

**Traumatized Bodies/Minds in Angela Carter's Works: A Study of Disabled Characters' social exclusion towards a more inclusion**

**Wiem Krifa**

*Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sousse*

[wimaksousse@yahoo.fr](mailto:wimaksousse@yahoo.fr)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5841-2740>

**Received:** 09/01/2026

**Accepted:** 13/01/2026

**Published:** 10/03/2026

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Angela Carter's works exhibit social exclusion of people with disabilities. Referring to the social and medical models of disability studies, the writer highlights the role society plays in enhancing disabled persons' predicaments. In *Nights at The Circus*, *Fevvers'* and *Toussaint's* social exclusion hinders their progress and limits their economic independence. Society proves to be responsible for their marginalization and undermined position. What the writer advances in her narrative is a more social inclusive framework that backs disabled people and ushers them into equality and justice. The way the writer studies disability in relation to gender opens further horizons for the female disabled category. In her short story "The Bloody Chamber", the writer deconstructs the internalized social prejudices based on unjust beauty and normalcy criteria. The blind music tuner's moral beauty provides him with a deep insight that empowers him over the abled Marquis.*

**KEYWORDS:** Disability, Society, Exclusion, Gender, Identity.

## Introduction

In her novel *Nights at The Circus* and the collection of short stories *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter provides the readers with a rich material that examines the social, economic and gendered marginalization of disabled characters. At the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the works anticipate the rise of the civil rights movements, the birth of the feminist movements and the initial appeal for recognition and equal rights for disabled citizens. The disabled characters in Carter's writings are depicted as socially, economically and sexually undermined. The female characters, notably Fevvers, are doubly marginalized due to their gender identity. With its intricate branches, disability studies cover a wide and varied range of subjects. "The social model of disability is predicated upon the dichotomy of disability and impairment, which proves vulnerable to objections. [...] Moreover, the social model ignores lived body of individuals and the inside-out perspective on disability" (Eli 713). In literature, Critical disability theory aims to challenge ableism and disablism. Carter's concern in disability studies is different from other writers in that she yokes disability to gender classifications in order to highlight the social atrocity towards disabled characters in general and female ones in particular.

The social construction of disability outweighs the health problem which, most of the times, could be medically cured. We can refer to the character of Toussaint in *Nights at The Circus*, "The social model of disability represents the disability movements 'big idea', and since its formulation, it has received sustained appraisal and critique. Despite its activist/scholarly currency, critics suggest the social model has experiential and theoretical limitations, and one fraught area is the split between impairment and disability" (Thornycroft 286). Over the last recent years, disability studies have gone beyond the social field and the medical one to include the literary realm. This particular type of inclusive literature works to appease the anxieties and fears of disabled people caused by constant marginalization and inflicted injustice. The maltreatment of disabled people is due to the internalized assumptions about the universality of the human definition of normalcy, which leads to the rejection of the "other" who does not conform to the ideal mythic model of physical beauty. Literature reflects life and raises the awareness of readers towards disabled people in reality. As Simi Linton avers: disabilities studies represent "a prism through which one can gain a broader understanding of society and human experience" (118). The literary impact has proven significant in improving the disabled people's situations. Similarly, Carter is not an exception in her depiction of the diminished disabled characters positions and their marginalization within the social sphere. Carter's writings neatly deal with the tight relationship between gender and disabilities. In this context, following the social and medical models of disabilities, this article aims to study the painful experiences of disabled characters in Angela Carter's *Nights at The Circus* and *The Bloody Chamber* and the role society plays in enhancing their disabilities. As a first part, the focus will be primarily on the imprisoned disabled characters in Madame Schrek's Museum of monsters as undermined figures in *Nights at The Circus*. Gendered identities will be studied as enhancing aspects of the disabled characters' experiences of marginalization and social rejection. An additional question to be tackled regarding the way literature and medicine intertwine to lighten the pain felt by disabled characters such as Toussaint. The second section will concentrate on *The Bloody Chamber*. The analysis will focus on the study of two disabled male characters' social marginalization and isolated life journeys: The blind piano teacher and the tiger Man.

### 1. Fevvers: an impaired female that challenges normalcy standards.

In *Nights at The Circus*, the narrative unfolds the existence of different male and female disabled characters. Though, the physical impairments seem to differ from one character to another, the social and economic conditions are identical for all of them. The disabled characters are economically and socially undermined compared to abled people. The prominent disabled character is Fevvers whose gigantic abnormal female body and severe economic situation make her a prey for Madam Shreak. Fevvers' unique winged female body sets her apart from the normal human beings and intrigues the male characters to decipher its secret. Standing as an enigmatic circus arealist, Fevvers is classified beyond the normal

category of human beings. Her features and physical distinguished characteristics are what attract males to reappropriate her as an object to be gazed at.

She was twice as large as life and as succinctly finite as any object that is intended to be seen, not handled. [...]Then she spread out her superb, heavy arms in a backwards gesture of benediction and, as she did so, her wings spread, too, a polychromatic unfolding fully six feet across, spread of an eagle, a condor, an albatross fed to excess on the same diet that makes flamingos pink. (Carter 13)

Fevvers' case of disability is viewed through her abnormal female body. The disabled body triggers the gaze of the abled category. She is defined as an abnormal human being by the other normal members of society. What's noticeable is that the disabled or the abnormal bodies accept their disability and survive their pain until it is highlighted by other so called normal human beings. The emphasis on "seeing" is significant in relation to the members of society who classify people with disabilities as the "other". The spectators are those who stigmatize Fevvers as abnormal and disabled seeing her feathered wings. The disabled characters are intimidated under the fixed gaze of normal or abled human beings. Her body triggers perplexity among the spectators whose sole goal is to divulge her real or fictitious nature as a winged woman. Though it brings her fame, her wings are the reason behind her exclusion and marginalization within society. Explaining the origin of her wings, Fevvers avers: "I never docked via what you might call the normal channels but, just like Helen of Troy, was hatched 'hatched out of a bloody great egg while Bow Bells rang as ever is!" (3). The abnormal circumstances of Fevvers' birth origin raise people's curiosity to the point of doubting her abnormal and freak female body. Her gigantic female body is beyond the norms of normalcy and socially categorized as deviant. Under economic necessity, Fevvers exhibits her abnormal physical features at the circus in order to earn a living. The American journalist Walser views her as the mysterious "other" who defies normalcy, and therefore he embarks on inspecting her deviance that stands behind her worldwide fame as a winged circus arealiste. She is presented as an object to be gazed at, and as an enigmatic element of the circus show. As such, the defiant /abnormal female heroine brings cheerfulness and pleasure to the normal spectators. The binary division between the normal "they" and the abnormal or defiant "she" yields an antagonistic relationship. Walser's aim, at the beginning of the novel, is to debunk the reality of Fevvers' claimed wings and to reveal the fakeness of her wings and birth conditions. At this level, we can refer to the double marginalization of the circus arealiste who is stigmatized due to her freak wings and female gendered identity. Taking into consideration the fictional nature of the narrative, Fevvers' wings, together with her gigantic female body, are questioned and doubted by most male characters, mainly Walser who embarks on a circus journey for the sake of revealing her true identity. Fevvers' physical impairment and exceptional female body collude with her female gendered identity to enhance her double marginalization within a patriarchal society.

Throughout her circus trip, Fevvers encounters various male characters, all of whom intend to check her real birth origin, own her and ensure whether she is a real human being or a fabulous creature. Their attitudes demonstrate the human internalized rejection of the "other" who is different from the common group and exceed the standards of normalcy. This frame of mind becomes sharper when it comes to an impaired female creature. Gender creates a more antagonistic relationship between society and the individual. Fevvers' case is more complicated since she is a woman with impairment. Females have always been relegated to an equal position to disabled people and this patriarchal tendency yields the interdisciplinarity between feminism and disability studies. In her *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Rosemarie Thomson deduces that:

Parallels exist between the social meanings attributed to female bodies and those assigned to disabled bodies. Both the female and the disabled body are cast as deviant and inferior; both are excluded from full participation in public as well as economic life; both are defined in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural physical superiority. Indeed, the discursive equation of femaleness with disability is common, sometimes to denigrate women and sometimes to defend them. (19)

The feminist discourse, at this level, is tightly linked to the critical disability studies knowing the alliance between females and disabled persons, let alone disabled women. Hence, studying Fevvers' as an impaired female with her gigantic winged body falls within the category of disabled studies. As such, Fevvers' predicament becomes more complicated because of her gendered status. What distinguishes Carter's novel from other feminist disability studies is her inclusion of male disabled characters apart from female ones. Her study unfolds various models of disabled and impaired characters who vary from female to male and bisexual ones. The proliferation of the feminist theories has proffered the birth of the feminist disability theory that gives special attention to the excluded female disabled characters, who are doubly cast within the social sphere. This alternative view advances the importance of reading the female body as a prerequisite to overcome disability and move on to the rehabilitation stage. A feminist disability study of the character requires a close scrutiny of the female physical body. Physiognomy and the ideal beauty standards are highly stressed in *Nights at The Circus*, though the female body transcends the human physical criteria. The female heroine: Fevvers embodies beauty standards as well as deviance. The coexistence of opposites is meant by the writer to deconstruct the rigid binary oppositions between normalcy and deviance; abled and disabled persons. Fevvers is a mixture of beauty and ugliness; of female traits and masculine inherent characteristics. Her enigmatic birth is symbolic of the birth of the new woman at the dawn of the twentieth century. Even though most of the disabled characters undergo medical treatments and go through rehabilitation process, Fevvers remains intact, to assert her normalcy and debunk the social and ideological rumours surrounding her exceptional corporeal appearance. This is to say that some disabilities urge medical interventions whereas others are not considered as illnesses and should be accepted within society.

Carter's feminist narrative bears a deconstructive tendency of the fixed gendered identities and common social view of disability and physical impairment. This interrelation between disability and gender brings to the fore another equally crucial question related to equality and inequality. The three discourses go in parallel with the civil rights activist movements which appeal for the disabled category's integration within mainstream society. Since literature mirrors life, Carter's text is not an exception in illustrating disabled characters 'struggles in social life. Fevvers' distinguished bodily traits attract the spectators' attention and increase Walser's inquisitiveness to unravel her secret. Reminiscing her childhood physical features, Fevvers addresses Walser saying: "When I was a baby, you could have distinguished me in a crowd of foundlings only by just this little bit of down, of yellow fluff, on my back, on top of both my shoulder blades. Just like the fluff on a chick, it was" (9-11). The emphasis is put on her freakish physical description and differentiated beauty. The writer accentuates Fevvers' distinctiveness in a positive and beautiful manner from the other human beings, aiming to convey that impaired and disabled people exhibit their own beauty which oversteps the social internalized and imposed models of beauty. Indeed, one of the most omnipresent feminist goals of Carter in all her writings is to deconstruct binarism at all levels and to celebrate multiplicity, coexistence and heterogeneity. Carter debunks the norms of beauty as they are accepted among human beings and dictated by society's rules and customs. She provides, instead, other models of beauty, though different from the accepted norm. Examining Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, one can think of the importance of breaking down the inherently unjust binary pairs; able versus disabled; beautiful versus ugly. "Bodies in the Borderlands" presents a character of "prosthetic subjectivity" which denotes personal and different construction of the "self" (118). The human subjectivity is constituted out of external physical and internal moral and psychological aspects which vary from one person to another. Hence, it is an inherent aspect of the human nature to be different from the others and to bear a "prosthetic subjectivity". Seen in this way, Fevvers' different beauty is supposed to be welcomed and accepted within society, rather than viewed as exotic and impaired "other". The social exclusion and marginalization of people who deviate from the standard norms of beauty complicate their alienation and can even yield further disabilities mainly the psychological ones. Borrowing Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept, those "extraordinary bodies" are kept out of the social sphere and gathered together in a freak show where they are displayed as rare species of human beings, each of which bears a unique and different disability and

handicap. In actual facts, Baynton asserts that the 1904 World's Fair's "display of 'fectives' alongside displays of 'primitives' signaled similar and interconnected classification schemes" (Baynton 36-37). The same historical event is evoked in Carter's *Nights at The Circus*, from a historiographical metafictional standpoint to denote the marginalization, exploitation and exclusion of abnormal and disabled characters, including the winged Fevvers.

## 2- Madame Shrek's Museum of Monsters: a Show of exiled disabled characters

One important aspect of *Nights at The Circus*, is Fevvers's omniscient storytelling and domination over the narration. Preparing herself for her coming circus show, Fevvers indulges in a lengthy narration of her life events to the American Journalist Walser. One significant milestone event is her adventure at Madame Shrek's Museum of monsters where she is considered as a precious and unique creature to be gazed at as a rare object in the world. The museum of monsters embodies a prototype of the 1908's World fair that displayed disabled and handicapped people as an isolated category that does not belong to mainstream society. Carter's use of historiographical metafiction aims to reinforce her feminist perspective towards disabled people and to criticize the social model of disability that yields injustice and the dehumanization of a category of human beings who are judged as abnormal due to their physical difference or diseases from which they suffer. What the writer aspires to achieve is to raise the readers' awareness to investigate more the social model of disability that proves to be unfair by penalizing people with physical differences instead of smoothly integrating them within the rehabilitation process. Madame Shrek's museum of monsters proves to be an exile for disabled characters who under economic necessity, surrender to her bargain and accept to be displayed as rare species. The female owner seeks to buy human beings with impairment in order to display them in her museum for her pervert visitors. Fevvers, the writer's heroine, is a winged female who agrees unwillingly to move on to Madame Shrek's museum. Upon her arrival, the heroine is shocked to discover the mysterious museum. "Well, Fevvers," madame Shrek says, "I've a proposition for you [...] I want you for my museum of woman monsters" (61). Fevvers is perceived as an object of inspection due to her gigantic female body and wings. Actually, Madame Shrek "catered for those who were troubled in their... souls" (63). Carter's implicit criticism of the social category classified as normal human beings is conspicuous through her reference to their "troubled souls" which themselves stand as an impairment. This is an evidence that all human beings bear a particular impairment whether it is physically visible or invisible. The social role in enforcing ableism and disablism is highly stressed in Carter's narrative. The embedded feminist objective revolves around an urgent transformation of the social view of disability in general and disabled people in particular. Carter's advanced successful model is conveyed through the character of the American journalist Walser who sets up as a traditional social figure aiming to debunk Fevvers' status and ends by accepting her difference and marrying her. Every attempt, in fact, to display the social marginalization and injustice towards disabled people signifies a social corrective goal towards disabled people. Scrutinizing Fevvers' case, together with her impaired mates, we come to deduce that disabled characters are restricted by the social limitations rather than by their own physical impairment. The fact of gathering physically disabled people, impaired and sexually different ones in one museum, to be gazed at as extraordinary creatures, assets the social point of view about disability and attitudes towards disabled people in general regardless of their sexual and gendered identities. Fevvers has become notorious for her wings and her enigmatic female shape. This leads to her sexual exploitation and estrangement within an intolerant world. Her dissimilar beauty and distinct personality resulted in her exclusion by society. What Carter endeavours to convey is the urgent need to change the social demeanour towards disabled people. Walser symbolizes the new social frame of mind that undergoes a process of change to end by accepting the other who is physically different from the majority of society. Even Madame Shrek's museum of monsters symbolizes the social world in miniature with its authoritarian and intolerant owner who maltreats and exploits the impaired people. To Fevvers' surprise, she meets other disabled characters in Madame Shrek's Museum of monsters, who are no less marginalized than her. The owner selects persons with rare disabilities to exhibit them in her show and earn money. "Those fine gentlemen who paid down their

sovereigns to poke and pry at us who were the unnatural, not we. For what is “natural” and “unnatural”, sir? Says Fevvers to Walser (68). The writer’s critical tone is embedded within Fevvers’ speech who debunks the absurd division between natural abled persons and unnatural disabled ones. Society perceives impaired human beings as unnatural since they do not adhere to the social norms of beauty that are taken for granted as natural. The social stigmatization of impaired characters is conspicuously conveyed through their classification as unnatural creatures.

To study the case of Toussaint “that self-same fellow with no mouth, poor thing, opens the door to [Fevvers] and bids [her] come in with his eloquent gestures of his hands” (63). Similarly to other neglected disabled characters, Toussaint is overwhelmed by sadness caused by the social injustice vis a vis his physical malformation. To refer to Fevvers’ depiction of him, she avers: “I never saw eyes so full of sorrow as his were, sorrow of exile and of abandonment; his eyes said, clear as his lips could have, “Oh, girl! Go home! Save yourself while there is yet time!” even while he takes away my hat and shawl, but I am the same poor creature of necessity as he, and, as he must stay, then so needs I” (63-4). The psychological trauma of disabled characters is conspicuous and reflects their awareness of being exploited by their social surrounding. Driven by economic necessity, the disabled characters succumb to Madame Shreak’s bargain, though aware of her exploitation and abuse. Apart from Fevvers, who is the heroine of the novel, all other disabled characters are minor ones, and as such, they are merely physically depicted and never centrally represented. Carter intends to display the social prejudices towards disabled characters and reveal their economic and sexual exploitation by the alleged normal members of society. Characters beyond the normal are categorized as freaks to be cast away and reappropriated as objects, while only some studies have considered their painful experiences. Toussaint’s disability leads to his misemployment and abuse by Madame Shreak. He is the manservant within the museum of monsters deployed by Madame Shreak to imprison her disabled hostages. “Toussaint” she says: “get in a man to block up all the chimneys immediately!” (65). However, despite the psychological pain, Toussaint always keeps his tender attitude towards the other disabled characters and feels the heavy responsibility of lightening their sadness. The disabled characters’ painful experience and traumatized life are inflicted upon them by Madame Shreak, who is considered to pertain to the category of normal human beings and represent the social demeanour. She gathers the whole, except Toussaint who resists his humiliation, in a Tableau Vivant for the sake of displaying them to her “normal” though pervert visitors. Recalling her painful exile within the museum of monsters, Fevvers addresses the journalist Walser saying: “who worked for Madame Schreck, Sir? Why, prodigies of nature, such as I. Dear old Fanny Four-Eyes; and the sleeping Beauty; and the Wiltshire Wonder, who was not three foot high, and Albert/Albertina, who was bipartite, that is to say, half and half and neither of either; and the girl we called Cobwebs” (66). People who are beyond normalcy are bought by Madame Shreak and exhibited as wonders of nature. Their undergoing pain is beyond description, crippling their traumatized psyches and impeding them from revolution. Toussaint is a typical disabled man who does not have a mouth and eats “through a tube up his nose [...] Liquids only but sufficient to sustain life” (67). Another area to consider when dealing with the character of Toussaint is the contrast between his physical characterization and the moral one. Despite his explicit physical impairment, he is depicted as a benign character whose kindness appeases Fevvers’ pain. Though his disability is physically apparent, the absence of his mouth connotes his deprivation from his right to freely speak and express his inner struggles. This fact sheds light on the deeply internalized prejudices underpinning society’s perception of disabled citizens. The latter are penalized for their physical appearance while their authentic interior nature is totally denied. Despite his severe impairment, Toussaint preserves his dignity and shuns joining the tableau vivant. He toils in order to earn his living and never sacrifices his respectability. This leads us to deduce that “At the heart of disability is a recognition that disability is a cultural construction” (Rose 2). Toussaint surmounts his physical disability but fails to break the cultural and social barriers that stigmatize him as a disabled person. Despite his severe health problems, he never concedes to Madame Shreak’s corruptive business. This is to confirm that disability is a question of social mindset rather than an apparent

physical impairment. Ironically enough, the men who watch Madame Shreak's Tableau vivant are depicted by Fevvers as "quite remarkable for their ugliness; their faces suggested that he who cast the human form in the first place did not have his mind on the job" (Carter 68). The writer reverses the standards of beauty and disability, to stress out the importance of the human interior beauty or ugliness. She reveals the social metrics of outward beauty by accentuating the momentousness of innermost beauty. The writer's irony in conveying the arbitrary nature of beauty's criteria is discernible through the ironic depiction of the male visitors. The binary division of human beings into natural and unnatural; beautiful and ugly is not based on solid grounds, rather culturally and socially created to empower a hegemonic group over a weaker category. A typical case of study is exemplified through the collection of weak disabled people in Madame Shreak's museum as a tableau vivant. Ensuring her freedom from the museum, after running away from the prison-like museum, Fevvers liberates all the disabled characters from Madame Shreak's tight grip and makes sure to submit Toussaint to various medical surgeries that culminated with success. In this context, Fevvers declares triumphantly:

I'm happy to say that, since I began to prosper on the halls and started to frequent the company of men of science, I was able to interest Sir S-J- in Toussaint's case and he was successfully operated upon at ST Bartholomew's Hospital two years ago last February. And now Toussaint has a mouth as good as yours or mine! You'll find a full account of the operation in The Lancet For June, 1898, Sir. (67)

The medical role in recuperating Toussaint's standard shape is highly emphasized in Fevvers' speech. One reading of *Nights at The Circus* suggests the importance to yoke the different disability theoretical approaches to uplift disabled people's conditions and position within society. Thus, the reference to the critical disability theory, feminist disability theory, added to the social and medical models might be necessary to improve disabled people 'social status and recuperate their human rights. Although it is not always possible to medically treat disabled people, still it is necessary to do it when it is achievable. As far as Fevvers is concerned, the writer emphasizes the social role to integrate impaired persons within the social conventional life by acknowledging their inalienable human as well as social, political and economic rights. Accompanying Fevvers, all along her circus journey, Walser falls in love with Fevvers despite her different and impaired female body. When society as a whole and more specifically citizens accept disabled people, the economic and the political barriers are, subsequently, eliminated and new horizons are opened to this so long undermined category.

One of the central foci of this study is to stress the paramount importance of the job medicine performs to save disabled people from social torture and marginalization. While society tends to widen the gap between its members on the basis of physical prejudices, medicine and scientific advancements work hard to uplift disabled people 's social status by remedying their physical impairments through physical surgeries and healing their psyches through psycho surgeries that follow the bodily medical interventions. Hence calls for justice have appeared globally, asking for disabled people's legal rights and talking about " how the good and bad in life should be distributed among the members of society" ( Pineda 27). The disabled characters succumbed to Madame Shreak's humiliating job due to the economic injustice and social marginalization they have submitted to. As such, medicine and literature are part of efforts to elevate the status of disabled people. Feminist disability studies dig deep into the roots of disablism and ableism and raise the reader's awareness by providing solutions. Medicine provides practical ways to heal them through physical and psycho surgeries. In Toussaint's case, medicine heals what society has injured in the disabled character. "by reading about characters with disabilities and vicariously experiencing their struggles" (Oliver 27), we can detect the social role in enhancing physical disability and depriving disabled persons from their human rights. In the case of Fevvers, "disability proves to be a social construct and not the inevitable result of impairment"( 27). The social stigmatisation hinders disabled people's progress and rehabilitation process.

### 3- The Blind musical teacher in “The Bloody Chamber”: The bride’s savior.

Similarly to her novel *Nights at The Circus*, Carter initiates her short story “The Bloody Chamber” by displaying the social exclusion of disabled characters prior to providing her readers with a corrective social perspective of the studied disability cases. In “The Bloody Chamber”, Carter conveys both: social exclusion and inclusion of a physically disabled male characters. The narrative starts with female victimization by a male abled authoritarian figure. The young pianist is imprisoned within the confines of her husband’s isolated castle which looks like Bluebeard’s. Meeting her piano teacher for the first time, the protagonist describes him as follows: “After my three hours of practice, I called the piano-tuner in, to thank him. He was blind, of course; but young, with a gentle mouth and grey eyes that fixed upon me although they could not see me” (Carter 18). His physical characterization is rather positive despite his disability. The young pianist focuses on the positive aspects which attract her despite his blindness. This is to show that even disabled people bear beauty traits and are sexually attractive. The fact of feeling his masculine gaze despite his blindness is very telling and foreshadows their future matrimony. One prominent difference between Toussaint, for example, and the piano teacher is the latter’s social embracement despite his handicap and without recurring to any medical intervention.

Driven by her childish curiosity, and during the absence of The Marquis, the young bride disobeys his orders and opens his forbidden room where she discovers his previous wives’ corpses. Looking for a shelter, she hides herself in the musical room where she discovers the soothing presence of her blind musical teacher. His physical disability makes him an easy prey for the abled male owner who exiles him in the castle similarly to his wives. The strong link between handicapped or disabled males and women is very conspicuous throughout Carter’s writings. The feminist cause, in this vein, is to uplift disabled persons and back their social inclusion regardless of their gender identities or orientations. The Marquis’ choice of a blind male tuner to support his wife’s musical learning process is purposefully done to ensure the absence of any visual contact between both. Added to that, the fact of confining the blind male musical teacher in the castle, similarly to his new bride connotes his relegation to a female position. The Marquis’ deemeanour towards the blind music tuner works to reinforce the socially internalized exclusion of disabled people and, more particularly, the undermining of male disabled people to a position equal to discredited women. This socially ascribed view is subverted within Carter’s narrative which unfolds the empowerment of the disabled male character over the abled tyrant one. The moral triumph of the blind music teacher resists the whole social definition of moral beauty which used to be related to normal people. In contradistinction to the social and cultural assumptions regarding the standards of beauty, the music tuner embodies physical as well as moral beauty notwithstanding his physical handicap. Carter’s deconstruction of dogmatic rigid binarism such as beautiful versus ugly; able versus disabled bears a corrective social goal. The social inclusion of disabled characters alleviates their plight and fascillates their habilitation process. The role literature dramatizes in correcting the social opinion about disabled people is apparent through the writer’s inversion of their positions within the story.

While The Marquis imbues his wife with terror and haunting death, the blind piano teacher appeases her soul and heals her disturbed mind with music. As she says: “Yet nothing, this morning, gave me more than a fleeting pleasure except to hear that the piano-tuner had been at work already” (18). What’s more, the role the piano teacher plays in saving the protagonist deconstructs the social view of his physical disability. The latter turns out to be a mere social and ideological sense of inferiority more than a physically crippling hinder. Studying both male characters, one comes to the conclusion that disability lies more in the ideological and social mindset rather than the physical body. The writer debunks the social stigmatization of disabled people by delving deep into the human nature and revealing the triumph of moral beauty despite the prevalence of physical disability. Not only does Carter stress the dominance of the piano tuner’s physical beauty but she, also, highlights his ethical behaviour towards the about- to be- decapitated bride. One result of the above analysis is the need to understand and integrate disabled characters and to re-

evaluate the social norms of beauty which should include the moral and ethical standards apart from the physical traits. Disability should be viewed as well from the moral perspective as it is the case for The Marquis who suffers, actually, from a moral disability notwithstanding his abled body. Hence, through her fictional works, Carter brings to the fore the importance of disability social model in alleviating disabled citizens' sufferings. As disability scholar Liz Crow acknowledges:

It has enabled a vision of ourselves free from the constraints of disability (oppression) and provided a direction for our commitment to social change. It has played a central role in promoting disabled people's individual self-worth, collective identity, and political organization. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the social model has saved lives. ( 207)

Part of disabled people's problem requires rethinking their social position as citizens. Their exclusion from social integration, deprivation from job opportunities and life joys are their real problems. This case applies to the music tuner who due to his physical impairment is rejected by society. In her book *The Rejected Body*, Susan Wendell; a disabled philosopher makes a sharp distinction between healthy disabled people and unhealthy disabled ones (22) The latter category suffers mostly from attitudinal hindrances more than real health problems, represented through the example of the music tuner. Hence, the social disability model lends itself to the study of the category of healthy disabled people like the music tuner, whereas for the case of Toussaint, for instance, it is necessary to make recourse to both the medical and social models due to his unhealthy disability. An equally important aspect to hint to is the fact that most professionals in medicine sympathize with disabled people and object to their social exclusion. As such, it is possible to yoke both models while studying some disability cases. As far as Carter's novels are concerned, an eclectic approach unfolding the use of both the social and the medical models of disability is advisable. Relating theorists' thoughts to Carter's texts, we can claim the existence of both cases. The task performed by the music teacher affirms the urgent need to consider his social inclusion as a normal "healthy disabled" person who defies his social marginalization.

At his arrival, The Marquis discovers his wife's disobedience of his orders and announces her near decapitation. The pianist only shelter is her musical room where she gives free vent to her imprisoned feelings and finds solace in the music tuner's secret company. His secret presence empowers her female being.

'Forgive me,' said Jean-Yves. 'I know I've given you grounds for dismissing me, that I should be crouching outside your door at midnight ... but I heard you walking about, up and down--I sleep in a room at the foot of the west tower--and some intuition told me you could not sleep and might, perhaps, pass the insomniac hours at your piano. And I could not resist that. (Carter 18)

The music tuner's telepathic powers are much stronger than the Marquis'. He feels the bride's distress and sacrifices his life for the sake of protecting her, contrary to the tyrannical Marquis who seeks her death. The difference between both is neatly designed within the narrative. Another important point to be hint to is Jean-Yves's refined musical taste which defies his blindness. Hence, art unites the blind teacher and the abled bride into a common cause, just to reinforce their human equality. His handicap does not stop him from falling in love with the pianist. Their love union defies his disability and all social barriers that might sever them. She confidently narrates: " My lover kissed me, he took my hand. He would come with me if I would lead him"(20). Despite his blindness, Jean- Yves falls in love with the pianist and attenuates her loneliness. The pianist symbolizes social acceptance of disability whereas the Marquis stands for the social rejection of disabled people and disability in general. Glimpsing both of his wife and the music tuner together, the Marquis addresses them in an ironic way. " Let the blind lead the blind, eh? (22 ) He metaphorically compares his wife's innocence and acceptance of him as a husband to a handicap. Blindness is symbolically deployed as a lack of insight rather than physical sight.

The writer exhibits two models of males: the abled bridegroom and the disabled music tuner. What strikes a sharp distinction between both is their moral characterization rather than the physical one. Literature's role, in this vein, is to enhance the social integration of disabled people. As readers, we are implicitly guided to compare both male characters and to evaluate the positions of both. Hence, the dire appeal to refigure the criteria of human normalcy and beauty mainly through the social inclusion of disabled people.

When the Marquis insists on decapitating his newly married wife, due to her disobedience, nobody comes to her rescue but her blind music teacher. The latter accompanies her till the altar offering himself as a scapegoat instead of her. The heroic role played by the blind character exceeds the mythical grandeur of the Marquis. This is to remind the reader that disability is moral rather than physical. Surviving death, The pianist and Jean-yves "lead a quiet life"(23). The fact that he does not see the bloody mark, pressed on her forehead by The Marquis fills her heart with relief. She declares: "No paint nor powder, no matter how thick or white, can mask that red mark on my forehead; I am glad he cannot see it—not fear of his revulsion, since I know he sees me clearly with his heart" (23). Moral beauty is highly emphasized at this level and helps deconstruct the importance given to physical beauty by society's members who tend to create fake presumptions about disabled people and the issue of disability. This idea is already raised by disability theorist Jenny Morris who avers that "all the undermining messages, which we receive every day of our lives from the non-disabled world which surrounds us, become part of our way of thinking about ourselves" (22). Society exercises a great negative or positive influence on disabled people who unconsciously internalize their social marginalization and behave accordingly or welcome their social integration. Hence, accepting his moral beauty, makes Jean-yves fall in love with the pianist and surmount his blindness. The pianist feels happy marrying the blind music tuner who loves her and sees her "with his heart" rather than judge her according to societal beauty criteria. The heroine's identification with the blind character urges a more inclusive social actions for disable people. Carter's literary message to alter the social view about the disabled category and disability in general is neatly suggested in her narrative.

## Conclusion

Although it is still considered to be a ubiquitous unspoken topic in today's culture, literature plays a significant role in unveiling the social injustice against disabled people. What's more, literature can benefit from the medical model as well as the social model of disability which could intersect to improve the status of disabled people. In *Nights at The Circus*, the focus has been on the study of the abnormal female character Fevvers whose journey has witnessed various gendered hardships and social exclusion. Though, her passage has been tough, she ends by being socially included and integrated by marrying the normal Walser. Besides, the second disability case dealt with is Toussaint who is bought by madame Shreak, together with other disabled characters, to be exhibited in her museum of monsters. The analysis followed an intersection between the social and medical models in Toussaint's case since his social integration is dependent on the medical intervention he undergoes and which transforms him from an unhealthy disabled man to a healthy abled one. Society's role in enhancing disabilities is dealt with at length, seeking to deconstruct the rigid social norms related to normalcy and beauty. While analysing the short story "The Bloody Chamber", the writer contrasts and compares physical and moral beauties and disabilities. The Blind Jean-yves proves to be more morally insightful and handsome than the abled Marquis who embodies moral short sightedness and ugliness. In this short story the social taken for granted beauty criteria are reversed to facilitate the integration of the blind music tuner. The writer refigures the social understanding of beauty, aiming for a more inclusive measures for disabled people. As such, starting from depicting the social exclusion of disabled characters and ending by achieving their inclusion and medical rehabilitation process represents a daring corrective literary step towards more governmental and human rights actions for the benefit of the disabled category.

## References

- Andrews, Sharon E. "Using Inclusion Literature to Promote Positive Attitudes toward Disabilities." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 41, no. 6, 1998, pp. 420–26. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40016767>. Accessed 11 Mar. 2025.
- Arzroomchilar, Eli. "Why Disability Is Technologically Mediated?" *Human Studies*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2024, pp. 713–726. *SpringerLink*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-024-09722-9>
- Baynton, Douglas C. "Disability and the Defamiliarization of the Normal." *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 5th ed., Routledge, 2017, pp. 35-44.
- Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Penguin Books, 1993.
- , ---. *Nights at the Circus*. Viking, 1984.
- Crow, Liz. "Including All of Our Lives: Renewing the Social Model of Disability." *Disability & Illness: Exploring the Divide*, edited by Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer, Disability Press, 1996, pp. 207–221.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia UP, 1997.
- Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. New York U P, 1998.
- Morris, Jenny. *Pride Against Prejudice: Transforming Attitudes to Disability*. New Society Publishers, 1991.
- Oliver, Mike. *The Politics of Disablement*. Macmillan Education, 1990
- Pineda, Eduardo. *The Ethics of Justice*. XYZ P, 2020.
- Ramlow, Todd R. "Bodies in the Borderlands: Gloria Anzaldúa's and David Wojnarowicz's Mobility Machines." *MELUS*, vol. 31, no. 3, Fall 2006, pp. 169–187. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/30029651>.
- Rose, Nikolas. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton UP, 2007.
- Thorneycroft, Ryan. "Screwing the Social Model of Disability." *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2024, pp. 286-299.
- Wendell, Susan. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. Routledge, 1996.
- Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton U P, 1990.