

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This dissertation delves into the multiple instances of the rituals of transformation within the tales of Angela Carter. Chapter One explores the binaries which Carter sought to disrupt, which can often be found within the ritualistic motifs of fairytales. Chapter Two deals with the very strong intertextual elements in her tales, citing several scholars who have linked this element to the idea of a framework being contained within her tales. It is submitted that the framework exists not just within the tales of *The Bloody Chamber* but also in the short stories of other anthologies, revealing the different cultural contexts which can arise out of the said themes.

Chapter Three discusses how the sense of enclosures within this tale works with the narration which hinges on the idea of ritual, and how it acts as a backdrop for the binaries examined in Chapter One. Finally, Chapter Four explores and further explicates the ritual of transformation itself and what I believe it signifies, drawing references from Joseph Campbell's extensive work on both the primitive Ritual Love-Death and the medieval Love Death. I also linked some of the actions by the protagonists in Carter's tales to Freud's idea of the Pleasure Principle. This is based on Carter's ideology, found in *The Sadeian Woman*, and the pointers found in the tales discussed.

There is very obviously a dialectic at play here, which is disrupted by her narration through the idea of a ritual hinging on the idea of death and transformation. The annihilations within Carter's tales herald a rebirth, which brings forth a condition of hybridity outside of the "either-or" dialectics which serve as choices in traditional fairytale settings. Carter brings a

postmodern, feminist *zeitgeist* to the bones of old tales, and as such, intersecting and not-necessarily competing values reside in the tales studied in this dissertation.

Many complementary themes and considerations arising during the long process of research for this dissertation have been set aside for future work due to constraints of time, space and focus. Even though the revisions are postmodern in scope, the original structures themselves contain archetypes and carriers of monomyth. This seeming dichotomy may arise from the inherent functions of the fairytale which Vladimir Propp has already talked about in *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*.

It is submitted that a future and more in-depth study into the dichotomy would be rewarding, especially with regard to the interactions and tensions between the Jungian anima/animus archetypes found within the narration with the postmodern *zeitgeist* of the storyteller (Carter). The focus and limitations of this dissertation have dictated that I set aside many of my thoughts on this matter for future papers.

The same also applies to the idea of “The Hero’s Journey” which is an important component of Campbell’s influential *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Undoubtedly, the journey of Carter’s heroines can be identified with the Hero in countless mythological setups. For instance, Theseus’s confrontation of the Minotaur in the Labyrinth mirrors the confrontation of human with hybrid in Carter’s narration. However, Carter would have been the first to reject the idea of a singular meaning in each of these journeys. I think a comparative study between the heroes

of myth and folklore and Carter's characters/ideals would be beneficial in order to ascertain whether postmodernisms and the symbolism of myth may coexist.

The seeming "clash" between old and new, the absolute and the diffuse has complicated the process but it has also provided me with many angles and perspectives. It is therefore also submitted that a further and more extensive look at postmodern revisions of folk and fairytale (primarily with regard to how two camps of thought seemingly at odds can co-exist) would be beneficial.

It is axiomatic that similar patterns resonate within the pantheon of folk and fairytale, but a fresh look at it through the perspective of hybridity and postmodernism would probably create an interesting discursive process which reflects not only the different *zeitgeists* that have utilized the genre, but also the very nature of the genre itself.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This will be explored further in the succeeding chapters.
- <sup>2</sup> Where stories from the anthologies *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974), *Black Venus* (1985) and *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (1993) are quoted and cited in this dissertation, the page numbers and citations refers to the compilation *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Angela Carter Stories*, hereinafter referred to in parenthesis as *Burning Your Boats*.
- <sup>3</sup> The original source for this quotation (as cited by Aidan Day) is Haffenden, John. "Interview with Angela Carter", in *Novelists in Interview*. London and New York: Methuen, 1985.
- <sup>4</sup> Found in the collection *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces*.
- <sup>5</sup> Explored at greater depth in Chapter Three.
- <sup>6</sup> To be discussed at greater length in succeeding chapters.
- <sup>7</sup> As explained in *Primitive Mythology*, where Campbell devotes an entire chapter to the primitive cultures'. In *Creative Mythology*, Campbell looks at the theme from a medieval and more esoteric point of view.
- <sup>8</sup> Lidia Curti. *Female Stories, female bodies : Narrative, Identity and Representation*. London: Macmillan Press, 1998.
- <sup>9</sup> By this, I refer to the ever present danger of being supplanted by youth and beauty, a case of intergenerational conflict. A discussion of this intergenerational conflict in "Snow White" can be found in Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP 1979.
- <sup>10</sup> Further discussion on "The Tiger's Bride" can be found in Chapter Three.
- <sup>11</sup> I read the birds as representing theriomorphized females within the text.
- <sup>12</sup> An article found in *Perspectives on Pornography: Sexuality in Film and Literature*. Ed. Gary Day and Clive Bloom. New York: St Martin's Press, 1988. 144 -57.
- <sup>13</sup> Although the stories do hinge between archetypal representations of sex, the ultimate resolution is not necessarily as linear or as obvious.
- <sup>14</sup> These enclosures are the subject of Chapter Three and will be explored in greater depth there.

<sup>15</sup> Such as: the wild or hybrid girl-child, which appears in “The Master”, “Wolf-Alice”, “Peter and the Wolf”, “The Lady of the House of Love” as well as in “The Tiger’s Bride” and “The Werewolf”, to a lesser degree.

<sup>16</sup> An article found in the Norton compilation selected and edited by him.

<sup>17</sup> This is found in Carter’s anthology *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*.

<sup>18</sup> Campbell notes a connection in the hero’s journey between the journey from the womb, towards the tomb. He says “Full circle, from the tomb of the womb to the womb of the tomb we come: an ambiguous, enigmatical incursion into a world of solid matter that is soon to melt from us, like the substance of a dream. And, looking back at what had promised to be our own unique, unpredictable, and dangerous adventure, all we find in the end is such a series of standard metamorphoses as men and women have undergone in every quarter of the world, in all recorded centuries, and under every odd disguise of civilization.” (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 13)

<sup>19</sup> As seen in the second tale.

<sup>20</sup> As cited by Turner.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Princeton UP 1973.

<sup>22</sup> This refers to the Marquis’s den, among other things.

<sup>23</sup> Discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>24</sup> As seen in: “Wolf-Alice”, “Peter and the Wolf”, “The Bloody Chamber” as well as “Reflections”

<sup>25</sup> Also popularly known as “Count Dracula”, as popularized by Bram Stoker.

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert and Gubar have discussed this fairly extensively in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

<sup>27</sup> This discussion can be found in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* where Campbell talks about the part of the monomyth of the hero’s journey which is designated by him as “The Meeting with the Goddess”.

<sup>28</sup> I will expand on this in Chapter Four.

<sup>29</sup> The implications of the events in “The Bloody Chamber” will be discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>30</sup> I have discussed this in a slightly different context in Chapter One.

<sup>31</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two

<sup>32</sup> See Warner (12-25) for an informed glimpse into the function of the Wise Woman and Gossip within the storytelling pantheon

<sup>33</sup> Leading to imminent death or danger.

<sup>34</sup> Even though in the original fairytale this would be a forgone conclusion and therefore stepping into the coffin would be a step into the marriage bed

<sup>35</sup> Gottfried Von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isold*, as cited by Joseph Campbell in *Creative Mythology* (see Works Cited).

<sup>36</sup> It is also a slightly more sophisticated update of the primitive versions of the Ritual Love-Death, discussed in *Primitive Mythology* by Joseph Campbell (see Works Cited).

<sup>37</sup> This can also be seen in the mystical "Christian idea of love" (245) as related to the death and resurrection of their saviour.

<sup>38</sup> It is particularly interesting since it is well-documented in popular culture that the Vampire's bed is also his/her coffin.