**Female Gaze**

***Read the quotes below and discuss how Carter subverts the male gaze to introduce the female gaze. Why do you think Carter introduces the female gaze?***

1. ‘If you will not let him see you without your clothes...you must then prepare yourself for the sight of my master, naked.’ Page 71.
2. ‘He must have decided that, if one should go naked, then all should go naked; without his livery, he revealed himself, as I had suspected, a delicate creature, covered with silken moth-grey fur...’ Page 74.

**Female Gaze**

The empowered tiger in an act of voyeurism asks the bride to be naked for him in order to pay her father’s debts. She refuses to submit herself to his gaze, to be seen as a mere “spectacle”. For the feminist theory, the voyeurism is symbolic of the man’s dominance through the gaze. For Palmer the controlling effect of the male gaze in a patriarchal society can be noted through “the constant circulation of visual representation of the femininity that is exploitative and oppressive. It pressures the women into a narcissistic preoccupation with self-image and imposes indirect control on their behaviour.”The woman’s body control is deep-rooted in our culture, and “the male gaze controls not only the woman’s appearance, but also her identity and sense of self-worth.” This controlling can be observed in the constant change of women’s clothing, make-up, hair-style, and excessive preoccupation with the body that has caused some psychic diseases as anorexia and bulimia.

In The Tiger’s Bride, Carter subverts the gaze, and as the bride refuses to be undressed to the tiger, he decides to unveil himself and to be exposed to the female’s gaze, taking off his clothes and mask, being free of the fantasy of humanity, he is revealed as he really is, a beast. He lets behind the social construction and shows to the bride his animal side that was hidden behind it. Surprisingly the bride identifies herself to his no-human part and she also takes off her clothes and her mask of femininity construction. The consumption is mutual and her sexuality is liberating. “When I looked at the mirror again, my father had disappeared and I saw a pale, hollow-eyed girl whom I scarcely recognised.” For the first time, she is unveiled to herself. It’s the beginning of the recognition of the self. In spite of recognising it as a difficult process, the bride gets rid of the artificiality of gender construction. “I was so unused to my own skin that to take off all my clothes involved a kind of flaying.” Her maturation comes with her sexual realisation, her self-knowledge, discovery of her sexuality, her freedom from “the nursery fears”. “...his appetite need not to be my extinction.”

At the end of the tale the narrator describes the sexual consummation as a metaphor of her freedom of artificial femininity construction. “... each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent platina of shinning hairs.” Finally she is transformed into a tigress, her transformation into a beast can be seen as a revelation of the possibilities for alternative models of gender and sexuality and also the self assuming a new kind of subjectivity. Finally the bride gets rid of the several artificial skins that had been constructed upon her through the years. Carter’s goal is the elimination of gender differences, proposing the model of androgyny, with men and women adopting a combination of masculine and feminine attributes.

*(Androgyny – a being of ambiguous sexual identity.)*