CHAPTER FOUR
**CHAPTER- 4**

**DID HE WHO MADE THE LAMB MADE THEE?**

*The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers. (Carter)*

The title of this chapter evokes the Blakean symbols of the tiger and lamb. In the context of Carter’s story-collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) this alludes to Margaret Atwood’s critique of Carter’s stories (“Running with the Tigers”) as depicting these two antagonistic images as complementary. Atwood’s critique appreciates Carter’s effort to reach a ground where binaries of active/passive, predator/prey or, tiger/lamb could be synthesized. In the earlier stories that were analyzed in the third chapter of this thesis we saw Carter’s heroines as ‘objects’ moving towards their ‘subject’ positions. The stories that will be analyzed in this chapter establishes the nature of Carter’s heroines as both ‘objects’ and ‘subjects’, a utopian synthesis where lamb and tiger are two sides of the same coin. Salman Rushdie in his Introduction to Carter’s collection *Burning Your Boats* (1995) reads the tale of Beauty and the Beast as “a metaphor for all the myriad yearnings and dangers of sexual relations” (xii). In the manner of Blake, Carter too comes up with this conclusion that the tiger and the lamb are both part of the same psyche, their creator being the same. A person could be a tiger as well as a lamb. ‘Experience’ does not take away one’s ‘Innocence’. Taking Rushdie’s perspective as a base point we find that almost all the stories in Carter’s collection projects the relation between these two (tiger and lamb) from various and varied angles. In her study of Marquis de Sade’s heroines Carter emphatically asserts her view on the subject, she finds that in a world marred by binaries and hierarchies one has to chose between these two available options- either to be a lion or a lamb, to kill or get killed, there is no in – between. The fable of Beauty and the Beast acts as a common denominator that binds all the stories in the collection together. Marquis in the title story of the collection is a Beast, a carnivore, bestial and animalistic who wants to devour his lamb – like bride. The Erl – King of another story is also a predator who traps and ‘consumes’ his victims. The
Sleeping Beauty of ‘The Lady of the House of Love’ is also a bestial beauty who consumes lost and wandering men.

To take this image of ‘beast’ or tiger (lion) as a metaphor for male sexuality; a clichéd view in traditional feminism, is to misinterpret Carter’s message (critique’s of Duncker, Lewallen and Clarks are examples of this). The chapter defending Carter’s attempt though, problematic and controversial, takes side of critic Makinen who interprets the image of ‘Beast’ in Carter’s tales as the projection of darker, animalistic side of female sexuality: ‘Read the beasts as the projections of a feminine libido, and they become exactly that autonomous desire which the female characters need to recognize and reappropriate as a part of themselves (denied by the phallocentric culture)” (12). Whether, it be the wolf of Carter’s three variations of The Little Red Riding Hood tale or the tiger of the two renditions of the tale of Beauty and the Beast, these carnivorous, bestial beings are in fact projections of women’s ‘otherness’. These female characters enacting both Justine and Juliette, tiger and lamb deconstruct the myth of essentialism. Their oscillation between these two roles demystifies the ‘naturalness’ of the notions of gender and sexuality. Hence, their gender seems like a performance, a theatrical trick, a ‘construction’ and not essential in nature.

Coming to the fable of Beauty and the Beast we find that Madame Leprince Beaumont (1711-80) is generally considered the author of the story in which a beautiful girl is married off to a beast by her father to pay his credit. Beauty who is meek and self – sacrificing agrees without raiding any dissent and with her pure and sacrificial love, the beast is turned into a human. The story has been attacked by various feminist critics who opined that Beauty in the story is projected as an asset, a commodity exchanged by her father to get rid of his debt to the Beast. Exposing and commenting on the fact that how women’s autonomy and individuality has been sabotaged by the male patriarch especially, in the context of the fairy tale genre, author and critic Joyce Carol Oates asserts:

Girls and women are the uncontested property of men, to be handed over by their fathers to virtually anyone the father favors – a murderous/cannibal Robber Bridegroom, a “frightful Beast,” the devil
himself. The father’s wish seems to include the daughter’s reflexive response, as if the two were not two but one (99).

Other critics like Bruno Bettelheim (The Uses of Enchantment 1991) have pointed out how the tale of Beauty and the Beast is a psychoanalytical account of how in order to become a subject in a patriarchal society a woman has to overcome oedipal complex (beauty’s obsessive attachment to her father is an indication of this). The female subject needs to transfer her affection to another male subject if she has to attain a healthy sexual subjectivity. Hence, Beauty must substitute her love for her father for another male (beast in this case). This fable also signifies how a woman must learn, however beautiful she is, to love and compromise even if it is beast that she has been sold off to. Grimm’s story ‘King Thrushbeard’ also exemplifies this moral. In a patriarchal setup women are made to learn repression and masochism so that their domination appear willing and a need. Patriarchal hegemony is maintained and propagated in the same fashion. The Frog Prince is another story where a prince is transformed from his ugly and hideous form with the kiss of a beautiful princess. All these tales with their prejudices for female characters showcase and articulates the expectations of a patriarchal society – a woman must learn to accept her fate and that too without questioning. She must learn to love a beast if she has to attain happiness.

As the genre has been associated with women for centuries of tradition, we often find in these tales that how women have impressed their desires and repressed fantasies upon these tales. Catering to the increasingly aware population the revisionist of the genre dismissed the socio – cultural scripts which were sabotaged by masculinistic fantasies. A startling amalgamation of timeless universality and the genre’s viability to be modified in relation to special cultural set ups and place marks the genre as apropos to the needs of a feminist writer. The stories that we will analyze in this chapter include two variants of the tale of Beauty and the Beast and a trilogy (a group of three different versions) of the Perrault’s famous tale The Little Red Riding Hood. Retrieving the genre from falling into the world of non – serious literature Angela Carter unwinds their hidden energy and harnesses this to fuel her feminist project. Being a writer full of nerve and vivacity Carter reworks the magic of these tales and deconstructs these age – old stories as potent myths for out times. Impregnating these stories with ideas like - sadomasochism, voyeurism, fetishism,
violence, eroticism and feminism, Carter makes them the springboard to endorse and advertise her vision of a utopia where an individual can exist as both object as well as subject; where gender and sexual identity is not rigid and hence, final. She delineates her characters as subject – in – process, transforming and evolving. Writing at the time when there was uproar and upheaval in the feminist circles over emerging debates around notions like female experience and identity, Carter viewed them as historical and cultural constructs with the artifice of timelessness and essentialism around them. Taking the image of Beauty and the Beast as the only available options she plays with these two historically contingent and mutable positions. In these tales she presents her characters as incorporating both beauty and beastliness. As Margaret Atwood comments about Carter’s intention behind writing these revisions:

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 avoid – at the extreme end of passivity – becoming meat…. But their change from lamb to tiger need not be a divesting of all ‘feminine’ qualities, as it is for de Sade; also, although society may slant things so that women appear to be better candidates for meathood than men and men better candidates for meat – eating, the nature of men is not fixed by Carter as inevitably predatory, with females as their ‘natural’ prey. Lambhood and tigerishness may be found in either gender, and in the same individual at different times.

(137)

So, we see that Carter is not writing against males and male sexuality, nor she appears to promulgate these stereotypes rather, she view them as relative positions; mutable and transformative in nature. She does not treat the topic of sexuality in the traditional manner, according to which, male sexuality is viewed as predatory and animalistic in nature. In a rather unconventional way, Carter takes these patriarchal images and set them on fire, drawing them with fresh colors. Being a
deconstructionist she demystifies the patriarchal myth of male superiority and female subordination. Playing within the patriarchally regulated models Carter subverts these forms, finding ways to deconstruct them and reveal their artificiality.

The first variant of the Beauty and the Beast motif in Carter’s story - collection *The Bloody Chamber* is named – ‘The Courtship of Mr Lyon’. The narrative opens with a scene of winter evening; this recurrent image acts as a *leit motif* in this collection. The heroine is looking outside her kitchen window, with nobody in sight. The narrator’s description of the protagonist echoes the popular fairy tale images of both Snow White and Cinderella (a connection pointed out by Vanrigh also): “This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same, inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made all of snow, pauses in her chores in the mean kitchen to look out at the country road” (144). The allusion to her skin as white as snow associates her with another fairy tale character Snow White while, her engagement with domestic and household chores links her with Cinderella.

It is Carter’s postmodern strategy to expose the fabricated nature of this seemingly timeless genre, establishing it as a product of historical and social conditioning. Her tales seem to explode with artifice and excessiveness. Moving within the trajectory of the Marchen world Carter’s tale modifies the fairy tale motifs image with anachronism. So, we find in the next passage a reference to car and broken telephone wires. This is Angela Carter’s modern fairy tale where time and timelessness are fused and mixed up to cater to an increasingly aware reading public. Beauty is awaiting her father’s return from town where he went to regain his lost fortunes. Reference to lawyers and judicial intervention highlights the colloquial nature of all this account. This trip to the town has left the father penniless and he cannot buy a ‘white rose’ even for his beautiful daughter. The symbolism around ‘white rose’ is well established in the fairy tale world – the symbol of purity as well as maidenhood. Beauty’s father’s inability to afford “the only gift she wanted” (144) points towards that she must forsake her so called ‘purity’ to survive in an adult world. Though, she has been sketched by the narrator in the initial paragraph as a woman exemplifying the patriarchal notion of an ideal woman – a ‘domesticated beauty’. Finding himself penniless and with a broken car the father goes out for help and stumbles upon a mansion – beautiful, royal yet with an intense air of mystery and
gothic surrounding it. The narrator describes the architecture of this gothic mansion with a picturesque vividness:

a miniature, perfect, Palladian house that seemed to hide itself shyly behind snow – laden skirts of an antique cypress. It was almost night; that house, with its sweet, retiring melancholy grace, would have seemed deserted but for a light flickered in an upstairs window… The gate clanged loudly shut behind him; too loudly. For an instant, that reverberating clang seemed final. Emphatic, ominous as if the gate, now closed, barred all within it from the world outside the walled, wintry garden. And, from a distance, though from what distance he could not tell, he heard the most singular sound in the world: a great roaring, as of a beast of prey. (144-5)

In this story also, as in Carter’s other stories, the houses seems to be an extension of the persons they belong to. The amphibious chateau of Marquis, the ruined mansion of the vampire – queen and this mansion of Mr Lyon, seems to be articulation of their master’s nature, concrete proof of their singularity. This description at times seems to be a description of the person living within these walls. The powerful aura associated with the character and personality of Mr Lyon as well as his otherness is established with these lines. However, powerful this character retracts from society and social communion. The golden knocker at the gate bears proof of the possessor’s wealth. The father enters the mansion and is escorted by a spaniel who, ushers him into a warm and snug study. He is provided with food and drink in Alice in Wonderland fashion (with tags and labels pasted on things). In this room he finds a telephone and the number of a garage so that he can call somebody to fix his car. After seizing this opportunity the father rings up to arrange a mechanic and comes out of the mansion. In the garden of this mansion the father sees a white rose exactly like the one that his daughter had asked for so, he plucks this rose without losing a minute. At this moment the narrator introduces us to the master of the house i.e. the Beast. Couched in gothic overtones we find the description of Mr Lyon as a mixture of
animal and human, something not this and not that, a go – in – between. His description is akin to that of Marquis with his ‘death like gravity’:

There is always a dignity about great bulk, an assertiveness, a quality of being more *there* than most of us are. The being who now confronted Beauty’s father seemed to him, in his confusion, vaster than the house he owned, ponderous yet swift, and the moonlight glittered on his great, mazy head of hair, on the eyes green as agate, on the golden hairs of the great paws that grasped his shoulders so that their claws pierced the sheepskin as he shook him like an angry child shakes a doll (146 original emphasis).

Mr Lyon’s image evokes Kristeva’s ‘abject’ arousing awe as well as dread, desire as well as repulsion. Upon finding Beauty’s father’s theft the beast demands for an explanation and he in return shows him the picture of his daughter whom he promised a white rose. The beast after seeing the photograph of Beauty with ‘wonder’ (147) asks him to bring her along with dinner. The visage of Beauty: “…a certain look she had, sometimes, of absolute sweetness and absolute gravity, as if her eyes might pierce appearances and see your soul” (147) mesmerized and mesmerized the deadly carnivore. This sweetness could be interpreted a symbol of her lamb-like meekness and sacrificial nature. She is the patriarchal model of perfect woman, an emblem of physical beauty which seconded by a self – sacrificial nature. Her father’s reference to Beauty as his “girl – child, his pet” (144) foregrounds the patriarchal objectification and fetishization of women; their value associated with their commoditization. Highlighting this fact French feminist Luce Irigaray comments:

The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women. Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy (?) of the natural world, the randomness (?) of the animal kingdom. The passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, into order as such, is assured by the fact that men, or
groups of men, circulate women among themselves, according to a rule known as the incest taboo. (170)

The father’s consent to exchange his daughter for a commodity brings out the bitter truth of her value in a male-dominated world where women are used and traded as objects. Beauty’s father agrees to bring Beauty along with his daughter as a price of this white rose. With this he takes Beast’s leave and gets back to his daughter and educates her about the nature and personality of their ‘roaring’ host; foregrounding his otherness. His similarity as well as difference from humans is stressed in his description: “Head of a lion; mane and mighty paws of a lion; he reared on his hind legs like any angry lion yet wore a smoking jacket of dull red brocade and was the owner of that lovely house and the low hills that cupped it” (147). Beauty at this stage acknowledges his otherness as something evoking horror. On meeting the Beast she for the first time confronts the ‘abject’ which is according to Becker – Leckrone:

‘Neither subject nor object,’ ‘abjection’ names not a thing but a potentiality, a gravitational field that summons the subject from its proper place to a no-man’s land where the subject is not only ‘beside himself’ but also almost ceases to be. Abjection’s power of horror derives from the fact that the subject is ex-statistically drawn from its proper domain to this “land of oblivion” at the same time the subject is repulsed. (33)

Beauty is up to this point the naïve, virginal bride of the title story as well as the bicyclist of the ‘Lady of the House of Love’. Interpellated by the patriarchal reality of binary existence where individual is entangled between the predator/prey positions, well versed with the patriarchal world of fairy tales where a carnivore represents death and devouring of the meek herbivore; mythical positions of men and women, respectively. There is an air of aloofness as well as loneliness about Mr Lyon. In this manner he appears to be a male version of the deadly vampire queen; trapped in the stronghold of ‘beastliness’. In this meeting the narrator highlights another
concern that links this story with other stories in the collection – the meatification of the female body. Appropriating a male – authored genre Carter employs phallic imagery to subvert and topple the established perspective. Like the wife of Marquis in the first story Beauty too recognizes her fear of being devoured by the Beast. Her view of herself and the Beast is based on the patriarchal definition of male and female sexuality: “when she saw the great paws lying on the arm of his chair, she thought: they are the death of any tender herbivore. And such a one she felt herself to be, Miss Lamb, spotless, sacrificial” (148). This ‘Miss Lamb’ blindly and unquestioningly acquiesces to her subservient position according to which she can be disposed off at a patriarch’s whims. Earlier in her treatise on Marquis de Sade Carter has attacked this phallocentric essentialism with a vigorous sarcasm:

The murderous attacks on the victims demonstrate the abyss between the parties to the crime, an abyss of incomprehension that cannot be bridged. The lamb does not understand why it is lead to the slaughter and so it goes willingly, because it is ignorance. Even when it dawns on the lamb that it is going to be killed, the lamb only struggles because it does not understand that it cannot escape; and, besides, it is hampered by the natural ignorance of the herbivore, who does not even know it is possible to eat meat… which is why we prefer to eat the herbivores. Because, no under no circumstances, could they eat us.

The relations between men and women are often distorted by the reluctance of both parties to acknowledge that the function of flesh is meat to the carnivore but no grass to the herbivore. (The Sadeian Woman 139-9)

Here also Carter makes her female character sympathize with the ‘loneliness’ of the beast, their helpless fate in which they are trapped in this vicious role. In this meeting with Beauty the Beast proposes to her father in regaining his lost fortunes but one condition – Beauty has to live with him in his isolated mansion. Taught to be self
– sacrificing even at the cost of annihilation, Beauty agrees to this proposition. She is the lamb who will be sacrificed to save her father from going bankrupt. In the popular and well-known versions of the story Beauty has sisters also but she alone goes to the Beast being the most beautiful, virtuous and dutiful. Carter in her version makes her the only child and hence the imperative of going to the Beast to repay his father’s loan is more pressing. The Beast fulfills his promise and Beauty leaves with her father to London with a promise to return to the Beast.

Now, Carter comes to play her game of sexual politics, toppling the conventional views of both male and female sexuality. With her changed circumstances, Beauty who was earlier the meek and submissive ‘Miss Lamb’ transforms into ‘pampered cat’. Intoxicated with this newly gained wealth and status Carter’s Beauty forgets her promise to the Beast and, gets busy with own affairs. She goes to parties, movies, shopping, etc. to enjoy her wealth. Without a tincture of guilt or remorse Carter’s Beauty has been shown to celebrate her transformation from dependent to autonomous being: “Carter’s Beauty is not the bashful girl of Beaumont’s story. The selflessness of Beaumont’s heroine is replaced by the thoughtlessness and narcissistic egotism of Beauty, oblivious of her promise” (Vanrigh 131). The narrator points out the fact that how her life in London has changed her. On one late evening Beauty confronts her changed self, sitting in front of a mirror; this confrontation with her otherness is crucial and replete with psychological significance. In psychoanalytical terms, in order to enter into the ‘symbolic’ she has to differentiate herself from other bodies. But, taking a u-turn from these traditional methods Carter’s heroine acknowledge herself both as an object as well as subject hence, offering a more liberating model of existence:

She was learning, at the end of her adolescence, how to be a spoiled child and that pearly skin of hers was plumping out, a little, with high living and compliments. A certain inwardness was beginning to transform the lines around her mouth, those signatures of the personality, and her sweetness and her gravity could sometimes turn a mite petulant when things went not quite as she wanted them to go. You could not have said that her freshness was fading but she smiled at
herself in mirrors a little too often, these days, and the face that smiled back was not quite the one she had seen contained in the Beast’s agate eyes. Her face was acquiring, instead of beauty, a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite, expansive cats (151).

In her newly – learned narcissism and selfishness lies her autonomy. She does not accept her sacrificial role and becomes independent of the patriarchal definition of femininity which endorses passivity and self – annihilation to the female milieu. She then, is summoned by the Beast to join him but, here we see a role reversal. Unlike the fairy tale conventions it is the Beast who has isolated himself in despair and he is the one who is starving himself. Carter deconstructs the patriarchal model of both male as well as female sexual behaviors. Now, if we see Beauty fulfilling her promises to the Beast, it is made clear that it is not to repay her father’s loan rather; it is out of ‘love’ what she goes to him. Writing against the fairy tale conventions the Beast appears to be the princesses (helpless and passive) awaiting Beauty’s arrival to release him from his entrapped state. It is the Sleeping – Beauty motif in reverse. Beauty’s true and pure love has the power to transform him from his animalistic nature. After discovering the Beast’s miserable condition Beauty “flung herself upon him, so that the iron bedstead groaned, and covered his poor paws with her kisses. ‘Don’t die, Beast! If you’ll have me, I’ll never leave you’” (153). Hence, we see a feminist fairy tale in sight where Beauty is not forced to trade herself off to the Beast to save her father. Here, her love makes her see the Beast from an objective point of view; she does not see him as fleshly incarnation of predatory male sexuality. The reciprocal love and understanding between them free them from antagonistic roles of predator and prey. Carter ends the tale with an account of how Beauty’s love free the Beast from his stultifying essentialism of a monster:

When her lips touched the meat – hook claws, they drew back into their pads and she saw how he had always kept his fists clenched, but now, painfully, tentatively, at last began to stretch his fingers. 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, a man with an unkempt mane of hair and, how strange, a broken nose, such as the noses of retired boxers, that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts (153).

The next story that we’ll analyze in this chapter is a darker and grim variant of the above story, entitled: ‘The Tiger’s Bride’. As the title is indicative the focus of this story is the ‘bride’ not the tiger, as in the previous tale Mr Lyon was the central figure. The opening statement of the tale disrupts the fairy tale image of a loving father with a blast – ‘My father lost me to The Beast at cards’ (154). This blunt, first – person attack of the narrator – protagonist provides the heroine with voice and hence, agency. Making her Beauty articulate and with a story of her to tell the world Carter free her from the magical trap of fairy tale world. Vanrigh reads this tale as a “cruel, unsettling twin” (138) of the previous tale. The very first line of the story exposes Carter’s attack on the patriarchal objectification of women where they are exchanged as commodities. Imagining a different background of this pact this tale presents the father as a drunkard, recklessness man who has gone bankrupt and penniless because his gambling habits. He is not the loving father of ‘The Company of Mr Lyon’ who committed a theft to bring his daughter a white rose as present. Here he is selfish gambler who has stacked his daughter at his card game. Treating her as his possession this father puts his own daughter as bait in a state of deliriousness: “…he laughs as if with glee as he beggars himself; he is in such a passion to donate all to The Beast” (154). The heroine’s reminiscences about her past and her mother makes it evident that it is not the first time that her father has done something so thoughtless and reckless; he has been this way for long. From the starting the narrator stresses her assertiveness, her bantering of the biased patriarchal notions, she is not the willing victim of the fairy tale world: “I watched with the furious cynicism peculiar to women whom circumstances force mutely to witness folly” (154). She is aware of her subservient role in the male – dominated world and is highly critical of this. She does not take her role as a fated condition that she cannot escape. The initial paragraph of
the narrative hint towards the possibility of a “blessed plot where the lion lies down with the lamb” (154)

Here too Carter inserts a ‘white rose’ but, with a different significance. Beauty’s nurse calling her “Christmas rose” indicates her virginal status; she too is like an object, valued only for her aesthetic value in a patriarchal set up. The Beast summons her to his palace and sends her white rose flowers which are demanded by her father as a token of forgiveness. In a critical manner when Beauty hands down a flower to her father she pricks her finger and “he gets his rose all smeared with blood” (158). The fact of Beauty being a virgin highlights the exchange value of woman in the male–dominated sphere. She is not ignorant of her objectification, she says: “For now my own skin was my sole capital in the world and today I’d make my first investment” (159). The narrator refers to the nursery tales, superstitions that Beauty has been exposed to, tale of devouring male sexuality have Shaped her vision of sexual relations. Inter-textual references and allusions to the lycanthrope of ‘The Little Red Riding Hood’ and to the predatory charm of the ‘Erl King’ points out the fictitiousness of these tales, which act as mythical lies to fetter men and women in their stereotypical roles.

The Beast in this tale too stands for an otherness, a different position from Beauty’s human character. The ending of Mr Lyon showed him as a man with ‘unkempt mane’ but in this tale the tiger is an animal who masquerade as human in order to move in the human circles. By highlighting the masked visage of the Beast Carter contends for the performative nature of sexual and gender roles:

He has an odd air of self – imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop on all fours. He throws our human aspirations to the godlike sadly awry, poor fellow; only from a distance would you think The Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man’s face painted most beautifully on it. Oh, yes, a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect,
uncanny. He wears a wig too, false hair tied at the nape with a bow, a wig of the kind you see in old – fashioned portraits (156).

What the narrator stresses here is the way an individual has to learn to repress and mask his otherness to enter into the symbolic order. The fact of The Beast’s living outside the peripheries of the human society indicates to the marginal status of such desires and drives. He could be interpreted as Beauty’s own hidden, repressed animality that is present inside her as an object evoking fear and repulsion. The confrontation with this animal and beastly nature of her own desire thwarts her symbolic position. When The Beast demands “to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress and that only for the one time after which she will be returned to her father undamaged” (160) this sarcastic and whimsical girl mocks the proposition; denying her objectification she “let out a raucous guffaw; no young lady laughs like that! My old nurse used to remonstrate. But I did” (161). Taking a jibe at the patriarchal objectification she shrugs away from this ideology. Now, asserting her individuality Beauty proposes her own rules in this patriarchal game of exchange and says:

‘You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once…If you wish to give me money, then I should be pleased to receive it. But I must stress that you should give me only the same amount of money that you would give to any other woman in such circumstances.’ (161)

So, we see a blatant and scathing criticism of phallocentric logic which reduces women to their object status. Playing within the male – defined game this new woman of Carter’s tale turns the table upon its head, seizing the opportunity to
articulate her inner desires. She has found a way to deconstruct and erode the patriarchal mansion from within. Employing the phallic tool of male voyeuristic control, the feebleness and ineptness of such control has been exposed. She in this unconventional fashion brings The Beast to be ashamed of his demand. She gleefully recognizes that how “pleased I was o see I struck The Beast to the heart! For, after a baker’s dozen heart – beats, one single tear swelled, glittering, at the corner of the masked eye. A tear! A tear, I hoped, of shame.” (161)

This meeting is followed by Beauty’s encounter with her maid whom she remembers as her “clockwork twin” (162) who is arranged by The Beast’s valet to help her out for her meeting with his master. Beauty’s association with this automaton is stressed by the narrator/protagonist time and again to expose the dependent nature of women’s existence, the fact of their being treated as dolls whose strings are pulled by their masters; lacking autonomy and freedom. Commenting on the imitative nature of women’s existence Aidan Day remarks, “Beauty sees that her culturally defined self was no self at all, merely an imitation of a self” (142). Another of Carter’s favorite literary prop of automatons, puppets highlights the inimical, controlled reality of women’s lives in a male – defined and dominated world. This image evokes image of the vampire- queen of ‘The Lady of the House of Love’, like her she too seems to be a puppet moving according to the whims and fancies of a patriarch. As an aware or we would say self – aware figure this woman (Beauty) takes into heed her position and makes the best out of her circumstances. Ashamed of his demand The Beast request Beauty to go riding with him and there in a miraculous encounter he discards his clothing to reveal the true nature of his skin, this animality which though was different but not threatening. At this moment we see a transformation in Beauty who was earlier suspicious and wary of this masked, hairy creature saw in him a beautiful beast. Coming down to the same level of bargain she too shows him her skin, not colored by patriarchal ideology this time. Though in patriarchal cultures women have been made to be frightful of their own sexuality but, in this tale we find a gleeful rupturing of all reductionist theories. Beauty learns that she do not need to be afraid of embracing her sexual self and she transforms from a patriarchal ‘object’ to an active ‘sexual’ subject. Near the climax of the tale we find Beauty pondering over the nature of women’s imprisonment in patriarchal, sexist structures:
… I was a young girl, a virgin, and therefore men denied me rationality just as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all their unreason… I certainly meditated on the nature of my own state, how I had been brought and sold, passed from hand to hand. That clockwork girl who powered 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? (165)

Making her female character autonomous, independent and sexually active Carter rewrites the outmoded fairy tale convention. By revealing herself naked to The Beast, she declares: “I felt I was at liberty for the first time in my life” (166). The removal of the clothing points towards the stripping off all mythical lies which imprison both men and women in their hierarchically placed roles. Now see encounter a gradually evolving Beauty encapsulating within herself her object and subject positions. Instead going back to her father with the end of the bargain, she sends the clockwork doll to replace herself in her father’s house. In an almost surreal, magical denouement to the tale we see Carter subverting the traditional tale. Making a paradigmatic shift in the prevalent ideology of male sexuality as animalistic and predatory, Carter makes her Beauty as capable of not only holding but also of harnessing the coarser side of her sexuality. Parodying and spoofing the age – old patriarchal myth of devouring nature of male sexuality Beauty contends:

He will gobble you up.

Nursery fears made flesh and sinew; earliest and most archaic of fears, fear of devourment. The Beast and his carnivorous bed of bone and I, white, shacking, raw, approaching him as if offering, in myself, the key to a peaceable kingdom in which his appetite need not be my extinction. (168)
Thus, we see in Beauty’s recognition and transgression the decoding and deconstruction of the dominant ideology. By participating in this sexual game equally Beauty’s act subverts the patriarchal conventions of a passive and inert female sexuality. Applauding the end of the tale critic Aidan Day comments: “By deconstructing one term of the opposition – in granting Beauty her own desire – Carter erases the opposition itself” (147). Unlike the transformation of the ‘Company of Mr Lyon’ we find in this tale Beauty transforming into the Beast. Upsetting the gender distinctions, Beauty celebrates her newly found ‘beastliness’. By portraying her women as visceral, sexual Carter emancipates them from the paralyzing effects of patriarchal censorship. Describing her metamorphosis from a passive to an active sexual subject the narrator writes: “And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shiny hairs. My earrings turned back to water and tricked down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur” (169). Writing within a male-defined genre, borrowing and continuously changing the paradigms of the genre Carter’s tale rewrites the tale, this time from a feminist perspective. Appreciating and interpreting Carter’s attempt Crunelle – Vanrigh notes:

Here is the point of Carter’s deconstruction of fairy tales. Where Beaumont starts from recognition of the potentially dangerous polymorphousness latent in each individual and attempts to fix and channel and castrate it according to the requirements of the social structure, Carter’s stories move toward polymorphousness as a desirable, excitingly perverse end. Pleasure lies in the unfixing of identity, in the recognition of its fluidity. The fairy tale moves from the margins to the centre, Carter from the center to the margins. That hopelessly closed ending of ‘Courtship’ with its couple walking for eternity in an autumn garden that looks alarmingly like a sepia photograph from an old family album is superseded in ‘The Tiger’s Bride’ by the open-endedness of a metamorphosis in the making. It
celebrates the perverse desirability of indeterminacy and liminality, the erotic but dangerous fascination of multiplicity (139).

In this unconventional, iconoclastic fashion Carter visions her heroine with a desire and subjectivity of her own. Her character is not single-faceted rather she has been depicted as multi-dimensional. There is always more to things in Carter than meets the eye. Her female characters both assimilate as well as modify the patriarchal definition of femininity and female behavior. The heroine of the next story ‘The Werewolf’ exemplifies this transformed woman.

In the collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) we find three different variants of Perrault’s story ‘The Little Red Riding Hood’. Each tale offering a different perspective on the popular story hence, showcasing the viability and mutability of the genre which can be modifies keeping in tandem the changed socio-cultural conditions. Perrault’s version of the story accounts that a little girl (reaching puberty) is sent by her mother to her granny’s house with homemade butter and bread. Before leaving her house she is cautioned by her mother not to divert from her path and lose her way in the woods (which is inhabited by wolves). But like the curious bride of the Bluebeard tale this girl wanders into the wood and meets a werewolf. Not sticking to the decree of her mother (a patriarch in the present case) she makes a bait with this animal- whoever reaches the granny’s house first will get a kiss from the loser. The wolf being cunning reaches the house first and devours the girl’s grandmother. After gobbling her up she gets in her bed and waits the girl’s arrival. Upon her arrival and confusing the wolf to be her granny, the girl joins him in the bed and is eaten up by the wolf. Perrault ended the tale with a moral similar to the Bluebeard story where girls were reprimanded and punished for exhibiting curiosity:

> From this story one learns that children,
>  Especially young lasses,
>  Pretty, courteous and well-bred,
>  Do very wrong to listen to strangers,
>  And it is not an unheard thing
>  If the wolf is thereby provided with his dinner.” (Zipes 242)
So, we see in the ending a moralist’s warning to the female readership that curiosity in women is indeed a deadly passion, they should not lose their way otherwise they could get killed. Such representation of male sexuality as wolfish, annihilating, death-dealing is in keeping true to the patriarchal script. Many critics have often criticized the tale for promulgating the ‘rape fantasy’ of a male culture; Zipes being one of them. He argues:

As every reader/viewer subconsciously knows, Little Red Riding Hood is not really sent into the woods to visit grandma but to meet the wolf and to explore her own sexual cravings and social rules of conduct. Therefore, the most significant encounter is with the wolf because it is here that she acts upon her desire to indulge in sexual intercourse with the wolf, and… she willingly makes a bargain with the wolf, or, in male terms, ‘she asks to be raped’. (―Second Gaze‖ 239 original emphasis)

This disturbing sub-plot acts as a parable of female behavior. Phallocentrism does not allow women to take autonomy and find their own way home. Couched with gothic imagery Carter’s ‘wolf trilogy’ (a reference to Kimberly Lau’s article ‘The Erotic Infidelities’) subverts the patriarchal understanding of both male as well as female sexuality. Like the two variants of the Beauty and the Beast tale in these tales too Carter makes her heroines active, independent, powerful and finally, excessively sexual. The image of the wolf, something not entirely human and not fully animal evokes the image of polymorphous sexuality; which defines the uni-dimensional definition handed down by a patriarchal history. Carter’s versions of Perrault’s moral tale exorcise the moral narrative of its reductionist outlook. Like the traditional tale, in these tales too confrontation between male and female sexuality is represented in the binaries of victim/victimizer, passive/active, predator/prey, etc.

Now we’ll come to the first story of this ‘lycanthropic trio’ – ‘The werewolf’. The narrative opens in a snow - laden mountainous landscape; reflecting the sterile and inert passion of the mountain – dwellers: “It is a northern country; they have cold
weather, they have hearts” (210). The narrative voice shifts from ‘first- person’ to ‘third-person’ hence, providing two different outlooks of the story. The narrator tells about how the people of these mountains are feed with stories of cannibalism, blood, superstitions regarding vampires and werewolves. In this land all these superstitions are ‘real’; it is a realm where magic and transformation takes place unlike the modern societies. It is Carter’s surreal, abject region, beyond the patriarchal reason. Bearing resemblances with the famous gothic plots of Stoker, Le Fanu, and other famous gothic writers Carter’s landscape prepares us for extraordinary and uncommon. The readers get the tone of the narrative with the familiar gothic paraphernalia with garlic wreaths and desecrated corpses. Concocting these excessive elements Carter gives us a horror tale where the image of the wolf or vampire stands for the Otherized self of the individual. This excessive and over-spilling gothic mode of writing could be interpreted as a conscious feminist strategy:

Monsters are particularly prominent in the work of women writers, because for women the roles of rebel, outcast, seeker of truth, are, monstrous in themselves. For a woman to rebel, to leave a comfortable home and to search for truth are noble acts… For women, however, such assertions of questing selfhood have been deemed bizarre and crazy; consequently the Gothic mode – and in particular the concept of self as monster – is associated with narratives of female experience.

In their Gothic narratives women reveal deep-seated conflicts between a socially acceptable passive, congenial, “feminine” self and a suppressed, monstrous hidden self. (Stein 123)

Coming back to the story we find a girl being sent to her grandmother’s house with some cakes and butter prepared by her mother. Keeping true to the original story the girl is cautioned against the dangers of losing her way and against listening to strangers. But in Carter’s story this girl-child is armed with her father’s hunting knife and unlike the fearful girls of fairy tales this child is not frightful, she knows how to use her knife. When she encounters the wolf she defends herself and swiftly cuts one
of its paws. She then, folds this in her basket and leaves for her grandmother’s home. There she finds that her grandmother is down with fever. Wittily, she takes out the slain paw of the wolf but to her amusement finds that it is a human hand. Without losing a moment she lifts the sheet off her granny and sees that, “There was a bloody stump where her right hand should have been, festering already” (211). She then, cries out loud and the next moment neighbors step in dragging the old woman out into the snow. We see that how these people “drove the old woman, in her shift as she was, out into the snow with sticks, beating her old carcass as far as the edge of the forest, and pelted her with stones until she fell down dead” (211). The narrative closes with the granddaughter usurping the place as well as house of her grandmother. The disturbing and detached account of grandmother’s murder could be viewed as a reference to the patriarchal tradition of witch-hunting. The old woman living at the margins of the society could be analyzed as the animal ‘other’ of the feminine experience which is ostracized and driven out of the phallocentric structure. The tale also acts as an account of a girl child’s initiation into the symbolic (the color of her hood symbol of her approaching puberty). The mysterious figure of the werewolf connotes transgression and perverse, untamed sexual appetite: “in the twentieth century, the werewolf becomes intimately connected to the realm of the sexual, and, above all, to ‘perverse’ forms of sexuality that call into question the hegemonic system of heterosexuality” (154). Such destabilizing and conflicting depiction of sexual experience (both male and female) upsets the heteronormative cultural presumptions. This incendiary narrative strategy confronts the prevalent phallocentric fantasy.

The next variation of this tale is entitled- ‘The Company of Wolves’ and could be viewed as an extended piece of ‘The Tiger’s Bride’. The girl of this story is as well as the bride of The Beast in the latter story. They have been raised on stories of ‘nursery fears’ and both the narratives echo the patriarchal tale of animalistic male sexual appetite. The narrative begins with relating superstitions and beliefs about werewolves and vampires as was the case in the previous tale. The narrator highlighting the violent, untamed and predatory nature of werewolves comments: “The wolf is a carnivore incarnate and he’s as cunning as he is ferocious; once he’s had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do” (212). The narrative in the postmodern fashion is filled with sub – stories surrounding the encounter with these magical
creatures hence, laying out the blueprint of the story in advance. We as readers get prepared for a tale filled with blood, cannibalism, gore and magical transformations and mutations. The narrator relates two accounts in which a human (male in the first and female in the second) is found out to be the real wolf, these accounts takes out the fear of the unknown and makes us confront the ‘reality’ of the Other. This ‘Other’ which is undefined in patriarchal terms posits a threat to the symbolic and therefore, is repressed and relegated to the margins of the society.

The protagonist is sent by her mother to visit her granny; replicating the plot of Perrault’s The Little Red Riding Hood. She is the virginal maiden of the fairy tale world. The narrator’s description of the heroine’s virginal status resounds with the description of the virginal bicyclist of ‘The Lady of the House of Love’. We see that how Carter has woven her tales from one another; the collection opening like a system of Chinese boxes that Carter was so fond of, adding angles and dimensions to the previous story. The fact of heroine’s being a virgin confers on her special, redeeming power. Her depiction is pregnant with sexual significance:

Children do not stay young for long in this savage country. There are no toys for them to play with so they work hard and grow wise but this one, so pretty and youngest of her family, a grandmother who’d knitted her the red shawl that, today, has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow. Her breasts have just begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her pale forehead; her cheeks are an emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her women’s bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month.

She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of
membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver.

She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing (215).

This privileging of a woman’s virginity over everything in Carter’s tale should not be misinterpreted as a reinscription of the patriarchal values and status quo. It is Carter’s way of deconstructing the patriarchal and phallocentric ideology from within. Her portrayal is keeping in mind the patriarchal conventions around women’s sexuality. She then enters the forest which evokes the enchanting but entrapping forest of the Erl King; a realm where desires (both articulate and repressed roam freely) exist and thrive outside the boundaries of patriarchal logic. In her typical manner of discarding the patriarchal myths Carter first introduces us to the myth and near the end demythologize it; opening new vistas and possibilities of human behavior.

On her way she encounters a “fully clothed” man “in the coat and wideawake hat of a hunter, laden with carcasses of game birds” (215-6). This conflation of the werewolf and the hunter by the narrator has been commented by Bruhl and Gamer as: “In making the huntsman a werewolf, [Carter] takes the story’s dyad of male virtue and vice and places them within the changeable body of a single character” (150). She being ignorant of his true identity confides in him the purpose of her journey. Forgetting the warning of her mother and the popular beliefs she starts chattering with this strange fellow. But we as readers are aware of the true self of this man with reference to “gleaming trails of spittle clung to his teeth” (216). Repeating its source text we find the girl making a bet with the wolf. Here, Carter gives us not a sexually intimitated person, however inexperienced; the girl is not naïve regarding the nature of sexual act. When asked by the wolf – man that what would be the reward for the winner she coquettishly utters: “A Kiss” (216). This girl is the emblem of Carter’s ‘wise’ child; resourceful and sure of herself. By projecting her heroine not only a passive recipient of male desire rather, as somebody who possess a desire and will of her own in the game of seduction, Carter provides an alternative, complex model of female sexuality. Flouting the decree of her mother the heroine “forgot to be afraid of the beats… for she wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager” (216). Mother acting as a patriarchal authority in the narrative is controlling and sanctioning the female sexual behavior; by going against
her orders the protagonist rebel against the expectations of a heteronormative culture, which privilege male at the expense of females. The narrator comments that display of such behavior by the heroine is nothing out of place, calling it as “commonplaces of a rustic seduction” (216).

Obviously, the wolf reaches grandmother’s home first and gobbles her up. Now time comes for hide-and-seek game in which the wolf disguises himself in grandmother’s clothes and awaits the arrival of the girl. The narrator making a change in the narrative also informs the readers of how slyly this wolf-man hid the stained sheets and put fresh linens on the bed-a pointer to his domestic skill. This fact links the wolf-man to Erl-king who was shown to be skilled in household chores (making both of them somewhat androgynous, as a result). When the girl reaches the house of her grandmother she somehow whiffs danger and noticing that the bed was freshly made and Bible lying closed on the table. Though she was expecting the handsome man to win the bet but not at the cost of her life. Enacting the scene from the famous tale “Red Riding Hood,” both the wolf and girl start playing their parts with:

What big eyes you have.

All the better to see you with

No trace at all of the old woman except for a tuft of white hair that had caught in the bark of an unburned log. When the girl saw that, she knew she was in danger of death.

Where is my grandmother?

There’s nobody here but we too, my darling (218).

At this moment comes the role of Carter as a feminist fairy tale revisionist. When the heroine comes face to face with the inevitable and inescapable death in the form of the wolf – she not only shows strength but also formidable will. Finding that now the house is surrounded with wolves and she is enclosed in the house with one of them, she without losing time turns her fear into strength and ceases to be afraid. Earlier she was sure that “blood must spill” (218) in this interaction with the wolf.
This view can be interpreted as the proof her interpellation by the patriarchal ideology around sexual relations in which a woman “loses” her chastity and virtue when she is deflowered. In male–supremacist cultures male’s sexuality is depicted as unrefined, uncontrollable and hence bestial and a woman’s exactly the opposite – passive, a ‘lack’ that could be filled by a man only. Pointing out and commenting the change in the thinking of the heroine at this crucial juncture critic Moss contends: “[t]he granddaughter re-conceives what she had been taught to fear and opens new ways of thinking about desire and sexuality” (191). Superseding the superstitions and fears that patriarchal culture have instilled in her mind she flung off her scarlet shawl, “the color of poppies, the color of sacrifices, the color of her menses, and, since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid” (219). The wolf at this moment is shown to be still encoded in the patriarchal heterosexual paradigms. He calls her by familiar adjectives that women have been addressed by – ‘my pet’ etc. Not only the girl but the wolf seems at this point emanations of patriarchal wishes and ideals; unquestioningly playing their parts in this sexual exchange. But we see here a visible transformation in the female ‘prey’ who rises from her paralyzed position and turns the situation to her advantage:

The thin muslin went flaring up the chimney like a magic bird and now came off her skirt, her woolen stockings, her shoes, and on to the fire they went, too, and wore gone for good. The firelight shone through the edges of her skin; now she was clothed only in her untouched integument of flesh. This dazzling, naked she combed out her hair with her fingers; her hair looked white as the snow outside. Then went directly to the man with red eyes in whose unkempt mane the lice moved; she stood on the tiptoe and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt.

What big arms you have.

All the better to hug you with.

Every wolf in the world now howled a prothalamion outside the window as she freely gave the kiss she owed him. (219)
Thus, diverting from and rewriting the traditional fairy tale plot Carter in the end subverts it, making room for play of desire and sexuality; unhinged by the patriarchal conventions. The act of heroine embracing the ‘Other’ frees her from the rules of the patriarchal ‘symbolic’. Her fear of the predatory and bestial sexual desire is transformed into an autonomous desire. With this shift in the character of the heroine she now moves on to harness and transform the sexual threat posited by the wolf. Her newly attained freedom liberates the wolf too from his monstrous stronghold. The heroine becomes the medium through which Carter put the cultural representations of both male and female sexuality to fire.

What big teeth you have!

She saw how his jaw began to slaver and the room was full of the clamor of the forest’s Liebestod but the wise child never flinched, even when he answered:

All the better to eat you with.

The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody’s meat. She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing. The flames danced like dead souls on Walpurhsnacht and the old bones under the bed set up a terrible clattering but she did not pay them any heed. (219)

In this unconventional way the heroine not only attains liberation herself but frees the wolf too. If we take this image of the bestial wolf as the projection of coarser side of female sexuality then too, we see how she learns to embrace and enjoy her sexual self without any prejudice. By naming their meeting as a “savage marriage ceremony” (219) the narrator informs us that how the deadly representation and conventions are redesigned by Carter. The burning of their clothes indicates that for the birth of new individual (man as well as woman) first the old and mythical self has to be done away with. By deconstructing these conventions as historical and socio-
cultural constructs Carter exhibits their fluidity and permeability. The dichotomy of the active/passive, predator/prey is destroyed by Carter with such bold representation. The heroine’s refusal to be objectified and meatified liberates her and makes her an autonomous being. The tale ends with the wolf’s transformation from a ferocious creature into a “tender wolf”. This model of transgression gives Carter’s stories their feminist vigor. Comparing “The Werewolf” with “The Company of Wolves” critic Sarah Gamble writes:

The process of growth is completed in “The Company of Wolves”, where little Red Riding Hood ends up “sweet and sound…in granny’s bed, between the paws of the tender wolf”. Inhabiting not only granny’s house but her bed, Red Riding Hood has in a sense become her grandmother. Making love with the wolf, in a “savage marriage ceremony”, she is also embracing her grandmother and thus acknowledging and affirming her adult female sexuality. Bettelheim says that it is love which transforms adult sexuality into something beautiful. Carter seems to be saying that love is not possible until one has come to accept and enjoy her sexuality. (127)

So, we find that in the conclusion of this tale the patriarchally-imposed gender and sexual roles have been reversed and modified. Through mutual love both male and female sexuality has been redefined by the author. This girl, this “wise child” is the twin self of the bride of The Beast from ‘Tiger’s Bride’. The former learns to be fearless and the latter embraced her beastliness; both in a sense killing the ‘animal’ representations of female and male sexuality.

This brings us to the last tale of the collection as well as the last installment of this wolf trilogy: ‘The Wolf Alice’. The title indicates that it does not revise a single tale but, two- Perrault’s ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and Lewis Carroll’s ‘Through the Looking Glass’. Unlike in the tale of Beauty and the Beast we have in this story not one but two beasts. As we all know that fairy tale features initiation rites and the quest for self-formation and sometimes identification, this tale by Carter in particular
projects theories of identity formation turned into fictional format. The narrative centers around two characters— one a human girl – child but raised by the wolves in the forest and the second a duke who is a vampire a carnivorous, necrophiliac monster. Highlighting Carter’s intention in portraying two ‘beasts’ in the story Gutenberg contends that in “Wolf-Alice” “the realm of the pre-Symbolic is revalued over the symbolic order.” (169)

This wolf girl appears to be the adult self of the girl in ‘Peter and the Wolf’ in Carter’s earlier story collection Black Venus, who was raised by the wolves in the same fashion. Aidan Day claims that this story “acts as a kind of summary of the collection’s preoccupations and perspectives as a whole” (162). Unlike the heroines of earlier tales this story features as the protagonist a half-animal, half-human girl, an exemplum of Kristeva’s ‘abject’ alluring as well as repulsive. While all other heroines in the collection in their journey of self-discovery find their animal side and leans to embrace it, this narrative reverses the process. Here the heroine starts her journey as an animal and someone who is not aware of her human side. As she has been raised by wolves and, not by humans, human laws and conventions does not seem to apply on her. She does not see herself in human terms and we as readers do not see her from patriarchal parameters either. The narrator’s employment of pronouns like “we” and “us” stresses the non-human nature of this character, the gulf between humans and this animal child. As the duke as well as this wolf-child exists outside the phallocentric logic, they are presented as ‘abject’. The description of this wolf-girl by the narrator stresses this abjection:

Her panting tongue hangs out… Her elbows, hands and knees are thickly callused because she always runs on all fours… Her pace is not our pace… She can net so much more of the world than we can through the fine, hairy sensitive filters of her nostrils… Nothing about her is human except that she is not a wolf; it is as if the fur she thought she wore had melted into her skin and become part of it, although it does not exist (221).
This is Carter’s fantastic utopian vision in fictional form. Her alternative model of sexual and gender identity which is unfettered from the socio-cultural constructions of male-dominant ideology. The inability of the wolf-girl to speak also indicates that she is not yet indoctrinated and is not taught by the patriarchal language. She is not yet ‘subjected’ by the symbolic order and hence wanders in the realm of semiotic. This is, to use the phrasing of psychoanalytical theory- ‘pre-linguistic’ state where the individual has no sense of difference between the self and the other, between human and animal. She tries to communicate with the wolves though in an incomprehension language as she does not know their language; thinking herself being no different from them. The author/narrator does not hide her animalist nature behind a human mask as in the case of ‘Mr Lyon’ or ‘The Beast’, it is rather, made disturbingly conspicuous. When in a hunt-session her wolf-mother is killed by hunters she is taken by humans, this entry from the semiotic to the symbolic is forced on to her; an unwilling initiation. These humans standing for the patriarchal authority and logic try to indoctrinate her, tame her, fitting her into a human mould. Her refusal to be tamed shows and strengthens her abjection. She is neither fully animal nor fully human, a go-in-between. This fluid, polymorphous self of the wolf-girl threatens the patriarchally constructed and regulated gender and sexual distinctions. Like Caroll’s Alice in ‘Through the Looking Glass’ this is a mirror-world, an inversion of the patriarchal world with its binaries and categorizations. In the world that Alice and the Vampire Duke live, binaries do not exist, neither does heterosexual hierarchies. The narrator reveals the threat such blurring of distinctions posits to the strictly demarcated social boundaries: “we secluded her in animal privacy out of fear of her imperfection because it showed us what we might have been” (221).

Unable to acquire human skills and equally helpless in forgetting her animalistic traits this wolf-girl seems to be hovering on the margins, neither object nor subject rather, an abject. When Mother Superior playing her part of a patriarchal cultural authority tries to educate her in human ways, she fails this task as “she always seemed wild, impatient of restraint, capricious in temper” (222). She is then sent back to the deserted, haunted castle of the vampire-duke. She comes to live with this hideous monster without any presumptions and prejudices. Her unawareness of patriarchal rules and conventions, her existing outside the symbolic makes her emancipated from the stultifying phallocentric logic. She comes unbidden to this
castle with her ‘self’ as a *tabula rasa*. Carter’s plot do not necessitate the object’s transformation into the subject in this narrative rather, their marginality has been projected and further, celebrated. Projecting the duke as rejoinder to her abject wolf-girl Carter delineates another abject figure-who is like her a transgressor of patriarchal socio-cultural conventions. The narrator says: He lives in a gloomy mansion, all alone but for this child who has as little in common with the rest of us” (222). He is similar to the beasts of the previous tales but his companion is not completely human like the characters, she is more similar to the duke than to her human counterparts. The coming the human in this castle do not transform the beast into a human rather in a startling way allows him freedom to remain a beast. Nor the girl is transformed into a beast and leaves her human dimension. This reciprocal relation between these two forged on equality makes them a powerful, intriguing duo of sexual exchange. None of them is superior or inferior thus, the patriarchal privileging of masculine is snatched away.

Taking this abjection as a utopian, primeval state, the narrator aligns Wolf-Alice with Eve and this castle with Eden. Thus, returning the tale to its beginning, to the beginning of human civilization. The absence of hope as well as despair in Wolf-Alice makes her apropos for this new myth of creation:

If you could transport her, in her filth, rags and feral disorder, to the Eden of our first beginnings where Eve and grunting Adam squat on a daisy bank, picking the lice from one another’s pelts, then she might prove to be the wise child who leads them all and her silence and her howling a language as authentic as any language of nature. In a world of talking beasts and flowers, she would be the bud of flesh in the kind lion’s mouth (223).

During her stay in the Duke’s castle the narrator observes this wolf-girl’s metamorphosis into a ‘sexed’ subject. Her identity gets chiseled and formed by the socio-cultural norms as soon as she starts to live among humans. She is involuntarily forced into this adoption process, forced to enter the patriarchal symbolic. Carter makes her heroine not only identify but discover her new self-her own body that she
was unable of. The ‘Mirror’ in the duke’s castle becomes her medium, her helpmate who makes her meet and view her ‘real’ self. Her days at the convent made her assimilate and imbibe patriarchal notion of womanhood. She soon began to be ashamed of her menstrual blood and her naked self:

Her first blood bewildered her. She did not know what it meant… At night, she prowled the empty house looking for rags to sop the blood up; she had learned a little elementary hygiene in the convent, enough to know how to bury her excrement and cleanse herself of her natural juices, although the nuns had not the means to inform her how it should be, it was not fastidiousness but shame that made her do so… She tore strips of the most absorbent fabrics to clumsily diaper herself (224).

This reality that we witness now is the patriarchal version which perceives women’s flux as dirty and unhygienic. This biological function separates women from men and in a phallocentric culture cause of women’s inferiority to men. They are viewed as creatures who are born to bleed, castrated. This brunt of castration has to be wear by them all their lives. Then, the narrator shows us how this subject-in-process (wolf-girl) conceptualizes her own notion of time, based on her menstrual cycle. This is Carter’s way of deconstructing and challenging the patriarchal construction of time:

She learned to expect these bleedings, to prepare her rags against them, and afterwards, neatly to bury the dirtied things. Sequence asserted itself with custom and then she understood the circumambulatory principle of the clock perfectly, even if all clocks were banished from the den where she and the Duke inhabited their separate solitudes, so that you might say she discovered the very action of time by means of this returning cycle (225).
Thus, subverting the phallocentric notions Carter gives us a new fairy tale, a fairy tale that the feminist as well as female readership can identify themselves with. Narrating the social and cultural conditioning of this wolf-girl the tale vouches for the interpellation of individuals under patriarchal rule. The difference between humans and these two abject figures reveals the chasm, the drift between nature and culture; wolf-alice’s gradual travail into the symbolic realm points towards her individuation. Putting Jacques Lacan’s theory of ‘subject formation’ in fictional form Carter presents with this unsettling story ‘Wolf-Alice’. Her first encounter with the mirror in the Duke’s castle could be interpreted as “imaginary” state of identity-formation:

She bruised her muzzle on the cold grass and broke her claws trying to tussle with this stranger. She saw, with irritation, then amusement, how it mimicked every gesture of hers… She rubbed her head against her reflected face, to show that she felt friendly towards it, and felt a cool, solid, immovable surface between herself and she – some kind, possibly, of invisible cage? In spite of this barrier, she was lonely enough to ask this creature to try to play with her… at once she received a reciprocal invitation. She rejoiced; she began to whirl round on herself, yapping exultantly, but, when she retreated from the mirror, she halted in the midst of her ecstasy, puzzled, to see how her new friend grew less in size (224-5).

In psychoanalytical accounts of identity formation, before the “mirror” stage there is no demarcation between the object and subject and self and other. The infant views itself in continuum; still a part of mother’s body. But entering this phase the child for the first time sees itself as a separate entity, different from others and having a ‘self’ which is not fragmentary. Though this wolf-girl sees her image in the mirror and perceives herself as a separate subject still, this image, this inverted twin is not her real self. This image in the mirror is without being, only a cover-up. Whereas her initial encounter with the mirror allowed her to view herself as an emanation of her mirror image, not separate but one, unified being, her second experience consolidates
her awareness of her separation from the mother. Though, she has been shown to find a mate in her mirror image this crude reality also dawns on her with this realization - this image is false, a hoax and ultimately, an illusion:

Her intimate in the mirror wound the old clothes round herself, wrinkling its nose in delight at the ancient yet still potent scents of musk and civet that woke up in the sleeves and bodices. This habitual, at last boring, fidelity to her every movement finally woke her up to the regretful possibility that her companion was, in fact, no more than a particularly ingenious variety of the shadow she cast on sunlit grass. Had not she and the rest of the litter tussled and romped with their shadows long ago? She poked her agile nose around the back of the mirror; she found only dust, a spider stuck in his web, a heap of rags. A little moisture leaked from the corners of her eyes, yet her relation with the mirror was now far more intimate since she knew she saw herself within it (226).

This fatal, existential reality marks her entry into the symbolic with is opposed to the semiotic, Robbins defining the “Symbolic order” asserts that it is “the realm of consciousness, rules, order, differentiation, logic…power, in contrast to the Imaginary realm of the Unconscious with its anarchic, uncontrolled desires” (115). The narrator shows her slow and gradual evolution from ‘abject’ to a ‘subject’ through her acts of cleansing and clothing herself. She is assimilating and adopting patriarchal culture’s mode of action and behavior. Though the subject finds that there is nothing behind the mirror, this liberates him from the entrapment myth of a unified reality. In this despair lies hope that sustains human existence. Supporting this theory Aidan Day contends: “[t]he regret at finding there is nothing substantial behind the mirror is also a liberation” (105).

The story does not end with Wolf-Alice’s ‘subjection’. When the Duke is shot by the villagers to avenge his acts of grave-robbing, she overcoming the patriarchal
rituals of hygiene licks his wound for him. This scene evokes the climax scene of ‘Tiger’s Bride’. When she finds the Duke in this state, she has been shown clad in the wedding gown of the Duke’s mother (stressing her identification with the Mother). But this dress, this patriarchy’s mould of ideal woman is ripped apart when she tries to put it on herself. Carter’s choice of the companion of this half-human, half-animal protagonist is apropos to her feminist agenda. Like her, the duke too is abject, stultified in her role as a monster:

Poor, wounded thing… locked half and half between such strange states, an aborted transformation, an incomplete mystery, now he lies writhing on his black bed… howls like a wolf with his foot in a trap or a woman in labor, and bleeds… She prowled round the bed, growling, snuffing at his wound that does not smell like her wound. Then, she was pitiful as her gaunt grey mother; she leapt upon his bed to lick, without hesitation, without disgust, with a quick, tender gravity, the blood and dirt from his cheeks and forehead (227).

Though she has acquired the laws of the symbolic she has not forgotten her previous monstrous self. She has not assimilated reason at the expense of instinct, she possess both. Her transformation is not final, from an abject she has transformed into a subject-in-process. As proposed by Carter in *The Sadeian Woman* and in other stories of this collection, it is through love based on the principle of equality, men and women could attain true emancipation. Wolf – Alice’s affection for the wounded Duke irreverent of his monstrous self brings him back to humanity. In achieving her identity, she paves way for the Duke to embrace his identity. The closing scene of the tale affirms this metamorphosis with a tribute to human love:

As she continued her ministrations, this glass, with infinite slowness, yielded to the reflexive strength of its own material construction. Little by little, there appeared within it, like the image on photographic paper that emerges, first, a formless web of tracery, the prey caught in its
own fishing net, then in firmer yet still shadowed outline until at last as vivid as real life itself, as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally, the face of the Duke (228).

This brings us to the end of the chapter where we see that how Carter has articulated her preference for a subjectivity unrestrained and undefined by the patriarchal conventions. She celebrates fluidity in place of encoded and imprisoned identities. Her tales depict and freely embrace their marginality, eccentricity. Bantering Carter’s depiction of women characters swelling with savage, unrefined sexual drives critic Duncker concludes that:

Rewriting the tales within the strait-jacket of their original structures…

[Carter] re-produces rather than alters the original, deeply, rigidly sexist psychology of the erotic… Carter’s tales are, supposedly, celebrations of erotic desire… Heterosexual feminists have not yet invented an alternative, anti-sexist language of the erotic, carter envisages women’s sensuality simply as a response to male arousal. She has no conception of women’s sexuality as autonomous desire (6-7).

Contrary to this conclusion which appears reductionist and myopic this thesis asserts that in her very representations of male and female characters un defined by the monolithic patriarchal history and tradition, Carter’s tales offers more liberating and emancipating positions. In their refusal to be bound by phallocentric logic, in their uninhibited embracing of their abjection Carter’s fairy tales deconstruct as well as subvert the patriarchal tradition of tale telling. Carter in her unique fashion places her characters- both male and female on an equal platform. In accruing them individuality and a sexuality unhinged by the patriarchal and heterosexual norms Carter dispels the canonical tales of their ‘bankrupt enchantments’ (SW). This is Carter’s feminist tale for the increasingly aware female readership. Whereas Duncker falls short of perceiving the flexible and fluid nature of fairy tale, Carter not only acknowledges their flexibility but makes them carrier of her anti-myth. Endorsing neither patriarchy nor matriarchy Carter’s tale exhibit their uniqueness, their
iconoclasm. This collection with its depiction of ambiguity, ambivalence, fluidity and polymorphousness disrupts the patriarchal model of sex and sexual behavior. This is in fact, a revolutionary revision of fairy tales, radical and polemic in its very essence.


Gutenberg, Andrea. “Shape-Shifters from the Wilderness: Werewolves Roaming the Twentieth Century”. *The Abject of Desire: The Aestheticization of the Unaesthetic in