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Female Transgression and Empowerment in Angela Carter's Novel *The Magic Toyshop*

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Contents

Abstract

The present paper examines the themes of female transgression and empowerment in British writer Angela Carter's (post)modern novel *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) and aims to determine how the major themes in the novel unfold through the instances of magical realism, gothic elements and the rewriting of classical as well as biblical myths which problematize social normative modes of seeing reality. By identifying the obstacles to female empowerment through the modes of linguistic articulation, the paper provides an analysis of the power of language and its competence to control and discipline. Since *The Magic Toyshop* is a social critique of patriarchy through the focalization of a female character, it inevitably invites a feminist theoretical framework. Thus, the ideas provided by Jean Bethke Elshtain and the French Feminist school of thought, namely, Julia Kristeva and Helen Cixious, were chosen for the subject matter. The analysis section relies on the motifs of sexual awakening, exploration and depiction of subjectivity, victimization, and the influence of tyranny, small forms of resistance and protest that may lead to the formation of a challenging and rebelling construct of female identity. *The Magic Toyshop* is a parody of mysogynistic patriarchy in which women are undermined, therefore, the female characters face various obstacles ranging from outright victimization, financial dependence on men to abusive male discourse that threaten their autonomy and sovereignty. However, the latter obstacles subsequently lay the foundation for eventual female empowerment which is explored through the competence of language, meaning that female discourse incorporates a sense of community and grants them power.

1. Introduction

Angela Carter (1940-1992) started her British literary career as a poet, journalist, novelist and short story writer, whose works have contributed to various literary and social movements, such as the mid-twentieth century feminist critique, magical realism, and gothic literature. Although her creative input into the literary canon raised a deliberate controversy, Carter's work is not associated with the English literary mainstream (Peach 2009: 7). Her creativity challenges the nature of perceptions, thoughts and actions due to the shift between different frames of reference and the subversion of the cultural forms and traditions (ibid. p. 9). In this respect, contrary to the traditional English novel, her works are more closely related to speculative fiction that is concerned with human imagination rather than reality. Thus, literary critic Linden Peach suggests that Carter's creative work is similar to 'Swift, the fiction of European Romantic writers, European film, folk tales, fairy stories, and American Gothic' (ibid.). Carter's literary contribution may be regarded as unique since it rouse controversy as well as 'notorious difficulty' among the literary scholars (Dimovitz 2016: 3). Consequently, Scott Dimovitz, a professor in the English department at Regis University in Denver, Colorado, proposes that:

> Critics have often attacked her denseley antirealist bravura because, in part, they have no idea what is going on. This led Carter to defend her style against a constant marginalization by the literary establishment, (...) Unlike the social realism of classic writers such as Kate Chopin and George Eliot (...) or the more recognizable fables of Jannette Winterson and Margaret Atwood, Carter's works are often architectonic allegories, descending from the high modernist tradition of James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound – erudite intellectuals who were deeply concerned with developing a comprehensive worldview and putting it all into the work (ibid.).

It is possible to regard Carter as a modernist writer falling under the same branch of 'erudite intellectuals' as the modernist avant-garde writers, therefore, the readers may acquire a sense of confusion while trying to disentangle Carter's extended metaphors and 'her often highly idiosyncratic intellectual interests, leading them to appreciate the erudition without understanding her larger project' (ibid.).

Having a profound interest in literature and creative writing, Carter graduated from the University of Bristol with a degree in English literature. Specialising in the medieval period, supposedly, affected her awareness of gothic tropes which, in turn, are featured in her works. In 1969 she received the Somerset Maugham Award for her novel *Several Perceptions* (1968) and on behalf of its profit she was able to divorce her first husband and move to Tokyo for several years, alternatively gaining some radical experience which can be explored in her collection of short stories *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974), and in the picaresque novel

The Infernal Desire of Doctor Hoffman (1972) (Peach 2009: 3). It was suggested by Carter's fellow writer Salman Rushdie that the period in Japan challenged Carter's imagination, hence, it was important for her creative sensibility (Rushdie in Peach 2009: 2). Later Carter travelled around the world, having a chance to explore Europe, Asia, and the United States, whilst she became a writer-in-residence at many universities, particularly the University of Sheffield, Brown University, the University of Adelaide, and the University of East Anglia (ibid. p. 3). In 1979 she managed to produce her greatest works *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, the latter of which explores not only the thematic scope of desire, and the victimization of women in the light of 20th century English literature, but also 'cultural discourses of gender and sexuality that opress not only women but also men' (ibid. p. 104).

In addition to being a highly creative writer of fiction, Carter contributed to other literary genres, for example, she wrote journalistic articles for *The Guardian*, *The Independant* and *New Statesman*; her short stories have been adapted for the radio. Also, she produced a few radio dramas (ibid. p. 2) and two of Carter's literary works have been adapted for the film industry: *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and *The Magic Toyshop* (1987), the latter being the object of attention in the present paper.

While trying to conceptualize Carter's aesthetic sensibility, it may be difficult to deine whether she is a modernist or a postmodernist. Since her artistic techniques and motifs are common for both modernist and post-modernist aesthetic platforms, it is possible to say that Carter's aestheticism merges these two movements. For instance, Carter's fiction may be regarded as somewhat parodic of the social situation of the late 20th century British culture, allusive in terms of metaphoricity, and frequently elusive, challenging the boundaries between 'realism' and 'fantasy' (ibid. p. 12). According to Peach, in Carter's works, intertextuality plays a major role and the essential 'area of interest is the way in which meanings, boundaries and identities are rendered through cultural and linguistic metaphors' (ibid. p. 9). Intertextuality in her case refers to the interrelationship between the literary texts that provides different ways of reading as well as interpreting them. As Peach points out:

> The literary influences on her work include Chaucer, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, early modern dramatists, Jonathan Swift, Wiliam Blake, Mary Shelley, the Marquis de Sade, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Dostoevsky, Lewis Carrol and Bram Stoker (ibid.).

Thus, it is possible to say that Carter's aesthetic sensibility lingers between the two movements, at times being more modern than post-modern or vice versa.

Carter's mesmerizing novel *The Magic Toyshop* has been chosen as the main object of analysis in the present paper for the reason that it contains many underlying layers of intertextual references and explores the taboo topics of sexual awareness, Oedipal love, feminism and magical realism entailing mischevious qualities. Furthermore, the novel is rich in symbolic imagery, fantastic and gothic tropes which label the novel as a gothic Bildungsroman myth-like fiction (Rudaityte 2000: 51). Principally, according to Peach, 'Carter's fiction encourages us to perceive the processes that produce social structures, sociohistorical contexts and cultural artefacts' (Peach 2009: 10).

Being the second novel in Carter's career, *The Magic Toyshop* has received mainly positive reception. While critics David Wiley and Lorna Sage comment on Carter's modern point of view, acclaiming her literary recognition, scholars Peter Childs and Andzej Gasiorek look at Carter's social criticique. For example, in his review of *The Magic Toyshop*, Wiley states that the novel is 'the best and most representative of her early work' which concerns 'both old and new themes written in neo-Ghotic style' and it reminds of the eeriness of the Brontës, however, Carter's methods of achieving such literary quality and exposure of point of view are predominantly modern (Wiley 2013: 1). Similarly, Sage comments on Carter's creative rationale by stating that it 'prowl(s) around the fringes of the proper English novel like dream-monsters – nasty, exotic, brilliant creatures that feed off cultural crisis' (Sage 1977: 51). This graphically vivid depiction of Carter's fiction summarizes the idea that, as an author of great potential, Carter has been placed at the 'forefront of contemporary English writing' (Bristow and Broughton 1997:1).

Professor of Modern English, Peter Childs, in his book *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction since 1970*, attempts to analyse and classify Carter's works, relying on the aspects of literary history, as well as emphasizing the characteristics of contemporary writing style. Childs comes to the conclusion that Carter's work may be considered as an attempt to 'demythologize the naturalized reality surrounding gender and sexuality' and he seeks to explain the rationale of Carter's creativity in terms of the major themes of disguise and carnival (Childs 2005:100). Similarly, Gasiorek, lecturer in English Literature at the Univeristy of Birmingham, in his critical essay *Feminist Critical Fictions In Post-War British Fiction*, proposes that Carter's writing focuses on the construction of such social categories as gender, sexuality and identity (Gasiorek 1995:123). Furthermore, Gasiorek points out that Carter's strategy of writing challenges the habit of thought by means of rewriting, which is deconstructing the stories and myths that have been central to the Western conception of gender (ibid.).

A slightly different perspective is chosen by Peach who argues that *The Magic Toyshop* is a critique of patriarchy realised through the magical realism narrative (Peach 2009:63). Peach is concerned with symbolic imagery, female relationships, identity and transgression. According to the critic, the novel reclaims the motifs of the fairy-tale genre, even though it is not a fairy tale as such; nevertheless, Peach states that in *The Magic Toyshop* Carter 'rediscovers its [fairy-tales genre] imaginative potential, especially for the feminist writer' (ibid. p. 64).

Also, an American professor of German at the University of Minnesota, who lectured on the subject of fairy tales, Jack Zipes agrees upon this idea saying that:

> (...) educated writers purposely apropriated the oral folk tale and converted it into a literary discourse about mores, values and manners so that children would become civilised according to the code of that social time (Zipes 1988:3).

However, differently than Peach, Zipes points out that such stories do not warn 'against the dangers of predators in the forest', but warn girls 'against their own natural desires which they must tame' (ibid. p. 29).

Peach indicates that Carter acknowledges fairy tales as a conservative 'form that inscribe mysogynistic ideology' (Peach 2009:65). To her mind, 'Carter adapted the form to criticise the inscribed ideology and to incorporate new assumptions' (ibid.). In this case the fairy tale genre is used as a creative technique to scrutinize society and provide moral guidance, while creating a new form of identity, followed by transgression and empowerment.

All things considered, it seems that although *The Magic Toyshop* has gained some attention among literary scholars, more could be done in investigating how the novel presents Carter's (post)modern rationale in relation to the aspects of female identity, sexual awareness, and autonomy, as well as how the work of art examines the fields of feminism, magic realism and gothicism regarding transgressive female behaviour and gender power relations in the literary tradition.

The aim of the present BA paper, thus, is to determine how the problems of female transgression and empowerment in the novel unfold through the instances of magic realism, gothic elements, and the rewriting of classical as well the biblical myths which problematize social normative modes of seeing reality. The paper will be concerned with the discussion of Angela Carter's (post)modern rationale, the presentation of the forms of and reasons for female transgression, and the discussion of power relations in terms of language and patriarchal tyranny. Also, by identifying the obstacles to female sovereignty through the

modes of linguistic articulation, the paper will provide an analysis of the power of language and its competence to control and discipline.

2. The Power of Female Discourse

Since Carter's aesthetic rationale includes the scrutinization of patriarchal dominance in society, the critical nature of her (post)modern works invites a feminist theoretical framework. The Feminist movement, as stated by Johnatan Culler, attempts to 'undertake a theoretical critique of the heterosexual matrix that organizes identities and cultures in terms of the opposition between man and woman'(Culler 2011: 140). Because the question of female identity and the power dominated relationship between the man and the woman are relavant to the case of *The Magic Toyshop*, this BA paper will rely on the ideas provided by an American ethicist, political philosopher and feminist Jean Bethke Elshtain, a feminist theorist Kari Weil, as well as the French Feminist school represented by Julia Kristeva and Helen Cixious.

Mediating between feminism and social criticism, in her article *Feminist Discourse and Its Discontents: Language, Power, and Meaning* (1982), Elshtain explores the nature of language and meaning, whilst implying that it is inevitibly connected with power and dominance (Elshtain 1982:603). Elshtain refers to and comments on the ideas provided by the early Western philosophers, such as Plato and Socrates, who argued that:

> The private speech of the household, the speech of women, lacked either the form of philosophic argumentation or the form of potery. It was, therefore, without meaning – unformed, chaotic, evanescent the speech of *doxa* (mere opinion, not truth) (ibid. p. 606).

In this case, Elshtain argues that female discourse manifests power by providing literary texts. If power structures depend on the means of language articulation, creative productivity foregrounds feminist discourse. Moreover, she rejects domination because male ideas on women's speech prove the focalization of androcentrism, which places the woman into the margins of everyday speech, thus excluding her from the realm of public discourse, which, according to Plato, is significant in order to become a 'good-being' (ibid.). Elshtain encourages the reader to question not only the nature and meaning of feminist discourse, but also the communicational dillema between men and women.

Looking back to the world of the misogynist Greek arena, Elshtain provides the idea that there was no place for women's thoughts. Thus, Elshtain believes that if men are to completely occupy the public sphere and women the private, it may help us to explain and understand why a number of women and men literally cannot 'speak' to one another (ibid.). Therefore, Elshtains's critique of the Western political theorists emphasizes the importance of the past since it 'shapes us', meaning that human nature relies on linguistic articulation or, in other

words, that language shapes human character, perception and meaning, thus contexts interrelate (ibid. p. 608).

While Elshtain is critical of the project of human speech, she is also deeply concerned with the relationship between the author, the text and the reader. This metaphysical relationship can possibly be defined as a vector of power because, according to Elshtain, language is part of the political and ideological power of rules (ibid.). What is more, Elshtain's intention is to discover an 'emancipatory window', which links to models for emancipatory speech. The author believes that female discourse and writing may relate to emancipatory models of language. In turn, she encourages women to act, by emphasizing the importance of a new language that rejects the old one dominated by males (ibid. p. 610) and argues that it cannot be used adequately, since it scrutinizes and alienates every female identity 'who must speak and write' (ibid. p. 611). By rejecting androcentric speech, Elshtain criticizes the way women are depicted in the social world: 'debased, victimized, deformed, mutilated' (ibid.). A strong emphasis is layed on the evaluation under certain description which influences human expectations by either excluding options or creating possibilities. Generally, Elshtain provides an argument that 'evaluation opens events up for critical scrutiny' (ibid. p. 612).

Furthermore, Elshtain refers to Martin Luther King, the liberator of private speech, and provides a deeper insight into the power of female discourse. Martin Luther King used the vernacular, the language of the everyday, the ordinary human speech to draw attention to meaningful topics of life concerning human rights which were tabooed and in this way he transformed the public and private discourses (ibid. p. 608). Essentially, it is the power of female discourse that manifests radical changes in the theory of human speech as well as empowerment through the means of language (ibid.). Elshtain states that the private voice is either liberated or silenced depending on whether the speaker is male or female (ibid.).

Accorrding to Kari Weil, Associate Professor of Humanities at the California College of Arts, 'language is both an ultimate tool of women's oppression and a potential means for subverting, if not escaping, that oppression' (Weil 2006: 153). In her article *French Feminism's Ecriture Feminine*, Weil comments on French feminists' rationale by stating that 'women's desire is what is most oppressed and repressed by patriarchy' and that 'language is itself patriarchal' (ibid. p. 153). French Feminism, in this way, champions the production of feminine writing. It questions the oppositions and hierarchies of mind over body, reason over emotion, power over vulnerability (ibid.p. 154). Helen Cixous was the first who coined the term *ecriture feminine*, translated as 'women's writing', in her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* and she argues that 'woman must write herself: must write about women and bring

women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies' (Cixous 1976: 875). Cixous further comments that women symbolize the sensual and emotional part of human nature, whereas men represent logic and reason (ibid.p. 875). However, the established opposition is not fully adequate in providing a hierarchical system of thought. French Feminism, in this case, argues that *ecriture feminine* is subordinate to the male-writing tradition and it criticizes the ideas of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, according to whom:

> There is woman only as excluded by the nature of things which is the nature of words, and it has to be said that if there is one thing they themselves are complaining about enough at the moment, it is well and truly that – only they don't know what they are saying, which is all the difference between them and me (Lacan 1985: 144).

The latter quote indicates that Lacan relies on inadequate male-oriented argumentation of thought, whilst granting the fact that 'the feminine or woman has been excluded from knowledge' (Weil 2006: 159).

Weil's discussion of Jacques Lacan's challenging humanistic vision of the world provides an important insight into the feminist theoretical framework (ibid. p. 158). Language is what forms subjectivity, therefore 'the subject is conceived of not only as agent (of choice, action in the world), but also as master/origin of meaning' (ibid.). French Feminism, in this case, differs from the Lacanian school of thought according to which the construction of meaning itself is male-oriented, emphasizing the nature of phallo-logocentrism (ibid. p. 159). Thus, French Feminism subverts this idea by stating that phallo-logocentrism offers 'the false reasoning by which man has asserted his primacy and power over women' (ibid.).

Cixious is eager to transform the power dominance in discourse and by doing so she calls women into action, that is by radically encouraging females to write (Cixious 1976: 875). She believes that: 'The future must no longer be determined by the past' (ibid.), although she does not deny that the effects of the past are still noticeable in the present. However, she refuses 'to strenghten them by repeating them' (ibid.). In her opinion, anticipation is necessary, meaning that: 'Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement' (ibid.). Cixious praises female creativity by claiming that: 'Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible' (ibid. p. 876). She criticizes phallo-centrism because male writing is advocated 'by a libidinal and cultural – hence political, typically masculine – economy' (ibid. p. 878). *Ecriture feminine*, according to Cixious, celebrates the liberation of self, individuality and empowerment through language. Cixous's ideas contribute to the significance of the power of female discourse because female writing employs the exploration of sexuality (ibid.). What is more, Cixious

encourages women to transgress, that is to challenge the 'the speech governed by the phallus' and 'speak in public' (ibid.). The paper will rely on Cixious definition of transgression treating it as an act that challenges patriarchal norm which stipulates female discourse.

Finally, the significance of the Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, psychoanalyst and feminist Julia Kristeva's work is also relevant to the case of female discourse study. In her essay *Semiotike, Recherches pour une Semanalyse* (*Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*), Kristeva coins the term 'intertextuality' which refers to 'a mosaic of citations' meaning that every text connects or relates to other texts providing different layers of meaning (1969: 146). According to Kristeva, 'every text is absortion and transformation of another text' (ibid.). Thus, the process of reading is associated with a deeply creative project of constructing meaning. The emphasis is placed on the semiotic relationship between the reader, the text, and the author. The reader, in this case, plays an important role of the originator of meaning which is combined of both the cultural practice and personal experience (ibid.). 'Intertextuality' may be referred to as an allusion, an intertextual reference to another form of discourse.

3. Femininity in *The Magic Toyshop*

While considering the nature of femininity in Carter's novel, it seems that it is essentially centered in both the body and the mind. The compound of the body is representative of the physical attributes, biological factors, and sexual appeal, while the mind incorporates the features of moral character, behaviour and attitudes, as well as feminine ethos. In this respect, these two compounds complement each other and their wholeness may signify the unique presence of femininity. Thus, the subject of femininity occupies a significant position in *The Magic Toyshop.* The novel seems to delve into the realm of female experience whilst providing deeper insights into the female consciousness. The theme of female survival is also predominant for the subject matter . The extent of femininity is undoubtedly vast in terms of the thematic scope, story line and the foregrounding of feminism. Carter's remarkable flair of aestheticism seeks to unravel the mysticism of femininity concerning female attributes, behaviours and roles. Her creative maneuver focuses on the nature of femininity restrained under severe social and cultural conditions. The current analysis will provide a thorough investigation mostly of the two major female characters, Melanie and Aunt Margaret, and their relationship with the dominant male characters of the novel. The analysis will be focused on the depiction of subjectivity, victimization and the sexual identity of these two women. The allusions to fairy tales, myths as well as other literary works will be taken into consideration.

3.1 Female Transgression

The novel features the formation of a 15-year-old protagonist Melanie who loses her parents in a plane crash and is forced to move in with her relatives in London. Her life changes completely whilst living under the roof of her tyrannical uncle Phillip, who is a puppet master and a toymaker, running his own toyshop business. Melanie builds a close realtionship with the dumb, Irish, red-haired Aunt Margaret, who is Uncle Phillip's wife, helping her with the house errands as well as assisting in the toyshop. Later Uncle Phillip decides that Melanie will have to play the role of Leda in his puppet show Leda and the Swan, and Finn, Aunt Margaret's brother who is infatuated with Melanie, compelled with anger, destroys Uncle Phillip's crafted Swan puppet. While Uncle Phillip is away from the house, the 'red people', precicely Aunt Margaret and her two brothers Finn and Francie, decide to throw a party with music and dances. The plot line reveals the Oedipal love between Aunt Margaret and Francie.

With an unexpected return, Uncle Phillip discovers the secret incest bond between his wife and Francie. While he is in a rage, he sets the house on fire. In the denouement of the novel, Melanie and Finn flee away together.

In the novel, transgression is investigated through the motif of sexual awakening and the exploration of subjectivity, providing that transgression may be observed in various forms. The following passage will offer an in-depth analysis of the latter topics within the method of close-reading. The story is focalized through the eyes of the teenage girl Melanie and it allows the reader to see the world from a female perspective, which, in turn, makes it a third person narrative. The very beginning of the novel opens with an epiphany which is a moment of sudden realization that is linked to the sensation of discovering a new land and Melanie's transformation from childhood to maturity:

> The summer she was fifteen, Melanie discovered she was made of flesh and blood. O, my America, my new found land. She embarked on a tranced voyage, exploring the whole of herself, clambering her own mountain ranges, penetrating the moist richness of her secret valleys, a physiological Cortez, da Gama or Mungo Park (Carter 1981: 1).

The latter quote shows Melanie's first attempt to explore the nature of her own sexual identity. By comparing her body to the land of the New World, i. e. America, Carter emphasizes the link between the sensation of discovery and the sudden realization of maturity. An important insight into this episode has been made by Ashley Chantler who states that Melanie positions herself both as an explorer and an explored continent (Chantler 2010:197). In this respect, Carter's allusion to the colonial explorations indicates that female self-identification may be understood as a continuous 'tranced voyage' implying the extraordinary qualities. The realm of the supernatural, therefore, is a pathway towards the exploration of the self. Such an interpretive direction can be suggestive of an idea that the exploration of female subjectivity as well as sexual identity is an act enriched with enchantment, curiosity and the sublime.

Carter's reference to male explorers and the colonial conquistador 'Cortez, da Gama or Mungo Park' (Carter 1981: 1) is suggestive of the colonial project, although the female body in this case stands as a metaphor for the conquered land of the unknown. Chantler's argument is particularly relevant to Carter's fiction, since the critic claims that:

> 'the references to Cortez and other explorers suggest Freud's infamous remark, first published in 1926, that 'the sexual life of adult women is a "dark continent" for psychology' (p.126), which carried unintended overtones of colonialism and racial prejudice, as well as the sexism of seeing women as an unknown Other' (Chantler 2010:197).

Author's cultural references relate to male explorers, artists and writers who 'shaped the images of women and the unknown lands, and conflated the two' (ibid.). In this case Carter challenges the reader to reconsider the dominant power relationships between men and women by evoking the historical context of colonial expansion.

Taking into consideration the dreadful consequences of colonialism, for instance, the extinction of indigenous culture and violation of human rights, it appears that there is danger in exploring the unknown land. In Melanie's case, it occurs when her faith brings suffering. Transgression may involve danger resulting in punishment. Melanie's punishment is executed by the loss of her parents, loss of a comfortable life in the parental house as well the unexpected move to London.

Carter uses spatial metonymies in order to point to the physical qualities of Melanie's newly discovered female body. The author provides a parallel between the female body and the land itself, and 'richness', in this case, symbolizes the fertility of the Earth (Chantler 2010:197). Both the female body and the body of the Earth entail feminine characteristics of nurture and nourishment. What is more, vivid metaphorical images of 'mountain ranges' and 'secret valleys' also may be suggestive of a Romantic sensibility. Since the subject of sublime nature and the fascination with it are common characteristics of the Romantic period, it is possible to state that Carter was influenced by the Romanic ethos which emphasizes the intensity of emotion experienced through the sublimity of nature. The findings of Nicholas Halmi, the Professor of English and Comparative Studies in the University of Oxford, are significant for the current interpretative point of view since he asserts that 'Wordsworth and Shelley sought to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary and thereby transform human understanding of the external world' (2007: 24). Likewise, Carter seems to employ the extraordinary, which is the sublimity of the female body, through symbols of nature.

Provided that Melanie is intently curious in disclosing the changing physical qualities of her female body, it appears that Melanie initiates the formation of her female identity. A valuable observation again has been made by Chanlter, who states that the 'piece of furniture containing clothing (connoting decorum and social roles) is, in a gesture of self-liberation, made to become the reflector of Melanie's excited celebration of her own nudity' (Chantler 2010: 197). This scene of epiphany raises the level of intimacy and sexuality in the atmosphere of the novel, while her naked presence in front of the mirror indicates absolute privy and seclusion:

> For hours she stared at herself, naked in the mirror of her wardrobe; she would follow with her finger the elegant structure of her rib-cage, where the heart fluttered under the flesh like a bird under a blanket, and she would draw down the long line from breast-bone to navel (which was a mysterious cavern or grotto), and she would rasp her palms against her bud-wing shoulderblades (Carter 1981: 1).

Carter uses her protagonist Melanie as a vehicle for revealing the nature of female subjectivity, since during the course of posing in front of the mirror Melanie's fantasies bring her to the realization of different probable identities and roles that construct femininity:

> 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, she dragged her hair sluttishly across her face and sat down in a chair with her legs apart and a bowl of water and towel at her feet (ibid.).

In these scenes, Melanie attempts to mimic the ancient canon of beauty, particularly posing as if she was an ancient sculpture or a promiscuous girl, which may show what kind of female identities and roles dominate Melanie's mind. Also, it may be inferred that sexuality is not a stable concept, which would mean that it is rather changing and, more importantly, culturally conditioned. A valuable comment is made by Peach who argues that the depiction of the female body and sexuality in writing demonstrates the interpretation of the female subject in art and society (Peach 2009: 66). The literary scholar suggests that the novel's concern with the female body and sexuality are conventional for the Anglo-American feminist art and literature of the late 1960s and early 1970s (ibid.). In her opinion, feminist artists and writers attempted to challenge the way in which the female body 'was rendered invisible in art and culture other than as idealized objects in works produced by men within the tradition of the classic female nude' (ibid.). Respectively, while exploring different female subjectivities and social roles, Melanie tends not only to question the uniqueness of female identity but also 'demonstrates how women have to negotiate a myriad of received assumptions and social conventions' (ibid. p. 70). It might be concluded that Melanie is trying out different sexual modes proposed by men and that Carter renders the challenge of the denial of women's experiences of their own bodies (ibid.).

Melanie's indulgence into her secret fantasies stimulates acts of transgression, for example, after reading D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* she starts sticking forget-me-nots in her pubic hair (ibid.). By providing the intertextual reference to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Carter defines the context to which the referred novel stands as a milestone for the guide to sexuality. Inferring that Melanie has read the book, it is possible to say that her consciousness had been affected by the virtue of love presented in the novel. Moreover, when it comes to marriage, it appears that her mindset was influenced by Lawrence's story. The formation of

Melanie's identity as a female subject, thus, is exceedingly affected by the social sphere of art and culture.

Another act of transgression could be Melanie's decision to steal 'six untouched Biggles books' from her brother Jonathon and exchange them to money so that she could purchase a set of eyelashes that were supposed to make her look more beautiful (Carter 1981: 5). It seems that Melanie's urge for beauty and adulthood controls her actions and influences the formation of her identity. The instances of sexual awakening noticed during the course of Melanie's inner growth demonstrate that at the beginning of the novel her consciousness is obsessed with marriage, conceiving it as the foundation of happiness, although a sense of disappointment does follow her afterwards.

Melanie transgresses once again when during the eerie midnight she decides to put on her mother's wedding dress and flee to the garden. In this case, the wedding dress signifies a symbol of losing the innocence of one's childhood:

> It seemed a strange way to dress up just in order to lose your virginity. (…) Symbolic and virtuous white. White satin shows every mark, white tulle crumples at the touch of a finger, white roses shower petals at a breath. Virtue is fragile. It was a marvelous wedding-dress (Carter 1981: 13).

Melanie's fascination with the white color of her mother's wedding garment presumably relates to female sexuality since in her mind the white dress is symbolic of marriage and the world of adulthood. More importantly, to Melanie, marriage is a culturally shaped purpose of life if not a ceremony in terms of religious and cultural ethics. Melanie drops a coin and tempts the fate in order to make a settlement for her decision of transgression. The night Melanie sneaks into the garden dressed in the white gown is described by Carter with a profound touch of magical qualities:

> Such a round moon. Trees laden to the plimsoll-line with a dreaming cargo of birds. The dewy grass licked her feet like the wet tongues of small, friendly beasts; the grass seemed longer and more clinging than during the day. Her dress trailed behind her; she left a glinting track in her wake. The still air was miraculously clear. Shadowed objects – a branch, a flower, stood out with a dark precision, as if seen through water. She walked on slow, silent feet through the subsequent night. She breathed tremulously through her mouth, tasting black wine. (…) She shook with ecstasy. (…) Great banks of cloud reared and dissolved in the heavens and here and there shone a star. The world, which was only this garden, was as empty as the sky, endless as eternity (ibid. p. 17).

The magical and mystical nature of Carter's writing merges the boundaries of the world of fantasy and reality, placing the reader into the realm of the sub-conscious and the world of the supernatural. In her world, Carter personifies the elements of nature, such as the 'licking

grass', investing them with lively qualities. Melanie's sexual awakening is focusing on the body and its senses. It seems that the realm of sexuality is a magical kingdom, not controlled by reason. Thus, Carter's poetic, yet unrealistic manner of writing challenges the imaginative competence of the reader. To put it in Peach's words, the key trope of Carter's fiction is 'the simultaneous eroticization and deconstruction of the cultural construction of the body' (Peach 2009: 167).

In addition, Carter's poetically-driven style of constructing meaning through the focalization of a teenage girl demonstrates how the exploration of female sexuality for Melanie may cause both excitement and anxiety (ibid. p. 67). This sensation, in Peach's point of view, could be associated with 'a young girl's first experience of sex' (ibid.). Taking into account the psychoanalytical observation produced by Sigmund Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1965), where he observes that climbing in a dream signifies vaginal intercourse, may support the current analysis (p. 401). Since the eerie atmosphere with the prevailing linkages to the moon surrounds Melanie, it seems that the moon functions as a symbol of femininity and is an allusion to Melanie's menstrual cycles. Moreover, the time frame in which the action takes place, namely the end of the summer, links to the end of childhood as well as innocence (Peach 2009: 67).

The same episode in which Melanie climbs the apple tree located in the garden next to the house in order to reach her room window is inevitably linked to the myth of the Garden of Eden. For instance, the garden may be reminiscent of the biblical Garden of Eden, the apple tree referring to The Tree of Knowledge (Carter 1981: 21). Eve's sudden realization of her own nakedness after eating the forbidden apple is linked to Melanie's overwhelming experience: 'She was horribly conscious of her own exposed nakedness. She felt a new and final kind of nakedness, as if she had taken even her own skin off (…) nude in the ultimate nudity' (ibid.). Again, intertextuality comes into play, since the mythical linkages provide new layers of perception and interpretation for the general reading of the story (Kristeva 1969: 146).

Carter's interest in the re-visioning of the female nude is part of the social activism concerned with the oppressive nature of social discourse (ibid.). Social discourse, in turn, operates as a dominant and manipulative mechanism which governs the norms of appearance as well as female identity. The model of the 'new' female nude presented through the woman's

perspective advocates a different female subjectivity as well as a sexual identity that is permeated with a sense of independence.

Alternative forms of female transgression are explored during the course of the novel when Melanie moves to London to live in her uncle's house. Uncle Philip's world is associated with tyrannical patriarchy in which Melanie is trying to maintain her own individuality, independence and uniqueness by engaging in various forms of transgression concerning female looks and behavior. For instance, Melanie wears trousers instead of skirts and the instance Finn notices it he bars her to change her apparel:

> 'Then he looked Melanie up and down. Then he said violently: 'No you can't wear them!'
> 'What?'
> 'Trousers. One of your Uncle Philip's ways. He can't abide a woman in trousers. He won't have a woman in the shop if she's got trousers on her and he sees her. He shouts her out into the street for harlot. Ah, it's dreadful, sometimes. (…)
> 'Melanie, will you slip up and put on a skirt? Or he'll turn you out!'
> Bewildered, she looked down at herself. She was covered. She was proper. He must be joking' (Carter 1981: 62).

Inferring that trousers are a signifier of maleness and superiority, especially in the society governed by patriarchy, Melanie violates the social norms of appearance and it may be regarded as a small form of protest. Thus, Finn warns her with an intention to avoid any kind of quarrelling and it shows that Finn seeks to protect Melanie and helps her to survive in the restricted society which discriminates femininity.

In this case, Uncle Phillip operates as a metonymy for the cruelty of male dominance over female looks as well as behavior. The following quote explains what model of femininity is acceptable in Uncle Philip's point of view: 'No make-up, mind. And only speak when you're spoken to. He likes, you know, silent women' (ibid. p. 63). Suppressed female identity conforms to the patriarchal social norms. Aunt Margaret is a perfect example since she is both literally and metaphorically a voiceless woman: 'She's dumb;' (…) 'it came to her on her wedding day, like a curse. Her silence' (ibid. p. 37). It may be concluded that the society which is led by men does not tolerate women who tend to speak up or at least express their own opinions and views. Taking into account the feminist critique, arguments on Plato's views provide a deeper insight into the field of female discrimination since Plato decisively stated that women's language 'was without meaning – unformed, chaotic, evanescent the speech of *doxa* (mere opinion, not truth) (Elshtain 1982: 607). Likewise, Aunt Margaret is debased of her capacity to speak; sarcastically Melanie finds herself alike with a bird: 'A

black bird with a red crest and no song to sing' (Carter 1981: 42). Thus, female behavior is demoralized in terms of an undermined identity.

The Magic Toyshop is a parody of patriarchy, under which women are silenced, mistreated and demoralized (Peach 2009: 73). The following quote reveals the brute nature of Uncle Philip's character:

> 'Uncle Philip never talked to his wife except to bark brusque commands. He gave her a necklace that choked her. He beat her younger brother. He chilled the air through which he moved. His towering, blank-eyed presence at the head of the table drew the savour from the good food she cooked. He suppressed the idea of laughter. Melanie (…) began to hate Uncle Philip' (Carter 1981:124).

The verb 'bark' is an animalistic feature denoting an impolite manner of verbal communication. His wedding gift, a 'sinisterly exotic and bizarre' (ibid. p. 112), heavy necklace is symbolic of Uncle Philip's dominance and power regarded as superiority, since it restricted Margaret's ability to either move her head and eat without utmost difficulty. Uncle Philip gazed 'at her with expressionless satisfaction, apparently deriving a certain pleasure from her discomfort, or even finding that the sight of it improved his appetite' (ibid.). He regulates the norms of behavior, appearance and ethics in the house. Since Uncle Philip stipulates the rules of moral discourse, it appears that his manner of living is more or less misogynistic. Moreover, he ignored and did not 'even acknowledged Victoria's (Melanie's sister's) presence, whereas his address to Melanie becomes even more unsettling (as if he does not acknowledge her existence either): 'What's your name, girly? Speak up' (ibid. p. 133). In Peach's words, 'The word 'girly' robs Melanie of her identity as his niece, reinforces the vulnerability and confirms his power over her' (Peach 2009:74).

Melanie compares Uncle Philip's house to the 'Bluebeard's castle' in which she feels as lonely as an outcast. The allusion to Bluebeard, in this case, performs as an intensifier of the dreadful atmosphere Melanie is surrounded with, whilst Bluebeard, having originated from the French folktales, was a misogynist aristocrat and wife slayer:

> 'She felt lonely and chilled, walking along the long, brown passages, past secret doors, shut tight. Bluebeard's castle. Melanie felt a shudder of dread as she went by every door, in case it opened and something, some clockwork horror rolling hugely on small wheels, some terrifying joke or hideous novelty, emerged to put her courage to test. And now she was entirely alone, brother and sister both lost to her' (ibid. p. 82).

Such folktale allusions bring anxiety to the general tone of the narrative and provide layers of interpretation, one of which may be that Uncle Philip is distinguished as the misogynist Bluebeard himself. In addition, the frightening and dreadful atmosphere and the spatial locus of a castle enriched with wonder and bewilderment are predominant tropes of gothic fiction.

Hence, *The Magic Toyshop* may be regarded as a gothic fiction narrative concerned with the realm of the supernatural and the anxieties that surround the human psyche. In a way, Melanie's anxieties about the unsatisfactory present are contrasted with the longing of the fulfilling past. A valuable insight was made by Zipes who observes that *The Magic Toyshop* is allegorical to a fairytale genre, thus, Carter's characters' 'early home life is severely disrupted by trauma', for instance, Melanie faces a psychological trauma after the plane crash signifying the loss of her parents (Zipes in Peach 2009: 69). Peach agrees with Zipe's argument and states that Melanie is motivated by a desire to realize the ideal of home and that 'the contrast between the new home and the one she has left opens up a new space in which Melanie imagines, locates and develops an ideal' (ibid.). The following quote illustrates Melanie's imaginative eagerness for an ideal home:

> 'Porcelain gleamed pink and the soft, fluffy towels and the toilet paper were pink to match. Steaming water gushed plentifully from the dolphin shaped taps and jars of bath essence and toilet water and after-shave glowed like jewellery; and the low lavatory tactfully flushed with no noise at all. It was a temple to cleanness. Mother loved nice bathrooms (Carter 1981: 56-57).

However, the reality in Uncle Philip's world is totally different because 'the bathroom depressed her [Melanie] very much', there were no luxuries compared with the past such as toilet paper, mirrors and warm water in the bathroom (ibid.). It means that Melanie faces a social status degradation, a transformation from a fortunate past life into an unfortunate and rather poor present. Accordingly, it affects the formation of Melanie's identity; she considers it as a punishment for her acts of transgression:

> '(…) this was reality – this chilly, high, inconvenient house with its threatening vistas of brown paint along which draughts roared like engines. This, she told herself, was the harsh, unloving truth, the black bitter of life; the tenderness of the lavish past was tenuous, insubstantial.'
> 'Eve must have felt like this on the way east out of Eden,' she thought. 'And it was Eve's fault' (ibid. p. 94).

Adjectives describing the house 'chilly, high, inconvenient' seem to be reminiscent of a gothic-like castle, which Melanie perceives as a prison where 'the dinner-gong clanged awfully' (ibid. p. 87). Moreover, the latter quote indicates that Melanie is sympathetic of the sinister Eve, seeing herself through the biblical icon of femininity. Melanie becomes emotionally attached to Eve's experience, and, in this way, she places the blame for the dreadful misfortune of life on her own shoulders.

Melanie's naivety stimulates her to transgress and 'to learn the new domestic geography' of Uncle Philip's house so 'to make herself at home' since 'she could not bear to feel such a stranger, so alien, and somehow insecure in her own personality, as if she found herself hard

to recognize in these new surroundings' (ibid. p. 58). Accustoming oneself with the present environment, thus, is a means of stabilizing one's personality and it is critical for Melanie to establish her own agency. She steals 'a ready-cut slice' of Aunt Margaret's baked cake 'from the larder' which 'made her feel more at home, already' (ibid.).

Ironically, the puppeteer and toymaker Uncle Philip turns his women into puppets and marionettes or, in other words, objects of deep fantasies and amusement. Aunt Margaret is metaphorically regarded as a puppet since she is voiceless under reduced subjectivity, whereas Melanie becomes 'a fetishised object as spectacle, a wooden marionette' (Peach 2009: 67). Uncle Philip 'becomes a parody of the wicked, incestuous uncle' (ibid. p. 74) who insists on Melanie acting with his puppets: 'He rubbed his hands with satisfaction' (Carter 1981: 74). His obsession with toy making and puppet theatre is obviously linked to passion for power, hence, power over women.

Uncle Philip decides to employ Melanie as his marionette into the puppet theatre, providing that he is empowered to manipulate people. The spectacle is reminiscent of the ancient Greek myth about Leda and the Swan. The original myth presents a story about the almighty Greek god Zeus, who relies on his supernatural powers and incarnates into a Swan, and seeks to seduce and rape a young and innocent girl named Leda. Carter, in this case, clearly provides an intertextual reference to both the myth and its interpretation in the famous poem *Leda and the Swan* by William Butler Yeats:

> 'A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
> Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
> By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
> He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
>
> How can those terrified vague fingers push
> The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
> And how can body, laid in that white rush,
> But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?' (Yeats 2007: 219).

The poem is concerned with the topic of eroticism and the depiction of a violent sexual encounter, which can also be regarded as divine. Aesthetically, the vivid and energetic imagery 'sudden blow', 'great wings beating', and 'staggering girl' portray the swan as an almighty and powerful creature that undermines the subjectivity of Leda, thus, making her an object of fragility, inferiority and vulnerability. Likewise, it is possible to interpret Carter's choice of allegory to the Greek mythological story in terms of power relationship structures.

Carter re-writes the myth by describing the scene with an upmost perplexity, merging the boundaries between the realms of fantasy and reality, which is a common technique for constructing magical realism:

> 'She was hallucinated; she felt herself not herself, wrenched from her own personality, wathcing this whole fantasy from another place; and, in this staged fantasy, anything was possible. Even the swan, the mocked up swan, might assume reality itself and rape this girl an a buzzard of white feathers' (Carter 1981: 166).

The swan-puppet is personified and acquires human characteristics. Since Uncle Phillip 'was pulling the strings' of the swan-puppet, it may be inferred that he aims to perform 'a surrogate rape' (Peach 2009: 73). Melanie tries to resist, although the swan overcomes her:

> 'The swan made a lumpish jump forward and settled on her loins. She thrust with all her force to get rid of it but the wings came down all around her like a tent and its head fell forward and nestled in her neck. The gilded beak dug deeply into the soft flesh. She screamed, hardly realizing she was screaming. She was covered completely by the swan but for her kicking feet and her screaming face. The obscene swan had mounted her' (ibid. p. 167).

The mesmerizing rape scene can be interpreted as a sexual intercourse for the following strongly erotical phrases: 'settled on her loins', 'dug deeply into the flesh', and 'she was covered completely by the swan' (ibid.). A simile is used to show the swan's dominance over Melanie 'the wings came all around her like a tent'. The phrasing in 'She thrust with all her force', however, refers to Melanie's resistence and intention to oppose.

From another point of view, the rape scene may also be part of Melanie's punishment. Since at the begining of the novel Melanie, being only 15 years old, already starts to fantasize about her marriage and wedding night, the swan-rape-scene symbolically indicates a punishment for her eagerness to reach adulthood. She violates the social decorum, which is the accepted norm for the age of marriage and then fate grants her with a symbolical punishment.

Uncle Philip physically assaults Finn because he ruins his 'Grand Performance': 'He shoved Finn's body (...) with the casual brutality of Nazi soldiers moving corpses in films of concentration camps' (Carter 1981: 132). The brutality of the social regime is presented through Uncle Philip's actions, so, following Elshtain's ideas, Carter's aestheticism can be regarded not only as a social critique of patriarchy, but also as an ideological critique of politics and power (Elshtain 1982: 603). Apparantly, the private discourse of the household which concerns the relationship between the family members is greatly influenced by the social regime of brutal dictatorial times, and, in this case, Carter refers to the Nazis (Carter 1981: 132). It reveals the social truth about the presence of dictatorship in the domestic

sphere. Thus, ideologies may be affective in terms of social, political as well as domestic discourse. By providing intertextual references to social, political and historical contexts Carter challenges human perception and the reader's awareness, since meaning is constructed not in the text itself but rather in the hermeneutical process which includes both the presence and the competence of the reader (Kristeva 1981: 146).

Transgression observed in the novel can be defined as direct and indirect. The latter forms of transgression that Melanie takes part in are socially and culturally conditioned. Oppositely, indirect transgression is noticeable in the character of Aunt Margaret. Her subtle misbehavior is observed in her secretly manifested incest relationship with her brother Francie, although only at the end of the novel Uncle Philip learns about her wife's betrayal.

To summarize, it occurs that the realm of female sexuality is enchanted with sublimity and can be effectively explored within the framework of the Romantic sensibility, since it is not reliant on reason. Art and social discourses vest power in shaping sexual identities and female roles, henceforth sexuality is not a stable, but a culture-bound concept, but rather changing and culture-bound. The model of the 'new' female nude depicted through the female perspective gives rise to a different female subjectivity as well as a sexual identity. Carter's intention to re-write the myths of the Garden of Eden and Leda and the Swan signifies both female transgression and eventual empowerment. It occurs that by deconstructing the story of Leda and the Swan Carter discloses the reality of the misogynistic patriarchal social system, whilst female subjectivity is demoralized in terms of undermined identity. By accepting the novel as a social and ideological critique, Carter manifests a powerful assessment of the social milieu of patriarchy.

3.2 Female Empowerment

The concept of female empowerment is closely related to the social schemata of power-roles, which was suggested by Elshtain and it provides a different reading of the novel (1982: 603). Men and women are believed to attain different positions of power or vulnerability, therefore, their authoritorization in the society may establish autonomy and lay an essential foundation for independent subjectivity. In *The Magic Toyshop*, Carter provides a substantial parody of a male-dominated society in which female characters face various obstacles that threaten their status and, subsequently, lay the foundation for their eventual empowerment. Female empowerment can be defined as the social competence of authority, autonomuous subjectivity

and an independent female identity. The following section will be concerned with the obstacles to female sovereignty presented in the novel and the means of establishing their authority.

The instances of victimization featured in the novel may be regarded as the initial obstacles to female independence. Since victimization is a process in which an attempt is made to undermine gender, in the latter case, female identity, it provides power preference for the contrary subject, male domination. Carter's female characters, Melanie and Aunt Margaret, in the realm of tyrranical patriarchy, are presented as supressed identities, inferior to the male characters. An attempt is made to ferociously victimize women and turn them into marionetes, paragons of submissiveness and obedience. For instance, Aunt Margaret is struck dumb on her first wedding day and is obliged to obey Uncle Philip's queer desires, such as wearing his wedding gift, the silver collar, which implements a form of slavery and loss of freedom:

> The necklace was a collar of dull silver, two hinged silver pieces knobbed with moonstones which snapped into place around her lean neck and rose up almost to her chin so that she could hardly move her head. It was heavy, crippling and precious and looked as though it might be very ancient, (...) sinisterly exotic and bizzare. Wearing the collar, Aunt Margaret had to carry her head high and haughty as the Queen of Assyria, but above it her eye were anxious and sad and not proud at all (Carter 1981: 112-113).

It may be said that this model of marriage is restrictive and confines Aunt Margaret's individuality as well as subdues her subjectivity. The wedding gift works as a crippling symbol which immobilizes the woman. Melanie becomes aware of Uncle Philip and Aunt Margaret's marriage as a negative example, although at the begining of the novel she herself longed for marriage and foresaw it as a purpose of a happy life. In this way, Melanie faces inner change, inner growth and achieves a realisation about the reality of marriage as a possible act discriminating power-roles.

However, at the end of the novel Aunt Margaret faces a critical change turning from a voiceless woman into an empowered female subject the moment her secret Oedipal love with her brother Francie is revealed: ''Get out,' she said. 'Now.' She could speak. Catastrophe had freed her tongue. (...) With her voice, she had found her strenght, a frail but constant courage like spun silk. Struck dumb on her wedding day, she found her old voice again the day she was freed' (Carter 1981: 197). It appears that love is a significant factor which facilitates empowerment in both Melanie and Aunt Margaret's cases. For Aunt Margaret, love generates strenght to re-establish her subjectivity with the appearance of her voice and in Melanie's case her relationship with Finn supports her wellbeing under severe circumstances that is he helps her to survive under the patriarchal tyranny. Since Finn is eager to take care of Melanie, it

shows that he cherishes her deeply, thus he is infatuated with her. The closing episode of the novel is pivotal because Melanie and Finn flee away, manage to escape and presumably start a new life together.

Also, implying that voice is a manifestation of strenght, it may be said that female empowerment is closely related to linguistic competence. To follow Elshtain's stream of thought, female sovereignty is related to linguistic competence, since language is inevitably connected with power and dominance (Elshtain 1982: 603). To Elshtain, language is a part of the ideological, yet political tool of power structures and the object of her critique is the public discourse in which female voice has no place, thus, the reader may need to redefine and, in turn, reestablish the significance of female discourse (ibid. p. 604- 606). In other words, the misogynistic arena of public discourse is governed by males, although female discourse links to emancipatory models of language (ibid.). Following Elshtain's claim it may be said that female discourse may opperate as the emancipatory model of female power and so it does in Carter's work.

Another form of female victimization, presented through the metaphor of marionete puppets, is utmost notable in the episode which depicts the Leda and the Swan spectacle, in which Melanie is turned into an actual marionette of one of Uncle Philip's puppets. The uncle orders her to perform the innocent girl Leda in his 'GRAND PERFORMANCE - FLOWER'S PUPPET MICROCOSM' (Carter 1981: 126). Carter rewrites the original myth by placing him in the superior god-like position. In addition, the way he addresses Melanie is unconditionally offensive and abusive: ''Smile.' She smiled. 'Not like that, you silly bitch. Show your teeth'' (Carter 1981: 144). This abusive manner of speaking in imperative forms places Melanie into an inferior position and it threatens her positive face, whereas Uncle Philip occupies the superior position and, thus, overpowers Melanie's autonomy and subjectivity.

Melanie tries to fight the swan and not to sucummb to its influence, although 'Leda attempts to flee her heavenly visitant but his beauty and majesty bear her to the ground' (ibid. p. 166). The scene of Melanie's resistance is described with a profound touch of magical realism and intertextual references which strike the mind too:

> Like fate or clock, on came the swan, its feet going splat, splat, splat. She thought of the horse of Troy, also made of hollow wood; if she did not act her part well, a trapdoor in the swan's side might open and an armed host of pigmy Uncle Philips, all clockwork, might rush out and savage her. This possibility seemed real and awful. All her laughter was snuffed out. She was hallucinated (ibid.).

Melanie faces fear and anxiety because of the swan's approach. Carter draws an allusion to the Trojan horse, which implies a state of falsehood and alert. However, Melanie fades into the world of fantasy and the subconcious in order to flee and escape from the obnoxious reality. She experiences 'a gap of consciousness' which implies her conscious absence during the rape scene as a mean of self-defence (ibid. p. 167). It may be said that by using magical realism, in other words, blurring the lines of the real and the imaginary, Carter presents the world of the subconcious as a safe space of escape for victimized women.

Taking into account the fact that both Melanie and Aunt Margaret are depicted as submissive female identities their social status is even more demolished because of their financial dependence. Carter depicts a world where women are financially dependant on male authority: 'But he doesn't let me have any money, myself. (...) He doesn't trust me with money. (...) She tried to gloss over the humiliation of it. (...) they were poor women pensioners, planets round a male sun' (ibid. p. 140). Since Aunt Margaret acknowledges the fact as humiliation, it may be said that the realisation of her humiliation is a step towards empowerment. In a society which is governed by capitalism the token of money is indeed significant in terms of the aspects of survival, well-being and social status. Thus, Carter's women are undermined because of their financial reliance and dependance on men. Without financial independence an individual pursues a great burden of denial and loss of self-determination in society. Cixious, too, criticizes structures governed by financial authority. According to Cixious, a feminist reading would suggest that the future must no longer be determined by the past concerning the condition of oppressed female experience (Cixious 1976: 875). The feminist locus seeks to diminish the inequality between genders, and, in accordance with Cixious as well as Elshtain, female discourse can transform the power dominance. Similarly, the social schemata of power-roles is transformed at the end of the novel when Aunt Margaret regains her subjectivity and individuality with her ability to speak. Consequently, Uncle Philip loses his mind and burns the house, which is the embodiment of patriarchal suppression and the scene symbolizes the end of misogynistic ruling. In the biblical sense, fire is symbolic of God's anger and judgement. It may be said that after the power-schemata is transformed, Melanie also achieves her independence when at the end of the novel she flees away in the company of Finn. Overall, it seems that victimization which subdues identities influences both female characters to reestablish themselves as independent subjects and, in turn, foregrounds their empowerment.

By comparing the characters' language, it appears that there is a great difference between female and male discourses. Female language presents a form of cooperation, while male language deploys domination through the imperative tone. Though Aunt Margaret is dumb, the only way for her to communicate is by writing her thoughts on the chalkboard, hence she manages to build a strong feminine relationship with Melanie. The two female characters seem to support one another by taking care of their looks and appearance:

> Melanie helped her aunt like a lady's maid, setting the dress fairly on the shoulders and adjusting the hang of the skirt and zipping up the back. Her aunt stood stock still and let Melanie dress her. She looked beatified. An angel could have entered holding a long, white lily, with a special message from God, and it would not have been surprising (Carter 1981: 188).

Melanie helps Aunt Margaret to fix her looks in order to become attractive and to achieve an angel-like-beauty. Also, it may be said that Melanie expresses her gratitute to Aunt Margaret by presenting her with the gifts of pearls and dresses. The women cooperate to maintain their prosperity and well-being. Presumably good-looks are essential for female welfare and contentment. In other words, both female characters appear in the same condition which threatens their status of independency and autonomy, therefore, the language as well as actions that represent the manner they communicate to one another foreground benevolence and empathy. The women shared the same burden of hard life and 'Each time Aunt Margaret cried, she and her niece became closer' (ibid. p. 145). It seems that their care-taking relationship builds a sense of community which may operate as a supporting act for re-estbalishing and securing female sovereignety.

On the other hand, male discourse, particularly Uncle Philip's language, employs disrespect and contempt. For instance, Uncle Philip uses an offensive, imparative tone when speaking with Melanie: ''You'll do,' he said. 'I suppose. Now piss off.'' (ibid. p. 144). Speaking in an absolutely misanthropical manner Uncle Philip proves his subjective dictatorship which abuses the people surrounding him:

> 'Take off that wrap,' he said.
> She obeyed, shivering, for the basement was heated only by a miserly, inefficient little oil stove. (...)
> 'You're well built, for fifteen.' His voice was flat and dead.
> 'Nearly sixteen.'
> 'It's all that free milk and orange juice that does it. Do you have your periods?'
> 'Yes,' she said, too shocked to do more than whisper.
> He grunted, displeased.
> 'I wanted my Leda to be a little girl. Your tits are too big.'
> Finn flung down his paintbrush.
> 'Don't talk to her like that!'
> 'Keep your mouth shut and mind your own business, Finn Jowle. I'll talk to her anyway I please. Who is it pays for her board?' (ibid. p. 143).

Even though Finn tries to defend Melanie's positive face which is threatened by Uncle Philip, Finn becomes an object of abuse as well as Melanie does, since Uncle Philip foregrounds his superiority by means of financial power. Uncle Philip is the bread-winner in the family, thus he attains the superior status. However, his manner of speaking violates social norms of politeness and he undermines the subjectivities of both male and female characters. Abusive language diminishes sovereignty and it may be said that it encourages the female characters to establish a sense of community for the reason to preserve a sense of autonomy.

Irish culture which is represented by Celtic traditions of folk music and dances plays a significant role in the preservation of the characters' ethnical identity. In the novel, the Irish people, namely Aunt Margeret and her brothers Finn and Francie, secretely indulge in their ceremonial music and dance sessions in order to maintain a sense of their Irish culture-hood:

> Drifting through the house was the fint noise of the violin and also of another instrument, a pipe or a flute. They were playing together as close as one single instrument which sounded like fiddle and flute at the same time. They leap up and down the scale like mountain goats, dancing to their own pulsing rhythm. Dance music for some intricate, introspective, self-contained dancer. Music in the house (ibid. p. 49).

Since folk music and Irish dances are one of the most essential parts of the Irish cultural foundation, it may be said that Aunt Margaret, Finn and Francie are eager to share the cultural experience in order to achieve a sense of their own community which unites and and strenghtens their spiritual bonds. Thus, the preservation of cultural identity foregrounds subjectivity and lays the grounds for sovereignty. Also, it may be said that the Irish music and dances elevate Aunt Margaret's spirit and bring great happiness to her life because 'Her eyes were stars. And this was how the red people passed their time and amused themselves' (ibid. p. 52). The sense of ethnical identity helps the red people to survive in the world restricted by Uncle Philip's patriarchy.

Having in mind that female transgression leads to female empowerment, likewise Melanie's exploration of her own sexuality influences her growth. Female sexuality, too, may be accepted as a vector of power. For instance, it is evident in the sphere of arts and culture because the image of the female nude apart from nature has been the most dominant depiction in human history. Melanie engages into acts of self-exploration to achieve a better notion of self maintaining her sexual appearance and with an intention to become a potential bride, which influences the formation of Melanie's identity. Thus, sexuality may be regarded as a vector for female empowerment.

What is more, the end of the novel provides a symbolic imagery of trousers when Melanie decides she can finally wear whatever she likes:

> 'What shall you wear, Melanie?'
> 'Trousers,' said Melanie.
> 'You look leggy,' said Finn. 'What nice legs you have.'
> 'I haven't worn trousers for ages.'
> 'Because of Philip.'
> 'And he's not here.'
> 'Quite right.' (ibid. p. 190).

The trousers are symbolic of Melanie's self-realisation and what she finds out is that she is a powerful, self-reliant woman. It may be said that Carter emphasizes the importance of Melanie's independent choice for wearing the trousers to underline her ultimate empowerment, since at the end of the novel Melanie faces her new and autonomious self.

Taking everything into account, it may be said that the ruling dominance of patriarchy which governs the society deprives the female subjects from autonomy. One of the possible consequences of patriarchal ruling is female victimization which in turn is a definite obstacle to self-determination. However, the linguistically-driven competence for language denotes self-realization as well is a vector for power. Male discourse implements imparative abusiveness, whereas female discourse enforces a sense of community and cooperation. In this way, female discourse operates as an emancipatory model for female autonomy.

Another obstacle to female sovereignety is financial dependence and reliance on male authority. Yet the feminist interpretative direction forsakes financial dependence and promotes the idea that women are capable of earning money themselves. Accordingly, financial independence contributes to female sovereignty. While the preservation of ethnicity is significant for one's self-determination, sexual activity and the factor of love, too, may be accepted as the vectors of power which lead to female empowerment.

4. Conclusions

Carter's profound aestheticism in the (post)modern novel *The Magic Toyshop* brings to light a strong concern for the question of femininity and explores female experience through the locus of female consciousness under severe social and restricting cultural conditions of patriarchal domination. Carter's two women characters, Melanie and Aunt Margaret, are portrayed as marionettes, undermined and suppressed female subjectivities, although at the end of the novel the reader learns about the crucial change towards empowerment in the female characters. Their changing worldview is revealed to the reader through the motifs of sexual awakening, initiation of self, linguistic competence and their relationship with men.

The analysis showed that female transgression, notable as an act which violates socially accepted norms of decorum, inevitably results in punishment. In Melanie's case, her transgression is concerned with childish naivety and utmost eagerness for adulthood as well as marriage, even though it is too early for her age. Melanie's punishment is understood as the ferocious consequences of her parent's' death, dreadful living conditions under Uncle Philip's roof and the surrogate rape scene during the spectacle Leda and the Swan. It seems that there is danger inherent in self-exploration, although it is still necessary for eventual female liberation.

Carter's unrealistic manner of writing, challenging the imaginative competence of the reader, is exemplified by the instances of magical realism, which proves that the exploration of female subjectivity, sexuality and the initiation of one's identity are acts enriched with enchantment and curiosity, thus it foregrounds the author's Romantic sensibility and search for sublime beauty in the female body. Art is influential and plays a pivotal role in the formation of female subjectivities and roles. Although, Carter is critical of the female image in artworks created by men, she renders the challenge of the denial of women's experiences of their own bodies. Hence, sexuality is not stable, rather changing and culturally conditioned.

The Magic Toyshop is a parody of mysogynistic patriarchy in which women are undermined, therefore, Carter's female characters face various obstacles that threaten their autonomy and sovereignty. Such obstacles include outright victimization, financial dependence on men and abusive male discourse. However, the latter obstacles subsequently lay the foundation for eventual female empowerment which is explored through the competence of language, meaning that female discourse incorporates a sense of community and grants them power.

Female discourse, in turn, operates as an emancipatory model in Carter's novel, most notably with the appearance of Aunt Margaret voice. The factors of love and the preservation of their ethnical identity also facilitate female liberation and even lead to empowerment.

Overall, as a coming-of-age novel, *The Magic Toyshop* provides a positive message which shows that even though Melanie was deprived of her comfort and luxuries when she faced the dreadful loss of her parents, the brutal experience of life under patriarchal tyranny provided a stimulus for her to grow and become stronger since at the end of the novel she embraces a new and autonomous identity.

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6. Summary in Lithuanian

Šiame darbe nagrinėjamos moterų transgresijos ir galios įtvirtinimo temos (post)modernistiniame britų rašytojos Angelos Carter romane „Stebuklinga žaislų krautuvėlė" (1967). Darbe siekiama nustatyti kaip pagrindinės romano temos atsiskleidžia per magiškąjį realizmą ir gotikinės literatūros elementus. Perrašydama klasikinius ir biblijinius mitus, Carter problematizuoja socialiai priimtas realybės suvokimo normas. Šioje analizėje identifikuojamos kliūtys moterų suverenitetui ir autonomiškumui per lingvistinį kompetetingumą. Romanas „Stebuklinga žaislų krautuvėlė" yra socialinė patriarchalinės visuomenės kritika, pateikta iš moterų veikėjų perspektyvos, todėl darbo teorinis pagrindas remiasi feministine kritika – Jean Bethke Elshtain ir prancūzų feminizmo judėjimo atstovių Julia Kristeva bei Helen Cixious pasiūlytomis idėjomis. Analizės skyrius tiria seksualinio prabudimo motyvus, moters subjektyvumo vaizdavimą, viktimizaciją ir tironijos įtaką bei pasipriešinimo ir protesto formas, kurios skatina maištingo ir reiklaus moterų identiteto formavimąsi. Novatoriškas Carter rašymo metodas, susijęs su mitų perrašymu ir dekonstrukcija, pabrėžia moters tapatybės ir vaidmens klausimą patriarchato sociume, kuris nuneigia pilnavertį, autonomišką ir nepriklausomą moters tapatybės egzistavimą. Transgresija ir įgalinimas yra vienas kitą papildantys komponentai, svarbūs moters tapatybės formavimuisi ribotų teisių ir galių aplinkoje.