In which ways do you think Carter depicts and challenges this view within ‘The Bloody Chamber?

At the beginning of the story Carter uses sexual imagery between the narrator and the Marquis. This makes the narrator seem powerless over the Marquis, as she is a virgin, and has not learned about her sexual power because of her youthful age and therefore is inexperienced. In a way she relies on the Marquis as he is much more experienced and is non virgin man. For the narrator, it is about self discovery, as Carter later on allows the narrator to experience the delights of her sexual consciousness. ‘I lay awake in the wagon-lit in tender, delicious ecstasy of excitement, my burning cheeks pressed against the impeccable linen of the pillow and the pounding of my heart mimicking that of the great pistons ceaselessly thrusting the train’. Carter uses verbs such as ‘pounding’ ‘burning and ‘thrusting’ to emphasise the excitement in the narrator as she experiences the act of sex.

Young women must undergo a rite of passage to teach them how to control their bodies and their desires as shown in ‘The Bloody Chamber’. ‘I had, in some way, ceased to be her child in becoming his wife’, as the narrator married at a youthful age she ‘knew nothing of the world’ or how to control her body, as in the story the Marquis eventually uses her and exploits her innocent and venerable body. Women should know how to control their desire as a ‘new women’ they can be in control and aware of their sexual needs and use their bodies to their full advantage.

The narrator is the Marquis’s possession rather than his wife. This is clearly shown as he demands and orders for the narrator to wear the ‘choker’ at all times. ‘His wedding gift, clasped round my throat, A choker of rubies, two inches wide, like an extraordinarily precious slit throat’. Wearing the ‘Choker’ indicates that as long as she wears this necklace, she is his possession and he is in control of her as if she is on a leash like a dog, and also symbolising the imprisonment of the narrator. The Marquis plans on keeping the narrator as an object after she is killed, intending to add her corpse, to his collectibles of his other wives. Carter uses the traditional conventions of the male being more superior as he uses her as a sexual object; he exploits her vulnerability in the most in a pornographic image when he undresses her while he is dressed ‘he stripped me, gourmand that he was, as if he were stripping the leaves off an artichoke… the child with her sticklike limbs, naked but for her button boots, her gloves, shielding her face with her hand as though her face were the last repository of her modesty’. From the quotation, Carter illustrates that the Marquis has used her to fulfil his pleasure, without acknowledging that the narrator is ashamed to show her femininity. This also symbolises the fact that he has taken the away the narrators ‘modesty’ just like he took her virginity for his pleasure. The narrator is seen reluctant and embarrassed as ‘her gloves shielding her face’. In addition, Carter represents the narrator as a ‘puppet women’ as she is controlled and played with as an object and not a wife and her femininity is trapped.

In traditional fairytales, the male figure is the dominant and controlling one; however Carter decides to challenge the traditional conventions of gothic literature allowing the women in ‘The Bloody Chamber’ to have a voice and to be able to have control over the male gender. A distinctive feature in ‘The Bloody Chamber’ is the narrator, she is the heroine, and giving the narrator a voice Carter is instantly challenges tradition. Allowing the female narrator to have a voice as she tells her story of the past events, Carter is empowering the status of women and giving them authority against the conventional male dominated roles. Carter develops the narrator’s character into a ‘new woman’ the narrator doesn’t let herself be controlled and is confident, this is shown when the narrator has the confidence to stand up to her husband by finding out his true nature which lies in the chamber. ‘I was determined, now, to search through them all for evidence of my husband's true nature.’ Carter allows the narrator to be control, not only is the narrator in control of her husband as she knows what lies in the chamber but also has the control in telling the audience about her husband’s nature.

Carter makes the narrator more powerful as she is given a blind lover. Carter than creates the male figures as inferior as the blind lover is unable to control the narrator or treat her as a sexual object. Through this Carter criticises myths and fairytales, promoting the ‘new woman’ as in ‘The Bloody Chamber’ Carter is idealising the ‘new woman’ as some women will change from being a ‘puppet woman’ to a ‘new woman’ this then challenges the traditional conventions of fairytales and gothic literature.