

1-1-1993

Exposing Bluebeard! Angela Carter Gets Delirious In The Magic Toyshop, Heroes And Villains, "The Bloody Chamber," And "The Fall River Axe Murders"

John Waite

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in [English](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Waite, John, "Exposing Bluebeard! Angela Carter Gets Delirious In The Magic Toyshop, Heroes And Villains, "The Bloody Chamber," And "The Fall River Axe Murders"" (1993). *Masters Theses*. 335.
<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/335>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

LB
1861
.C57x
E53
1993
W3
copy 2

EXPOSING BLUEBEARD ANGELA CARTER
GETS DELIRIOUS IN THE MAGIC TOYSHOP,
HEROES AND VILLIANS, "THE BLOODY
CHAMBER," AND "THE FALL RIVER
AXE MURDERS."

WAITE

THESIS REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates who have written formal theses.

SUBJECT: Permission to reproduce theses.

The University Library is receiving a number of requests from other institutions asking permission to reproduce dissertations for inclusion in their library holdings. Although no copyright laws are involved, we feel that professional courtesy demands that permission be obtained from the author before we allow theses to be copied.

Please sign one of the following statements:

Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University has my permission to lend my thesis to a reputable college or university for the purpose of copying it for inclusion in that institution's library or research holdings.

7-29-93

Date

John V. Vane

Author

I respectfully request Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University not allow my thesis be reproduced because _____

Date

Author

Exposing Bluebeard! Angela Carter Gets Delirious
In The Magic Toyshop, Heroes and Villians, "The
Bloody Chamber," and "The Fall River Axe Murders."
(TITLE)

BY

John Waite

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in English

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1993
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

8/3/93
DATE

Stephen Sword
ADVISER

8/3/93
DATE

James C. Cuyler
DEPARTMENT HEAD

Abstract

References to Bluebeard appear in many of Angela Carter's works; he makes his appearance in the guise of uncles, leaders, husbands, and fathers, scaring up "delirium" in Carter's heroines in the past, present, and future. This population of Bluebeards in Carter's fictional world points to one of the genres Carter chose to explore, one that Carter felt a special affinity towards, the Gothic. Very little has been written about Carter's use of the Gothic, although it holds a central place in her fiction and helps explain many of the cruelties and confusions that Carter's works present.

Focused on a prison-like home, Bluebeard's story perfectly fits the definition Kate Ellis has used to designate the Gothic: "The strand of popular culture we call the Gothic novel can be distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out" (3). The locks are figurative as well as literal; Carter makes it clear that Bluebeard locks away knowledge and pleasure. Controlling the locks in Carter's works are her Bluebeard characters, patriarchal nightmares who imprison men and women in gothic homes and societies and then attempt to control every aspect of their prisoners' lives, from what they wear to what they feel.

However, for Carter, Bluebeard was not only one man with a terrible secret; Bluebeard represented an ideology, patriarchal domination. The manipulations this patriarchy utilizes are varied, and Carter is thorough in her cataloging of them. This paper attempts to make this cataloging clear. Ultimately, Carter claims that women have for too

long been dismembered from their own senses, or wrenched from their personalities, by domineering men who want only to brutalize and destroy them. Thankfully, Carter makes it clear that this behavior is not common to all men, or *natural* to them; her male characters suffer under Bluebeard's roof. Again, Bluebeard's actions are part of a philosophy, one that even women can adopt, like Marianne at the end of Heroes and Villains.

Using Gothic criticism and Carter's The Sadeian Woman, I trace the Bluebeard theme Carter explores in The Magic Toyshop, Heroes and Villains, "The Bloody Chamber," and "The Fall River Axe Murders." I hope to make clear the thorough nature of Carter's exploration of Bluebeard's cruel patriarchy and the delirious times that result under such a system. Carter's consistent use of this theme suggests that she saw this exploration to be a necessary task if we are to escape from Bluebeard's castle.

Table of Contents

Bluebeard's New Clothes.....	1
<u>The Magic Toyshop</u>	5
<u>Heroes and Villains</u>	15
"The Bloody Chamber".....	30
"The Fall River Axe Murders".....	36
Bluebeard Exposed!.....	42
Works Cited.....	45

Bluebeard's New Clothes

"...it was locked. I found this key in one of his trouser pockets, see, and I thought, you know, of Bluebeard."

'Bluebeard?'

'Bluebeard. And the locked room. I don't know him very well, you know'" (*Honeybuzzard* 106).

This brief exchange in Angela Carter's first novel, Honeybuzzard (1966), introduces a theme that would run throughout Carter's career--getting to know the men inhabiting Bluebeard's castle and the cruel tactics they use in their games of domination and possession. Bluebeard makes his appearance in the guise of uncles, leaders, husbands, and fathers, scaring up "delirium" in Carter's heroines in the past, present, and future. Whatever disguise he wears, however, and whatever his tactics, his motives are always the same; Bluebeard desires control, over everything. The population of Bluebeards in Carter's fictional world points to one of the genres Carter chose to explore, one that Carter felt a special affinity towards, the Gothic. This genre holds a central place in Carter's fiction and helps explain many of the cruelties and confusions that her works present. Carter called the Gothic a genre as full of "cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious..." (Fireworks 132).

The Bluebeard tale incorporates practically all of the elements of the Gothic. Bluebeard, a figure of the aristocracy, lives alone in his gothic ancestral castle. He lives alone because his wives have a

tendency to die. With his eerie blue beard and imposing manner, he is a figure of the grotesque; this makes finding a bride difficult. He is a figure haunted by a gothic family curse; the alienation and cruelty of his ancestors creates for him a destiny of murder. He also possesses the essential gothic trait of having a terrible secret; he dismembers his wives.

Combined with this gothic hero-villain is the typically innocent gothic maiden who, seduced by his wealth, stumbles into Bluebeard's clutches. Despite Bluebeard's grotesque appearance and the maiden's youth and innocence, the couple is married. The maiden is immediately given the run of the castle; she can go anywhere, except that little room where Bluebeard goes to be alone. Her newly found wealth and status comforts and excites the maiden for a while, until she becomes curious about that little room that is off limits. But the maiden is torn: does she disobey her husband or give in to her curiosity? Her desire for knowledge wins out and she enters the room; she is now initiated into the sisterhood of dismembered women. She leaves the room and tries to pretend that she has not visited it. But Bluebeard's trip was only a plot to allow the heroine a chance to betray him; he knew she would go to the secret room. He has manipulated her into wanting to do it. He returns unexpectedly and immediately guesses why his wife is behaving peculiarly. The sentence is passed; the price of rebellion is decapitation, which is either executed or stopped in the nick of time depending on what version you happen to read.

Focusing on a prison-like home, Bluebeard's story perfectly fits the definition Kate Ellis uses to designate the Gothic: "The strand of

popular culture we call the Gothic novel can be distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out" (3). But the locks are figurative as well, Ellis points out. Bluebeard also locks away knowledge. The Gothic, with its inquisitive heroines, becomes a way for writers to subvert patriarchy's boundaries, arguing that knowledge is necessary to survival. Controlling the locks of the houses in Carter's works are her Bluebeard characters, patriarchal nightmares who imprison men and women in their homes and societies and then attempt to control every aspect of their prisoners' lives, from what they wear to what they feel. Carter's Bluebeard characters take control of pleasure as well as knowledge. Her heroines find themselves struggling to find an identity as they face a sensual and intellectual awakening and a Bluebeard who uses their confusions against them.

The gothic heroine's response of both disgust and excitement to her life in Bluebeard's castle is part of what Carter referred to as the "delirious" nature of the gothic. "We live in Gothic times" (Fireworks 133), wrote Carter in 1974. She would explain her definition of "Gothic times" further in "The Cabinet of Edgar Allen Poe,"

It was the evening of the eighteenth century.
At this hour, this very hour, far away in Paris,
France, in the appalling dungeons of the Bastille, old
Sade is jerking off...Everything is about to succumb to
delirium. (72)

Born at the turn of the eighteenth century, "Gothic times" coincided with The Marquis De Sade's career. The Gothic would come to chronicle a time when the manacles of the Age of Reason were being challenged and the world would meet the dizzying poetry of the Romantics. Sade's work would introduce to the world the cruel combination of love and torture

as his libertine characters condemn others to their hateful philosophy of domination. Human nature and the role of its institutions, Carter says in The Sadeian Woman, were debated then as much as they were in the 1960's and 70's. The human race was looking for an identity, like Carter's heroines and Bluebeard's wife. Carter's choice of the word "delirium" to describe the state that everything would succumb to during these times of identity crisis is provocative; the word can mean "a temporary mental disturbance, as during a fever, marked by confused speech and hallucinations" and/or "uncontrollably wild excitement" (Websters 164). Certainly delirium in both senses of the word is found in Carter's own works; her characters suffer, surmise, and slip into violent eroticism as their increasingly attenuated identities become the prey of Bluebeard's vultures. Carter exposes and challenges Bluebeard's stifling and grotesque world, always struggling against his cleverly orchestrated trips and traps of desire.

Using current Gothic criticism and Carter's The Sadeian Woman (1978), I will trace the Bluebeard theme Carter explores in The Magic Toyshop (1967), Heroes and Villains (1969), "The Bloody Chamber" (1979), and "The Fall River Axe Murders" (1985). I hope to make clear the thorough nature of Carter's exploration of Bluebeard's bloodthirsty patriarchy and the delirious times that result under such a system.

The Magic Toyshop

'All figures of this sort...which can scarcely be said to counterfeit humanity so much as to travesty it--mere images of living death or inanimate life--are most distasteful to me.' (Hoffmann 81)

In The Magic Toyshop, Bluebeard appears in the guise of Philip Flower, the uncle of fifteen year old Melanie, who is sent to live with him in his house above his toyshop when her parents die. Like Bluebeard's underground charnel house, Philip's basement is strewn with dismembered puppets. The puppets left whole are used in his fully rigged marionette theatre, where he puts on shows for his family, his wife Margaret and her brothers Francie and Finn. It is not long before he incorporates Melanie into his show and the true nature of the magic toyshop is revealed. Uncle Philip not only creates life-like puppets, with real hair, for his private shows, he also turns the people around him into puppets; this is the magic of the magic toyshop. These puppet-people's senses are no longer their own, and their desires are orchestrated to fit Philip's "poetry."

In The Contested Castle, Kate Ellis comments that the Gothic "is preoccupied with the home. But it is the failed home that appears on its pages..." (ix). In Carter's work and in the Gothic, the failure of the home is usually directly attributable to a domineering patriarch. Focusing on this sphere, Carter criticizes the exploitative and cruel aspects of Bluebeard's domestic patriarchy.

Unlike Bluebeard, Philip's strategy is not to lavish his prisoners

with luxury but to deny them of basic comforts. Other than the cab ride he pays for when Melanie first arrives, which is orchestrated to show Melanie his financial strength, Philip is a miser, locking all of his money in a safe in his bedroom. Philip's hoarding of finance coincides with a hoarding of pleasure. When Philip is about, the home is a joyless, typically Gothic one; Melanie sums up her uncle's presence thusly:

Uncle Philip never talked to his wife except to bark brusque commands. He gave her a necklace that choked her. He beat her younger brother. He chilled the air through which he moved. His towering, blank-eyed presence at the head of the table drew the savor from the good food she cooked. He suppressed the idea of laughter. (118)

The sole sanctioned pleasure in Philip's home is the enjoyment of his puppet shows, which he forces his family to attend and applaud.

Before Melanie arrives, the others have already begun to succumb to Philip's suppression of pleasure, and their transformation into puppets is underway. Aunt Margaret lacks a voice, having lost it on the day she married Philip. Like a puppet, she has arms that were like "two hinged sticks" (49). She also lacks age, "She could have been any age between twenty-five and forty" (42); later, in "The Lady of the House of Love," Carter would describe this same sense of agelessness as a symptom of "soullessness." Margaret's soulless fate is reflected by one of Philip's puppets; the Queen puppet wears a collar like Margaret's, "but it could not chafe her neck, because she was made of wood. Aunt Margaret surreptitiously ran her finger around her own silver choker as if the sight of the Queen's collar had reminded her how much her own hurt" (123). While Margaret may be the "Queen" of the household, she

holds no power. She is kept like a puppet through Philip's refusal to let her leave the house and his keeping her economically dependent. One reaction to this realization of being turned into a puppet and the pain one feels because of it is to further make one's self wooden; this is the path Margaret is on. Because of her insistence on playing the wife, she seemingly becomes complicit in her own dehumanization. She also becomes active in helping Melanie prepare for the role of Leda in Philip's puppet show.

Philip's domination is not limited to women; Margaret's two younger brothers are also at risk of becoming puppets under Philip's roof. At the first dinner, Francie, the older of the brothers at about 25, says "a strange grace," "Flesh to flesh. Amen" (47), as if flesh were somehow lacking in the house and had to be created. Francie's voice "creaked" as if wooden from lack of use and his face is "impassive." For reasons that aren't exactly clear, Francie does little or nothing to stop Philip; for this, Francie risks the loss of his voice, his feeling, and ultimately his will.

Finn, the younger brother at 19, is at first the least controlled by Philip and therefore possesses, in Melanie's eyes, a sort of natural "grace" of movement. Philip attempts to teach Finn his trade, but Finn is not interested: "...sometimes he lets me pull the strings. That's a great day for me." His voice curled ironically at the edges" (67). Finn's contribution to the toyshop's stock is a harmless representation of a bear riding a bicycle, an "odd and witty little toy" (65). The difference between their art shows the difference between Philip's domination and Finn's good-natured fun. Ultimately, however, Finn is at

risk of becoming a puppet. When Philip throws Finn onto the stage for ruining a marionette show, we are told, "...he never moved. His eyes were open and staring. He looked broken, like the toy he threw against the wall. All his lovely movement was shattered" (125). Indeed, Finn has taken his place on Philip's stage and risks becoming wooden. Later, Melanie comments that Finn "creaked, indeed, like a puppet" (141), his grace is gone. Finn then realizes his uncle's scheme; Philip has told Finn to act the part of the raping swan in a rehearsal of Melanie's performance as Leda in order to get Finn and Melanie to have sex, an attempt to "spoil" Melanie. Realizing the true nature of the situation, Finn rejects Melanie and says, "'He's pulled our strings as if we were his puppets...'" (144). The puppet motif, says Palmer, "As well as carrying Hoffmanesque associations of the fantastic...has connotations of the 'coded mannequin', the metaphor employed by Helene Cixous to represent the robotic state to which human beings are reduced by a process of psychic repression" (180). Carter argues that in Philip's toyshop, psychic repression is brought about by the denial of the economic, sensual, and intellectual freedom of everyone but Philip.

In the face of real flesh, Philip becomes enraged; it painfully reminds him that the people around him are *not* puppets. He becomes furious at even the trivial matter of Finn walking around with his shirt unbuttoned in the morning; after beating Finn for this offense, Philip is "considerably mollified" when Finn "covered himself up" (69). Philip's excuse for this rage is simply, "'What the eye doesn't see...'" (68); if it can't be seen, it can't be desired or acknowledged as real.

Philip also disapproves of Melanie's body; it does not fit the role

he prepared for her. When Philip sees her in her costume he tells her, "Your tits are too big...I wanted my Leda to be a little girl" (137). Carter writes, "...he was resenting her because she was not a puppet" (137). He even disapproves of her having her period, possibly because it represents proof of a type of creation that Philip can never attain, birth; he can only create puppets. Philip claims later that Melanie ruined the performance of "Leda and the Swan" by acting too afraid. Although the swan is ridiculous, as it tries to rape her, Melanie becomes delirious; Philip tells her, "You overacted...You were melodramatic. Puppets don't overact. You spoiled the poetry" (159). Philip's motives are clear; he desires control over his subjects, body and soul, in the name of "poetry." This poetry relies on the masochistic submission of women while a god, with what Philip calls "beauty and majesty," "'wreaks his will'" (158). Women's real sensual experience is nullified. During the rape Melanie thinks, "She was hallucinated; she felt herself not herself, wrenched from her own personality" (157); autonomy is denied; women become raped puppets on the stage of "poetry." There is no room for unpredictable flesh on this stage.

Despite his concerted effort to stifle the fleshly, however, Philip can never have total control; creating an uneasy situation of incest, Carter shows the way puppets are prone to revolt. Francie and Margaret's incestuous affair is a clear violation of Philip's attempts to control sensuality; Margaret's sensuality is supposed to be limited to sex with Philip on Sundays, the day she has to wear her choker collar. Carter's invoking of incest creates a great deal of unease, as

Carter said the Gothic was prone to do: "...it [the Gothic] retains a singular moral function--that of provoking unease" (Fireworks 133). Carter forces Melanie, and the reader, to choose the lesser of two evils; does one disapprove more of the incest or of the brutal domesticity Philip reigns over? It takes Melanie little time to decide; she continues to love Margaret and Francie: "'I love her.' It was true. As she spoke, she felt the love, warm and understanding, inside her. And she loved Francie too, there was no helping it" (184). Melanie's love for Margaret and Francie is a result of the mutual concern the three have shown for each other. Also, there is no aspect of domination in Francie and Margaret's relationship. But if it is free from domination, it is also free from choice; the incestuous couple, struggling to find pleasure in Philip's oppressive toyshop, is, perhaps, an all too painful symbol of the closed nature of such domesticity. Aunt Margaret, afterall, rarely leaves the house, never having a chance to meet other people. Likewise, Finn tells Melanie that their own relationship is based more on "proximity" than anything else and even suggests that they name their first child "Proximity." The limitation of choices is essential to Philip's plot of domination.

Upon discovering the incestuous couple, Philip goes on a rampage and purposely burns down the toyshop and his home. This is a perplexing move on Philip's part until one considers what Carter said regarding patriarchal attempts to control pleasure; while commenting on a story in The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book; Carter wrote,

...fairy stories could change a woman's desires, and [this story shows] how much a man might fear that change, would go to any lengths to keep her from pleasure, as if pleasure itself threatened his authority.

Which, of course, it did.
It still does. (xiv).

Like Bluebeard, who must kill his wives because of their refusal to submit to his will, Philip will go to any lengths to assume total control, including murder and the destruction of his own castle. Philip's crazed scramble for control is ultimately futile, however; regarding the "overreaching will to absolute power," Carter writes in The Sadeian Woman, it "carries within it the seeds of its own destruction because in this world, unhappily, there are no absolutes" (103).

Melanie's arrival at Philip's brutal toyshop coincides with her sensual awakening: "The summer she was fifteen, Melanie discovered she was made of flesh and blood" (5); this, the first sentence of the novel, juxtaposes nicely with all of the "wooden" behavior that Melanie will be forced to perform. Carter makes it clear, however, that Melanie's first home was no haven of sensual freedom or autonomy. Her parents show little sign of sensuality, and Melanie's only desire is to marry a dream-man she imagines. Before reaching the toyshop, Melanie pretends to pose "slutishly" for Lautrec and the Pre-Raphaelite painters: "She gift-wrapped herself for a phantom bridegroom..." (6). Melanie is learning a role of submission. She is, in a sense, a puppet to the dominant culture and art; Finn comments repeatedly that Melanie sounds "like a women's magazine." Melanie faces the fact that she is something other than totally free the first time she sees Philip's private marionette theater. The first puppet she sees is a nymph who reminds her of herself the night she wore her mother's wedding dress. Greatly disturbed by the realization that someone may be pulling her strings,

Melanie falls victim to delirium in both senses of the word. She begins to hallucinate and mistrust her senses, and she becomes very excited as she struggles to find autonomy and an identity.

When she meets Finn she experiences a masculinity unlike any other she has known, leaving her questioning her response:

It was as if he had put on the quality of maleness like a flamboyant cloak. He was a tawny lion poised for the kill--and was she the prey? She remembered the lover made up out of books and poems she had dreamed of all summer; he crumpled like the paper he was made of before this insolent, offhand, terrifying maleness filling the room with its reek. She hated it. But she could not take her eyes off him (46).

Besides showing Finn's taking on of an artificial "cloak" of maleness that is violent, this passage shows Melanie's masochistic and passive role. By admitting she is attracted to Finn, who is from a different class, from Ireland, and not physically clean, Melanie is stepping outside of the desires permitted by her culture, but her semi-masochistic response as "prey" shows that she is still under its influence. She has no ability to refuse, or no idea that she can refuse, sexual domination. When they are close, Melanie can only wait for Finn to do something, having never learned the ability to initiate sex. After facing the nightmare of domestic patriarchy Carter creates, however, Melanie takes control of herself; She tells Finn that she "will not be rushed."

But Melanie's autonomy comes only after she comes close to joining the others as Philip's puppets. One graphic example of Melanie's perilous position is her relationship to her hand. At one point Melanie hallucinates there is a "freshly severed" hand in a drawer, the hand of

a little girl, perhaps like herself: "'I am going out of my mind,' she said aloud. 'Bluebeard was here'" (113). By invoking Bluebeard, Melanie draws attention to a history of dismembered, disembodied women. Later in the novel, Melanie ponders the meaning of her own hand; it becomes a symbol for lost sensuality:

She stared at her hand. Four fingers and a thumb.
Five nails.
This is my hand. Mine. But what is it for? she
thought. What does it mean?
Her hand seemed wonderful and surprising, an object
which did not belong to her and of which she did not
know the use. (153)

Melanie has been separated from her own senses; they "belong" to the puppet-master. Before this, she had used her hand to comfort Aunt Margaret and had thrilled to Finn's touching her breast with his "strong and cunning" workman's hand. But Melanie is beginning to lose the ability to touch and be touched. After being raped by the swan, when she felt "wrenched from her own personality," at dinner Melanie eats cake without tasting anything; she feels she can "cast no shadow" (160). The rest of the day is lost to Melanie as she inhabits a "gray no man's land between sleeping and waking" (160). Later, in bed, she does not recognize her own toes. Her identity is beginning to fade; she is becoming a projection of Philip's desires.

At first, when Melanie hears that she will play Leda, she thinks, "he saw her as once she had seen herself. In spite of everything, she was flattered" (135). The actual performance, however, is an all too real representation of how Philip *really* sees her. Sally Robinson, discussing Alice Jardine's Gynesis, suggests that "'representation' is an act of violence, perpetrated by the self-present and knowing subject

against, one can only assume, the Others that that subject desires to know and control. Thus, representation is a form of colonization, an imperial move on the part of the subject" (190). Similar to Jardine, Carter tells us in "The Loves of Lady Purple, "The master of marionettes vitalizes inert stuff with the dynamics of his self" (25). With the puppet-master colonizing the puppet, there is little, and eventually no, space for the colonized within his or her own body, or senses.

Melanie realizes after the performance that Leda is not who she wants to be, but she does not know what other options exist. Few roles, none of them positive, have been presented to Melanie: the painter's subject; the bored housewife (her mother); the abused housewife; the raped maiden; the haughty queen (who, despite her status as Queen, wears a choker); and the forest nymph. After the toyshop has burned, however, Melanie says, "Everything is gone" (189). Finn replies, "Nothing is left but us." Having swept the stage so abruptly in the end, Carter leaves the reader scrambling for answers, but none are forthcoming; the novel ends: "At night, in the garden, they faced each other in a wild surmise" (189). Carter recasts the two as a sort of Adam and Eve, with a new world and new relations to their bodies; also, they now have the experience to know what they *do not* want to do or be as they set about making a life in their shabby Eden. Philip's imposing of roles is overcome; they wake from the delirium that has made them susceptible to his will. No Bluebeard she, Carter leaves Finn and Melanie, and the reader, to create their own new life instead of imposing a final narrative upon them.

Heroes and Villains

"...as if we were the slaves of history and not its makers..." (Sade 3)

The post-apocalyptic world of Heroes and Villains is divided into three groups of people: the Professors in their farming communities; the Barbarians who roam the land and occasionally raid the Professors' societies for supplies; and the Out People, mutated humans who inhabit destroyed cities. At the end of the novel Marianne, a professor's daughter who has been transplanted into a Barbarian tribe, claims, "I shall stay here and frighten them so much they'll do every single thing I say...I'll be the tiger lady and rule with a rod of iron" (150). This overtly phallic language hints that Carter saw this claiming of power as something other than ideal. Dr. Donnaly, the Barbarian tribe's shaman, is the first to suggest this transformation, so, given his wide knowledge and use of the art and myth of the past, it is not hard to believe that the "tiger lady" is an allusion to Blake's poem "The Tyger": "Tyger Tyger burning bright,/In the forests of the night:/What immortal hand or eye,/Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" (Blake 192). That Carter was not aware of this poem is doubtful: "When I was a girl, I thought that everything Blake said was Holy..." (Wives' x). Blake's poem ends with a question, who created the fearful tiger? Carter, it would seem, wants readers to ask this very question regarding her

heroine; what has driven Marianne, who once said she would not play the children's game "Heroes and Villains," to become a major figure in the adult version of this game?

The answer is found in the patriarchal societies she inhabits and the Bluebeard character she meets, Dr. Donally, whose scarlet and purple beard hints that Carter saw him as a Bluebeard figure. However, if in Toyshop Uncle Philip was concerned with turning others into symbols of his passions, in Villains Dr. Donally is concerned with turning himself and others into symbols of fear so that he can hold power over the Barbarian tribe. Like Bluebeard, Donally is a master of manipulation. The two major victims of this manipulation are Marianne, who, as a female, is continuously forced to be merely a spectator, and Jewel the Barbarian, who is forced into the sado-masochistic role of "hero;" their attempts to escape Donally's and society's manipulation result in delirium as they struggle to find new identities. Ultimately, both fall into the roles provided in history.

After placing the Gothic, which is usually set in the past, in the present day of Toyshop, Why would Carter bother putting the Gothic in the future? Why continue the traumatization instead of focusing on a more utopian vision like some feminist science fiction writers? Trying to explain the reasoning behind women's desire to continue to read and/or write Gothic fiction and the continuous representation of women in peril Gothic literature presents, Massé writes,

My argument is that repetition in the Gothic functions as it does for certain other traumas: the reactivation of trauma is an attempt to recognize, not relish, the incredible and unspeakable...The originating trauma that prompts such repetition is the prohibition of female autonomy in the Gothic, in the families that people it, and in the society that

reads it. History, both individual and societal, is the nightmare from which the protagonist cannot awaken and whose inexorable logic must be followed. (Masse 12)

This sense of an inescapable past with its "inexorable logic" is at the heart of Villains; Carter places the Gothic in a brutal post-nuclear-apocalyptic-future, making the "past" of her novel our "present;" the reader is automatically cast in the uneasy role of being a part of the history Marianne is caught in, that she must awake from, although she does not. Following Massé's line of thought, it seems clear Carter is trying to recognize, *not* relish as some have suggested, Marianne's dilemma, for Marianne lives in a world controlled by Bluebeard characters, where autonomy and freedom are always at risk. In his introduction to the The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales, Chris Baldick places Carter squarely in the Gothic tradition:

...just as the consciously Protestant pioneers of the Gothic novel raise the old ghosts of Catholic Europe only to exorcize them, so in a later age the fiction of Angela Carter has exploited the power of a patriarchal folklore, all the better to expose and dispel its grip upon us. (xiv)

By setting her story in the future, one that remains frighteningly similar to the present, Carter can draw attention to the "patriarchal folklore" that, if it were to continue into the future, would continue to wreak havoc on people and society. The trappings of patriarchal folklore are the building blocks of both the Barbarian tribe and the Professors' society. The Gothic, for Carter, is not only a matter of the past and present, but an all too possible future.

Before discussing Donally's tribe, a look at Marianne's first home will be necessary in order to understand her later actions. Essentially

patriarchal, the land of the professors, divided among workers, professors, and soldiers, seems tranquil enough, except for the occasional suicide or Barbarian raid. The Professors, Marianne's father claims, were "'the only ones left who could resurrect the gone world in a gentler shape, and try to keep destruction outside, this time'" (8), but their attempts to apply pure reason ultimately fail as the Soldiers begin to take on more power and desire only to "win"/destroy rather than to apply their power to help the community. The Professors' society, having continued the history of subservient and/or passive women, presents few options for young Marianne. The society values male children over female children, leaving Marianne with the feeling, which would seem to be correct, that "Her mother loved her brother best" (3).

Perhaps because she can never be a professor, Marianne finds little of the philosophical talk around her to be of interest; instead, she fantasizes about the Barbarian she sees kill her brother: "'...when I was a little girl, I used to dream about the Barbarians and that used to disturb me, but never to the point of sweating and moaning. At least, not often. And then it was never out of fear" (82). Marianne's life is so dull that she is left to fantasize about the Barbarians. This fantasizing is an attempt to break out of the alienation her society creates; everyone around her hardly seems human. At times, Marianne comments, her father does not seem real, and the Soldiers are more like robots than people. This alienation becomes more apparent to Marianne when her father dies and she is sent to live with her uncle, the Captain of the Soldiers. Marianne's uncle comes to resemble Bluebeard in his rigorous keeping of borders; like Philip in Toyshop, Marianne's uncle

ominously suggests that Marianne "should be taken out of herself" (15). It is shortly after this that Marianne runs away from the Professors and into the clutches of Dr. Donally.

The philosophy of destiny Dr. Donally sells to Marianne is similar to the one Melanie learns from all of the authority figures in her life, but with an important twist-- Donally's goal is domination. A professor of history, Marianne's father is the first to teach Marianne that she is trapped in history:

'We are all arbitrary children of calamity,' he said in his academic voice. 'We have to take the leavings.'
'I don't see why!' she exclaimed. (11)

In response to his comment, when her father is dead Marianne burns his books and throws his clock into a swamp, but her outrage does not last; by the end of the novel Marianne accepts her "leavings." Marianne, like Melanie in Toyshop, also learns that sexual passivity is her destiny. In a world practically devoid of significant female characters, Marianne's only mother-surogate, Mrs. Green, incorporates the idea of destiny into the relationship between the sexes. After Jewel rapes Marianne Mrs. Green tells her, "Young men will always take advantage, dear...And we all have to take what we can get" (59). Finally, Dr. Donally lends his own variation on the theme of destiny: "ONENESS WITH DESTINY GIVES STYLE AND DISTINCTION" (59). With his romanticization of destiny, offering style and distinction, Donally is trying to sell destiny, unlike Marianne's father who saw it as a grisly trap. Donally's subtle manipulating, with the goal of domination in mind, is what makes him a Bluebeard character.

An important part of Donally's strategy is to keep people

separated; he does this by creating (or re-using) myths that instill fear, which he calls the "ruling passion" (51). Donally makes his position clear to Marianne early: "I can provoke an ecstasy of dread by raising my little finger but then, I've worked hard and bided my time" (51). With his filed teeth, "fits" of writhing and frothing at the mouth, and a son chained up like a dog, Donally keeps the tribe in a horrified trance. Carter makes this use of fear a political comment when Donally, about to be expelled from the tribe, tells Jewel, "I'll give you a future, if you'd only listen. I could make you so terrifying the bends of the road would straighten out with fright as you rode down. I'll make you a politician and you could become the King of the Yahoos and all the professors, too..." (125). In the game of power, in which the future lies for Donally, the one who is the most frightening is the most powerful. Donally always has the upper hand, the right to "give" or take power as he pleases.

Upon Marianne's arrival into the tribe, Donally initiates Marianne into his gothic culture of fear and alienation: "'familiarity breeds contempt. You'll have to remain terrifying, you know, otherwise, what hope is there for you?'" (50). Marianne, believing the Barbarians to be beneath her, never considers she might try to educate or help them, thus Carter makes clear the snobbish aspect of Marianne's character that helps to alienate her from the tribe. Afraid of losing his position, Donally suggests to Marianne, "Domiciled as you are among the Yahoos, you might as well be Queen of the midden. Don't you know the meaning of the word 'ambition'?" (61). "'There must be something you want,'" he says, "'Power?...I can offer you a little power' He suggested the idea

as if it were a delicious goody" (61). Donally may allow Marianne to become the "Queen," but as long as he is about, she would always, like the puppet Queen in Toyshop, wear a choker; Donally would ultimately be in charge. This offer of "a little" power is a ploy on Donally's part to suppress the potentially disruptive Marianne. Although she rejects it at first, Donally's philosophy of fear is the one Marianne succumbs to at the end of the novel.

The roles that Jewel is forced into further show Donally's tactics. Under Donally's influence Jewel becomes the "unfortunate lover" of the Marvel poem of the same name that Carter places as an epigraph to the novel: "Torn into Flames, and ragg'd with Wounds, / And all he sais, a Lover drest / In his own Blood does relish best." This masochistic role is balanced by the sadistic one the professors impose on the Barbarians. Jewel says at one point, "Sometimes I dream I am an invention of the Professors; they project their fears outside on us so they won't stay in the villages, infecting them, and so, you understand, they can live peacefully there. On the nights I have these dreams, I have been known to wake the entire camp with my screams" (82). He realizes the professors would never accept him so he is stuck outside, in the role of "Barbarian," where Donally keeps him. Dr. Donally says he does not want to teach Jewel to read because "literacy would blur his outlines, you wouldn't see which way he was going anymore" (62), but it seems more likely that Donally is afraid of Jewel usurping his position. Marianne also comments on Jewel's existence as a symbol, "His appearance was abstracted from his body, and he was willfully reduced to sign language. He had become the sign of an idea of a hero" (72). As the "hero" of the

tribe, Jewel must bury the dead, punish the guilty, and kill the sick. Far from making Jewel popular, this role leaves him open for mutiny by his brothers; paranoia is an unpleasant fact of Jewel's life, alienating him from those around him. As the hero, Jewel is also the most extensively tattooed member of the tribe; Carter called Irezumi, the extremely painful ancient Japanese art of tattooing that Donally employs, "almost certainly one of the most exquisitely refined and skilful forms of sado-masochism the mind of man ever divined" (Sacred 38). With the tattoo of Adam and Eve on his back, Jewel's flesh has literally become the word of Donally's philosophy of fear. Knowledge would "blur" Jewel's outlines, Donally says, ignorance will keep him "natural." Actually, Carter claims, it will keep him ignorant and oppressed.

Jewel is also forced into roles by Marianne. She first labels him a as a Barbarian, then as a fantasy, and then as a husband. When she reaches the last role, Marianne becomes more intent on being spiteful and does everything she can to dominate and destroy Jewel. Smarter than everyone imagines, Jewel realizes Marianne's desire and power to dominate him the first time he sees her: "...She converted me into something else by seeing me..." (122). Having no control over Marianne's imperious gaze and prepared by Donally to fit the masochistic role of hero, Jewel repeatedly offers Marianne the chance to kill him. Indeed, Donally compares Jewel to "'the milk-white unicorn, a heavily symbolic and extravagantly horned beast who could only be captured by a young virgin, which always proved the worst for it. Poor Jewel, in the same plight..." (93). It is interesting that Donally presents the idea

of a unicorn as if it had really existed; this mistake on Donally's part points out the fictionalized nature of Jewel's adopted self as well.

That Jewel is not the savage everyone would label him as is suggested again and again. When he kills a Soldier during a raid we see that he has some compassion: "The Barbarian boy dropped the knife and clasped his victim in his arms, holding him with a strange, terrible tenderness until he was still and dead" (6). The striking difference between Marianne's and Jewel's attitude toward death is summed up when Jewel recalls the first time he saw Marianne, when he killed her brother: "This little girl...looking down as if it were all an entertainment laid on for her benefit. And I thought, 'If that's the way they look at death, the sooner they all go the better" (80). But Jewel's role as hero demands that he take on a cruel attitude; when Jewel punishes Precious, his brother, in a public flogging, Carter writes, "He was nothing but the idea of that power which men fear to offend...he was concealed within a mask which covered his entire body, a man no longer" (113). However, Jewel pleads forgiveness from Precious: "'It's not my fault...I love you best'" (113). Jewel's admission of love is a clear sign that he is uncomfortable with his role.

When he is questioned by Donally, Jewel's real feelings are finally heard:

"Would you have punished Precious of your own free will?"

"No."

"Would you have married her of your own free will?"

"No."

"Would you create a power structure of your own free will?"

"No."

"Then how can you hope to be Moses when you won't

acknowledge a chosen people?"
 "I don't want to be Moses" (123).

Jewel wishes to reject Donally's society of fear; he doesn't want to be Bluebeard. After this discussion, Jewel tells Donally that they have "come to a parting of the ways, at last" (126). Jewel no longer wants to play the hero, but he tells Marianne, "in as cool and rational a voice as she had ever heard," that he is at the end of his "tether."

His desire to escape society's expectations leaves him delirious as he goes in search of another life. Jewel tries to drown himself, but Marianne saves him. Sleeping on the beach, Jewel is passed over by a lion who considers him dead. Jewel concludes from these two happenings that he is nothing more than an abstraction, no longer in charge of himself, a puppet of destiny. His death is a result of his trying to continue his role as Barbarian despite his realization that he no longer wants to fill the role; he fights a futile battle even though he no longer has any ability, or wish, to frighten. Realizing Jewel's position, Marianne "laughed hysterically and repeated over and over again: 'You aren't yourself this morning, you aren't yourself this morning, you aren't yourself this morning...'" (146). Jewel can never escape everyone's labeling of his "self." Carter has made it clear that men suffer under the roles of patriarchy.

While Jewel struggles to resist the roles the others project onto him, Marianne struggles to retain her alienation; as a female in both the professor's society and that of the Barbarians, Marianne has little to do but watch. This leaves her with a curious inability to be introspective and gives her the ability to remain alienated from everything around her, to see others as not real. Watching Jewel's

brothers among the horses, Marianne "inspected these sights as if she were looking at colour illustrations in an ingenious book. So at all times she maintained a triumphant loneliness..." (90). In an attempt to have power over Jewel, Marianne begins to deny him existence when he is not with her or when they are not having sex. When Jewel smears blood on Marianne after a hunt, Carter makes the tension between Jewel and Marianne clear, "she construed [his action] immediately and immediately despised, as if he were helplessly trying to prove his autonomy to her when she knew all the time he vanished like a phantom at daybreak, or earlier, at the moment when her body ceased to define his outlines" (89).

While her alienation numbs her from the painful reality about her, Marianne also suffers from the tribe's refusal to accept her. Before Marianne arrives in the tribe Donally has already turned her, as a female from the Professor's society, into a monster. Dr. Donally instills in the Barbarians the following, "'It's a well-known fact that Professor women sprout sharp teeth in their private parts, to bite off the genitalia of young men'" (49). Also, "There were stories among the Barbarians that Professor women did not bleed when you cut them..." (25). Marianne's reaction to this dehumanization changes as the novel progresses. At first, tired of the villagers making signs against the evil eye when she is about, Marianne proclaims, "Oh, don't be stupid...I'm flesh and blood..." (36). But as she continues on in the society she becomes less concerned about what the others think. She begins to alienate herself as she becomes more of an abstraction and turns others into abstractions.

CHARLES J. WILSON

Marianne's alienation reaches a climax one day when she realizes she is being watched by two women of the tribe: "Marianne knew in her heart that none of this was real; that it was a kind of enchantment....she knew herself to be dreaming and was all at once immensely relieved, so relieved she allowed herself a small ripple of laughter" (103). This laughter leads one of the women to believe that Marianne is trying to kill her baby; the woman goes mad and Marianne is forced to stare "unbelievably at the woman who had lost all restraint and foamed and moaned upon the mattress whether she was real or not" (103). When Jewel suggests that a kiss would convince the woman that Marianne was real, Marianne "reached out uncertainly, for she did not know how to approach a woman worn to such strange shapes by hardship and fear...Besides, she did not want to admit the unknown woman's suffering was real" (103). Marianne's extreme response, she sobbed as if her "heart was breaking," is lost on Marianne; she seems to have no ability to be introspective: "...she could make no sense of it and often wondered why she had cried so much that night" (106). Marianne is so accustomed to alienation that she cannot understand that it might be the root of her problems. Soon after this, a turning point in her character is reached:

Boredom and exhaustion conspired to erode her formerly complacent idea of herself. She could find no logic to account for her presence nor for that of the people around her nor any familiar, sequential logic at all in this shifting world; for that consciousness of reason in which her own had ripened was now withering away and she might soon be prepared to accept, since it was coherent, whatever malign structure of the world with which the shaman who rode the donkey [Donally] should one day choose to present her...The cracked mirrors of his dark glasses revealed all manner of

potentialities for Marianne, modes of being which she might aspire just as soon as she threw away her reason as of no further use to her, since it scarcely helped her to construe the enigmas all about her. (106)

The irony is that Marianne's original form of "reason," which really was complacent, led her to not think about the major questions put to her; she always falls back on the "destiny" or "fate" prescribed by authority figures instead of thinking through decisions. Probably the most important decision in her life is given no thought; when Jewel asks her if she wants to leave the Professors' community Marianne says "yes" immediately, "If she had allowed herself to think, she would never have said this" (18). Near the end of the novel, Marianne says, "When I was a little girl, we played at heroes and villains but now I don't know which is which any more...Because nobody can teach me which is which nor who is who because my father is dead" (125). This reliance on the absent father for definitions and guidance leaves Marianne without the ability to think. Indeed, Marianne would seem to be the answer to a question posed by Dr. Donally: "I THINK, THEREFORE I EXIST: BUT IF I TAKE TIME OFF FROM THINKING, WHAT THEN?" Marianne's response to this question is to despise Donally's "resorting" to rhetorical questions, another sign of her resistance to thinking and introspection. Having taken time off from thinking, Marianne becomes a victim of history, like the ignorant tribe people she looks down upon.

One role that Marianne buys into, despite her claims otherwise, is the role of "wife," which gives Marianne an anchor for her behavior. But if Marianne is a wife, she is a spiteful and contrary one. She even sleeps with Donally's thirteen year old son because it is her first

chance to "betray her husband." By the end of the novel, Marianne is so dependant on behaving as a wife that when Jewel is gone she does not feel whole:

When she could see him no more, she was surprised to find herself dislocated from and unfamiliar with her own body. Her hands and feet seemed strange extensions which hardly belonged to her; her eyes amorphous jellies. And she was not able to think.
(149)

This delirium sounds much like Melanie's disassociation from her senses in Toyshop. Both girls struggle to find identities in worlds that offer no real autonomy to women. Another point where Marianne resembles Melanie and loses contact with her body is the near rape by Jewel's brothers. Up against six large men, Marianne does "struggle and shout," but at this "the brothers laughed but did not cease to crowd in on her" (49). As a form of protection, Marianne imagines she is not in her body. Again, Marianne learns that her only forms of protection in this brutal world are to become an abstraction and to treat others as abstractions; thus, she allows herself to become the frightful "tiger lady."

In the end, Marianne and Jewel do not awake from the nightmare of gothic histroy. Jewel is killed because of his half-hearted attempt to follow Donally's fearful philosophy, and Marianne finally accepts Donally's offer of power, after learning the necessary alienation and objectification from those around her. The two are so delerious, so alienated from each other and from their own selves, because of Donally's, and the wider society's, logic, that in the end there is little or no chance that they can help each other:

...they looked at one another with marvelling suspicion, like heavily disguised members of a

conspiracy who have never learned the signals which would reveal themselves to one another, for to neither did it seem possible, nor even desirable, that the evidence of their senses was correct and each capable of finding in the other some clue to survival in this inimical world. (148)

Ultimately, under Marianne's leadership the tribe will continue to be one based on fear and alienation; Marianne assumes the role of Bluebeard, a move considered by some critics as a victorious liberation from the roles of femininity. However, in The Sadeian Woman Carter calls this type of "victory" a "liberation without enlightenment...[she will become] an instrument for the oppression of others, both women and men...tyranny is implicit in all privilege. My freedom makes you more unfree, if it does not acknowledge your freedom, also" (89). Marianne becomes both victimized and victimizer in a gothic eternity of brutal domination.

"The Bloody Chamber"

It is easy to see that the events described in this story took place many years ago. No modern husband would dare to be half so terrible, nor to demand of his wife such an impossible thing as to stifle her curiosity. (Perrault 41)

In "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe" Carter writes that Poe learned at an early age "the nature of the mystery of the castle--that all its horrors are so much painted cardboard and yet they terrify you..." (78). This attitude seems present in "The Bloody Chamber," in which Carter takes on the legend of Bluebeard directly. If Carter challenged oppressive art in Toyshop by showing its imperious nature, in "The Bloody Chamber" Carter takes on the story of Bluebeard and twists it to her own ends, while showing Bluebeard's horrifying nature as well as the attractions he possesses. In her introduction to her translation of Perrault's fairy tales, Carter berates Perrault for not bothering his head "with the mysteries of sado-masochistic attraction" (18). Carter's version of Bluebeard is full of speculation regarding this attraction; her heroine begins to take on the role of a masochist as her husband, the Marquis, subjects her to his will.

Carter's Marquis, the obvious Bluebeard character, is a voluptuary and a connoisseur of pornography; in fact, pornography has become his religion. The similarities between the Marquis in "Chamber" and the Marquis De Sade's libertine characters, who Carter deals with extensively in The Sadeian Woman, is blatant: "'Did all the castle hold

enough riches to recompense me for the company of the libertine with whom I must share it?" (21). Like Sade's libertines, as well as Bluebeard, the Marquis is wholly selfish, thinking of others only as objects to use in his games; "I have a place prepared for your exquisite corpse in my display of flesh!" (44), the Marquis tells his bride as he is about to kill her. In The Sadeian Woman Carter considers how the word "flesh" can also be used to mean "meat" and what this implies:

What are the butcherly delights of meat? These are not sensual but analytical...A clinical pleasure in the precision with which the process of reducing the living, moving, vivid object to the dead status of a thing is accomplished. (138)

While Uncle Philip in Toyshop is interested in controlling pleasure and Dr. Donally in Villains is interested in controlling a society, The Marquis is ultimately interested in nothing more than complete domination, murder, the transformation of skin into flesh, or fleisch, or meat.

The Marquis' desire for domination is accompanied by a desire to play cat and mouse games of manipulation with his prey. He enjoys sneaking up on his wife and scaring her (she goes along with the game even though she is always aware of his presence); arousing desire and then frustrating it is another of the Marquis' pleasures, "Anticipation is the greater part of pleasure, my little love" (12). He also constantly wears a mask that shows no emotion, making his motives unclear and confusing his wife. Finally, he creates a sense of "gravity," an ability to seem more powerful and real than he really is: "...I was afraid, not so much of him, of his monstrous presence, heavy

as if he had been gifted at birth with more specific gravity than the rest of us, the presence that, even when I thought myself most in love with him, always subtly oppressed me...." (19). Through these tricks, the Marquis begins to transform the heroine into a masochist.

Carter's heroine comes to the Marquis out of a desire to banish poverty from her and her mother's "meager table," selling herself like a piece of meat: "'This ring [a giant fire opall], the [figuratively] bloody bandage of rubies, the wardrobe of clothes from Poiret and Worth, his scent of Russian leather--all had conspired to seduce me so utterly...'" (8). The heroine's preoccupation with luxury at first seems odd since her mother "had gladly, scandalously, defiantly beggared herself for love..." (2). But this very description of the mother's actions implies that the rest of the society did not approve of such an action; marriage, they believe, is an economic affair. Society, represented by the heroine's Nanny, couldn't be more impressed by the "little Marquise" and her splendid wedding. Despite her mother's concerns, the heroine marries; she, like Margaret in Toyshop, is given a choker, extravagantly made of rubies, as a wedding gift.

Although the Marquis states that his bride was not "blind" to her "desires" before she married, it would seem he is wrong. This is part of his manipulation; like Philip and Donally, he attempts to impose on women the way they are "supposed" to be, challenging their relation to their own senses. While the heroine certainly knew she wanted to be wealthy, she claims she did not know she had masochistic tendencies:

I saw, in the mirror, the living image of an etching by Rops from the collection he had shown me when our engagement permitted us to be alone together...the child with her sticklike limbs, naked but for her button hook boots, her

gloves, shielding her face with her hand as though her face were her last repository of her modesty; and the old, monocled lecher who examined her, limb by limb. He in his London tailoring; she, bare as a lamb chop. Most pornographic of all confrontations. And so my purchaser unwrapped his bargain. And, as at the opera, when I had first seen my flesh in his eyes, I was aghast to feel myself stirring. (12).

Like Melanie in Toyshop, who was at first pleased that Philip represented her the way she saw herself, the heroine has been influenced enough by her society so that she *does have* some masochistic tendencies, despite her ignorance of them. Abruptly after arousing this response, the Marquis says he must go away; the heroine is left alone with "bewildered senses" (13), a.k.a. delirium. The Marquis has begun his manipulation, confusing the heroine's reason and senses, the key, Carter says again and again throughout her works, to domination.

The heroine loses her virginity to the Marquis, and we get a further sense of his nature, "'There is a striking resemblance between the act of love and the ministrations of a torturer,' opined my husband's favorite poet; I had learned something of the nature of that similarity on my marriage bed" (29). Further confusing the heroine, this combination of love and torture leaves her clinging to her husband "as though only the one who had inflicted the pain could comfort me for suffering it" (16). Thus the Marquis brings the delirious heroine to the role of a masochist. He tells his wife, "Your thin white face, with its promise of debauchery only a connoisseur could detect" (19). Again, he is projecting his will onto her; she responds,

I was not afraid of him; but of myself. I seemed reborn in his unreflective eyes, reborn in unfamiliar shapes. I hardly recognized myself from his descriptions of me and yet--and yet, might there

not be a grain of beastly truth in them?...he might have chosen me because, in my innocence, he sensed a rare talent for corruption. (19)

The heroine's confused questioning of her own motives and nature is the result of her autonomy and identity having been so weakened by the Marquis' manipulations.

Amid all of the pornographic art of the Marquis and the masochistic responses of the heroine is the blind piano tuner. The heroine introduces him, "He was blind, of course..." (22). The "of course" points to the selfish and jealous nature of the Marquis; could he allow a sighted man the pleasure of seeing the heroine? Hardly. When Bluebeard is about, other men must be blinded, or similarly tortured, like Finn and Jewel from Toyshop and Villains. That this blind man winds up as the heroine's lover is heavily ironic given her former abuse by the gaze-obsessed Marquis; it also points out a healthy form of love. The tuner is said to possess a "blind humanity" which allows him to see "clearly with his heart." He is also aware of the way that the heroine's actions were orchestrated by the Marquis, and he is able to forgive the complicit behavior the heroine was tricked into. The fact that the heroine's mother, who saves the heroine in a bravura of steely last-second heroism, loves the tuner as much as the heroine also hints that the new relationship is a sort of ideal. The tuner and the heroine rely on each other to tune and play the piano that they both love so much.

This granting of an unquestionably happy ending, combined with the utopian economic aspects Carter presents, is quite different from the endings of Carter's two previous Bluebeard stories; she doesn't leave us

delirious with "wild surmise" like in Toyshop, and she doesn't present a bleak future always under Bluebeard's manipulation like in Villains. Like Poe saw that the "horrors of the castle were so much painted cardboard," Carter seems to be saying that our stories are also "so much painted cardboard" and can be repainted as we please. Bluebeard *can* be denied; his extra "gravity" is only a mask. That this is the case is seen when Carter describes the Marquis' reaction to the arrival of the mother, "The puppetmaster, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, impotent at the last, saw his dolls break free of their strings, abandon the rituals he had ordained for them since time began and start to live for themselves..." (45). Bluebeard and his story are ultimately impotent in the face of a concerned and loving community. It is only by stepping out of the roles of history, and the fictions of history, that this community can be created.

"The Fall River Axe Murders"

The green leaf of loyalty's beginning to fall.
The bonnie White Rose it is withering an' all.
But I'll water it with blood of usurping tyranny.
And green it will grow in my ain countrie.

Allan Cunningham
(The title of this,
Lizzie's favorite
hymn, was carved in
Lizzie's fireplace
mantel...)

Almost twenty years after her first reference to Bluebeard, and after seemingly refusing to continue his abuse in "The Bloody Chamber," Carter transplants Bluebeard and his castle directly into history and the real world in "The Fall River Axe Murders," a sort of essay about the Borden murders. Carter's choice of a historical Bluebeard is Andrew Borden, slumlord, miser, New England patriarch, and loving father. Like she retold the Bluebeard tale in "Chamber" in order to show she could liberate herself from it, Carter uses the Borden murders to comment on the fictional and mythic nature of history, which has been less than kind in its representations of women. While creating a historical "domestic apocalypse," Carter questions the very reliability of such a story. Still, she comments on the delirium Lizzie faces as her mysterious illness goes untreated because of Fall River's regime of gentility.

Carter places as an epigraph to her story the children's rhyme that has immortalized the Borden murders and villified Lizzie:

Lizzie Borden took an axe
Gave her father forty whacks

When she saw what she had done
She gave her mother forty one.

Carter wants to be sure that we know how Lizzie Borden has been represented to the world, how she has become a myth, dehumanized, to the perverse extent of having a children's rhyme made from her story. But Carter then goes about making the story more complex rather than doing away with it. In the story, Carter again makes us aware of Lizzie's historical reputation: "...it is time for her to go down to the cellar wood-pile to collect the hatchet with which our imagination--'Lizzie Borden with and axe'--always equips her, just as we always visualise Saint Catherine rolling along her wheel, the emblem of her passion" (10). Carter argues here that we have been led to believe Lizzie was "passionate" about killing, always waiting for a chance to kill. This is the dangerous simplification of myth.

Carter's goal is to fill our imagination with more than just the image of Lizzie with an axe. There are no motives given for the murders in the children's rhyme most people know Lizzie by. Commenting on her own story, and mocking the myth that surrounds Lizzie, Carter states, "the colouring of this domestic apocalypse [Carter's own version] must be crude and the design profoundly simplified for the maximum emblematic effect" (11). Certainly the children's rhyme is "crude," "emblematic," and "profoundly simplified," but its lesson, Lizzie Borden was passionate about and took a curious delight in killing for no apparent reason, does not suit Carter. She turns the story, whether historically accurate or not, into a warning to patriarchs everywhere: repression leads to madness, and madness leads to murder. Lizzie's "insanity," whether it is caused by genes or society we do not know, is only

exacerbated by the society she lives in; the title of the story draws specific attention to the Fall River's complicity in the murders.

Partly invoking the sickness and delirium in the residents of Fall River is the unbearably hot weather, which "clings, like a fever you cannot shake off" (9). But the people of Fall River do little or nothing to ease the strain: "...the descendants of the industrious, self-mortifying saints who imported the Protestant ethic wholesale into a land intended for the siesta are proud of flying in the face of nature" (9). This disregard for nature is especially apparent in the clothing Lizzie wears; she dresses herself in a "whalebone corset that takes her viscera in an unkind hand and squeezes them very tightly....In all these clothes, out of sorts and nauseous as she is, in this dementing heat, her belly in a vice, she will heat up a flatiron on a stove and press handkerchiefs..." (10). Like Margaret in Toyshop and the heroine of "Chamber," Lizzie wears a "choker collar." The men also dress inappropriately, "...the stern fathers of Fall River will step briskly forth into the furnace, well wrapped up in flannel underclothes, linen shirts, vests and coats and trousers of good, thick wool, and--final touch--a strangulatory neck tie, as if discomfort were next to godliness" (9). The loss of pleasure and/or comfort is the price the residents of Fall River pay for their Protestant ethic.

In this stifling world, Andrew Borden takes on the role of Bluebeard:

Morose and gaunt, this self-made man is one of few pleasures. His vocation is capital accumulation.
What is his hobby?
Why, grinding the faces of the poor.
....Foreclosures and evictions are meat and drink to him. He loves nothing better than a little usury.

(18)

Here, Borden very much resembles the Marquis in "Chamber," except Borden does not lavish his prisoners with dizzying luxury. Like Philip in Toyshop, Borden is a miser, interested, as Carter says, mainly in capital accumulation, as he attempts to bury the memory that his father was a lowly fish peddler under a mound of immense wealth. Borden's mansion is unmistakably gothic: it is "a house full of locked doors that open only into other rooms with other locked doors. Upstairs and downstairs, all the rooms lead in and out of one another like a maze in a bad dream" (13). It is "narrow as a coffin," and "cramped, comfortless" (10). Later, it is described as "Bluebeard's castle" (28). The architect of the Borden home was Andrew Borden himself.

While using his economic power to terrorize and subdue the town, Borden uses his locked home to trap women that must admire him: "The...old man [Borden] owns all the women by either marriage, birth, or contract" (10). Lizzie has been so much indoctrinated into the Fall River society that she "loves her father. All are agreed on that" (24); she even gives her father her gold high school ring to always wear. Borden's manipulation of the women in his house is complete, except for that little problem Lizzie has.

At the age of thirty, Lizzie is still called a "girl," as if she never grew up. In a sense, of course, she didn't; she still lived with and relied on her father. She is the innocent Gothic maiden, with a sick twist. The beginning of her menstrual cycle coincides with the beginning of her "peculiar spells," further contributing to Lizzie's delirium. During her period, Lizzie says, "...as for me, I haven't felt

myself all day, I have felt so strange. So very...strange" (24). Lizzie does not know her self. All of the mirrors in the house "take your face and twist it out of shape for you" (12). Also, being a good daughter, and a non-discrete, socially acceptable woman, compels Lizzie to keep her "spells" a secret; introspection is also not an option:

She had no words with which to describe the over-
clarity with which she had seen the everyday things
around her, even had she wished to do so. She kept
the knowledge she was discontinuous to herself--or,
rather, she steadfastly ignored the knowledge that
she was discrete because the notion had no meaning
to her, or, perhaps, too much meaning for her to
assimilate since she believed that either a person
was, or else was not...Therefore these intermittent
lapses in day-to-day consciousness, in which she was
and was not at the same time, were unaccountable in
every way and she did not dare to think of them once
she came back to herself. So she remained a
stranger to herself. (16)

Despite her wish to be a good daughter, Lizzie is the one, Carter suggests, that burgled and vandalized the Borden home. But Lizzie is not aware of what she has done, "What was she doing, standing clad only in her corset in the middle of the sitting room? How had she got there? Had she crept down when she heard the screen door rattle? She did not know. (15). Lizzie's crazed, rebellious actions are born during her spells, when "everyday things appeared to her with piercing, appalling clarity..." when they appear nameless. Carter suggests that Lizzie is unconsciously struggling against the genteel labels that imprison her.

But Carter is doing more than merely trying to make Lizzie's actions seem human; she questions the very act of writing a story about Lizzie. Another man was in the Borden house the day of the murder, but Carter sweeps him out of the picture:

The other man is some kind of kin of Borden's. He
doesn't belong, here; he is a chance bystander, he

is irrelevant.

Write him out of the script.

Even though his presence in the doomed house is historically unimpeachable, the colouring of this domestic apocalypse must be crude and the design profoundly simplified for the maximum emblematic effect. (11)

This blatant disregard for "unimpeachable" history for the sake of "emblematic effect" seems to be Carter's payback for her feeling of marginalization as a woman in history; it also draws attention to the partisan nature history can serve. Carter, at least, makes her motive clear. She is frank in admitting that she does not know the whole story:

I can't imagine what else they do.

What the girls do when they are on their own is unimaginable to me.

Emma is even more of a mystery than Lizzie because we know less about her. She is a blank space. She has no life. (14)

Also, Carter writes that Lizzie kept her "spells" a secret, but somehow Carter knows enough about them to describe them in detail. Lizzie, it would seem, is a mythic every-woman, the tortured and delirious Gothic soul. While reclaiming it from the simple children's rhyme, Carter unabashedly makes it into an "emblem" of "domestic apocalypse," the essence of Gothic and of the Bluebeard tale. Carter does not resolve this dislike of and use of history and myth, leaving the reader deliriously attempting to fix a meaning on the story.

Bluebeard Exposed!

For Angela Carter, Bluebeard is not just one man with a terrible secret; he represents an ideology, patriarchal domination. The tactics this patriarchy utilizes are varied, and Carter is thorough in her cataloging of them. Ultimately, Carter claims that women have for too long been dismembered from their own senses, or "wrenched from their personalities," by domineering men who want only to brutalize and destroy them. Thankfully, Carter makes it clear that this behavior is not common to all men, or natural to them. Again, it is a philosophy, one that even women can adopt, like Marianne at the end of Villains.

Carter saw the world about her as Gothic, full of confusion rooted in the search for identity as Bluebeard's cohorts attempt to gain control over their delirious prisoners. This is reflected in Carter's heroines, who, on the verge of maturity, are tempted by Bluebeard's art, society, wealth, and "love." But their understanding of love and his clash, resulting in delirium as the women scramble to make sense of the new, blatantly cruel worlds they inhabit. It is the confusion of love and cruelty that Sade exploited and the Gothic attempted to understand; Carter understood this and drew from both in her work.

That Carter would be drawn to the Gothic in her attempt to expose patriarchal domination seems natural given its preoccupation with this very topic. But until recently, as much new criticism of the genre is being done by feminist critics, the Gothic has held a dubious reputation. Its repeated representations of cruelty and abuse of women has led some to see it as a sensational genre that *relishes* cruelty and

the abuse of women. Carter's more insightful understanding of the genre saw it as a means of exposing cruelty; she used it towards this end. But Carter grew wary of the genre in "The Bloody Chamber," and her later books, Nights at the Circus, and Wise Children show Carter moving much further from the Gothic, focusing more on positive actions that can be taken in this Gothic world. Indeed, in Nights at the Circus, 1984, The Strong Man of a travelling circus, a Bluebeard character, says to the woman he has abused,

'All my life I have been strong and simple and--a coward, concealing the frailty of my spirit behind the strength of my body. I abused women and spoke ill of them, thinking myself superior to the entire sex on account of my muscle, although in reality I was too weak to bear the burden of any woman's love. I am not vain enough to think that, one day, either Mignon [his victim] or the Princess [Mignon's lover] might learn to love me as a man; perhaps, some day, they will cherish me as a brothr. This hope casts out fear from my heart...I grow stronger in spirit the more I serve.' (276)

One gets the feeling that if a Bluebeard character could come to this understanding anything is possible, even a woman with wings such as Carter's aerialist heroine. The delightfully frank speech also says much about what Carter saw as non-Gothic behavior. It is love that takes courage and strength, Carter claims. While her earlier works hint at these positive alternatives, it is easy to miss them among all of the violence. In Toyshop, Margaret, Francie, and Finn share a love of music and dancing that they express when Philip is not around. Their loving, cruelty-free community with its harmless art is a hint of the community Carter longs for. In "The Bloody Chamber," the heroine and the blind piano tuner enter a relationship of friendship and love based on a love of music; the immense wealth the heroine inherits is

given to charities. Sadly, the world of Villains and "Murders" were so far corrupted that Carter seemed to find no hope for happiness in them.

Carter's Bluebeard characters are not simply maniacal killers, however; Carter is careful to show them as both victims and victimizers in societies that impose their cruel roles upon them. The Marquis in "Chamber" is a victim of the aristocratic tradition and his own ancestors' cruelties. Andrew Borden struggles in a society that he thinks will never forget his father was a fish peddler. Dr. Donally and Philip are harder to understand, less motive is given, but both live miserable, angry lives in their attempts to dominate. Also, the Marquis suffers from an "atrocious loneliness" (39), and Borden's life is spent making himself into property. These characterizations may not provoke too much sympathy, but it is crucial to our understanding of Bluebeard that we do not make a myth of him; we must understand the society he is born in and the society he works within.

Finally, Bluebeard may cause delirium, but Carter's heroines learn that he would rather destroy them than love them. By daring to enter Bluebeard's locked castle and cast light on his many disguises and weapons, Carter hopes to expose his little secret-- the blade does *not* have to fall, heads do *not* have to roll. As Carter writes in "The Bloody Chamber," Bluebeard is ultimately "impotent" when "his dolls break free of their strings" and "abandon the rituals he had ordained for them..." (45).

Works Cited

- Baldick, Chris. The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Carter, Angela. "The Bloody Chamber." The Bloody Chamber. Comp. Angela Carter. New York: Harper and Row, 1978. 1-46.
- . "The Cabinet of Edgar Allen Poe." Saints and Strangers. Comp. Angela Carter. New York: Penguin Books, 1987. 71-81.
- . "The Fall River Axe Murders." Saints and Strangers. Comp. Angela Carter. New York: Penguin Books, 1987. 7-32.
- , Trans. The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault. New York: Avon Books, 1979.
- . Fireworks. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.
- . Heroes and Villains. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.
- . "The Lady of the House of Love." The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales. Ed. Chris Baldick. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- . The Magic Toyshop. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.
- . Nothing Sacred. London: Virago Press Limited, 1982.
- , Ed. The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book. New York: Pantheon Books, 1990.
- . The Sadeian Woman. New York: Pantheon Books, 1979.
- Hoffmann, E.T.A.. "Automata." The Best Tales of Hoffmann Ed. E.F. Bleiler. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967.
- Massé, Michelle. In The Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
- Palmer, Paulina. "From 'Coded Mannequin' to Bird Woman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight." Women Reading Women's Writing. Ed. Sue Roe. Sussex, UK: Harvester Press Limited, 1987.
- Robinson, Sally. Engendering the Subject. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.