves as a punishment, being cursed by their parents (147).
[7]Again, it is the woman who rebels against patriarchal society who is punished and cursed into becoming a werewoman. Similarly, the negative connotations demonstrate that the women who want to be free will be condemned for that.

strong and active)" (qtd. in Clark 36). Consequently, women's bodily appearance is criticized even when it comes to mythological figures.

All in all, if wolves and werewolves are crucial (and universal) figures of folklore and literature, it is because they are used as a metaphor for human behaviours, traits and beliefs (Mitts-Smith 1). Actually, in Bettleheim's analysis of "Little Red Riding Hood," he argues that the wolf "is not just the male seducer, he also represents all the asocial, animalistic tendencies within ourselves" (175). Hence, whereas humans have developed a fear of these animals, they have also used them as a way of reflecting their own faults through fiction. Paradoxically, human behaviour is also utilized to explain wolves' attitudes in nonfiction; therefore, as in a reciprocate relationship, people use the wolf "to mirror the ways in which we see ourselves" (Mitts-Smith 23), because, after all, "we are the wolf and the wolf is us." That is why, Atwood's quotation defending that "all stories are about wolves" (344) proves true.

In this section, the figure of the wolf has been examined, focusing on the characters of "Little Red Riding Hood," providing different interpretations and analysing the role of female werewolves in folklore. Many of the studies have concluded that there is an identification between humans and wolves, as writers use this animal in a way that readers could see themselves represented by it. The wolf thus constitutes a fundamental motif and cultural symbol that Carter will also employ in *The Bloody Chamber.*

1.2. Reinterpreting the Genre: Feminist Rewriting of Fairy Tales

As the first stories with which humans become familiar during childhood, fairy tales are constituted as one of the most powerful and influential genres because of their establishment of the basis of our understanding of the world. Although the origin of these stories lies in the oral tradition, male authors were usually the ones writing the versions which have been considered the "canon"—e.g. Perrault or the Brothers Grimm. As a result, owing to the stereotyped

discourse transmitted in their narratives, during the twentieth century, female writers felt the need of revising them, offering feminist versions, as in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. This section will explore the reinterpretation of the fairy tale genre into feminist rewritings.

It is unquestionable that traditional stories play a fundamental role in shaping children's personality; although they do not fully understand the underlying morals of the stories, the values take root in them from a very early age. As Andrea Dworkin states, fairy tales accompany people during their growing, their maturity; therefore, we have "[the ancient world's] values and consciousness imprinted in our minds as cultural absolutes long before we [are] in fact men and women," whereas society becomes unable to defy established prejudices (qtd. in Zipes 57).

Hence, the danger lies in the perpetuation of gender roles transmitted in these stories: portraying women as weak, submissive and dependent beautiful objects unable to control their lives, while men act as powerful and dominant agents of their own destiny (Kuykendal and Sturm 39). Infants grow learning, for instance, that the princess' death will be revocable with the prince charming's kiss, which does not only perpetuate the idealization of romantic (toxic) love, but also positions heteronormativity as a model.

Apart from the princess, the female characters who have power are usually the villains[8] of the story: the women who perform the protagonist's antagonists and whose features are, on some occasions, reflected in the character of the wicked and evil stepmother. Therefore, through the relationships between stepmothers and stepdaughters, fairy tales are perpetuating rivalry among women, showing two females fighting over a man—the girl's father and the stepmother's husband.

---

[8] It has been argued that *Disney*'s villains are shown "queerificated," that is, they possess queer and camp features in order to represent an evil "otherness" charged with negative connotations; in fact, they have been called "quillain" (McLeod v). By doing this, *Disney* decides to perpetuate the dichotomies of hero/villain, centre/margin and, of course, heteronormativity/queerness.

As a response to all the prejudices present in fairy tales, in the twentieth century there is an emergence of female authors who decide to revise these fictions. At last, women's time has arrived and they are able to provide a feminist lens and change traditional stories. By giving voice to the ones that have always been the silenced "others," readers obtain females' testimonies and new generations are able to access renewed versions that offer modernized images of women. Similarly, it is interesting to focus on Anne Sexton's "The Gold Key"—a poem of *Transformations,* a book which reinterprets fairy tales in verse—"The speaker in this case / is a middled-aged witch, me— / … ready to tell you a story or two" (223). The poet is claiming her place as the storyteller, but it is also remarkable that she embraces the role of witch, the evil woman par excellence, one of the most abused figures through history, given her potential as the powerful female who seems to threaten patriarchal societies. However, Sexton will not be the only providing her feminist lens to traditional folklore; this tendency is formed by authors as Olga Broumas, Emma Donoghue, Francesca Lia Block, Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson and Angela Carter. According to Marina Warner, feminist retellings have been called "anti-tales" (148), as what the authors are doing is breaking the spell of enchantment and idealization characteristic of fairy tales: "they seize the old story and 'tell it slant'" (Warner 148). Actually, one of Carter's most famous quotations defends the retelling of traditional stories as a rebellious act: "Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and the most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (37).

Feminists' election of traditional myths has been studied by Susan Sellers, who identifies different reasons: first, the need of retelling these stories for "set[ting] the record straight" (30); then, aiming to erase the patriarchal distortions and achieving a "more woman-centred account" (Sellers 30). Nevertheless, above all, Sellers defends the power of myth, which still bears much power and accuracy, whereas individually writing "cannot so easily achieve

this resonance" (32). Therefore, as a response that emerges from centuries of women's enforced silence, their interest in reinterpreting the genre underlies the wish of raising their voices and finally be heard. Thus, female authors aim to subvert women's traditional role in literature: from being the object in men's works, to gaining the position of literary subjects. As Sexton claimed, they become the witches who, almost under a spell, fight against patriarchal conventions and achieve their active role in literature. In consequence, by revising traditional literature women writers are also creating themselves, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar state: "Women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been killed into art … The woman writer has had … to define herself as a mysterious creature who resides behind the angel or monster or angel/monster image" (17).

In addition, fairy-tale retellings have been considered to be between "art and pedagogy" (Joosen 129). Marcia R. Lieberman argues that children cannot be prepared to understand female liberation by reading traditional fairy tales; on the contrary, these fictions favour to "acculturate women to traditional social roles"[9] (383). The tales' didacticism is irrefutable, actually, it has contributed to the consolidation of patriarchal values for centuries. Therefore, the feminist revisions of them will be the perfect tools to provide healthier referents to children and making them reflect about gender-biased stereotypes. Besides, by highlighting the hidden content of traditional folklore, children and teenagers will also acquire knowledge which has always been denied for them because of their taboo nature. Likewise, feminist retellings also defend the urgent need of sexual education, as Warner states: "feminists grasped this role of the fairy tale: sexual education in the broadest sense became the aim of their subversions" (145).

Nevertheless, traditional fairy tales can also be useful to educate in values if teachers make children reflect upon the sexist stereotypes of these stories. For instance, one interesting

[9] Lieberman also asserts that fairy tales perpetuate the toxic notion of idealized beauty, since it is considered "a girl's most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable asset" (385). Besides, the "beauty-contest" was a constant in these stories, having women competing again, aiming to obtain the first prize: the love of prince charming.

experiment is Ella Westland's study examining students' reaction to Cinderella-style tales after developing group discussions. Whereas the boys "appeared to have little incentive to alter the standard fairy-tale structure … because they had more to lose than to gain from the changes, the girls argued they would not want to be a princess because it was simply too boring and restrictive" (*The Oxford Companion* 159). As a result, the girls are "resisting readers" against the enchantments of the traditional fairy tales. By rejecting the role of the princess and enhancing female emancipation, girls dream of being the independent heroines of their own stories.

All in all, as Bacchilega contends, the retellings do not always use the same strategies, although one of the most interesting ones—and shared by the majority of authors—is the exposition of "the fairy tale's complicity with the 'exhausted' forms and ideologies of traditional Western narrative, rewriting the tale of magic to … re-create the rules of narrative production, especially as such rules contribute to naturalizing subjectivity and gender" (23). Consequently, feminist reinterpretations act as a "mirrors to the magic mirror of the fairy tale" (Bacchilega 23), playing self-reflexively with their images and altering them when necessary. By reproducing the basic pattern of traditional stories, the reinterpreted versions act as attractive novelties that challenge obsolete values and offer healthier ones.

As it has been shown, fairy tales have a significant impact upon society, especially during childhood: due to their educational elements, their pedagogical values shape the children's way of seeing the world. Notwithstanding, the gender-biased stereotypes characteristics of the traditional fairy tale help to promote patriarchal ideologies, among others. As a result, retelling these stories from a feminist viewpoint by female authors supposes a remarkable change of paradigm. Said reinterpretation of classical fairy tales finds its exponents in the works of authors as Sexton or Carter, who, tired of the old conventions, decide to unmask the hidden contents of traditional stories and make them explicit to the readers.

2. Part Two: Wolves in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

Angela Carters' *The Bloody Chamber* is one of the most famous retellings of fairy tales. In its ten stories—considered by Warner as a "kind of profane Decalogue" (148)—, Carter reinvents the plots and characters of traditional stories as "Bluebeard," "Snow White," "The Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Riding Hood." Notwithstanding, her wolves are renewed: in "The Werewolf" we see the grandmother turned into the wolf, whereas in "The Company of Wolves" a werewolf, reminiscence of the "(sexual) predator" of LRRH, is sexually explicit with the girl. Contrarily, in "Wolf-Alice," the author mixes references of the traditional tale with Lewis Carrol's *Through the Looking Glass,* offering a hybrid protagonist who is discovering the layers of her own body and sexuality.

Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* is considered the "founding charter of modern fairy tale" (Warner 140); moreover, although published in 1979, it keeps influencing women who could now be her grandchildren (Warner 139). Warner indicates, reproducing Carter's words, that the author's main aim was to open up the tales, revealing their latent, erotic content (148). In consequence, Carter does not only combine sexually explicit components with what originally was children's literature, but she also dares to explore female desire, one of the greatest taboos of Western culture.

As a result, the female characters who inhabit the world of Carter's modernized fairy tales act as agents, as they are no longer the literary objects of the old tradition. As Kelly Link asserts, "the girls and women … remake the rules of the stories they find themselves in with their boldness. And Angela Carter, too, was bold" (xiv). Who are bold as well, undoubtedly, are wolves: in fact, their courageousness has always been one of their most highlighted features. Nevertheless, as it has been said before, Carter's wolves are not the typical of fairy tales, as will be shown in my analyses of "The Werewolf," "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice."

2.1. "The Werewolf"[10]

A rewriting of "Little Red Riding Hood" (LRRH), Carter's "The Werewolf" provides a new perspective on the traditional story, radically changing the characters' usual roles and provoking the readers' reflection. Thus, this section seeks to analyse the rewriting of the figure of the wolf in "The Werewolf," the first of the three last wolfish tales of *The Bloody Chamber.*

Carter devotes the initial part of the tale to describe the dark atmosphere that surrounds the action, since from the first line of the story, the gothic essence is unquestionable: "It is a northern country; they have cold weather, they have cold hearts" (Carter 137). Consequently, it is introduced the environment that maybe determines people's attitudes: there are "wild beasts in the forest" (Carter 137) and the villagers are extremely superstitious, as for them "the Devil is as real as you or I" (Carter 137). Besides, there are also references to other supernatural creatures, as the introduction of a witch, who is depicted as the old woman "whose cheeses ripen[11] when her neighbours' do not ... search ... for the supernumerary nipple her familiar sucks. They soon find it. Then they stone her to death" (Carter 138).

After establishing the plot's setting, the narrator introduces the characters and elements which suppose evident reminiscences of the traditional "Little Red Riding Hood." However, the protagonist is no longer Perrault's "little village girl, the prettiest that had ever been seen" (qtd. in Dundes 4); she is presented as a good "mountaineer's child" (Carter 138) who knows how to defend herself. Actually, Carter's heroine does not wear the typical red hood, but a "scabby coat of sheepskin" (Carter 138), which is a reminder of Western culture's symbolism

---

[10] A plot summary might be helpful: in "The Werewolf," the protagonist visits her sick grandmother; during her quest, an evil werewolf attacks her, but she defends herself by cutting its paw. When she arrives to her destination, she notices her grandmother's illness, but she soon realizes that the lycanthrope's paw has become the matriarch's hand, revealing that she is, in fact, the werewolf. Finally, the neighbours come to the girl's aid and kill the grandmother by stoning her to death.

[11] Although the fact that "cheeses ripen when their neighbours' do not" could be suspicious, it is also a sign that demonstrates that successful and powerful women are easily considered witches by patriarchy. As Madeline Miller explains, "a witch transgresses norms of female power—punishing her makes other afraid to follow in an unruly woman's footsteps"; consequently, society decides to massacre said women by stoning them to death.

around lambs and wolves. Notwithstanding, although sheep are usually the inevitable victims of wolves, this girl will not follow the same fate; on the contrary, she takes her father's hunting knife and does not hesitate to use it in order to protect herself from the "starving wolves" (Carter 138).

It is interesting to analyse that whereas traditional wolves always try to seduce little girls, pretending to be friendly before killing them and their grandmothers, Carter's werewolf attacks the girl immediately: "It was a huge one, with red eyes and running grizzled chops … It went for her throat, as wolves do, but she made a great swipe at it with her father's knife and slashed of its right forepaw. The wolf let out a gulp, almost a sob" (Carter 138). As a result, the narrator admits that "wolves are less brave than they seem" (Carter 138).

Once the girl successfully overpasses different obstacles, she wraps the wolfish paw she has just cut and arrives at her ill grandmother's house. Hence, the girl decides to use the cloth she used to wrap the paw as a compress to relieve her pain, nevertheless, its content falls to the floor, and she discovers that "it was no longer a wolf's paw. It was a hand, chopped off at the wrist … There was a wedding ring … and a wart on the index finger. By the wart, she knew it for her grandmother's hand" (Carter 139). Subsequently, the girl cries out, the neighbours arrive to help, and as they identify the old woman's wart as a witch's nipple, they condemn her, pelting "her with stones until she fell down dead" (Carter 139). Despite the questionably happy ending, the reader discovers that the little child now "lived in her grandmother's house; she prospered" (Carter 139).

If it is evident that the girl in Carter's tale does not behave as the worldwide known Little Red Riding Hood[12]; the wolf's reshaping is also undeniable. First, it is no longer a wolf,

[12] The new LRRH offered by Carter in this tale is, undoubtedly, a bold girl. I agree with Çekik Ekmekçi that she proves "her powerful body politics by being fearless and decisive … Carter deconstructs naïve, timid and coward woman images and she subverts them in forming her autonomous woman characterisation" (163).

but a werewolf: this creature was present in the oral folk tale which influenced Perrault, who changed the character into a wolf because “werewolves had lost their significance after the decline of witch-hunts” (Zipes 54). Therefore, Carter embraces the tradition when returning to the original werewolf. At the same time, this hybrid creature allows the author to attack different dichotomies: initially, the Judeo-Christian human/animal, which, according to Jennifer Reid, reminds us of the binary of powerful/powerless related to gender and class (13).

Whereas the male wolf in “Little Red Riding Hood” needs to cross-dress as the grandmother, here there is no masquerade: the wolf is the grandmother herself (Al-Kassasbeh 37); thus, Carter is introducing a female werewolf in the androcentric universe of fairy tales. Subsequently, this character has caused different interpretations: for some scholars, the wolf-grandmother aims to represent a psychological conflict between the two generation of women, by substituting the good grandmother for the “unrealistically grotesque of the maternal; a hostile wicked werewolf who wants to kill the granddaughter”(Al-Kassasbeh 37). As a result, the evil grandmother would represent the discomfort of the protagonist towards a repressive authoritarian maternal figure; therefore, the purpose of the quest ends being “to resolve these hostile feelings and to bring some balance to her world by killing the wicked grandmother” (Al-Kassasbeh 38). Although innovative regarding the girl’s independence, this reading offers the idea of women fighting against other women, perpetuated and favoured by patriarchy. In this occasion, females are not fighting over a man, as the final award here seems to be power: the story ends with the heroine living in her grandmother’s house, where “she prospered” (Carter 139). Now the girl takes the grandmother’s place, and as Rabab Taha Al-Kassasbeh argues, she fits the matriarch’s role, as she has “the hand of the wolf, the symbol of her place in society that she is in process of fulfilling” (38). Furthermore, Ekmekçi defends that Carter metaphorically associates the wolf’s paw with the penis; therefore, by cutting it, the child is ending with the patriarchal hegemony (163).

The character of the wolf has also provoked other interpretations. For Kimberly J. Lau, creating the werewolf grandmother implies the alignment of this figure with "the predatory male of the Little Red Riding Hood tradition, [therefore], Carter creates a phallic mother, the supposed omnipotent master of the child's desire and the child's eventual initiation into language and the symbolic order" (82). As a result, the girl's success by cutting the werewolf's paw and having a happy ending is understood as a triumph for the collective of women over patriarchy, as it "opens up a range of possibilities in which [females] might even exist in the symbolic order, might even 'prosper' there" (Lau 83). Consequently, the protagonist is "no longer subject to the aggressions of the phallic mother … Little Red Riding Hood can inhabit her grandmother's house … a heroine who ... live[s] alone, able to protect herself, prosperous" (Lau 83). Notwithstanding, Lau also remarks the girl's phallic power, which lies in the use of her knife, the phallic element which she uses to protect herself and to end with her grandmother's power (83). Actually, Al-Kassasbeh compares her use of the knife with male characters' utilization of their swords (37); hence, the protagonist is equated to the bold knights that inhabit most fairy tales. By fighting against patriarchal oppression—represented by the grandmother—, the protagonist succeeds by reaching independence and feeling, at last, liberated from these conventions.

Finally, it is interesting to consider that the reader could feel shocked by the fact that it is difficult to distinguish the victim from the villain. Objectively, the eternal victim is the girl, who only attacks her grandmother in self-defence—and without knowing her identity. However, I concur that the "sympathy and pity of the reader is directed towards [the grandmother] rather than towards the little girl; the girl's descriptions are devoid of emotions whereas the description of the grandmother's death is clearly moving" (Klonowska 150). Barbara Klonowska reflects about who is the real werewolf in the story, as while the grandmother is definitely evil when trying to attack her granddaughter, the child who prospers

because of her death is almost seen as a ruthless murderer, "thus exhibiting her 'dark' animal side as well" (Klonowska 151); ergo, anybody could be a werewolf, not only those who assume their shape (Klonowska 151). This idea is coherent with dismantling the human/animal binary pointed out above. Therefore, although the grandmother's condition of victim could be controversial if compared to the child's—who cannot be considered guilty of her own attack and who must be admired for her boldness—, I do see the grandmother as a victim of her society. Due to her condition as a supernatural creature, a werewolf/witch, she is condemned to an atrocious murder: being stoned to death. Even if she had not assaulted the girl, she would have been killed by the villagers, as powerful women are always seen as a threat.

In sum, the character of the wolf in "The Werewolf" has provoked different interpretations: oppressive mother, phallic mother, the victim, etc. By establishing the identification of this animal with the traditional grandmother, Carter defies gender roles and offers a tale based on two powerful female characters who demonstrate that the boundaries between good and bad are not that obvious.

2.2. "The Company of Wolves"[13]

"The Company of Wolves" is one of Carter's most popular works; it inspired both Neil Jordan's homonymous film—in which Carter worked as screenwriter—and a previous radio adaptation. In this tale, the heroine defies the roles that she is supposed to perform due to her female condition and attains her sexual awakening, which also supposes the liberation from patriarchal conventions. Hence, in this section, I will explore the character of the wolf and its diverse connotations, as well as the feminist innovations that Carter introduces.

[13] In "The Company of Wolves," a girl goes to visit her grandmother, finding a charming hunter in her journey who bets a kiss that he can arrive earlier to her destination; nevertheless, the man is actually a werewolf that kills the old woman. When the protagonist arrives, she fears that she could end like her grandmother; notwithstanding, she takes control and raises independence by experiencing sexual intercourse with the wolf.

The narrator begins defining the wolf as the most feared creature by the characters, since he is shown as "carnivore incarnate … as cunning as he is ferocious; once he's had a taste of flesh, then nothing else will do" (Carter 141); furthermore, wolves are considered the "forest assassins" (Carter 141). By reminding readers that we are always in danger in the woods, the narrator warns us about these creatures' attractive charm: "[wolves] have ways of arriving at your own hearthside. We try … but sometimes we cannot get them out … Fear and flee the wolf; for, worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems" (Carter 142). With this last statement, the narrator is anticipating the wolf's identification with the notion of "sexual predator," which will become explicit as the story advances.

When introducing the main plot of the story, the character of the girl is depicted as a "strong-minded child"[14] (Carter 145). She insists on going to the woods, as she "is quite sure the wild beasts cannot harm her" (Carter 145), but as the girl in "The Werewolf," she carries a knife to protect herself. She is, besides, "so pretty and the youngest of her family" (Carter 145), and, evidently, carries the traditional red shawl which had been knitted by the grandmother, which is first compared with "blood on snow" (Carter 145) and will be later described as the colour of "her menses" (Carter 150). Based on sexual references, the girl's portrayal is a strategy used to show that she is experiencing her puberty; this becomes explicit when the narrator indicates that "she has just started her woman's bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month" (Carter 146).

Consequently, one of her most appealing attributes seems to be her innocence and, above all, her so-called virginity, which is described through parodic metaphors that present the girl as "an unbroken egg … a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to

[14] Although her mother warns her not to go into the woods, her authority is not enough to stop the girl, while "her father might forbid her, if he were home" (Carter 146). Consequently, Lau discusses the protagonist's phallic power, as she shares her father's power in his authority over the mother (86).

shiver" (Carter 146). This satirized vision of females' virginity emerges from the idealization that this concept has borne and still bears; as Jessica Valenti states, "virgin" is usually perceived as a synonym of "woman" (21), and, evidently, due to religion's influence, women said to be virgin are considered (almost) saint, but sexually active females are condemned and considered whores[15]. Whereas males' sexual initiation is normally regarded as a triumph, women are thought to lose something; moreover, the patriarchal stereotype of penetration as the only action which would transform a girl into a woman does not only invalidate masturbation, but also establishes heteronormativity as a model. Thus, this demonstrates that virginity must be considered as a social construct, which, in fact, does not exist at all.

The girl goes into the forest. When she encounters a handsome and mysterious stranger dressed as a hunter, whose presence awakens the protagonist's sexual desire, as "she'd never seen such a fine fellow before" (Carter 146). Then, they have a flirtatious dialogue in which he, after showing her his compass, assures her that one path will be better for her and bets her that he would arrive at her grandmother's house earlier; however, the prize is a kiss, which causes that she, feeling seduced, "lowered her eyes and blushed" (Carter 147). Consequently, she "wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman win his wager" (Carter 147); therefore, it is perceived that she is aware of her sexual desire and she, consciously, loses the bet in order to obtain that precious kiss. Lau describes the girl's behaviour as "both innocent and knowing" (86) which is exactly what "makes her so highly desirable in the typical male fantasy." I concur with Lau, who identifies the girl's role with "the conventional pornographic tropes" (85), in which the female's assumed inexperience makes her even more attractive to the presumed experienced male.

[15] The "virgin/whore" dichotomy is explained by Jessica Valenti, who states that it "is not only leading young women to damage themselves by internalizing the double standard, but also contributing to a social and political climate that is increasingly antagonistic to women and our rights" (13-14).

Once the handsome man encounters the grandmother, she immediately recognizes his eyes as those of a beast's and worries about her granddaughter's welfare. When he begins to undress, he—ambiguously shown as half man, half wolf—is described from a sexual perspective, highlighting that a "crisp stripe of hair rounds down his belly, his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit. His genitals, huge. Ah! Huge" (Carter 149). In fact, it is said that what the grandmother last sees before dying is "a young man, eyes like cinders, naked as stone, approaching her bed" (Carter 149), a quotation which bears evident sexual connotations, as it could be interpreted that she was raped before being killed.

Moreover, the grandmother aims to instil in the girl her traditional vision of sexuality: "that men are dangerous predators, and that sexual relationships should therefore be avoided" (Reid 29), as women are always the desired objects, but they should never attain their sexual agency. The idea that "if you stray from the path for one instant, the wolves will eat you" (Carter 142) is constantly repeated by the grandmother in Jordan's film, who tries to stop her granddaughter's sympathy towards these animals. An interesting scene of the movie is the one in which the girl asks her mother if the father had hurt her during sex, as she says that they sounded like "the beasts granny talked about" (*The Company* 00:34:47); notwithstanding, the mother's response refuses the so-called granny's idea saying that "if there's a beast in men, it meets its match in women, too" (*The Company* 00:34:58). Hence, whereas the old woman's notion of beast is "sexual predator," the mother conceives bestiality as the animal drives which affect couples during sexual intercourse.

In addition, the grandmother's continuous warning places responsibility on women, who need to be restricted to the path in order to avoid dangerous wolves. However, the ones who must carry the responsibility are the eaters, not the eaten: the aggressors, not the victims. Only by educating "wolves" and, therefore, society, people—especially women—can attain a healthier sexual environment. For a graphic reference, see Flavita Banana's illustration in the

Appendix, which shows a scared Little Red Riding Hood—a synecdoche of women—and defends that “if they truly want to revisit fairy tales, they should begin by educating wolves” (Flavita Banana, my translation).

When Carter’s protagonist arrives at the cottage, she discovers the death of her grandmother and seeks her knife, but she is unable to reach it. Despite being frightened, as she knows that she can end as her grandmother did, she realizes that “her fear did her no good, [so] she ceased to be afraid” (Carter 150); thus, she confronts the wolf, who has revealed his nature when recognizing the wolves’ howling as “the voices of my brothers” (Carter 150). When the girl asks what she should do with her shawl, he tells her to throw it in the fire, as she will not need it again; therefore, the symbol of the red shawl as the girl’s virginity becomes obvious.

In the habitual dialogue between wolf and girl, highlighting the big attributes the creature possesses, she is surprised about the big teeth he has, to which he responds, “the better to eat you with” (Carter 151). Notwithstanding, the heroine will not allow to be eaten and becomes the one who takes the reins and decides to end with the sexual tension that surrounds them: “The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody’s meat. She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire... Carnivore incarnate, only immaculate flesh appeases him” (Carter 151). Besides, by throwing the wolf’s clothing to the fire, she is not only condemning him to be an eternal wolf, but she also puts him in the same situation as her; that is, she equates both of them, now, both male and female are in the same place, and they both embody the category of fearful and feared. As a result, I agree with Bacchilega, who indicates that the protagonist offers herself as flesh, not meat (63), and, in fact, the nude wolf is now the one who fears the girl (Al-Kassasbeh 36): his authority has been challenged by her, who, unexpectedly, embraces her sexual desire and uses it as a weapon to defeat him. In consequence, “sweet and sound she sleeps in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf” (Carter 152) and both of them become “carnivore incarnates ... young

heterosexual beings [who] satiate their hunger not for dead meat, but flesh, while at the same time embodying it" (Bacchilega 64).

The heroine's evolution is evident: from following the grandmother's advice, which perpetuated the idea of women as the desired objects of the patriarchal tradition, to becoming an autonomous desiring subject (Lau 88). As Reid asserts, "she knows what Granny did not, that she is 'nobody's meat'" (11) and, indeed, Carter herself confesses that it is the girl who ends eating the wolf (qtd. in Wu 61). The author, therefore, leaves readers uncertain whether the girl has really transformed into a wolf or whether the wolf has transformed into a gentle creature (Al-Kassasbeh 36). However, in Jordan's film, the girl dreams[16] about becoming a wolf: she escapes with her lover and, when she wakes up, the animal enters in her room breaking the toys. This symbolic scene shows the loss of the protagonist's innocence, and how she desires to reach independence through her sexual awakening.

Although critics have accused Carter of idealizing a rape, what the author is really doing is challenging the damaging ideas concerning females' sexuality. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter writes, "[a] free woman in an unfree society will be a monster. ... The sexual behaviour of these women ... is a mirror of their inhumanity ... Women do not normally fuck in the active sense. They are fucked in the passive tense and hence automatically fucked up, done over, undone" (27). By playing with grammar and gender (and sexual) roles, Carter presents her intention of normalizing female sexuality and ending, once and for all, with the taboo. Therefore, as Lau contends, with this story (and many others), Carter is "dismantling a world of sexual absolutes" (86) in order to obtain what she calls a "world of absolute sexual license for all the genders" (qtd. in Lau 87). Thence, the writer's female heroines, especially the girl

[16] Becoming a wolf supposes a symbol of independence and attaining sexual agency. Therefore, by showing that the protagonist is only a wolf in her dream, Jordan is stopping females' success, showing that it would only be possible in the realm of utopia; furthermore, the director reveals his fear for wolfish women—the ones who have overpassed all the patriarchal barriers and have obtained their desired liberty.

from "The Company of Wolves," reject patriarchal dictations as "keeping their virginity, or obeying the traditional rules to be virtuous women; instead, they use their own identities to keep their autonomous selves by challenging acute gender ideologies" (Ekmekçi 166). Thus, Carter shows a model of womanhood in which females should liberate themselves from patriarchal conventions, as the protagonist of the story who, by becoming the owner of her sexuality, saves her life and attains subjectivity.

Consequently, Carter offers an ambiguous vision of wolves, who are first depicted as the worst and most dangerous creatures that can be found in the woods. In fact, the wolf is the one who ends with the grandmother's life, for whom this creature represents the male who could be sexually interested in the girl. Nevertheless, the heroine's sympathy towards these animals is unavoidable, not only because of her sexual desire to the handsome werewolf, but also because the creature becomes a symbol of female sexuality. Therefore, the wolf's evolution plays with the binary opposition human/animal, a topic which can also be found in the other tales of Carter's wolf-trilogy. Finally, Jordan's filmic work ends with a voice saying, "sweetest tongue has sharpest tooth" (*The Company* 01:28:54). More than a warning this message could be a motivation, since maybe this "sharp tooth" is able to bite and finally break the constraints inside which females have found themselves for centuries. Perhaps, said tooth could function as the keys of a "chamber" which opens new possible ways of living female sexualities, without being considered the "other" for attaining their sexual agency.

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated how Carter defends a healthier non-patriarchal conception of women's sexuality, based on their condition of "desiring subjects" rather than "desired objects." Accordingly, it has also been shown the multiple interpretations that the wolf presents in this tale, from a dangerous beast to a symbol of feminist liberation.

2.3. "Wolf-Alice"[17]

In the third and last tale of Carter's wolf-trilogy, "Wolf-Alice," the author discusses topics as females' bodies, identity or sexuality by showing a hybrid protagonist, unable to fit either among humans or among wolves. Thus, in this section, I will examine the motif of the wolf by focusing on the character of Wolf-Alice.

Although "Wolf-Alice" might not seem a reinterpretation of "Little Red Riding Hood," Bacchilega argues its relation with a medieval poem which sets LRRH "unexpectedly safe in the lair of the wolf" (65). Furthermore, Carter's choice of naming her protagonist Alice becomes an irrefutable allusion to Lewis Carrol's most famous character, whereas the mirror's symbolism immediately refers to *Alice Through the Looking Glass.* Hence, Carter intelligently chooses these two canonical female figures and, as if by a spell, combines some of their attributes in order to create her own heroine. Similarly, Veronica Schanoes contends that both Alice and LRRH allow Carter to present "a more complex vision of female sexual awakening under patriarchy, its pleasures as well as its genuine risks and sufferings" (39).

When the narrator introduces the protagonist, she highlights her inability to speak: "Could this ragged girl ... have spoken like we do she would have called herself a wolf, but she cannot speak, although she howls because she is lonely" (Carter 153). Notwithstanding, although humans possess language, her "panting tongue" (Carter 153)—which later will become a "gentle tongue" (Carter 162)—has another power which will make her the saviour of the story (Bacchilega 65). The human-animal hybridity of the girl is emphasized when it is said that "nothing about her is human except that she is *not* a wolf" (Carter 154).

[17] The protagonist of "Wolf-Alice" is a hybrid creature (half wolf and half girl) who is obliged to abandon her wild life with the pack in order to be integrated in society; afterwards, she is sent to the Duke's house, who is as hybrid as she is. Wolf-Alice combats matters of identity with her first menstruation and by observing her own image in the mirror, but she finally embraces her "otherness" and her hybridity, helping the Duke and encouraging him to do the same.

As a result, humans do not only separate her from her foster mother (a wolf)—whom they kill—, but they also feel the necessity of saving her, who is in fact happy living with the animals. When they take her to a convent, the nuns realize that she can be educated: "they found that, if she were treated with a little kindness, she was not intractable" (Carter 154). However, the girl's nature makes her ill-suited for life in the symbolic order (Al-Kassasbeh 31) and after returning to her animal behaviour, the nuns reject her and take her to the Duke's house. The nuns could represent the traditional role of the mother as a "transmitter for female attitudes, and whose responsibility is to enforce their daughter's conformity within a patriarchal culture" (Al-Kassasbeh 31)—like the grandmothers in the two previous tales. However, their figure could also remind us of the colonizer/colonized relationship: by considering themselves superior, they decide to take the girl in and, as they are unable to change her, she is no longer valuable for them. Subsequently, by offering this power relation between the nuns and Alice, Carter is challenging the human/animal hierarchy, exploring notions of humanity and bestiality: one of the main topics of the author's narratives and, particularly, of her wolf trilogy.

Although he is dangerous and a murderer, Wolf-Alice is sent to the Duke's mansion because of their similarities, as "this child ... has as little in common with the rest of us as he does" (Carter 155), since he considers himself "both less and more than a man" (Carter 160). Neither of them is able to fit in one single category, hence, they are a representation of "the imagery of dismemberment" (Al-Kassasbeh 30); thus, their in-between place among humans and wolves makes them an example of "otherness". Thence, as Link states, both of them are "fully human, and yet also wolfish: the Duke in his madness, in his nature; Alice by nurture" (xii). Since the "other" has always perturbed society, Wolf-Alice must be exiled in order not to contaminate humanity with her bestial traits, which results ironic, as she does not want to leave her animal life.

The characters' departure from childhood and their approach to maturity through menstruation is a common topic in Carter's narrative. Hence, Wolf-Alice's menstrual cycle does not only suppose her sexual awakening, but also the emphasis of her animal side, becoming "all animal desire" (Lau 88): "Her first blood bewildered her ... The moon had been shining ... and it seemed to her that a wolf who, perhaps, was fond of her ... must have nibbled her cunt while she was sleeping" (Carter 157). Despite her ignorance of good manners, she is able to maintain a proper hygiene, due to the shame that her blood brings; it is curious that the protagonist, who does not carry Western culture's prejudices on her back, sees menstruation as a taboo, just as society itself. However, I agree with Al-Kassasbeh that "in a phallocratic culture woman is defined by reference to the body and sexual reproduction … Alice's feeling of shame can be explained by the fact that she has internalized the dominant culture" (32).

Once Alice is looking for fabrics to clean herself, she finds a mirror. Whereas nothing can hurt the Duke because he has "ceased to cast an image in the mirror" (Carter 155), the girl's reaction is different. Wolf-Alice's first animal impulse is to smell her own reflection, which she considers a stranger: "She saw, with irritation, then amusement, how it mimicked every gesture of hers ... She rubbed her head against her reflected face, to show how she felt friendly towards it" (Carter 158). She even thinks that her new friend is enclosed in an "invisible cage" (Carter 158), but even then, the fact that she has found company makes her feel less lonely. Additionally, Ali Smith explains that the mirror's symbolism means sisterhood, family (qtd. in Ekmekçi 58); therefore, by looking herself in the mirror, Wolf-Alice finds the support that she needs in order to begin the process of introspection and personal growing that she will experience.

It is thus relevant to analyse how Wolf-Alice sees herself: "she saw how pale this wolf, not-wolf who played with her was" (Carter 158-159), being aware of her own hybridity even not knowing her identity. Notwithstanding, she soon discovers that it is she who returns her

gaze in the mirror: “This habitual, at last boring, fidelity to her every movement finally woke her up to the regretful possibility that her movement companion was, in fact, no more than a particular ingenious variety of the shadow she cast on sunlit grass” (Carter 160). Thence, I agree with Gillain Alban, who considers that it is before the mirror where Wolf-Alice “gives shape to her life and learns transformative power through an educational process” (qtd. in Ekmekçi 57). Thence, whereas the repressive methods used by the nuns—a synecdoche of the prejudiced society—only aimed to erase her animal spirit, Wolf-Alice achieves her wisdom independently, by beginning to know herself and by identifying her image in the mirror.

The realization of her reflection makes her understand that she has power over her surrounding (Al-Kassasbeh 32); therefore, she “goes out more often now; the landscape assembles itself about her, she informs it with her presence” (Carter 161). Wolf-Alice, then, embodies nature and civilization; there is no possible dichotomy, as when she puts on her white dress, she celebrates her learning of wearing clothes “singing to the wolves ... [as it is] a visible sign of her difference from them” (Carter 161). Wolf-Alice’s election of wearing a white dress will save the Duke, as after killing a bride, her groom is ferociously seeking for revenge; however, when they see her in the graveyard, they think she is a ghost and leave. Subsequently, as the Duke is hurt, Wolf-Alice becomes her saviour again, and, imitating her wolf mother, she “leapt upon his bed to lick, without hesitation, without disgust, with a quick tender gravity, the blood and dirt from his cheeks and forehead” (Carter 162). Alice’s (erotic) care does not only cure the Duke, but also produces his presence in the mirror, and, as Lau explains, Wolf-Alice’s “licking is slow and sensual ... [she] ushered him into existence, escorted him into the symbolic, but it is her symbolic, a world outside of language though still shaped by tongue” (91). By embracing her hybridity, Wolf-Alice becomes both a “feral child” and a “hero” (Bacchilega 65), a new Eve “identified primarily by her sexuality and nurturance” (Bacchilega 66).

In conclusion, as it has been shown in this section, Carter explores how females confront identity, sexuality and the multiple changes their bodies experiment. By showing Wolf-Alice's sexual awakening, from menstruation to erotic play, the protagonist gains her sexual liberation and embraces her truest and freer self: one which allows her to behave as humans and wolves, as she will never fit into one single category—as Carter's heroines tend to do.

Conclusion

This end-of-degree project has analysed the motif of the wolf in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. First, I have examined its repercussion as a cultural symbol. Therefore, the figure of the wolf has been initially studied in the context of fairy tales, especially in "Little Red Riding Hood", due to its influence in Carter's wolf's trilogy. In said story, this animal actually performs the role of the "Big Bad Wolf," representing a sexual predator that people should avoid in order to protect themselves. Although multiple aspects remain hidden in child literature, as symbols or metaphors, Carter makes them explicit in her stories. Furthermore, the importance of the wolf in other spheres has also been explored, such as the case of the *lobismuller* in Galician's folklore, portraying the rebellious woman who is cursed into becoming a wolf. Finally, I have examined the figure of the wolf as a metaphor for human behaviour, used for representing societies' faults by justifying them under the wild nature of the wolf.

In the field of the feminist rewriting of fairy tales, Carter is regarded as a referent and her work *The Bloody Chamber* is considered foundational. The revision of the fairy-tale genre provokes the creation of a new literary tendency in the twentieth century: the feminist rewriting of fairy tales, which emerges as a response to the multiple patriarchal prejudices that surround the stories that children first acquire. By offering these new stories—based on the traditional ones—, the authors do not only unmask the sexist values that the old tales perpetuate, but they also give voice to the "others," usually gendered as female. Thus, feminist rewritings become beneficial tools to provide children with healthier models, avoiding sexist prejudices; in addition, the revision of the traditional fairy tales from a critical perspective is also useful to make infants aware of the toxicity of the old-fashioned values.

With the new wolf characters in *The Bloody Chamber,* Carter is defying the patriarchal values of Western Culture by examining taboos as females' sexual desire, women's bodies,

gender politics or binary oppositions as man/woman or human/animal. As a result, the author does not only become a referent in Postmodernism and Gender Studies, but she is also a pioneer of Posthumanism and Animal Studies. Therefore, as cited above, Carter fills "old bottles" with "new wine"; this is how she provides readers with a tasteful—and healthier—new beverage that definitely makes the old recipients explode: challenging the toxic values of the old stories and urging people to embrace the ones offered in her narratives.

Carter's wolf trilogy is composed of three tales that reject the traditional concept of the wolf and offer a new image of this character: the evil wolf-grandmother who tries to murder her granddaughter in "The Werewolf"; the handsome werewolf who symbolizes female sexual liberation in "The Company of Wolves"; and the hybrid protagonist in "Wolf-Alice"—half wolf and half girl—who refuses to be labelled and proudly embraces her "otherness." Carter's wolves are, thus, examples of a change of paradigm: while using the same pattern as fairy tales, the results are completely different. All in all, by analysing the figure of the wolf in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, I have demonstrated that, through the rewriting of fairy tales, the author uncovers the hidden aspects of the original versions from a feminist viewpoint.

Works Cited

Actas das II Xornadas de literatura oral. O mito que fascina: do lobo ao lobishome. Asociación de Escritores en Lingua Galega, 2009.

Al-Kassasbeh, Rabab Taha. "Feminism and Postmodern Aesthetics in Angela Carter's 'Wolf-Alice', 'The Company of Wolves,' and 'The Werewolf'." *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies.* January 2013, pp. 25-42. *Google Scholar,* https://scholar.google.com/. Accessed 28 February 2023.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Blind Assassin.* Anchor, 2001.

Bacchilega, Cristina. *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies.* Pennsylvania UP, 1997.

Banana, Flavita. "Si de verdad quieren revisitar los cuentos infantiles, que empiecen por educar a los lobos." *El País,* 3 Feb. 2022. https://elpais.com/opinion/2022-02-03/flavita-banana.html. Accessed 7 March 2023.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. Jonathan Cape, 2009.

Berne, Eric. *What Do You Say After You Say Hello? The Psychology of Human Destiny.* Bantam, 1973.

Bettelheim, Bruno. "Little Red Cap and the Pubertal Girl". *Little Red Riding Hood. A Casebook,* edited by Alan Dundes, Wisconsin UP, 1989, pp. 168-191.

Carter, Angela. *Shaking a Leg.* Penguin, 1998.

----. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories.* Penguin, 2015.

----. *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography.* Pantheon, 1988.

Clark, Elizabeth M. *"Hairy Thuggish Women." Female Werewolves, Gender and the Hoped-For Monster.* 2008. Georgetown University, PhD dissertation. https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/551562/etd_emc58.pdf;sequence=3. Accessed 13 February 2023.

Cuba, R. Xoán et al. *Diccionario dos seres míticos galegos.* Xerais, 2008.

Dundes, Alan, editor. *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook.* Wisconsin UP, 1989.

Ekmekçi, Çekik. *Body Politics in Angela Carter's Works.* 2018. Istambul Aydin University, PhD dissertation. https://acikbilim.yok.gov.tr/handle/20.500.12812/626943. Accessed 4 March 2023.

Fromm, Erich. *The Forgotten Language; An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths.* Rinehart, 1951.

Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic.* Yale UP, 2000.

Joosen, Vanesa. "Fairy-tale Retellings between Art and Pedagogy." *Children's Literature Education,* June 2005, pp. 129-39. *Google Scholar, https://scholar.google.com/.* Accessed 12 February 2023.

Klonowska, Barbara. "Contemporary Fairy Tales: Angela Carter's *The Werewolf.*" *Studia Anglica Resoviensia.* 2005, pp. 148-52. https://www.ur.edu.pl/files/ur/import/Import/2012/5/sar_v3_13.pdf. Accessed 2 March 2023.

Kuykendal, Leslee F. and Sturm W. Brian. "We Said Feminist Fairy Tales, not Fractured Fairy Tales! The Construction of the Feminist Fairy Tale: Female Agency over Role Reversal". *Children and Libraries,* 2007, pp. 38-41. *Google Scholar, https://scholar.google.com/.* Accessed 10 February 2023.

Lau, Kimberly J. “Erotic Infidelities: Angela Carter’s Wolf Trilogy.” *Marvel & Tales.* 2008, pp. 77-94. *JSTOR,* https://www.jstor.org/stable/41388860. Accessed 28 February 2023.

Lee, Sun-Ji. “Metamorphoses in and between Charles Perrault’s ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and Angela Carter’s ‘The Company of Wolves’.” *Feminist Studies in English Literature,* 2012, pp. 117-45. Accessed 11 March 2023.

Lieberman, Marcia R. “’Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale”. *College English,* Dec. 1972, pp. 383-95. *JSTOR,* *https://www.jstor.org/stable/375142* . Accessed 8 February 2023.

Link, Kelly. Introduction. Carter *The Bloody Chamber*, pp. vii-xiv. Penguin, 2015.

McLeod, Dion S. *Unmasking the Quillain: Queernes and Villains in Animated Disney Films.* 2016. University of Wollongong Australia, PhD dissertation. https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5824&context=theses. Accessed 12 May.

Miller, Madeline. “From Circe to Clinton: Why Powerful Women Are Cast as Witches.” *The Guardian,* 7 Apr. 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/07/cursed-from-circe-to-clinton-why-women-are-cast-as-witches. Accessed 5 February 2023.

Mitts-Smith, Debra. *Picturing the Wolf in Children’s Literature.* Routledge, 2012.

----. “The Wolf. Danger and Deception in Three Tales.” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle,* 2007, pp. 941-59. *JSTOR,* *https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.25290/prinunivlibrchro.68.3.0941* . Accessed 7 February 2023.

“Motif.” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.* Bantam Dell, 2004.

Reid, Jennifer. “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing: Transgressive Sexualities in ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and Angela Carter.” *Postgraduate English.* September 2014, pp. 2-25. Accessed 28 February 2023.

Róheim, Géza. “Fairy Tale and Dream: “Little Red Riding Hood.” *Little Red Riding Hood. A Casebook,* edited by Alan Dundes, Wisconsin UP, 1989, pp. 159-169.

Saintyves, Pierre. “Little Red Riding Hood or the Little May Queen Mary.” *Little Red Riding Hood. A Casebook,* edited by Alan Dundes, Wisconsin UP, 1989, pp. 71-88.

Schanoes, Veronica. “Fearless Children and Fabulous Monsters: Angela Carter, Lewis Carroll, and Beastly Girls.” *Marvels & Tales.* 2012, pp. 30-44. *JSTOR,* https://www.jstor.org/stable/41702489. Accessed 12 March 2023.

Sellers, Susan. *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women’s Fiction.* Palgrave, 2001.

Sexton, Anne. *The Complete Poems.* Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

Snowden, Kim. “Fairy Tale Film in the Classroom: Feminist Cultural Pedagogy, Angela Carter and Neil Jordan’s *The Company of Wolves*.” *Fairy Tales Films: Visions of Ambiguity,* edited by Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix, Utah State UP, 2010, pp. 157-177. *JSTOR,* https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt4cgn37.13. Accessed 11 March 2023.

“Symbol.” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.* Bantam Dell, 2004.

The Company of Wolves. Directed by Neil Jordan, performances by Angela Lansbury, Sarah Patterson, David Warner, Micha Bergese, 1984.

The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales, edited by Jack Zipes, Oxford UP, 2000.

Valenti, Jessica. *The Purity Myth: How America's Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women.* Seal, 2009.

Warner, Marina. *Once Upon a Time. A Short Story of Fairy Tale.* Oxford UP, 2014.

Westland, Ella. "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Reponses to Gender Roles in Fairy-tales." *Gender and Education,* 1993, pp. 237-49.

Zipes, Jack. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context.* Bergin & Garvery, 1983.

Appendix

Flavita Banana's "Si de verdad quieren revisitar los cuentos infantiles, que empiecen por educar a los lobos" (2022).