

Space and Spatial Relations in Angela Carter's
The Magic Toyshop

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1 Introduction

Angela Carter consciously carried on a never-ending tradition of retelling legends, myths and fairy tales with her novels and short stories by giving her own accounts on well-known stories, using their common plot formulas for her unique writings, or both, to construct her own narratives. This feature of her works provides the possibility to compare the literal and symbolic spaces of her writings with those of the referenced tales and myths. In Carter's fiction a great deal of attention is paid to the setting, involving places and their meanings in the gothic framework, in which space has always been an important detail. One may recall the prototypical places of the classic novels, such as gothic castles, scary, mysterious houses etc. Jerrold E. Hogle emphasizes that these spaces, or the combination of them, hold "secrets from the past [...] that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise..." (2002, 2). But spaces are not only for holding secrets for the characters, the spatial structure of the gothic novel is connected to the unfolding of the plot as well (Cavallaro 2002, 29), just as in Carter's novel *Melanie's* story unfolds with the change of the children's home and the constant movement between the three floors in Philip's house. In the gothic literary tradition spaces were often created with the intention of provoking emotions in the reader (Savoy 2002, 181) as well as fears in the characters such as claustrophobia or cleithrophobia. The formulation of spaces often carries the potential to reflect on the characters' psyche; since Freud, gothic literature has been very consciously integrating his notions of the unconscious desires (Bruhm 2002, 262-3) and the uncanny. The relation between the character's psyche and the space in which they are in is close, as Anna Kérchy notes, "[Carter] reconsiders spatiality in terms of the inhabitants' psychic, and imaginative interactions with their own locatedness" (2019).

The setting of *The Magic Toyshop*, featuring all the toys and dolls in the house, creates a sinister atmosphere and evokes fears and uncanny feelings in both the readers and the novel's characters. Ever since Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the castle has been a popular setting for gothic novels, yet later, it was replaced by the family home, the old house, which, as Fred Botting writes, "as both building and family line, [...] became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present" (2005, 2). Carter, in *The Magic Toyshop*, sets the main events of the novel in an old family home that functions as a toyshop as well. Dolls and masks, which people are wont to find unsettling and terrifying in general, are the most remarkable and centric pieces of the toymaker Philip's creations. Regarding pediophobia, the anxiety about such toys and dolls, Masahiro Mori coined the term "uncanny valley," which proposes that this irrational fear comes from the connection of human resemblance to the inanimateness of the doll, which reminds one of the deceased – also a central issue in Freud's work (Mori 2012; Freud 2003,

chap. 2). The novel does not only take advantage of this to create an eerie atmosphere, but also tears down the curtain between reality and abstraction as people become living dolls in it. Carter's works, as Gina Wisker puts it, "combine horror, gothic and fantasy: man reduced to object, machine, a doll" (1993, 163).

In *The Magic Toyshop*, Philip creates his own world with reversed order and values to dominate over; each family member's life is affected not only by Philip as a person, but by his house and toyshop as well. Joanna Piwowarska, upon discussing the symbolic aspect of ruins in gothic literature, writes that as they are "no longer useful for everyday purposes [ruins] start a 'mystical' existence" (2003, 193). On the same basis, it is questionable whether Philip's poorly maintained house in Carter's novel is still capable of functioning as a family home, and as the novel reveals, it is quite the contrary. Due to this, as Andrew Hock Soon Ng writes, Philip's house reads as "a parody of the notion of home itself: for instance, while home is traditionally associated with privacy, such a quality is mostly impossible in the toymaker's house" (2015, 35). This parodic nature of the novel seems to manifest in binary oppositions such as the one between privacy and publicity in the house; the reversal of order bears a satirical tone, yet at the same time this is the very property of the book that makes it possible to approach it through the Bakhtinian notion of the carnival and to interpret Philip's house as the incarnation of a symbolic Hell, a space that serves as the place of the heroine's initiation,¹ turning the narrative into a katabasis, Melanie's journey to the underworld.²

The present essay analyses space and spatial relations in *The Magic Toyshop*, paying exclusive attention to a myth critical approach when discussing the vertical axis, and psychoanalytical notions in the interpretation of the vertical one. The incorporation of myths and fairy tales is a characteristic feature of Carter's works. To start with, I elaborate on the biblical expulsion and the story of Bluebeard. One of Carter's original intentions with *The Magic Toyshop* was to depict the expulsion from the Garden of Eden being a "Fortunate Fall as meaning that it was a good thing to get out of that place. The intention was that the toyshop itself should be a secularized Eden" (Haffenden 1985, 80). Yet, my interpretation considers the expulsion scene as the underlying narrative of the beginning of the book, while the house of

¹ For an elaborate discussion on initiation rituals see chapter 1.5 in *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion: Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Versnel 1993, 48-73).

² The essay refers to and outlines some of the ideas of Christianity as details from its mythology, avoiding its discussion as a religion. Although making a rigid differentiation between the terms 'Hell' and 'underworld' is not necessary for the present analysis, it is to be noted that underworld here is recognized as a general term referring to the eschatological space that is imagined to be below earthly realms, therefore, the use of 'underworld,' as an umbrella term, includes the Christian notion of Hell. For further discussion of the terms in the frameworks of Christian, Greco-Roman and other mythologies in relation to katabasis narratives see *Myths of the Underworld in Contemporary Culture: The Backward Gaze* (Fletcher 2019, 1-12).

Philip as the manifestation of symbolic Hell. Philip is associated with Bluebeard, and that changes the reader's understanding of the main space of the novel – Philip's home – and judgement of Melanie as a curious heroine. Her story, on the novel's vertical axis, recalls the motif of the katabasis, while the horizontal spatial relations reveal information about her psyche, her desires that cannot be fulfilled during a journey to Hell. This eschatological space serves as a very limiting environment for Melanie to work on her identity development – as teenagers are wont to do. Her desires for a complete family and to become a functioning adult cannot be fulfilled while experiencing living hell. Her desires work unconsciously, sometimes surfacing in different forms of emotional reactions. Investigating the house of Philip as a closed space and as an eschatological one reveals a connection between the two types of readings; the way of interpreting the house's space at the symbolic level exposes different influences it has on Melanie's psyche. A seemingly consistent tendency is noticeable through the book that connects Melanie's deepest wants with shielding objects and closed spaces; thus, connecting the Freudian notion of unconscious desires with the spatial relations of *behinds* and *insides* is the main intention of the essay's third part. The essay proposes that the tale of Bluebeard and the myth of the biblical expulsion serve as the main underlying narratives for interpreting the novel's spatial relations; that *The Magic Toyshop* in a way reads as a katabasis that corresponds with the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque Hell; that two types of spatial relations – the *behinds* and *insides* – act as signifiers of Melanie's forbidden, unconscious desires throughout the novel; and that, in relation to the previous proposition, free spaces indicate the resolution of the anxiety caused by Melanie's emerging desires.

The essay first examines the tale of Bluebeard and the biblical expulsion as the underlying narratives of the novel. Some parallels between them and the novel are obvious, but the ways Carter modifies and applies them come with additional meanings that influence the reader's understanding of her text. After that the presence and properties of the katabasis motif are to be demonstrated, along with the correspondences between *The Magic Toyshop*'s symbolic Hell and the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque Hell. Roles are assigned to the characters within this paradigm, Melanie as the descending heroine, Philip as the devil's spawn and Finn as a trickster, a Promethean or Luciferian character. The last part of the essay is concerned with the horizontal axis of the novel, discussing spatial relations such as the *insides* and *behinds* and their meanings as signifiers of Melanie's unconscious desires.

2 The Underlying Narratives of the Novel: “Bluebeard” and the Biblical Expulsion

The Magic Toyshop, although not a fairy tale itself, “reclaims” motifs from fairy tales (Peach 1998, 74-5), it is filled with mythical allusions and fabled references. The most explicitly included tale is that of Bluebeard, whose name is mentioned multiple times throughout the novel. The story of Bluebeard is well-known across Europe with its many variants. The wealthy man with the forbidden chamber, who purposefully provokes curiosity – to kill the cat – gained great attention and has been used as grounding for literary pieces by many authors since Perrault published his account in 1697.³ Proverbs are usually left unfinished in spoken English, yet in this particular one, using the full sentence leaves the cat alive – curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back. Although the second part of the saying, so to speak, is already present in some variations of the tale, featuring the brothers or mother saving the heroine, it dominates in feminist revisions and retellings of “Bluebeard,” such as Carter’s works. Whenever a tale or myth is recreated, the intentions of the author always alter it in some shape or form. “Wrapping up” Bluebeard’s tale in a modern form is Carter’s take on representing patriarchal domination. Anne Williams, in the context of gothic novels, reads the Bluebeard narratives as the patriarchal tales of female curiosity (1995, 43). Two obviously essential elements of such a tale are the Bluebeard figure and its home, as well as the connection between the character and its space, which are elaborated on below. Carter implements both the Bluebeard tale and the myth of the biblical expulsion in her novel as underlying narratives that bear symbolic meanings for her initiation, as is to be discussed later, and the journey Melanie has to go through, which is a katabasis, a trip to the underworld, more precisely, to Hell and back.

In *The Magic Toyshop*, the equivalent of Bluebeard is, without doubt, Philip. Melanie’s uncle, the toymaker seemingly does everything in his power to possess a house and “family” that succumb to his will – and his only. Although he lacks the literal beard, his appearance is unusual due to his unguessable age (Carter 1996, 12), his social skills are non-existent – as John Waite elaborates, Philip is on a mission to turn the family members as close to being controllable puppets as possible (1993, 5). Furthermore, he is known to keep the toyshop’s income to himself; his toys and woodworking products are not cheap (Carter 1996, 80), yet his wealth is not reflected by the condition of the house. Not only do the Flowers have to live in an unpleasant environment, they are also deprived of any freedom or chance to forget about the place: after Melanie and her siblings move to Philip’s house, school is not a concern anymore

³ See the tale in Carter’s translation in *Sleeping beauty & other favourite fairy tales* (Perrault 1984, 33-40).

and going for a walk is only possible when Philip is not home (ibid., 98). In other words, Philip is not satisfied by merely controlling the family, he also wants them to feel his power and live in deprivation of their desires.

The main space of Carter's novel is the opposite of a castle. While Bluebeard's home is enormous, calls for an exploration and reflects wealth, Philip's house is relatively small, private life in it seems to be an impossibility, and its connection with the shop itself is a reminder of labour. While there is no difficulty in recognising that both places are filled with undiscovered rooms that are revealed to the heroine by the end, a dubious question arises: what is the toyshop's forbidden chamber, in which knowledge and objects of desires are kept? I suggest that in this home, where values appear to be reversed, it is worth looking for the forbidden space not inside, but outside the house. As if the fairy tale's chamber was turned inside out, the holder of knowledge and objects of desire is not in a closed space in the house, it is everything *but* the house. No one but Philip is free to leave the house for whatever reason, others may do the shopping but that is it. The inhabitants of the house rarely get the chance to communicate with someone outside the family, which translates as the prohibition of social needs and knowledge from the outside of the twisted toymaker-realm. The members of the family become outsiders of society at Philip's will, the chance for escape arrives with the destruction of the house. The burning of the house is an attempt at murder, similar to the fairy tale's ending. In some of its variants, the heroine is saved; similarly, as Casie E. Hermansson writes, the feminist treatment of the "Bluebeard" narrative usually features the heroine as a trickster, who figures her way out of danger and makes her escape (2009, 168). An outstanding difference in Carter's novel is that Melanie herself is not a trickster, but – as is to be discussed later – Finn, serving as her extension, is.

Both in the tale and the novel, the relation between the proprietor and the property is seemingly supernatural, as if the house and castle acted on behalf of their owners. Bluebeard, of course, is in possession of the keys of his own castle. These keys are not only the tools to open the locks, they also hold the capability to fulfil the heroine's curiosity. Therefore, the keys, locks and rooms become the executors of Bluebeard's will to persuade his wife to peek into the forbidden chamber, and thus rush to her death. In *The Magic Toyshop* Philip's absolute authority gets emphasized when the reader learns that the bathroom's geyser only works properly for him, everyone else struggles with getting hot water (Carter 1996, 117). The house, due to this seemingly magical phenomenon, appears to be serving its master, Philip – and not only does it provide him comfort, but also, in correspondence with his will, discomforts everyone else. As Simon Goulding writes, for Philip, it is a passion to control the domestic

space, and his identity depends on the shop and the house – “he controls it and therefore he is it” (2012). Philip not only has the keys and ownership of the house, it is his own realm, which obeys him. Apparently, the characters of the novel also see the tie between the toymaker and his house. Finn, being angry with Philip, does not speak about committing anything against him, rather he is fantasising about destroying the house: “I should like to smash it all up [...] I should like to huff-and to puff and to blow his house down” (Carter 1996, 114-5). The house, in Finn’s perspective at least, appears to be so deeply contaminated by the vice of Philip that removing him by some means would not be enough for the Jowles to live a pleasant life.

The Bluebeard-Philip resemblance is explicitly expressed not only by the narrator several times, but once, by Melanie herself, as she finds the – imaginary – severed hand in the kitchen drawer: “I am going out of my mind,’ she said aloud. ‘Bluebeard was here’” (ibid., 118). The facts that Melanie both knows the tale of Bluebeard and makes the association between him and her uncle magnify the awareness of danger, even if she gets told multiple times that “[Philip’s] bark is worse than his bite” (ibid., 74, 163). Bluebeard’s castle in itself can be considered a luxury, but only until its secret remains uncovered. Once the secret is revealed, the castle (or house) becomes the heroine’s – potential – coffin. Melanie’s realization of the parallel between the tale and her own life, for her, foreshadows grave danger, thus inflating the importance of the detaining function of the house.

As Bluebeard’s wives represent female curiosity, so do Pandora of Greek mythology and Eve of the Bible, the difference being, as Williams notes, that the stories of the latter two take place in nature – as opposed to culture (43). Beside fairy tale motifs, Carter also incorporates myths into her works.⁴ The myth that frames the novel – and thus, Philip’s play as well – is the biblical story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve. The allusion is given at the very beginning: Melanie is locked out of her home, she wears her mother’s wedding dress, and in order to get back inside, she must climb her way up the apple tree, well known from Christian artworks. The biblical Garden of Eden is reflected in the novel’s setting, the story at the beginning reads symbolically as the expulsion of Adam and Eve as Melanie, locked out from her home, wanders

⁴ The most distinct appearance of myth in *The Magic Toyshop* is the embedded narrative of Leda and the swan in the centre of the novel. Inserting this myth in the context of symbolical hell bears great significance for the theme of patriarchal domination and its timelessness. The myth portrays a rape scene taking place in a sacred time, *prior* to historic time. With the act of placing the mythic story in an eschatological space – accessible *after* earthly existence –, Carter emphasizes the timeless nature of the patriarchal system. Since further analysis would exceed the scope of the present paper, the scene is not discussed in detail. For a thorough analysis of the Leda and the swan motif in general see *Leda and the Swan—An Analysis of the Theme in Myth and Art* (Medlicott 1970, 15-23). For an analysis of the motif in relation to the novel see “Ledas and Swans in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* and *Nights at the Circus*” (Reichmann 2002, 39-53).

around wearing her mother's wedding dress and accidentally destroys it attempting to climb a tree and get back into the house through its branches.

The actions of climbing and falling are to be interpreted symbolically in the novel, associating the upward movement with ascent to Heaven and downward movement with descent to the underworld – which is, in *The Magic Toyshop*'s Christian framework, Hell. This opposition is one main feature of Mikhail Bakhtin's conceptual framework that I apply to Carter's novel and elaborate on later. As he writes:

The top and bottom, the higher and the lower, have an absolute meaning both in the sense of space and of values. Therefore, the images of the upward movement, the way of ascent, or the symbols of descent and fall played in this system an exceptional role, as they did also in the sphere of art and literature. (Bakhtin 1984, 401)

Carter introduces these terms at the beginning of the novel, when Melanie is trying to climb up the apple tree in their garden. Reading the novel from a mythical perspective, one must take into consideration the aspects of mythical symbolism, of which one important notion is the presence of semantic oppositions and their meanings. The most important of oppositions are the ones corresponding to one's sensory and spatial orientations (e.g. below/above; high/low); these are capable of making a "division between Earth and sky, upper and lower class status [... and] in most cases, 'high' is associated with the sacred dimension" (Meletinsky 1998, part II). Melanie's climbing, then, is an effort to reach the symbolic Heaven, while her fall – which is notably inflicted by the destruction of the wedding dress, understood here as sin of symbolical murder, described as "Christian's burden" (Carter 1996, 22) – shows her inability to ascend and the beginning of her journey down to the underworld. As seen here, not only the setting, but also the text as a whole is filled with Biblical references. When Melanie is hanging from a branch of the tree, she is described as hanging "in agony by her hands, strung up between Earth and Heaven" (ibid., 21), which I take as a giveaway of the intended symbolic meaning. This state corresponds perfectly with the Bakhtinian term of the grotesque swing, "which brings together Heaven and Earth. But the accent is placed not on the upward movement but on the descent" (Bakhtin 1984, 371).

The novel's silence about Melanie's mother bears importance in creating the suggestion of symbolic matricide. Not much is known of the mother, the owner of the dress; in Sarah Gamble's reading, "Melanie's mother's only real identity is that of a bride" (2012), which is represented by the bridal gown. Its destruction, then, can be understood as a symbolic matricide. Even before tearing it apart, Melanie has already "felt wicked, like a grave-robber" (Carter

1996, 15) taking it. She has created the association between the death of her parents with the destroyed dress, she “knew” what was in the telegram even before opening it. Later she references her own action, clearly thinking about it as a sin: “Eve must have felt like this on the way east out of Eden,’ she thought. ‘And it was Eve’s fault’” (ibid., 94).

The apple tree, as the biblical tree of life, can be considered a cosmic tree with its universal meanings. Such a tree is always present at the sacred central point of the world, and on it, semantic oppositions appear on the vertical axis (such as sky/Earth; Earth/underworld etc.), and it emphasizes a trinity of spheres: the top of the tree with branches as the Heavenly realm, its middle with the trunk as the Earth and the bottom with the roots as the underworld (Toporov 1988, 267-71). The top branches of the novel’s tree lead back to Melanie’s room, the home, which, at the symbolical level, represents Heaven, which she and her siblings must leave as they must move to their uncle’s. Melanie falls on the roots of the tree as she tries to climb the first branch (Carter 1996, 21), which translates as her descent to Hell, which later takes the form of Philip’s house. As she leaves the homely Heaven and ends up in Hell with a fall, she later also reaches back to the Earth by ascent as she escapes from her uncle’s burning home – as is to be discussed later.

Not only has she committed a symbolic sin, she had given up believing in God when she was thirteen (ibid., 8). Climbing up the tree causes her difficulty, although “in her tree-climbing days, the ascent would have taken only a few minutes. But she had given up climbing [...] since she was thirteen” (ibid., 20). Ascendance, both at the level of abstraction and literally, became a hardship when she abandoned her belief. As she loses faith, she must go on her journey to Hell, and only by escaping from there will she be able to continue her life in the sphere in between, on Earth. During her time in Philip’s house, seeing the devilish actions of her uncle, she turns back to religion again.

As opposed to the traditional tale, Melanie, in the symbolic role of Eve, is not presented as the first woman, but the last: “She was alone. In her carapace of white satin, she was the last, the only woman” (ibid., 17). A world in which the only woman present is the *last one* rejects the notion of it having been just created. Carter changes the setting of the underlying myth, transforming the creation into an eschatological myth; this change reflects on Melanie’s shifting perception of the world. While cosmogonic myths tell about the universe’s transformation from chaos to cosmos (from disorder to order), eschatological myths do the opposite, they speak about the destruction of the established and well-known world, cosmos becoming chaos again. The same switch is present in Melanie’s worldview as she moves to her uncle’s. While in her parents’ home everything is in order and she knows her place in it, Philip’s realm is disordered,

uncanny, everything is unexpected and her place in it is dubious. She, being fifteen, is supposed to be working on developing her identity in her teen years, but this natural process is seemingly sabotaged, in Hell (even if it appears at the level of experiences and abstraction), one cannot establish an identity. In Philip's house, "Melanie also becomes an object into which others, whom we may suspect of not having forged an adequate sense of their own identity, project their own phantasies and desires" (Peach 1998, 80).

Where does Melanie's expulsion lead her exactly? As it is obvious from the discussion on Bluebeard, the house of her uncle is not an average home to move into. She must descend to the underworld – Philip's house. A journey, a katabasis is foreshadowed and also made possible by this passage, which makes the "inverted" creation myth necessary. As discussed above, Melanie goes through a – both symbolic and literal – fall from the tree. Yet having to leave her home may be considered as part of this symbolic fall. Northrop Frye distinguishes between four levels of the world; for the first level there is Heaven, the highest realm above humans, the second is the Garden of Eden, level three is the space of ordinary life and the fourth one is the underworld below the level of earthly existence. As Frye writes, this way the expulsion from the earthly paradise is also considered a fall (1976, 97-8), in which a downward movement is present: humankind descends one level. In the case of *The Magic Toyshop* Carter, so to speak, "erases" the third level by setting the fall in an eschatological context, thus allowing Melanie to fall directly to the fourth level, the underworld, which is, in the novel, the symbolical Hell manifested in Philip's house.

The tale of Bluebeard and the biblical myth of the expulsion are the underlying narratives of Carter's novel, which resemble a transition from order to disorder and from nature to culture. The biblical setting at the beginning prepares the heroine's katabasis, while the Bluebeard story introduces an association between patriarchal domination and Hell. The first home of Melanie is a sacred space, completed by the cosmic tree – as opposed to that, Philip's house is the manifestation of the underworld.

3.1 The Vertical Axis and the Katabasis Motif in the Novel

The term katabasis comes from the Greek word meaning “descent”, “in the context of myth, it usually refers to a descent to the land of the dead by a living person who later returns” (Harrison 2013, 3705). In the classical katabasis the hero descends with a quest usually for knowledge (e.g. Odysseus) or to bring someone back from the dead (e.g. Heracles in *Alcestis*). The underworld often holds great wisdom, wealth or other rewards for those who venture there alive (Frye 1976, 98). In modern literature, the katabasis is commonly present at the level of abstraction, Hell is not a literal space with flames and demons, but a place that bears the properties to imitate the experience of being in Hell. As Rachel Falconer states, the notion of Hell always changes with time, today it is generally regarded as an experience rather than an eschatological space; “while the medieval idea of Hell as a region of punitive justice is still very much with us, modern usage of the name tends to focus on the suffering of the damned” (2007, 18). The structure of the katabasis narratives includes four parts, although it can be “distilled” to three, or, in most radical cases, two parts; the sections of the structure are the “threshold crossing, series of trials, ‘ground zero’ confrontation with the other, return” (Falconer 2012, 405). Such division can be applied to Carter’s novel as well: the threshold is crossed upon the first entrance into the toyshop, the return is associated with ascent in the form of escaping through the roof by the end of the novel. The trials Melanie must go through are the theatrical performances of Philip, her confrontations revolve around Finn. Melanie is changed by the end of her journey, she is ready for adult life. Katabasis narratives can be read as an “initiate’s death and rebirth into a new status” (Mikellidou 2015, 337), the same pattern is present here as well. Melanie, in order to achieve acceptance into society, to become an adult, has to go through a symbolic death. Her initiation manifests in Philip’s play, in which she must perform. She does not only go down to the deepest pit of this Hell, she must take part in it for a short time, which reads as her symbolic death, after which she starts her ascent, the rebirth. In *The Magic Toyshop*’s Christian framework, the underworld is specifically Hell, represented by the house of Philip, who is the king and master of it, essentially the devil. Melanie is the descendant heroine, who must go down to the lowest point of this symbolic Hell – the puppet theatre – before making her ascent. On her journey, she is escorted by Finn, who plays a trickster role in the novel.

The entrance to the toyshop serves as the threshold of Hell. When Melanie sees it for the first time, it is described as a “dark cavern of a shop” (Carter 1996, 39); in agreement with classical katabases, the road to Hell commonly led through a cave. The term katabasis also bears the meaning of “any physical descent, through a cave mouth or other such entrance, into

the earth” (Falconer 2007, 19). The toyshop is also provided with a sign “TOYS PHILIP FLOWER NOVELTIES” (Carter 1996, 39), although the message is not so obviously threatening, it mirrors the well-known beginning setting of Dante’s *Inferno*, in which, before entering Hell, Dante and Vergil encounter the sign warning of the dangers and commending those who wander there to abandon hope.

The house is filled with signs that suggest its infernal nature. Not long after entering the shop, the reader learns about a painting in the house, which is a reproduction of *The Light of the World* (1851–1854). The painting by William Holman Hunt features Jesus Christ preparing to knock on a door that has seemingly stood unopened for a great length of time. A notable feature of this painting is the missing doorknob, indicating that it cannot be opened from the outside. My interpretation suggests that the painting’s door represents Philip’s house, which has closed gates for Christ. Melanie has already lost her faith by the time she moves to Philip’s house, but as she gets to know about him and the dangers she is exposed to, she seemingly turns to religion again, praying for divine help:

One night, she got up and turned on the light and looked at the sweet, bland face of Jesus, the Light of the World, in the picture over the mantelpiece. He smiled beneath his crown of thorns. 'Sweet Jesus,' she said. 'Help me. Help us all.' But no help came. (ibid., 135-6).

Even Finn makes the sign of the cross (ibid., 172), but no divine help comes, as the toyshop’s door has no handle and remains closed for anything heavenly. The wickedness of the toyshop and Philip, in other words, is rooted so deeply, that not even God can help it. This makes the house a space that rejects everything that is holy, yet it pledges allegiance to its only authority, the evil toymaker. As opposed to the door that is closed for Christ, there is one that is always open, as Francie explains to Melanie:

'The back door is never shut and there is an alley at the end of the garden. [The dog] just comes in.'

'But what if people, strangers, burglars, for example, get into the house, if you leave the door open, always?'

'We keep a welcome for all.' (ibid., 47)

As this excerpt suggests, while good people are forbidden from the house, the wicked are welcome. Furthermore, the house is not unfamiliar with incest, adultery and other atrocities, it is essentially a (or the) house of sins. The presence of sins inflects Melanie as well: not long

after moving in there she feels alienated, and “stealing” from the kitchen helps her getting accustomed to her new life and environment (ibid., 58). She even writes dishonestly to Mrs Rundle: “I hope you are settling down and the cat is well.’ This was a lie. She did not hope the cat was well. She hoped it was dead” (ibid., 79). Although, informing her falsely about their experience with Philip – describing him as “old-fashioned” is clearly a euphemism – may be considered a white lie (ibid.). The toymaker’s home, then, is open for sinners and has the ability to make its members commit immoral deeds. Interpreting Philip’s house as an eschatological space assigns new meaning to Melanie’s feeling that she might as well not be in London at all (ibid., 88) and that “she felt she cast no shadow” (ibid., 169), since she is more likely to be in Hell, where people are only shades themselves.

The ruler of this symbolical hell is Philip with his absolute and at some points supernatural authority. Thinking about Philip as the spawn of Satan explains Carter’s early remark that it is impossible to guess his age (ibid., 12). Finn paints him in the context of Hell, but the painting features Philip as the tortured (ibid., 154), while in the novel’s reality, he is, in fact, the torturer. Early in the novel, Finn and Melanie find a Mephistophelian mask (ibid., 67), which later gets associated with Philip (ibid., 73); he is even called the “Beast of the Apocalypse” (ibid., 77). Like a shadowy creature, his presence darkens the space he is in, as even the room becomes brighter when he leaves (ibid., 74).

3.2 Philip’s Microcosm: Carnavalesque Hell

Literary depictions of Hell usually feature different layers of it; the deeper one goes, the worse it gets. The underworld of Greek mythology features different places, such as the Asphodel meadows and the Elysian fields, with its deepest point being Tartarus. Christian Hell’s most famous layered depiction is that of Dante, who put Dis at the very bottom of the pit. In the same manner, Philip’s house has levels, three of them, of which the deepest one is the basement, where the acts of his obsession are carried out.

The house consists of three levels, and so it is a charming idea to think about the place as the whole world with both eschatological places featured in it – based on the semantic oppositions of *up* and *down*, the first floor considered as the sacred space, the ground floor as the earthly realm and the basement as Hell; essentially the house bears the structure of a cosmos. The reason why I still believe it is more accurate to regard the entirety of the house as Hell is because the cellar appears only to be the “core” of Philip’s wickedness, the other two floors are not unfamiliar with his presence and his influence, either. His obsession reaches its highest point under ground level, where he is able to fully handle his family as life-sized puppets. Ascending

from there, the higher one gets, the less noticeable his power is – on the ground floor he is only present on some occasions and he is not known to come to the first floor at any time throughout the novel. It is only an apparent change, Philip has a full authority over the whole house, as he is capable of ordering anyone from any point of the house to come down to the basement. Also an instance of his absolute control is the scene including Finn and Melanie on the first floor where they have to practice the act of Leda and the swan for Philip's play (147-54).

Philip uses his house and power to create his very own world. Downstairs there is a poster that is a telltale sign about him consciously forming his realm:

On the wall was a poster in crude colours announcing: 'GRAND PERFORMANCE – FLOWER'S PUPPET MICROCOSM,' with a great figure recognisably Uncle Philip [...] holding the ball of the world in his hand. (ibid., 126)

Holding the world in his hands is a clear symbol of his authority. What is interesting in the excerpt is the use of the word "microcosm." One would normally infer that the expression is used for the puppet theatre exclusively, but it is more applicable to the house as a whole. Cosmos in itself refers to a world that has a specific order, works according to certain rules. Philip's intention is to create such a realm, in which he even wants to turn his family members to controllable dolls. But a cosmos also has the distinction of three levels – underground, ground level and sky – which are not features of the puppet theatre on its own. Yet even if the house is considered to be his microcosm, its upper levels are not sacred. Therefore, I argue that Philip's conscious world-making excludes anything sacred from it, his cosmos is structured alternatively, in which each level is merely a layer of Hell.

As discussed earlier, in Philip's house there is no possibility to receive any divine help, sacrality is banished, yet once this symbolical Hell is escaped, the potential of faith is re-established. Melanie and Finn leave the house through the roof, notably with an upward movement, an ascent. Opening up the roof of the house is a symbolic act of gaining access to the sacred realm, as Mircea Eliade writes:

On the most archaic levels of culture this possibility of transcendence is expressed by various *images of an opening*; here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven. (1959, 26)

The door to the world above in the novel is created by the escape of Melanie and Finn, which is, then, a symbolic ascendance. The presence of the sacred world above the house is also noted

earlier in the novel; after Melanie faints, she is escorted upstairs – highest floor of the house – and put to bed. As she lays on her back, of course, she is facing upward, and she, instead of the Jowles, sees angels – the beings of Heaven:

“[Francie] and his sister stood on either side of the bed, [...] To Melanie's dazzled eyes, they seemed to mingle and become one single arch of living substance raised up over her, beneath which she could sleep in safety.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,

Bless the bed that I lie on,

Four angels round my head . . .

Not four but three angels. Here was Finn, appearing at her bed foot.” (Carter 1996, 122)

Philip's house carries all the significant characteristics of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque hell. Early in the novel, one item that Melanie and Finn find in Philip's house that implies the analysis of space as symbolical Hell is the Mephistophelian mask (ibid., 67) in the basement. Bakhtin assigns a special role to masks: “Even in modern life it is enveloped in a peculiar atmosphere and is seen as a particle of some other world. The mask never becomes just an object among other objects” (1984, 40). The mask represents a demon, which indicates that this other world, in the case of Carter's novel, is Hell. The carnivalesque Hell that Bakhtin defined lines up well with the symbolical underworld in *The Magic Toyshop*. One essential topic of the varieties of the carnival hells is the symbol of fear defeated by laughter (Bakhtin 1984, 394), which is done by burning down the carnival's hell:

one of the indispensable accessories of carnival [is] the set called "hell." This "hell" was solemnly burned at the peak of the festivities. This grotesque image cannot be understood without appreciating the defeat of fear. The people play with terror and laugh at it; the awesome becomes a "comic monster." (ibid., 91)

The culture of laughter is one of Bakhtin's central ideas that is reflected neatly in Carter's novel. This microcosm provides the setting for an ongoing fight between two opposed characters, the devilish Philip and the trickster Finn. While Finn does everything to annoy Philip and fight against his will, the toymaker's effort is to enforce his rules and keep his space free from everything that is to be cherished in the framework of the medieval carnival; he fights back against laughter, pleasant feasts and freedom.

In the carnivalesque Hell everything appears to be “inverted in relation to the outside world. All who are highest are debased, all who are lowest are crowned” (ibid., 1984, 383). The inversion of the highest and the lowest appears both on the vertical and moral spectrum. In *The Magic Toyshop* the social role and spatial placement of a person are related as follows: the lower one’s associated space is, the higher their social role is in the family. For instance, the core of Philip’s realm lays in the basement, the spatially lowest point of the house; in the social aspect, he alone takes the top, for he dominates and controls the family. Aunt Margaret is mostly seen on the ground floor, which is the middle level of the house vertically, although she is dominated as well as anyone else, after all, she is married to Philip. The others are usually on the first floor, yet it is notable that Finn is very familiar with the basement as he often helps Philip carry the plays out and paints toys as his apprentice. Finn is very close to Philip in this sense, which enables them to fight each other on this social ladder.

Philip is on an ongoing mission to repress everything that is to be cherished in a carnival and establish fear in their place. Feasting with a great feel is impossible with him, laughter in his presence is forbidden: “[Philip’s] 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” (Carter 1996, 124). Not only does he deprive the family of these earthly goods, he also degrades the importance of the feasts. When Philip first addresses that Melanie shall perform in his next play, he says “why shouldn’t the girl do something for her keep? God knows she eats enough. She can act with my puppets up on my stage” (ibid., 133). His words carry the implicit assumptions that she needs nothing more but to be fed, and that feeding her comes with the right of giving her orders. This is the exact opposite of the carnivalesque notion of feasts, where equality – just like in the ancient saturnalia – was established among the celebrating people (Bakhtin 1984, 81). This scene may as well be interpreted as a mythical allusion to the rape of Persephone, who, after eating pomegranate seeds in the underworld, could not leave the place anymore. This view also emphasizes the objectification of Melanie, whose free will cannot be practiced while under the supervision of Philip.

Finn very explicitly rebels against Philip and tries to re-establish the family’s proper rights of free will and laughter. His actions may remind the reader of a Luciferian or Promethean character, who does not accept absolute authority, rebels against and disturbs the one with it also of the mythological trickster, whose most remarkable feature is its constant “boundary-crossing” (Hyde 2008, chap. 1), which is revealed in his many actions. Finn does everything to annoy Philip, for instance, very conspicuously not caring about his orders (Carter 1996, 73), or chewing gum, which he dislikes, just for Philip’s annoyance (ibid., 98). After he makes a

mistake in Philip's puppet show, he breaks the awkward silence with his laughter, which is an attempt to gain back the family's privilege to laugh, but his actions are in vain as they only result in Philip's atrocities (ibid., 113). By the end of the novel, a prototypical carnivalesque inversion can be seen as Finn sits in Philip's chair (ibid., 183) and "borrows" his shirt to wear (ibid., 116).

In conclusion, paying attention to the vertical axis of the novel's spatial structure reveals a classic motif of literature, the katabasis. The fifteen-year-old Melanie may be seen as a young heroine who must descend to the underworld and emerge back to earthly realms only after she suffered through a symbolic death, as part of her initiation, preparing her for adulthood. Philip's house serves as the main space of Melanie's journey, which is experienced as living Hell. Philip created this microcosm, which, almost in a supernatural way, is bound to his rules and will. He is the incarnation of the Devil, the only ruler of his own realm, who even wants to objectify and completely control the family's members. His world can be escaped by an upward movement, an ascent, which is only possible when Philip himself destroys his territory. Finn is Melanie's companion in the ascent, playing the role of a trickster who fights against Philip's will and attempts crossing boundaries whenever possible. The novel's symbolic Hell corresponds with the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque hell. Although Philip actively tries to repress everything that is fancied in the medieval carnival theme, at the end, his microcosm burns down and the culture of laughter stands victorious.

4 The Horizontal Axis and Forbidden Desires

While the vertical dimension of space in the novel mostly recalls mythical allusions and the katabasis motif, the horizontal axis offers an interpretation with a focus on space in conjunction with psychological aspects. In this section of the paper the Freudian notion of unconscious desires is the main idea that is to be connected with the spatial relations of *insides* and *behinds* that are present in the novel. Although space is not a common aspect for the analysis of this novel, such studies have been written before. For instance, Nurten Birlik has already connected space and psychology *The Magic Toyshop*, inspecting its “psychic space” (2021, 1-17). Upon discussing the role of the family home in the novel, Andrew Hock Soon Ng has concluded that it obviously has the “capacity to reflect the subject’s desire” (2015, 27). This concluding idea, considering that almost the entirety of the novel takes place in a family home, can be narrowed down by examining elements that reflect on forbidden or secret desires in particular. In *The Magic Toyshop*, there is a tendency for *insides* and *behinds* to appear in conjunction with the forbidden desires of Melanie. The two desires of Melanie that surface are for the past and for a complete, loving family. These include the previous house and living conditions that she was used to, the carelessness of childhood, wanting to have her parents back or take part in a new family, not necessarily fulfilling the role of a child, but that of an adult.

The first instance that introduces this tendency at the beginning of the novel is the unopened telegram (Carter 1996, 24-25). The loss of her parents is an impactful shock in Melanie’s life. When she receives the telegram concerned with their death, she, without even opening it, starts a rampage. The objects of her unconscious desires from this point will be the original home and her parents; these will be often recalled when closed spaces appear in the novel, frequently alongside with *behinds*, as is to be demonstrated. When the siblings move, Mrs Rundle tells Melanie that she “must be a little mother to [her brother and sister]” (ibid., 28). Melanie cannot seem to let go of this thought; she is under pressure for having to shoulder a responsibility for her siblings, she is pressured to be mature. Later, as her relationship with Finn develops, her desire for the family modifies in the sense that she opens toward fulfilling not necessarily the role of a child, but that of an adult. The desires that surface with the appearance of the *insides* and *behinds* in the later parts of the novel are, in different ways and forms, connected to these longings.

Her wish for a decent family appears when she is spying through the keyhole to see the musical production of the Jowles (ibid., 50). She sees everyone else *behind* a door, an obstacle that separates her from them. A possible interpretation of the scenario is that as she enjoys the

performance, she sees a prototypical image of a happy family, which she does not have anymore. She is peeping through the keyhole, yet the very same door disconnects her from the others, it prevents her from being part of the happy gathering. Her desire for the family is closely linked to her longing for the past, since it is something she has had before moving to Philip's house; a more explicit instance of this appears when she looks into a toy box:

[Melanie] fingered the boxes with a furtive secrecy, like a child rooting among the holly-wrapped parcels hidden away on top of her parents' wardrobe. She took off lids which Finn had left unopened. She held her breath with wonder and delight. She was seven years old again. (ibid., 84)

Notably, this is the first instance that opening up a closed space causes her desire to surface.

Finn becomes closely related to Melanie's desire of becoming an adult – he is the companion of her as she goes through the events that lead to her becoming ready for an adult life. The peeping hole between the rooms of Melanie and Finn enables them to think about each other as being *behind* a separating wall. Finding out about the hole, she, filled with rage, covers it (ibid., 108-110), yet later it is mentioned that even she spies on Finn through that hole from time to time (ibid., 136). The hole enables both of them to see whether the other is currently in their room, thus, from their own perspective, *behind* the wall. This situation mimics the one above with the keyhole: the object of desire is separated by a shielding object. Throughout the novel they get closer to each other, by the end Finn refers to himself as being “almost a family man, now” (ibid., 191); although the nature of their relationship is not explicitly stated, Melanie, by telling him that she is “not going to be rushed” (ibid., 193) implies that she does not entirely reject Finn as a partner.

Melanie's direct interactions with closed spaces usually cause her desires to surface and some of her reactions are followed by consequences that actually get her closer to the desired objects. After Finn cuts his hand, Melanie sees the imaginary hand in the drawer (ibid., 118) and faints. Seeing the hand, which is *inside* the drawer – a closed space until she opened it up –, makes her unconscious desires burst out. Drawing a connection between the hand and Finn's wound, Francie says “perhaps [Melanie was] thinking about Finn's hand and that made [her] think [she] saw a hand?” (ibid., 120). Finn can be associated with Melanie's desire for a decent family, the hand is, of course, a reminder of him. The consequences of her blackout actually take her closer to this desire, as Francie helps her, she gets to know him like never before: “‘How nice he is,’ thought Melanie, astonished. ‘And I never knew him till now’” (ibid., 120). As she is calmed, Francie shows her the bottom of his cup of tea, as if there was a prophecy in it:

'Look ,' he said, showing the pattern of tea leaves among the melted sugar at the bottom. 'A ship. That means a journey.'

'For me?' she said and could not keep the longing out of her voice.

'Or someone.' (ibid., 121)

Although Francie is not sure if the journey is for her, Melanie makes this assumption with a longing. The most straightforward interpretation of the journey is escaping the house of Philip. It is clear why she would want to leave, as the house manifests a living Hell for her, she wants to get rid of the stress caused by her uncle. Essentially, this journey may be the one she is already going through, the katabasis. A journey may as well mean a road to reaching adulthood, which is closely related to both her desire of the decent family and the initiation theme of her descent. It is also notable that the journey is signified by the resemblance of a boat, which appears is Melanie's dream later in the novel (ibid., 174-6). The dream scene with the ship and the ocean, as is to be discussed later in relation to open spaces, reads as a state free of any desires and anxiety that they would cause. In other words, the boat may indicate a spiritual journey with an aim of achieving a psychological state free of anxiety. Francie, then, escorts her to her bed. The interaction with him leaves her with an experience that she describes as being too deep to comprehend, while falsely feeling as if she were with her mother (ibid., 121-2). She describes the Jowles as angels (ibid., 122), imagining Margaret's touch as her mother's: "Melanie closed her eyes and imagined it was her own mother caressing her or any mother caressing any child" (ibid., 122). All these, consequences of opening the drawer, point toward the desire of a loving family – this includes her longing to have her own parents back and live a life free of anxiety.

The spatial relations of *insides* and *behinds* may appear in an immaterial context as well, in which they alter Melanie's desire. After the atrocities of Philip, Finn is described with the metaphor of being closed into a glass cube: "Finn had moved into a glass box and never noticed if she or Francie or Aunt Margaret scratched on the glass to attract his attention" (ibid., 134). Uniquely, this introduces an imaginary closed space that is not capable of hiding its insides. After that, when Melanie thinks of Finn, it makes her feel hopeless (ibid., 141). The metaphor of being locked away here expresses the distance between Finn and everyone else after he suffered the fall, but at the same time, the concept of this closed space also suggests that it signifies one of Melanie's objects of desire, namely, Finn – and through him, becoming an adult. The glass box is metaphorical, something imagined to be transparent and incapable of hiding Finn. This property implies the unnecessary of opening up its closed space, since one can

already see through it. Possibly, this can be interpreted as a change of Melanie's desire, it is not merely a scopic one at this point.

While the *behinds* and *insides* act as signifiers of the heroine's desires, Philip, as previously discussed, does everything in his power to restrict the objects of the family members' wants, deprive everyone of them. His influence is present on all floors of the house, even Finn, who actively fights Philip's will, cannot get away from it. When Finn reveals Philip's order that he and Melanie are to practice the Leda and the swan scene, he closes himself *inside* the cupboard, and even when Melanie opens it up, he hides *behind* the clothes (150). After opening the cupboard, Melanie's desire to become an adult is once again referred to: "Why are you hiding in the cupboard, Finn?' [Melanie] asked like a mother to an inexplicable child at the end of a hard day" (ibid., 151). This case in particular includes both spatial relations, a closed space is opened up and in it the clothes serve as shielding objects. Finn hides as he feels guilt from having to take part in Philip's game and play the swan. In Heta Pyrhönen's reading, the swan serves as the alter ego of Philip, which knows no boundaries (2007, 96). The swan, then, can be seen as a symbol of everything Philip stands for, such as limitless patriarchal domination, loss of free will and liberty. This interpretation allows one to assign further meanings to certain scenes. When Melanie thinks to herself that she is going crazy and wraps her head in the curtains, she places herself *inside* a closed space, on the verge of her nervous breakdown, she sees the swan and it is described as being "over her head, dangling there like the sword of Damocles" (Carter 1996, 162). The same way Dionysius emphasizes the state of constant danger with the hanging sword, the swan serves as a steady reminder of the unchallengeable restrictions and inaccessible desires in Philip's realm. On the stage, as events unfold, the swan costume covers Melanie's head, wraps it in and creates a closed space described as a tent (ibid., 167) – provoking her emotional reaction. The swan being the very thing that creates this closed space, meanwhile clearly dominating Melanie and restraining her, translates, on the symbolic level, as Philip's practice of his absolute power, not allowing any desires for her. Later the swan is buried by Finn (ibid., 171), which is another attempt on his part to fight against Philip's will in their symbolic battle.

A new space is introduced by the end of the novel as Melanie gets to enter the room of Margaret and Philip. A space that was closed throughout the novel is opened up, and after Melanie gets *inside*, she notices a copy of the family picture she tore up at the beginning. As she stands astounded, she explains to Margaret that "The photograph [...] gave [her] a shock" (ibid., 187). The picture functions as a reminder of the event that introduced the main source of Melanie's forbidden desire of the family and the past. The second copy of the picture frames

the novel. Melanie destroys the picture before having to leave her home, and, by the end, the second home is destroyed shortly after finding the photograph. Even though time seems to repeat itself, as apparent from her and Finn's talk – "She said aloud: 'I have already lost everything, once.' 'So have I,' said Finn" (ibid., 199) – she must realise that the past can be neither retrieved nor escaped. Carter writes that "Photographs are chunks of time you can hold in your hand" (ibid., 12), as Melanie found the picture, she had to face her unchangeable past once again. She escapes the closed space as it burns down, she appears to be ready for adulthood, yet this new life that starts in open space remains untold.

It is visible that whenever Melanie opens up or gets inside a closed space, or encounters a shielding object, her desires surface. Yet the reactions following these feelings are somewhat different. On some occasions her reactions are ordinary, for instance, when she opens up the toy box and feels like a child again (ibid., 84) and when she peeps through the keyhole, observing the musical production of the family (ibid., 50). In some cases, she tries to distract herself from the ongoing events. For example, during the cupboard scene (ibid., 150-151), she is concerned with the cleanness of the room, Finn's shoes and the splinter in his foot. She is trying everything to ignore what Finn is saying: "Did the household have credit at a cobbler's shop? She tried to concentrate on this so as not to have to think about what Finn was saying" (ibid., 152). The most radical reactions of Melanie show signs of a mental breakdown, which do not come unexpected, as the triggering experiences of the condition are present in her story, such as a major change in her life, high anxiety, abuse etc. One of the most obvious examples is the case of the unopened telegram (ibid., 24-25), which resulted in a rampage of anger and guilt; there the high level of anxiety comes from Melanie's own assumptions and association between the destroyed wedding dress and the "foreknown" death of her mother. Another relevant part of the novel is the above-mentioned swan scene, which causes her to scream and kick, and is followed by experiencing a "gap of consciousness" (ibid., 167) as the swan costume constructs a closed space around Melanie and closes her in: "the wings carne down all around her like a tent and its head fell forward and nestled in her neck." (ibid.).

While closed spaces and shielding objects are interpreted as the signifiers of Melanie's surfacing unconscious desires, free spaces with no capacity to hide anything seem to stand for an absence of desires, therefore a freedom from anxiety. But such settings are rare in the novel, after all, Philip's house itself is a closed space into which Melanie moved, and, accordingly, it provoked a desire in her for the past, for the old house. One of the most significant places of

the house that comes with a change that Melanie must stomach, as Maggie Tonkin suggests, is the bathroom:

Melanie consciously represses her nostalgia for the old bathroom. Yet despite her altered circumstances she wages an unconscious battle to remain within her class of origin in which the bathroom carries an extraordinary symbolic weight. It is 'a temple to cleanness', and cleanness is constitutive of bourgeois subjectivity (2012, 37-8).

Philip's whole house is a provider of constant anxiety, from which Melanie wants to escape; it is no surprise that Melanie "was happy to be near a door into the street" (Carter 1996, 84); the outside, opposing to the *inside*, comes with a relief of anxiety and inner struggles. This, and that the house of Philip is a place to be escaped appears to be a common conclusion of both analyses of the novel's vertical and horizontal dimensions of space. The novel rarely ever introduces open spaces without shielding objects. One such space appears in the dream scene, in which she (or he, being Jonathan in the dream) is at sea. The sea, described as having a great and calming atmosphere (ibid., 175-176), is a seemingly infinite space with no obstacles; thus, a place free from anxiety of emerging desires.

As seen, in *The Magic Toyshop* spatiality and the notion of the unconscious are closely related. Melanie, the novel's focalizer, goes through a sudden and radical change in her life; as a result, she is left with desires that are repressed. On some occasions these surface, usually indicated by an interaction with a shielding object or a closed space, assigning a significant role to the spatial relations of *behinds* and *insides* in the novel. The reactions that come with these bursts come in great variety. She would like to avoid closed spaces but the task becomes an impossibility as she is in Philip's house, spatial confinement in this closed patriarchal system is hardly escapable until the building stands. The few free spaces in the novel are associated with freedom from stress and anxiety, forming an ideal spatial objective for Melanie.

5 Conclusion

Angela Carter is a writer well-known for integrating fairy tales and myths into her works; in *The Magic Toyshop*, two such stories are the biblical expulsion and the tale of Bluebeard. Carter uses these stories as the novel's underlying narratives which have a great influence on the text's meanings on the symbolic level. The expulsion takes place at the very beginning of the novel, while "Bluebeard" comes in conjunction with Philip's house. He and Bluebeard show great resemblance – which is made explicit by the heroine as well – and although both of them rely heavily on their power and maintain a patriarchal system, the main space of the novel is the opposite of the fairy tale's castle. Melanie makes this association between the two characters, this realization makes her life even more anxious, as she knows the fairy tale and the grave danger of the heroine. It is apparent that in both stories the relation between the proprietor and the property is supernatural: the house, as if it was a living creature, serves its master. They differ in terms of publicity and privacy, in size, but the most important difference is the placement of the forbidden chamber, which appears inverted in Carter's work. The forbidden knowledge is not hidden inside the house, but its inhabitants are closed away from it, for the chamber is everything *but* the house.

The myth of the biblical expulsion underlies the novel's beginning. The tree in the Flowers' garden may be considered the biblical tree of life, a cosmic tree that locates the sacred central point of the world. The tree introduces the tendency and importance of binary oppositions in the novel, with special attention to the *up* and *down*, indicating Heaven and Hell. Carter, however, changes this underlying narrative of the creation by transforming its setting into an eschatological one. By doing so, the author wipes out the earthy realm, the space between Heaven and Hell, allowing her heroine to fall from the former to the latter. Melanie destroys her mother's wedding dress, which is an act of symbolic matricide, of which she is aware. She loses faith young, commits the sin of killing her own mother; as a result, she must experience Hell in the form of her own katabasis. While she hangs on the apple tree, the scene evokes the Bakhtinian term of the grotesque swing, which emphasizes the downward movement, that is, a descent to the underworld.

The Hell of Melanie's katabasis is manifested in Philip's house. Although Melanie is a teenager, she cannot establish an identity while experiencing Hell, Philip attempts to objectify her – just like he does everyone else. Although she is unable to develop her identity, she goes through a change and gets ready for adulthood by the end. In this respect, her katabasis may be interpreted as an initiation, including her symbolical death and resurrection as anew. The central

point of the initiation is her task to perform in Philip's theatre. It is this action that I consider to be the deepest point of her Hell experience, from which she can turn back and start her ascent. Just like Dante, she must first reach the very bottom of the underworld to be able to move upward again. By this point, she also turns back to religion and so she can move toward the sacred skies. Finally, she makes her escape through the roof of the house, as if climbing out from Hell, with the help of her companion, Finn.

Philip's house represents Hell, essentially it is a house of sins, in which the feeling of comfort comes from committing immoral deeds, for example, stealing. Its inhabitants are either sinners already, or they are to be. This realm is under the complete control of Philip, who is an incarnation of the Devil. His goal is to objectify his family members as much as possible and to deprive them of their objects of desire. His house, with its three levels, forms a microcosm, but not a regular one, for sacrality is fully rejected by it. Philip's own world is nothing more than layers of Hell. In this interpretation Finn plays the role of a mythological trickster, a Promethean or Luciferian character who constantly annoys Philip, crosses boundaries, thus fights against his will and dominance. The space of this katabasis corresponds with the Bakhtinian carnivalesque Hell. Philip does everything to repress what is loved in the culture of laughter, he replaces it with fear, while Finn does the contrary. In Philip's house the traditional values, roles and order are reversed, the rules are the ones Philip makes up arbitrarily. Feasts are the occasions when everyone comes together on the ground floor; Philip, although he degrades the importance of food, uses feeding his family as a reason to authorize himself to control them. Just as the Hell of the medieval carnival, the house also burns down by the end, and so the culture of laughter stands victorious.

Examining the horizontal dimension of the novel, it becomes apparent that two types of spatial relations, the *behinds* and the *insides* may be interpreted as signifiers of Melanie's unconscious desires. The relations take shape as shielding objects and closed spaces in the novel, both with the capability to hide something. Melanie's interactions with them usually come with her desires coming to surface in the forms of different emotional reactions. Apparently, the closed space does not necessary have to be material. Open spaces, on the other hand, as they have no means to hide anything, signify a state of being free from desire and the anxiety they would cause. Such spaces in the novel are rarely introduced, yet it is remarkable that the novel ends with Philip's house burning down, the main closed space of the novel becoming an open one.

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