The Bloody Chamber: A Critical Marxism Reading

A Critical Marxism reading of Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" exposes social emancipation within its society as undoubtedly challenging. The Marxism appeal to this text requests the exploration of "paradox", in which can be defined as a statement that challenges itself yet still appears to be true by one way or another (Literature Glossary - Paradox, 2019). There are two powerful arguments that reveal Carter's perception of the struggle amongst the superior and the inferior. Foremost, "The Bloody Chamber uses symbolism to identify the struggle in class through the wealthy versus the poor and secondly, the use of symbolic imagery within the text identify manipulative power and possession. Together these demonstrate social emancipation and class struggle that will be explained by focusing on symbols within the text.

Marxism texts underline the social act, but also communicate, contemplate and denounce the overall social standards, classes and directs (A Brief Guide to Marxist Criticism - A Research Guide for Students, 2010-2019). Throughout "The Bloody Chamber" symbolism is used to identify class struggle though the wealthy versus the poor. In this text the wealthy is represented through the symbolism of the train, and through the "Marquis" and his possessions as he is granted as "the richest man in France" (pg12). Meanwhile the poor is represented by the female protagonist who is also the narrator as she is the stick of poverty. Through the setting of the text of the first paragraph we are introduced to the train as the female protagonist is on her way "into the unguessable country of marriage" (pg.7). By looking at the usage of the train as a symbol, it can be seen as more than just an acceptable way of travelling but as an entry to sponsor the wealthy. It is a symbol of a man-made and cost-effective community or an expression of divided classes. By knowing the function of a train as a way to get somewhere faster we can attach it to the thought of the society being controlling as someone can only get off a train once it stops, thus it being inescapable just like a capitalist society. By way of analysing the symbolism of the "Marquis" and his possessions compared to the female protagonist we see the difference of the wealthy versus the poor and class struggle. Such possessions such as the Marquis Castle that can be seen as a symbol of royalty compared to the narrator's mother's apartment in which she lived in till now and the Marquis bed that the narrator describes as "itself the size, almost, of my little room at home"(pg14).By comparing these accessories between the wealthy and the poor it makes awareness of the intimidating wealth of not only the castle but of the Marquis himself, giving a sense of certain class hierarchy such as the royals in comparison to the working class in today's society. Thus, symbolism throughout "The Bloody Chamber" is used to identify and explain social emancipation through the wealthy and the poor.

When critically reading "The Bloody Chamber" as a Marxist literary viewpoint, symbolic imagery is also used to identify social emancipation within manipulative power and possession. "Promise me you'll use all the keys on the key ring expect that last little one I showed you … All is yours, everywhere is open to you – expect the lock that this single key fits" (pg21). This quote is a direct example of manipulative power as the narrator is given the keys to the castle yet can't open one particular door thus, clearly showing that she doesn't maintain such power that her husband gave the impression of. This gives an untrue impression of authority as she has power but not enough to advance above the Marquis, an example of paradox. The symbolic imagery of the keys gives he a false belief of choice, making her feel like she is free and

independent when really, she is not, just like capitalism. Another symbolic imagery is the ruby choker that is given to the narrator as wedding gift as it shows manipulative power but also possession. It is a sign of control and entrapment within itself and can be seen as similar to a dog collar in this text as the Marquis makes, he wear it and not take it off “but he would not let me take off the ruby choker” (pg19). Through looking at the ruby choker we observe that the marquis doesn’t view his wife as his wife but as a material possession that he can objectify. Therefore, through symbolic imagery of manipulative power and possession, social emancipation is identified.

In conclusion through the use of symbolism of wealthy versus the poor and symbolic imagery of manipulative power and possession, within this Marxist literary viewpoint of “The Bloody chamber” social emancipation was identified as undoubtedly challenging.