**Write a critical appreciation of this extract from The Bloody Chamber relating your discussion to your reading of Women In Literature. (30)**

***The Bloody Chamber* – Angela Carter. From *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* 1979**

Slowly, slowly, one foot before the other, I crossed the cobbles. The longer I dawdled over my

execution, the more time it gave the avenging angel to descend ...

'Don't loiter, girl! Do you think I shall lose appetite for the meal if you are so long about serving

it? No; I shall grow hungrier, more ravenous with each moment, more cruel ... Run to me, run! I

have a place prepared for your exquisite corpse in my display of flesh!'

He raised the sword and cut bright segments from the air with it, but still I lingered although my

hopes, so recently raised, now began to flag. If she is not here by now, her horse must have

stumbled on the causeway, have plunged into the sea ... One thing only made me glad; that my

lover would not see me die.

My husband laid my branded forehead on the stone and, as he had done once before, twisted

my hair into a rope and drew it away from my neck.

'Such a pretty neck,' he said with what seemed to be a genuine, retrospective tenderness. 'A

neck like the stem of a young plant.'

I felt the silken bristle of his beard and the wet touch of his lips as he kissed my nape. And, once

again, of my apparel I must retain only my gems; the sharp blade ripped my dress in two and it

fell from me. A little green moss, growing in the crevices of the mounting block, would be the

last thing I should see in all the world.

The whizz of that heavy sword.

And--a great battering and pounding at the gate, the jangling of the bell, the frenzied neighing of

a horse! The unholy silence of the place shattered in an instant. The blade did not descend, the

necklace did not sever, my head did not roll. For, for an instant, the beast wavered in his stroke,

a sufficient split second of astonished indecision to let me spring upright and dart to the

assistance of my lover as he struggled sightlessly with the great bolts that kept her out.

The Marquis stood transfixed, utterly dazed, at a loss. It must have been as if he had been

watching his beloved Tristan for the twelfth, the thirteenth time and Tristan stirred, then leapt

from his bier in the last act, announced in a jaunty aria interposed from Verdi that bygones were

bygones, crying over spilt milk did nobody any good and, as for himself, he proposed to live

happily ever after. The puppet master, open- mouthed, wide-eyed, impotent at the last, saw his

dolls break free of their strings, abandon the rituals he had ordained for them since time began

and start to live for themselves; the king, aghast, witnesses the revolt of his pawns.

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized by the winds and blown out to

sea so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts

tucked round her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my

father's service revolver and, behind her, the breakers of the savage, indifferent sea, like the

witnesses of a furious justice. And my husband stood stock- still, as if she had been Medusa,

the sword still raised over his head as in those clockwork tableaux of Bluebeard that you see in

glass cases at fairs.

And then it was as though a curious child pushed his centime into the slot and set all in motion.

The heavy, bearded figure roared out aloud, braying with fury, and, wielding the honourable

sword as if it were a matter of death or glory, charged us, all three.

On her eighteenth birthday, my mother had disposed of a man-eating tiger that had ravaged the

villages in the hills north of Hanoi. Now, without a moment's hesitation, she raised my father's

gun, took aim and put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head.

We lead a quiet life, the three of us. I inherited, of course, enormous wealth but we have given

most of it away to various charities. The castle is now a school for the blind, though I pray that

the children who live there are not haunted by any sad ghosts looking for, crying for, the

husband who will never return to the bloody chamber, the contents of which are buried or

burned, the door sealed...