

## Worksheet 4 – Angela Carter

### Review: Lecture 3

In the third lecture of the unit, Prof. Mulvey-Roberts introduced allusions connected to real-life performances and historical figures referenced in “The Bloody Chamber”.

- Name two allusions which are referenced in this particular short story.

### Recall

**Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.**

1. What is the setting of the story of “The Erl-King”?  
a) Castle    c) Garden  
b) Forest    d) Dungeon
  
2. What type of animal does the character of the Erl-King turn females into?  
a) Mice    c) Cats  
b) Wolves    d) Birds
  
3. Prof. Mulvey-Roberts references another fairy tale in which women are also rescued by the heroine of the story. What is the name of this fairy tale?  
a) Fitcher’s Bird    c) Death's Messenger  
b) The King of the Golden Mountain                      d) The Frog Prince
  
4. Prof. Mulvey-Roberts identifies an allusion within “The Erl-King” to a poem entitled “Goblin Market” by which female poet?  
a) Elizabeth Barrett Browning                      c) Christina Rossetti  
b) Katherine Tynan    d) Alice Meynell

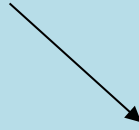
### Analysis

5. In the lecture [1.10-2.25], Professor Mulvey-Roberts refers to meat imagery within the story, and explains how food imagery in general symbolises “means of seduction.” Look at the following quotations from “The Erl-King” in which Carter utilises these types of imagery to represent the female protagonist and the male antagonist.

Make a mind map for each quotation, exploring the representations created by the word and phrase choices. You may refer to the use of symbolism and literary allusion to support your ideas.

*Make sure you give reasons on your mind map for why you have made these inferences. One idea for the last one has been done for you.*

“He is the tender butcher who showed  
me how the price of flesh is love; skin the rabbit,  
he says! Off come all my clothes.”



The word “tender” suggests he will be gentle with her,  
but this also is used to refer to meat that is ready to eat; he is a “butcher”  
who is prepared to hurt and consume her

“His eyes are quite green, as if from too much looking at the wood.

There are some eyes that can eat you.”

“He spreads out a goblin feast of fruit  
for me, such appalling succulence...”

He strips me to my last nakedness, that  
underskin of mauve, pearlized satin,  
like a skinned rabbit...

### Evaluation

6. Write a diary entry from the perspective of the Erl-King, creating his character based on the information you are given from the heroine’s perspective in Carter’s version. Use the main plot points below to guide your writing.
  - It is October in the forest, and the heroine enters the woods. She is trapped already, though she does not know it.
  - She hears two notes of bird song and is drawn irresistibly forward, and she comes to the house of the Erl-King.

- The Erl-King is in his garden, surrounded by wild animals and playing his pipe, which was what lured the heroine in. In his house he has many birds in cages. He keeps his house very clean.
- The heroine moves in with the Erl-King and they become lovers, though she is “at the mercy of his huge hands” and naked while he is clothed. The Erl-King plays songs on his pipe and lures in birds and animals.
- She feels like she is drowning in him when they sleep together. Winter approaches and the forest grows colder.
- The heroine realizes that the Erl-King’s caged birds were once women like her, and she grows terrified though she still loves him.
- One day the Erl-King lets the heroine comb out his long hair, and she strangles him with his own hair.

You might consider:

- The Erl-King’s feelings towards the heroine
- His motivations in trapping, seducing and planning to kill her
- His relationship with nature
- His knowledge of his past crimes and the birds in the cages

Challenge: “The Erl-King” is a re-telling of a dramatic ballad by J.W. von Goethe, written in 1782 and published as Der Erlkönig. The poem is based on the Germanic legend of a malevolent elf who haunts the Black Forest, luring children to destruction. Like the other tales in “The Bloody Chamber”, there is little dialogue in Carter’s version compared to the original. Research and read the original poem in order to create intertextual links between the diary entry narrative, and this version by Goethe: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Erlkonig>

## Glossary

- **Erlking** – In European folklore and myth, the Erlking is a sinister elf who lingers in the woods. He stalks children who stay in the woods for too long, and kills them.
- **aristocratic (adjective)** – having the qualities of a person at the highest level of society in terms of wealth and nobility
- **entrapment (noun)** – the action of tricking or luring someone into being caught; restriction of freedom
- **anorexic (adjective)** – the characteristic or state of suffering from the eating disorder
- **gourmet (adjective)** – high quality, expensive, or specialty food typically requiring elaborate and expert preparation
- **decadent (adjective)** – the quality of being luxuriously self-indulgent.
- **succulence (noun)** – the state of being moist, juicy and tasty (in reference to food)
- **phosphorescence (noun)** – illumination that is caused and continuing after the absorption of light or electrons