

## Chapter Three

### The Horror, the Horror:

#### The Unsettling Effect of the Fairy Tale

She [Carter] is fascinated [...] by the blurring of gender boundaries; by adolescence, that brief period when the subject is not quite a child, but also not yet adult; with the period of suspension between departure and destination which constitutes a journey [...].

--Sarah Gamble's Introduction of *Angela Carter*:

*Writing from the Front Line*

*The Magic Toyshop* is a story of Bildungsroman. The protagonist, Melanie, is a fifteenth-year-old girl whose family is fairly rich. She and her brother Jonathon and sister Victoria live happily without worry. Nevertheless, their parents die in an air crash. The three of them come to their Uncle Philip Flower, the only relative they have, for shelter and protection. It turns out that their uncle is a cruel and violent toymaker, trying to turn these three children into three "flowers" as he expects. Melanie feels herself isolated in this castle of the Bluebeard, for her brother only cares about making the models of ship and her sister only cares about eating. She lives under the gloomy atmosphere of the house, working day and night. "How could this be?" she doubts from time to time. What she is looking for is a delicate future with her prince of charming, but in this house, there is only a dirty Finn. The whole lot of events happens to her like a stormy wave. She even has to play with puppets on the

stage. What will become of her?

### **I. *The Magic Toyshop* as Fairy Tale**

*The Magic Toyshop* is defined by her as a fairy tale in an interview with John Haffenden. Angela Carter shows her interest in fairy tales throughout her academic career. She does not only write novels which are embedded in the elements and motifs of fairy tale and the fantastic, but has also edited several anthologies of fairy tales including the two volumes of *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, *Wayward girls & wicked women*, *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favorite Fairy Tales*, and so on. In the interview, she conveys her tendency toward regarding European literature as a kind of folklore and writing herself within the tradition. Carter places a lot of Irish folklores in *The Magic Toyshop*, which is deemed by Roby Kinley as an “obsessive creation of a fantasy world” with fairy tale motifs (42). However, Carter’s fantasy does not present a world of promise and hope but often a world of threat and danger, within which the protagonist fights to find a way out.

According to Alan Dundes in the introduction to the second edition of Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*, fairy tale is a “model of fantasy” (xiii). Merja Makinen also considers fantasy to be one of the main conventions of the fairy tale, and since fantasy profoundly disturbs and subverts the reader’s cognition, the fairy tale has the “potentially transgressive disposition” and the “ability to unsettle and disturb the traditionally male reader” (Makinen 59). Carter creates her model particularly within this fairy tale of fantasy.

Propp manifests that in the genre of fairy tale, a person of older generation or

parents depart from home, leaving the younger generation by themselves, and a more “intensified form of absention is presented by the death of parents” (26). Because the younger generation is left at home without restraint, the protagonist consequently violates some prohibition: “The interdiction is violated” (Propp 27). In *The Magic Toyshop*, from the beginning the parents are absent because the father, a successful writer, has a lecture tour in American, leaving the children at home with the housekeeper, Mrs Rundle, who pays little attention to what the children are doing except loading the children with “bread pudding plain and fancy, with or without currants or sultanas or both” (Carter 3). Therefore, the summer vacation of the fifteenth-year-old protagonist, Melanie, passes within her bedroom, fantasizing her future of marrying a prince charming or at least having sex.

One night when Melanie cannot sleep, she sets out an adventure into her parents’ bedroom, imagining how her parents make love with clothes on: her father always wears the “hairy tweed jacket with leather elbow-patches” with his pipe in the breast pocket, and her mother always wears her “black, going-to-town suit” (Carter 10). Then, Melanie surveys her parents’ wedding photograph, in which her mother’s wedding dress is so extravagant as if she is “in a pyrotechnic display of satin and lace [...] as for a medieval banquet” (11). Holding a bouquet of white roses, her mother looks so “sappy and ecstatic and young and touching” that Melanie regards this moment as the most beautiful time of her mother’s life (11). Finally, Melanie puts on her mother’s perfume of Chanel, and all of a sudden she is stunned and confused by the scent that she thinks herself turning into her mother: “[...] smelled so like her mother that she glanced at herself in the mirror to make sure she was still Melanie”

(14). Touched by the romance atmosphere of the photograph, Melanie tries on her mother's wedding dress with the sense of guilt and goes into the garden. Afterwards she finds that she is locked outside and forced to climb the apple tree near her bedroom window to get back. Because the wedding dress is ruined and the wreath is left on the tree during the process, Melanie feels shame, foolish, "chastened and humiliated" (23). Therefore, when a telegram is sent to her home, she immediately assumes that it is about the death of her parents, thinking the cause is that she wears and ruins the dress: "She [Melanie] met herself in the mirror, white face, black hair. The girl who killed her mother" (24). Although her mother does not forbid her to wear the dress in the novel, Melanie does have sense of shame and guilt about the damage. In this sense, Melanie fits the protagonist in the model of fairy tale in Propp's definition, who violates the prohibition in the established order.

Melanie's parents died in the air crash, so the function of the absence of the parents in the fairy tale is enhanced. The father does not leave any savings, believing that he can always earn more. Therefore, the three children are without economic support and are sent to their Uncle Philip, the brother of their mother. After the violation of the interdiction or prohibition, the protagonist has to start an adventure or journey, and according to Propp, there are two kinds of heroes, seeker-heroes and victim-heroes: the first has a pursuit or destination, while the second begins a "journey without searches, on which various adventures await the hero" (39). Melanie belongs to the second, who is thrust into the unknown future with no sense of guarantee. Melanie feels herself, her brother, and sister as the "forlorn passengers from a wrecked ship [...] at the choppy sea to which they must commit themselves"

(Carter 30). Despite the feeling of helplessness, she reckons that she has to take the responsibility for the situation and be a “little mother” (31). Melanie shows her strength by bravely taking the responsibility. She binds her hair in the manner of a squaw so tightly that it hurts, but she does so for “penance” (*The Magic Toyshop* 28).

Consequently, in the fairy tale there has to be villains who use their power to oppress the others in order to benefit. According to Zipes, the villains are “those who use words intentionally to exploit, control, transfix, incarcerate, and destroy for their benefit” (*When Dreams Came True* 6). They are selfish and egotistic that others’ will is not a concern for him, and due to their social, institutional, or economic power, the enforcement of the commands is difficult for the victims to subvert and fight back. Philip Flower is the villain in *The Magic Toyshop*, who does not even laugh on his sister’s wedding day. Later he sends a malicious jack-in-the-box in which contains a horrid cartoon of Melanie’s face, deliberately frightening the little girl. His house, gloomily set at Southern London, is his governed realm in which everyone has to obey his order. His wife, Margaret, is the poorest victim in the Flower’s family. Since the day she is married, Margaret loses the ability to speak, “like a curse. Her silence” (Carter 37). In front of Philip’s “stifling” authority, Aunt Margaret is like a bended flower, even afraid of looking at him (73). The mental abuse from her husband causes the malnutrition so that her shoulders are like one pair of bony wings. Just like any other doll made by Philip, Margaret is oppressed to become one of the “Dutch-doll” with arms of “hinged sticks” and “cool, dry and papery” lips (48-9). Everyday Margaret cooks for the household and sews the clothing for the dolls with hands as much and as fast as she can.

When it comes to Sunday afternoon, she changes into her best dress, “an annihilation of any possibility of prettiness,” which is oversized, horrid, and gloomily grey (111). The dress goes with a silver necklace made by Philip as a wedding gift, but the wedding gift is meant for torture than pleasure, which buckles so tightly around Margaret’s neck that she can not even turn her head. Because the necklace is almost up to her chin, Margaret has to hold up her head “high and haughty as the Queen of Assyria” (112-13) but there is no pride in her eyes but sorrow and anxiousness: “*Il souffrir pour être belle*”<sup>1</sup> (113). It is Philip’s purpose to cause his wife much pain so that he can be satisfied with his overruling power over the family, for the collar is “primitive and barbaric; the mastiff of a prince of medieval Persia might have worn it for going out hawing in a miniature” (113). Margaret bears a resemblance to a mastiff, because they are regarded as property and subordinate to their masters who can control their fates. While watching his wife eat with great difficulty, Philip shows “expressionless satisfaction, apparently deriving a certain pleasure from her discomfort, or even finding that the sight of it improved his appetite” (113). Philip treats his wife as a puppet for in one of his puppet show, Philip decorates Mary, Queen of Scots, with the similar collar.

Philip enjoys manipulating the members of the family, treating them like they were puppets and dolls. Under the house, the basement is the place where Philip works on puppets and dolls for sales or for his pleasure. He does delicate and ingenious adornment such as “The Rocky Road to Dublin” which are two dancing monkeys that play violin and flute (65), and “Surprise Rose Bowl” which is a white

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<sup>1</sup> “*Il souffrir pour être belle*”: One suffers for being beautiful.

rose with a bud that contains a circling shepherdess doll. Beside of those saleable dolls, what Philip really likes is to create the puppets for the performance of the puppet show, his “heart’s darling,” in which he is in total control (67). What he makes is not meant to bring other pleasure, and the children in the house are not allowed to play it either. Therefore, Finn warns Melanie not to wear trousers in the house and not to speak except when Philip asks her questions the first day she arrives at the house, because Philip likes “silent women” (63).

Later Finn shows Melanie the toys in the basement, and although toys are originally made for pleasure and fun, Melanie does not feel happy to see her uncle’s work, especially when seeing that a live-sized lady puppet lies with face down on the stage as if somebody gets “tired of her in the middle of playing with her” and forsakes it arbitrarily (67). From the scenery, Melanie faintly sees her future: “The crazy world whirled about her, men and women dwarfed by toys and puppets, where even the birds were mechanical [...], and the doll was herself” (68). In the toyshop, she feels herself being reduced to an object, a toy, or a puppet, manipulated by Uncle Philip. Day after day, Melanie cannot sense her own subjectivity. Compared to the red-haired Jowleses, she turns into a grey shadow: “they [the Jowleses] were red and had substance and she, Melanie, was forever grey, a shadow,” because since the day she wears her mother’s wedding dress, Melanie believes that she is doomed (77). Her presage is right. Melanie is doomed because from that day on, she is forced to enter female adulthood dominated by men. Not treating the members of the family as people but dolls, Uncle Philip eventually decides to put Melanie into his puppet show.

The stains of fairy tale are all over the text. Firstly, the violent and highhanded

Philip owns the power to suppress people in the shop, which Melanie originally regards as “the Castle of Corbenic” but eventually discovers as the castle of Bluebeard (37). There seems to be a force or spell set upon the house. One day Melanie is left alone in the kitchen, cleaning all the dishes and finding a chopped hand with a great amount of blood in a drawer. “Bluebeard was here,” Melanie panics and faints. The hand, “soft-looking, plump little hand with pretty, tapering fingers” with a silver ring, belongs to a young girl (118). However, later Francie inspects the drawer and finds nothing. The illusional hand, signifying that the romantic part of her imagination is killed, reveals the fear in Melanie’s unconsciousness. The Bluebeard is Uncle Philip, who kills any possibility of the romantic prospect in the future.

Secondly, when Melanie, her brother and sister are sent to London, they take a long-distance taxi with Francie and Finn. After a long ride, Melanie can not help asking about when they will arrive, but Finn’s answer is twice, “Sill farther (37),” which is the intertextuality of the typical beginning of a fairy tale, “far far away.” At sunset, Melanie indicates that it is going to get dark, and as if she speaks the “secret sequence of words” which can “lead her safe over the sword-edge bridge” into the castle (37). Thirdly, the beginning of chapter three begins with “Now, who has planted this thick hedge of crimson roses in all this dark, green, luxuriant foliage with, oh, what cruel thorns?” (53) The allusion is to the story of the sleeping beauty, “la belle au bois dormante” (53). It is the first morning at the Flowers. Melanie wakes up to notice the thorns of roses on the wall paper. When the children finally settle down, every Monday night Aunt Margaret bathes Victoria.

## II. Psychoanalytical Analysis of Melanie's Subjectivity within the Social System of the Patriarchal Domination

Sarah Gamble expresses that subjectivity is “one of the major strands” in Carter’s novels (7). The fantastic is a perfect means to analyze the issue of subjectivity, since it is a genre deeply concerned with the realm of desire/lack and unconsciousness. According to Jackson, the fantastic is a means to reveal unconsciousness, and thus it is specifically “open to psychoanalytic readings” (6).<sup>2</sup> One of the prominent critics on Carter, Paulina Palmer, also states that Carter takes a “psychoanalytic approach to gender” in *The Magic Toyshop* (75). The psychoanalytic analysis is particularly fit for shedding light on the bildungsroman of Melanie. At the beginning of the novel, Melanie, fifteenth years old, enters the oedipal stage and starts to build her ideal ego. In front of the mirror, she poses as the female characters in paintings:

She also posed in attitudes, holding things. Pre-Raphaelite, she combed out her long, black hair to stream straight down from a centre parting and thoughtfully regarded herself as she held a tiger-lily from the garden under her chin, her knees pressed close together. A la Toulouse Lautrec<sup>3</sup>, she dragged her hair sluttishly across her face and sat down in chair with her legs apart and a bowl of water and a towel at her feet. She always particularly wicked when she posed for Lautrec, although she

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<sup>2</sup> Jackson relates psychoanalytic study to the core of fantasy, claiming that the omission of psychoanalytic analysis to be one of the insufficiencies of Todorov’s study of the fantastic. Jackson’s criticism of Todorov’s study has been mentioned in previous chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) spent his life in the Montmartre section of Paris, the center of the cabaret entertainment and bohemian life and painted the Parisian nightlife.

made up fantasies in which she lived in his time [...] (Carter 1).

Since the mirror phase, a baby constructs his subjectivity by identifying itself with what it sees, typically with mother, recognizing that its self and his mother are unified, which Jacques Lacan points out as a misconception: “the nature of symbolic incorporation is misunderstood” (Lacan 246). Later this misrecognition is broken by the realization that actually what his mother desires is the father and not it, and thus the baby feels powerless and castrated, which is called the oedipal stage. Therefore, a boy turns to identify with the powerful father. As for a girl, she needs to become what the father likes: “[...] the girl abandons the mother as a love-object, and focuses her libidinal drives on the father” (Grosz 69). The child imagines what he or she should look like in others’ eyes.

Melanie believes she is what she sees in the mirror, imagining herself as the objects of the male desire. She pretends to be the female in the gaze of the male, like Pre-Raphaelite, Toulouse Lautrec, Titian, Renoir, and Cranach.

She was too thin for a Titian<sup>4</sup> or a Renoir but she contrived a pale, smug Cranach<sup>5</sup> 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*,<sup>6</sup> she secretly picked

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<sup>4</sup> Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) (c. 1485-1576), the greatest painter of the Venetian school, was probably a pupil of Bellini, Giovanni.

<sup>5</sup> Cranach, Lucas the Elder (1472-1553), German painter, was particularly good at painting nude women with erotic beauty.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noticing that there is only one writer among those male artists, D. H. Lawrence, whom Carter is quite strongly opposed to. Carter describes the social regulations and conventions as “social fictions” and “what Blake called the ‘mind-forg’d manacles’” which she is highly conscious of (“Notes

forget-me-nots and stuck them in her pubic hair. (2)

By turning herself into the images of those erotic women which the male takes for granted, Melanie becomes involved in the symbolic order in which the male dominates the female subjectivity and sexuality. Therefore, she is not satisfied with her slim figure and small breasts. Melanie thinks that as long as she resembles those women, she eventually can get her bridegroom who takes her to honeymoon at exotic places. Getting married is such an important and crucial event in Melanie's perception: "Well, I shall grow up. And get married. I hope I get married. Oh, how awful if I don't get married." (*The Magic Toyshop* 6). Melanie's subjectivity can only be reassured in a family structure, subordinating under the male's interpretation of women. Carter expresses her observation in "Notes from the Front Line," when she notices that there is a

sense of heightened awareness of the society around me [Carter] in the summer of 1968, my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a *woman*. How that social fiction of my 'femininity' was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as a real thing. (70)

This kind of awareness is in deed what Carter focuses on when she writes *The Magic Toyshop* in 1967. She interrogates the social injustice of which women have no power to shape her identity and subjectivity. This process of "oedipal socialization"

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from the front line" 70). In brackets she notes her constant perceptions that the "versions of reality" she is offered are "badly wrong," which takes the "being *as a woman* for granted:" "I smelled the rat in D. H. Lawrence pretty damn quick" (70). In Carter's criticism on sexuality and pornography, *The Sadeian Woman*, she argues that sexuality is "never expressed in a vacuum [...] Sexuality is as much a social fact as it is a human one" (11). Sexuality is constructed as a narrative of social and cultural conventions.

demonstrates that “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” (Wyatt 67). Already sacrificing her subjectivity in the social order, Melanie does not realize that her thinking is controlled by the operation of the patriarchal discourse.

After looking at her parents’ wedding photograph, Melanie is touched by the luxury of the dress and the emotions on her mother’s face. The white wedding dress, the symbol of pureness and innocence, is a delicate device to restrict women’s freedom of sensuality. Such a “[s]ymbolic and virtuous white” dress is made to reward women for their virtues of obeying the social rules: “White satin shows every mark, white tulle crumples at the touch of a finger, white roses shower petals at a breath. Virtue is fragile” (*The Magic Toyshop* 13). The patriarchy sets numerous restrictions for women, and one of which is that women have to keep their virginity until marriage. However, in order to get sexual pleasure before marriage, men seduce and threaten women to violate the restriction. In the women’s magazines borrowed from Mrs Roundle, Melanie is confused by the letters in which women proclaim that ““My boy friend says he will leave me unless I let him love me to the full but I want to be honestly married in white”” (13). The male seduces and threatens women into sex before marriage, and then blames them for not being pure and virtuous. The wedding ceremony is more like a celebration of virginity instead of sincere relationship. Melanie is a girl who desperately wants to fit in the archetype of women made by patriarchal system. Therefore, she inevitably wants to become the perfect image of women in the male’s perception. Gazing into her mother’s dressing-table

mirror, Melanie is startled by the image of her in the white dress: “‘And am I as beautiful as that?’ she thought [...]” (16). She is intoxicated, “‘Look at me!’ she said to the apple tree [...]. ‘Look at *me!*’ she cried passionately to the pumpkin moon” (16). Although Melanie believes the image in the mirror, which shows her to be the perfect woman, the image is not truly equivalent to what she is.

In the moonlight, Melanie has a feeling that she is the “last, the only woman” on earth (17). In other words, she dresses her mother’s wedding dress and becomes her mother, substituting her mother’s place psychologically. Later when she gets the telegram of her parents’ death, Melanie believes that she kills her mother: “‘It is my fault,’ [...] ‘It is my fault because I wore her dress. If I hadn’t spoiled her dress, everything would be all right’” (24). Assuming that she should take the responsibility of her mother’s death, Melanie turns to hate her image in the mirror.

[...] She met herself in the mirror, white face, black hair. The girl who killed her mother. She picked up the hairbrush and flung it at her reflected face. The mirror shattered. Behind the mirror was nothing but the bare wood of her wardrobe.

She was disappointed; she wanted to see her mirror, still, and the room reflected in the mirror, still, but herself gone, smashed. (25)

By smashing her image in the mirror, Melanie hopes that her image can be ruined, and thus her mother can come back from death. Alongside the oncoming great change of her life style, what Melanie imagines to be in front of the mirror paves the way for her victimization.

As Richard J. Lane and Philip Tew indicates, Carter’s protagonists are

presented in a “space that is often determined by desire, perversity and sexual abandon in a *contest* with containment, tradition and self-negation” (194) (emphasis added). Melanie’s willingness to be subordinated to the male gaze reveals the psychoanalytical state of a girl who experiences the oedipal phase. The reminiscence of the primal stage disturbs what is repressed in the reader’s unconsciousness and brings what is hidden beneath into daylight. Melanie’s “sexual abandon” causes the effect of the unsettling on the reader, and her experience of alienation provokes questions about sexual domination and the male creation of femininity (194). Melanie’s abandonment of her sexuality is much less a negation than a protest against the sexual manipulation of patriarchy.

#### **A. The House of Dolls: Flattened by the Pressure of Patriarchal Dominance**

Paulina Palmer remarks that around early 1970s radical feminists focus on the topic of family, because in the realm of family, there exists “women’s oppression and the dialectic of sex” (71). Family is the first place “where the Law of the Father is inculcated and the positions of masculinity and femininity learnt; and the arena where acts of male violence, including battery, rape and incest, are perpetrated” (Palmer 71). *The Magic Toyshop* is a novel which concentrates on the issue of patriarchal domination within the household. Since Melanie, Jonathon, and Victoria are sent to their Uncle Philip at southern London, they enter the realm of symbolic order, completely dominated by the law of father. Philip represents the symbolic order in a patriarchal society. Melanie gradually loses her subjectivity and feels herself becoming gray and unsubstantial, compared with the red-hair Jowleses: “Yet how did

they manage to stay red and substantial (or, in Aunt Margaret's case, intermittently substantial) when they lived under the weight of Uncle Philip, the Beast of the Apocalypse?"<sup>7</sup> (*The Magic Toyshop* 77) Melanie is extremely afraid of Uncle Philip's authority.

She saw her uncle only at mealtimes but his presence, *brooding and oppressive, filled the house*. She walked warily as if his colourless eyes were *judging and assessing* her all the time. She trembles involuntarily when she saw him. [...] He seems of a different texture and substance from her gentle and ineffectual mother; he was hewn or cut out of thunder itself. She sensed his *irrational violence* in the air about him. Sometimes he fell in a landslide on Finn, clouting him round the head over the dinner table when Finn's insouciant insolence went too far. (*The Magic Toyshop* 92) (emphases added)

Under the pressure of Philip's wrath, Melanie reduces her personality and subjectivity to fitting in with the silent and obedient character/role set by him. Although Melanie seems to have quite adjusted to the role on the surface, her subjectivity is greatly maimed in the process of entering the realm of patriarchy.

While working, Melanie frequently feels numb and senseless as if she has already been turned into a doll, like the five-foot-high puppet abandoned by Philip on the stage when satiated: "She was a wind-up putting-away doll, clicking through its

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<sup>7</sup> The Beast of the Apocalypse: Revelation 13 and the book of Daniel indicate that there are several disordered powers in the apocalyptic world. The beast(s) rises from the sea, which hints that the beast originates from the turmoil of people, and the wind is a hint of the occurrence of war.

programmed movements. Uncle Philip might have made her over, already. She was without volition of her own” (*The Magic Toyshop* 76). Indeed, Philip does not allow anybody in the shop to have his or her will, and his designs and plans have to be obeyed. Uncle Philip’s complacency comes from what he designs and makes, those dolls, puppets, toys, and even people in the shop. Philip apprentices Jonathon to be a toymaker just like him, pleased with Jonathon’s obedience. As for Jonathon, he is fully content as long as he can make model ships, living in his own world without noticing that those events happen around him. When being asked by Melanie whether he is happy or not, Jonathon reacts as if “to him her question was boring and irrelevant” (82). His “frightening tractability” eventually makes him one of Philip’s puppets, an apprentice of his authority (82).

Therefore, it is understandable that Philip highly values his puppet show, because it is the only occasion that can greatly satisfy his desire of full control. In the basement, the image on the poster can efficiently explain the essence of the puppet show and the condition of the members of the family: Uncle Philip, “a great figure by virtue of the moustache and wing collar, holding the ball of the world in his hand,” and the words of ““GRAND PERFORMANCE—FLOWER’S PUPPET MICROCOSM”” (*The Magic Toyshop* 126). Imagining himself as a god, Philip believes that he has the power to control and run the world. Certainly, in his toyshop, a puppet show is performed by everyone who has to obey his rules and commands. Melanie is appointed by him to play Leda: “‘Humans can act with my puppets,’ said Uncle Philip. ‘That’s it. That’ll be a novelty. Puppets and people. I’ll use the girl.’ He swung round and jabbed his forefinger at Melanie. ‘I’ll use you, miss!’” (132).

Melanie inevitably becomes one of Philip's utilities.

Home originally should provide shelter and sense of security, but in *The Magic Toyshop*, home is no longer a place for rest and mental comfort. Uncle Philip's cruelty and sexual manipulation breaks up the illusory picture of a happy "home" in the reader's expectation. The gloomy and alienated atmosphere in the house arouses the unpleasant and "upsetting" feelings of the reader (Zipes, *Fairy Tale* 191). However, although it is an unhappy home, only through the departure from the taken-granted beautiful illusion of a home can the reader have a chance to speculate on the problems in the family structure. The fantastic opens a space for "ego disturbances" to be found and then a possibility for a real and non-alienated home (Zipes, *Fairy Tale* 179).

## **B. Leda and Swan**

One night, Aunt Margaret takes out a piece of chiffon and makes Melanie's costume for the show. At that time, it seems that Melanie is back to her home again. With artificial yellow and white daisies on her head, Melanie feels like "a nymph crowned with daisies once again" (141). The appearance reminds Melanie of how she enjoys playing the women in those male painters and novelists' works, adjusting herself to the male gaze, and actually this appearance is how Philip sees Melanie: "That is how he sees you [Melanie]. White chiffon and flowers in your hair. A very young girl" (141). Philip does have certain expectations of how his Leda should look like. The similarity of Philip's depiction and Melanie's imagination of a woman in the first chapter of *The Magic Toyshop* symbolizes the "structural alienation of woman in patriarchy" (Wyatt 69). Nevertheless, since Melanie is not a wooden puppet, her

version of Leda can not please Philip.

He grunted, displeased.

‘I wanted my Leda to be a little girl. Your tits are too big.’ [...]

‘You’ll do, then,’ Uncle Philip said to her. ‘I suppose you’ll have to do. And you’ve got quite nice hair. And pretty legs.’ But he was resenting her because she was not a puppet. (143-44)

Philip is not satisfied because he can not control Melanie through the threads and make her act exactly how he wants, turning three children into “little Flowers” (144). Although Melanie is flattered a little bit by the dressing, she does not want to be Leda<sup>8</sup> after all. She has sensed that the appearance is made to please male’s expectation of a woman, and she “did not think she would like herself in it [chiffon] if she could see herself” (145). Moreover, Melanie used to tries on fake eyelashes and her mother’s make-up at home, while in Philip’s house she no longer “think she would like to see her face bright and thick with greasepaint” (145).

The most famous version of the story of Leda, W. B. Yeats’ “Leda and Swan,” depicts the rape as a blessing from god through which the human might have the chance to gain Zeus’s power and knowledge: “Did she [Leda] put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?” (*Variorum Edition*

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<sup>8</sup> The most usual account of the story of Leda is that she is seduced and raped by Zeus in the form of swan beside the river Eurotas. According to Robert Graves’s *The Greek Myth*, afterwards Helen lays an egg from which Helen, Castor, and Polydeuces are hatched, and thus later is “deified as the goddess of Nemesis” (206). Some note that Clytaemnestra is hatched from the second egg; others assume that Helen is the only daughter of Zeus while Castor and Polydeuces are children of Leda’s husband, Tyndareus. Still others consider that “Castor and Clytaemnestra were children of Tyndareus, while Helen and Polydeuces were children of Zeus” (207).

441) Yeats regards Zeus's violent act as an "annunciation," which indicates the beginning of Greek civilization: "I imagine the annunciation that founded Greece as made to Leda, remembering that they showed in a Spartan temple, strung up to the roof as a holy relic, an unhatched egg of hers, and that from one of her eggs came love and from the other war"<sup>9</sup> (*A Vision* 268). The almighty power of patriarchy rationalizes the rape to be fertile and productive despite women's volition.

Uncle Philip arranges Finn to rehearse with Melanie in Finn's room, planning that Finn will rape Melanie in the process. When Finn tries to show Melanie how to elegantly act as if picking shells on the beach, he moves stiffly: "But he no longer moved like a wave of the sea. He creaked, indeed, like a puppet. He had forgotten his grace was all gone" (148). After being brutally beaten by Philip, Finn has been slightly forced to be a puppet manipulated by Philip. However, although Melanie seems to consent to what Finn might do to her, Finn does not do what Philip orders, because at the last moment Finn realizes that Philip wants him to "fuck" Melanie: "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. [...] He wanted me to do you and he set the scene" (151). Finn finally refuses to become one of Philip's puppets and to be a part of the patriarchal tyranny.

Uncle Philip despises Melanie's father and thinks him as a hypocritical upper-class man. Philip's intent is to destroy Melanie, Jonathon, and Victoria and

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<sup>9</sup> Yeats regards Helen and Clytaemnestra (wife of Agamemnon) as Leda's two daughters. Helen's elopement with the prince of Trojan, Paris, causes the Trojan War. Clytaemnestra kills her husband after Agamemnon, the general of Greece, wins the victory and returns home.

force them to become subordinate and inferior to him. Jonathon has already become Philip's apprentice, working day and night in the basement; Victoria is raised by Philip's silent and obedient wife, Aunt Margaret, who is no doubt an excellent model of an oppressed woman. Melanie is the only one who has not yet been completely overridden. Consequently, Philip sends Finn to abuse Melanie but in vain.

There is another device that Philip prepares to govern Melanie, the swan, which does perturb Melanie enormously: Melanie thinks "of the unknown and unknowing swan which was to ravish her the next day. She was scared of the very idea of the swan" (161). The swan, metamorphosed by Zeus, is a symbol of patriarchal symbolic order which forces woman to succumb to the male scheme. It minimizes Melanie's subjectivity and denies her autonomy as a person. Therefore, the swan is not scary based on its material substance: "It was nothing like the wild, phallic bird of her imaginings. It was dumpy and homely and eccentric. She [Melanie] nearly laughed again to see its lumbering process" (165). What frightens Melanie is the act of violence, the rape, which she has no power to resist and reject: "But it was not precisely the swan of which she was afraid but of giving herself to the swan" (162). In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter comprehends 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. (6)

Before the show, Melanie feels herself "infinitely small, furious, reluctant," and "minute" under the swan, which is like the sword of Damocles<sup>10</sup> (*The Magic Toyshop*

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<sup>10</sup> The sword of Damocles: Damocles proclaims that the emperor's life is cheerful and delighted.

162). When she looks at her hand, four fingers and a thumb, Melanie experiences this “dismemberment of the self:” “‘This is my hand. Mine. But what is it for?’ She thought. ‘What does it mean?’” (161). Losing the ability to act according to her volition, Melanie senses that her body is broken and disjointed. During the climax of the show, Melanie lies on the floor with the swan mounting on her, suffering a “psychic disintegration.”

She was hallucinated; *she felt herself not herself, wrenched from her own personality*, watching this whole fantasy from another place; and, in this staged fantasy, anything was possible. Even that the swan, the mocked up swan, might assume reality itself and rape this girl in a blizzard of white feathers. The swan towered over the black-haired girl who was Melanie and *who was not*. (166) (emphases added)

This passage clearly exposes the cruelty of rape and reveals that Zeus’s or Uncle Philip’s swan is “a patriarchal power” (Jouve 152). What is frightening is not the cardboard swan but the act of violence.

When Philip decides to make Melanie Leda, the tension enormously increases. This dystopia seems to turn into a hellish nightmare. Melanie has no power to resist the manipulation of the male. Her fear and helplessness are so overwhelming, but she can only endure and tolerate all the tortures to her subjectivity. The play of swan’s rape and Finn’s intended rape of Melanie unsettle the reader, because of its implied reference to reality where women live in unwilling subordination to male power.

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While one time he is invited by the emperor and set on the throne, Damocles discovers that there is a sword fastened by a hair upon his head and realizes that the emperor lives in constant fear.

Melanie's awful experience perturbs the reader, makes the reader to face the limitations in reality, and thus achieves opening a space for the liberating and subversive power to fight against the oppression of symbolic order.

The next chapter focuses on the subversive function of the fantastic. The boundary of the real and unreal becomes more and more blurry through the progress of the plots. The traits of the menippea, the origin of the fantastic, show up at the last part of the novel which demonstrates the most subversive power. The symbol of patriarchy is destroyed, and the spirit of carnival begins to bloom.