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## THE HEROINE'S JOURNEY IN ANGELA CARTER'S *THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES*<sup>2</sup>

Over the past decades, cis-women have obtained opportunities to demonstrate their skills and voice their opinion in what had predominantly been male-dominated settings, establishing that there is no such environment unbefitting of their presence. However, this development in gender equality carries the question whether people of all genders are conditioned to change their innermost self in order to feel welcomed in Western societies which are predicated on masculine principles. In *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* Maureen Murdock utilizes Jungian archetypes to examine the methods in which collective and one's individual femininity keeps being suppressed in favor of traditionally established masculine traits. Outlining each stage of the heroine's journey, a psychoanalytic model of her own making, Murdock asserts that each individual must strike the balance between masculinity and femininity within themselves in order to complete their own, and others', quest for wholeness. Considering that in *The Bloody Chamber* Angela Carter transforms masculine-driven fairy-tales into those celebrating the aforementioned quest for balance, the purpose of the paper is to provide a detailed examination of how Carter's anthology follows the heroine's journey. The paper establishes that each story corresponds to a stage in the heroine's mythic quest, and that Murdock's interpretation of Jungian archetypes echoes the character arcs of Carter's heroes and heroines.

*Keywords:* *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter, the heroine's journey, Maureen Murdock, the masculine, the feminine

### 1. Introduction

Folk-tales remain one of the earliest illustrations of archetypal storytelling; they provide the reader and listener with a means of understanding themselves, considering that identifying with an archetype or a character's narrative can contribute to one's understanding of their own life story. Angela Carter's fairy-tale revisions deliberately subvert contemporary readers' expectations of what the genre is aimed towards, referencing her dissatisfaction towards the idea of a fairy-tale being manipulated into teaching children moral lessons, and her statement that the genre's origin lies in the imaginations of illiterate and disempowered communities (1990: ix, xi). However, Carter's attitude towards

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fiction as an instrument of ethics does not imply that her tales do not encourage self-love and maturation. Connecting the stories into a single thread which represents feminine awakening, Carter's anthology could uncover its answers to readers who are searching for contentment and liberation from the male gaze. In keeping with Carter's belief that fairy-tales illustrate portable myths where people of all cultures and ethnicities can meet, the approach is to examine Carter's anthology via an analysis which speaks to common struggles and journeys regardless of one's background. Maureen Murdock's publication, *The Heroine's Journey: A Woman's Quest for Wholeness*, presents a conclusive examination of myths and archetypes which are entwined with one's journey towards the feminine.

Working as a counseling psychologist with adult female patients, Murdock found that women approached her due to a sense of unfulfillment and exasperation with the lives they were leading. By listening to their stories and transforming them into narratives, Murdock concluded that her patients did not feel as if they were the heroines of their own lives, that they felt they had been conditioned to comply with the preexisting formula of simultaneously maintaining a family and a prosperous career (1990: 1–2); the women lost their inner feminine due to surrendering completely to capitalist institutions and having no time for the expression of their identities. Murdock's heroine feels as if she needs to spend every waking moment productively, thereby finding it difficult to reconnect with her creative impulse and be spiritually rewarded. Drawing additionally from how she got accustomed to shunning her own vulnerability and the sorrow of others through constant work, Murdock details the repercussions a society focused strictly on capital and profit can have on the wellbeing of an individual and the planet. While the heroine's journey is not a model that portrays universal development (MURDOCK 1990: 4), what the model is representative of is the journey of any individual who has had to sacrifice their health and sense of identity for the acceptance of others, or for material and financial gain. The general fairy-tale structure consistently reflects parts of the heroine's journey, whether the hero is overcoming obstacles in the form of deceptions or fighting inner demons by stumbling through darkness and caves, looking for light.

Nevertheless, the split between the masculine and the feminine can be healed by revisiting the wounds which caused the separation from the feminine. According to Murdock, the notions of femininity and masculinity must not be defined in relation to one's gender or Western gender stereotypes (1990: 187). Murdock adopts Jung's insistence that the masculine is the aspect of objectification, definitions and borders (JUNG 1980: 124); while practical, it can pose danger for an individual and their surroundings when taken to an extreme. The integration of the masculine and the feminine, the compassionate aspect emblematic of emotional intimacy and vulnerability, represents the end-goal of the heroine's journey and the dissolution of duality.

Although the heroine's journey comprises ten stages, they are all joined in a single, continuous cycle; separation from the feminine can blend seamlessly into the next stage, identifying with the masculine. In consideration of one's ability to simultaneously experience multiple stages of the journey, not a single tale in Carter's anthology is truly representative of only one stage. Therefore, the analysis should not be construed as a definitive interpretation of Carter's relation to Murdock's model. The attribution of one or two stages to a story, and vice versa, serves to shed new light on an anthology that has

been subject to debate for decades.

## 2. The heroine's journey in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

### 2.1. Separation from the feminine and identification with the masculine

Carter's "The Snow Child" begins with a man wishing for the perfect daughter. The Count has the power to single-handedly create a child and, more unnaturally, determine her appearance before she is born. While traversing through a snowy landscape, he manipulates a hole of blood in the snow which, in view of Murdock's ideology, presents an allusion to life, health and women's menstrual cycles, thereby corrupting nature, a representation of the feminine, to design a girl in line with his sexual preferences. The feathers of a raven, the only animal in "The Snow Child", are similarly exploited in favor of the girl's hair color. As soon as he conveys his vision the child materializes, built according to his tastes down to her complete nakedness.

Due to the heroine separating herself from her intuitiveness, she begins the heroine's journey by adopting a philosophy of life formulated by the society she inhabits. The separation from the feminine may range from complete rejection of the mother figure, who is deemed an ineffective or uncaring role model in comparison to the father figure, to the disrespect of one's female or non-binary peers. If the Count represents the negative masculine, the intense desire for control, the negative feminine lies in the Countess' lack of a nurturing or mothering instinct; every order she issues to the girl functions as a death sentence. Thus, she portrays one of the two Mother archetypes, the Terrible Mother. The child has no caring figures to tell her to devise her own way of life; ergo, she is destined to comply with the masculine. She does not perceive anything could harm her so long as she has a father figure beside her. Murdock, inverting Jung's postulation that the daughter exists as her mother's Shadow (JUNG 1980: 89), highlights that the mother can serve as her daughter's Shadow, that her powerlessness can easily alienate the daughter who does not want to possess the same inadequacies (1990: 14). Hence, the heroine distances herself from the mother figure as much as possible. If the mother reveals jealousy over her daughter's youth, a jealousy hereby exhibited by the Countess, the heroine will feel trapped and unable to communicate her emotions. Bacchilega notes how the narrative of Snow White has remained relatively consistent, despite numerous renditions throughout history (1997: 33); the mother figure never grows to care for her daughter and remains eternally envious of her beauty, seeing what the male gaze conditions her to see. Therefore, Snow White is a tale which consistently depicts the separation from the feminine; the comfort of a nurturing mother figure is non-existent in Snow White's life and, by association, the Snow Child's journey.

Murdock contemplates how girls who are made to feel inadequate due to their physical appearance can be humiliated to the point of completely rejecting their own bodies and the feminine within; to stifle women's physicality is to deny them spiritual freedom and growth, given how the body sends crucial messages on pain and limitation (1990: 24). When the heroine cannot use her body to learn about her strengths and aspirations, there is a split between body and mind that limits her intuition. The Snow Child

has no intuition. The previously mentioned split is cemented at her birth, caused by her becoming sexualized by the two adults. She does not question the Count, and dies once he allows her to obey the Countess' order, to pick a rose from a rose bush. Carter thereby also borrows from the tale of Briar Rose, the rose's thorn a spindle on which the girl pricks her finger. The ending of Carter's story alludes to one of the earlier renditions of the Briar Rose tale, Giambattista Basile's "Sun, Moon, and Talia", wherein the heroine is raped by a king while she is unconscious. Herein, the Count completely separates the Snow Child from the feminine by raping her as soon as she succumbs to eternal sleep, giving insidious meaning to the hole of blood which was his inspiration for her appearance; a symbol of the growth of the body, and therefore the maturation of the mind, mutates into a symbol of one individual devaluing and contributing to another's pain. The heroine was never meant to become a woman; her rape is an attack on her body, and, thus, an attack on nature and femininity itself.

The second stage, identification with the masculine, highlights the imbalance inside the heroine, an individual who now cares solely for logic and practicality, and the scars left by a community which prizes ruthless ambition in lieu of emotional wellbeing. The world of "The Werewolf" instantly bears a resemblance to Murdock's depiction of the heroine's perception of a world revolving around masculinity. Carter emphasizes the correlation between the villagers' surroundings and their minds: "they have cold weather, they have cold hearts" (2015: 137). The insides of their homes are dark and murky, portraying a complete lack of warmth and clarity even inside spaces that are made to provide safety and comfort. With solely their personal well-being in mind, they eradicate any being which poses potential danger to their lives; a witch is identified by an additional nipple which she uses to nurture her kind, and the excess of the feminine is punished by stripping the witch naked, a violation widely experienced by members of transgender, intersex and non-binary communities (HUSAKOUSKAYA 2013: 18; QUINN 2019). The fact that the witches in Carter's iteration can shift into wolves illustrates a type of physical transformation that is shunned for its ability to overcome polarity.

Upon her departure, Little Red Riding Hood is given her father's hunting knife. Lau brands the knife as a "phallic object" and Red's strength as her "phallic power" (2008: 83), signifying the girl's inability to survive without adopting the identities and tools used by masculine figures. Hence, when she comes across a wolf, she cuts off its paw in self-defense, unaware that she has wounded her grandmother who had taken on the form of an animal. Lau remarks how Carter's decision to assign the vulnerable grandmother a role originally designed for predatory male figures results in Carter "transgendering" her and converting her into a "phallic mother" (2008: 82). In view of Murdock's reverence for cultures whose religions subsumed non-binary deities, the scene portrays Red extinguishing the fluidity of gender identities and expressions. The grandmother is no longer eaten by the wolf, but can rather choose when and if she wants to become one. Her choice to "[go] for [her granddaughter's] throat" (CARTER 2015: 138) can be misconstrued as an attack due to the girl's masculine point of view. Red has been raised in a community which is poised for an attack, resulting in a loss of understanding between the two female figures. When the girl resumes the path to her grandmother, the landscape is described as colder than before, caused by snow so heavy it masks every footstep. As much as it marks the end

to the grandmother's lifespan, hiding her pawprints as she retreats, it also marks the girl's ineptitude as a bearer of life and creation. Murdock notes how the feminine moments of love, understanding and affection are some of the most "sacred" ones throughout our lives (1990: 117). Given that Red uses the knife to dispose of one of her grandmother's hands, a limb also meant to provide comfort and intimacy, she is cutting off a valuable source of connection, thereby emphasizing that Little Red Riding Hood is a fairy-tale that rarely relies on compassion as a way of resolving the main conflict. Whether it is the hunter who ends up saving the girl and her grandmother or Red finding the means of saving herself, it remains a story with an either/or foundation; one being will inevitably end the life of another.

The heroine's goal during the second stage is to gather masculine allies she can look up to, who will be willing to rescue her from failure (MURDOCK 1990: 36), and the reason Red prospers by the end of Carter's rendition is because she has completed the rite of passage as defined by the adults in her life; she has chosen to act on their instincts by killing the phallic mother, and denying the unity of the masculine and the feminine. Red's neighbors are the ones who ultimately help her defeat the grandmother by taking the woman forcefully out of her home and executing her, thereby allowing the masculine granddaughter to appropriate her space. The masculine is not an innately negative entity, however, and it is only during the final stages of the journey that the heroine is capable of transforming the masculine into a positive form, the supportive animus.

## 2.2. The road of trials and boon of success

"Puss-in-Boots" is the only story in Carter's anthology told entirely from a masculine point of view, and it is instantly evident that the male protagonist possesses more pride and confidence than his female counterparts. Deeming love and intimacy too worthless to be pursued, Puss roams the streets, boasting that he is capable of infiltrating women's bedchambers, and unable to comprehend his sexual advances being rejected. Considering that the heroine's road of trials serves to alter her in accordance with the harrowing environment she is forced to habituate, the heroine is conditioned to strive for success in said environment. Puss strives for perfection in every deed, exemplified by his feats of acrobatics, so as to better compensate for the card he was dealt with. Hence, Puss is not immune to the misfortunes of blindly pursuing the masculine. In the same manner as Murdock's patients, he is accustomed to living day by day, and never reflecting on his past nor future aside from acknowledging material accomplishments. In view of Puss and his master having developed personalities to sift through depending on who they are surrounded with, neither feels belonging in their community. The two characters are left in the "cold" and "dark" (CARTER 2015: 88), encased by the negative masculine, until the master encounters the inner feminine.

Confined to Puss' perspective, the reader never becomes fully acquainted with the heroine. What can be decisively determined is that she wishes to eliminate the obstacles on the road ahead of her, that of her abusive husband and the old woman who guards her. Labeled by Puss' master as "a princess in the tower" (2015: 86), the heroine cannot defeat her dragons without the help of her masculine allies; she has to receive Puss' hints

to notice the youth and start acting on her desires. Murdock highlights how girls can be “trained into a state of expectancy” (1990: 57), having to constantly wait for male figures who will introduce them to rewarding experiences. Therefore, Puss and the youth are the ones with enough power and agency to fulfill the heroine’s dream.

The heroine’s lover exhibits remarkable development regarding his journey, deciding to bring to the forefront his feminine and creative aspects in order to gain her affection. He distances himself from Puss’ masculine influence, indicating that the matter of emotional connection is too precious to be treated as a joke. However, the ending of the tale remains conventional, with the heroes unable to evade their conditioning. Having taught *The Bloody Chamber* in a classroom setting during the 1990s, Bruhl and Gamer noticed that, in view of its simplistic and masculine narrative, “Puss-in-Boots” received the most positive response from students (1998: 143). The heroine and her tabby propose multiple schemes which result in fake identities, blackmail, and the murder of the abusive husband. Moreover, in the final paragraph, Puss wishes that the reader may find an affluent and conventionally attractive spouse whose virility will lead to offspring, insinuating that shrewdness and cunning are vital to surviving his environment. The heroes would end their journeys with a happily ever after were it not for the subsequent stages in the heroine’s journey which promote bridging gaps between polarities. Having found the boon of success and defeated the dragons, the protagonists remain in a community which never alleviates their struggles; the belonging they seek has always been dependent on the financial wealth they possess, and they have learned how to utilize the masculine in order to change their circumstances.

### 2.3. Spiritual aridity and descent to the Goddess

“The Erl-King” features a heroine whose previous steps the reader cannot discern; owing to the distress of her present moment, she never discloses her past, cementing the emptiness and loss of oneself which come with the fifth stage. Her physical movements are limited by the stifling environment of the woods she has ventured into, the coldness seeping directly from the ground, and the trees barren and “anorexic” (CARTER 2015: 105), reflecting the heroine’s frail body and, therefore, her lack of intuitiveness. Nature is neither healthy nor inviting, having been altered into a dominion ruled by the most powerful masculine figure, the king.

In the stage of spiritual aridity, Murdock’s heroine desperately searches for the masculine figure’s protection and approval. Since the Erl-King’s qualities are that of a strict and demanding housekeeper, “The Erl-King” achieves what “Puss-in-Boots” prompted; it portrays domesticity as an alluring trap. Murdock’s citing an Erica Jong poem to further her own observations emphasizes this occurrence: “The best slave / does not need to be beaten / She beats herself” (1990: 54). Although the heroine seeks the King’s skin and embraces, the two symbols of intimacy are nullified due to their being likened to poisonous armor. Aware of her eventual demise, the heroine can envision herself willingly becoming one of his caged birds and forgetting to exist without his aid.

There is a privilege Murdock associates with the fifth stage of the journey, wherein “the king must die” (1990: 84) and the heroine must commence her separation from

the masculine. It is a transition which heavily relies on knowing how and when to say 'no', a transition only an individual with a safety net can afford to undergo. Murdock remarks how we desperately need the income and privileges which come with certain environments, and to leave those behind requires tremendous sacrifice (1990: 72). The return to the feminine requires patience with oneself, and the individual needs to be aware of the potential of losing allies, not least because the subsequent stage, the initiation and descent to the Goddess, is marked as a period of sterility and desolation. Unlike the locked-up princess in "Puss-in-Boots", the heroine is not looking for answers in her masculine ally. Her vision of killing the king presents the awakening and courage needed to break the cycle, to disregard the negative masculine. The weather in "The Erl-King" is reminiscent of the heroine's desire to heal when she interprets it as "introspective" (CARTER 2015: 105), a trait often applied to the ill, individuals who are in an in-between state and have time to reflect. Concluding that she cannot sacrifice her liberty in exchange for fragile security, the heroine becomes the Great Mother, an archetype embodying nature, support and nourishment (MURDOCK 1990: 18). Her vision incorporates the Erl-King recognizing her newfound femininity, addressing her as "mother" (2015: 114) right before she ends his life. In a conclusion that implies she will act on her instincts, her hands shaking in anticipation, the heroine is set to become the savior of the woods, leading nature towards a healing path by killing the King.

However, the adjacent stage entails a descent into the underworld and meeting the dark feminine; the heroine needs to accept that she has lost an aspect of herself and retrieve it, an endeavor that appears fruitless and, thus, results in grief and depression. Time loses all meaning as the individual voluntarily undergoes isolation to escape the "male realm" (MURDOCK 1990: 89), thereby feeling abandoned and realizing there are no shortcuts in departing from a masculine mindset. Coming to terms with that notion is a process that can take years, but it provokes the heroine into finally acquainting herself with her values, intuition and sexuality. Reminiscent of the caged birds that surround the heroine of "The Erl-King", the Countess in "The Lady of the House of Love" is in a perpetual state of limbo. While not damned to eternal sleep, the Countess suffers the fate of eternal life, a vampire who is painfully aware of being both victim and predator. Having been betrayed by her masculine ancestry, the heroine despises her own inner masculine despite it being an unavoidable aspect of herself. In view of Nelson referring to Briar Rose's tower as "a prison tower of masculine principles" (1991: 234), the Countess' curse is a direct result of the negative masculine embodied in adults who should have protected her. Nevertheless, although Nelson notes that "the feminine value itself (...) has gone to sleep" (1991: 191), darkness and stillness are crucial for the heroine's evolution and creative capabilities. Hence, although the heroine's vampirism is depicted as though it were a physical and mental illness, wherein she rarely ever ventures outside her manor and neglects her health, she imagines a future where her cold surroundings are replaced with summer heat. Murdock's patients portray this stage in their lives as exceptionally afflicting due to the prolonged absence of playfulness; they miss physical activities in nature and utilizing their hands for creative endeavors (1990: 73), both of which could form a healthy link between their bodies and environments. The heroine, herein the Countess, spends her time isolated in darkness, unable to give birth to anything: "She may feel an

incredible sense of emptiness, of being left out, shunned, left behind, without value. She may feel homeless, orphaned, in a place of in-between” (MURDOCK 1990: 105).

When a young man crosses the border between the natural realm and the Countess’ manor, the Countess is granted an opportunity to awaken the feminine. The youth is a synthesis of the positive masculine and feminine; he is cautious of the vampire yet protective of her, longing to distance her from the ancestors whose portraits are a fixture on the chateau’s walls. In choosing to delay his death and acknowledge her affection towards him, the heroine illustrates that she is ready to embrace the inner feminine and the lessons she has had to learn. Clumsy and tearful in her final attempt to display her masculine and vampiric needs, the Countess drops her glasses, the shards making her bleed while she tries to salvage the pieces. When the youth heals the vampire by kissing her wound, he personifies the feminine, thereby releasing her from her temporal prison and granting her a passage to adulthood. Instead of taking another’s blood the Countess finally gives her own, becoming as vulnerable and feminine as any human being capable of maturing. Her pet bird, therefore, also becomes liberated from its cage, resulting in a continuation of the Countess’ journey: “When the Countess dies, she dies as a vampire” (FOWL 1991: 77).

In her final moments, the Countess plucks a rose, an allusion to her vampiric urges (FOWL 1991: 78), from between her thighs, gifting her masculinity to the youth. Thus, the young man is gifted the knowledge of surviving the cruel, masculine world she had inhabited; the Countess symbolically completes the sixth stage by giving birth, or rather, by creating another vampire, a soldier who will need to sleepwalk and deprive others of their blood so as to survive the impending horrors of war.

#### 2.4. Urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine

While the seventh stage of the heroine’s journey centers on healing the injured feminine, Wolf Alice is a creature who cannot initially find the solution to her recovery. Sleeping in the curled-up position of an infant, neither fully human nor wolf, Alice exists in the larval stage until she is sent to tend to the Duke’s castle, a vampire as isolated as she is. Whereas she sees her reflection in the mirror and does not realize it is herself, the Duke possesses no reflection, his connection to Alice and the wolves being that he cannot perceive his self and actions, with only his meals to mark the passage of time. Nevertheless, the separation from the feminine and identification with the masculine in “Wolf-Alice” are not portrayed in an unfavorable manner; the two stages function as precursors to the heroine’s maturation.

If the descent represents one wandering through the underworld, the seventh stage, yearning to reconnect with the feminine, depicts the rewards of ascending to the nature above. The heroine is rejuvenated, ready to act on her instincts and follow her creative impulses. Murdock remarks how the return to the feminine causes the heroine to have a sharper sense of hearing, smell and touch (1990: 126); colors become more vibrant, food tastes more pleasing and eyes are not the sole instrument of sight. Wolf Alice is instantly a master of the senses in a way her fellow human beings are not, and her dual nature allows her to perceive food and smells differently. Murdock even associates the heroine’s newfound wisdom to her menstruation (1990: 115); an exceptionally tactile and



observant heroine, Alice perceives the cycles of the moon, “the governess of transformation” (CARTER 2015: 155), as corresponding with her menstrual cycles. Nelson remarks how the journey towards the feminine comprises both light and dark moments, periods marked using the sun and moon cycles (1991: 190). Having grasped the concepts of time and identity through her menstrual cycles, the symbol of Alice’s femininity becomes a symbol of her wisdom. It is during the nights when the moon shines the brightest that Alice experiments with dresses of the Duke’s grandmother, ready to indulge the aforementioned creative impulses and taking joy in discovering her identity through self-expression.

When Alice sees herself in the mirror for the first time, she tries to nuzzle the reflection, assuming it is another creature. Schanoes interprets Carter’s use of mirrors as subversively feminine due to the woman’s ego having been devalued for centuries through the use of the mirror motif (2009: 5). In view of the woman in the mirror having been manipulated in service of the male gaze, Alice’s longing for companionship due to the mirror is entirely subversive; the mirror reflects her curiosity about herself and the urge to connect with the feminine. In Lewis Carrol’s *Alice through the Looking-Glass* the mirror introduced the heroine to a fantasy world that is not dissimilar to our own in terms of absurdism and injustice; it gave Alice a pathway towards wisdom and maturity. Carter, on the other hand, takes the looking-glass so as to prove how knowledge of one’s own body and its messages can also be a marker of wisdom, echoing Murdock’s outlook.

Alice notices that her companion in the mirror is herself when she grows tired of the creature copying her actions; conclusively, she grows tired of impressions and embraces her own identity. The mirror proves that if she wants to know who she is and where she belongs she needs to find that answer on her own. By shedding tears, and tackling her fear with compassion for herself, Alice becomes capable of nurturing herself and her environment. Carter infuses the story with healthy domesticity, portraying the Duke’s home as no longer just his, since through Alice’s sense of responsibility the house becomes hers as well. She revives the feminine by caring for herself through proper hygiene and stepping out of the castle in a wedding dress, thereby embracing the nature surrounding her.

The seventh stage represents a period of birth, whether of the individual’s uninhibited persona, or their newfound hobbies and connection to nature. Their body is no longer a commodity to be exploited and capitalized on in order to preserve cultural and economic expectations. Therefore, “Wolf-Alice” culminates with the heroine discovering her body’s propensity for creation. Murdock draws a comparison between the heroine’s yearning for the feminine and the final scene between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader in the Skywalker saga, wherein the son takes off his father’s mask to find a lonely man beneath. According to Murdock, in appeasing the need we used to neglect, the need for affection, we are “unmask(ing) the father within” (1990: 110). Hence, Alice licking the Duke’s face and nursing him back to health parallels father and son’s healing moment; the Duke is the lonely creature in need of affection and Alice’s compassion towards him defines how much she has soothed her fathering, nurturing side. Carter’s tale begins with the heroine not wanting to rest in a bed due to her perception of it as a cage, but when she ultimately decides to lie on a bed it is due to her longing to revive a dying being. Moreover, Murdock’s analysis of this stage incorporates a myth from Navajo mythology, the

myth of a woman who “made the first human beings from skin rubbed from various parts of her body” (1990: 126), which echoes Alice using her tongue to create the Duke. Due to her ministrations regarding his health, the Duke appears in the mirror, representing newfound humanity and, thus, someone whose vulnerability and femininity has come to the surface. Hunted and in pain, he mirrors Alice’s deceased wolf-mother, but his cries reflect those of “a woman in labour” (CARTER 2015: 162), a figure ready to create something new.

## 2.5. Healing the mother/daughter split

The eighth stage of the journey, which presents the heroine reconnecting with her mother, is a direct inversion of the first stage, their separation. Murdock commences her analysis of this step by quoting Kolbenschlag’s *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Goodbye*: “The reality of our time in history requires that we reverse the pattern of the fairytales—we must go back, restore and heal these female constellations in order to renew and integrate the suppressed masculine element” (1990: 130). “The Bloody Chamber” is a solitary tale in the anthology of ten wherein Carter incorporates and celebrates a nurturing female relationship.

The protagonist of “The Bloody Chamber” initially renounces the inner feminine upon describing the feeling of leaving her mother as nervous excitement and professing that she wants to marry her future husband due to his status, thereby disregarding affection as a viable factor. The heroine’s identification with the masculine is further apparent in how her instinctive feeling of dread is instantly quelled by her husband’s scent, reminding her of her deceased father. In a surrounding where the negative masculine, the archetype that separates and defines, prevails, the heroine believes she cannot be both a daughter and a wife; the two roles are mutually exclusive. Therefore, she abandons her creativity in favor of appeasing the Marquis’ sexual appetites and migrating to what she perceives as the adult world.

Most of Murdock’s patients needed to find beauty in caring for their home and accomplishing mundane tasks so as to feel closer to their mothers, a notion Murdock labels as “divine ordinariness” (1990: 139). When her husband leaves during their honeymoon, however, the heroine does not know how to pass the hours alone. The keys he gives her to explore the house are not designed to keep his home safe, but manipulate her into shaming herself for her curiosity; the heroine feels ashamed not only of her desire to open the forbidden door, but her attraction towards her husband. Renfroe notes how defiant men have long been portrayed as innovators and revolutionaries in fiction and real life, but defiant women tend to be used as cautionary tales (1998: 91). Carter erodes said idea when she makes the heroine’s curiosity not the beginning of a ruinous cycle, but the ending of one; the protagonist’s curiosity regarding the forbidden chamber prevents the deaths of all women who could have succeeded her.

Despite having acknowledged that the king must die, the heroine’s feelings of disgrace and humiliation persist when she finds she cannot wash away the blood on the key. She realizes that the negative masculine will not fulfill her need for safety and that she cannot achieve perfection, prompting her to welcome her mother’s aid. Murdock notes

that the heroine is in need of a community which will show her that healing lies in a supportive environment, and not battling the dragons on one's own (1990: 140-141). When the heroine's mother comes to her safety, she embodies every individual who has suffered from abuse. By alluding to the place of the Marquis and the heroine's coupling as an "ancestral" bed (2015: 2), Carter is referring to the hundreds of generations of women who suffered the same fate as the heroine. Hence, the heroine is not just reconnecting with her mother, but every human being whose openness and consent has been betrayed.

The mother figure is an archetype of the unconscious, the very aspect the heroine was trying to suppress at the start of her journey. Consequently, healing the mother/daughter split does not necessarily entail the heroine repairing her relationship with her mother. Murdock specifies that the Mother archetype portrays a unity of opposites (1990: 17); the heroes start to see the similarities between all living and nonliving things, thereby becoming "preservers of life" (1990: 125) and embodying the feminine through compassion and charity. Referring to Murdock's concept of divine ordinariness, the protagonist has learned how to lead a peaceful and content life. Her exposure to the Mother has made her loving in return and capable of following her instincts, as depicted in her marrying the piano-tuner for love, and her inclinations towards donating her income and creating inclusive education.

However, the heroine has not completed the final steps and healed her wounded masculine. The scars left by her deceased husband remain on her forehead, illustrating she will never stop carrying the guilt at the inquisitiveness and attraction she had expressed. Considering that she no longer has the confidence to explore her sexuality and make errors, her sense of safety may permanently be dependent on her mother's proximity. Therefore, the heroine's animus, is severely injured. Bacchilega concludes that "The Bloody Chamber" showcases "how precarious any resolution built on binary oppositions will remain—even when one pole is a quite understandable self-righteousness" (1997: 129), revealing her skepticism over the happiness of the ending. The Marquis is both the violator and the violated (MAKINEN 1992: 13), but his humanity and victimhood are disregarded due to his rejection of redemption. Nevertheless, while a woman's animus can easily be damaged by an antagonistic male figure, it can also be healed by one. Therefore, the tale of Bluebeard shares similarities with that of Beauty and the Beast; both examine the animus and the masculine as forces which can advance the heroine's journey and alter her perspective.

## 2.6. Healing the wounded masculine

Crunelle-Vanrigh expresses that Carter's adherence to subverting Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont's moralistic retelling of Beauty and the Beast in "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" results in a bleak ending wherein the lovers' union merely perpetuates the toxic morality inherent to the tale (1998: 116). However, Carter's subversion cements that the appeal of Beauty and Beast's union does not lie in completely dismantling social constructs, but rather in transforming them into concepts which are no longer damaging to the human psyche, just as the masculine is transformed into a positive force that aids the heroine.

Both “Beauty and the Beast” and “The Animal Bridegroom” tales are categorized by Aarne and Thompson under “The Search for the Lost Husband” (ASHLIMAN 1987: 86-89), as if the husband were the positive masculine, i.e. the assertiveness and fearlessness, the heroine had lost at the beginning of her journey. Thus, Carter’s Mr Lyon is an epitome of the positive animus, the masculine ego (JUNG 1980: 215) that existed along with the heroine’s self; he longs for Beauty to accept his proposed dinner invitations and stay of her own volition, inducing vulnerable moments wherein the two see themselves reflected in the other’s eyes. Carter utilizes the moon as a backdrop for such moments throughout the anthology, namely in tales which correspond with the most healing stages of the heroine’s journey, thereby adopting it as the embodiment of the symbiosis of the masculine and feminine, a moment when the two principles are completely aligned. Murdock’s quoting of Birkhauser-Oeri elaborates on the union: “the unconscious cannot carry out the process of individuation on its own; it is dependent on the cooperation of consciousness. This needs a strong ego” (1990: 160). The heroine needs Beast so as to embrace her instincts and accept the ego, the positive masculine which drives her to act on her desires with confidence. As not yet ready to embrace the animus, Beauty does not act on her romantic instincts; she trades the warmth of Beast’s kisses for the artificial warmth of the city. The uprooted flowers inside shopping windows give no indication of time passing and the changing of the seasons, exhibiting the heroine’s absolute departure from the natural world. Coinciding with the heroine of “The Bloody Chamber”, Beauty clings to her father figure’s newfound reputation, rejecting Beast’s influence further by wearing fur, an integral element of his body, and treating it as a commodity, a manufactured garment which can be taken off.

The warmth and moisture of spring ultimately break Beauty’s heart. Carter connects the wetness of Beauty’s tears to the moisture of earth, the sign of vulnerability serving as an emblem of the feminine. Upon realizing that the Beast has let himself feel immense pain at her loss, she mirrors him by shedding tears at the thought of losing him, echoing Wolf Alice who uses the moisture of her body to heal a lonely being. Snowflakes no longer simulate cold and detached landscapes, or rather the surrounding of Beauty’s home at the beginning of her tale, but the falling of her tears upon Beast’s skin. Upon kissing her lover’s claws, Beauty evolves into the Beast, the animus who had shown his love by kissing her hands before she left him. Therefore, the heroine reconnects both with the masculine and the feminine, her tears bringing the Beast back to life and her resolution healing the wounded masculine.

Carter ultimately refers to Mr Lyon as a beast despite his human-like transformation. Beauty’s husband remains “the handsomest of all the beasts” (2015: 60), his physical transformation unable to hide his instinctive and uninhibited nature. Therefore, Bacchilega maintains that it is not Beast’s transformation that is the focal point of “The Courtship of Mr Lyon”, but Beauty’s (1997: 80); regardless of his final physical appearance, the Beast is embraced by and remains inside Beauty.

In “The Company of Wolves”, Carter expands on the penultimate stage by introducing a heroine whose unapologetic embrace of her inner beast, the wolf, leads towards the wolves’ liberation. In contrast to the heroine of “The Werewolf”, the following Red

Riding Hood longs to venture into the woods to sate her adventurousness. She reciprocates the romantic advances of the werewolf who stumbles upon her path, and the compass said animus carries displays the inevitability of their union, that no matter which direction she goes in, the heroine will have found herself by the end of the journey. The wolf tends to be depicted as a perverse figure, destined to operate as Red Riding Hood's antagonist partially due to his implicitly sexual transgressions, namely his willingness to cross-dress and imitate the grandmother. Carter, on the other hand, treats his non-binary disguises and sexual urges as tools which help the heroine grow accustomed to the extent of her desires. Despite Red's fearful reaction upon seeing the werewolf's true form, reflecting Beauty's initial mindset towards Mr Lyon, Carter returns to the imagery of moisture, herein of melting snow, to allude to the heroine's imminent fondness of the wolf: "(s)o she came in, bringing with her a flurry of snow that melted in tears, (...) a little disappointed to see only her grandmother sitting beside the fire" (2015: 149).

Murdock points out that the masculine's assertiveness, ambition and pursuit of order can become "cold and inhuman" without the feminine (1990: 156); as exhibited previously, the masculine can actively combat the fluctuation of nature. The inner masculine presents a strong ego, and can only manifest itself when the heroine decides to embrace her feminine identity with complete confidence in herself; the game of Red's questions and the wolf's answers appeals to the heroine's call to adventure, and Red merely laughs at his proclamation that he could devour her. Murdock also addresses the positive masculine as "the Man with Heart" and, analogous to the Mother archetype, it can embody a corporeal man who feels compassion for the heroine and accepts her choices. It is in the final sentence of the story that Carter addresses the reader, pointing out the tenderness of Red Riding Hood's wolf. Hearne further draws attention to the kindness of the masculine: "The Beast wants a relationship with Beauty; he will lure her but not force her into it. Instead of trying to eat Beauty, he feeds her. He is powerful, yet vulnerably at the mercy of his unrequited passion" (1989: 139). Both "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Company of Wolves" present the heroine with a choice, resulting in their acceptance of the Other and the masculine being healed. Burning the wolf's clothing along with her own, Red welcomes the masculine, urging the Man with Heart to stand with her on equal footing. The image of Red and the wolf curled up together, her eating the lice lurking in his fur, echoes Carter's idyllic description of Adam and Eve in "Wolf-Alice", wherein the image of eating lice is employed to depict mankind's closeness to nature.

Ultimately, the boundary between what had been the grandmother's cabin and the snowy landscape outside blurs. Carter's sentence "(s)nowlight, moonlight, a confusion of paw-prints" (2015: 152), which promptly follows the idyllic image of Adam and Eve, cements snow as the masculine and the moon as the feminine. The two entwined result in an environment warm and comforting enough for other creatures to come out of their shells. The distance between the werewolves and the cabin grows shorter as Red and her beast become closer. Their passing the threshold to witness the couple asleep in each other's arms marks the end of ostracism and segregation. Carter's response to the perception of *The Bloody Chamber* existing solely to dismantle the patriarchal elements of fairy-tales is dismissive; her approach is to rather uncover what they had only been implying in regard to sexuality (BACCHILEGA 1997: 69); Red welcoming the animalistic

into the cabin emulates Carter's vision of sexual liberation for all genders. Hence, "The Company of Wolves" is the only tale in the anthology in possession of an ending that alludes to Murdock's ideal end to the heroine's journey; the heroine passes on her wisdom to a community, albeit a community already coded as marginalized.

## 2.7. The integration of masculine and feminine

In "The Tiger's Bride" Carter decides to examine, and ultimately eliminate, the confines of gender the heroes find themselves in, constructs which lead them to alienation and body dysmorphia. The Tiger, ashamed of his body and identity, wears a mask simulating a male human face so as to hide his beastliness, embodying the disastrous search for perfection characteristic of the masculine-driven road of trials. His choice of traditionally male garments is an inversion of the wolf cross-dressing as the grandmother, unveiling his misconstrued vision of belonging. Placed at a continent he does not originate from, his displacement mirrors the heroine's, who exhibits grief and suicidal ideation due to her father's treatment. She identifies with horses as "beasts in bondage" (2015: 75) and takes pleasure in the stories of her Russian homeland which center around the powers of non-human creatures. However, the heroine remains in tune with the feminine; her appreciation for the "wounded sensitivity" (2015: 75) in the eyes of the Tiger's horses echoes the very trait she demands of the Tiger. Conversely, he is far from divorced from the inner masculine and feminine, as exhibited in the tears and the rose he gifts Beauty, naked offerings which seek nothing in return. When Beauty accepts the rose and plucks its petals, she foreshadows her own ending by sealing her beastly fate.

To merge the masculine and the feminine is to enact "the sacred marriage (which) is the marriage of ego and self" (MURDOCK 1990: 160). The joining of the masculine and feminine is immensely challenging for the heroine precisely due to the animalistic nature of the process, indicated by how Beauty's discomfort with being nude borders on pain; her inner union of the masculine and feminine goes against everything her community has taught her. However, as soon as the Tiger uncovers his body to the heroine in his personal display of said union, the heroine becomes a mirror image of him, unveiling her own body to him. The walls between them disintegrate following Beauty's proclamation that the lamb, or rather she, "must learn to run with the tigers" (2015: 77); the heroine eradicates her passivity by eradicating the boundaries between herself and the Beast. The Tiger's masculine aspect, exhibited by his revealing his teeth as tools of destruction, does not deter her. Her ego, the masculine represented by her confidence, becomes inseparable from the vulnerable self of the feminine when she utilizes said confidence to welcome his tongue and teeth, and stretch her hand out to him. The Tiger's purring at her display of courage and vulnerability is that of "the engine that makes the world turn" (2015: 81), illustrating the foundational aspect of their union. Furthermore, both the sun and the moon make their appearance in the ending sequence so as to finalize the heroine's journey, the former referenced in Beauty's description of the Tiger's eyes, and the latter illuminating their figures as the man-made structure they inhabit crumbles around them.

The animal state in fairy tales is oftentimes a transitory period, the purpose of which is to impose a moral punishment on the afflicted individual, thereby treating the

animalistic and human as emotional opposites (WEBB, HOPCROFT 2017: 318). Beauty's permanent metamorphosis, however, bridges that artificially constructed gap between human and beast. In his narration of the ritual of the sacred marriage, Joseph Campbell states: "Marriage and killing are related. The marriage is the killing of your separateness. You're becoming one part of a larger unit. You're no longer the separate one" (CAMPBELL 2010). Having realized that she does not want only to be with the Tiger, but to become him, Beauty kills her human form. Carter already alludes to the concept of skin as something that can be changed, most notably when Wolf Alice identifies the reemergence of the inner feminine as her "new skin" (2015: 159); Beauty's multiple skins must disappear beneath the Tiger's tongue before her fur emerges. Instead of Beauty kissing and reviving the Beast, it is the Beast who provides rebirth by licking Beauty into a new body. Hence, free from preconceived views on sex and gender, Carter's heroine creates a life absent of self-consciousness. The Tiger and Beauty's sacred marriage disperses any semblance of duality, the two blending into one creature inside which there is ultimately no distinction between the masculine and the feminine.

Brooke asserts that the couple's newfound existence should not be construed as liberating, that any transition founded on separating from society results in lack of safety and companionship (2004: 84). Murdock, however, ends her analysis of the heroine's journey by contrasting the societies of past and present. She recounts religions whose deities were coded neither male nor female, and the communities which prospered due to their open-mindedness (1990: 176). Moreover, she empathizes with students who verbalize insecurities regarding contemporary gender dynamics, namely the pressure that exists on men and women to conform to Western depictions of masculinity and femininity (1990: 182–3). Hence, the Tiger and Beauty are exploring their past, planting seeds of hope for future generations. Given that male and female bodies have long been measured in terms of their service and appeal to the public, Beauty's complete lack of concern for her past community is deemed therapeutic; the beauty of her fur is a testament to the beauty of non-conforming bodies and non-binary expressions of gender. When the Tiger and Beauty become one, their union presents a balm to the aforementioned cracks and fissures of their world.

### 3. Conclusion

Maureen Murdock's study remains one of the timeliest explorations on the concept of dualities in the West. Her magnum opus is a damning indictment of the binary opposition between the masculine and the feminine that has been implemented by Western religious ideologies. Carter's female characters are constantly surrounded by figures that seem to be taunting them due to their higher social standing, corresponding with Murdock's conception of obstacles on the road of trials. Domineering titles of the Count, the Marquis, the Duke and the King guarantee protection neither to the women subservient to these figures, nor to the men who bear the titles. Carter's dismantlement of social and political hierarchies is in line with Murdock's entreaty to look to specific past civilizations and religious denominations for guidance, which pose that one of the highest forms of individual and collective wellbeing lies in the absence of duality (1990: 179).

In “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” Beauty’s father remarks how the Beast’s surroundings remind him of “a place of privilege where all the laws of the world (...) need not necessarily apply” (2015: 49). Carter’s words are also applicable to the manner in which one could interpret her stories, as realms devoid of didactic limitations through which readers can explore their identity. Although Duncker views Carter’s male heroes as perpetrators of abuse, the beasts as “men in furry clothing”, and women and girls as their victims (MAKINEN 1992: 12), to deny male and male-coded characters their otherness brings binary thinking to a text that firmly opposes it. The nature of Carter’s love stories seamlessly embodies Murdock’s model, the obstacles in a dynamic representing the road of trials, and the lovers’ physical transformation mirroring the final stage of emotional re-birth. While there is not a single tale which explicitly ends with the wise heroine coming back to her community and teaching it what she has learned, all Carter’s heroines, with the exception of the Snow Child, accomplish what they set out to achieve, illustrating that the nature of the feminine lies in its fluctuation. Carter’s storytelling approach, coupled with Murdock’s estimations, unveils the need to share one’s pain and accomplishments with one’s community, spurring understanding and support of the Other.

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## PUTOVANJE JUNAKINJE U ZBIRCI PRIČA KRVAVA ODAJA I DRUGE PRIČE ANDŽELE KARTER

### Rezime

Cis žene su se tokom proteklih decenija izborile da pokažu svoje sposobnosti i izraze svoja mišljenja u okruženjima kojima su najpre dominirali muškarci, utvrđujući da ne postoji prostor u kome ne zaslužuju da budu uključene. Međutim, ovaj razvitak na polju rodne ravnopravnosti postavlja pitanje da li su ljudi svih rodnih identiteta uslovljeni da nesvesno menjaju sopstvenu prirodu kako bi bili primljeni od strane zapadnjačkih društava koja se pretežno zasnivaju na maskulinim principima. Koristeći Jungove arhetipove, Morin Mardok obrazlaže u publikaciji *Putovanje junakinje* kako se femininost kolektiva i individue i dalje suzbija u korist ustanovljene maskuliniteta. Prateći etape mitskog putovanja junakinje, Mardok se zalaže da svaka jedinka mora u sebi uspostaviti ravnotežu između maskuliniteta i femininosti kako bi doprinela svojoj potrazi za celovitošću i dobrobiti ostalih. S obzirom na to da u zbirci priča *Krvava odaja* Andžela Karter transformiše poznate bajke sa uobičajenim maskulinim narativima u one koje veličaju navedenu potragu za ravnotežom, namera rada je da se detaljno prikaže kako Karterina zbirka prati obrazac putovanja junakinje. Ustanovljeno je da se svaka priča poklapa sa etapom u ženskom mitskom pohodu i da se Mardokina interpretacija Jungovih arhetipova odražava u putanjama Karterinih junaka.

*Ključne reči:* *Krvava odaja*, Andžela Karter, putovanje junakinje, Morin Mardok, maskulinitet, femininost