

"treacherous" place far away, allowing us to suspend our disbelief and accept the magical happenings of the story. The Beast's home is also a classic Gothic, "ruined" setting; with "infinite complexity" and "broken windows", the palace seems "uninhabited", the place almost seems dream like, again allowing a suspension of our disbelief of the story, in comparison the modern, city setting of London in the previous story, which makes our suspension of disbelief less likely.

In the "Bloody Chamber" the gothic conventions are contrived through the "richest man in France" he is a bearded nobleman who collects sadistic pornography and murders his wives in the bloody chamber of his seaside castle. The male character is first introduced as a mysterious figure. He gradually takes on more of an identity as the story unfolds. He is associated with symbols of wealth – "gold" and a "gigantic box", in which the narrator's "wedding dress is ... wrapped up (...) like a Christmas gift" – while his physical form is conveyed through a "kiss" and a "rasp of beard". The narrator builds his identity through recalling his "opulent male scent", and Carter places her characters in a mating game: the "exquisite tact" of his courtship of the girl is linked to the attentiveness of a lion stalking his prey. The explicit reference to his "dark mane" is the first of many allusions to his bestial qualities. His title is revealed when he is introduced as 'my Marquis' (p. 4), but he is given no other name. His identity is not fully revealed; this is emphasised by the description of his face as a "perfectly smooth" mask. Almost immediately after the Marquis has been introduced as a mysterious enigma, he is explicitly linked to a symbol that will recur throughout the story. The narrator makes a strange comparison between the man, as "a sentient vegetable", and a flower commonly associated with "familiar" matters: the lily. The suggestion here is that his cultured manners, calm detachment and composure are the product of an inhuman nature: he has the capacity to think but no real awareness of other people's feelings. There is "gravity" in his desire for his new wife, which she cannot resist, and this seems to be linked somehow to his with their beauty and almost overpowering heavy perfume. The Marquis remains shapeless and mysterious while the narrator recounts the beauty, talent and tragic demise of his first three wives; and she is clearly flattered by his invitation "to join this gallery of beautiful women". Carter here foreshadows the events of the story in a seemingly innocent remark that also alludes to the original story of Bluebeard. She glimpses, indirectly in his reflection, the way he views her as a piece of meat. The narrator's innocence and naivety attract the Marquis's "carnal avarice", while the Marquis represents to the narrator the mysterious and appealing danger of the unknown. This appeal is linked to her growing up and explains her willingness to expose herself to the risks involved in becoming an adult.