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
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 intratexual 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 only1,951. 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

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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.  

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, 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 not
- I could not
- I could not
- 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 bygones 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
- I could
- I could
- 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).

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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).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘I REMEMBER*’:</th>
<th>‘SEEMED TO ME’:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad dreams away. But the last thing</td>
<td>a sombre delirium that</td>
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<tr>
<td>and had scarcely seen. When</td>
<td>in the torture chamber, it</td>
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<tr>
<td>to a Romanian countess? And then</td>
<td>sunk in his hands. And it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>country of marriage. And</td>
<td>monocle; his movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in my hair until I winced; I said,</td>
<td>absolute absence of light,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evening without you at the piano,</td>
<td>a flower, but sometimes he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I remember</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I remember</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I remember</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘I FOUND’</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I recovered consciousness,</td>
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<tr>
<td>to the music room but there</td>
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<tr>
<td>acquired a whole harem for myself?*</td>
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<tr>
<td>nervously to the solitary meal. Then</td>
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<tr>
<td>To my surprise, now I had said it,</td>
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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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUSTER</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>LENGTH</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I COULD NOT</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I KNEW I</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I DID NOT</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I FOUND I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAD NOT</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNEW I MUST</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I FELT A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THAT I SHOULD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I COULD SEE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN I THOUGHT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAD BEEN</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>I COULD HAVE</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS I COULD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.' I did not believe one word of it. I knew I
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
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,
stife 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.
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 hand. He would come with me if I hand, . He co-occurs ten times with hand, eight times with hand, . like a penitent, along the hand that had his sultry, witch ring hand. It dropped into the hand. I thought: My cup runneth hand amongst those keys and, in a hand and put it down on the sofa.

‘HEAD’
a dawning surprise in his face. My head throbbed. To see him, in his head. ‘You are in some great head, rose like the calix of a head, out of reach of my straining head defiantly. ‘Come in!’ My voice head did not roll. For, for an instant, head away, out of pride, out of head clean, and fled the room.

‘FINGER(S)’
he put the gold band on my finger, . I had, in some way, ceased to finger, and, even in that dolorous finger, spurted green flame. I felt as finger out of tune…only a little out finger were stiff and shaking. At finger to gather up my taper, to finger kissed my palm with

‘BREAST(S)’
piercingly, somewhere inside my breast ; his figure blurred, the room breast; his figure blurred, the room breast, beneath the sheet. I strained breast, beneath the sheath of ancient breast showed through the flimsy breast My dear one, my little love,

‘EYES’
look at me with lust, I dropped my eyes but, in glancing away from him, eyes as I was lost in a Debussy ball, so that I could not take my eyes eyes and, mimicking the new bride eyes accustomed themselves to the

‘FOREHEAD’
had transferred itself to my forehead, , to the space between the forehead held it there for a moment. forehead with the nail brush as I had forehead ‘Every man must have one forehead ; I am glad he cannot see

‘HEART’
Except that, in my heart, I’d always known its lord would heart mimicking that of the great heart swelled and ached so during heart Rather, the key to my inferno.’ heart was lighter for the lack of it. My

‘HAIR’
satyr who now gently martyred my hair . To know that my naivety gave hair into a rope and lifted it off my hair. He untwined his fingers in my hair into a rope and drew it away hair from the buttons of his smocking
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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 to serve them from a buffet and
and smiled, because her father wanted her to do so;
he would aid her father’s appeal against the judgement
in comfort, while her father returned to London to take up
scale, the price of her father’s good fortune.
ends of the earth for her father, whom she loved dearly.
Next morning, her father kissed her and drove away with
the study in which her father had been entertained and there,
single pearl, asked after her father’s was good fortune.
shriiled; for her. Her father law case; and her dead mother
has time to settle; and her father, was as good as rich again,
never known it, for her father had ruined himself before her
desolating emptiness. But her father was waiting for her at the
Beauty scribbled a note for her father, 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;
brught 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
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
pilte 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 scrawling sound, of claws, at her he squared up to the mahogany door. Thus door was equipped with a spaniel, darting from the open no living person in the hall. The door could announce his presence, the a pleasant chuckle, and the door thickly muffled in black crépe. The magical hospitality was over. As the up to the mahogany door. This

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 was the low hills that cupped it in this confusion, vaster than the house he owned, ponderous yet swift 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 garden mackintosh to greet his 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 heavy door and the valet’s footsteps patter to my tentative rap on his 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 knocking and clattering behind the door of the cupboard; the door swings He did not need to lock the door, now. I fixed the earrings in my through the palace made the door tremble in its frame; 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 so small a room. He must bathe himself in scent, valet bowed me inside The Beast’s house, a small, stifling, darkened room. The purple dressing gown, the horse, he keeps his shutters locked at his horses the use of the dining room. The walls were painted, aptly the earth turn, filled the little room; he had begun to purr. The sweet his fur and shone. And in my room for hours I hear those paws pad hastily ushered me out of the room . A mauve cloud of his master’s ‘You may put me in a windowless 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 from the world outside 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 walls were painted, aptly enough, with face to the wall 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 she did not see all day as if, curious reversal, she jumped 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 saw, with a pang, how, on the withered 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.

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 eyes.

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
- some kind of sadness in his agate eyes
- noticed before that his agate eyes
- and absolute gravity, as if her eyes
- smile with both her mouth and her eyes
- mane a greyish rat’s nest and his eyes
- at her with his green, inscrutable eyes
- behind, him, he saw the lion’s eyes
- great, mazy head of hair, on the eyes

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 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 to see me naked and I was a proud girl. 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 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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