

Worksheet 5 – Angela Carter

Review: Lecture 4

In Lecture 4, Prof. Mulvey-Roberts explains how food, particularly meat imagery is used throughout the story “The Erl-King”.

- Complete this quotation that depicts this imagery through the description of the male character in this story

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

Recall

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

1. Prof. Mulvey-Roberts references a famous Hungarian countess who tortured women and girls in her own torture chamber, thereby alluded to in the story, “The Lady of the House of Love”. What is the name of this countess?

- a) Elizabeth Bathory
- b) Ilona Barkóczy
- c) Anna Bornemisza
- d) Maria Elisabetta di Savoia

2. Which monster does the heroine in “The Lady of the House of Love” embody?

- a) Werewolf
- b) Vampire
- c) Drowned
- d) Hanged

3. “The Lady of the House of Love” is a retelling of which fairytale?

- a) Little Red Riding Hood
- b) Sleeping Beauty
- c) Snow White
- d) Hansel and Gretel

4. What is the occupation of the man who enters the heroine’s dwelling in “The Lady of the House of Love”?

- a) Soldier
- b) Farrier
- c) Carpenter
- d) Blacksmith

Analysis

1. Roses are a symbolic, recurring motif which Carter uses throughout the story “The Lady of the House of Love”. Re-read this extract which describes the function of the roses within the story, and answer the questions below.

Tomorrow, her keeper will bury his bones under her roses. The food her roses feed on gives

them their rich colour, their swooning odour, that breathes lasciviously of forbidden pleasures.”

- a) What do the roses “feed” on?
- b) How does the scent of the roses affect the characters?

2. Re-read this extract from the ending of “The Lady of the House of Love” which is referenced by Prof. Mulvey-Roberts [4.20-5.23] as a passage which suggests that the real “horror” in this story is not a literal vampire, but war itself. Answer the questions below.

“When he returned from the mess that evening, the heavy fragrance of Count Nosferatu's roses drifted down the stone corridor of the barracks to greet him, and his spartan quarters brimmed with the reeling odour of a glowing, velvet, monstrous flower whose petals had regained all their former bloom and elasticity, their corrupt, brilliant, baleful splendour. Next day his regiment embarked for France. ”

- a) How did the rose come to be in the soldier's room?
- b) Which words or phrases imply the danger of the roses?
- c) Describe how there is juxtaposing imagery within this extract.
- d) What could the renewed “odour” and “splendour” of the rose imply about the curse, or the heroine herself?
- e) How could these ideas lead towards the last line and consequently foreshadow the inevitability of death in war?

Evaluation

Read the extract below, taken from a published review of *The Bloody Chamber* in 2006. It describes Carter's philosophy behind writing this story, and other stories in *The Bloody Chamber*. Write a paragraph which: a) Summarises the key point being made in the extract in your own words. b) Evaluate to what extent this idea or sentiment is effectively conveyed in “The Lady of the House of Love” and one other story of your choice from the collection.

“The heroines of these stories are struggling out of the straitjackets of history and ideology and biological essentialism. ‘There's a story in *The Bloody Chamber* called ‘The Lady of the House of Love’,’ said Carter, ‘part of which derives from a movie version that I saw of a story by Dostoevsky. And in the movie... the woman, who is a very passive person and is very much in distress, asks herself the question, ‘Can a bird sing only the song it knows, or can it learn a new song?’ Have we got the capacity at all of singing new songs? It's very important that if we haven't, we might as well stop now.’” Helen Simpson, review of *The Bloody Chamber*, *The Guardian*, Jun 24, 2006

You might consider:

- The meaning of the “bird” and the idea of its “songs” as a metaphor for artistic expression, or for the performance of gender roles

- How Carter was inspired to transform literature by a variety of both ancient and contemporary literary forms
- Who and what Carter may be referring to when she states “we might as well stop now”
- The way in which Carter’s statements may reflect the purpose of “The Bloody Chamber”

Challenge: Read the entire review and choose two more quotations from the writer of the article to support and expand upon your ideas:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jun/24/classics.angelacarter>

Glossary

- **monotonous (adjective)** – used to describe something that is boring because it is always the same; lacking in variation.
- **inversion** – a situation in which something is changed so that it is the opposite of what it was before.
- **feudal** – relating to the social system of western Europe in the Middle Ages or any society that is organized according to rank.
- **modernity** – both a historical period and the ensemble of particular socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that arose in the wake of the Renaissance—in the "Age of Reason" of 17th-century thought and the 18th-century "Enlightenment"
- **inadvertently (adverb)** – in a way that is not intentional
- **mess** – an area where military personnel socialize, eat, and (in some cases) live.