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The Ritualization of Violence in *The Magic Toyshop*

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The Ritualization of Violence in *The Magic Toyshop*

A Dissertation by

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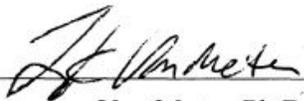
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ABSTRACT

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by Victor Chalfant

This dissertation will explore the way Philip treats puppets and masks as pseudo-sacred objects in order to maintain control in Angela Carter's work *The Magic Toyshop*. To show the implications of the pseudo-sacred, I will use *Violence and the Sacred* by Rene Girard that examines the way primitive cultures are able to maintain order through particular religious beliefs and collective violence against a scapegoat. My critical reading of the text will look closely at how Philip uses the pseudo-sacred to build up the community. When the pseudo-sacred is finally called into question the community is threatened. Although Philip attempts to deflect blame onto the scapegoat Melanie, he fails as there is no social buy-in, leading to the destruction of the community. While the house is burned down destroying the puppets and masks, presumably along with Philip, the pseudo-sacred still has the chance of being perpetuated through Finn's own obsession with power and control.

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The Ritualization of Violence

At the core of understanding how Philip ruthlessly exerts patriarchal control in Angela Carter's novel *The Magic Toyshop*, is the pseudo-sacred. With the absence of religion in the community, puppets and masks have the quality of the divine, providing support and meaning to Philip's ruthless behavior. This is captured perfectly when Melanie innocently discusses Philip's ability to perform alchemy by "turn[ing] wood into swans" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 168). In this process, Philip is able to take something as mundane as a piece of wood and transform it into something much more profound. Philip is able to create life itself; however, Philip uses his abilities to deceive and create control not for the whole world to see but exclusively for his family. Through the usage of the puppets and masks, Philip is able to suppress both the men and women in the household. The social philosopher, Rene Girard, provides a practical way to understand this novel filled with violence and the social structure of the sacred. He shows how human communities are able to maintain cultural order through his work *Violence and the Sacred*. Although Angela Carter wrote *The Magic Toyshop* in 1967, five years prior to the publication of Girard's work in 1972, Carter seems to be pulling from the way primitive cultures structured their own societies around the sacred. The puppets and masks that Philip manipulates are being used for a micro community in the same way that they would be used by a primitive civilization. With the support of Girard's theory, I aim to illustrate how violence, through the notions of both desire and sacredness, is ritualized in the world that Philip creates and maintains in *The Magic Toyshop*.

Before considering the pseudo-sacred, it is important to consider the origin of violence. According to Girard, violence emerges from competing desires and rivalries. When discussing mimesis, Girard tells us how "in all the varieties of desire

examined...we have encountered not only a subject and an object but a third presence: the rival...[who] desires the same object as the subject” (*T.G.R.* 145). The combination of a subject, a rival, and an object creates a love triangle in which two people compete for one object. In most cases, including *The Magic Toyshop*, it is two men who are competing for a woman. Violence develops as a result. As Girard writes, “Violence is the process itself when two or more partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical or other means” (*T.G.R.* 9). In *The Magic Toyshop*, similar triangulations are formed that lead to violence. The most obvious example is Philip and Francis, who are competing for Margaret. Though he may not perceive that Margaret has developed a secret incestuous relationship with Francis, Philip is knowingly competing for her attention and allegiance. Philip realizes that Finn, Francis, and Margaret are made from one substance: he cannot have Margaret without her brothers. The closeness between the Jowles siblings is shown repeatedly in the text. Spying on them, Melanie herself recognizes that she “would never get closer to [the Jowles] than the keyhole in the door behind which they lived” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 76). Never able to fully have his wife, Philip becomes engaged in a bitter and violent rivalry with Finn.

The incestuous pairing of Melanie’s mother, her father, and her Uncle Philip further expands the circle of violence. Although it is never made explicit in the text, it is implied that when Melanie’s mother and father got married, Philip was cast aside. In first introducing her uncle, Melanie tells us that he was “her only relative living, for all the others were father’s family. And he could not even raise a smile at his sister’s wedding” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 12). As Sarah Gamble notes, Philip “is actually forced to give away the

only 'lot' he wishes to keep, one who will become de-'Flowered' in the process" ("Magic" 48). The wedding is the last time Philip and Melanie's mother see each other, as Melanie tells us, further showing how the marriage between Melanie's mother and father ruins any way for him to fulfill his desires with his sister. When Melanie is forced to take on the role of Leda in the play "Leda and the Swan," Philip seizes the opportunity to tell her, "You've got a bit of a look of your ma. Not much but a bit. None of your father, thank God. I never could abide your father" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 144). In Philip's being attracted to the way Melanie resembles her mother, it is strongly insinuated that he is sexually attracted to his sister. Sarah Gamble tells us that the incestuous fascination is shown "as an example of trans-generational haunting, concretized by the omnipresence of the wedding photograph" ("Magic" 48). Uncle Philip is at the center of each of these incestuous pairings, further widening the rivalry and, ultimately, violence. Out of these desires for both his sister and his wife, Philip feels the need to acquire power.

In order to assume control, Philip appropriates the pseudo-sacred. Although in *The Magic Toyshop* a religion is absent, the puppets are transformed from ordinary objects into lifelike creations by means of "magic." In fact, Albert Rommel suggests that "In pre-monotheistic religious traditions, there is no fundamental distinction between religious practice and magic" (167). The puppets have the stature of divine objects. Thus, at his core the puppet master Philip is an artist. In talking about the role of art as part of religion, Girard states, "Primitive art, after all, is fundamentally religious. And masks will undoubtedly, therefore, serve a religious function" (*V.A.T.S.* 167). In being treated as art, the masks and puppets hold a pseudo-sacred place in the household where few people are able to touch them. When Melanie plays with the Noah's ark toy, Uncle

Philip scolds her: “I don’t like people playing with my toys” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 86). The puppets and masks are not actually toys to play with, but objects of manipulation that are used to control his family. In fact, Philip explicitly sets aside certain toys not to be sold at all. Finn tells us that the puppets particularly hold a pseudo-sacred place as “no one knows about the puppets” except for his family (Carter, *T.M.T.* 64). The theatre itself becomes a pseudo-sacred space. Similar to the presentation of a religious ceremony, the space of a theatrical performance can make a profound emotional impact on an individual. The private theatre becomes transformed into a temple. As Melanie enters the theater for the first time she tells us, “They were all ready, spruce and clean as for going to church, Sunday trim...they took their seats with some ceremony, arranging their good clothes around them” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 126). It is interesting to note how puppets have been revered as pseudo-sacred objects in a similar way to *The Magic Toyshop*. According to Olga Taxidou, marionettes have had qualities of the divine throughout history:

The human emerges as inadequate, prone to narcissism and excess and totally unsuitable for the grand act of acting. The puppet, on the other hand, with its affinities to God, as Kleist claims, can help restore to theatre not only its lost grandeur, but also its lost metaphysical dimension. (11)

It is the ease with which puppets are completely manipulated and molded to a scene – an ease that humans cannot possibly emulate – that relegates them to the most pure form of art. After the performance of “Leda and the Swan,” Philip tells Melanie, “You overacted... you were melodramatic. Puppets don’t overact. You spoiled the poetry” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 167). As a human, Melanie can never be manipulated as a puppet can.

Although a puppet can be shaped and used in any way possible, humans will always be out of an artist's control. Therefore, in using the marionettes to resemble real life, Philip has accomplished the goal of the puppet master. As Sarah Gamble recognizes, Philip "has achieved the puppet master's ideal: the ultimate blurring of realism and fantasy" ("Monarchs and Patriarchs" 257). Philip is able to create life through his art.

Philip put on theatrical performances exclusively for his family to see. The Flower household is a community where traditions and values are held. Girard himself recognized that his approach goes beyond just understanding ancient primitive cultures or texts. He states that "in concluding the present chapter I will try to show that the [analytic] method loses none of its validity when applied outside the realm of Greek tragedy and mythology" (Girard, *V.A.T.S.* 244). His work can be applied to the Flowers household who form their own social community apart from the metropolis where they live. While London is one of the leading global cities of the world, it is almost like the family does not live there at all. The subjective narrator states that "Melanie had been told they had come to live in a great city but found herself again in a village, a grey one" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 88). The house where they live is set apart by being located on the top of a hill, making it so they have no real neighbors where they live. Along with being set apart geographically, the interaction that the family members have with anyone but each other is limited due to the fact that the household is strictly forbidden from accessing anything that unites them to the rest of the world. While there is the technology available to communicate or become connected to the world, "there was no television set, no record player, not even a radio. Uncle Philip [instead] loved silence" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 90). Philip is distrustful of anything from the outside world and considers it a threat to the

community he has created in the house. Philip demonstrates this distrust in one instance by jumping up and down on Francie's copy of the *Irish Independent* newspaper (Carter, *T.M.T.* 90-91). The only real interaction the family does have with other people in London is exclusively economic. The narrator states that "Nobody visited them in the evenings or dropped in for a chat during the day, except in the way of business—to sell wood to Uncle Philip or to arrange a booking for Francie and his fiddles" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 90). Members of the family such as Melanie or Margaret are allowed to leave in order to get supplies for the house, but that is it. However, while Melanie is able to go get supplies from local shops, she is unable to deal directly with money. As the narrator states, Melanie "never was given any money for the Flowers had credit at all the shops with which they dealt" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 88). Even Philip's wife Margaret is denied any type of financial independence. In controlling all the money, Philip forces his family to rely on and trust in him. The whole household is held to a standard. They must follow rules on dress, eating, drinking, and even work—or fear punishment, similarly to how a society functions.

Girard's analysis of the uses of the sacred in major civilizations appears in miniature through Philip's violent oppression over the household to create disorder. As Kinly Roby describes, the puppets "are representations and interpretations of Philip's world, and all are evidence of his desire for control" (48). When Melanie steps into her uncle's house for the first time she is caught in a frenzy where "This crazy world whirled about her, men and women dwarfed by toys and puppets, where even the birds were mechanical and the few human figures went masked and played musical instruments in the small and terrible hours of the night" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 68). The world that Philip

creates through his puppets and masks is intended to be chaotic and overwhelming so that everyone is implicitly made to follow. In discussing the role of the sacred in society, Girard states that “The sacred reigns over structure: engenders, organizes, observes, and perpetuates it or, on the contrary, mishandles, dissolves, transforms, and on a whim destroys it. But the sacred is not actually present in structure in the sense that it is present everywhere else” (*V.A.T.S.* 257). As a result, the puppets that Philip keeps in the house keep everyone disoriented.

Philip uses the puppets and masks not only to scare and to frighten, but also to create social control. As the use of mirrors is a symbol for self-discovery in the text, inhabitants are denied access to mirrors. In Melanie’s old house, she had the freedom to come to the conclusion that “she was made of flesh and blood” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 1). However, in Philip’s home, the only images the family see of themselves are created by Philip. The toys resemble aspects of each character such as the uncanny white satin dress that represents Melanie, the dancing monkey with bells on its ankles that looks like Finn, a monkey who plays the tin fiddle representing Francis, and a monkey that plays the flute representing Margaret. These caricatures become the primary way that the characters see themselves, and also recognize each other. There is no puppet of Philip, for he is the creator and master of his domain. Through these puppets, Philip is able to implicitly control the way the members of the household see themselves not only on an individual level but also on a social level. Similar to how plays reflect the image of a society, the theatrical performances that Philip puts on reflect the household. Philip puts on performances to display the values he wants to enforce in the people. The poster that rests on the wall in the basement depicting Philip “holding the ball of the world in his

hand” becomes much more significant in this context as it represents the way that he, as an artist, is able to manipulate the world into his own (Carter, *T.M.T.* 126). The use of the puppets and, implicitly the pseudo-sacred, becomes the way that Philip is able to maintain control.

As Philip’s mentee, Finn threatens the control that the master has on the household. During the “Grand Performance—Flower’s Puppet Microcosm,” Finn is allowed to manipulate the Bothwell marionette while Philip controls the Queen of Scots marionette. Mary Queen of Scots was part of a famous love triangle that ended in both murder and tragedy. She was married to her cousin Lord Danley; however, their marriage was unhappy, whereupon Bothwell generally is believed to have murdered Lord Danley in order to have Mary Queen of Scots for himself. The performance is significant due to the juxtaposition of Mary Queen of Scots to Margaret who “wore a collar like Aunt Margaret’s but it could not chafe her neck because she was made of wood” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 129). Following this line of thought, Finn then represents Bothwell especially as he is controlling his puppet while the king that resides over the household, Philip, is equivalent to Lord Danley. Despite the fact that Philip appears to be adapting the performance for his own purpose, it soon takes an unexpected turn when the Bothwell and the Queen marionettes become knotted together in a “lovers meeting” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 130). The play mimics the real threat to the king’s power: his rule is called into question by the love between the Queen and Bothwell. Although it is not Finn’s intention, the pseudo-sacred is turned against Philip. As Philip’s disciple in the theatre, Finn is to emulate him. The relationship between the disciple and the model is an important one according to Girard as they eventually share the same desire for an object and become

direct rivals. When the disciple finally becomes a direct rival, the model “concludes the disciple has betrayed his confidence by following in his footsteps. As for the disciple, he feels both rejected and humiliated, judged unworthy by his model of participating in the superior existence the model himself enjoys” (Girard, *V.A.T.S.* 147). In taking part in the pseudo-sacred, the disciple Finn becomes humiliated, which Melanie immediately notices after the performance. Melanie recognizes Finn’s shame: “He rarely spoke...his head hung down. He grew dirtier than ever...worst of all, his grace was gone” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 134). After the performance, he is no longer the rebellious man he used to be. Melanie loses her only friend in the house as “only Uncle Philip was real to him any more” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 134). In his humiliation, Finn attempts to make up for going against his master and model Philip.

Though not directly intended by Finn, a sacrificial crisis is created where all of the rites and ceremony of the puppet theatre no longer hold any value. Philip becomes afraid that he will lose his control over the household, and that he will be overthrown by Finn. Philip understands that “whoever uses violence will in turn be used by it” (Girard, *V.A.T.S.* 261). But the bigger threat is to the micro community. Due to the fact that Finn and Philip resemble each other in their rivalry over one object, they are threatening to create a bigger social crisis. As Girard states in talking about the origins of a crisis, “Wherever differences are lacking, violence ensues” (*V.A.T.S.* 57). This opens the potential for violence to recur with no end. Girard acknowledges the importance of the sacrificial crisis to the community:

The sacrificial crisis, that is, the disappearance of the sacrificial rites, coincides with the disappearance of the difference between impure violence and purifying

violence. When this difference has been effaced, purification is no longer possible and impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community. (13)

Once the pseudo-sacred's validity is called into question, Philip's actions lose their significance. Ultimately, the social crises cause chaos in the social fabric of the household. As Girard states when talking about the sacrificial crisis threatening society, "when the religious framework of a society starts to totter, it is not exclusively or immediately the physical security of the society that is threatened; rather, the whole cultural foundation of society is put in jeopardy" (*V.A.T.S.* 49). This seems to be why Philip must act with immediate reproach, flinging Finn down onto the stage, handling him "with the casual brutality of Nazi soldiers moving corpses in films of concentration camps" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 132). By Philip's treating Finn as subhuman, he is only temporarily able to regain control.

To rectify the disorder that Finn causes, a scapegoat is needed to restore equilibrium and deflect any wrongdoing. As Girard states, violence begins that "the surrogate victim alone can save" (*V.A.T.S.* 259). In discussing the implications of the sacrifice, Girard writes, "it is a substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves. The sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from its *own* violence; it prompts the entire community to choose victims outside itself" (*V.A.T.S.* 8). In contrast, in *The Magic Toyshop*, Melanie is explicitly chosen to serve as the sacrifice by Philip alone. Girard suggests, "In order for a...human or animal, to appear suitable for sacrifice, it must bear a sharp resemblance to the *human*...while still maintaining a degree of difference that forbids all possible confusion...[examples]

include prisoners of war, slaves, small children, unmarried adolescents and the handicapped” (V.A.T.S. 12). As an unmarried adolescent with a marginal role in the Flower household, Melanie meets all the qualifications to be a surrogate victim. Finn attempts to be the scapegoat in her place by telling Philip, “I wish you’d kill me,” though he would not be an appropriate victim because his death would only spur more violence (Carter, *T.M.T.* 132). Instead, Melanie becomes perfectly groomed for the part of victim due to the fact that she is both on the outside of society and on the inside. Although she is Philip’s niece and has been welcomed by the Jowles as part of the “red people,” she is also on the outside of the community because she was raised in a liberal bourgeois house not under the oppressive control of Philip (Carter, *T.M.T.* 122). While her siblings, Jonathan and Victoria, could serve as sacrificial victims, Finn rationalizes Philip’s decision to select her because “Victoria is Maggie’s baby, now, and he has Jonathon working all day and all night under his eye and there is only [Melanie] left not accounted for” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 152). Melanie becomes the perfect choice for victim because Philip does not have control over her.

Festivals have been used for centuries for social purposes. Occurring as part of the festival, the sacrifice ultimately fails to rally the community together in *The Magic Toyshop*. In ancient Greece, the festival of Dionysius began with a sacrifice of animals and led to theatre: the presentation of Greek comedies and tragedies to the community. Similarly to how the ancient Greek festival began with a purification ritual, Philip instructs Finn to carry out a virgin sacrifice by telling him to practice the performance of “Leda and the Swan” with his step-sister Melanie. The sacrifice is chilling because the symbolic rape in the theatrical performance is meant to be preceded by a real one. In

order for the ritual to be successful, the violence inflicted upon the sacrifice must be communal. The community must act all together in the sacrifice in order for the whole ritualization process to succeed in stopping the cycle of violence. Girard states, “If these rites were not performed by the entire group acting in unison they would be nothing more than criminal acts of destructive intent” (*V.A.T.S.* 198). This is ultimately where the sacrifice falls short due to the fact that there is no social buy-in. From the very beginning, the community is against the choice of Melanie as a sacrifice. Francie, Margaret, and Finn each separately vocalize their disgust with the choice in victim (*Carter, T.M.T.* 132). The tipping point is when Finn realizes that Philip has been manipulating him like one of his puppets. Although Philip could rape Melanie himself, he wants Finn to rape Melanie because Melanie and Finn care for each other. It forces Finn to violate the woman he loves. However, Finn finally tells Melanie that he “Suddenly saw it all, when [they] were lying there. [Philip] pulled our strings as if we were his puppets, and there I was, all ready to touch you up just as he wanted...He wanted me to do you and set the scene” (*Carter, T.M.T.* 152). Finn had been in a trance due to the humiliation he had inflicted upon himself by attempting to use the pseudo-sacred for himself, but he finally regains self-consciousness. He begins to recognize the choice of victim as unjustified and therefore does not play into the sacrifice. By Finn’s choosing not to take part in the ritualization, essentially to rape Melanie, he is no longer maintaining the social order but directly working against it.

Even though the sacrifice does not occur, the festival leads into the theatrical performance of “Leda and the Swan.” The play itself is based on Greek mythology, but is best known through Yeats’ poetic adaptation, having the basic plot of Zeus becoming a

swan in order to rape Leda. In classical mythology, the language is indifferent to Leda's rape, if not positive. The language was reconstructed in Yeats's poem to be violent. In talking about the poem, Barbara Hardy notes that "Yeats likes to pluralize his myths, sometimes to emphasize and elaborate system, . . . to open, unsettle, and reveal the process of mythical making and remaking" (23). The language in *The Magic Toyshop* resonates not only with the classical image of "Leda and the Swan," but more appropriately with the poem created by Yeats. The play that begins as playful soon takes a dark turn when the rape has all the appearance of being real when the swan is heaved over Melanie. Although it is simply a performance, for Melanie it begins to feel like she is temporarily not there. In the act itself, Melanie feels disconnected from her own body as "she felt herself not herself, wrenched from her own personality, watching this whole fantasy from another place" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 166). Essentially, this out of body experience is the emotional repercussions of rape. The true harm of the rape occurs to Melanie's identity. Easton says, "Women experience rape not only as a physical violation, but as denial of their humanity, of their agency and self-determination" (66). This rape scene is all the more gruesome due to the fact that it is mythologized.

There is a clear connection between violence and the divine in "Leda and the Swan." In Yeats's poem, as a result of the violent rape, Leda gives birth to Helen of Troy and sets into motion a violent chain of events that ultimately leads to the Trojan War along with the whole beginning of Greek tragedy. Thus, Philip's decision to present "Leda and the Swan" in *The Magic Toyshop* is incredibly important in what he is trying to accomplish. Philip is attempting to create himself into a god by manipulating life within his art and connecting his art to something that has the element of the divine.

Philip is using art in a similar way that Yeats originally had done in his poetry, as he “saw art as the vehicle through which he could achieve ‘a universal transmutation of all things into some divine and imperishable substance’” (Keller-Privat 70). As Philip manipulates the puppet, he is taking on the role of Zeus and trying to set into motion a violent chain of events. The reader is left to ponder the same question as in Yeats’ poem of whether Melanie was able to experience the divine and “put on his knowledge with his power / before the indifferent beak could let her drop” or whether Melanie was simply ‘used’ by Philip (14-15). In this case, the answer seems to be no. Philip is in fact delusional regarding his own power as an artist. While Philip tries to become divine through his art, he fails as he is in the end only human.

Occurring as part of the festival, the carnival allows everyone in the household to break out of the hold that Philip has on each of them and change into new roles. Girard describes the carnival as the “deliberate violation of established laws...[where] family and social hierarchies are temporarily suppressed or inverted” (*V.A.T.S.* 119). After the performance of “Leda and the Swan,” Finn goes against the established code by destroying the swan that “raped” Melanie. Although Finn destroys the swan to get vengeance for the pain it caused Melanie, he also is subconsciously acting against the patriarch. After Melanie asks why he decided to destroy the swan, Finn tells her that Philip “put himself into it. That is why it had to go” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 174). Finn is directly challenging Philip in destroying the swan, and in doing so, Finn can finally come into his own to gain the freedom he desires for himself. As Day suggests “With the casting off of Victorian values, Finn can...become himself rather than dangle at the whim of Uncle Philip” (29). The freedom is not just his own but shared by the rest of the

family, which is shown by the relaxed feeling in the house the next morning. As Melanie walks into the kitchen, the food itself becomes a symbol for the freedom felt by the members of the household where “The very bacon bounced and crackled in the pan for joy...[the] toast caught fire and burned with a merry flame and it was not a disaster” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 183). Margaret, Finn, and Francis each take on different roles. As Kinly Roby indicates, “Everything is turned upside down, and a carnival spirit reigns: Finn takes a bath, Melanie dons trousers (forbidden by Philip), Margaret is transformed by wearing Melanie’s dress, and pearls, Guinness flows, and music fills the house” (44). Margaret is able to move her lips for the first time since she was first married and “forget[s] she was dumb” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 185). Although they all take on different roles in the household, in the convention of the carnival, the social inversion is only temporary and soon will come to an end.

When carnival is suspended, violence again ensues causing destruction to the household and ultimately leaving Finn and Melanie free with one another. As Philip comes home, he finds his wife Margaret in the arms of her brother Francis. The physical tension brought about by the carnival erupts into violence as Philip burns down the house, attempting to destroy everything inside. Beyond causing the destruction of the community, Philip burns the puppets and masks that served as the totems of the pseudo-sacred (Carter, *T.M.T.* 200). Nothing is left except for Finn and Melanie. Instead of closing the text, the novel’s conclusion leaves more questions of Melanie’s and Finn’s futures unanswered. The novel ends with Finn and Melanie looking at each other in “wild surmise,” alluding to the “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” poem by Keats regarding the discovery by Cortez (in fact, Balboa) of the Pacific. The reference to the

poem hints at a change between Melanie and Finn's relationship since the poem is often thought to refer to Keats' own excitement on discovering the two works of the epic poet Homer. Easton understands the ending to be positive and "encourages readers to hope up before Melanie and Finn an uncharted space free of the old gender demarcations" (77). However, there is also a negative implication to the poem since with Cortez came destruction to the native people and colonial oppression. With Finn being the apprentice of Philip in his craft of using the pseudo-sacred, it is a possibility that Finn will become what Philip once was in the household: a symbol for patriarchy. If this is the case, the ending reveals that this process of the ritualization of violence will only repeat itself. Girard recognizes that "destruction in turn fuels renewed violence" (*V.A.T.S.* 49). So even with the community coming to an end, violence will perpetuate itself through the lives of individuals. Like the poem, the real question remains as to their future and whether Finn will simply become a stand-in for the ruthless Philip.

The absence of the pseudo-sacred and Philip opens up the possibility of a harmonious relationship between Melanie and Finn. Throughout the text, there are moments of shared intimacy between them. Finn is attracted to Melanie from the very beginning. He often compliments her saying things such as "You've lovely hair...Black as Guinness. Black as an Ethiopian's armpit" (Carter, *T.M.T.* 45). Melanie and Finn become not only close friends, but she confides in him and trusts him at his word. However, Philip stands between Melanie and Finn having a healthy relationship. Philip teaches Finn to abuse women and even goes so far as to tell Finn to rape Melanie. With the destruction of the swan, Finn finally has his own agency and has the opportunity to treat Melanie as an equal. Coming back into the house after he destroyed the swan, Finn

approaches Melanie in a state of brokenness seeking comfort in her bed. The subjective narrator states that Melanie “drew the covers protectively around her but she could not tell him to go away...[and] so she held him until his teeth stopped chattering” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 170). The next morning, Finn even attempts to make up for her mistreatment of her in the past. He tells her “I shall respect your youth and innocence, Melanie” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 193). For the first time, they now have the possibility of a future together as equals.

Although Finn and Melanie have the chance to have a loving relationship with one another, I believe that Finn will instead become a stand-in figure for Philip. Each scene has undertones of Finn’s aggression that are unmistakable in context. Finn takes advantage of the trust Melanie has for him. Leading Melanie to his private pleasure garden where the National Exhibit of 1852 was held, he isolates her from the rest of the family so that he can sexually assault her. While he assures Melanie that “It is only Finn, who will do [her] no wrong,” he does just that by forcibly kissing her. The event is incredibly traumatic for Melanie who describes Finn “insert[ing] his tongue between her lips...[while] she choked and struggled, beating her fists against him, convulsed...[at his] rude encroachment on her physical privacy” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 106). Even as Finn promises to respect her, Melanie cannot help but think back to the moment at the National Exhibit. Melanie asks him “Then why did you kiss me in the pleasure gardens when I didn’t like it?” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 193). Finn is unapologetic, instead telling her “You didn’t know you didn’t like it until I did it” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 193). Rather than allowing Melanie free choice, he acts on her insecurities. In the same scene that Finn is apologizing to Melanie, the subjective narrator notes “he fondled her. She did not stop him because she did not

quite know how and she not sure if she wanted him to stop” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 192). This inappropriate invasion of space shows how even with Philip not manipulating the way he acts, Finn again treats Melanie as an object. He begins to resemble Philip more and more. The narrator notes that “Uncle Philip’s ominous chair stood empty” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 183). Rather than leave the chair empty, Finn sits on it and fills the role left by him. Finn begins to set the rules in the house. He tells everyone “we won’t open the shop today. We’ll have a party. We’ll have a wake for the swan. With music and dancing. No, not dancing” (Carter, *T.M.T.* 184). Finn sets the rules for the household like Philip once did. Instead of wanting to separate himself from Philip, Finn puts on his shirt in order to further become the master of the household (Carter, *T.M.T.* 186). Finn becomes exactly what Philip was both in his treatment of women and in his desire for control.

These moments show how Finn will treat Melanie with inferiority because of her gender. While Melanie may be disgusted by Finn, as the victim of violence she will always be subordinate and be manipulated by the man. Angela Carter suggests in *The Sadeian Woman* the way in which men control women:

Violence, the convulsive form of the active, male principle, is a matter for men, whose sex give them the right to inflict pain as a sign of mastery and the masters have the right to wound one another because that only makes us fear them more, that they can give and receive pain like the lords of creation. (22)

Finn has the power over her, like the control that Philip had over Margaret. Melanie again seems to be running to a man because she has no other options. This is similar to the way she was forced to live with Uncle Philip after the death of her parents. Palmer

suggests that “as is typical of a woman in a patriarchal society, [Melanie] is pressured to seek refuge from one man in the arms of another” (187). By displacing Philip as head of the household, Finn not only becomes more powerful, but his relationship with Melanie will also change. Instead of being equals, Finn will be in control. Just like Margaret, who was transformed from a relatively free woman to a victim at the hands of Philip, so too will Melanie become a victim through her relationship with Finn due to his patriarchal superiority.

At the heart of *The Magic Toyshop* is the pseudo-sacred, which connects and provides meaning to violence in the entire micro community. The pseudo-sacred is pivotal to building trust within the community. However, when the pseudo-sacred begins to be questioned, the community falls apart. While Philip is able to maintain control of the household temporarily, at a certain point the violence and the pseudo-sacred is turned against him by his disciple Finn. Philip tries to project blame on the scapegoat Melanie in order to avoid this crisis, but it ultimately fails as the community ends in violence and destruction. Despite the fact that the community has ended, the pseudo-sacred has the opportunity to repeat through generations of compliant individuals who attempt to use the power of “magic” as a patriarchal tool. Through her work, Angela Carter holds up a mirror to society by showing how violence can be threatening and menacing, especially to women who are abused and victimized. While she may have never read Girard’s book, she realizes the way that the pseudo-sacred becomes a building block by those in power to keep others in line. Carter is able to show the drastic effects the “sacred” is able to have on a society, to suppress both men and women, when it is controlled and manipulated by a single man.

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