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TRANSMOGRIFICATION DEPICTED IN ANGELA CARTER'S
'THE BLOODY CHAMBER'

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ABSTRACT

Once upon a time there was a monstrous beast who transmogrified into a handsome prince, with a true loves kiss. This article relies on Angela Carter's 'Bloody Chamber' (1979). It is a series of short stories closely related to fairy tales. This article brings out an analysis based on transformation that occurs due to absurd powerful relationships. With focus on the ambivalent and complex characterization along with explicit sexual relationship to bring about a condition for change, a change that once gone through will have no going back. Also, the article reveals how short stories aped from fairy tales can be erudite towards brings out the essence of sexuality, transformation from innocence to reality and the realm of transmogrification.

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Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber', stands out as a unique amalgamation of short stories found onan attitude of folk and fairy tales. Each story fathoms themes on sexuality, feminism, female machosism along with characters with animal behavior. Angela Carter based these stories on Charles Perrault's fairy tales maintaining the interest and complexities of the old version. She extracted the essence from 'Blue Beard', 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Puss-in-the boots', 'Snow White', and 'Beauty and the Beast' with a design to entertain along with comprehending the complexities of life. Her determination was to bring to light the icy cold daggers of reality that can be absorbed only when the individual is put to task. In each of these short story there is a transmogrification that takes place, where beast like character become human and human characters become animals. This articleprioritizes in exploring the transitional changes that takes place with the characters in the 'The Bloody Chamber.'

The protagonists in these short stories are mostly women who transform into strong individuals, with experience and integrity. They go beyond 'happily ever after' in each 'once upon a time'. This article emphasizes on the passage that each character travels towards transformation. Transformation can be viewed as a metamorphosis that takes within each individual. Most of the characters exhibit eithertimid or innocent character when the story commences but as the story takes shape, the protagonist transforms into a strong personality.

Angela Carter has made it clear,

“My intension is not to do ‘versions’ or, as the American edition of the book said, horribly, ‘adult’ fairy tales, but to extract the latent content from traditional stories and to use it as beginning of new stories.”

Cater was born in 1940. Her first novel ‘Shadow Dance’ published in 1966 brought her laurels. She was soon recognized as one of Britain’s most original writers. Angela Carter spent most of her years with her grandmother facing the blunt cold of the Second World War. Carter struggles and personal experiences instigated her to write and go beyond the usual storylines. To her credit she has eight published novels, three volumes of short stories, she also wrote screen plays, essays and translated fairy stories of Charles Perrault.

The title story ‘**The Bloody Chamber**’, is built on the traditional fairy tale ‘Blue Beard’. The story is centered on a young nameless heroine. The story is in the first person narrative, as she narrates her life with the Marquis. Like all young brides, she dreams of a life with riches and wealth. She is mesmerized with the huge expensive engagement ring the Marquise offers her. Leaving her widowed mother, she travels in the marquis’s carriage. She is in pique with curiosity about her husband’s castle and her new life. Soon the innocent heroine loses her virginity in a brutal manner. In a few days the marquis leaves on a business tour entrusting her with his bunch of keys that’s opens all the doors in the castle, but he forbids her not to open one particular room of the castle.

With curiosity, disobeying her husband, she secretly opens the forbidden door. To her horror, she sees the savagery slain bleeding bodies of his three previous wives. The key to the room is stained with blood. Petrified she narrates all that she has seen to the mute piano tuner. The heroine picks up cudgels as she awaits her husband’s return. The Marquis on discovering what his wife had done raises his sword to behead her. Just as he swings the sword her mother appears and shoots him. The heroine inherits her husbands’ fortune and lives in the castle with her mother and the piano tuner.

‘**The Courtship of Mr. Lyon**’ is modified from the famous fairy tale ‘The Beauty and the Beast’. Similar to the fairy tale, the father is lost in snow storm, wandering about he finds shelter in an abundant mansion. To his surprise the castle is abandoned, but he is served good food by a dog. As he is about to leave he see a bush with white rose, reminded of his daughter he steps forward to pluck a rose, assuming the gracious owner would not mind. Suddenly out of the blue, an angered beast appears frightening and threatening to kill the poor old man. The old man explains that the rose is for his daughter. Without realizing the father trades his daughter in return for his life, the beast with all curiosity invites beauty for dinner. He is fascinated with her innocents, and requests her to stay with him the castle. In return he would give her father all the riches he wanted. Beauty, kind and innocent agrees with an open heart agrees. She spends days and nights talking to the beast. One day she goes to visit her father, with a promise to return before winter ends. Beauty forgets her promise and returns a few months later. To find the beast dying, she realizes she loves the beast. Beauty kisses the beast and her transforms into a man.

In story ‘**The Tiger’s Bride**’ a father loses his wealth gambling, all that he has left is his daughter. He ends up gambling her away to a strange man whose identity was not revealed to anyone. He was known as ‘The Beast’. The innocent daughter was taken to his mansion. The girl has no clue in whose house is she in, the maid comes in to inform her that the beast desires to see her naked. The innocent girl was horrified with the thought of exposing herself to a stranger. To calm the situation he took her for a horse ride into the woods. Deep in the woods, he discloses himself, revealing his fury tiger body. With awe she undresses herself realizing that the beast is front of her is more scared. The tiger man gently takes the willing girl to his room and begins licking her slowly till layers and layers of her skin comes off leaving her with a fury body. The girl herself turns into a tiger

‘**Puss in the Boots**’, Figaro is a smart cat, who is on wheels to help his master. His master has fallen head over heels with the wife of Signor Panteleone. Figaro with his cunning skills unites the lovers. In the wooing process he falls in love with Tabby the woman’s cat. Tabby and Figaro murder Panteleone, Paving way for the master and lady to wed. The heroine receives the fortune from her dead husband obtaining all the

power she was denied earlier. Both the master and Figaro leave their old untidy ways being 'Tamed', transforming their natures for the sake of love.

'**The Erl-King**', the heroine wanders aimlessly into the woods. She makes her acquaintance with the Erl-King. She is seduced by the mysterious figure who lives in the woods. He lives in harmony with nature. He holds quite a number of birds captive. The heroine learns that each caged bird was once a girl. With disgust and courage she strangles the Erl-King with his own hair. She sets the birds free. Unlike the previous stories, the heroine does not transform for the sake of love but for her freedom.

'**The Snow Child**', is a short disturbing tale of a Count and his wife travelling on a snowy day. The Count expresses his desire, he wants a child as white as the snow, and whose hair is as black as the raven and whose lips are as red as a rose. The Snow Child takes form and appears. His wife is envious. She stops the carriage and orders the child to pluck her a rose. The child pricks her finger and dies. The lustful count has sex with the snow child, melting it. All that is left is the red rose, the count hands the rose to the countess but she too is pricked. The countess cries out "it bites". This tale is symbolic of sexual violence and the 'bite' of supporting violence and oppression

'**The Lady of the house of love**', a young soldier wandered into the territory of a vampire. The Vampire was a beautiful countess who lived in solitude. The castle was surrounded by thick lush red rose bushes. She manures the bushes with the remains of her prey. The vampire prepared herself to seduce and feast on the soldier. She accidentally cut herself. The soldier seeing the bleeding lady innocently kisses her wounds. This act makes her mortal and she dies. He plucks a rose from her garden and goes for war. The real world is where the monsters are ready to spill blood, where else the vampire dies a human with a small gesture of true love.

In '**The Werewolf**' a brave and fearless child travels alone through the forest to visit her grandmother. The child is aware of werewolves wandering in the forest. Yet with her knife she sets out. On the way she encounters a werewolf, with courage she cuts off the werewolf's front paw and runs to her grandmother's home. When she reaches her grandmother's house she finds that the grandmother's hand is missing. She discovers it is her grandmother who is the werewolf. Screeching she runs calling the village folk, they kill the grandmother. It is brutal for the child to have killed the grandmother, but the grandmother also lets herself be killed as she knows of her beastly traits.

'**The Company of wolves**' an innocent child dressed in a red cape trots into the forest to visit her grandmother. She meets a young handsome huntsman on the way. He seductively talks to the girl, showing her a compass. He tells her if she reaches her grandmother's house first, he would reward her with a kiss. The huntsman takes a different route, reaching first. He transforms into a wolf kills the grandma, wears her clothes and sits like her near the fire. The child arrives; she sees her grandma's bones burning. The girl to save her life courageously seduces him before he can eat her. This story illustrates the powerful sexual truth. In this story the child who seems innocent transforms into a 'wolf' by becoming a sexual being, robbing the wolf of his power, 'taming' him., Making him human.

'**Wolf-Alice**' is a girl raised by a pack of wolves. One day the wolves are shot. The child thinks she is a wolf, she walks on fours and eats and behaves like a wolf. She is set to a convent for taming. The nuns take her in and give her to a werewolf duke. She works for the duke. She discovers herself as she keeps looking into the mirror. She learns to wear a dress. One day the duke is shot. Wolf-Alice with compassion licks his wound, transforming him into a full human being. Wolf -Alice is the last short story, it is viewed as a typical example for transfiguration a metamorphosis toward hope and life.

Many of the characters portray the hidden beastly qualities that are deep within human beings. Through courage and innocence the beastly quality can be tamed. Characters like the Beast, Erl-King and the werewolf can be viewed as hidden human qualities.

And The Beast gave me the rose from his own impeccable if outmoded buttonhole when he arrived, the valet brushing the snow off his black clock. The white rose, unnatural, out of season, that now my nervous fingers ripped, petal by petal, apart as my father magnificently concluded the career he had made of catastrophe...(30)

Every individual displays characteristic qualities like onion peels, layers and layers that prove complicated to decipher. The beast that appears to have a monstrous appearance externally proves to be like a lamb. The 'father' like character that selfishly trades his daughter and be viewed to monster within. There are a throng of characters in 'The Bloody Chamber with focus on two countenance **innocence** and **realization** to bring about a better understanding of the nuances of Angela Carters work.

Innocence

The characters in the beginning of each story portray being innocent and ignorant. The protagonists are virgins, symbolizing purity and innocence's. Characters like the heiress, wolf Alice, the snow child and the protagonist in most of the short stories are young and innocent. Their virginity is a symbol of their purity. Their innocence is their ignorance. The ladies are completely unaware of dangers that lie before them. For instance, to the Marquise, the heroine's virginity is an innocence that cannot be corrupted and destroyed. The entire frame work of the story involves her life from girlhood to adulthood and from wifehood to widowhood, the sequence of events take place in a wink of an eye. Viewing the story line from the different dimension, though virginity by nature is a kind of innocence, in Carter's stories it exhibits a unique strength.

I remember how, that night, I lay awake in the wagon-lit in a tender, delicious ecstasy of excitement....., my heart mimicking that of the great pistons ceaselessly thrusting the train that bore me through the night, away from Paris, away from girlhood, away from the white, enclosed quietude of my mother's apartment ,into the unguessable country of marriage. (1)

It can be viewed that heroin's physical journey runs parallel to her psychological journey. Innocence can be viewed as a state of mind, when a child is brought up in a safe environment, completely unaware of the dangers of the world, cocooned. When at home the child is completely ignorant of the dangers, sudden marriage is a loss of this comfort. A moment of silence after a few days of her married life makes her think.

Promised warmth, company, a supper of sausage, hissing is a pan...children tucked up in bed asleep in the brick house.....all the paraphernalia of the everyday world from which I, with my stunning marriage, had exiled myself. Into marriage, into exile; I sensed it, I knew it- that, henceforth, I would always be lonely. (7)

The child alone filters her thoughts and prepares herself to what she has to face. Viewing these stories from a different tangent, picking out the innocence from characters makes them so pure and untainted.

This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same, inner light so you have thought she, too, was made all of snow.....(26)

Her inner beauty is radiated on her face, as she is completely unaware of the dangers that lie beyond. Their innocence helps them to look the tiger in the eye, as they are ignorant about the danger. It is that innocence and love that transforms a beast into a gentle human being. The heroine stands in front of the beast for she is ignorant of the dangers. Wolf- Alice sleeps among the wolves completely unaware of perils. The child faces the wolves with artlessness of their true nature. These innocent characters possess a unique strong heart. The transformation cocooned is seen in each short story. 'The Bloody Chamber and the other short stories' stands out as a unique blend between innocence and ignorance, it is viewed as a perfect example of stepping into the lion's den to cuddle up with the lion, without knowing the fear of the lion

Realization

Transformation occurs with the evolution of realization. A simple, ignorant and innocent person lives in his own world. When the egg breaks from within with its own effort a new life begins. Similarly when the innocent heroines fend for themselves overcoming their hurdles their new life begins. Almost all of Carters characters are different people at the end of their stories. The female characters are stronger than the men; the heroines accept changes, and prove to be the reason of change in the male characters. It can be viewed that Carter chose stories to bring out transformation more significantly. For instance in 'The Courtship of Mr. Lyon' beauty is the reason to the Tiger to become a changed man.

She flung herself upon him, so that the iron bed stand groaned, and covered his poor paws with her kissed. "Don't die, beast! If you'll have me, I'll never leave you." When her lips touched the meat-hook

claws, and she say.....her tears fell on his face like snow and, under their soft transformation, the bones showed through the pelt, the flesh through the wide, tawny brow. And then it was no longer a lion in her arms but a man.....(33)

The lion transformed into a man in the arms of an innocent pure love. The concept of true love's kiss seemed to have been coined by Shakespeare. A line of Act 4, Scene 4 in Richard III "Bear her my true love's kiss; and so farewell." The true love's kiss appears in most fairy tales, but it can kiss really life. The kiss does not technically hold magic but it holds the power of purity and innocence. Every individual deserves a change and every individual has decisions to make. Many characters in 'The Bloody Chamber' are creatures who are half-human and half-beast, but most of these creatures transform undergoing changes from beast to humans towards the end of the stories. It can be analyzed that sexuality is an important tool in transformation. The term sexuality is evocative; it causes a strong connection that has an effect on personal life. The true love's kiss can be attributed to 'pure relationship' and on the contrary the beastly like quality can ooze out during sexuality.

He stripped me, gourmand that he was, as if he were stripping the leaves off an artichoke.....And when nothing but my scarlet, palpitating core remained, I saw, in the mirror, the living image of etching by Rops....most pornographic of all confrontations. And so my purchaser unwrapped his bargain....(10)

To conclude

Transmogrification is a strange and preposterous metamorphosis that takes place throughout the stories. The beastly like qualities exist within individuals it is only through the tide one realizes the 'beastly' qualities and either 'Tame' it or wait for the right one to come 'to be tamed'. To understand the complexities is vital to remove the veil in front of our eyes, to see the reality. There is a wide gap between imagination and reality. Accepting reality is not a piece of cake. Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber and other short stories' are like old wine in new bottles. The commonly known fairy tales are only to delight but Carter picks up the whip lashing out painted picture in the fairy tales to bring out the ugly reality. The stories may see exaggerated but they hold a throng of meaning. The lesson of courage, innocence and relationship between genders can be inculcated not only in literature but also in reality.

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