

A Potentiality for Corruption: On the Pornographic Descriptions in Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber"



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The publication of Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" has added fuel to the series of debates on whether it is appropriate to expose women to pornographic contents that feature male dominance. The explicitly pornographic descriptions Carter has applied in her work position her as a supporter of women's right to experience pleasure from sadomasochistic sex. Meanwhile, this paper intends to interpret the bloody corpses inside the secret chamber as Carter's warning against falling into the traps of male dominance, which may be disguised as pleasure. It has a potentiality for corruption to female sexuality as it teaches them to centre their pleasure around male dominance. This paper also addresses the seemingly happy but sexless ending and consider it as Carter's efforts to alert her readers of the dangerous power relations in the patriarchal society that groom women to base their sexual desires on the domination of male gaze, which are capable of corrupting the female sexuality and hinder them from achieving a more equal relationship. This paper argues that although Carter's novella seems radical with its rich pornographic descriptions from a female perspective, it still possesses a somehow conservative feature as it intends to educate women of what the correct or healthy sexuality is supposed to be. To support its arguments, the paper intends to examine the advocacies of the pro-pornography and antipornography movements and apply feminist psychoanalytical theories on male gaze, sadomasochism, and castration to a close analysis of the text.

Biography:

Yitong Liu (uclziuu@ucl.ac.uk), currently a PhD candidate of English Literature at Shanghai International Studies University; obtained MA on Comparative Literature at University College London. Research interest lies in the Female Gothic and feminist psychoanalysis. Previous research includes literary studies on witches and witchcraft and modern and contemporary Bluebeard adaptations. Publications include "Belief, Life and Perception: A Study on Witchcraft in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama" as primary and corresponding author (IJHASS, vol. 2, no. 2); "Space and Romance: A Study of Feminist Position in Miss Sophia's Diary and Sealed Off" as second author (Paper ID: SSPHE48575).