

Words which are ‘very much her own’ – a corpus stylistic analysis of *The bloody chamber* by A. Carter

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Abstract – This paper endeavours to carry out a corpus stylistic analysis of the discursive construction of female identity in some fairy tales collected in *The bloody chamber and other stories* by Angela Carter (1979) with a twofold purpose. More generally, it aims at providing a further example of the application of corpus linguistics methods to the analysis of a literary text. It also purports to emphasise that corpus stylistics can assist the examination of the poetics as well as the politics of a literary text. In particular, corpus linguistics methods will be shown to enable an analysis of the way in which the linguistic configuration of the text can be seen to map power relationships. This investigation addresses two main research questions stemming from corpus-based comparative enquiries, which analyse some keywords as triggers of ideological meanings:

- if the fairy tale ‘The bloody chamber’ is computationally compared to what is deemed to be its main source, Perrault’s ‘Blue beard’, is it possible to show that Carter succeeds in challenging and amending the gender politics underlying Perrault’s text through the use of language?
- can the intuitive insight that Carter manages to criticise women’s compliance with patriarchy in their subordination, and to offer empowering alternatives through intertextual and intratextual references be proved with corpus linguistics methods?

The first question will be tackled through the computational comparison between the tales ‘The bloody chamber’ and an English translation of ‘La barbe bleue’ by Charles Perrault; the second through the comparative analysis of the two versions of ‘Beauty and the Beast’ re-written by Carter and included in the same collection – ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ and ‘The tiger’s bride’.

As regards methodology, three main techniques will be deployed: the study and comparison of the wordlists of the tales through some purposely-generated concordance lines, the analysis of collocations, and – to a lesser extent – that of keywords. The software used for the analyses is WordSmith Tools, which generates statistical data on a text or corpus through three main functions: wordlist, concord, and keywords.

Even though it will not be possible to draw general conclusions about Carter’s style or about the ways in which the fairy tale as a genre changes thanks to her revolutionary manipulations (which will hopefully be the focus of future research), sample-examples will be offered of the ways in which a computer-assisted analysis could support, validate, and even enrich an intuitive one performed through the methodological and critical tools offered by cultural and literary studies. In both cases, indeed, intuitive insight will be proved through computer-generated textual evidence and new knowledge will hopefully be gained as well.

Keywords – corpus stylistics, literature, fairy tales, poetics, politics

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper puts forward a corpus stylistic analysis, that is “the linguistic analysis of electronically stored literary texts” which results from the combination between stylistics – i.e. “the linguistic analysis of literary texts” – and corpus linguistics – i.e. the “electronic analysis of language data” (Fischer-Starcke 2010: 1). More specifically, it sets out to investigate the discursive construction of female identity in some fairy tales collected in *The bloody chamber and other stories* by Angela Carter (1979) with a twofold purpose. First of all, it aims at providing a further example of the application of corpus linguistics methods to the analysis of a literary text. Secondly, it purports to emphasise that corpus stylistics can assist the examination of the poetics as well as the politics of a literary text. In particular, corpus linguistics methods will be shown to enable an analysis of the way in which the linguistic configuration of the text can be seen to map power relationships between the sexes.

This research is part of a larger project, which draws on Cultural, Gender, and Literary studies to explore Angela Carter’s fairy tales against the notion of ‘metamorphosis’, in particular to show how change and transformation inform these texts from a generic, stylistic, thematic, political, and even physical point of view. The corpus stylistic investigation which will be shortly detailed is chiefly meant to achieve “new insight into already known and already thoroughly analysed texts”, that is, to reveal “new literary meanings” within the data (Fischer-Starcke 2010: preface), and to test if intuitively gained insights find correspondence in the actual use of language *within the text* (Fischer-Starcke 2010: 10–11). Two main research questions will be addressed, which stem from corpus-based comparative enquiries analysing some keywords as triggers of ideological meanings. The first arises from the computational analysis of the opening tale of the collection, ‘The bloody chamber’, and endeavours to assess if, how, and to what extent the text succeeds in disclosing, challenging, and possibly amending the patriarchal oppressive gender politics underlying Perrault’s ‘Blue beard’ – which is commonly acknowledged as its primary source – through narrative strategies and stylistic choices.¹ The second part of the study aims at assessing whether the intuitive insight that Carter manages to criticise women’s compliance with patriarchy in their subordination and at offering empowering alternatives through intertextual and intratextual references is proved with corpus linguistics methods. This issue is tackled through the comparative analysis of the two versions of ‘Beauty and the Beast’ re-written by Carter and included in the same collection – namely, ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ and ‘The tiger’s bride’.

2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

As regards methodology, I deployed three main techniques: the study and comparison of the wordlists of the tales through some purposely-generated concordance lines, the analysis of collocations, and – to a lesser extent – that of keywords. The software used for the analyses is WordSmith Tools (Scott 2004), which generates statistical data on a text or corpus through three main functions: wordlist, concord, and keywords. Despite the latter method being usually the most extensively used, it is not widely referred to here because the limited length of the texts lowers the significance of their keywords.

The texts under examination in the following sections are Carter’s tales ‘The bloody chamber’, ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’, and ‘The tiger’s bride’, collected in *The Bloody Chamber and other stories*, and the above mentioned English translation of ‘Blue beard’ by Charles Perrault. More specifically, as has already been anticipated, two comparative analyses are carried out: the first between Carter’s and Perrault’s version of ‘Blue beard’, and the second between the two stories about ‘Beauty and the Beast’, both by Carter. Of course, the extremely small size of the corpora taken into consideration has a significant impact on the results of the analysis: ‘The bloody chamber’ counts 16,370 orthographic words (tokens) whereas its counterpart ‘Blue beard’ contains only 1,951. As for the second set of texts, ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ amounts to 4,643 tokens, and ‘The tiger’s bride’ to 7,753. Contrary to what usually happens in this kind of corpus stylistic analyses, whose reference corpus is usually very broad, frequently coinciding with the British National Corpus (consisting of about 100 million words),² it will not be possible to draw general conclusions about Carter’s style or on the ways in which the fairy tale as a genre changes thanks to her revolutionary manipulations. As a matter of fact, such an analysis would be beyond the scope of this research, which rather aims at giving a sample-example of the ways in which a computer-assisted analysis could support, validate, and even enrich an intuitive one performed through the methodological and critical tools offered by cultural and literary studies. Nevertheless, as the discussion of the data will

¹ Among the number of translations available in Project Gutenberg, I chose the one published by J. M. Dent & Company, one of the closest to the original version, and not least because the moral at the end of the tale is translated and kept – which is not always the case, above all in later translations addressed to children. Unfortunately, the translator is anonymous.

² This is due to the fact that the BNC is taken to represent “standard” language, and is therefore suitable as a background against which to “measure” the peculiarities of a text.

hopefully show, interesting insight can be attained even from these limited source texts, which suggests that a broader research would be worthwhile and should be encouraged.³

I take Carter's fairy tales to be particularly apt for a corpus stylistic analysis due to the complexity and political implications of her linguistic and stylistic choices. Besides the interesting achievements of corpus linguistics in the study of the poetics of texts, on authors' idiolects, and more generally on style,⁴ this methodological approach has in fact already proved effective in unveiling also, and most notably, the hidden ideology of texts.

3. A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF 'THE BLOODY CHAMBER'

The corpus-assisted study of Carter's 'The bloody chamber' is carried out in two steps. First, Carter's tale is considered alone in order to show how some hypotheses related to power relationships and the discursive construction of female identity put forward in the intuitive literary analysis can be confirmed by corpus linguistics methods. More specifically, the claim that the tale is a retrospective account told by a woman whose identity journey is still in-progress (Manley 2001: 83) is scrutinised. Secondly, the tale is compared to Perrault's 'Blue beard' and the interpretation of the texts is validated and expanded through a corpus stylistic examination. This stage points to the linguistic elements which enable one to prove that Carter's representation of the development of female identity exposes the underlying patriarchal ideology and is set in dialectic opposition with Perrault's.

As for the first contention, the examination of the wordlist of the tale confirms the impressions that the narrator of 'The bloody chamber' is a "woman in process". This emerges, for example, from the analysis of the modal *could*, more often than not followed by *not* or in any case used in a negative sense. The verb expresses dynamic modality and conveys the impression that the young girl, whose experience is accounted for, was unable to act or react autonomously in the situations which she came to face:

found I could not say anything else
hours at your piano. And
away that afternoon and now
reverberation, like the door of hell.
were stiff and shaking. At first,
and at the same time a repugnance
My breath came thickly.
sprang out in beads on my brow.
about. Mother, the line was bad,
now, for the rest of my life. And
now that I had said it, I found
played, to be conversing with God.

I could only
I could not
I could not
I could not
I could
I could not
I could not
I could no
I could
I could not
I could not
I could not

repeat: 'In tune...perfect...
resist that. Besides, I
sleep. I lay tossing and
take a refuge in my bedroom,
manage **nothing** better than the
stifle for his white, heavy flesh
meet his eye and turned my
longer hear the sound of the
hardly make out her
sleep. I stealthily sat up,
say anything else. I could
restrain a sob. 'Oh, my love,

Moreover, the frequent use of *could* also testifies to the way in which the grown-up woman reassesses her by-gones in the light of newly gained knowledge and narrates them with a regretful, and perhaps also apologetic tone:

time in all my married life. And
in this file. It was a very thin one.
crinkled brown hair, I saw myself as
But, now...what shall I do, now?

I could
I could
I could
I could

have shown my interested
have wished, perhaps, I had not
have wished to be. I warmed to a
have spent a happy hour

Together with *could*, *would* is the first modal in the wordlist. The relations between these two verbs in the past tense is significant, in that *would* often introduces predictions, that is, acknowledgements or decisions that the girl takes about her future actions. Through this opposition, the impediments to act expressed by *I could not* are partly countered by her anticipations, often stated with determined resolution (even though they are never confirmed).

³ It must be noted that this is not the first occasion a really small text is analysed with computer-assisted techniques in order to gain literary insight into it (see O'Halloran 2007).

⁴ See, among the many examples, Culpeper (2002), Scott and Tribble (2006), Adolphs and Carter (2002), Stubbs (2005), Mahlberg (2007), O'Halloran (2007), and Fischer-Starcke (2010).

so that, for as long as I could
when I thought that, henceforth,
I knew that, henceforth,
creatures, all. Once at the village,
of avid collectors – ah! He foresaw
If he had come to me in bed
chamber, it seemed to me that
tide receded from the causeway
before I spoke; a subtle discourtesy.

I would
I would

be able to smell the ancient
always share these sheets with a
always be lonely. Yet that was
fling myself directly on the mercy
spend hours there. He had amply
have strangled him, then. But he
never laugh again; now
make for the mainland – on foot
Speak to my husband about it.

A similar function is played by the cluster *seemed to me* and by the verb *remember**, which are rather frequent. Besides conveying the idea of a retrospective narration and of a subject-in-process who narrativises her access to womanhood in order to make sense of it and to justify her past actions (to herself as well as to the readers), these patterns also hint at the – questionable – reliability of the narrator. As *seem* and *remember* suggest, indeed, what is told is the product of – more or less randomly surfacing – memories and, in any case, of a partial, individual perspective:

‘I REMEMBER*’:

bad dreams away. But the last thing
and had scarcely seen. When
to a Romanian countess? And then
country of marriage. And
in my hair until I winced; I said,
evening without you at the piano,

I remember
I remembered
I remembered
I remembered
I remember
I remember
I remember

how, that night, I lay awake
, before I slept, was the tall
that, I felt the exhilaration
her pretty, witty face, and
I tenderly imagined how, at
, very little. ‘The maid will
Of course! The music room!’

‘SEEMED TO ME’:

a sombre delirium that
in the torture chamber, it
sunk in his hands. And it
monocle; his movements
absolute absence of light,
a flower, but sometimes he

seemed to me
seemed to me

compounded of a ghastly, yes,
that I would never laugh again; now
he was in despair. Strange. In spite
deliberately course, vulgar. The
like a mask, as if his real face, the
like a lily. Yes. A lily. Possessed of

Finally, with reference to the identity journey in progress, the frequency of the cluster *I found* is meaningful, as it indicates a realisation on the part of the narrator, something new and often unexpected that she has learnt about herself.

‘I FOUND’

When I recovered consciousness,
to the music room but there
acquired a whole harem for myself!’
nervously to the solitary meal. Then
To my surprise, now I had said it,

I found
I found
I found
I found
I found

I was lying in the piano-tuner’s
I had not been abandoned. ‘I can
that I was trembling. My breath
I had to tell her what I would like
I could not say anything else. I

When it comes to the comparison between Carter’s and Perrault’s tales, computational tools happen to be very helpful to tackle issues of focalisation, in order to prove that in Carter’s tale the female I-narrator is also the main focaliser. A simple analysis of the most recurrent clusters with the keyword *I* testifies to it, as the subject is mostly preceded or followed by verbs like *know*, *think*, *feel*, *see*, which suggests that everything is seen through her eyes. From these considerations, then, it is easy to infer that in Carter’s tale the female character is given pre-eminence together with voice, and that this counters Perrault’s silencing of the passive type of his heroine, who is accounted for in the third person by an omniscient narrator. This, nevertheless, does not imply that Carter’s protagonist is accorded much more agency than is Perrault’s. As has already been stressed, the fact that the narrator’s identity journey is still in progress entails that she has not elaborated efficient empowering strategies yet. The pattern of recurrent clusters with the keyword *I* confirms this hypothesis, since, as is proved by textual evidence, more often than not the subject pronoun co-occurs with a negated verb (significantly, the negative adverb *not* is unusually frequent), or with modals in conditional tenses or verbs of feeling and perception, which express subjective impressions rather than actions, and external imposition rather than autonomous initiative.

CLUSTER	FREQUENCY	LENGTH
I COULD NOT	13	4
I KNEW I	12	4
I DID NOT	9	4
I FOUND I	8	4
I HAD NOT	8	4
KNEW I MUST	7	4
I FELT A	7	4
THAT I SHOULD	6	4
I COULD SEE	6	4
WHEN I THOUGHT	5	4
I HAD BEEN	5	4
I COULD HAVE	5	4
AS I COULD	5	4

Just to provide an example, the instances where the protagonist takes the decision of *not* doing something (in italics in the table below) are definitely outnumbered by the ones where she is kept from doing something either by her husband or by her inability to understand the situation or her self.

our interrupted pleasures, my love.
 – on foot, running, stumbling;
 of his; I was only a little girl,
 newlyweds in her native Breton.
turned my back pettishly on her.
I had let them down again but
a late luncheon. When I told her
 to seduce me so utterly that
 reverberation, like the door of hell.
 and at the same time a repugnance
 My breath came thickly.
 now, for the rest of my life. And
 like a gipsy's magic ball, so that
 now that I had said it, I found
 played, to be conversing with God.
 hours at your piano. And
 away that afternoon and now
 face without its mask; and perhaps
 Until that moment,
a connoisseur of such things? Yet
 I warmed to a loving sensitivity
 I could have wished, perhaps,
of an officer's daughter. No,
 by the brilliance of his hoard. But
 little relics, the tumbled garments
 always subtly oppressed me...No,
 not dress for dinner. Furthermore,
 weight of his desire was a force
 the well-behaved housekeeper, and

I did not
I did not
 I did not
 I did not
I did not
I did not
I did not
 I could not
 I had not
 I had not
I had not
 I had not
 I had not
I would not
 I would not
 I would not
 I would not
 I was not
 I was not
 I might not
 I dared not

believe one word of it. I knew I
trust that leather-clad chauffeur,
 understand. And, he said
 understand. That he, smiling,
want to remember how he had
care; I was armed against them
need it, she looked at me
 say I felt one single twinge of
 take a refuge in my bedroom,
 stifle for his white, heavy flesh
 meet his eye and turned my
 sleep. I stealthily sat up,
 take my eyes off it when I
 say anything else. I could
 restrain a sob. 'Oh, my love,
 resist that. Besides, I
 sleep. I lay tossing and
 . Yet I had been infinitely
 given a single thought to the
bargained for this, the girl with
 hitherto suspected in him. Then
 found that touching, ill-spelt
dress for dinner. Furthermore
 find his heart amongst the
 need any more, the scores
 afraid of him; but of myself
 hungry enough for dinner itself.
 withstand, not by virtue of its
 take any of the pale, ghostly

Last, but not least, another meaningful contention that is corroborated by means of computationally pinpointed textual evidence through the comparison between the two tales is the centrality of the body in Carter's stories, as opposed to its merely functional role in traditional fairy tales. As the following instances show, the insistence on an omnipresence of bodily parts seem to promote a change in the traditional way of considering and representing perception, as different functions, purposes, and abilities are ascribed to different parts of the body. This choice plays a pivotal role in that it could point to Carter's intention of weakening the supremacy of the – masculine and patriarchal – sight. The female body, Carter's language seems to suggest, should be the place where a new way of approaching reality and knowledge of oneself and of the world should start.

In Perrault's 'Blue beard' the representation of both *his* and *her* body is negligible, with the obvious exception of *beard*, which is the only term related to the body mentioned more than four times. As for the female body, there are only a few instances where its parts are explicitly mentioned (more specifically, *her hand* appears twice and *her head* and *her neck* once). With regard to the male body, the difference is inconsequential, but is eloquent to quote the case of *his feet*, used twice, and always to describe the wife throwing herself at them.

went down and threw herself at his
 flung herself at her husband's

feet
 feet

with weeping eyes
 , weeping and begging his pardon

When it comes to Carter, instead, the occurrence of – especially female – bodily parts is surprisingly frequent: *my* co-occurs ten times with *hand(s)*, eight times with *head* and *finger(s)*, five times with *breast(s)*, *eyes*, *forehead*, *heart*, and *hair*, four times with *neck*, three times with *ear(s)* and *shoulders*, twice with *face*, *feet* (interestingly enough, always referred to rising or being set on her feet, and not to throwing oneself at someone's feet), *thighs*, and *skin*, and once with *flesh*, *palm*, *lap*, *legs*, *throat*, *nostrils*, *stomach*, and *elbow*.

'HAND(S)'

light caught the fire opal on my	hand	so that it flashed, once, with a
My lover kissed me, he took my	hand	. He would come with me if I
'I can smell the blood.' He took my	hand	; he pressed his arms about
taper and advanced with it in my	hand	, like a penitent, along the
of water, he reached out for my	hand	that had his sultry, witch ring
the key I still held in my other	hand	. It dropped into the
rim of my glass and drenched my	hands	. I thought: My cup runneth
the shore. I held my life in my	hands	amongst those keys and, in a
snatched the book from my	hands	and put it down on the sofa.
it in my handkerchief to keep my	hands	clean, and fled the room.

'HEAD'

a dawning surprise in his face. My	head	throbbled. To see him, in his
from the piano-stool under my	head	. 'You are in some great
sable, with a collar from which my	head	rose like the calix of a
jewelled turban and aigrette on my	head	, roped with pearl to the navel,
the key tantalizingly above my	head	, out of reach of my straining
gave me strength. I flung back my	head	defiantly. 'Come in!' My voice
the necklace did not sever, my	head	did not roll. For, for an instant,
meet his eye and turned my	head	away, out of pride, out of

'FINGER(S)'

he put the gold band on my	finger	, I had, in some way, ceased to
I gladly slipped it from my	finger	and, even in that dolorous
of sparks; the opal on my	finger	spurred green flame. I felt as
discords flowed from beneath my	fingers	: out of tune...only a little out
I began to play but my	fingers	were stiff and shaking. At
candles round the bier with my	fingers	, to gather up my taper, to
witchy ring on it, pressed my	fingers	, kissed my palm with

'BREAST(S)'

piercingly, somewhere inside my	breast	; his figure blurred, the room
executioner. His hand brushed my	breast	, beneath the sheet. I strained
laid his hand imperatively upon my	breast	, beneath the sheath of ancient
he seemed especially fond of it, my	breasts	showed through the flimsy
ceased flinching and he caressed my	breasts	. My dear one, my little love,

'EYES'

look at me with lust, I dropped my	eyes	but, in glancing away from him,
keys and clasp his hands over my	eyes	as I was lost in a Debussy
ball, so that I could not take my	eyes	off it when I played the piano.
lascivious tenderness, he kissed my	eyes	and, mimicking the new bride
a white, nacreous glimmer, as my	eyes	accustomed themselves to the

'FOREHEAD'

had transferred itself to my	forehead	, to the space between the
he pressed the key lightly to my	forehead	, held it there for a moment.
but, outside – never.' I scrubbed my	forehead	with the nail brush as I had
to drop a beard-masked kiss on my	forehead	. 'Every man must have one
can mask that red mark on my	forehead	; I am glad he cannot see

'HEART'

Except that, in my	heart	, I'd always known its lord would
the pillow and the pounding of my	heart	mimicking that of the great
Tristan. And, do you know, my	heart	swelled and ached so during
he said. 'Not the key to my	heart	. Rather, the key to my enfer.'
even in that dolorous place, my	heart	was lighter for the lack of it. My

'HAIR'

satyr who now gently martyred my	hair	. To know that my naivety gave
ice and chilled me. He twined my	hair	into a rope and lifted it off my
us. He twined his fingers in my	hair	until I winced; I said, I
had done once before, twisted my	hair	into a rope and drew it away
he unwound the tendrils of my	hair	from the buttons of his smocking

'NECK'		
I fastened the thing about my a rope and drew it away from my face, the way the muscles in my the ruby necklace that bit into my	neck neck neck neck	. It was cold as ice and chilled . 'Such a pretty neck,' he said stuck out like thin wire. I saw , but with such tenderness now.
'EAR(S)'		
madame, and put my so that the blood pounded in my kiss the downy furrows below my	ear ears ears	to the keyhole and listened, and as if we had been precipitated ; that made me shudder. And he
'SHOULDERS'		
seems to weigh too heavily on my hair into a rope and lifted it off my of my jacket and slip it from my	shoulders shoulders shoulders	. There I can go, you so that he could the better Enough! No; more! Off
'FACE'		
vulgar. The blood rushed to my suddenly, as he saw me, my pale	face face	again, and stayed there. And , the way the muscles in
'FEET'		
outside the door! I rose to my lifted me up and set me on my	feet feet	; fear gave me strength. I flung ; I knew I must answer it. The
'THIGHS'		
insinuating, nudging between my feel the cold metal chilling my	thighs thighs	as I shifted restlessly in my through my thin muslin frock.
'SKIN'		
substance that could seep into my Red Sea to let us through. My	skin skin	. I looked at the precious little crisped at his touch. How my
'FLESH'		
opera, when I had first seen my	flesh	in his eyes, I was aghast to feel
'PALM'		
pressed my fingers, kissed my	palm	with extraordinary tenderness.
'LAP'		
the keys in a jingling heap in my	lap	. I could feel the cold metal
'LEGS'		
stirring. At once he closed my	legs	like a book and I saw again the l
'THROAT'		
His wedding gift, clasped round my	throat	. A choker of rubies, two
'NOSTRILS'		
leonine shape of his head and my	nostrils	caught a whiff of the opulent
'STOMACH'		
a certain tension in the pit of my	stomach	, to be so watched, in such
'ELBOW'		
stood open. If I rose up on my	elbow	, I could see the dark, leonine

4. A CORPUS LINGUISTICS COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF 'THE COURTSHIP OF MR LYON' AND 'THE TIGER'S BRIDE'

As regards the second comparative study, proof of the reach of a corpus stylistic literary analysis is offered by the computer-assisted comparison between the two versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' collected in *The bloody chamber and other stories*. Throughout my intuitive analysis, a productive dialogue between 'The courtship of Mr Lyon' and 'The tiger's bride' was established with reference to different topics in order to argue that the two stories function as a sort of intratextual mirroring device. The following investigation draws on textual evidence gained through the examination of the wordlists and collocations produced by WordSmith Tools to show that three among the most noteworthy intuitive contentions are in fact rooted in Carter's language. The first stage is a comparison between the use of the word *father* in the two stories, followed by the analysis of the differences in the collocates of the nouns related to enclosed spaces, which allows one to draw interesting conclusions about their impact on the representation of female identity. Finally,

considerations about focalisation, agency, and empowerment are drawn through the comparative study of the terms related to sight.

The comparison between the wordlists of ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ and ‘The tiger’s bride’ shows that there is an evident disparity in the frequency of the word *father*. Since the father is an important character in both stories, as he is the one who sets the events in motion and brings Beauty to the house of the Beast, Carter’s choice must be consequential. Moreover, in both tales he is the typical patriarchal figure, who can decide the destiny of his daughter and claim her obedience. What is, then, the difference, and above all the reason why there is such an evident disparity in the occurrence of the word? I claim that this disparity is coherent with the different attitudes of the two daughters toward the father, rather than due to the father himself.

‘FATHER’ in ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ (20 occurrences out of 4 643 tokens, 0.43%)

that remained to make Beauty's	Father	said he would be home before
loved his daughter, Beauty's	father	entirely comfortable was to find
being who now confronted Beauty's	father	stole the rose
leonine apparition shook Beauty's	father	seemed to him
was for my daughter,' said Beauty's	father	until his teeth rattled and then
rudely snatched the photograph her	father	'All she wanted, in the whole world
Although her	father	drew from his wallet and inspected
cheese. He asked her	father	had told her of the nature of the
and smiled, because her	father	to serve them from a buffet and
he would aid her	father	wanted her to do so;
in comfort, while her	father's	appeal against the judgement
scale, the price of her	father	returned to London to take up
ends of the earth for her	father's	good fortune.
Next morning, her	father	, whom she loved dearly.
to the study in which her	father	kissed her and drove away with
single pearl, asked after her	father	had been entertained and there,
shrilled; for her. Her	father's	law case; and her dead mother
has time to settle; and her	father	. Such news!
never known it, for her	father	was as good as rich again,
desolating emptiness. But her	father	had ruined himself before her
Beauty scribbled a note for her	father	was waiting for her at the
		, threw a coat round her shoulders.

‘FATHER’ in ‘The tiger’s bride’ (18 occurrences out of 7,753 tokens, 0.23%)

My	father	lost me to The Beast at cards.
windowpanes to mock my	father's	expectations of perpetual pleasure
witness folly, while my	father	, fired in his desperation by more
Not my profligate	father	, certainly; the mirror above the
petal by petal, apart as my	father	magnificently concluded the career
lost all its petals, my	father	, too, was left with nothing.
Gambling is a sickness. My	father	said he loved me yet he staked his
You must not think my	father	valued me at less than a king's
my flesh but, truly, my	father's	soul that was in peril.
that was in peril. My	father	, of course, believed in miracles;
brought his cloak. My	father	sat amongst these preparations for
shaped shoes. Where my	father	had been red as fire, now he
My tear-beslobbered	father	wants a rose to show that I forgive
to conceal the sight of my	father's	farewell; my spite was sharp as
peasants once brought my	father	a skull with horns four inches long
will be returned to her	father	undamaged with bankers' orders
my own face but that of my	father	, as if I had put on his face when
hay with every lad on my	father's	farm, to disqualify myself from this
as proof of the axiom my	father	had drummed into me:
than I had done until my	father	abandoned me to the wild
own face in it but that of my	father	; at first I thought he smiled
pile of banknotes. My	father's	circumstances had changed already
showing. Then I saw my	father's	trunks were packed, ready for
looked at the mirror again, my	father	had disappeared and all I saw
to perform the part of my	father's	daughter. 'Leave me alone

As the wordlists above show, in ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ the daughter loves her father and holds him in the highest regard. Beauty is obedient and does not challenge paternal authority, thus is totally complicit in her destiny. If one turns to ‘The tiger’s bride’, by contrast, the girl – who accounts for herself in the first person – openly despises her father’s drinking and cowardice and obeys to his orders because she cannot do otherwise, but manages to rebel against the Beast and to negotiate and then assert her power of decision. Thus, the different uses of the word signal the different degrees of importance of the character for the protagonist in terms of his capacity of influencing and directing her behaviours and decisions.

As for the analysis of enclosed spaces in the two stories, it arises from the traditionally established link between woman and private spaces as if the latter were her natural domain, which Carter addresses and questions with apt

strategies. Carter criticises and challenges the cultural construction of female confinement in domestic spaces through establishing echoes between the two tales in such a way that the first story to appear in the collection – ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ – exposes woman’s complicity in her confinement, whereas the second – ‘The tiger’s bride’ – questions it. Within this framework, the first significant word is *door*. In ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ it is the first noun to occur after the names of the characters and, as can be seen from the examples, it collocates with usual or neutral words (i.e. words which suggest opening and closing without any further connotation), and most of the times is simply described (e.g. it is a *mahogany door*, “equipped with a knocker”).

the girl pushed open the front	door	, she saw, with a thrust of
close as that mahogany front	door	, rose a mighty, furious roaring; the
conscience, how the golden	door	knocker was thickly muffled in
scrabbling sound, of claws, at her	door	. Her trance before the mirror
he squared up to the mahogany	door	. This door was equipped with a
spaniel, darting from the open	door	, danced round them, yapping
no living person in the hall. The	door	behind him closed as silently as it
could announce his presence, the	door	swung silently inward on well-oiled
a pleasant chuckle, and the	door	of a cloakroom opened of its own
joyful, she ran to open the	door	. But it was his liver and white
thickly muffled in black crêpe. The	door	did not open silently, as before, but
magical hospitality was over. As the	door	swung to behind him, he saw the
up to the mahogany door. This	door	was equipped with a knocker in the

A similar stance holds true also for the use of the words *house* and *room*, both rather frequent in the tale and both conveying the impression of domesticity being a safe, cosy, welcoming dimension – thus emphasising that traditional models are not challenged.

‘HOUSE’:

and was the owner of that lovely	house	and the low hills that cupped it
in this confusion, vaster than the	house	he owned, ponderous yet swift
At that, every window of the	house	blazed with furious light and a
as soon as he described the	house	from where he was calling. And he
not even the statutory country-	house	garden mackintosh to greet his
rich are often very eccentric and the	house	was plainly that of an exceedingly
It was almost night; that	house	, with its sweet, retiring
a miniature, perfect, Palladian	house	that seemed to hide itself

‘ROOM’:

at the top of the table; the dining	room	was Queen Anne, tapestried, a
themselves together, alone, in that	room	in the depths of the winter’s night
another word, he sprang from the	room	and she saw, with an indescribable

When it comes to the same terms in ‘The tiger’s bride’, their collocates immediately show differences between the feelings associated with domesticity, which turns into an entrapping, at times scary domain, therefore pointing to the threats hidden beneath woman’s naturalised confinement in the entrapping walls of the private realm.

In this story, for example, *doors* are *heavy*, barriers outside or inside which individuals are trapped and communication is obstructed if not unattainable (someone knocks, or tentatively *rap[s]*). In other cases they are frail borders protecting from something threatening, as in the case where the Beast makes “the door tremble” with a roar.

I heard the key turn into the <i>heavy</i>	door	and the valet’s footsteps patter
to my <i>tentative rap</i> on his door	door	. Then the wind blew the valet
pad back and forth outside my	door	. When the valet arrived again with
moment, the valet knocked at my	door	to announce that I might leave the
<i>knocking and clattering</i> behind the	door	of the cupboard; the door swings
He did not need to <i>lock</i> the	door	, now. I fixed the earrings in my
through the palace made the	door	<i>tremble in its frame</i> ; had the north

Similar negative impressions of confinement are conveyed by the noun *room*, which most of the times co-occurs with words expressing littleness (e.g. *small, little*) or claustrophobia (eg. *small, stifling, darkened, and windowless*).

close quarters in <i>so small</i> a	room	. He must bathe himself in scent,
valet bowed me inside The Beast’s	room	. The purple dressing gown, the
house, a <i>small, stifling, darkened</i>	room	; he keeps his shutters locked at
his horses the use of the dining	room	. The walls were painted, aptly
the earth turn, filled the <i>little</i>	room	; he had begun to purr. The sweet
his fur and shone. And in my	room	<i>for hours I hear those paws pad</i>
hastily ushered me out of the	room	. A mauve cloud of his master’s
‘You may put me in a <i>windowless</i>	room	, sir, and I promise you will pull my

One last comparison confirms the impression that Carter sets a contrast between two opposite representations of female identity – one compliant with her subordination, perhaps even unaware of it, and the other subversive, or at least consciously challenging oppression – through the description of domestic spaces: that between the collocations of *wall**. In ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ walls, like the house and its rooms, are harmless: the walls of Beauty’s room are covered with beautiful tapestries painted with *birds of paradise* and despite the garden being *walled*, Beauty can serenely *wander* around.

and a little parlour of her own, the	walls	of which were covered with an
birds of paradise nodding on the	walls	? This one's fringed ears
it from the world outside the	walled	, wintry garden
she wandered in the	walled	garden, among the leafless roses

In ‘The tiger’s bride’, by contrast, *walls* are always coupled with negative images of entrapment (people hanged in cages within the city walls), power abuse (people put *face to the wall* because their masters do not want to see their faces), and threat (*the draughts came out of the old walls to bite her*). Paradoxically, however, they are also barriers about to be broken, or rather made fluid, which tremble and finally *dance*, their movements paralleling the dramatic metamorphosis of the human body, whose boundaries are about to be exceeded, its furry insides abjectly overflowing onto the outside.

men in cages from the city	walls	; unkindness comes
draughts came out of the old	walls	and bit me, I was colder
of the dining room. The	walls	were painted, aptly enough, with
propped with their faces to the	walls	as if their master could not bear to
thunder of this purr shook the old	walls	, made the shutters batter
the foundations of the house, the	walls	began to dance.
of the painted horses on the	wall	, into whose saddle the valet sprang

The third set of considerations that can be drawn by the computational comparison between Carter’s stories is indirectly related to the previous ones, as it addresses issues of freedom and autonomy of female identity as well as of focalisation. More specifically, the focus of the last topic under consideration is the power of observing, understanding, and defining people and the external world through sight and looking. In this case, the corpus-assisted analysis reveals that although the main focaliser of the events is the same (i.e. Beauty), other linguistic strategies enable Carter to portray two very different examples of female identity: once again one completely caught up with patriarchal discursive arrangements and another who, on the contrary, tries to challenge established norms and to negotiate an independent subject position.

If a range of terms belonging to the semantic field of sight is taken into consideration, it can be noticed that in ‘The courtship of Mr Lyon’ not only is Beauty the main focaliser, but she is invariably the looking subject, as opposed to the Beast, who is mainly the object of the gaze. The verbal forms *see* and *saw* confirm this view (the subjects of the verb *see* are in italics to help get an immediate visual impression):

possessor and himself <i>she</i> did not	see	all day as if, curious reversal, she
jumping up from time to time to	see	that everything was in order. How
might pierce appearances and	see	your soul. When he handed the
host’s wealth and eccentricity to	see	the dog wore, in place of a collar, a
<i>she</i> pressed the latch of the gate and	saw	, with a pang, how, on the withered
the door swung to behind him, <i>he</i>	saw	the lion’s eyes were made of agate.
inward on well-oiled hinges and <i>he</i>	saw	a white hall where the candles of a
lay under water, and when <i>she</i>	saw	the great paws lying on the arm of
shudder of fear when <i>she</i>	saw	him, for a lion is a lion and a man
pushed open the front door, <i>she</i>	saw	, with a thrust of conscience, how
drew back into their pads and <i>she</i>	saw	how he had always kept his fists
he sprang from the room and <i>she</i>	saw	, with an indescribable shock, he
all the time she stayed there, <i>she</i>	saw	no evidence of another human she
inscrutable eyes, in which <i>she</i>	saw	her face repeated twice, as small as
pot, and, when <i>the spaniel</i>	saw	to it he had served himself, she

As the above listed examples show, in the few times when *he* is the subject of the verb *see*, it is always Beauty’s father. The only verb linked to the semantic field of sight which does not follow this pattern is, curiously enough, *gaze*, which could be an ironic move on Carter’s part for the symbolic load of the corresponding noun.

He drew back his head and

gazed

at her with his green, inscrutable

As for the *eyes*, most of the times they are the Beasts', and are looked at by Beauty. Conversely, in the only two instances where they are Beauty's (in italics in the list), either one of their features related to looking is emphasised (*as if her eyes might pierce appearances*), or they are performing an action (*smiling*):

seen contained in the Beast's agate	eyes	. Her face was acquiring, instead of
some kind of sadness in his agate	eyes	, that looked almost blind, as if sick
noticed before that his agate	eyes	were equipped with lids, like those
<i>and absolute gravity, as if her</i>	<i>eyes</i>	<i>might pierce appearances and see</i>
<i>smile with both her mouth and her</i>	<i>eyes</i>	<i>. But when, as they sipped their</i>
mane a greyish rat's nest and his	eyes	closed. On the stick-backed chair
at her with his green, inscrutable	eyes	, in which she saw her face
behind, him, he saw the lion's	eyes	were made of agate. Great wreaths
great, mazy head of hair, on the	eyes	green as agate, on the golden hairs

The connotation of the looking person as female and the direction of the gaze being usually from Beauty to the Beast foreground the girl's position as subject, besides focaliser. The fact that Beauty does not challenge the patriarchal standards that she is subjected to, however, suggests that she is complicit in her subordination or, at least, that she is so engulfed in patriarchal normative and naturalising discourses that she is unable to literally look outside of the framework. As the use of language in the text testifies to, neither the Beast's gaze nor that of Beauty's father can be deemed to wield an actual defining power over the girl's identity: Beauty is unquestionably the looking subject. Furthermore, her visual perceptions are always clear and neat, and provide a rather straightforward picture of the "bourgeois idyll" (Bacchilega 1997: 95) which constitutes the epilogue of the story, but which is anticipated by the images offered throughout the narration.

Both the nature of sight and that of its subject change in 'The tiger's bride', although the female protagonist remains the main focaliser and looking subject. As the analysis of the verbs *see** and *look** proves, sight is sometimes hindered or blurred, its focus partial, its perspective unclear or questionable:

'SEE*':		
in all their unreason. If I could	see	not one single soul in that
inches above us. As far as eye could	see	, not one thing living. How
against the cold so you can hardly	see	their faces. And they lie to you and
of reeds. 'If you will not let him	see	you without your clothes-' I
meat of contract and, if she did not	see	me, then so much more like the
magic fits again and I did not	see	my own face in it but that of my
river that was so wide we could not	see	across it, so still with winter that
He gibbered a little to	see	my fine furs and jewels as if I were
your right.' How pleased I was to	see	I struck The Beast to the heart! For,
'My master's sole desire is to	see	the pretty young lady unclothed
with a bow, a wig of the kind you	see	in old-fashioned portraits. A chaste
blushed a little, for no man had	seen	me naked and I was a proud girl.
lady's skin that no man has	seen	before-' stammered the valet. I
from the poor, shabby things I'd	seen	once, in the Czar's menagerie at
drink it down. Had she not	seen	him do so, at the sign of The
'LOOK*':		
I never saw a man so big	look	so two-dimensional, in spite of the
would have called an 'old-fashioned	look	, ironic, sly, a smidgen of disdain
as if their master could not bear to	look	at them. The palace was
douse the candles one by one. To	look	at them you would think that
raised her dripping muzzle and	looked	at me keenly, as if urging me.
me up and send me off. When I	looked	at the mirror again, my father had

The high frequency of instances where modals like *could* or conditional constructions like *had she*, negatives and adverbs like *hardly* co-occur with terms belonging to the semantic field of sight suggests that the point of view is limited, the perspective questionable and, above all, its subject – in this case also the narrator – unreliable. In addition, as the wordlists of *seen* and *looked* in particular reveal, the woman is both the subject and the object of the gaze. Most notably, in this story the only occurrence of the verb *gaze* sees Beauty, or rather, her eyes, as its subjects:

had passed under the indifferent

gaze

of eyes like hers. Then I was

5. CONCLUSIONS

All these examples of corpus stylistic analysis give evidence of the potential of the application of its methods to the study of literature. The computer-assisted analysis of 'The bloody chamber' and its comparison with 'Blue beard' prove that the application of some corpus stylistic methods can both confirm intuitive hypotheses and offer new insights in an extensively studied text. The comparative investigation of two stories belonging to the collection, whose intratextual references were intuitively pointed out, benefit too of the import of corpus stylistics. The analysis of the occurrence of the lexical items and of their collocations generated by WordSmith Tools enrich and corroborate the arguments set forth with relation to both the poetics and the politics of the text.

Even though it is not possible to draw general conclusions about Carter's style or about the ways in which the fairy tale as a genre changes thanks to her revolutionary manipulations, the analysis succeeds in providing sample-examples of the ways in which a computer-assisted analysis can support, validate, and even enrich an intuitive one performed through the methodological and critical tools offered by cultural and literary studies.

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