

CHAPTER THREE: ENCLOSURES WITHIN CARTER'S STORYTELLING FRAMEWORK

The backdrop of the different texts studied in this dissertation may be a sound indicator of the inductive quality of the narration. The setting is essential to the plot in Carter's tales; they are the props that link one tale to another in the same way that location is important with regards to ritual. John Hilary Martin discusses the importance of location in ritual in *Bringing the Power of the Past into the Present: Murrinh-patha Ritual*. He notes:

Location has a great deal to do with what can be described as the shaping and the tempo of ritual action. If a ritual is assigned to be held in a cave with a long, narrow and restricted entrance, we can expect that the audience will feel a constriction that will increase the tension of the rites performed there

(33-34)

As a genre, the fairytale encompasses a narrow universe, which in Carter's appropriations is often encapsulated in a maze-like and enclosing setting; this is also reflective of the Gothic. I shall not delve too deeply into the Gothic as a genre, but for the purposes of this dissertation I will consider it in relation to enclosures, which represent the background of the plots (rituals) of the tales.

Armitt notes that the narratives within *The Bloody Chamber* are often Gothic, leading the reader from frame to frame (95-96). She says:

“The Bloody Chamber” itself follows this dynamic, luring us into a false sense of narrative security in which the precise boundaries between the internal (present) and external (retrospective) time sequences remain clear. But as we progress through the tales as a whole, the apparent limitation imposed upon each as discrete spatio-temporal (and even textual) entities are breached by the type of narrative overspill already witnessed between ‘The Lady of the House of Love’ and ‘The Erl-King’. In other words, images, symbols and motifs from one story turn up in another in a way that reiterates and reworks the concerns of a previous vignette. As a whole, this multiplicity of interconnecting frames is, like the contents of the coffin, only precariously encased within the larger frame of the whole (95-96)

The enclosures that Armitz discusses can be found throughout the tales studied in this dissertation. There are gloomy mansions and secret pathways into the woods, the use of claustrophobic settings as background to the events taking place. And more importantly, the events that occur are often quite far removed from everyday life in such a way that assures one that what is being read is a hidden world of symbols and representations. This can be linked to Turner’s definition and explication of “liminality” (95).

In speaking of the liminal, Turner notes that

During the intervening “liminal” period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) are ambiguous; her passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or the coming state (94)

Therefore, the enclosures in Carter’s tales may be read as this “cultural realm” (94) which inducts the subject into Van Gennep’s “rites de passage” (94)²⁰, and Carter has done this via the agency of Gothic devices. Carter observes that the Gothic includes

cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious – mirrors; the externalized self; forsaken castles; haunted forests; forbidden sexual objects. Formally the tale differs from the short story in that it makes few pretences at the imitation of life. The tale does not log everyday experience, as the short story does; it interprets everyday experience through a system of imagery derived from subterranean areas behind everyday experience, and therefore the tale cannot betray its readers into a false knowledge of everyday experience (*Burning Your Boats* 459)

It is relevant to note Carter’s assertions that the Gothic consists of “fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious” (459) since the same could be said of the fairytale genre which Carter draws upon in her tales. Also, her assertions tie in quite well with what James Hillman has said about the subterranean “underworld” of the Psyche. In *The*

Dream and the Underworld, James Hillman refers to these subconscious enclosures as “the Underworld” (46). He explains

Put more bluntly: underworld is psyche. When we use the word *underworld*, we are referring to a wholly psychic perspective, where one’s entire mode of being has been desubstantialized, killed of natural life, and yet is in every shape and sense and size the exact replica of natural life. The underworld Ba of Egypt and the underworld *psyche* of Homeric Greece was the whole person as in life but devoid of life. This means that the underworld perspective radically alters our experience of life. It no longer matters on its own terms but only in terms of the psyche. To know the psyche at its basic depths, for a true depth psychology, one must go to the underworld. (46)

Hillman is referring to the topology of the subconscious and dreaming states, as opposed to the waking consciousness. In many ways, the enclosures of Carter’s tales, the different motifs within them, symbolize the underworld, rife with symbolism and meanings that continuously change with the surroundings. Joseph Campbell²¹ has commented on these enclosures in mythology:

And so it happens that if anyone – in whatever society – undertakes for himself the perilous journey into the darkness by descending, either intentionally or unintentionally, into the crooked lanes of his own spiritual

labyrinth, he soon finds himself in a landscape of symbolical figures (any one of which may swallow him) [. . .] (101)

This can be read in partial harmony with Carter's narrative dreamscapes, which are filled with highly symbolic figures within the binaries I have delineated in preceding chapters. Most of the narratives selected for this dissertation feature an inducting, enclosing space within which the narrated events take place. These enclosures dictate the resolution of each piece and represent a chamber of some sort. They may also be taken as Carter's nod to the Gothic.

One of the most "gothic" of Carter's tales is the title tale in the anthology, *The Bloody Chamber*, which reworks the fairytale "Bluebeard" while outlining a blueprint of the sadistic patriarch in the figure of the Marquis. The narrative in that tale moves from enclosure to enclosure, from the past of the "white, enclosed quietude of my mother's apartment" to the wagon of a train (7), to the box that held her wedding dress and another which held her wedding ring:

He had the ring ready in a leather box lined with crimson velvet, a fire opal the size of a pigeon's egg. (9)

These preliminary enclosures with their wealth of detail encompassing jewels and "gilded mirrors" reflect the confines of the fairytale "Bluebeard", because it all comes down to the forbidden chamber that marks the downfall of the heroine. The tales revolving around "Bluebeard" always denote that the chamber is the site of the heroine's transgression, linking it

to her forbidden, sexual curiosity, even adulterous intent (Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales* 161).

However, in “The Bloody Chamber” the enclosures of that one portentous receptacle has been linked with the different enclosures the ingénue has been progressing from throughout her young existence. It marks the confines of her life as well as her rite of passage throughout the story. The masculine trappings²² of this chamber of perversity foreshadow the other enclosures within Carter’s subversive texts in the anthology, which unveil different associations and meanings.

One of the tales in which the sense of an enclosure becomes synonymous with the female protagonist of the tale itself is “The Lady of the House of Love”. Here, the house and the roses become a metaphor for the attrition that takes place within the story. In other tales, the “reflection”²³ often represents a very important medium of transformation²⁴. Like “The Bloody Chamber”, “The Lady of the House of Love” is a tale with marked Gothic undertones, although based on the fairytale of “Sleeping Beauty”. The difference lies in the fact that “Beauty” is the heir of a vampiric dynasty, being the last of the line of Vlad the Impaler²⁵, (94).

Her Transylvanian castle is an extension of the other backdrops in Carter’s oeuvre, featuring the trademarks that Carter has noted in the above quotation. The tale also features any number of theriomorphic motifs: this Sleeping Beauty has been identified by the narrator with felines (95), the same as the native girl in “Master”, and countless male/female characters within the

framework of her tales. Mirrors have an added significance here, particularly because it is well known that vampires have no reflection. The story opens:

At last the revenants became so troublesome the peasants abandoned the village and it fell solely into the possession of subtle and vindictive inhabitants who manifest their presences by shadows, even at midday, shadows that have no source in anything visible; by the sound, sometimes, of sobbing in a derelict bedroom where a cracked mirror suspended from a wall does not reflect a presence; by a sense of unease that will afflict the traveler unwise enough to pause to drink from the fountain in the square that still gushes spring water from a faucet stuck in a stone lion's mouth. (*Bloody Chamber* 93)

It is significant that the tale opens with absence. The village has been abandoned and the shadows "have no source in anything visible" (93).

The sentence suggests a peculiar sort of negation since a shadow generally emanates from a material entity or source, but in this case it is denied one. This would generally suggest an invisible presence. However, couched in Carter's choice of words, the sentence is markedly deprived of an object. This is a state of affairs heightened by the fact that the mirror on the wall is not only "cracked" but also "does not reflect a presence" (93). It is as though the Lady is a non-presence, a total negation of existence in more ways than one. The Lady's feline attributes and attraction to the leonine hero remind one of other heroines. A particularly interesting

comparison may be made with the ingénue of “The Tiger’s Bride” who is struck by her first glimpse of the Tiger, by the “annihilating vehemence of his eyes, like twin suns.”(64). Here, however, the tale is markedly inversed as the Lady is the “place of annihilation” itself,

Her voice is filled with distant sonorities, like reverberations in a cave: now you are at the place of annihilation, now you are at the place of annihilation. And she is herself a cave full of echoes, she is a system of repetitions, she is a closed circuit. ‘Can a bird sing only the song it knows or can it learn a new song?’ (93)

The Lady is likened to a cave, which is an enclosure linked to a place of annihilation. This enclosure is much like the room of the mirror in “Reflections” where thesis and antithesis create negation and violence. She is also a “system of repetitions”, a fact that is stressed by the repetition of “now you are at the place of annihilation” (93). The Lady is a relevant landmark within the context of the enclosures, mazes and systems within systems since she seems to be part and parcel of a landscape that seems synonymous with “annihilation” (93). As such, she makes an interesting contrast with the wolf-girl in “Peter and the Wolf”.

In “Peter and the Wolf”, the hero's cousin is a girl who runs with the wolves, not unlike her counterpart “Wolf -Alice”. She too, was lost as an infant and raised by wolves. Unlike Alice, however, she manages to escape the snare of civilization. Her very wildness and natural state of being is what evokes a transformation in her cousin Peter, unlike what occurs in “Wolf-Alice”.

Peter first sees his cousin amongst the wolves (385). This leads to her capture and subsequent escape from captivity, injuring the grandmother in the process. His first glimpse of what leads to his own version of epiphany is of her vulva, which Carter describes in what is an interesting play of the idea of enclosed spaces first come across in “The Erl-King”:

Her lips opened up as she howled so that she offered him, without her own intention or volition, a view of a set of Chinese boxes of whorled flesh that seemed to open one upon another into herself, drawing him into an inner, secret place in which destination perpetually receded before him, his first, devastating, vertiginous intimation of infinity.

(Burning Your Boats 287)

The enclosure here seems to be that of the contained space within the wolf-girl’s feminine organs, the unknown wilderness of the female consciousness emblemized by her vagina. In “The Laugh of the Medusa”, Cixous likens the idea of the feminine to the idea of Africa being the “Dark Continent”, something unknown and to be feared. According to Cixous, this is something that women have been indoctrinated in:

As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they’re taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can’t see anything in the dark, you’re afraid. Don’t move, you might fall. Most of all, don’t go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark (114)

It is this sense of horror and vertigo that seems to be afflicting Peter, encapsulated in the very wild persona of his cousin. She represents the dark unknown which he is both drawn to and afraid of. In “Desire and the Female Grotesque”, Betty Moss analyses this moment within the text of “Peter and the Wolf” as significant because it denotes a fear of over-abundance rather than that of negation/castration theorized by Freud (195). That may be so, but the feminine is also portrayed here as a maze: vertiginous and another kind of construct. Textually, the narrative may sound familiar for the reader of *The Bloody Chamber*; the roads moving deeper into the metaphoric forest marking the unknown can also be found in “The Erl-King”:

The woods enclose. You step between the first trees and then you are no longer in the open air; the wood swallows you up. There is no way through the wood any more, this wood has reverted to its original privacy. Once you are inside it, you must stay there until it lets you out again for there is no clue to guide you through in perfect safety; grass grew over the tracks years ago and now the rabbits and the foxes make their own runs in the subtle labyrinth. [. . .] The woods enclose and then enclose again, like a system of Chinese boxes opening one into another; the intimate perspectives of the wood changed endlessly around the interloper, the imaginary traveler walking towards an invented distance that perpetually receded before me. It is easy to lose yourself in these woods. (*The Bloody Chamber* 84-85)

The above narrative speaks of an enclosing wood which is both claustrophobic and disorienting. There is also the sense that this forest is a construct and representative of something else. This may be gleaned by: “the imaginary traveler walking towards an invented distance that perpetually receded before me” (85).

This labyrinth of words is a construct, which the “me” in the tale proceeds to shatter in the pivotal moments towards the end of the narrative. The narrator takes on the role of a girl seduced by the Erl-King, a man of the woods who is at once wild but also a civilizing force, who creates tools out of the harvest of the forest and transforms young girls into caged birds (87). The Erl-King is an agent of patriarchy within the textual woods of this fairytale. By ending his life, the female narrator of “The Erl-King” is reclaiming the woods from patriarchy.

I find it relevant and particularly telling that the forest of the Erl-King finds its way into the later narration of “Peter and the Wolf”, as represented by the genitalia of the girl-wolf. She is obviously an embodiment of the idea behind the other half-wild girls in Carter’s tales who can also be identified with the enclosures within the tales. Clarissa Pinkola Estes in *Women who run with the wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* refers to the “wild woman” as an integral feminine archetype which “belongs to all women” (22). Indeed, they seem vital to many of the tales within Carter’s anthology.

In more than one instance, the deliverance of the female protagonist seems to be effected through a return to a state of wildness represented by theriomorphic motifs, which has been discussed by Estes. Estes approaches the trope or archetype of the wild woman from her stance

of a known Jungian psychoanalyst, storyteller and collector of folktales. Although Carter did not validate representations of mythic archetypes as something authentic, she did utilize the trope of the wild woman more than once. Therefore, I feel it is relevant to refer to Estes's work.

Estes notes that:

A healthy woman is much like a wolf: robust, chock-full, strong life force, life-giving, territorially aware, inventive, loyal, roving. Yet, separation from the wildish nature causes a woman's personality to become meager, thin, ghostly, spectral. We are not meant to be puny with frail hair and inability to leap up, inability to chase, to birth, to create a life. When women's lives are in stasis or filled with ennui, it is always time for the wildish woman to emerge; it is time for the creating function of the psyche to flood the delta.

(11)

This "wildish woman" may be a symbol of Beauvoir's "Other", but she is also present in more than one of Carter's stories. In "The Tiger's Bride", Beauty finds her way out of the trap woven by patriarchy by reverting to a primeval state of being, and this occurs again in "The Company of Wolves".

There have been detractors to Carter's textual discourses. Robert Clark, for instance, argues that the "positive aspects" (149) of "The Company of Wolves" arrive

at the cost of accepting patriarchal limits to women's power: the woman is pursued, surrounded, implicitly threatened. The wolf is agent, she is responsive object. (149)

This seems to suggest that Carter is subscribing to the very dialectic against which she is opposed.

As mentioned in Chapter One, Carter has indicated in *The Sadeian Woman* that there is a place beyond the polarities of being victim and aggressor, a place of synthesis which is often reached through disruption. I am therefore of the opinion that the wild male beasts within the tales are not necessarily patriarchal representations. That is a linear reading that does not do Carter justice, especially when one takes into account the subversive and empowering role the wildness plays in her tales. Wildness can be an agent of awakening, and a leveler between tropes, even though it is a trope in itself. For instance, in "Master", the animal attributes of the girl/slave's tribe's totem help to release her from the cruel bind she finds herself in.

It would also be wise to note that there are two kinds of transformation occurring within Carter's tales. One of these seems to represent a civilizing process, as is evident within "Wolf-Alice" whilst the other is the process of returning to wilderness. In "Peter and the Wolf" a second moment of epiphany is apprehended by Peter when he is fourteen years old and on his way to a seminary in town to pursue a priestly career (289). He is confronted by the tableau of his wild cousin:

She could never have acknowledged that the reflection beneath her in the river was that of herself. She did not know she had a face; she had never known she had a face and so her face itself was the mirror of a different kind of consciousness than ours is, just as her nakedness, without innocence or display, was that of our first parents, before the Fall. She was hairy as Magdalen in the wilderness and yet repentance was not within her comprehension.

Language crumbled into dust under the weight of her speechlessness. (290)

The silence of the female protagonist gains new currency in this tableau. It transforms Peter's perception because "now he knew there was nothing to be afraid of" and therefore "experienced the vertigo of freedom"(291). Here, the wolf-girl represents a view that directly contrasts with that of the bourgeoisie sensibilities that Peter has been raised with. The transformation that takes place at the end of this story occurs when some sort of identification occurs within Peter's self. This identification and conversion of paradigms is not complete, because Peter does not want to look back at the mountain of his birth, but some sort of transformation has begun to take root (291).

Peter could not help it, he burst out crying. He had not cried since his grandmother's funeral. Tears rolled down his face and splashed on the grass. He blundered forward a few steps into the river with his arms held open, intending to cross over to the other side to join her in her marvelous and

private grace, impelled by the access of an almost visionary ecstasy. But her cousin took fright at the sudden movement, wrenched her teats away from the cubs and ran off. The squeaking cubs scampered behind. She ran on hands and feet as if that were the only way to run towards the high ground, into the bright maze of the uncompleted dawn. (290)

The “bright maze” leads us back to the enclosed spaces which induct the reader into the site of transformation (290). The idea of “crossing over” the boundaries between male-female territories have been dealt with before in Carter’s tales. In “Peter and the Wolf”, even though his attempt to fully cross over is interrupted by the wolf-girl’s flight, Peter has been touched and transformed by the encounter. In this particular instance, the fact that the girl seems to symbolize the figures within Christian iconography even though she stands for everything it was against, leads to a wavering in Peter’s decision to join a seminary, though the conclusion is left for the reader to decide (291).

While the wolf-girl in this tale represents an affirmation of sorts, the countess in “The Lady of the House of Love” represents negation – a point that Carter brings across through the tropes of reflection. The mirrors and all reflective surfaces have to be hidden in the “House of Love” because the vampiress has no soul and therefore will not be seen within the mirror.

An old mute looks after her, to make sure she never sees the sun, that all day she stays in her coffin, to keep mirrors and all reflective surfaces away from her – in short, to perform all the functions of the servants of vampires. (95)

The Lady has no presence, and even though she too, is theriomorphized, she is bereft of the qualities of the wolf-girl in "Peter and the Wolf". The wolf-girl's reflection there signifies an active presence of Otherness that transcends words (*Burning your Boats* 290). The Lady, in her theriomorphized state of being, seems to signify negation because she is trapped within a role not of her fashioning. In the following passage, Carter represents the Lady as a cat, a well-known domesticated creature.

On moonless nights, her keeper lets her out into the garden. This garden, an exceedingly somber place, bears a strong resemblance to a burial ground and all the roses her dead mother planted have grown up into a huge, spiked wall that incarcerates her in the castle of her inheritance. When the back door opens, the Countess will sniff the air and howl. She drops, now, on all fours. Crouching, quivering, she catches the scent of her prey. Delicious crunch of the fragile bones of rabbits and small, furry things she pursues with fleet, four-footed speed; she will creep home, whimpering, with blood smeared on her cheeks. She pours water from the ewer in her bedroom into the bowl, she washes her face with the wincing, fastidious gestures of a cat. (95)

The Lady awaits her prey within a patriarchal setting, a female version of the lovelorn Beast. However, there are differences. She is not happy with her bestiality. The trappings of the Gothic palace make it more of a prison than a luxurious ancestral abode, as evidenced by "a huge, spiked wall that incarcerates her in the castle of her inheritance"(95). Her retainer seems

more like a warden than a servant, and her bestiality is that of a shackled beast of prey, as opposed to the wolf-girl in “Peter and the Wolf” who comes to represent freedom and a world outside of binaries. Nevertheless, the sense of hybridity remains and gets stronger and stronger as we are inducted into the tale. The world which entombs the Lady is a familiar one: the “bloody chamber” of Carter’s fairytale landscapes, here personified by the poor, little-girl-lost vampiress of “The Lady of the House of Love”:

She herself is a haunted house. She does not possess herself; her ancestors sometimes come and peer out of the windows of her eyes and that is very frightening. She has the mysterious solitude of ambiguous states; she hovers in a no-man’s land between life and death, sleeping and waking, behind the hedge of spiked flowers, Nosferatu’s sanguinary rosebud. The beastly forebears on the walls condemn her to a perpetual repetition of their passions (103).

It is not hard to see where the similarities between the Countess and a haunted house may be found. A vampire is, in popular tradition, a being without a soul and is perhaps a fitting metaphor for the placid, silent, teeth-gnashing figures of females within patriarchal frameworks. This is evident in this tale because the Countess is a victim of her own ancestry. She has inherited it all, but she owns nothing. Even the men who are bedazzled by her cannot be owned. Though she may consume them, she cannot get what she wants. While she may be cast in the role of a predator in this tale, she is still an ingénue. It is interesting that within this

context, she is a hybrid of both the angel and the monster in the house that Woolf talks about in *A Room of One's Own*²⁶. This is the dialectic that requires that women either

immobilize themselves with suffocating tight-laces in the glass coffin of patriarchy, or they are tempted to destroy themselves by doing fiery and suicidal tarantellas out of the looking glass. (Gilbert and Gubar 44)

In this case, the Lady's transformation takes place from one extreme to another, and the hero who walks into this tale becomes the agent for her "fiery and suicidal" (44) dance out of the patriarchal setting of the enclosure that entombs her.

Appropriately, the male protagonist who walks all innocent into this setting allows the reader an external glimpse at this ingénue/predator. She seems to possess neither personality, nor self-will, only an inherited way of life-which-is-no-life. Or, at least, this is how she is portrayed through the eyes of the young man. He nurtures the fancy that she is "a child putting on the clothes of a dead mother in order to bring her, however briefly, to life again" (100), while observing that:

Her voice, issuing from those red lips like the obese roses in her garden, lips that do not move- her voice is curiously disembodied; she is like a doll, he thought, a ventriloquist's doll, or, more like a great, ingenious piece of clockwork. For she seemed inadequately powered by some slow energy of which she was not in control; as if she had been wound up years ago, when

she was born, and now the mechanism was inexorably running down and would leave her lifeless. The idea that she might be an automaton, made of white velvet and black fur, that could not move of its own accord, never quite deserted him; indeed, it deeply moved his heart. The carnival air of her white dress expressed her unreality, like a sad Columbine who lost her way in the wood a long time ago and never reached the fair. (102)

Interestingly, it is this air of absence that moves the heart of the young man, that and her youth. Note that Carter likens her to various constructs, a “ventriloquist’s doll”, a “great, ingenious piece of clockwork”, a “mechanism” an “automaton, made of white velvet and black fur” (102). These are all qualities that touch and intrigue the male protagonist (102). It is also rather significant that this tale may be cross-referred with “The Tiger’s Bride”.

In that tale the ingénue receives as a maid, a mechanical simulacrum of herself that could be said to be the epitome of what she herself was expected to be (59). The maid looks like her, and has “a musical box where her heart should be” (59). She is a “marvelous machine, the most delicately balanced system of cords and pulleys in the world”(60) and even her bowel movements are “churning out a settecento minuet”(60). She is therefore a musical creation which always performs on cue but not on her own accord (60).

Beauty, as a natural, living opposite to this wonder is aware of the irony. She muses

That clockwork girl who powdered my cheeks for me; had I not been allotted only the same kind of imitative life amongst men that the doll-maker had given her? (63)

Likewise, the Lady in the Transylvanian house of love is trapped within a clockwork kind of existence. Although she is heir to a Gothic palace not unlike the Beast's palace, she is no less a prisoner. The fate that she suffers includes cannibalizing the men she would like to love. It is a role reversal of sorts but the "Lady" is still stuck within a patriarchal framework, exemplified by the landscape within which she has been placed. It is interesting that Carter has named this story "The Lady in the House of Love", since it bears similarities to a type of tale found in mythic narrative. According to Joseph Campbell²⁷:

The Lady of the House of Sleep is a familiar figure in fairy tale and myth
 [. . .] She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero's earthly and unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bride. Whatever in the world has been lured, whatever has seemed to promise joy, has been premonitory of her existence – in the deep of sleep, if not in the cities and forests of the world. For she is the incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul's assurance that, at the conclusion of its exile in a world of organized inadequacies, the bliss that once was known will be known again: the comforting, the nourishing, the "good" mother – young and beautiful – who was known to us, and even

tasted, in the remotest past. Time sealed her away, yet she is dwelling still,
like one who sleeps in timelessness, at the bottom of the timeless sea.

(110 –111)

This Lady, sealed ominously from life by a frightening objectification can be found in Carter's tale. Here, she is not the impossibly pure ideal talked about by Campbell. Instead, she is trapped. She becomes the angel turned grotesque, a predator peculiarly innocent of experience. However, this is also a destiny which she struggles against, as is evidenced by her avid reading of the Tarot (93). She is in fact trapped in another "Bloody Chamber" which in turn creates another dwelling, set within the frame of the Lady's body, and she yearns for release:

(One kiss, however, and only one, woke up the Sleeping Beauty in the
Wood.) (103)

This statement is significant because it marks an identification with "Sleeping Beauty" and a need to be awakened. The Lady sees the young man as her possible saviour, since she is in a prison she desperately needs to break free of. This is compounded by the fact that she draws the tarot card "Les Amoureux" (97) for the first time. "Les Amoureux" symbolizes love and makes an interesting juxtaposition with the cards which she usually draws up, symbolizing "wisdom, death, dissolution" (95).

It leads the reader to the Love-Death dialectic which comes and goes in the stories that are studied in this dissertation²⁸. It is a strangely annihilating yet liberating mating-dance that

occurs again and again within the texts. Interestingly enough, the vampiress herself describes it as a ritual or a kind of sacrament as can be seen in the passage directly above the one previously quoted. It marks a significant shift from a relatively straightforward third person narrative to a first person narrative. The reader is thus thrust from the gothic landscape of a castle into the far more intimate enclosure of the lady's mind:

I do not mean to hurt you. I shall wait for you in my bride's dress in the dark.

The bridegroom is come, he will go into the chamber which has been prepared for him.

I am condemned to solitude and dark; I do not mean to hurt you.

I will be very gentle.

(And could love free me from the shadows? Can a bird sing only the song it knows, or can it learn a new song?)

See, how I'm ready for you. I've always been ready for you; I've been waiting for you in my wedding dress, why have you delayed for so long... it will all be over very quickly.

You will feel no pain, my darling. (103)

The ambiguity here is that she takes on a role usually reserved for males: the patriarchal role of a Lord of the manor preparing to deflower the ingénue. This is made evident by the wry, "I will be very gentle". And yet, she is also a little girl hoping that a prince will save her from captivity. The shift in narration turns her from a two-dimensional caricature into a hybrid being with hopes and wishes, desperately trying to evade the role she has been thrust into through her ancestry.

It is interesting to note that this tale may be taken as an inverse of more than one tale in *The Bloody Chamber*. For instance, the title tale in which an ingénue enters her groom's Castle of Horrors²⁹. The circumstance in "The Lady of the House of Love" may be different, because the female is the owner of the gothic Castle, but it is also significant that she is owned by the trappings of tradition and can only break the spell by wanting to do something different. Hence, when the bicycle riding male virgin in an innocent, yet leonine aspect shows up at the palace, she is primed.

Margaret Atwood comments that there are "three cat family stories at the beginning" of *The Bloody Chamber*, "followed by 'Puss-in-Boots' as a kind of comic coda" (122). She places "The Lady in the House of Love," in another set, namely, that of "ambiguous supernormal creatures – erl-king, snow-child, female vampire" (122). However, in this tale, both the Lady and the virgin bicyclist are portrayed through feline theriomorphic tropes. This feline entity can also be seen as the jaguar in "The Master" who is an unseen presence dogging the post-colonial Beast and his native Beauty as they move deeper within the interior of the forest.

What is the significance of this? Margaret Atwood comments that

What Carter seems to be doing in *The Bloody Chamber* – among other things – is looking for ways in which the tiger and the lamb, or the tiger and the lamb parts of the psyche, can reach some sort of accommodation.

The Bloody Chamber can be understood much better as an exploration of the narrative possibilities of de Sade's lamb-and-tiger dichotomy than as a 'standard' work of early-seventies to-the-barricades feminism ... It is Carter's contention that a certain amount of tigerishness may be necessary if women are to achieve an independent as opposed to a dependent existence; if they are to avoid – at the extreme end of passivity – becoming meat. (120)

If we follow this line of thought, then the enclosures we are discussing represent the interior of the mind, and the feline tropes are the empowering elements in each tale. However, I would assert that it is markedly more complicated than that. The tameness of the Lady's kitten-self seems to represent a diminishing whilst the leonine aspects of the male protagonists seem to have a distinct patriarchal cast. In "The Logic of the Same and *Différance*: "The Courtship of Mr Lyon", Anny Crunelle-Vanrigh notes that

Carter's deconstruction of fairy tales is part of a larger feminist statement. With a few exceptions, instability is a character of, or is granted by the feminine. Woman, in the form of Beauty or the Wolf-girl, is the liminal figure endowed with a power to take her partner across the boundaries of *either/or* into undecidability and the destabilization of identity ("Wolf-Alice" and "Courtship"). (139)

It is this “undecidability” that makes Carter’s “Sleeping Beauty” stand out. It becomes hard to pinpoint whether she is the predator or the prey (of patriarchy), whether she is vanquished by her death or whether this was the means by which she could break free of the puzzle or trap of the “House of Love”. Read on its own, the reader may not make too much of this, but alongside the other stereotype-challenging dialectics of Carter’s fairytales, it leaves the way open for the liminal ambiguousness Cruelle-Vanrigh refers to in the above quotation, paving the way towards the “destabilization of identity”(139).

This is a place beyond the binary tropes which I have referred to before at the beginning of Chapter One, and which we have glimpsed in various places in the tales studied. One of the ways in which this place is glimpsed is through the agency of the mirror in more than one of Carter’s tales³⁰. It is often an integral part of the ritual being unveiled by her narration, and is an important prop within these narrative enclosures. This reflection may be literal, in devices such as the mirror in “Wolf-Alice” and “The Tiger’s Bride” and “The Lady of the House of Love”, or implied, as in the case of “In the Company of Wolves”.

In “The Tiger’s Bride” the heroine is an uncommon version of Beauty in the “Beauty and the Beast” fairytale. Although trapped within a patriarchal framework in which she is collateral to be disposed of as a gambling debt by her father to the “Beast”, she is curious and alert. Rather than huddling within her victim status, Beauty changes the status quo of the tale by transforming herself (67) and perhaps the Beast too through the transformation of her perception.

I would assert that this transformation is made apparent to the reader particularly because of the narrative style chosen by Carter. For most of this story, Beauty addresses us in the first person (as an I-narrator). Therefore, the reader apprehends the universe of Carter's baroque Beauty and the Beast tale through Beauty's limited point of view as the pawn within this tale. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth notes that I-narrators can be both dramatized or undramatized, since they may sometimes have "radically different" viewpoints and characteristics from the author or actual narrator despite the fact that an "I" is used (152). When there is this difference, or where the character of the narrator plays a discernible and distinguishable character within the narration, she or he is a dramatized narrator. Booth states:

In fiction, as soon as we encounter an "I", we are conscious of an experiencing mind whose views of the experience will come between us and the event. When there is no such "I", as in "The Killers," the inexperienced reader may make the mistake of thinking that the story comes to him unmediated. But no such mistake can be made from the moment that the author explicitly places a narrator into the tale, even if he is given no personal characteristics whatever. (151-152)

This dramatized "I" may be observed in "The Tiger's Bride". Although Beauty is a supposed ingénue, she also displays viewpoints of others through her narration, such as that of *La Bestia*, her Animal-Bridegroom.

For instance, the image of a sparkling tear falling from the Beast's eye, which makes a tinkle as it drops (59) begins the process of disarming the reader, even before the heroine herself begins to shed the clothing of her preconceptions. These pointers seen through her eyes inform the reader that the figure of the Beast as an archetype is undergoing some sort of transformation.

One important pointer is that the silent figure with the glittering or "jewel-like" tear within fairytales or folk-tales is usually that of the female but in this tale, the heroine is the one with the jaded viewpoint, laughing raucously (58) at both the tearful Beast and his servant. The Beast, who remains silent throughout most of the story, seems almost intimidated by her.

Whilst the journey this heroine takes in this story may not seem to be overtly different from the traditional Beauty and the Beast tale, the plurality of voices turns this into a rather unconventional text. For one, Beauty does not consider chastity a necessary component to her sense of self-worth. In fact, she laments that she had not lost her virginity before she became the subject of barter between her father and the Beast.

I wished I'd rolled in the hay with every lad on my father's farm, to
disqualify myself from this humiliating bargain. (61)

That she perceives the circumstances from this viewpoint is radical. Instead, her value is placed solely on her own sense of dignity which she would not consider sullied by lack of virginity. This may be seen to be an instance of Carter's ideological leanings entering her text, heightened by the manner of narration. By having the main and obvious narrator of her text

narrate snippets of other dialogues (for example: *La Bestia*, his servant, her nursemaid), the author shows that Beauty's character can be molded and influenced by her surroundings. What is really fascinating is the fact that the nursemaid's voice merges with Beauty's into a first person account (56). She also makes it clear that, while part of what "nursie" relates has to do with patriarchal remonstrations that "good little girls" should remain chaste, neither she nor her nurse are in earnest about it:

How I'd squeal in delighted terror, half believing her, half knowing that she teased me. (56)

This foreshadows the rest of the events of this story, up to the moment Beauty decides to take her destiny in her own hands by realizing that the narrow confines of her tale is a "play" which can be re-written. This self-conscious method of narration can also be found in other tales within *The Bloody Chamber*, such as "The Erl King" and the title tale of the anthology, with varying resolutions to each tale. This is an indication of Carter's intentions for her text heroines. They are her vessels of narration, whether they are gossipy or fearful and sooner or later, these vessels have to decide on the ending that they would prefer for their tales.

By inducting the reader into the consciousness and perceptions of the heroine, Carter is selecting the messages imparted to the reader. The seemingly narrow enclosures of the tale therefore afford an intimate, almost internal view even when viewed from external, third person lenses. This is a very effective device which shakes up any preconceived apprehending of the tale's dialectic.

Beauty, like the protagonists of “The Erl King” “In the Company of Wolves”, “The Bloody Chamber” and “Wolf-Alice”, is taking part in a ritual of transformation from the moment she enters the labyrinthine passages of the tale to the time of apprehending her nemesis/lover/male counterpart. This ritual leads her to the resolution of the tale, be it in death or transformation, submission or defiance. In her “Beauty and the Beast” scenarios, Carter’s heroines are found within interiors where they have to confront a “Beast”, which mirrors the journey of mythic heroes. Often, this does not seem to be very different from prescribed patriarchal messages in the better-known versions, for instance, in Campbell’s monomyth of the hero where he notes that,

the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world. (25)

This statement seductively circles the idea of the binary relationship between tropes, between the exalted and the grotesque. It also touches on the element of annihilation implicit in the ritual discussed in this dissertation.

By using different modes of narration, Carter cunningly changes the dynamics of the monomyth, creating a disorienting and disarming effect which destabilizes the mostly patriarchal discourse implicit in it. In Roger Fowler's *Linguistics and the Novel*, he explains that there are "discourse relationships" between the author's "assumed self" and "his character's" (89), explaining further that in the author's

presentation of his characters, he need not seem to be omniscient or omnipotent – he may or may not choose to appear as a knowing puppet-master. He has a number of options as to how much, and how, he reveals; to what extent he allows the character's consciousnesses to be liberated from his own, and to what extent their thoughts are infiltrated and coloured by the quality of his own thoughts. These are, of course, linguistic options, so if we examine closely the narrative discourse we will find clues, in the choice of words and of syntactic constructions, as to how the creator of a prose fiction and his creatures 'stand' in relation to one another. (89)

Therefore, the manner in which a character and her/his surrounding is depicted will display how much the author is lengthening or limiting his or her perspective. This is evident in the gothic surroundings of the stories examined since the perspective of the narrator acts as a focal point for the reader to apprehend the enclosures talked about in this dissertation. Fowler goes on to explain "internal and external views" (89), differentiating between the two.

Generally speaking, Fowler's internal view exposes the inner workings of a "character's states of mind" (89) whereas the external perspective creates "the role of an unprivileged observer coming to partial understanding of the fictional figures in a fragmentary way" (90). Since the surroundings create context and therefore influence the characters³¹, the narration provides an intimate glance into why and how the ornate descriptions of the enclosures relate to the consciousness of the characters.

For example, by shifting the scope of Beauty's narration from an internal view (which includes her personal feelings and memories) to the external apprehending of the Beast, Carter allows the reader to experience Beauty's change of heart and broadening of scope within the tale itself. This is the opposite of what occurs in "The Lady of the House of Love" where the reader is given first an external view of the Lady and her surroundings, then narrowing down to the Lady's thoughts before concluding with an external view.

The shift of modality helps to shift the perception of the reader, for instance, as occurs in the following passage:

But the tiger-man, in spite of his hairiness, could take a glass of ale in his hand like a good Christian and drink it down. Had she not seen him do so, at the sign of The George, by the steps of Upper Moor Fields when she was just as high as me and lisped and toddled too. Then she would sigh for London, across the North Sea of the lapse of years. But, if this young lady was not a good little girl and did not eat her boiled beetroot, then the tiger-man would

put on his big black traveling cloak lined with fur, just like your daddy's, and hire the Erl-King's galloper of wind and ride through the night straight to the nursery and –

Yes, my beauty! GOBBLE YOU UP! (56)

In this passage, Beauty is reporting the tales that her nursemaid had told her, partly to scare her and partly to train her, but in her retelling, what is obvious is her identification with the girl in the tale (“when she was just as high as me and lisped and toddled too”). But then, the narrative changes when it moves towards the nurse-maid's admonition, showing that this is no longer a third person report of the nurse's speech but a moving towards the nurse's perspective in the tale. This separation of the girl in the story from her self can be seen in the phrase “just like your daddy's” (56) and in the succeeding exclamation, which could come from either an Animal Bridegroom story or Red Riding Hood (56).

This indicates an instance of possible identification with the narrator mimicking as well as identifying with the voice/persona of the nursemaid. This identification can be seen as part of the transformation undergone by Beauty in this narrative. I am referring to the transformation of perception and identification experienced by this ingénue facilitated by the fact that she has already been inducted into the world of the fairytale through her nursemaid. This nursemaid has correlations to the raucous “Wise Woman” of folklore and fairytale³². Like the heroine of “The Company of Wolves”, Beauty too, does not set her value according to patriarchal standards. Rather, she sees it as being placed within her own sense of self and pride.

In "The Company of Wolves", Carter's Red Riding Hood rejects the fate apportioned her by the fairytale medium by recognizing the human in the wolf (117-118) and conversely, by recognizing the wild animal within her self. This recognition comes with first, the sympathy for the hungry wolves in the cold (117), then, in refusing to see herself as different and as a victim (118). Finally, it culminates with participation in the ritualized and rather primitive marriage ceremony with the Male/wolf, in which she cleans him and eats his lice. Carter translates the devouring of Red Riding Hood (symbolizing "death") in the fairytale into a tableau of conjugal desire/love.

The clash between the civilization and the wild evident in the enclosures of the grandmother's house outlines this ritualistic drama. For instance, the dichotomy between civilization and the wild can be seen in the phrase, "We keep the wolves outside by living well". The bourgeois decorations within the grandmother's house is a pitiful attempt at trying to keep the Wolf out, such as indicated by the Bible which usually lies open on the table.

This detailing of the interior of the cottage also corresponds well with the idea of an enclosure within which the ritual takes place. Both civilization and wilderness cohabit here by the end of the tale when a savage ritual takes place within the bourgeois interior. This denotes a marriage of opposites in more than one way.

This contrast between civilization and wilderness is both explicitly and inexplicably spelt out in many different devices within Carter's textual universe, be it in "The Snow Child" or in "Wolf-

Alice". In "The Company of Wolves", the tone of narration is disrupted when the modality of the tale shifts during the scene where the wolf-man disrobes himself:

He strips off his shirt. His skin is the colour and texture of vellum. A crisp stripe of hair runs down his belly, his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit but he's so thin you could count the ribs under his skin if only he gave you the time. He strips off his trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are. His genitals huge. Ah, huge! (116)

It is at this point where a fairly straightforward narrative switches to something more informal and direct. By using terms such as "you", Carter effectively connects the narrator with the reader. This air of informality is sustained till the last, terse exclamation in the description, which before that point reads like a relatively straightforward third person account. The exclamation tends to bring the reader back to the narrator, who converts from a dispassionate storyteller to a gossipy bystander giving a blow-by-blow account of events. The author's choice of description is also very telling, because she focuses on the disrobing of the male, before cutting to the doubtful demise of the grandmother.

She is not seen to be running away from the young man at all, protesting at any point during his disrobing, changing the tone of the original story from a straightforward devouring of an innocent to something markedly more prurient. It is also through this shift in narrative voice that Carter inducts the readers in the enclosures of the text into which anthropomorphic and theriomorphic tropes are woven in order to offset the dialectics of her story.

For instance, instead of the tiger the ingénue of “The Tiger’s Bride” turns into, the vampiress of “The Lady of the House of Love” is depicted as a caged feline, a cat who is let out at night to hunt, a weaker, feminine counterpart of the other beasts in Carter’s tale. And in “Peter and the Wolf”, the theriomorphic or becoming-animal qualities of Peter’s cousin is seen as something greater than the truths he would have learned in the seminary.

These intertextual readings are obviously subversive, as has been stated by Anny Crunelle-Vanrigh. She notes:

[Carter] splits open closed texts and revels in what she finds there, blood, scars, perversion. She puts her dialectic of repetition and difference at the service of a revaluation of the marginal that is the feminine, sabotaging – as she would – patriarchal structures and phallogocentrism, indulging in the fantasy of an undecidable being, the wolf-girl, both animal and woman, Carter’s most mysterious representative of feminine Otherness. (142)

By “split[ing] open” these texts, Carter is unraveling them, revealing hidden depths (which I equate with the enclosures of this chapter) which can be related to the feminine Other. By doing so, she is also unraveling patriarchal structures. These structures may be seen in the gothic Chinese box-like interiors of each tale, be it an enclosing wood or a Transylvanian Chamber of Horrors. The labyrinthine passages that the heroine of the “Erl-King” has to traverse and the journey into the claustrophobic confines of “The Lady of the House of Love” all have a dream-

like quality to them. These interiors could be identified as the female psyche, long poached upon by the assimilation of patriarchal ideals. In some traditional fairytales, the castle and the woods are the province of patriarchy; woods are either ostensibly owned by the King or populated by woodsmen. It also goes without saying that the same applies to the houses, manors and castles of the literary fairytale. It is within this structure that the heroine must barter or negotiate the perils of the tale, for life or love.

Carter's narration transforms the forest into a much more ambiguous place, one more amenable to the feminine. In "The Master", the forest works against the fever-crazed patriarch and for the good of the Amazonian Red Riding Hood, far from home. This can be compared with Perrault's version of the tale where the wilderness is something that Red Riding Hood has to negotiate carefully in order to avoid peril, because the wilderness is her enemy. Carter's tale shows a different enemy, her own family.

In "The Erl King" the title character is both wild and yet a civilizing force within the enclosure of that beguiling wood which I have referred to before in Chapter One. He seems to be wild because the protagonist "could believe that it has been the same with him; he came alive from the desire of the woods"(86), but in reality, he is the sole inhabitant in the heart of the forest within a house. It seems almost a part of the forest, almost a living thing that has "grown a pelt of yellow lichen". Likewise, the roof seems to be growing things as well. He gathers the produce of the forest and names them "rude names, 'bum pipes' or 'piss-the-beds'" and in a superstitious manner will not touch the brambles which "he says the Devil spits on [. . .] at Michaelmas."(86). This is one of the clues that the Man is not a natural inhabitant of the forest.

He has come there, and has made a home out of the forest. Inside resides another sort of Bloody Chamber:

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.

He is an excellent housewife. His rustic home is spick and span. He puts his well-scoured saucepan and skillet neatly on the hearth side by side, like a pair of polished shoes. Over the hearth hang bunches of drying mushrooms, the thin, curling kind they call jew's-ears, which have grown on the elder trees since Judas hanged himself on one; this is the kind of lore he tells me, tempting my half-belief. (87)

In a sense, the homicidal heroine of that tale sees "The Erl King" as another colonizer. She identifies herself with the caged birds and acutely feels and dreads the death of her own identity, as can be seen in the following claustrophobic passage:

What big eyes you have. Eyes of an incomparable luminosity, the numinous phosphorescence of the eyes of lycanthropes. The gelid green of your eyes fixes my reflective face. It is a preservative, like a green liquid amber; it

catches me. I am afraid I will be trapped in it for ever like the poor little ants and flies that stuck their feet in resin before the sea covered the Baltic. He winds me into the circle of his eye on a reel of birdsong. There is a black hole in the middle of both your eyes; it is their still center, looking there makes me giddy, as if I might fall in it. (90)

In this passage the eyes seem to her to be the mesmerizing instrument of a predator. It is also an enclosure which threatens to imprison her. While the caging of the birds may be symbolic as well as magical, it is her identity, her Self, that the heroine feels is in danger even though she “loved him with all my heart” (90):

Your green eye is a reducing chamber. If I look into it long enough, I will become as small as my own reflection, I will diminish to a point and vanish. I shall be drawn down into that black whirlpool and be consumed by you. I shall become so small you can keep me in one of your osier cages and mock my loss of liberty. I have seen the cage you are weaving for me; it is a very pretty one and I shall sit, hereafter in my cage among the other singing birds but I – I shall be dumb, from spite. (90)

This claustrophobic enclosure can be contrasted with the vertiginous experience of Peter which has been detailed in Chapter Two. It can be seen as the apprehending of the threat of the opposite side of a dialectic. Peter feared the infinity of what he could sense, the heroine of the Erl-King feared the limitation of her role within the Erl-King’s slightly macabre domestic

utopia. The thread of story is at once synonymous with the enclosure of Bluebeard's castle, within a rustic, woodland setting, and that of Red Riding Hood, as here too, the male is portrayed as lupine or lycanthropic (90) and the text makes direct reference to the Red Riding Hood story more than once. "What big eyes you have" is one of them, and early on in the story the female protagonist notes that

A young girl would go into the wood as trustingly as Red Riding Hood to her granny's house but this light admits of no ambiguities and, here, she will be trapped in her own illusion because everything in the wood is exactly as it seems. (85)

This passage is interesting, when seen in context with its position within an anthology which is fraught with ambiguities. However, it does bring home the fact that the different tales intersect each other. It also strikes home the idea that these woods, like all other enclosures, are both "illusions" and "traps". This is mostly because the terrain traversed by the reader is located within the subconscious. As such, the enclosures within each setting can either be very deceptive or a place of learning. As mentioned before, these can be identified as the backdrop for the ritual of transformation taking place. At times, this backdrop mirrors and represents the feminine psyche as Carter steers her reader out of the dualistic world of binaries, into the condition of hybridity. I shall discuss this transformation further in Chapter Four.