THE BLOODY CHAMBER
[THE BLOODY CHAMBER WEEK]

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Carter’s heroine initially seems to be a feckless young woman naive to her surroundings. She believes that she is tricking the Marquis, “I’m sure I want to marry him”, not love him. She will marry him and live a very wealthy lifestyle, going to the opera and wearing lots of beautiful jewellery. She was “seventeen and knew nothing of the world”, she is oblivious to the fact that it is actually she that is being tricked.

The heroine wears the ruby chocker that resembled an “extraordinarily precious slit throat” with no inkling that it foreshadows the Marquis sinister plans.

Furthermore, Carter uses of religious imagery is particularly interesting, the lexical cluster referencing religion such as “sacredotal”, “incence” and “missals” describing the his carnal desires, as if they are worthy of worship. Furthermore, in calling the heroine his “little nun” he attempts to initiate her into his perverse religion.

It is arguable that the heroine accepts her role as the victim in the relationship, “there is a striking resemblance between the act of love and the ministrations of torturer”. She knows that she is the victim in the relationship and yet does nothing about it.

On the other hand, the image of her going down to the chamber may be a physical reflection of her digging into her own psyche, and in the chamber she must face her own subconscious desires, perhaps the heroine is in fact interested in the Marquis’ sadomasochism, this reading would explain why the Marquis wants to marry her in particular, her face had the “promise of debauchery.”

Kathleen E.B. Manley describes the heroine as “a woman in progress” she learns to grow into a self sufficient woman as the story progresses. She then goes on to suggest that “the Marquis favours a dichotomy between innocence and debauchery, not innocence and experience.” The fact that she grows and gains experience and survives is a victory over the Marquis and his depravity.
The heroine’s mother plays an important role in the story. In saving the daughter the mother replaces the traditional male hero.

The mother is incredibly brave she described to have “outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates”, not only is she strong physically but she is very wise, initially worried about her daughter’s decision to marry the Marquis, asking her daughter “are you sure you love him,”. The mother makes note that marriage and love are not analogous, by asking the daughter is she loves the Marquis, perhaps the mother is aware that love is an equal power sphere, where both must love for it to exist, whereas marriage is domain where the man is in control.

The Marquis is murdered with the heroine’s “father’s gun”, in using this weapon, a phallic symbol of violence, she gives the mother the opportunity to empower herself, and placing her in position where she can defend herself against the men.
“And the line, of course, was dead”

- Carter, criticises the institution of marriage which Mary Wollstonecraft described as ‘legalised prostitution’, the heroine is objectified in society passed straight from her parents to her husband,

- After the heroine discovers the chamber she rushes to the phone to reach her mother but “the line, of course, was dead”. Carter uses humour, the educated Gothic reader might find the comment humorous as this is typical in the gothic tradition. (Think about your favourite horror films.)
Mirrors, mirrors on the wall

- The bedroom is filled with mirrors, which allows the Marquis to watch himself make love to the heroine, accentuating his perverse nature.
- The mirrors are entrapping and whilst she sees more of everything, it becomes claustrophobic because she cannot escape the Marquis and his desires because they are being reflected in every mirror.
- The mirrors also provide the heroine an opportunity to look at herself. The heroine struggles with her identity “she was seventeen and knew nothing of the world”, and so she doesn’t really know who or what she is. The mirrors force her to take a look at herself, when she finally recognises a “capacity for corruption”. This has two meanings, the heroine takes it to mean a sexual corruption. She feels it is corrupting for her to desire sex, men are not the only ones driven by their libido. From the Marquis’ point of view the corruption is based on the corruptibility of the flesh by torture and death.

http://aqalitb.wordpress.com/
This is a story all about how my life got twisted upside down.

- Carter allows the heroine to tell her own story, which is significant because she gives the heroine the power of voice.
- The heroine begins the narrative in retrospect which is quite common in gothic texts, it distances the reader from the horrors that she faced, but it also presents us two versions of the heroine. The heroine telling the story and the heroine within the action of the story.

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“Her dead lips smiled”

- The Bloody Chamber itself is a disturbing room, the girl enters the chamber to “absolute darkness”, darkness is used to conceal the Marquis’ sinister sins. The horrors that are hidden within cause the walls to “[sweat] with fright”.

- Surrounding the heroine are “instruments of mutilations” words such as “mutilation” and “annihilation” reveal that the room serves a single purpose.

- The most shocking thing about the room is the fact that she sees his ex wife in the room and “her dead lips smiled”. What is particularly frightening is that she was so complicit to serve his submissive desires to the point of death.

- The Bloody Chamber could also be a metaphor for the woman’s womb, perhaps Carter is insinuating that women have lost control of their identities and their sexuality. Men have taken control of the identity of women by labelling them, ‘whore’, ‘angel’ etc. This is reflected in The Bloody Chamber where the Marquis has literally taken control of their identities, they are no longer women but corrupted flesh, that are mementos of the Marquis’ sordid act.
The Piano Player

- The piano player is a very effeminate character, he is unable to protect her from the Marquis, who states that he will “deal with him later”, unlike the mother. He provides the girl with a emotional support, but in the situation, he is pretty much useless.

- He is important for what he symbolises he cannot see her and is therefore unable to subject the heroine to the ‘male gaze’, he provides her with a relationship where they can be equal.

- The heroine’s head is marked with the red mark which perhaps is symbolic of the stigma attached to women when they explore their sexuality, and are no longer pure (a virgin). The piano player comes to symbolise one of the few men that will actually have relationship with a ‘marked’ woman.
“ceased to be her child in becoming his wife.”
“her mother had outfaced a junkful of Chinese pirates.”
“like one of those cobra-headed, funereal lilies ... Tensely yielding to the touch as vellum.”
“opals are bad luck”
“I was seventeen and new nothing of the world”
“like an extraordinarily precious slit throat.”
“eye of the connoseisur”
“so many mirrors”
“more white lilies than i’d ever seen before”
“leaves of an artichoke”, “bare as a lamb chop”
“closed my leg like a book”
“missals,” “sacredotal” and “incense”
“my little nun”

“Have the nasty pictures scared baby?”
“A dozen husbands impaled a dozen brides”
“one sided struggle”
“promise of debauchery only a connoisseur could detect”
“Rather, the key to my enfer”
“A long, a winding corridor, as if I were in the viscera of the castle”
“There is a striking resemblance between the act of love and the ministrations of a torturer.”
“Absolute darkness”
“She had inherited nerves and will from the mother”
“the walls stark torture chamber ... were sweating with fright.”
“instruments of mutilations”
"I had sold myself to this fate"

"And the line, of course, was dead"

"I had another fate"

"I only did what he knew I would"

"Give it me back, you whore"

"father’s gun"

"and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband’s head."

"Into marriage; into exile"