


# Ritchie and Carter's beauties and beasts

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Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Angela Carter both recreated the classic tale *Beauty and the Beast*. This article analyses these recreated tales using the new historicist and feminist theories. The analysis allows for a discussion of how each tale conforms to and/or contrasts with expected gender roles. Thackeray and Carter reflect particular ideas about gender within their tales. Writing in the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively, the women published within particularly patriarchal social contexts – Ritchie slightly more so than Carter. The limiting social contexts allowed for minimal, if any, diversion from the status quo of expected gender behaviours. These social contexts impacted on the writers of these centuries and their texts. However, writers such as Thackeray and Carter did not simply accept the patriarchal expectations thrust upon men and women but actively commented against them within their tales. These women writers developed tales that were commentaries on the gender expectations of their social contexts. Although both of these centuries were saturated with patriarchal ideas encouraging particular rigid behaviours for men and women, Thackeray and Carter sought to recreate these limiting gender expectations through publishing dynamic tales. Each writer includes characters and relationships in their tales, which are alternatives to their societies' patriarchal expectations of men and women. By creating new narratives into their *Beauty and the Beast* tales, these women writers both question and critique patriarchal rule and provide alternatives to it.

**Keywords:** Anne Thackeray Ritchie; Angela Carter; fairy tale remake; feminist fairy tales; new historicism; feminism; fairy tale gender roles; fairy tale character analysis.

## Introduction

The genre of fairy tales has a rich history, stemming back centuries. Originally shared as adult entertainment, the genre soon became literature for young readers. These tales are seen as innocent and unalterable constructs. Zipes (1987:107) discusses how many tales have become 'classical' and are common knowledge. These tales, Zipes says, become so embedded in society that it is easily believed that they have always been around; they undergo 'mythicization' (Zipes 1987:107). Unquestionably accepted by society, these tales impact on the reader as they suggest ideal behaviours for him or her.

Original, classic tales – those written by Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers – typically reflect patriarchal expectations and exhibit male and female characters in gendered ways (Erum 2009:1). Males are reflected as virile, powerful characters who are in charge of their circumstances. Moreover, they often set out on heroic quests to rescue beautiful, hopeless maidens (Talairach-Vielmas 2010). On the contrary, females are defined by 'formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, [and] compliancy' (Eagleton 2003:155). Zipes's idea that these tales have become myths enforces that the gendered, patriarchal ideas of these tales have become mythicised as well. The reader thinks of these tales and their shared messages of gender as ordinary and typical and then rejects literature that does not fit within this idea of normalcy.

In more recent times, the 'classic' tales have been recreated and restructured to incorporate new, diverse stories and characters. The writers who do this are specifically interested in reworking the 'classics' and reflecting their own take on the tales. This has become a popular phenomenon amongst feminist writers, who create tales introducing more fluid characters, relationships and events. The problem with new and different tales is that they do not fit within the mould cast by these classic tales and so they face a struggle to be accepted. Zipes (1987:107) captures this idea best: 'We [society] shun the new, the real innovations', making it increasingly difficult for innovative, radical tales to influence society. The innovative tales have become more and more apparent in modern times. The stereotypes imbedded in classic tales have long been surpassed

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and replaced (Fernández 2018/2019:31), as women in these new tales are strong willed, active and decisive.

Fernández (2018/2019:31) suggests the writing of tales conveying more feminist ideas developed immensely after World War II. Zipes (2000:xxxi) highlights that during this time 'Other feminist writers began publishing collections of feminist fairy tales or tales in which traditional sexuality was questioned'. Feminist fairy tale writers aim to recreate texts that represent typically gendered messages, as they seek to create alternatives to them. Creating a new, often contrasting, narrative to that which is already so popular in the literary world is not an easy task, and those feminist writers who have committed to doing this over the years have been faced with various challenges as well as victories.

This is because the author is always writing and recreating within a particular social context with its own ideas of gender expectations and equality. Consequently, the gender ideas of society impact the content of literature published within that society. Herein lies the focus of this article to analyse the 'Beauty' characters by two well-known feminist fairy-tale writers (or re-writers) – Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Angela Carter – and discuss the influence in the contexts in which they wrote may have played on their tales and heroines. Writing in different centuries, the tales were constructed in different social structures and were influenced by different social contexts.

This article provides a comparative analysis of Ritchie's *Beauty and the Beast* and Carter's *The Tiger's Bride*. It discusses how each tale maintains or contradicts the gender expectations of its social context and background, with the characterisation of its female heroine. The analysis of the 'Beauty' character from each tale will aid in understanding how feminist remakes of tales developed over the 19th and 20th centuries.

## Theoretical approach: New historicism and feminism

The basic framework of New Historicist thinking is the idea that a piece of literature is imbedded in a larger framework of society, politics and economy. The contents of a text are identified as only one side of a coin (Sharma 2014:2), and analysis that focuses only on this is seen as ignoring a large amount the text's true meaning. The theory considers that 'a literary work should be considered a product of its time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation of genius' (Sharma 2014:2). It is essential to understand the context from which a text comes if one is to provide a thorough analysis or gain a proper understanding of it.

Perhaps Greenblatt (1980) elucidates the best:

Language, like other sign systems, is a collective construction; our interpretive task must be to grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investigating both the social

presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text. (p. 5)

Moreover, literature is created by and helps create the era and society in which it is written. These two aspects – language and society – encompass a reciprocal relationship, each one influencing, adapting and altering the other; specific to this research is the reciprocal influence between literature and society. Greenblatt identifies that literature has three major purposes. The first is 'a manifestation of the concrete behaviour of its particular author' (Greenblatt 2005:4). Any piece of writing must be understood as a product from its author. The text is fashioned using a particular language, themes and social relationships understood and accepted by the author. Secondly, literature must be understood as 'the expression of the codes by which behaviour is shaped' within a society (Greenblatt 2005:4). Therefore, it is important to understand any piece of literature as including language, themes and social relationships expected and enforced by the society in which it is written. Thirdly, a text is seen 'as a reflection upon those codes' (Greenblatt 2005:4). Here, according to Greenblatt, a piece of literature cannot be seen as a simple replication of society's social 'codes'. Rather, any text is a careful, contemplated creation through which authors aim to send across particular messages to their audience. This means that a text can either continue the status quo of these 'codes' through embodying messages that coincide with society's, or it could counter these 'codes' and create alternatives to them. Ultimately, this means that the true understanding of a piece of literature can only be found through a dual investigation into the text itself together with its societal backdrop.

Amalgamating 'new historicism' with 'feminism' allows for a focus on the gender constructions evident within time eras, and how these ideas of gender make their way into the tales published. Feminist literary criticism aims to analyse literature for gendered and patriarchal messages. Leaning on the theories of a number of feminist writers, the literary criticism analyses the characters, relationships and gendered messages portrayed by a piece of literature. This determines whether, or to what degree, the text conveys patriarchal ideas and gendered expectations. The theories of Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler will be the key focus of this study and will be used to analyse Ritchie and Carter's tales.

Feminist Gayle Rubin's theory that each society has a sex/gender system is an essential concept. Although useful to the analysis of the two tales depicted in this article, the theory but would not be suited to the analysis of fluid texts that have been adapted and shared orally for years. She describes this system as 'the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity' (Rubin 2004:771). The sex and/or gender system evident within a social context, according to new historicism, will influence the ideas of gender that appear within literature from that context. Hence, in order to thoroughly analyse the gender ideas in these two *Beauty and*

*the Beast* recreations, an understanding of their societies' sex/gender systems is necessary.

Butler states that 'woman' does not necessarily exist, but rather people construct 'woman' through a number of gender performances. Important to her theory is the understanding that it is the actions of people that create gender identities rather than the gender identities that create the actions of people. In other words, the way people communicate and behave creates and continues gender expectations. More than just developing from behaviour, Butler states that language is also a performative act, stating that gender can be performed 'through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign' (Butler 1992:519). Language plays an integral part in gender performativity as 'there is no gender identity that precedes language' (Salih 2006:56); language and the words used in communication create particular gendered identities such as a masculine man or a feminine woman. Butler explains that language is neither a constant nor objective reality. Instead, its many rules have been created by and are learned by society, only to create the misleading understanding that using language in certain ways, which often continue patriarchal ideals, is normal. This means that 'gender itself is naturalized through grammatical norms' (Butler: 2002:xix), and that language plays a large role in limiting the possible performances of men and women.

The study analyses the tales by Ritchie and Carter, discussing the characters' behaviours and relationships in order to determine the gendered ideas of each tale. Moreover, through discussing the social context, an understanding of how the sex/gender system of a particular social era influences the literature published within it is also achieved.

## The 19th century: A period of patriarchal rule

The Victorian era in England, in which Thackeray wrote, encouraged strong differences between the socially defined roles of men and women. Hughes (2014a) maintains that this century created more rigid gender expectations than any other time in history. During the beginning of the first wave of feminism, the 19th century's ideas of men and women as distinctly different from one another and representative of 'separate spheres' of society were rooted in understanding the natural differences between men and women (Hughes 2014a). According to societal rules, women were best suited for domestics and child rearing (Sagarra 2009:407) and men for the economic and political life. This subordination of the female saw many women kept within the confines of their homes. Women were definitely seen as unequal to, and less capable than, men; Paradiz (2005) stresses the lack of autonomy and lower ranking of women in this century.

The limited expectations for women also meant they were provided a different education from men. Boarding schools, or very commonly governesses, would educate young girls in certain 'accomplishments' – such as music, art, dancing,

poetry, et cetera – with the specific intent of attracting the attention of a husband (Hughes 2014b). For women, these qualities were held much higher than education.

In fact, 19th-century accomplished writer Austen (2008)'s novel *Pride and Prejudice*, first published in 1813, highlights the importance of a well-educated girl remaining graceful and feminine. Meanwhile, it was considered worrying for women to go out looking for a husband. Rather, a woman was to remain passive and chaste, and in these ways, she would capture the attention of a man.

Marriage was encouraged throughout the century. It was deemed essential for a woman to marry, becoming dependent on a man who would support her financially. Although women could find employment, the poor working conditions, low wages and the negative stigma behind working women discouraged this (Smith-Rosenberg 1985:13). Women were given very little choice but to marry, becoming the domestic support for their husbands.

This gendered way of thinking began to be changed by feminist thinkers in the mid- to late-19th century. The women's movement in this century saw the beginning of 'women's strivings to improve their status in and usefulness to society' and their objectives were 'to initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to initiate struggles for civil rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot' (Cott 1987:3). Although feminism as it is known today, only began to develop in the 20th century, the 19th century began the narrative for and towards gender equality.

The 19th century saw a number of female writers recreating the classic tale *Beauty and the Beast*. Although Victorian women writers created dynamic tales as alternatives to the era's rigid patriarchal ideals, their tales can be defined as 'socially acceptable feminism' (Talairach-Vielmas 2010:275). The tales created in this era did not completely contrast patriarchal ideas and expectations but simultaneously upheld and challenged these gender roles. Created in the early years of feminist thought, the remakes include hints at women empowerment and freedom; however, they can be viewed as less refractory than the feminist tales of more modern times. Writers were limited by the Victorian societal structure and what was deemed acceptable behaviour for men and women.

Moreover, the patriarchal society enforced strict gender roles by referencing the natural differences between men and women. De Beauvoir (2011:26) commented that the patriarchal society used the biological differences between men and women as justification for the subordination of women. The patriarchal society's commentary on the natural differences, in size and physical make-up, between men and women, created the idea that the genders were naturally predisposed to behave in certain ways. Patriarchal rule saw 'man' as superior, better or at the very least: the norm, whereas it saw women as inferior and less capable than men

(De Beauvoir 2011:26). This led to a strict distinction between the types of work men and women could perform.

Although she wrote a century later, Luce Irigaray's theory is an important inclusion in this discussion. She highlights that the women have always been considered inferior to men and she states that 'female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters' (Irigaray 1985a:23). Irigaray (1985b) goes further and states that the very act of male domination is only based on female suppression, and this suppression creates boundaries, limiting women's ability to seek equality, independence and true freedom. Moulded by the patriarchal expectations of their society, it becomes difficult for writers to step out of this thought process and into an alternative perspective. This is what was experienced by early Victorian writers as their society heavily encouraged gendered behaviours. Friedan (1963:31) calls these restrictions on women's behaviours the 'chains' of patriarchy, which forced women into expected, gendered positions. The intensity at which patriarchal expectations were thrust upon 19th-century societies provided little to no freedom for women to step out of the expected roles. The result is a collection of tales that began a new narrative on gender roles and freedom but do not completely redefine and contrast societal expectations. This is evidenced in Ritchie's *Beauty and the Beast*.

## Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837–1919)

Ritchie published a total of nine tales between 1866 and 1874. These tales were later organised into two collections: *Five Old Friends and a Young Prince* (1868) and *Bluebeard's Keys and Other Stories* (1874).

Ritchie's *Beauty and the Beast* is found in her first collection of tales. The story is placed within a larger narrative. The narrator, Miss Williamson, shares the tales of the five women. Moreover, Miss Williamson provides an interesting commentary on the tales, becoming Ritchie's voice and allowing an analysis of each tale within the collection. Miss Williamson and her friend, H, theorise on the popularity of fairy tales. Miss Williamson wonders how the tales outlasted tales of common people, and H maintains that fairy tales are so popular and have lasted many years because the stories are derived from the lives of real people and their experiences. The tales convert these simplistic, mundane stories into ones filled with fairies, magic, princes and princesses. Ness (2017a) states that Ritchie created her tales from her fascination and love of the stories. Through writing her tales in common settings with real people, Ritchie aimed to encourage readers to believe that happy endings were not only for the princes and princesses of fairy tale realms, but that happiness could also be achieved by everyday people.

*Beauty and the Beast* tells the story of a young heroine, Belinda – also called Belle – who must move to live with Guy Griffiths and his mother to fulfil a debt Belinda's father owes Mr Griffiths. Belinda moves in with Guy and his mother, with the understanding that she will keep Guy's mother company and

assist him in looking after her. Belinda and Guy spend some time talking and getting to know each other. Guy has liked Belinda for quite some time and asks her to marry him. Belinda, however, is not interested in a relationship with Guy and says she will only marry him if he requires her to, but she will not do so if left to her choice. Belinda receives permission from Guy to visit her family and the pair agree that she will return in a week. Unfortunately, when she is home, Belinda's family sneakily persuades her to stay. Her sisters are envious of Belinda's possessions and finances she receives when she is with Guy, and they encourage her to stay home.

The speaker, H, travels to Belinda and informs her that Guy is distraught without her. Belinda even has a dream in which Guy dies and she rushes to his rescue. Belinda discovers Guy prostrate in the garden and wakes him. When she sees him, she suddenly no longer sees him as 'ugly' or 'unlovable' (Ritchie 1868:150).

## The 20th century: A period of social change

Living within 20th century Britain, Carter wrote during the second-wave Feminist movement. The century included significant wins for the female liberation movement as numerous changes occurred both in the public and private spheres. Previously, the 19th century fought for women's rights to vote and be educated (Whelehan 1995). The second wave fought for equality amongst genders. Moreover, powerfully influential feminists such as De Beauvoir, Friedan, Irigaray as well as Virginia Woolf wrote during this time. Literature published by 20th century women was, hence, female-empowering and sought for women to be seen as equals to men. This is highlighted by Gilman (1914), a prominent, feminist writer of the 20th century, who referred to herself in this way: 'Here she comes, running, out of prison and off the pedestal; chains off, crown off, halo off, just a live woman'. Her description paints the picture of an empowered 20th-century woman, finally breaking the disempowering grasp of masculine domination and feminine oppression. The century made for a dynamic setting in which the social position of women was being questioned, allowing narratives to take on this stance stronger than ever before. Carter definitely appropriated the narrative that was being shared by other female writers and included it into her collection of modern tales.

## Angela Carter (1940–1992)

Of all the female authors constructing remakes of tales, Carter is one of the most recognised and celebrated by female scholars. Her collection of tales, *The Bloody Chamber*, was published in 1979 and includes a number of short fiction tales. Carter's gothic, magic-filled tales introduce interesting themes and reversed gender roles. In creating these new tales, De Silva (2004:1) states that 'Carter's specific goals are to update, twist, and demythologise the classic fairy tales from a feminist perspective'. As with Zipes (1987:107), Carter maintained that classic tales have become myths and

this means that they – and the messages and ideals they convey – are accepted into society.

Furthermore, her feminist retellings have been described as ‘putting new wine in old bottles until the pressure of new wine makes the old bottles explode’ (Kérchy 2011:xvi). Carter’s tales are so dynamic and contrary to traditional tales, that when she writes her tales using the basic outline of traditional ones, her new characters, setting and relationships overwrite the traditional stories. Carter aims to contrast typical masculine and feminine ideals in classic tales and creates dynamic male and female characters. Her tales are, hence, powerful remakes that overcome the restrictive nature of classic tales.

Whether Carter read Ritchie’s collections of tales or not is unknown, however, Barzilai (2008:106) highlights the likelihood that Carter did read them. Given her expertise in fairy tale literature, it is quite possible that Carter may have read and been somewhat influenced by Ritchie’s tales.

Angela Carter penned two *Beauty and the Beast*-themed tales in her collection: *The Bloody Chamber*. The first of these – *The Courtship of Mr Lyon* – is a tamer version of the tale. Carter is subtler with her feminist innuendos, and the tale follows the typical structure of the ‘classic’ tale closely. However, the focus of this study is her other tale: *The Tiger’s Bride*.

*The Tiger’s Bride* tells the story of Beauty, a young woman whose father gambles her away to a Beast. Beauty is visibly angered by her father’s disregard for her, but she goes with the Beast. Arriving at the Beast’s secluded castle, Beauty is taken to Beast’s room where his valet tells her the Beast wishes to see her unclothed. Beauty requests her face be covered and she must be in a dark room if the Beast wishes to ‘visit’ her (Carter 2006:65). Beast is hurt by this and sends her away. After spending some time in the castle and meeting a few more of the workers, Beauty makes her way to the Beast’s room again, undressed and alone. She enters and stretches out her hand to the Beast and coming nearer, he begins to purr. The purr is so loud that the windows break and walls shake around them. He begins to lick her hand and as he does, she feels her skin rip off, revealing fur – and her transformation takes place.

## The beauties: Physical appearances

Ritchie’s beauty is named Belinda, described as a ‘silly name’ (Ritchie 1868:90), even though Belinda is derived from the Italian term *Bella*, which means beautiful. Nonetheless her name cannot be discounted as a significant reference to her physical beauty, suggesting that Thackeray is unable to completely separate her character from the pressures of the male gaze and the requisite beauty of a female protagonist as this description indicates: ‘Belinda smiled a delightful fresh, sweet, tender smile, like sunshine falling on a fair landscape’ (Ritchie 1868:94).

Moreover, Belinda’s looks are what seem to attract men, like Mr Griffiths, to her. Initially describing her to Miss Williamson, Mr Griffiths says: ‘I never saw such a sweet, young creature’ (Ritchie 1868:85).

On the contrary, Carter does not leave her heroine nameless, and Laskosky (2015:35–36) argues that this allows the character her own identity. Carter also rejects the patriarchal notion suggested in Ritchie’s text: that female is beauty. Carter’s heroine describes herself in less than desirable ways: ‘haggard ... pale’ (Carter 2006:66), ‘frail little article of human upholstrey’ (Carter 2006:72) and ‘pale, hollow-eyed girl’ (Carter 2006:73). However, this is not the way she is seen by those around her. In fact, the young woman reflects on how, as a little girl, she was referred to as ‘the pretty one, with the glossy, nut-brown curls, and rosy cheeks’ (Carter 2006:57). Her nanny also compared her to a rose in her younger years. Within the text, Carter creates a patriarchal society that values beauty and depends on it for a happy marriage to a handsome man (Laskosky 2015:36). The nursemaids’ story of ‘the waggoner’s lass, hare-lipped, squint-eyed, ugly as sin, who would have taken her?’ (Carter 2006:62) highlights the importance the society places on beauty and outward appearance. Throughout the tale, the young woman also makes mention of how her society places her in a position lesser than men. She sees herself objectified and given little value beyond outward appearance and what she can give to a man – namely, her virginity.

## The beauties: Conforming to or contradicting patriarchy

Ritchie’s text often refers to ‘poor Belle’ (Ritchie 1868:89, 91, 126, 128, 133 & 139), and she is often described as a helpless maiden. In this way, Belle is depicted similarly to the expected fairy tale women – as a helpless maiden. The damsel in distress is commonly included in classic tales. These women wait patiently for a man to rescue them from their devastating lives. However, Ritchie’s descriptions of Belle as hopeless and helpless seem ironically included. This is because Belle’s character is decidedly strong and has independent thought. In describing her in this helpless manner, and ironically so, Ritchie is able to emphasise the ridiculous idea of a pathetic woman helpless without a male to save her. In doing so, she critiques this expectation and continues to do so by creating Belle as a much more powerful, independent and active protagonist than other women around her.

Belle’s resilience shows in her reaction to her father losing his wealth and her family moving to a cottage in the forest. Unfortunately, the cottage looks more tragic than even Belle expected and so it ‘required all her courage and natural brightness of spirit to go on looking at the bright side of things’ (Carter 2006:100). Describing Belle as courageous is something unexpected of 19th-century custom. Frevert (2011) highlights ‘the nineteenth-century notion of women as weak, powerless human beings’ with limited control over their lives. Therefore, Belle’s characterisation as a strong, young woman contrasts with patriarchal society’s expectations of

the weak, hysterical female. She can be likened to other contemporary, brave 19th-century characters, such as Gretel with her empowering leadership, Schwesterchen with her immense courage and Cinderella with her emboldened rebellion.

However, not all girls and women behaved in the ways expected by patriarchy. The 19th century saw the reign of a powerful woman: Queen Victoria, whose ruling developed Great Britain into 'a worldwide empire' (Royal.UK n.d.) – emphasising its wide, powerful reach. Like this powerful ruler, Ritchie's resilient, courageous Belle emphasises that women need not be confined to patriarchal submissiveness and passivity.

Ritchie's Belle behaves in ways that oppose the female characters around her, and she is presented as more determined and powerful than her father. As a result, Belle is reprimanded several times for her 'unacceptable' behaviour in the family's time of turmoil. When Belle decides to clean her father's room and sews new curtains for the place, Anna is repulsed and exclaims that Belle has forgotten herself stating that these actions reveal Belle's happiness for her father's failure. Belle's fortitude differs from the attitude and behaviour exhibited by her sisters and, presumably, other young women of her era and so she is scolded. When her father sees his room, he is ashamed that Belle has worked to create something beautiful for him, exclaiming that she should not be 'brought to this' servant position (Ritchie 1868:102). Judith Butler suggests that in patriarchal social contexts, individuals who behave outside of gendered expectations are ridiculed or punished, in order to maintain patriarchal power and control. This discourages the behaviour incompatible with patriarchal demands and therefore continues sexist domination over society. Although the tale was written before Butler's time, the behaviours of Belle's sisters and father are representative of this idea, as these characters attempt to discourage Belle from behaving outside of social expectations.

However, an empowered Belle does not simply allow the reprimands to dissuade her. Although chastised, Belle does not relent or passively retreat and apologise for her 'incorrect' conduct. Instead, she laughs and gracefully explains her actions to Anna and does not allow herself to respond in anger. Here, Belle shows her intellectual maturity and that ability to act rationally and not simply based on emotions.

It was expected of women in the 19th century to behave emotionally and be incapable of controlling their feelings. Burki (1975:197) discusses that women were seen as capable of 'less emotional control' than men because of their lighter brains and weaker intellect. In this way, Thackeray introduces a character that contradicts her 19th century's expectations of women and, in doing so, comments on women's true capabilities and strength.

Contrasting this, the picture created of Belle, with 'her sleeves tucked up, and her dress carefully pinned out of the dust' and 'hammer in hand' (Ritchie 1868:99) echoes the message

commonly shared in 19th-century conduct books. In one such conduct manual by Mrs Ellis (1842:47), women were encouraged to 'avoid the evils arising from the entire disuse of the female hand'.

Sewing new curtains for her father and cleaning his previously dishevelled room is an opportunity for Belle to perform domestic tasks and become a typical Victorian woman. Moreover, she is disinterested in financial affairs and says that anything would be better than talking about money (Ritchie 1868:91). Belle's disinterest in economics and delight in domestic simplicity align her with gendered ideals of upper-class women. The Victorian era taught that women remain domestically feminine and enshrined in their class positions. Those women of the upper class, to which Belle initially belonged, were expected to appear as 'ornamental, leisured, and expensive' (Loeb 1994:20). Expressing vanity or selfishness was considered unladylike, and these characteristics were discouraged. Rather, a woman was to be composed and must follow the rules of correct Victorian etiquette.

Carter's young heroine expresses a similar, more intense, courage and power compared to Ritchie's Belle. Her heroine also lives within a socially gendered society; however, the young woman's response to her society differs from Belle's. Carter's heroine is wise and has a good understanding of her gendered position in society. The metaphor she uses, which compares her body to an object which can be traded: 'For now my skin was my sole capital in the world and today I'd make my first investment' (Carter 2006:62), highlights her awareness of her inferior position. Furthermore, the young woman notices that:

I was a young girl, a virgin, and therefore men denied me rationality just as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all their unreason. (Carter 2006:70)

She shows the importance her virginity has within the patriarchal society and sheds light on the patriarchal idea that women are seen as worth no more than commodities.

Laskosky (2015:3–4) argues that men typically are seen as having reason and so are given the ability to think logically. Plumwood (1993:19) agrees and argues that as rationality is given to the dominant group (men), this allows them to determine what has value and what does not. This leads to patriarchal ideas and concepts, which emphasise that women must be placed in the category of 'other'. Women are not seen as having the potential to be rational and thus are placed within the same category as animals or non-humans. One is either a man and seen as rational or not a man and placed into what ecofeminists call the 'nature' category (Miles 2018). Ecofeminists question how patriarchal norms encourage the submissive treatment of nature and the feminine (Miles 2018). Carter (2006)'s heroine is aware of the binary: rational (men) vs irrational (women and non-human) and clearly recognises that she is placed within the same category as animals:

[T]he six of us ... could boast amongst us not one soul ... since all the best religions in the world state categorically that not beasts nor women were equipped with the flimsy, insubstantial things. (p. 70)

Here, she identifies one similarity between herself and Beast – they are both chastised by society. Placed within the same category, Beauty begins to feel closer to Beast now than she ever has been to a man.

Carter creates a character that is strongly opposed to being categorised as lesser because of a perceived lack of rationality. However, the irony is that Beauty does not lack rationality and logic. She is intelligent and perceptive enough to realise her worth in society and is not afraid to share her dislike. She contemplates the ‘clockwork girl’ (Carter 2006:70) who lives in Beast’s palace, which resembles a young girl, like herself. She compares herself to this doll – strengthening the idea that the females are placed in the same societal categories as non-human objects. The young woman notices that she is made for similar reasons to the doll: to follow an ‘imitative life’, gazed at and manipulated by men, to do what is expected (Carter 2006:70). This resembles Beauty’s wisdom and logic. By truthfully speaking of the social binary, which posts men above women, Carter discusses a topic often ignored by traditional tales. She criticises the gendered society in which she too lived: the 19th-century society that included patriarchal expectations for women, considering them to be of less value than men.

More than awareness, Beauty expresses her anger and frustration with the situation her father puts her in: ‘I watched with the furious cynicism peculiar to women whom circumstances force mutely to witness folly’ (Carter 2006:56). Her bitterness is uncommon with what is expected of women: acceptance and submissiveness. In contrast, Thackeray’s Belle, although nervous and fearful of Beast, willingly leaves her home to live with him. She expresses no frustration with her circumstance, unlike Carter’s female character who speaks her mind. Specifically, when she is presented with a white rose by Beast, she immediately destroys it: ripping each petal off the flower (Carter 2006:57–58). By destroying the rose, a symbolic object that makes an appearance in every *Beauty and the Beast* tale, the young woman separates herself from Ritchie’s Belle, as she outwardly illustrates her feelings against her situation.

Carter expresses distaste for the position of women within the patriarchal realm. Moreover, as her character contrasts the expectations of normative patriarchy, Carter counters the idea of what it means to be feminine. She creates a character who is unlike the beauties of past tales and, in doing this, questions the socially constructed regulation of women

## Relationships with beast

The 19th century did not condone a young woman living alone with a man out of wedlock. Hughes (2014a) discusses how young women were not allowed to speak to young men

alone, requiring that a married woman ought always to have been present. Staying true to these societal expectations, Ness (2017b) highlights that Thackeray does not condone the ideas of Beauty’s ‘kidnapping’ apparent in earlier tales. Beauty’s move to the manor is not solely for Guy’s benefit; Belle moves to the house as a companion for his mother and earns a small salary for doing so.

Creating a more ordinary reason for Belle’s move – to care for Guy’s mother – Thackeray avoids the troubling idea that Beauty is taken against her wishes to live with a dangerous beast. This is a true testament to Thackeray’s Victorian society’s social expectations and moral standings.

Talairach-Vielmas (2010) highlights how Belle is cherished like a commodity. Mr Griffiths compares her to the draperies, gold cups and other things around her in the room. Where these objects belong to him, Guy is not sure that Belle ever will. This interest in owning Belle objectifies the young woman. This ownership of the feminine by the masculine replicates Victorian relationship expectations. Tassel (1983:374) states that marriage ‘swallowed up a women’s independent identity’ as she became his. Guy wanting to own Belle is, therefore, a reference to Victorian, patriarchal expectations.

Belle, alternatively, does not want to be ‘had’ by Guy and rejects his plea to marry her. Belle is resolute in her decision and makes it clear that she does not want to marry Guy. The young woman exhibits will power and the strength to make her own decisions – characteristics not expected of patriarchal women. Finally, returning to the villa and seeing Guy again, Belle realises that she was wrong about him, no longer sees him as ‘ugly’ or ‘unlovable’ (Ritchie 1868:150), and she truly falls in love with him. Miss Williamson, the narrator, conveys an important message of the tale: ‘ugliness and dullness do not exist for those who truly love’ (Ritchie 1868:150). Hence, Belle’s acceptance of Guy’s physical appearance strengthens the love she has for him. These final scenes and the reflections of Miss Williamson share intriguing commentary on relationships.

Moore (2009:8) discusses the prevalence of arranged marriages in this Victorian era. However, she states that although these marriages were common, the beginning of the 1800s also saw the beginning of criticism towards them (Moore 2009:8). The idea of marrying for true love became more common. With a new narrative developing, which encouraged marrying for love, the writers also created tales based on romance and true love and, following the ideas of Greenblatt (2005), influenced society and other writers as well. Thackeray’s ending exhibits that true love is necessary for happiness and marriage. Although the reader does not see Belle and Guy marry, the reader still witnesses the happy couple, in love at the end of the tale. Belle has not been forced into a loveless, unwanted relationship and marriage, rather she is allowed to take her time to fall in love with Guy, and through getting to know him and learning his true nature, she eventually falls in love. By

creating this relationship between Belle and Guy, Thackeray lays comment on the importance of love for a marriage to be successful.

Discussing Carter's *Tiger's Bride*, Arikan (2016:122) maintains that the tale's title indicates the possession of the feminine. She is defined as his bride and belongs to him. She is not an independent character within the title but is one whose very existence relies on being married.

These expectations are inherent in a number of classic, traditional fairy tales, which champion marriage over all else, and, from the title, it seems Carter's *Tiger's Bride* will follow these characteristics. However, defined as 'bride' in the title of the tale, the heroine does not marry Beast nor become his bride. By avoiding the typically expected ending of tales, Carter rejects the expected fairy tale ending and societal norms, which depict marriage as the ultimate happiness. Her tale creates an alternative: one that sees the young woman transform into a character unaffected by patriarchal expectations.

Unlike Thackeray who normalises the relationship between Belle and Guy, Carter creates a more outlandish, shocking relationship between her heroine and Beast. Beauty's father gambles and loses her in a game of cards. His actions have led to his daughter being forced to have relations with a Beast. These are not her choices, and they are not the result of her independent actions, but Beauty is required to leave with Beast to pay her father's debt. Thackeray's Belle is provided a choice to go with Beast; her father unsuccessfully insists to take on the debt himself; however, Carter's character is given no such choice. Through this, a harsher picture is painted of the arrangement between her father and Beast.

Beauty condemns the act and is not in agreement with the arrangement. She does not believe that her father truly loves her if he is willing to give her away so easily: 'My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards' (Carter 2006:59). This reflects Beauty's true resentment for the trade and emphasises how it illustrates her father's indifferent attitude towards his daughter. Presenting this shocking trade between father and Beast highlights the outrageous act of arranged marriages, in which a young woman is handed from one man (her father) to another (her husband), only a possession to each of them. According to Beauty's description, her father's actions do not show his love for her, and, in this way, Carter brings to light the uncaring nature of the arranged marriage. If a woman rejects her new husband and is not content to live with him, then forcing her to do so against her will seems cruel and distasteful. By discussing the negative side of arranged marriages, Carter's message echoes that of Mary Wollstonecraft (1996:4) who advocated for marriage to become more 'sacred', as she emphasised that leaving the choice of who to marry to the man and woman would result in happier marriages for both the husband and wife.

Rubin's (2004) sex/gender system theory aids in understanding Carter's intentions here. Some marriages, Rubin states, are relationships in which an exchange takes place: an exchange between two men. What they are exchanging here is the woman. In this way, Rubin discusses how women are objectified in a number of marriage scenarios. The bartering of Beauty from her father to Beast resonates of this exchange. The passing of Beauty from one man to another seems unjust and unthinkable and, thus, highlights the ridiculous nature of expecting women to allow themselves to be passed from one man to another through marriage arrangements. Beauty's reluctance and fear of Beast replicate the reluctance of women forced into marriages and exchanged between men.

Like Thackeray, Carter also contrasts arranged or forced marriage; however, Carter does this in a much more aggressive way. She does this by presenting disturbing relationships and Beauty's questionable ideas that allude to the general status quo expected of women. Beauty is not powerless and submissive to her relationship with the beastly tiger throughout the tale. Beast's wish is to see the young woman unclothed standing in front of him, after which time she will be returned to her father. Beauty, however, counters the offer. She agrees to lift her skirt to her waist and Beast can have her just once. Through the ordeal, she demands that a sheet be laid over her upper body and face so that it is hidden from him. Her confrontational attitude and active denial of Beast's demands show the young woman's true independent spirit. As she has done previously, she does not just allow things to happen to her, but actively resists when she is unhappy. She is like Belle in her resistance towards Beast; however, Carter's heroine portrays a more confrontational approach in her resistance. By wanting her face covered, the young woman actively opposes the idea suggested by Beast and highlights her dissatisfaction with it. She will sleep with him but denies him any real connection with her. He cannot have her freely and willingly.

Although Beauty is forced to leave with Beast, he does not force her to shed her clothes for him: 'The tiger will not lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal' (Carter 2006:71). Instead, he decides that if she is involuntary in letting him see her without clothes, then she must see him naked (Carter 2006:71).

Similar to Thackeray, Carter allows her heroine to say whether she gives herself to Beast or not. Thankfully, the young woman is given this small justice, but she is put in a panic at the thought of seeing Beast. Once she does see him, Beauty decides to show herself as well. She goes back a second time, and, in their relations, she sheds her human skin and becomes a tiger, too. No longer is she an object used to satisfy the male gaze and be only a means of barter. She is freed from the patriarchal expectations placed on her gender by choosing to become a beast. Beast licks away her human skin and, in its place, hair grows; he helps her to liberate herself from societal ideals in becoming a beast. These last lines show the ultimate difference between



Carter's rendition and earlier tales. Beast does not change, but Beauty does. In this metamorphosis, she can recognise her true self (Atashi 2016) and transform into a beast. This heroine's transformation sheds light on both patriarchal human/animal dualism and undercuts the idea that women and animals are other. Through becoming an animal, the young woman challenges this dualism and provides an alternative to it.

The idea of equality in sexual transaction plays a major role in the tale, as the interaction with the young heroine and Beast introduces an equality. There is not one focus on masculine desires nor the male gaze. The young heroine is able to reject Beast's demands of seeing her unclothed and, instead, is able to witness his vulnerable state of nakedness. Moreover, Beast seems to fear the young woman (Carter 2006). In this way, she is empowered and not helpless to Beast's demands. In his anxious state, Beast shows himself to the young woman, and it is through his actions that she too shows herself to him and soon after sleeps with him (Makinen 2000:6). Their relationship is equal and allows both the young woman and Beast to make reciprocal decisions.

Within *The Tiger's Bride*, the young woman works towards finally expressing her sexuality when she lays with Beast. She initiates the sexual relationship with Beast by laying on the straw and reaching out to him. Makinen (2000:6) states that by realising her desires, they become part of her and so she becomes a Beast. This is an outward reflection of female sexual desires (Makinen 2000:6), which are no longer subverted but physically realised and outwardly expressed. Earlier centuries, especially Ritchie's 19th century, enforced that women remain submissive during the sexual act, performing it in a reluctant, perfunctory manner. If they were to express interest in sexual relations and were too forward whilst in the company of men, women's 'worrying sexual appetite' would be frowned upon (Hughes 2014a). Interest in marriage was to be centred on becoming a wife and mother, rather than sexual fulfilment and satisfaction. In fact, it was believed that 'the sexual act was associated by many wives only with a duty' (Degler 1974:1468) as women simply did not have the instinctual desire for it, as men did. Moreover, Klein (1946:56–57) suggests that 'it would have been not only scandalous to admit the existence of a strong sex urge in women, but it would have been contrary to all observation'. The belief that women lacked sexual desire was rooted into the ideas of the century.

Carter's young protagonist, however, is free to embrace her sexual desires. The young protagonist independently decides to do so and, through this, becomes an empowered woman by shedding her humanity. Through this tale, Carter counters and recreates the patriarchal limitations previously placed on female sexuality and the expectations of male/female gender roles in the bedroom.

Carter's heroine overcomes her 'nursery fears' (Carter 2006:74) of an aggressive tiger there to devour all young girls who do not behave as they are told. Thus, as a young girl, she was

frightened into 'good behaviour' (Carter 2006:61) by this story and grew into a typical, gendered young woman, who did what was expected of her and acted as a lady 'should'. When she sees Beast pacing in his chamber, she is reminded of the story she was told and, for a moment, her fear returns. However, the young heroine is able to overcome her hesitation and bravely gives herself to Beast. Warner (1955:275) states that *Beauty and the Beast* tales written by women 'place the male lover, the beast, in the position of the mysterious, threatening, possibly fatal unknown, and Beauty, the heroine, as the questor who discovers his true nature'. Therefore, the quest is that of the young woman, who courageously seeks Beast and, in doing so, is able to embrace the beast in herself as well. Carter gives her heroine the power, flipping typical, gendered roles. Finally, by overcoming her childhood fear of a beastly tiger, the one thought that forced submissive behaviour, she is able to become her own self and is freed of the societal expectations of her gender, as she sheds her humanity and rejects docile female expectations.

Carter's tale is dynamic, which allows her heroine to gain power and control over her situation. Dominick LaCapra (1983:26) discusses the strong relation between text and social structure, stating 'nothing is seen as being purely and simply inside or outside texts'. Moreover, what this means for the analysis of Carter's tale is that the text does not simply project a powerful female character, breaking the boundaries of control, but the tale reflects specific, developing ideas of the late 20th century. As nothing can remain solely inside, or outside, of a text, a piece of literature, such as this tale, is a representation of its social context. By creating this powerful female character, Carter replicates and furthers the discussions already taking place in her own society and establishes them further.

The late 20th century saw an increase in feminist thought and female empowerment. The rise of second-wave feminism encouraged the shattering of gendered expectations and an increase of female empowerment. Carter's collection of fairy tales, more specifically her *Tiger's Bride*, presents this feminist viewpoint. Karjalainen (2010:8) adds that Carter creates alternatives that 'do not simply reify patriarchal versions of 'women' but rather such that question and undermine essentialist views of males and females'. Carter challenges the ideas of patriarchy and gendered expectations through the heroine of her tale. Beauty's metamorphosis into a Beast not only allows her to shed the patriarchal expectations of her character but also allows Carter to boldly present an alternative and opposition to patriarchal rule.

## Conclusion

There is a significant change from Thackeray's Belle and Carter's heroine. The social context in which Thackeray wrote created a new narrative that questioned gender expectations. The society, however, was still heavily confined by gendered ideas and expectations. This discouraged extremist, radical theories of female empowerment and

gender equality, providing little possibility for feminist thought. Thackeray's tale, although a contrast to the typical status quo of the gendered Victorian era, is subtle in its critiques and contradictions. Belle lives in a gendered, controlling society, shunned by her father and sisters and is constantly chastised for acting beyond feminine expectations. However, Belle's resilient spirit and ability to make her own decisions about moving in with Guy, and falling in love with him, encourage independent thought in women: something the patriarchal, gendered Victorian era disagreed with, for the most part.

Whereas the 1800s saw only the introduction of feminist thought, the 1900s, especially the second half, saw the development of much stronger ideas of gender equality. The second wave of feminism strengthened the narrative of female empowerment. As the social context was more forceful and vocal in its critique of patriarchal rule than previous centuries, literature in this era also took on this powerful voice. Carter's tale resembles the anger and frustration experienced by many women who felt controlled and devalued by patriarchal ideas and social structures. By confronting the tiger that aims to objectify her, and powerfully shedding her humanity, Carter's heroine confronts the boundaries set to limit her. Her heroine is empowered, more than Thackeray's Belle, in that she is aware of her position within her gendered social context. Furthermore, she does not simply accept this position but actively reflects on her annoyance with the system. She behaves in ways that show her frustration and anger towards her position and situation with Beast and in society. Creating such a powerful, rational and active heroine, Carter is able to confront patriarchal ideas head-on. She directly addresses gender inequality and expectations and critiques them through her heroine. The final scene of the heroine becoming a Beast herself and Beast that expresses his fear of her is a piece of elaborate imagery that places the young woman in a powerful, controlling position and completely reverses the gender roles expected of patriarchy.

Clearly, the century difference between these tales included a number of feminist developments and thoughts. These developments created not only a more diverse 20th century but also allowed for literature to take on a more diverse approach to gender. Carter's tale is an example of these developments and represents the change in gender ideas between the 18th and 19th centuries.

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