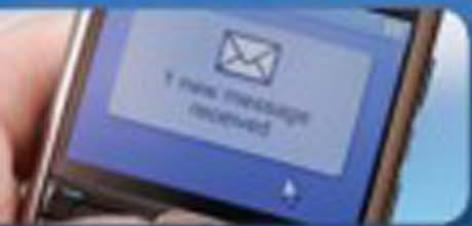


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# Research Chronicler

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# Research Chronicler

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## Negotiating the Patriarchal Authority: The Magic Toyshop

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### Abstract

The paper makes an attempt to display Angela Carter's early preoccupation with the destructive effects of patriarchal culture on both men and women. It also brings to the readers images of human lives that are caught up in the regimental gender roles. However, Carter's characters like Ghislaine, Melanie and Kay Kytes challenge the patriarchal hegemony by creating carnivalesque mood and by playing multiple roles which emphasize the performative nature of gender.

**Key Words:** Patriarchy, culture, gender, hegemony

*The Magic Toyshop* is a complex project, telling about three children Melanie, Jonathan and Victoria – whose liberal, educated middle-class parents are killed in an air crash while in the United States. The orphaned children are forced to move out of the safe comforts of their home in the country to the South London house of their mother's estranged brother, Uncle Philip. Philip Flower is a toymaker who sells his pieces to a nearby shop. Married to an Irish Woman, Margaret, he lives with her brothers, Finn and Francie Jowle. The material conditions of life are completely changed for the children, from the bourgeois comfort to something less prosperous. Further, Carter focuses on the spirit of their life. The novel's main focus is on Melaine since her siblings are too young. During the critical stage in her life, (adolescence), she is forced to change her home and guardianship. Her encounter with the dominant patriarchal, psychic world of Uncle Philip and his toyshop is an important preoccupation of the novel. Carter also dwell's deep into a youngman's – Finn's – confrontation with the *Toyshop* is the way in which men as well as women may be

negatively affected by patriarchy and how they seek to resist it.. Carter's main concern in *The Magic Toyshop* is the way in which men as well as women may be negatively affected by patriarchy and how they seek to resist it.

*The Magic Toyshop* opens with a description of Melanie's fifteenth summer, which denotes the transition from childhood to adulthood. This is the stage of narcissistic desire, in which Melanie, self consciously posing in front of her bedroom mirror, can try out a variety of feminine roles patriarchy assigns to women without having to particularly commit herself to any of them. The Author says 'the slowly ripening embryo of Melanie grown-up' [MT – 20], suggesting that she is gestating inside herself and has not yet been born. The struggle going on for the styling of Melanie's body is quite evident in this opening episode. As she traces the outlines of her flesh, her finger is already that of the colonialist, - a physiological Cortez, da Gama or Mungo Park' [MT – 1], her body that of a soon-to-be conquered Mexico, India or West Africa. Her opening words, - O my America, my

new found land|| [MT – 1]; adopt the avaricious, objectifying voice of a male seducer. We also observe how the hated and gloved image of bourgeois femininity provided by her mother is being supplanted, in Melanie's bedroom mirror, by a set of sexual representations defined by canonical male artists and writers. Consequently, the catalogue of body styles with which she experiments is structured completely by the male gaze: Ala Toulouse Lautrec, she dragged her hair sluttishly across her face and sat down in a chair with her legs apart and bowl of water and a towel at her feet... She was too thin for a Titian or a Renoir but she contrived a pale, smug Cranach Venus with a bit of net curtain wound round her head and the necklace of cultured pearls they gave her when she was confirmed at her throat. After she read Lady Chatterley's Lover, she secretly picked forget-me-nots and stuck them in her pubic hair. [MT – 1-2] The opening episode is significant in many ways. At the outset, we observe Melanie considering herself from a male-identified perspective, visualizing her future adult female role as a man's bride or muse, which eventually takes her to continually assess her body's worthiness as the object of male desire. She is, she feels at one point, -too thin||, and the size of -her small, hard breasts|| [MT – 2] is disappointing – but she is also paradoxically afraid of growing too fat, because then -nobody would ever love her and she would die virgin|| [MT – 3]. At this stage, with her heteronormative view of female body, Melanie's passage into the patriarchal system is inevitable. She may live under the support of an essentially benevolent father, but he is a patriarch

nonetheless and Melanie visualizes herself through his eyes.

Further, though Melanie - gift-wrap[s] herself for a phantom bride groom|| [MT – 2], a wonderfully, self-absorbed sexual excitement emanates through her reveries, pinpointing that the real object of her desire is, in fact, herself: - In readiness for him, she revealed a long, marbly white leg up to the thigh [forgetting the fantasy in sudden absorption in the mirror play of muscle as she flexed her leg again and again] || [MT – 2]. Melanie's apostrophe to America also reflects how Carter appropriates a Renaissance convention in which the continent of America (of discovery and excitement) serves as a metaphor for the body. But, as Richard Brown pinpoints, the male colonial explorer implied here is a young woman – an index in the text of female self-possession'. Through her fantasies enacted before her mirror, Melanie starts to explore her various potential identities and the contradictory roles that make up the female subject in art and society such as a Pre-Raphaelite, a Lautrec with her hair -dragged sluttishly across her face,' and a Cranach Venus||. [MT – 1]. These roles that Melanie tries out indicate the performative aspect of gender. The novel's concerns with the female sexuality and body are akin to the Anglo-American art and literature of the late 1960s and 1970s. Feminist artists and writers of that time were disillusioned by the way in which women's bodies were made invisible in art produced by men. They were particularly focusing on the western culture's denial of women's experiences of their own bodies.

Lacan's theory of the gaze, throws light on Melanie's passage into the symbolic order. As per Lacan's schema of the visual field, - when I look at an object an image 'comes between my gaze and the object: when I in turn become the object of the gaze, the gaze surveys me through an intervening screen|| Lacan doesn't say what exactly is the image through which I view an object or the screen through which the gaze fixes me. But Kaja Silverman considers both image and screen as 'cultural artifacts' (Silverman 1992:152). The first part of Lacan's proposition applies to Melanie, since she cannot see her reflection directly but only in a form dictated by the culture. The later part goes on to explain that the gaze fits one into a configuration that the cultural milieu projects on the person. But, since Melanie is alone in her room she gets an illusion of creating her own image in an autonomous space. Lacan substantiates our position as objects of the gaze, though no one else is present: -That which makes us conscious institutes us by the same token as speculum mundi... that circumscribes us... makes us beings who are looked at, but without showing this||.24 We are never free from this gaze, which is all around us. Though Melanie is alone in a room, she is the subject to the world's gaze and it fits her into a series of cultural images. To be a possessor of gaze as Melanie does in the scene is to be misled and -In the scope field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at that is to say, I am a picture||. Lacan further elaborates that being converted into a 'picture' being mapped onto a background of pre-existing pictures.

Melanie has already accepted her cultural constructedness as object much before she is

forced to act out Philip's script. Carter's view of how, the social fiction of [her] femininity' is palmed off' on a woman's not quite simple. She probes deep into the psychoanalytic model of femininity produced basically through father-daughter relations by interlinking Philip's idea of femininity as veiled impotence to the various representations of women in Western art and myth Philip's idea of gender adds up more information on womanhood that Melanie has already acquired from various artisans of femininity whose images crowd her during her loneliness. The mirror episode brings to the forefront how a young girl like Melanie is driven into a make-believe world of hypocritical patriarchal culture by driving into her the idea that provocative dressing gives much sexual power to a woman. Philip's staging of the puppet scene later in the novel gives a realistic assessment of the veil's power. In the puppet play 'Leda and the Swan', the rape of Leda by a figure of omnipotent masculinity illustrates the disparate power relations circulating in the patriarchal culture that is camouflaged as love relations. Contrary to feminist accounts of rape as a powerful, political tool that subjugates and intimidates all women, Philip uses rape to - teach the objective, innate, and unchanging subordination of women. The play pushes Melanie back into a system, denying her any trace of subject position. She is forcefully made to realize what the veils mean in a masculine symbolic system, that is, the erasure of the female subject - her passage into a position, signifying lack. As Lacan puts it, the veils' charm occurs from their ability to pinpoint the lack beneath - to

suggest the nothing that supports the something of man. He says: -Adornment is the woman, she exists veiled: only thus can she represent lack, be what is wanted||.31 Beginning with a situation in which her heroine has already \_gift-wrapped herself for a phantom bridegroom' [MT – 2], Carter soon returns to the founding myth of the Fall to express the destruction of her closeted femininity. Within a few pages, Melanie finds herself in an Eden-like garden, clothed in the garment of patriarchal virginity [her mother's wedding dress]. Quite predictably, she meets her downfall in the branches of an apple tree. The wedding dress is lost its sheen and torn, and the security of her closed world is shattered symbolically. This very episode begins with the portrayal of Melanie's anxieties about tree-climbing since she's already begun menstruating. The novel mentions periods, pregnancy, embryo, gestation and miscarriage within one paragraph, indicating the interiority of a female subject. May be, Carter is bringing to the forefront the feminist concerns of her time to challenge, and work against traditions that celebrated the cosmetically finished surface of the female body and denied its interior completely. Ironically in London, Uncle Philip tries to turn Melanie into a fetish object – as spectacle, a wooden marionette. The image of the puppet, as Palmer [1987] points out, suggests the \_coded mannequin' metaphor employed by the French critic, Julia Kristeva, to represent -the robotic state to which human beings are reduced by a process of psychic repression||.(Palmer 1987:180)

At this juncture in the novel, Carter rewrites the myth of the Garden of Eden of which we

are reminded by the tree itself specifically the Tree of Knowledge, reference to the shower of apples, and by an allusion to Eve's realization of her nakedness after eating the forbidden fruit. Melanie is \_very much conscious of her exposed nakedness'. However, though the biblical imagery reminds us genesis, the episode in the novel also shows elements taken from witchcraft, paganism and superstition. For instance, the cat is a familiar symbol for a witch, the reference to blackness, night; blood and nakedness remind us of symbols absent from the biblical version of the Adam and Eve story. This episode appears to challenge the myth that endorses the inferiority of women to men.

The novel portrays a re-vision of the Adam and Eve story basically through the female focalization. That is, it shows the emerging sexuality of a young girl along with the anxieties, fears and fantasies attached to it. But, soon the focus is in the pain and disillusionment that come along with it. Initially, Melanie is reassured of her sexuality as she sees the purring cat. But, soon it leads to discontentment, as the cat turns out to have paws, -tipped with curved, cunning meat hooks|| [MT – .21]. The outcome to Melanie's nude tree-climbing is one of disillusionment and agony. Maybe it is the premonition of what is in store for her. Soon, she comes to know of her parents' death and will be forced to move to London under the patriarchal dictate of her uncle. Quite ironically, though much of the passage focuses on the irretrievable loss of childhood – Melanie has started her periods, decided to grow her hair long and has stopped wearing shorts – Melanie emotionally regresses to

childhood: -Please, God, let, me get safe back to my own bed again|| [MT – 21]. The novel's concern at this juncture with Melanie explicitly and all women implicitly is the tension between desire and restraint which causes a scream to swell up in Melanie's throat.

This uncalled for scream, becomes a mark of the condition in which Melanie, and perhaps many women, will come to live: Once a branch broke with a groan under the trusting sole of her foot and she hung in agony by her hands, strung up between earth and heaven, kicking blindly for a safe, solid thing in a world all shifting leaves and shadows. [MT – 21] The overt symbolism of the opening episode denotes Melanie's desired passage into sexual adulthood [the blood-stained dress], as well as the assertion of her womanhood through the usurpation of her mother. But, this unequivocal symbolism raises many an eyebrow since the death of the parents is causally connected to Melanie's midnight adventure. Actually, these opposing effects act together to make female bodily experience the central issue, and to undercut the guilt associated with its expression. At a stroke her entire world, and the security of the bourgeois femininity that came with it, are erased, and she has nothing but herself and her wits to fall back on. At the outset, then, what *The Magic Toyshop* appears to do is to juxtapose various sets of institutionalized, patriarchal gender representations against each other. But, a careful reading of the opening episode, in the narrative, shows us how the text opens up the possibility of female autonomy in the pivotal garden scene, in which though the traditional white dress and

continuous emphasis on virginity condition us to expect a 'fall from grace' and a defloration, put out instead to be a kind of Re-birth: -Since she was thirteen, when her periods began, she had felt she was pregnant with herself, bearing the slowly ripening embryo of Melanie-grow-up...|| [MT – 20].

Shedding the dress, Melanie climbs the apple tree naked, and, after the serious focus on her newly sexualized flesh, it is noteworthy that this birthing is also imagined as a shedding of the body itself, - as if she had taken even her own skin off and now stood clothed in nothing|| [MT – 21]. Subsequently, before she has even opened the telegram informing the sad demise of her parents, Melanie has already wrecked her room – the sight of her girlhood development. And the mirror that, only a few pages before, had framed the disciplining of her body within a masculine economy of desire is smashed. Re-visiting the body-without-a-past as in Jeanette Winterson's fiction, seen in the whole opening episode of the first chapter in the novel can be read as, not a fall, but an awakening a re-birth. In Melanie's orphaned, lonely state, the physical transition to the new world of London is again symbolically represented as a ritual of the passage: -The train was a kind of purgatory, a waiting time, between the known and completed past and the unguessable future which had not yet begun|| [MT – .22]. The patriarchal world of Uncle Philip into which Melanie and her siblings are thrown into is, on one level, a mythological world, in which the power relations between the various characters which occupy it appear to be immediately

intelligible. Uncle Philip's authoritarian control, in particular, is blown up to the point of being highly demonic.

Though, at one level, this transition itself is a step forward for Melanie from a point in which she is completely complicit in her own subject, the text moves its protagonist to a position in which her fascination within a patriarchal system is understandable to her. Thus, rather than a step back into oppression and victimization from the safe, liberating environs of her middleclass household, the transition to the toyshop can be read as an important stage of understanding which Melanie's character needs to go through, in her ultimate journey towards self-liberation. Further, the metaphor of journey is also indicative of Melanie's ultimate growth from object position (Toy) to the subject position. She finally occupies the place of Magician (Uncle Philip). Philip's world, she recognizes immediately, is one of dominance and control, in which the puppets and people are choreographed alike according to the patriarchal will. His wife, Margaret, like a fairytale damsel, has been struck dumb on her wedding day. Even Margaret's brothers, Finn and Francie, come out of their tightly defined roles only when the house has gone to sleep. One of the concerns of the novel is to portray the ego disturbances within the psyche. This has happened by what Lorna Sage has described as -the bad magic of mythologies||.34 Sage argues that the psyche itself is constructed within a network of relationships including familial, social, cultural and political forces. We regard desire and fantasy as universal, but these are also socially constructed. For

instance, many teenagers nowadays identify with the chart-topping pop songs since they appear to reflect their emotions, anxieties and problems. But, these songs also as a part of popular culture, contribute to the social construction of emotional identity of gendered behaviour within relationships, and even desire itself. Testifying Sage's view of a teenager, in her exploration of the variety of social roles and subjectivities available to women, Melanie not only challenges the notion of a singular female identity, but also proves how women have to negotiate a myriad of received assumption and social conventions.

Melanie even becomes an object into which others, who don't appear to have their own identity, project their own fantasies and desires. For instance, Finn not only insists on combing her hair differently immediately as she arrives, but he also paints her secretly through a hole in her bedroom. Uncle Philip visualizes her as a nymph covered with daisies. Even Melanie, in her regressive state sees her like this. Carter also uses parody to subvert patriarchal silencing of women. The toyshop is a parody of patriarchy under which women are completely silenced. It is notable, though rather crudely, that Aunt Margaret is struck dumb on her wedding day and only regains her voice when Philip discovers her locked in an embrace with Francie. Melanie, along with her brother and sister are thrown into the world of Uncle Philip, which on one level, is a mythological world, in which the power relations between the various characters which populate it appear to be intelligible. Uncle Philip's authoritarian control specifically appears to be pantomimic. At one level, this transition

can be considered as a step forward for Melanie. From her position as subject, the text moves its protagonist to a position in which her enthrallment within a patriarchal system is quite evident to her.

Uncle Philip's patriarchal dominance is seen not only with his wife Margaret, but in his control of the entire family as a personification of patriarchy. Further, the imperiousness of his patriarchy is expressed in the power relations between himself as Englishman, and the Jowles, who are Irish Catholics. He subjugates the Jowles just as the English, historically dominated Ireland. His behaviour towards them portrays the power of colonizer on colonized, thereby proving that personal is political. The relation between patriarchy and imperialism is revealed figuratively in the scene where the entire family has to go to the basement of the house to watch a performance of Uncle Philip's puppets. The figurative message is that, patriarchal power itself is absolute dominance that turns people into mere puppets, depriving them of autonomous life. Uncle Philip treats Margaret just as an object like his puppets. This attitude is revealed through his wedding day gift to Margaret, a necklace that completely constrains the natural movement of the human body, and he derives absolute pleasure from observing this constraint when, on Sundays, she wears the necklace, or collar, a token of being owned. Margaret is reduced into a mere object in Philip's world, and is symbolically silenced the day she was married. But, towards the end of the novel, when Philip's authority is overthrown, Margaret's voice returns: -Struck dumb on her wedding day,

she found her old voice again the day she was freed.|| [MT – 197] Unlike Margaret, Melanie the adolescent girl doesn't lose her voice, but has to go through a grueling experience into her final state of being a woman. She is thrown into this cruel world of Philip's patriarchal dominance. In this uncompromisingly patriarchal world, Melanie's adolescence is at first directed, as Sue Roe has put it, by a -mythology of awakening in which women blossom into shuddering subordination||.35

Uncle Philip resents her because she was not a puppet' [MT – 144] His attempts to subjugate Melanie reaches its Zenith in the climatic rape scene in Philip's puppet theatre where she is required to play the role of Leda in the play Leda and the Swan' a reproduction of the classical Greek myth in which the god Zeus, in the form of a by the swan, rapes and impregnates a young girl. In order to position himself in the ultimate patriarchal position of Zeus, Philip needs Melanie to be positioned in the canonical role of female sexual subordination. However, Philip's fantasy is successful, holding the woman within the realms of male world:

Though the swan is, not anatomically correct, the act' of rape itself generates the psychological effect that theorists and survivors of rape emphasize: that is, women experience rape not only as a physical violation, but as a denial of their humanity, of their agency and self-determination: -the real crime is the annihilation by the man of the woman as a human being||.37 In *Sadeian Woman* Carter reflects her clear understanding of rape: -In a rape... all humanity departs from the sexed beings...

somewhere in the fear of rape is... a fear of psychic disintegration... a fear of loss or dismemberment of the self||.38 In *The Magic Toyshop*, Carter uses rape as a metaphor for this psychic dismemberment' of a young girl. Like Gayle Rubin, Carter revises through this episode Freud's notion that -it is the recognition of her anatomical lack, of her actual castration', that persuades a girl at the oedipal juncture to acknowledge her inferiority||,39 and rather, oedipal socialization itself is shown as a castrating process that strips a girl of her active impulses, her agency, and indeed her subjectivity, reducing her to the feminine object required by a patriarchal social order. The play actually teaches Melanie to define herself as object: The swan towered over the girl who was Melanie and who was not'. [MT – 166]. She has to double herself to survive the simulated rape. John Berger gives us the paradigm for this doubling: -existing within a world defined by the male gaze and dependent upon male approval for her welfare, a woman learns to see herself as men see her, carrying the surveyor and the surveyed within her||.(Berger1975:46)

Soon after the play, Melanie retains the consciousness – ironically – of an object. As she lacks the subjective centre from which to organize the world, reality emerges from the things she perceives, moving toward the subject who now organizes her as an object in his world. -The cake seemed extremely unlikely a figment of the imagination. She ate her slice but tasted nothing. The company round the tea-table was distorted and alien... Everything was flattened to paper cut-outs by the personified gravity of Uncle Philip as he ate his tea|| [MT – 169].

There is only one subject now, and -his silence reached from here to the sky. It filled the room|| [MT –168]. As Philip, the ultimate patriarch is silent; Melanie devoid of any script is silent too. The violence of gendering is usually camouflaged by the dynamic of love that produces it: according to the feminist theorists cited by Nancy Chodorow, -a father bribes' his daughter with love and tenderness' when she explains the passive feminine behaviours that please him and so gradually trains her to derive self-esteem from his praise rather than from her own actions – to become, in the familiar phrase, the apple of his eye, the submissive object of his affection||.41 The idealization of the father as powerful subject in relation to a passive and dependent self -becomes the basis for future relationships of ideal love, the submission to a powerful other who seems to embody the agency and desire one lacks in oneself||.42 By stripping the oedipal conversion from subject to object of compensatory fatherly affection and condensing a process of adaptation that usually is a long process into the space of a single scene, Carter dramatizes the violence of the father-daughter relations which force the identity of passive object on a girl-a violence already implicit, if unexplored, echoing de Beauvoir's description of a daughter's normal oedipal resolutions: -It is a full abdication of the subject, consenting to become object in submission [to the father]||.

Further, when Philip encourages Finn to rape Melanie in actuality, the agenda is definitely not sexual desire but male rivalry and power. Sexuality, and particularly the prospect of pregnancy, is a weapon in a

class and family war. Melanie recalls: -He's pulled our strings as if we were his puppets, and there I was, all ready to touch you up just as he wanted... You represent the enemy to him, who use toilet paper and fish knives... And so I should do you because you shave under your armpits and maybe you would have a baby and that would spite your father|| [MT – 152-3]. Finn's refusal to assert his sexuality to take forward Philip's designs is definitely an important instance in the text that subverts the absolutist regime in the house. With his magnetic maleness, Finn represents an alternative paradigm of masculinity to that of his uncle. He is presented consistently with importance to sexuality and also on warmth and human feeling. Reference to a tawny lion poised for the kill, pinpoints his status as an icon of male physical vitality. Carter treats this in a complex way. Initially, Melanie is repelled by him, and even finds his attention invasive, but later she voluntarily enters into a relationship with him. Melanie's initial distrust give way to grateful acceptance of all the red people', Finn and his brother Francie and her aunt Margaret, as kind protectors, who live brightly and vividly. She considers them as - three angels... All the red people lighting a bonfire for her, to brighten away the wolves and tigers of this dreadful forest in which she lived|| [MT – 122] The colour symbolism also enforces the difference between the vitality of the red-haired, musical Irish Jowles family, into which Melanie is excited to enter, and the colourless, cold authority of Philip. Carter brings to the forefront the rivalry between the Irishman Finn, a tawny lion poised for the kill' [MT – 45], and the black-suited

\_immense, overwhelming figure of a man' [MT – 69] that is. Uncle Philip. Carter problematizes the conventional assumption that, as the hero', it is Finn's role to fight Uncle Philip for possession of Melanie. She tries to present Finn as the inverse of patriarchal control, a Lord of misrule' [MT – 183], who wants to bury his brother-in-law's authority [in swan's figure] but not to usurp it. Along with Finn's rebellion against Uncle Philip, there is another important subversion in the novel. We come to know in the later part of the novel that Margaret and Francie are involved in an incestuous relationship right under Philips's nose. Francie and Margaret's incestuous relationship is a severe jolt to the patriarchy professed and practiced by Philip. Philip accidentally discovers this affair and goes mad. In his rage, he sets fire to the house, intending to burn his wife and her brother Francie, and even Melanie and Finn to death. But later we come to know that Francie and Margaret escape, while Finn and Melanie who are already lovers, get free. Paulina Palmer objects to the depiction of Melanie and Finn running away as lovers. According to her their relationship in the final part of the novel itself is a symptom of the continuing power of patriarchy: -As is typical of woman in a patriarchal society,[Melanie]is pressured to seek refuge from one man in the arms of another||.44 The conclusion need not be read like this. As palmer herself points out, Melanie is never subservient to Finn. For instance, we have the example of the peephole into Menalie's bedroom which Finn uses to spy on her. Later, Melanie discovers this peephole, but, she turns the tables:

[Carter's] description of the peephole which Finn constructs in the wall of his room in order to spy, on Melanie while she is undressing, introduces the theme of voyeurism. It draws attention to the power exerted by the male gaze. The gaze is a practical means for men to impose control on women, as well as a symbol of sexual domination. However, the fact that Melanie responds with indignation to the intrusion on her privacy and retaliates by using the peephole to spy on Finn back, complicates the meaning of the image. On peering in it, she catches sight of him walking on his hands. This results in a momentary instance of role-reversal. She becomes the observer and he the observed. She represents the norm while he, in his odd position, becomes the freak and 'spectacle'. These are roles which, in a patriarchal society, are generally reserved for women. Thus, in her treatment of both motifs Carter indirectly reveals that, despite appearances to the contrary, the roles adopted by men and women are, in fact, flexible. They are open to change. Finn as observed to reject the role assigned to him by the patriarchy and reinvents himself completely. Melanie and Finn appear as an entirely different kind of individuals, as they escape from the burning house. Here, their relationship is not based on oppression and subjugation, but on equality. They mature and bloom in a new world since they've resisted and thrown off the sexist oppressiveness of the old. The shop in *The Magic Toyshop* gets burnt down, the old dark house, and adult life begins'. (*The Magic Toyshop* also offers an alternative as well as critique of patriarchal sexual relations. Melanie is romantically involved

with Finn, her counterpart in age, status, and subordination to the father-her brother in the family structure. She hasn't changed suddenly from the young impressionable girl into an autonomous and self-defining heroine; but, it is Finn who makes the revolutionary gesture of forfeiting the privileges of masculinity opening up the chances of a different relationship between man and woman. During the night after the play, Finn comes to Melanie's bedside requesting for comfort. He has destroyed the puppet swan, and is overcome with shock at his own audacious act and with fear at the terrible vengeance that awaits him-for Philip loves all his puppets inordinately, specifically the newly-created swan. Finn describes the chopping up of the swan and taking it to a nearby park to bury:

'First of all, I dismembered [the swan]... with Maggie's little axe... the swan's neck refused to be chopped up, the axe bounced off it. It kept sticking itself out of my raincoat when I buttoned it up to hide it and it kept peering around while I was carrying it, along with all the bits of the Swan... It must have looked, to a passer-by, as if I was indecently exposing myself, when the Swan's neck stuck out. I was embarrassed with myself and kept feeling to see if my fly was done up... it seemed best... to bury it in the pleasure garden.' [MT - 171-3] The false phallus' pokes out from Finn's body itself, hence by chopping it off Finn refuses the masquerade of masculinity: he accepts his own castration within Philip's family. Finn is having the position of son to Philip, apprenticed' to him apparently to learn, the art of male dominance. He's a master', says Finn, referring to Philip's skills as doll

maker, but in the field of gender relations as in woodcraft Finn is meant to identify with the father figure, become \_master in relation to woman. By chopping and throwing away the paternal symbol, Finn actually refuses the phallic function. In Lacan's words, Finn acknowledges the ultimate lack that is everyone's inevitable lot. He presents himself at Melanie's bedside as castrated – that is, \_incomplete, insecure, in need of comfort: -Sick and Sorry, he came creeping to her bed...|| -Melanie... Can I come in with you for a little while? I feel terrible|| [MT – 170]. Finn not only rejects the family agenda; -by rejecting the affirmation central to our present symbolic order that the exemplary male is adequate to the paternal function||.47 Finn also subverts the power relations of patriarchy.

Carter realizes the immense potential of shifting the castration from woman to man, thus subverting Freud's concept of castration process. Freud inscribes his notion of gendered power relations across the genitals, with the active penis representing the triumphant male subject and the corresponding blank representing a necessarily passive female space. Directing the sign of castration to the male body, dispensing with a \_troublesome machismo', with the aspiration to invulnerable masculinity with the phallus, not the penis – would shift the balance of power to which Freud subscribed, opening the way for an egalitarian and reciprocal' relation between man and woman. Eventually, Melanie responds to Finn's display of neediness with a different set of reaction: He must have been through a great ordeal. ... I have been in that place, too, she thought . She could

have cried for them both... You must have had a time of it, Poor Finn. She felt that somehow their experience ran parallel. She understood his frenzy. Poor Finn'. [MT – 172-3] Finn's acceptance of his castration process, clearly paves the way of the collapse of the sexual differences created and propagated by the patriarchy.

The end of the novel, Carter make a reference a wild surmise – that wild imagining of a new future-alludes to Keats's picture, in \_on First Looking into Chapman's Homer'48 [1816], of the sixteenth-century Spaniard's first sight of the Pacific Ocean. This closing allusion actually encourages the readers to hope that the destruction of Philip's factory of patriarchal fantasies opens up before Melanie and Finn an uncharted space free of the old gender demarcations. The conclusion of the novel, just like the ending of *Shadow Dance*, is very much representative of the late 1960's and leaves us with a sense of jubilation at the collapse of the old order, whilst the future is left as an undefined space of newness and possibility. Arguably, the conclusion of the novel raises as many questions as it answers, basically in its recapitulation of the colonial theme. We begin with the ripe-for-exploitation \_new found land' of Melanie's body, and conclude w invocation of Cortez. Further, the very expectation we are left with – that Melanie will now marry and bear Finn's children – also appears to be problematic. Though it is not bourgeois respectability, neither is it the celebration of deviancy we are offered with Francie and Margaret. Thus in one reading, the novel's conclusion appear to run counter to some of its more

deconstructive suggestions. In spite of the limitations of the novel, as Sarah Gamble argues in her study *Angela Carter*, [1997] the deconstruction of patriarchy in *The Magic Toyshop* is achieved not by the substitution of an alternative phallic figure to Uncle Philip, but through the constant undermining and erosion of his regime of control. As the text gradually reveals first in a glimpse through a keyhole and later in full view, there is always a space of carnivalesque subversion at the bottom of the house, maintained by Margaret, Francie

and Finn. In opposition to Philip's contrived and violent performances, we see Finn's dexterous and eloquent dancing. In defiance of Philip's arid and orderly domination, we feel the tender and sinuous strokes of Francie's violin bow. Breaking the silence of her patriarchal dumbness, we hear the tune of Margaret's ebony flute and of course, the final mocking subversion of Philip's phallic authority is definitely provided by Margaret and Francie's incestuous relationship and their affinity towards each other.

#### Notes:

1. Angela Carter. *The Magic Toyshop*. London: Virago Press, 1981, p.18. [All subsequent references in the paper from this edition of the text are cited in the body as MT]
2. Richard Brown. Postmodern Americas in the Fiction of Angela Carter, Martin Amis and Ian McEwen, in Massa, Ann and Stead, Alistair (eds), *Forked Tongues?: Comparing Twentieth-century British and American Literature*. Harlow and New York: Longman, 1994, p.92.
3. Jean Wyatt. The Violence of Gendering: Castration Images in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Passion of New Eve*, and "Peter and the Wolf", in Alison Easton (ed.), *Angela Carter* (Contemporary Critical Essays). Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000, p.70.
4. Jacques Lacan. „*The Four Fundamental Concept of Psycho- Analysis*“, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Norton, 1981, p.75.
5. Kaja Silverman. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. New York: Routledge, 1992, pp.145-52.
6. Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p.75.
7. Kaja Silverman. *Male Subjectivity at Margins*. [p.148].
8. Paulina Palmer. From -Coded Mannequin to Bird Woman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight', in Roe, Sue. (ed.), *Woman Reading Women's Writing*. Brighton: Harvester, 1987, p.180.
9. Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. New York: Avon, 1965, p.401.
10. Susan Griffin. *Rape, The Power of Consciousness*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979, p.39.
11. Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*. London: Virago, 1979, p.23.
12. John Berger. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Viking, 1975, p.46.
13. Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H.M. Parshley. New York: Random, 1989, p.287.
14. Kaja Silverman. *Male Subjectivity at Margins*, p.135.

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