

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

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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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 critiques 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.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, A.S. Byatt'ın *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* ve Angela Carter'ın *The Bloody Chamber* adlı eserlerini ve dahilinde güncel kadın meselelerini, medyada bir toplumsal cinsiyet tasviri ve kadının siyasi konumu üzerine incelemesini içerir. Ayrıca, Byatt ve Carter'ın seçtikleri öykülerinde hâkim olan geleneksel kadınlık kavramlarını yeniden tanımlama biçimlerini de incelemektedir. Erkek egemen bir ortamda, kadınlar duygusal, zayıf, takipçi ve erkeklere boyun eğen olarak sunulurken, erkekler cesur, güçlü ve rasyonel varlıklar olarak sunulur. Her iki koleksiyon da çağdaş toplumun metinlerarası bir kültürel eleştirisini ve çağdaş sonrası feminizmin birçok söylemini özetleyen alt metinsel olarak sunar. Byatt ve Carter'ın toplumsal cinsiyet ve toplumsal cinsiyet algılarına ilişkin farkındalıkları, ana akım kitle kültürüne müdahale etmeyi temel hale getirdi. Makale aynı zamanda hikayelerdeki kadın imajlarını, bu hikayelerde görülen tartışmalı unsurları inceliyor ve figürleri cinsiyetçi ve ataerkil ideolojinin kısıtlamalarından kurtarmak için çeşitli kadın bakış açılarını anlıyor. Buna istinaden, bu koleksiyonlardaki stereotipleri, Byatt ve Carter'ın bu stereotipleri nasıl tartıştığını ve eserlerinde kullandıkları anlatım tekniklerini ve edebi araçları belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

DEDICATION

To my beloved and long-gone mother...



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1 INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales are literary fairy stories, which means that these original stories are rewritings of older stories, either literary or orally. The concept of a literary fairy tale is generally characterized by its various hybridities as it reworks the communal past to establish new ones that involve textual/literary crossbreeding. The tale also uses archaic elements to express the present to evoke old motifs and themes that envision new ideas. Furthermore, a literary fairy tale is a hybrid in its magical juxtaposition and daily reality, which seems like a genre that is tied to the past with a spect for innovation. A glance at its history shows that fairy tales are a literary genre or form, which enables authors a space for artistic and imaginative creation (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 Other Stories* 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 *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.

The collections of Carter and Byatt contain several stories that are told exclusively from the perspective of a woman, and that is one significant approach authors use to give voice and role to the female figures and characters. For example, in *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter unfolds the matter of sexuality, gender role, identity, marriage, sex, violence, and love with mythical references. The collection begins with the depiction of a seventeen-year-old girl who recently married The Marquis, who is a rich businessman from France. The girl is the protagonist of the story who is beginning her new life with a strange individual older than her who made her quite unsatisfied with her situation from the early days of marriage. The Marquis attempts to kill the protagonist by shooting her; yet, the girl's mother is able to rescue her. Also, the mother kills her son-in-law in revenge. The mother is shown to be a courageous and bold woman. The Marquis wanted to kill the girl because she found her husband's bloody chamber where he had killed three previous wives (Carter, 1995).

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 revaluated 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. Females are expected to wear expensive cosmetics and ornaments. 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. Dresses and etiquettes were created by males to control women, and these things have been challenged and exposed by the female characters (Carter, 1995).

In a sense, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and *The Bloody Chamber* are a 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. For instance, in "Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* and the Decolonization of Feminine Sexuality", Makinen (1992) argues that these stories truly constitute the female protagonist who is initially mistreated by her old husband but she slowly gathers courage though she does not explicitly show it. The protagonist's mother is shown to kill her son-in-law who represents symbolically the phallocentric perspective. At the same time, Marquis's death symbolizes the death of the male-centric/phallocentric perspective, which is the traditional patriarchy (Makinen, 1992).

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 definitely 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.

1.1 First Wave Women's Movement

Feminist literary criticism is a type of literary criticism that takes a feminist viewpoint. It is a feminist analysis based on feminist politics and theory. It is a critical analysis that utilizes a different ideology to study literature. In other words, this type of criticism utilizes a feminist approach in the study of language, structure, and being

of literature. Feminist literary criticism allows women to explore the field of literature and express themselves in the social, economic, political, and psychological being of literature. Womanism emerged as a means for women to express their needs, ideologies, and perspectives. In response, women started reflecting on gaining long-term achievements and practical action in literature.

Feminists' literary criticism uses the ideologies of womanism in the critique of the language of literature and how other factors reinforce the patriarchy and gender roles to further neglect feminine gender over masculine gender. The feminist's literary criticism is the bearer of women's movements that called for equal rights in the 1960s and sought equal opportunities and freedom for women. The development of the feminist movement was characterized mainly by efforts to change the tyranny of male-oriented views and roles over women (Benjamin, 2020).

The scholars of "feminist" literary criticism date back to the 1700s up to the development of the women's rights movement in the 1960s. The first wave of women's movement dated at least to the mid-nineteenth century when social and economic equalities were the major drives for movement and the resurgence of feminist analyzes and activism that were developed in the 1960s (Ferris, 2008).

The first wave of feminist criticism enhanced equal opportunity for women for the enhancement of economic and political equality. It has adroitly reviewed the development of the first-wave women's movement from the vindication of women's rights in 1792 to the formation of the second-wave women's movement in the 1970s. In broader historical terms, first-wave feminism started in the pre-nineteenth century when Mary Wollstonecraft first introduced the expression and concerns about the rights of women. The French Revolution of 1789 was the time when Wollstonecraft

identified the first concerted demands for the rights of women and enhanced publications for the vindications of the rights of women in 1792. Therefore, the report forms the first substantial and systematic feminist treatise that enhanced the development of women's rights concerns (Wollstonecraft, 1982).

The theorist's ideas for equality in social and economic rights are marked as the groundbreaking work of literature that, up to date, resonates in human rights movements and feminism. The French Revolutions stated that women should not receive rational education. Wollstonecraft argued that women are human beings who deserve the same fundamental rights as men and thus fight against subjecting women as mere property of men, the ideology that undercuts the moral foundations of society. Thus, criticism enhanced women to be given an education commensurate with their positions in society (Ferris, 2008).

The scholarly literature by Wollstonecraft believed men and women should be given equal rights and opportunities in society and viewed men and women as totally equal beings. Wollstonecraft (1982) advocated for educational reforms that she believed would give both genders the same equal education rights and opportunities.

A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) was arguably the source and root of feminist literary criticism since it forms the earliest literary critique of conventional femininity by questioning the socializing process in the subordination of women (Wollstonecraft, 1982). The critique became significant in the development of the feminist movements since Wollstonecraft's literary works radically deviated from the conventional ideologies that take femininity as a natural or biological concept. The literature viewed by Wollstonecraft recommended social, legal, and cultural practices that can gain and reform the call for equality (Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 2013).

Wollstonecraft laid the foundations of feminism by criticism of the conventional femininity ideologies since her literature made a more organized standpoint for the social and political emancipation of women's rights. Being the first work that presented women's education as an issue of human rights has become reputable literary work that seeks educational rights for women. Wollstonecraft viewed the ideas of women's place in society as she accords the interpretation that men have implicitly assigned women to a place of submissiveness in society (Wollstonecraft, 1982).

Therefore, critiquing the conventional ideologies of women, the literary feminist criticism enhanced empowering women from the susceptible excessive emotions and sensibility of gender inequality. Feminist criticism in this literature reinforced the call for gender equality in terms of educational attainments and social interpretation of women's roles; since it enhances equality in the ways women are perceived in society. Mill's literary work in 1869 was an attempt to include women under the provision of the 1867 Reform Act; thus is a progressive theory espousing women's equality in society by critiquing the conventional ideologies surfacing in society about gender roles in political contexts (Mill, 1869).

Mill criticized the political neglecting of women, especially in their voting rights, and thus served as essential feminist literary criticism that seemed to be fed up with women being treated as subordinate and disempowered. Mill advocated for women's equality by criticizing ideologies that women are naturally weaker than men. He theorizes about women's suffrage rights by holding that the tyranny of men subjugates women since they lack ways that protect their interests. Additionally, Mill criticized the Victorian customs that women's roles are to please and serve men and identified

women as equal to men and thus should be granted more political and legal rights that would limit subjugation, especially in the cult of domesticity (Mill, 1869).

Mill (1869) stood with the idea that the subjection of women by men in gender roles and marriage has put women in the type of slavery, and as a slave are fearful of displeasing their masters, women are put under commendable social status. The literary work of subjection of women looks at women in their marriage, gender roles, and work, and Mill's ideology was that granting women's suffrage rights that enhance their political and legal rights would make them free from oppression and slavery (Ashley, 2020).

Mill's work on the subjection of women was the first feminist literary criticism that provoked vociferously against the political role of women and held for the emancipation of women in Victorian society. The works acknowledge women's personal and political rights by criticizing society's confinement of women's rights like working outside the domestic sphere, rights to suffrage, and education. Mill's critique understanding is that opposition to female emancipation was based on prejudice rather than rationality and goes on to affirm that granting females rights to suffrage enhances increased competition in the society that enhances moral and intellectual development in the society and at the individual level (Mill, 1869).

In 1884, Friedrich Engels introduced his work which was an influential and profoundly provocative critique of the Victorian nuclear family. In his work, Engel contrasts what he terms a communistic household by holding that family that turns women's labor into private services rather than a public and socially necessary role enhances the disintegration of labor and the emergence of the social class based on private property (Engels, 1978).

The traditional patriarchal monogamous households were closely bound up with capitalists' societies and turned women into servants and sex workers. The scientific work by Engel explored the role of property in the creation of modern families and only argued that the patriarchal monogamous marriage setup was the only guarantee for the modern civilization of families and inheritance of property (Benjamin, 2020). Therefore, Engels critiqued society marriage by stating that the patriarchal monogamous family only creates a sexual division of labor that induces exploitation of women. The origin of the family in 1884 marked the inducement of socialist feminism since Engels saw the subjugation of women as intertwined with the patriarchal system of capitalism (Struik, 1992).

The criticism looks at the gender system of the capitalist society by holding for change on the origin of the family (Bennett, 2016). Engel argues that unequal division of labor in marriages is a significant problem that relates to contemporary society since it is founded on the concealed domestic slavery of the wife (Selden et al., 2013). Engel comes with modern society ideology that only proletarian wives can break the exploitative cycle; thus, bringing women into public industry gives them the labor value that demeans the society or familial exploitation.

Also, de Beauvoir was one of the earliest feminists who confronted human history from a feministic perspective. The writings critique the perspective of men in modern society that fundamentally oppressed women by characterizing women on every level as the other, with women seen as an object while men were occupying the role of self (de Beauvoir, 1949).

The critique is seen as a pillar of feminist thoughts in the twentieth century since it concerned massive and meticulously researched masterwork. It revealed women were

seen as inessential, mutilated, and incomplete objects while men were seen as absolute, transcendent, and essential creatures, the perspective that imposed oppression and subjugation of women in society. The writing views women as the second sex of men with its historical account of women being in disadvantaged positions in society. The writing criticizes the primitive facts and myths that society broadly embraced of women as idols representing nature and motherhood, thus making them objectified by men. The depictions of how women are mythologized in different negative ways enhance show how society's perspectives demean modern women's reclamation of self-independence (de Beauvoir, 1949).

de Beauvoir (1949) portrays women as being confined in every function they perform in society, as well as being pushed to adopt features that make them appear unhappy, irritable, and dissatisfied. The 1949 critique of women's inequality, in terms of social perspective, marked the most influential second-wave feminism criticism that enhanced equality in the modern world by seeking the benefits of both genders' social living. The critics of how independent women face more challenges than men due to traditional values regarding femininity, reproductions, and marriage enhance effective critiques that now form the first wave of sexist feminist ideologies.

In her extended essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf delivered the precondition for the development of the second-wave women's movement in the 1960s, which considered the empowerment of women in having their own space and financial stability to become successful. Woolf (1929) is seen as the pioneer of literary criticism for feminism since her literary work on issues such as social and economic contexts enhanced the female literary tradition. Her writing advocated for women's need for financial and psychological independence. Many criticisms, interpretations,

and theories concerning the rights and equalities of women have developed from Woolf's literary works like *A Room of One's Own* (Goldman, 2007; Woolf, 1929).

Woolf's literary goals were in conjunction with the first-wave women's movement's goals that called for equality in suffrage and political and economic goals. Her writings serve as the foundational basis for the American feminists, especially for Elaine Showalter, who coined the introduction of gynocriticism whose subjects were the genres, history, structures, and themes of writings by women. Additionally, Woolf's writings in the 1920s marked the basis of de Beauvoir writings in the 1940s and transitioned up to the post-civil war periods of the 1960s with the envisioning of radical feminism that enhanced women's liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Wittrock, 1977). Therefore, her literary criticisms are seen as essential groundbreaking writing for modern feminism (Woolf, 1929).

The first wave of feminist criticism was introduced in the nineteenth century and produced by early theorists like Wollstonecraft in 1792 enhanced the development of ideologies, which formed the second wave of feminism criticism and modern feminism. During the 1940s, Woolf and de Beauvoir as pioneers of feminism, with their critiques of gender equality, enhanced the development of modern feminism. Within this period, the discussions of these scholars enhance insightful that affect the development of feminist movements for the fight for equality in political, social, economic, and familial responsibilities and roles (Woolf, 1929; 1943).

1.2 Second Wave Women's Movement

Women's movement as it is aforementioned is divided into two, the first wave and the second wave women's movement. The first took place in Britain between 1890 and 1920. The first wave, also called liberal feminism, was intended to fight for civil

liberties and the right to vote in Britain and the United States. The movement was successful as women could attend colleges, gain fundamental civil rights and find employment in specific fields. The first wave set the precedence for massive and subtle actions by feminists in the 20th century to fight women's discrimination. The second wave focused on addressing differences between males and females, discussing the origin of discriminative gender, cultural and societal ideologies, and the images of women in literature. Feminist criticism developed along with the second-wave women's movement which criticized patriarchal ideologies and the political literature mechanism.

The second wave of feminist literary criticism thrived as historians, sociologists, and psychologists developed a sense that female awareness could achieve something great. Their efforts were translated into literature which also saw the rise of several feminist authors. Most historians trace the origins of the second-wave feminist literary criticism to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan was motivated by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949).

Afterward, many other authors were inspired by feminist literature arising in the same period (Showalter, 1977). The movement was motivated by several legal actions that took place in the 1960s, such as the introduction of the contraceptive pill. While women had achieved the right to vote, undertake specific professions, and the right to own property, they had not gained equality.

Feminist literary criticism resulted from previous women's struggles against the oppressions of a patriarchal system. There were huge differences between men and women, demonstrated by extensive gender discrimination. Barry (2020) explains that the movement was only a renewal of ideology. He explains that the movement's origin

date back to the 18th century when some male writers had written about the unequal treatment of women and their solutions. The second-wave feminist literary criticism was only implementing this theory. Watkins (2001) pointed out that female writers also captured these works. She explains that writers and philosophers of the late 18th century and 19th centuries, such as Mill, Wollstonecraft, and Taylor, argued that men and women had an equal chance of achieving success.

Another significant element of the women's liberation movement was understating what liberation meant. Previous female writers have been criticized for imitating men in literature. Showalter (1977) explains that such literature does not liberate the female since it falls for the patriarchal system. Showalter, notes that the second-wave feminist literary criticisms understood women's liberation; referring to one of the movement's leaders, Sheila Rowbotham, who said: The fortunes of the new feminism will depend on our capacity to relate to the working-class and the action of working-class women in transforming women's liberation according to their needs (Showalter, 1977).

The women's liberation movement was determined to achieve liberation where women developed a sense of self-worth and freedom. It was rooted against the patriarchal ideology that women should be restricted to domestic duties by arguing that an individual involved in every aspect of society is capable of effectively upbringing a child. The argument sought to remove pressure from men as sole breadwinners while allowing women to also engage in similar activities as men.

The rise of the women's liberation movement is majorly attributed to de Beauvoir's "Second Sex" and Friedan's "Feminine Mystique." These books acted as the basis for the movement's arguments based on knowledge. The movement aimed to expose how

women had been socially and culturally marginalized for a long time and it increased the probability of a massive social change in society. Historically, women were restricted to domestic roles. Despite the rise and success of the first wave women's movement, the differences between men and women remained high. The second-wave feminist literary criticism intended to explore these differences, especially gender roles (Fraser, 2017). These changes depended on politics if they were to be achieved. The movement was geared to change patriarchal ideologies, emancipating men and women from oppression. As a result, the movement resulted in key political changes in Marxist and liberal lines.

The second-wave feminist literary criticism originated from the need to change the social system that assigned women subservient roles. The idea to change was revolutionary and propelled it into a radical movement. They considered patriarchy the major source of the challenges and sought to revamp the whole social system. They aimed at revolutionizing power relationships that showed male bias. It was a fight against a male-dominated society.

In a patriarchal system, men are viewed as dominant while women are submissive to male domination. *The Second Sex* (1949) mentioned earlier argues that such a system discriminates against women based on their biology. Instead, de Beauvoir argues that they can use "Second Sex" when referring to females to fight patriarchy (Burke, 2018; Pratama, 2018; de Beauvoir, 1949). As a result, prejudices attributed to women can be minimized and thus progress to equality. Since it was first published, the book has been like a feminist bible. The second-wave feminist literary criticism is thus attributed to the book. The second-wave feminist literary movement of the 1960s

set the precedence for other forms of feminism, including Marxist feminist literary theory and modern feminism.

1.3 Marxist Feminist Literary Criticism

The Marxist feminist literary theory was based on Marxism, which states that social class struggles dominate human history. Marxism argues that the struggles between classes continue unless society attains a classless society, and was used to fight capitalism, where a few people, elites, control factors of production while the majorities provide labor for wages. The second-wave feminist literary criticism utilized this argument that a male-dominated system has historically oppressed women. Marxism explains that the two classes of people struggle due to oppression. The rise of the movement was inevitable. It was only a matter of time before one could identify women as the oppressed class in a male-dominated society. Marxist feminist literary criticisms are thus ideologies and perspectives that have evolved due to the merging of Marxist and feminist ideologies. In *Origin of the Family, Private property and the State*, Friedrich Engels examines the history of women's oppression. Engels argued that the rise of private property led to women's oppression.

Engels has placed the origins of women's oppression on historical and social developments in bringing Marxist feminism into perspective and argued that women's oppression arose with the rise of capitalism. Capitalism led to the division of labor between sexes in a capitalist sense leading to oppression. Engels has compared the division of labor in hunter-gatherer communities and the agrarian society, which demonstrates women's oppression. In hunter-gatherer communities, "the division of labor within the family had regulated the division of property between the man and the woman" (Engels, 1978).

The agrarian revolution set precedence for gender roles while women were confined to their homes while men went out to work. The industrial age only exacerbated the situation. As Michel Foucault (1978) explains, sex and its challenges were translated into modes of production by capitalism. Feminists with Marxist ideological views thus were determined to fight these oppressions.

A close examination of second-wave feminism reveals that Marxist feminist literary criticism evolved due to radical feminism, liberalism, and Marxism inadequacies. While the radical feminist approach focused on the patriarchal system, Marxist feminism focused on the patriarchy in a capitalist setup. However, its main goal is the same as radical feminism; to liberate women. Engels' demonstration of women's oppression due to the rise of private property and capitalism has been accredited as the inspiration behind the rise of Marxist feminist literary theory. According to this theory, the attack on patriarchy by radical feminism is vague. One needs to understand the consequences of patriarchy historically and in economic terms (Watkins, 2001, 223).

The fight against a male-dominated society has changed over time. However, in the second wave, they were determined to change the social ideology stating that women are capable as men. Marxist feminist theory rose aiming to fight a system that appropriates private ownership and where things are exchanged as commodities.

Marxist feminist theory sprouted after the second-wave feminist literary criticism in the 1970s and 1980s. The movement was popular in Britain and North America (Selden et al., 2013). It drew parallels between Marxism and women's oppression. For instance, Marxism classifies controllers of factors of production as the bourgeoisie while the workers are the proletariat. In Marxist feminist literary theory, women are

compared to the proletariat while men belong to the bourgeoisie class. The theory also examines women belonging to the bourgeoisie class who fight for equal rights in education and higher professions but are not focused on lower-class jobs.

Therefore, 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.

Engels (1978) explains that as communities became more agrarian, the family became the locus for female oppression. Roles became gendered and patriarchy strengthened. Most of the Marxist feminists of the 1970s have employed Engels' critique in fighting against the economic oppression women experience in a male-dominated society.

In conclusion, feminist literary criticisms have evolved since they were first conceived in the 18th century. While these theories had been in existence, they only manifested later during the first wave, second wave, and Marxist feminism. The first wave of feminist literary criticism occurred in the early 20th century, followed by the second wave in the 1960s and later the Marxist feminist criticism theory. The first wave sought women's enfranchisement and the second fought for women's liberation ideologically, while Marxist feminists fought against women's oppression by the male-dominated patriarchal society.

2 THE DJINN IN THE NIGHTINGALE'S EYE BY A.S. BYATT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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).

By 1994, Byatt published her collection of fairy tales, under the title *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, which included five short tales that were given in a narrative style that has been classic for this specific genre; whereas the story's title is of the short story's length, which merges fantasy and realism. The first two stories in the novel, *Gode's Story* and *The Glass Coffin*, were published in *Possession*, which is Byatt's successful novel; as they were reprinted verbatim along with three new stories in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. The author's work is uniquely intertextual; as *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* seems to be a rich virtual collage of fairy tale motifs (The New York Times Book Review, 1997).

With the title story and the rewritten tales, Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* is an intertextual work that is primarily about the process of storytelling as an instrument of revising and reviewing the construction of what a female is. The incredible title story of this work of fairy tales mainly describes the unreal and unusual relationship that emerged between the novel's extravagantly brilliant protagonist, who is a world-renowned researcher of the storytelling art, and the extraordinary being that inhabits a mysterious bottle, which was discovered in an old store in a bazaar located Istanbul, Turkey (Byatt, 1994).

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). This chapter examines A.S. Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* to identify the stereotypes in this collection of stories, the way Byatt discussed these stereotypes and the literary devices she used in this novel.

2.2 Heroines of A.S. Byatt's

The first-person narrator in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* tells the story of Dr. Gillian Perholt, who is a fifty-year-old divorced narratologist woman that did not live happily ever after; particularly with an unfaithful husband, unlike the traditional tales of princesses in fairy tales. While she suggests a remote imaginary world with the fairy tale opening "*once upon a time*", the narrator hints that the story of Gillian takes place at a period when the United States of America and the United Nations were bombing Iraq during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (Byatt, 1994). This story starts:

At the time when my story begins the green sea was black, sleek as the skins of killer whales, and the sluggish waves were on fire, with dancing flames and a great curtain of stinking smoke. The empty deserts were seeded with skulls, and with iron canisters, containing death --- In those days men and women, including narratologists, were afraid to fly East, and their gatherings were diminished. Nevertheless our narratologist, whose name was Gillian Perholt (Byatt, 1994: 43).

The comparison of the story's narrator that painted the Persian Gulf black with dancing flames and transformed the geography of Iraq into uninhabited deserts with smoke, iron canisters, and skulls, evokes the horrifying outcomes of the war that results in the death of nearly a hundred thousand people. The general fear, Europe displayed from going east, shows their tendency to homogenously classify these lands as being uncivilized and dangerous. Therefore, the narratologist Gillian Perholt feels "an appropriate measure of fear" towards Turkey who did not take part in this War and, despite her concern, she flies to the capital Ankara for the "*Stories of Women's Lives*" conference and visits Istanbul to address the British Council (Byatt, 1994).

2.2.1 Dr. Gillian Perholt 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.

Therefore, Byatt's female protagonists constantly narrate the role of reading in others' engagement in stories. For example, In *Possession*, reconciling with her identity causes the female writers and readers to undertake a literary mission for a link with the tradition of literature. 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 intertextual construction of Byatt begins with presenting Gillian's expedition for the reader to become a part of it by seeing rich materials of myths, fairy tales, and poems. In this construction, writing and reading appear in the form of the woman protagonist's relationship with ancestral writings, which have proven to be timeless. In *Possession*, the female protagonist searches for a connection to the past through the words written by her biological and literary ancestors. For Gillian, she feels compelled to find this connection because it will allow her to have a comprehension of the man's oppression of women in the literary and social realities. The primary trouble of Gillian deals with the social construction of her gender around her and the female figures she faces in the texts reveal the metaphorical and literal imprisonment of females and their challenges against it (Byatt, 1994).

The female protagonists in this work have a sense of isolation in their present environments, and they are entrapped within the intertextual narrative entanglement struggling to belong to a tradition that belongs to females. The displacement and isolation of Gillian as a female is further intensified by Gillian's fear of futility and death since she worries about passing away without proving her ability as a female that can be suitable at narrating tales. Before Gillian's encounter with the *djinn*, in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, who narrates her tales about amazing female

characters such as "the beautiful Zefir, wife of Mustafa Emin Bey, in Smyrna" (Byatt, 1994) and the Queen of Sheba, Gillian sees herself as a female who cannot write her own life story or even write fiction without a strong imagination. Thus, Gillian forsakes writing fiction as she is unable to have a place in the world of literature, she is currently occupied with her fear of obliteration, as a female, and death. For many, the female author has always been viewed as a woman indefinable, anomalous, alienated, a freakish outsider in the patriarchal world of literature (Byatt, 1994).

Gillian recalls her attempts to construct a tale about "a young man, called Julian who was in hiding, disguised as a girl called Julienne" (Byatt, 1994), which can discuss the gender confusion Gillian found herself in when she was a young girl. The patriarchy's impositions on females and stigmatization as incompetent in literature and society render Gillian's attempt at writing a tale unsuccessful. It is only when she hears from the *djinn*, who is a male, tales of powerful females that Gillian makes another attempt at writing. Her relationship with the *djinn*, who calls her "Djil-yanPeri-han", as a nice reference to the fairies in traditional eastern tales, frees her from the imposition of patriarchal reason, thus liberating her narrative powers.

Campbell believes that with Gillian's eastern name, she becomes a magical character, the Persian elf, peri, in a tale; therefore, she finally emerges as the protagonist and narrator (Campbell, 2001). Due to Gillian's relationship with the *djinn*, she can realize the subtle message seen in the question presented by the *djinn*: "What does an independent woman wish for?" (Byatt, 1994). An independent woman can wish anything and, by using her final right to make a wish that sets the *djinn* free, Gillian finally feels complete as a female and in her story. Moreover, the protagonist's encounter with the *djinn* establishes an essential role in her journey since it makes her confront her fears and demands a redefinition of her identity. As a female who is

unsettled by the concept of death, she is also a female who was born within the traditional politics of gender in the 20th century with embedded narratives of the myth that are usually expressions of the dominant motifs (Franken, 2001).

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).

2.2.2 The heroine in *The Story of the Eldest Princess*

The conversation between the *Eldest Princess* and the *Old Woman*, in "*The Story of the Eldest Princess*", 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 story includes several motifs from the traditional construction of tales and it seems like the princess's tale is a frame gathered with other pieces of different tales. In this frame, the princess is sent on a journey by the King, which represents a traditional motif in many tales. The necessity rule is accentuated in this tale, which made the heroine question and dismiss such a rule throughout her quest. This is evident in:

The witches and wizards on the whole favoured a Quest. One rather powerful and generally taciturn wizard, who had interfered very little, but always successfully, in affairs of State, came out of his cavern, and said that someone

must be sent along the Road through the Forest across the Desert and into the Mountains, to fetch back the single silver bird and her nest of ash-branches (Byatt, 1994).

The words capitalized in the previous text show the main settings of the storyline and the primary event of its plot, which is the Quest; thus, emphasizing the importance of the tale's traditional elements. These traditional elements emerge in nearly all stories as they imply the concept of necessity ruling the tradition of a fairy tale. For Byatt, the eldest heroine has the role to fight against the rule of necessity by following the mission of an author within the narration itself and rewriting women's place in the construction of a fairy tale.

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).

Nevertheless, Byatt leaves her heroine with many ways that would set her free from the tale's necessities. The princess believes that: "She thought I am in a pattern I know, and I suspect I have no power to break it, and I am going to meet a test and fail it, and spend seven years as a stone" (Byatt, 1994: 24). Throughout this Quest, the heroine meets the tale's minor characters, knows what path to follow, and faces

incidents on such a path before she reaches the finish line; still, she is not satisfied with her role in this story and constantly remembers that she "could just walk out of this inconvenient story" (Byatt, 1994: 26).

For the reader, there is a present sense that the tale's female heroine is an untraditional *Eldest Princess* challenging the conventional plotline; therefore, postponing the settled end. For Gilbert and Gubar (1984a), the self-willed heroine of the tale is the heroine resisting and rejecting the narrative closure of her fairy-tale identity; as she arrives at the end of her story without achieving any closure at all. Instead, she finds a place where she can be both free and content, telling stories in the forest with the old woman and her creatures.

The Eldest Princess's fight against the tale's predestined end is an important exemplification of the female writer and storyteller's desire to have a say and a word in her own tale. This is also the main concern of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*; as Gillian's wish to find and retell tales is not different from the *Eldest Princess's* desire to neglect the tale's stereotypes and construct a tale of her own.

The creatures that met *the Eldest Princess* on the princess's way and the *Old Woman* have significant symbolic functions as they relate the princess's story to several other tales and create a metafictional relationship. Throughout the princess' walk in the forest to look for the silver bird, she comes across many animals, each with an ailment that requires treatment and she puts these animals in her basket to deliver them to the *Old Woman's* home. The *Old Woman* plays a wise and timeless healer by allowing the princess and the creatures to tell their tales. For the princess:

Old Woman put the creatures on the table, and healed them in her way. Her way was to make them tell the story of their hurts, and as they told, she applied ointments and drops with tiny feathery brushes ...¹

The *Old Woman* applies the same treatment to the princess by making her go through her challenges once again. Then, the princess feels calm and purified while telling her tale, which shows that the *Old Woman* uses the healing power of storytelling and words. So: "And the Princess, telling the story, felt pure pleasure in getting it right, making it just so, finding the right word" (Byatt, 1994: 31). From the way the heroine tells her story, the *Old Woman* realizes that the heroine is under a "curse" of addiction to writing and reading and that storytelling treats her ailments.

As the *Old Woman's* observation of the *Eldest Princess's* storytelling skills, the condition of the *Eldest Princess* and her role within the story show the characteristics that Byatt associates with her heroine (Tiffin, 2006).

2.3 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.

When Gillian received her husband's letter, she feels "like a prisoner bursting chains and coming blinking out of a dungeon" and "like a bird confined in a box, like a gas confined in a bottle, that found an opening, and rushed out" (Byatt, 1994). Instead of "loss of companionship" and "grieving over betrayal", Gillian is pleased to be set free from her "grumbling and jousting" partner who has been constantly late for meals and always unconcerned about her emotions (Byatt, 1994).

The divorce that triggers Gillian's emotions of "lightness, happiness, and purpose" interrupts the myth of marriage as the absolute source of women's bliss (Byatt, 1994). For instance, the happy-ever-after tales that narratologists speak in the conference of "Stories of Women's Lives" in Ankara, which allowed Gillian to reflect on her prosperous yet lonesome reality as a divorced woman whose children rarely talk to her.

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).

Despite Gillian's critical perspective on the tales' masculinist institutions, she understands the ways in which these tales have shaped her ideas of womanhood as she listens to Orhan, her Turkish colleague, while she tells a tale from *The Arabian Nights*, saying:

I had this idea of a woman I was going to be, and I think it was before I knew what sex was (she had been thinking with her body about the swooning delight of Camaralzaman and Princess Budoor) but I imagined I would be married, a married woman, I would have a veil and a wedding and a house and Someone – someone devoted, like the thief of Baghdad, and a dog ...²

Questioning Gillian's happiness and beauty standards, the novel continues to question the gift of marriage by telling tales of many conversations, such as the conversations between *Zefir* and *Queen of Sheba*, who did not want to be held captive in the domestic reality. Therefore, showing marriage as an institution that obliges women to be subservient throughout their marriage period.

2.4 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. Moreover, the Nature journal article, written by Byatt, regarding her work, is a verification of these perspectives; as she states that her novels have a primary motif that knits together the different strands and standards of narratives. Byatt expatiates that the central motif for example in, *The Virgin*: a united sensibility between mind and body, informs both the narratives of Frederica Potter and Marcus, her brother: So my heroine, brooding about seventeenth-century metaphors in sensual language for what was beyond the sensual world, and my mathematician, were, in fact, struggling with the same problem (Byatt, 2005).

Byatt is primarily interested in reviving the mythic figure of women that celebrates deeply the female power. Furthermore, Byatt's interests, in Melusine for example, are not regarding the myth of being a mother or a wife, but also her being a strong individual. Byatt continues to advocate a modern image of myths and structures of mythical figures as independent strong females in order to overturn the conventional stereotypical perspectives of women being either tragic victims of love or monster-like. This suggests that Byatt's novels present a modern concept of possession in which a female writer and artist can be possessed without humiliating herself or losing her personal independent identity. Regarding the significant role Byatt is playing in postmodern literature, her works became a fundamental opportunity to evaluate, present and comprehend the contemporary British storytelling concerned with female issues (Al-Hadi, 2011).

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 & 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.

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

Narrative techniques and literary devices constitute several methods used to convey the author's ideas, which are conducted by establishing a narrative to relay information to the reader and improve the narrative itself, often to make it more complex and interesting (Abrams & Harpham, 2015). A reader can find several

techniques and devices in the works of A.S. Byatt, who has always been interested in fairy tales, from her years of reading fairytales and myths. For example, the five tales in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* are quite short that follows a narrative style known for this genre; while the title story is of the length of a novella that incorporates Byatt's desires and perspectives on a strong, independent female (The New York Times Book Review, 1997).

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 & 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).

The novel can be considered the most academic work in Byatt's collection; as the analysis and references of Shakespeare's plays, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the *Thousand and One Nights*, Greek myths, and tales' origins that transformed the storyline into an interesting environment of details. These details have helped the reader understand the heroine's feelings, hopes, and her life. The novel shares a few tales woven into this work, which are Patient Griselda, Gilgamesh, details on Turkish history, where the heroine visits the conference, and where she purchases a curiously-shaped bottle, in a Turkish bazaar, that houses the *djinn* (Kieda, 2015).

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.

3 THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES BY ANGELA CARTER

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Angela Carter (1940-1992) started as a journalist while studying medieval literature, which helped her develop a multifaceted manner of writing in the works she created. Carter began her journey with radio plays, children's stories, poetry, film scripts, criticism of various kinds, and journalism; however, she is mainly accepted as an author of fiction with four collections of short stories and nine novels between 1966 and 1993. The author employs an argumentative approach in her work; especially as she believes that emphasizes the importance of such practice. Although the author's subject matter differs in every work, she focuses on the concept of challenging the long-established quotidian notions. Establishing these arguments presents alternative options in realizing these notions such as sexuality, gender, and multifarious concepts, which were engraved into society (Bartu, 2014). Having examined the strife of the oppressed and the oppressor, the author elaborates upon these challenges by saying:

I spent a good many years being told what I ought to think, and how I ought to behave, and how I ought to write, even, because I was a woman and men thought they had the right to tell me how to feel, but then I stopped listening to them and tried to figure it out for myself but they didn't stop talking, oh, dear no. So I started answering back. How simple, not to say simplistic, this all sounds; and yet it is true (Carter, 1992: 5).

As it is stated in the previous quote, Carter's perception and argument focus on the challenges facing women in society. The author attempts to emphasize the relativity of the circumstances and ideas regarding the differences in gender. Furthermore, Carter's work deliberately reflects and promotes her arguments and beliefs in discrepant concepts among genders. In a previous interview, Carter stated that "*women are people too*" and depending upon the diverse circumstances, she emphasized that the circumstances facing women are quite different from the ones facing men (Haffenden, 1985). Still, Carter does not use her fiction to the service of a specific concept of feminism using her writings as an instrument for agitation and propaganda. She writes about the overall circumstances of her gender in culture and life and defines the ground women are standing upon incessantly. In this regard, the author mentions the relationship between feminism and her work consistently:

It's been amazingly difficult, trying to sort out how I feel that feminism has affected my work, because that is really saying how it has affected my life and I don't really know that because I live my life, I don't examine it. . . Oh, hell. What I really like doing is writing fiction and trying to work things out *that* way. (Carter, 1983: 30).

Carter was primarily interested in the deconstruction of male-centric tropes that constantly deny the existence of female victimhood and virtue; thus, replacing them with a desire and crucial consciousness of her female heroines. The author deconstructed all the stereotypes connected with folk stories and reversed myth tropes and fairytales such as the maiden's incorruptibility, the innocence of virginity, the male hero's self-confidence, or the beast's absolute monstrosity (Bryndová, 2016).

The Bloody Chamber (1979) offers a discussion on the modern issues of women, a portrayal of gender in the media, and the political position of women. The collection offers a cultural criticism of contemporary society and a sub-textually that summarizes the discourses of post-contemporary feminism. The author's awareness of the public perceptions of sexuality and gender made it fundamental to intervene in the culture of the mainstream mass (Bryndová, 2016). Therefore, this chapter examines the images of women in Carter's work, the controversial elements seen in the contemporary society's culture, and understand the several female perspectives to untangle the figures from the restrictions of the sexist and patriarchal ideology.

3.2 The Narrator Heroines

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, this section follows three particular stories: *The Bloody Chamber*, *The Tiger's Bride*, and *The Erl-King* to examine the significant spectrum of modes that involve the heroines' circumstances in these stories and highlight the various genres and styles intertwining with each other.

3.2.1 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. Being aware of the fact that she is a teenager, she says that the Marquis:

Married three times within my own brief lifetime to three different graces, now, as if to demonstrate the eclecticism of his taste, ... I, the poor widow's child with my mouse-coloured hair that still bore the kinks of the plaits from which it had so recently been freed (Carter, 1995: 5).

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. As a woman-would-be and wife, the typical teenage bride wavers between her logic and love. For Manley (2001): *she is not always passive, however, but rather oscillates between being insecure and feeling sure of herself. She is a woman in process, someone who is exploring her subject position and beginning to tell her own story.*

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. In "*The Sadeian Woman*", Carter (2001: 6-7) explains the process:

Relationships between the sexes are determined by history and by the historical fact of the economic dependence of women upon men. This fact is now very largely a fact of the past and, even in the past, was only true for certain social groups and then only at certain periods. Today, most women work before, during and after marriage. Nevertheless, the economic dependence of women remains a believed fiction.

Following these words, the author parodies the economic dependence and obedience of women explicitly through her heroine's position in the Marquis' atmosphere of oppression. Carter subverts the idea she believes in as a postmodern and feminist writer and highlights it as the tale's ironic situation. Hutcheon (1989: 150) supports Carter's perspective by correlating postmodernism and feminism; as she states that:

While feminisms and postmodernism have both worked to help us understand the dominant representational modes at work in Western society, feminisms have focused on the specifically female subject of representation and have begun to suggest ways of challenging and changing those dominants in both mass culture and high art.

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. In addition, the Marquis is a predator whose sole goal is to consume and eat the things he covets; as, in this particular context, our heroine portrays him as a lion due to his well-built and big body, and the shape of his head. His consumption obsession appears in many corners of his life. Roemer (2001: 114) Believes that:

On the surface, the Marquis's appetites are varied: they are perversely sexual (had he not hinted that he was a connoisseur of such things? Carter, 1995: 16), economic (bankrupting a small business in Amsterdam (25)), criminal (he was

engaged in some business in Laos that must . . . be to with opium (25), elitist (My husband liked me to wear my opal over my kid glove, a showy, theatrical trick (13)), literary (in his library, row upon row of calf-bound volumes (16)), artistic (the picture gallery, a treasure house filled by five centuries of avid collectors (20)).

The peak phase of the Marquis's predatory hunger is heavily concentrated on the pornographic and sexual elements. Since his goal is to deplete things and people, the Marquis considers everything as items to be devoured. In this context, this new bride, the heroine, is now his victim, on the face of it, she is his wife; however, he sees her as his prey. This means that the heroine is the Marquis' toy that he can satisfy his sadistic and sexual needs through her. In the tale, when the Marquis sees the bride in a stylish dress, the bride explains the way he watches her as a narrator:

I saw him watching me in the gilded mirrors with the assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab. I'd never seen, or else had never acknowledged, that regard of his before, the sheer carnal avarice of it; . . . When I saw him look at me with lust, I dropped my eyes but, . . . And, for the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away. (Carter, 1995: 6).

In this situation, the author inserts the act of objectifying women and their bodies as meat and material before the eyes of the male. The heroine's body is completely transformed into food by the Marquis who tries to make his spouse the primary object of his sadistic desires. This highlights the concept of the "*male gaze*", which has been proposed by Mulvey (1999) who supported the idea that a male is a looker and the

subject; while the female is the object that is looked at. Mulvey presents a reciprocal correlation between sadism and voyeurism, which is similar to the Marquis' deviant situation:

Voyeurism has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness. This sadistic side fits in well with narrative. Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end (Mulvey, 1999: 833).

3.3 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 in medias res as *The Girl* suddenly states that: "My father lost me to *The Beast* in cards" (Carter, 1995: 58).

Traveling down to Italy from Russia, the daughter and father find themselves foreigners to the surrounding environment. However, the father has an inveterate obsession with card games and gambling that even after losing all his wealth due to gambling, he continues to gamble with *The Beast*. The gambler father becomes the reason his spouse died due to "his gaming, his whoring and his agonizing repentances" in the past (Carter, 1995: 59). On that unfortunate gambling night, *The Girl* is lost to *Milord* and she looks upon her situation saying:

Gambling is a sickness. My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards. He fanned them out; in the mirror, I saw wild hope light up his eyes. His collar was unfastened, his rumpled hair stood up on end, he had the anguish of a man in the last stages of debauchery. The draughts came out of the old walls and bit me, I was colder than I'd ever been in Russia, when nights are coldest there . . . You must not think my father valued me at less than a king's ransom; but, at no more than a king's ransom (Carter, 1995: 61).

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. *The Girl's* childhood nursemaids told her stories about a tiger-man who kidnaps children that misbehave to "*scare her into good behaviour*" (Carter, 1995: 63). Therefore, brought up with the concept of a children-devouring animal as a scary image, *The Girl* fears being the prey of *The Beast's* destructive sexual activity. Although, *The Girl* went through a dormant sexual consciousness with the old stories, her encounter with *The Beast* in human clothes becomes the very first actual revival of her desire. Realizing that she will be the object of *The Beast's* voyeuristic intentions, *The Girl* summarizes her transition from childhood to womanhood openheartedly, saying: "*I knew well enough the reason for the trepidation I cosily titillated with superstitious marvels of my childhood on the day my childhood ended. For now my own skin was my sole capital in the world and today I'd make my first investment*" (Carter, 1995: 64).

Regarding *The Girl's* transition to womanhood, Day (1998: 140) argues that:

This girl/woman/ Beauty is not being easily and lovingly transferred from girlhood into womanhood. She is making the shift apprehensively: her mind filled with factual knowledge of sex on the one hand, the contrasting rhetorics of fear of animality and of superstition about sex on the other; together with an

awareness of her own role as a flesh-object in a commodity system and a determination to play the game for all it was worth, since that was the hand she'd been dealt.

When arriving at *The Beast's* estate to pay the debt of her father, *The Girl* comes to a derelict castle with messy household items inside. *The Beast* waits for *The Girl* inside with an outfit of "*Ottoman design, a loose, dull purple gown with gold embroidery round the neck that falls from his shoulders to conceal his feet*" emblematic of his affluence (Carter, 1995: 66). Adding to the bleak environment, the valet who translates the words of his master and *Milord* himself are both quite grotesque and peculiar characters. Therefore, Brooke (2004) believes that the estate's atmosphere is created both by *The Beast* and the valet as an "... *embodiment of the uncanny, familiar yet not*". Among all these distorted elements, the most central figure is *The Beast* who is a tiger in human clothes, wig, and mask without being an enchanted individual in an animal body. *The Girl* (the tale's heroine), when she sees him, says that *The Beast* looks like a "*carnival figure made of papier mâché*" with the "*crêpe hair*" and "*mask concealing all the features*" (Carter, 1995: 58-60). As Bryant (1998) states: "*he never desires to alter his nature permanently, and his temporary attempts at a false disguise cause him to appear a garish parody of The Beast in humans that is so thinly and ...* "

The Beast did not succeed in having an identity because of his physical qualities; yet, when the creature's human nature is considered, *Milord* presents a distinct behavior. Neglecting the fact that he is an actual animal character, *Milord* is far more superior than other beasts from former tales in terms of sensibility and consideration (Bryant, 1998). For example, in the scene where the careless father wails about the loss of his *Girl* (the heroine), *Milord* roars: "*... If you are so careless of your treasures,*

you should expect them to be taken from you" (Carter, 1995: 62). As seen above in this story, the author employs parody through subversions and reversals of the conventional elements of the classical tales to give voice to the function and role of female identity through the tale's characters.

As proof of Carter's intention, neither *Milord* nor *The Girl* demonstrated the expected speech or attitude in the conventional sexist discourse. *Milord*, during the bargaining process, does not manifest any sign of rigorous attitude towards *The Girl*; as he does not assume the patriarchy's prerogatives by asking *The Girl* to wed him. *Milord's* only desire is to see her naked, without any clothes, as a reward for the bargain. Yet, the heroine considers this as a great insult and manifests a drastic passive aggressive behavior out of fury towards her owner (Rose, 1983). Rebelling against *Milord* with a rather ironic reaction, *The Girl* says:

You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once. After that I must be driven directly to the city and deposited in the public square, in front of the church. If you wish to give me money, then I should be pleased to receive it. But I must stress that you should give me only the same amount of money that you would give to any other woman in such circumstances. However, if you choose not to give me a present, then that is your right. (Carter, 1995: 67).

The Beast sheds a single tear upon the ironic words of the heroine; yet, after this courageous remark, she is placed in a cell with another individual "*to assuage her*

loneliness" (Carter, 1995: 68). 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.

3.4 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. *The Erl-King's* eyes are green and "*can eat you*" (Carter, 1995: 103). The heroine describes him:

His kitchen shakes and shivers with birdsong from cage upon cage of singing birds, larks and linnets, which he piles up one on another against the wall, a wall of trapped birds. How cruel it is, to keep wild birds in cages! But he laughs at me when I say that; laughs, and shows his white, pointed teeth with the spittle gleaming on them. (Carter, 1995: 104).

As the story progresses, 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. The concepts of sexuality and food are represented more explicitly, which can be seen as she says:

... in the evenings when the cold darkness settles down, I always go to the Erl-King and he lays me down on his bed of rustling straw where I lie at the mercy

of his huge hands. He is the tender butcher who showed me how the price of flesh is love; skin the rabbit, he says! Off come all my clothes. (Carter, 1995: 104).

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. She continues to relish the beautiful nature as she is lured into the woods' deeper parts. Carter preferred to use the birdsong as the heroine's invitation to enter the natural mysterious scenery of the forest. The birdsong signifies something beautiful and gentle; yet, after she realizes that *The Erl-King* cages the birds, she tries to face him without any success (Mehulic, 2018).

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).

The Erl-King is the sexually seductive character targeting the beautiful and young heroine and he is the character connected to the story's sexual violence. In the meantime, he enchanted the heroine with his green eyes like the forest and with the tuneful birdsong. Whenever the heroine hears his pipe, she comes to *The Erl-King* immediately and falls into his arms and, though she knows he is threatening, she remains obedient to him and to his love tune. She experiences sexual delight with *The Erl-King* and fears leaving him; even though he does not consider her his equal. *The Erl-King* is the character who is responsible for metaphorical cannibalization in the tale. For example, the heroine claims that his eyes are so beautifully dark and green; yet, she points out that his eyes "*can eat you*" (Carter, 1995: 103).

The Erl-King is consuming the heroine metaphorically with his gaze, stripping her dress as if she is only an item. He is a character compared to a slaughterer when they have sex (105). In addition, he is a heartless, cruel humanlike beast who sees her as his prey; especially, as the heroine is objectified, in every part of the tale, by *The Erl-King* and she is the character without any power or control. This can be noticed in their sexual relationship as *The Erl-King* desires to strip her skin like he strips a rabbit's fur to see her undressed (105).

While reading the story, the reader can see that the heroine is again innocent, young, and trapped by a fantastical male creature. 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. While other heroines in the collection find happiness in relationships with men, the heroine in *The Erl-King* entirely rejects them and aims to replace them as the sole creator and powerful character (Katarina, 2018).

3.5 The Married Woman in *The Bloody Chamber*

From the very beginning, the married female protagonist warns the reader, without much delay, about the uncertainty of her condition; as she was marching "*away from girlhood ... into the unguessable country of marriage*" (Carter, 1995: 1). The

descriptions, like the protagonist, are at first incredibly delicate, unsure, unsteady, and compelled in a sense and soon enough, the reader is introduced to her mother, the second female character, who seems steady, calm, subordinate, and experienced at first, but she starts to gradually assume the characteristics of an omnipotent and powerful senior figure, showing a guardian angel in disguise. Therefore, the feminist critique of fairy tales is not a new idea, but it has recently seen a resurgence. This critique is based on the premise that fairy tales and other stories with female protagonists perpetuate negative images of women. According to this perspective, the princesses and other female characters in these stories are often depicted in two ways: Helpless victims or Scheming villains. There is a longstanding problem with the way women are portrayed in fairy tales (Katarina, 2018).

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 & 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.

By reading these stories from a feminist perspective, one can start to dismantle the institutionalized sexism that pervades society. Henceforth, this part analyzes the images present within the stipulated fairytales seen in *The Bloody Chamber* with the images of women suffering and struggling within the context of their marriages (Bernhardt, 2019).

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. 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. The stereotypes of male dominance and power are seen within the backdrop of *The Bloody Chamber*. This also shows that male dominance is the way a male controls women as objects (Nogueira & Silva, 2019).

The 1869 publication of *The Subjection of Women* for Mill (1869) is a work that speaks to the women's rights movement (Smith, 2001). In Victorian England, the subjection of women was a societal norm, which was often justified by the idea that women lacked reasoning ability and intellectual capacity and; therefore, should be submissive to men (Smith, 2001). This is the argument Mill addresses here and he does not mince words when discussing the realities of what life for women can be in his time. Concisely, Mill believes that women need to have the same rights as men.

Mill also campaigned for men's equality and rebuked the notion of men's inequality. Carter stated that most of the feminist stereotypes within the play's backdrop are the realities of what happens in modern society. Mill published the book to fight for feminist rights by describing them as equal genders as males within the community (Mill, 1869). He also argues that women are subjected to gender inequality and discrimination because they are not accorded the same rights and opportunities as men. Additionally, he contends that the subordination of women is not simply a matter of custom or tradition but is underpinned by rational reasons. Because women are biologically passive and emotionally unstable, they are inherently less capable than men of making autonomous decisions (Smith, 2001). The stereotypes of male dominance and power are seen within the context of the novel when it comes to property-owning. According to Carter, the female gender has suffered the torture of not having property-owning right for decades.

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. Furthermore, Engels, as Engels an intellectual architect of socialist feminism that advocated for gender equality, thinks that families are necessary for developing civilization because they are responsible for socializing children. Families are also responsible for teaching children about right and wrong, which is essential for their development as humans.

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).

Carter's visit to Japan taught her the way to be a woman and became radicalized. Her response to critics was by stating that women's perceived inferiority creates human imagination that is nothing short of a myth. For her, women must write fiction as women, it is part of the slow process of freeing women's realization and their essential habits of thought. Moreover, it is to do with creating a means of expression for an infinitely greater variety of experiences than has been possible; therefore, to say things for which no language previously existed (Carter, 1983).

3.6 The Independent Woman in *The Bloody Chamber*

The Bloody Chamber involves multiple stereotypes that fall into feminism, oppression, and discrimination. The female independency state caused by the male character due to dominance counts among the present stereotypes (Nogueira & Silva, 2019). According to Carter's storyline of the novel *The Bloody Chamber*, the characters are primarily associated with relationships. For instance, the mother, wife, and daughter are all the best characters in the scene. However, all exist independently and have their capabilities limited by a man. The alternation of passivity and strength

happens between *The Tiger's Bride* and *The Bloody Chamber* (McDowell, 2005). For example, the young girl who is the daughter of a Russian nobleman finds herself lonely while fighting for her freedom. Also, Carter responds to the feminist stereotypes of independence by writing several patriarchal narratives (Nogueira & Silva, 2019). The other occasions of women assuming the role of independency are through females taking the protagonist role from the male (Cuciureanu, 2002).

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. This situation is supported by the maids who expect the narrator to behave the way they request. Previously, the heroine lived with her mother in completely different conditions and was educated about the freedom of the contemporary world. Moving to the castle made her move to a historical and traditional environment and she is expected to behave the way the historical and traditional position of a female demands (Munford, 2006).

The author is simultaneously illustrating the historical persecution of women and the derogatory relationship encouraged by the surrounding society. It is noteworthy, that for the mistreatment, she blames not just the male but also the other female characters. This shows that Carter does not view women as martyrs of the time, but puts a portion of the guilt on them for their historical position, for either passively accepting or encouraging the oppression (Bryndová, 2016). The most analyzed part of *The Bloody Chamber* is the dynamic relationship between the heroine and the Marquis. Marquis is an excessively violent, dominant, and wealthy man who manifests himself in a feudal position. While he is establishing himself as superior in power, intelligence, and experience, the heroine is constantly placed in a position of a dependent child. The author exaggerates the gender differences intentionally by letting the Marquis represent the hyper masculine and stereotypical violent elements; while on the contrary, the narrator is a pubescent and vulnerable woman. Moreover, Carter emphasizes the dynamics between the genders by switching to power-fueled relationships with clearly defined roles as sadomasochist dynamics.

The narrator feels compelled to surrender herself to the Marquis, but instead of completely losing her own personality and identity under his command, she begins to explore her identity and gains sexual awareness. She also realizes she actually desires to sexually submit, but also begins to realize the significance of distinguishing her sexuality from her social position; saying:

I lay in bed alone. And I longed for him. And he disgusted me. (Carter, 19).

Carter continues to raise the question of whether a modern abused or even oppressed woman has the right to want sexual submission. She 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.

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

In the introduction of her article, Sheets (1991) believes that *The Bloody Chamber* must be discussed nowadays for two reasons. The first reason is that fiction work constitutes an essential part of the modern discourse on female sexuality; while the second is that an interdisciplinary method is needed for reading imaginative writings about the concept of sexuality. *The Bloody Chamber* presents a modern perspective on the *Bluebeard* tale; while in the original one, the primary focus was on *Bluebeard*, Carter changed the narrator's role from being an observing character to the protagonist heroine. From the postmodern perspective, this technique enables the reader to examine the classical narrative of the silenced woman from a new point of view. Furthermore, by leading with a female first-person narrator, the author applies a

technique of erotica authors, which, enables the readers to take a dominant perspective over the narrator, as she mentioned in *The Sadeian Woman* (Carter, 1979).

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. The narrative highlights the heroine's leaving her mother for the Marquis; showing that she accepts her position voluntarily as a passive part of society and is doing everything to satisfy her partner under the assumption that this role is fated for her:

He had loved to surprise me (...) but that perfume of spiced leather always betrayed him; after my first shock, I was forced always to mimic surprise, so that he would not be disappointed. (Carter, 1995: 3).

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. On the other hand, as the reader becomes lost due to the continuous shift in the narrative, time, and tense, the ideas of mortality and sexuality constantly intertwine. *The Bloody Chambers* keeps the layers of fear, tension, suspense, horror, gore, landscapes, nature's power, isolated settings, ruin rational vs belief, eroticism, sexuality, and feminism.

4 CONCLUSION

The general conflict between the logical perspective of reality and the supernatural settings in literature has been of significant interest to the ones who show the way fictional elements interrupt and fade in the natural course of life mainly to affirm reality's course. The blend of the fiction aspects with reality results in a fictional reality where the line between fiction and fact is usually deliberately unfathomable. Both Carter and Byatt are famous exponents of the fictional reality in Britain; as their fictional works wreak havoc on fantasy and naivety in common fairytales in order to reveal the world's bleak reality and its injustices.

The authors make their readers move from intoxication to self-realization and from the sentimental to the rational when they transform the common romances and folklore to show other plots. In this regard, such a writing style always keeps old tales and myths up to date by linking them together with modern motifs and themes (Yahya, 2017). The efforts presented by both writers aim primarily to highlight the individual issues of women and society when these polished fairytales are given deliberate motifs and themes.

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.

This final chapter presents a comparative analysis between Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* and Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* to identify the various themes that highlight the roles of heroines and princesses. Both collections work on revealing society's sickness by shining a light on the concepts of marriage and women's independence from males through the use of narrative techniques and literary devices. Furthermore, the collections can be read with different breaths, especially, when the fictional elements are thoroughly comprehended. The clearest excursion of Byatt into the fairytale structure is *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* (1994). More than half of the collection is generally devoted to the title story, a story written in the Oriental folklore that dates back to the publication of *The Arabian Nights*, which was translated by Antoine Galland (1704–1717).

As discussed in the previous chapters, the first two fairytales are extracted from *Possession*, a translocation that opens a discussion between the fairytales and their native place of creation (Todd, 1997). Of the remaining tales, *The Story of the Eldest Princess* was published originally in the anthology *Caught in a Story* (Sacido-Romero & Lojo-Rodríguez, 2018).

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).

When she faces a wounded scorpion, which needs help from a wise woman who lives at the forest's other end, the princess states:

I could just walk out of this inconvenient story and go my own way ... just leave the Road and look for my own adventures ... It would make no difference to the Quest. I should have failed if I left the Road and then the next could set off. (Byatt, 1994).

Understanding the loopholes in the fairytales' injunction not to abandon the beaten way, the princess enters the forest, acquiring other companions along the path, until she sees the woman's home. Here, "*no story*" exists, "*we are free, as old women are free, who don't have to worry about princes or kingdoms, but dance alone and take an interest in the creatures*" (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. From the beginning, Carter's (1974) *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* was her first short-fiction collection that included strikingly experimental pieces, which exhibited several defining characteristics of literary postmodernism; therefore, making her among the most prominent initiators in Britain. Her later collection, *The Bloody Chamber* received much more pivotal interest; as the composition of the profane pieces and tales was related mainly to her experience and journey to learn the way to become a woman, which made her a radical author (1983).

Carter's new realization of female predicaments and her idiosyncratic affiliations to feminism, which is shown through the course of her career, found a privileged literary expression of fiction in the short story. For example, *The Bloody Chamber* stories associate the role of the storyteller with the grandmother and; consequently, a tool of the patriarchy. As for Byatt, she reclaims the character "spinster" as an individual released from the bonds of sexual lust and the patriarchal narratives of inheritance and marriage.

The relationship that the princess has with the wise woman is grandmotherly. Therefore, the work of Carter and Byatt underlines writing and reading as two activities that guide the female/author's quest for her identity. Stories, myths, and poems are integrated into the primary narrative as intertexts that the female author reads to rewrite them and establish her own narratives. Reading the work of their female ancestors connects women writers and readers to the female custom and makes them realize the politics of gender and their existence in society and their narratives.

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.

In *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, Gillian's comprehension of herself, in an act that brings together a female's transnationalism, identity, and the practice of storytelling, shows the benefits of her transcultural journey. The character's success can be analyzed in terms of her assimilation of the three aspects of culture; material, cognitive, and social (Nünning, 2014). This particular example that discusses the protagonist of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* is meant to reveal Byatt's ability to integrate the cognitive and social aspects through the character's interaction with other characters and the *Djinn*. Furthermore, Byatt also manages to integrate the social and material aspects of *The Eldest Princess* in terms of the character's interest in reaching, history, and her engagement with literature. Byatt stated herself, in her contribution to the issues of the millennial, that tales are similar to genes as they keep a part of humans alive after the story ends (2001).

Storytelling creates a fertile ground for crossing challenges across space and time; particularly, in its immortality to discover the implications of the transcultural and transnational experience for the configuration of female identities and for the fictionalization of encounters between the West and the East. This is also seen in Byatt's collection, which depicts her female protagonists as enthusiastic writers/readers who decode the gendered symbols first in narratives of the present and past; subsequently in their own lives as they redefine and revise the female identity.

After discussing Byatt's work, Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* presents a set of transformative short stories from tales of innocent children into adult stories with deliberate themes of liberty and subjugation. *The Bloody Chamber* established the author's fame as a fictional realist mythologizer; as it opens different horizons in criticism because the conclusions of this structure of stories result in the heroines' epiphany and not the heroes; therefore, announcing the feminist roles and voices. In addition, *The Bloody Chamber* presents the wealthy Marquis who buys his impoverished, new, and beautiful pride to engulf, to control her, and devour her innocence and pureness through perversion". Carter offers the inclusion of *dues-ex-machina* that helps the heroine dispense with the complicated circumstance to reach self-determination, freedom, and equality (Munford 2006).

Carter uses the structure of fairytales as an approach to explore female desire, sexuality, and power. The females in these tales have real voices, which did not nearly exist in the original tales. In addition, she transports the tales to the confines of contemporary society and considers actual problems such as the limitations of gender and the representation of women. The author is rewriting the conventional narratives and tales in a newly modified and constituted structure and form.

Through her literary work, *The Bloody Chamber*, she delineates the ancient traditional elements, cultural orientations, and culture itself. Also, the roles of gender in the current day are not an aspect that is to be outdated and excluded; however, they require new reformations and definitions. Thus, the current society can assimilate and adapt easily as pre the era demands. *The Bloody Chamber* argues that the concept of culture is constantly dynamic; as it constantly changes according to age. Therefore, the author attempts in redefining traditional femininity to create a harmonized society; where no biases and discrimination exist between females and males (Baral, 2019).

From the researcher's perspective, in the stories of *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter concentrates mainly on the methods of subject formation; particularly, the formation of sexual identities and gender. She uses traditional mythological stories and fairytales in her literary manifestations with a different approach, unlike other writers. She draws conventional stories to reveal current societal systems of belief and their historical origins; thus, revealing the modern popular representations of culture. This shows that gender is a performance and not absolute; as men also have feminine characteristics and women have masculine characteristics; yet, society is the one that establishes a hierarchy between females and males. Carter and Byatt do not only argue for the resistance of the traditional perspective of society; but also, for the equidistance between females and males that can create a harmonious connection between both.

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.

That writing and reading have an essential role in the female character's existence and is the primary theme examined in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*. In most of Byatt's work, myths and tales have a fundamental role in the narratives of the past; as they emerge as the element that establishes the text itself. In her work, reading is manifested as a practice that drives female readers to reassess their present subject positions. In Carter's work as well, the readers are presented with rewritings of conventional myths and fairytales to reread the present texts with a critical perspective. Within the frame-story of their work, Byatt and Carter revisit the old fairytales and myths only to write their own stories as women in modern society.

In conclusion, just as the characters in their novels, Carter and Byatt prove themselves as subtle readers behind their fictional realm. Both understand the close interaction between writing and reading many genres and incorporating them into their fictional narration. In this regard, it can be stated that writing is an existential dimension for the female characters in the works of Carter and Byatt; as in their quest for role and identity, reading the works of the past offer the characters the links to the female custom. This shows that the authors' characters depend on narrating and writing tales that give them a rational sense of society and their roles in it.

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