

**A STUDY OF ANGELA CARTER'S LIFE AND THE NOVEL
*THE MAGIC TOYSHOP***

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman aiheena oli tutkia brittiläisen kirjailijan Angela Carterin (1940–1992) elämän ja hänen kirjoittamansa romaanin <i>The Magic Toyshop</i> (suom. Maaginen lelukauppa) yhtäläisyyksiä. Ilmestyessään vuonna 1967 romaani ravistutti aikansa brittiläisen yhteiskunnan patriarkaalisia käsityksiä. Romaani kertoo Melanie-nimisestä työstä ja hänen perheensä elämästä Philip-enon lelukaupan yhteydessä. Romaanissa esiintyy intertekstuaalisuutta, viittauksia ja merkityksiä ja on teemoiltaan sekä tyylilajiltaan moninainen.</p> <p>Angela Carterin elämänvaiheisiin on perehdytty hänestä kirjoitetun elämäkerran ja muiden hänestä tehtyjen elämäkerrallisten kirjoitusten avulla. <i>The Magic Toyshop</i>-romaanin on käyty läpi kokonaisuudessaan ja sitä on tarkasteltu myös siitä tehtyjen analyysien ja tutkimusten valossa.</p> <p>Pyrin osoittamaan löytämiäni samankaltaisuuksia elämäkerrallisen kirjallisuudentutkimuksen ja lähiluvun avulla. Tutkimusmateriaalin suuren määrän vuoksi tutkimus on rajattu koskemaan vain romaania <i>The Magic Toyshop</i> ja Carterin elämää hänen syntymästään romaanin julkaisuvuoteen asti.</p> <p>Tulokset on jaettu kolmeen ajanjaksolliseen ja teemalliseen ryhmään Carterin elämäntulkintaa ja romaanin tapahtumia mukaillen: lapsuuteen, nuoruuteen ja avioliittoaikaan hänen ensimmäisen aviomiehensä kanssa. Tutkimuksessa tuli esille, että romaanin teemat, henkilöhahmot ja tapahtumat voivat kuvastaa moniulotteisesti Carteria itseään, hänen elämäkokemuksiaan, hänen elämänsä vaikuttaneita ihmisiä ja myös hänen ajatuksiaan yhteiskunnallisiin muutoksiin liittyen.</p> <p>Carter itse on sanonut, että Melanien henkilöhahmon täytyy olla hän itse. Olen tuloksekseni ottanut huomioon mahdollisuuden, että romaanit voivat sisältää yhtymäkohtia kirjailijan omaan elämään ja, että elämäkerrallinen kirjallisuus voi olla totuutta, mutta myös fiktiota. Lopulta kyse on kuitenkin lukijan ja tutkijan tulkinnasta.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Angela Carter's (1940-1992) novel *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) made an unforgettable impression on me. The novel is abundant in themes, intertextuality, allusions, and meanings. For that reason, I found myself not only thinking about the novel and the themes of confinement, trauma, and secrets but increasingly the author Angela Carter. What kind of life she might have had, was my first question to myself. How her own life experiences might have influenced on her narrative in *The Magic Toyshop*, was another question that I pondered upon. Finally, to satisfy my curiosity, I decided to write my thesis based on these questions. Thus, the research question of this thesis is the following:

What resemblances could be found when comparing Carter's life experiences during 1940-1967 with some of the characters and the course of events in *The Magic Toyshop*?

The Magic Toyshop was published in 1967 as Carter's second novel and in 1968 it won the Mail on Sunday/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize (British Council Website). The story of the novel is an intriguing and uncanny portrayal of an unconventional and bizarre family of seven living above Uncle Philip's toyshop in London. Perplexity is one word to illustrate the reader's experience after having read the novel for the first time. The novel can be considered as a collection of various sensitive themes which were striking in the still patriarchal English society of the 1960s. On the other hand, the story can be read as a fairy tale-like description of a young Melanie's maturation into womanhood or, for example, as a love story.

From the genre's point of view the novel could be part of fairy tale, gothic, fantasy, or horror literatures, or as a representative of the magical realism genre. Although, for example, Carter's friend and publisher Callil (2007, p. xiii, cited in Carter, 1967/2008) points out that Carter did not like to be categorised as a magical realism writer, instead, she considered herself as "a stern realist". However, defining the genre

is not perhaps that meaningful since it depends on the reader's viewpoint. Carter could merely have used genres to illustrate the novel's course of events more captivatingly by wrapping them in a mixture of many genres. I suggest that *The Magic Toyshop* can be understood to reflect Carter's own life experiences from her childhood, early adulthood, and her married life with her first husband Paul Carter. Gordon (2016) supports this view. I am especially interested in the period from 1940, when Carter was born, to 1967, when Carter had been married to Paul Carter for seven years and *The Magic Toyshop* was published. The research field of my thesis is both biographical and literary. By using biographical and close reading methods, the aim of my thesis is to find out and compare the possible resemblances between the novel's events and characters and few momentous events of Carter's life during the period from 1940 to 1967.

Angela Carter was a prolific writer. Her literary production consists of novels, stories, children's stories, non-fiction, essays, newspaper articles, and radio plays. She also made translations from French to English. In addition, she has appeared on television programmes and has given interviews to newspapers and TV. Some of her works have been adapted to television and films, such as *The Magic Toyshop*. In addition, she taught writing in various universities. Her literary production has been studied, reviewed, and criticised widely. Due to the considerable amount of research material and literature published on Carter's life and her literary production, this thesis has limitations. Namely, I am concentrating on a brief period of Carter's life and one of her novels only.

Born in 1940, Carter was a wartime child. She spent her teenage years in the 1950s when Britain was recovering from the war. The 1960s, however, was life changing for Carter. Gamble (1997) suggests that "the liberal and experimental atmosphere of the sixties undoubtedly suited Angela Carter" (p. 39). Namely, Carter became adult and writer in the 1960s, a decade known also as the "Swinging Sixties". Ford (1988/1992) reports that life was altering with the advances in science and technology, new trends and approaches in cultural life were created and adopted and the flower power ideology was in its peak wanting to change the conservative values and concepts of societies. In the aftermath of the postwar Britain, women's life changed gradually from the roles of housewives with domestic duties towards individuals with more independency, possibility to education, jobs outside the house and increasing freedom to choose their own paths. Additionally, feminism was strengthening and liberated women.

Carter caught the mood of the 1960s in her novels written in the same period. Gamble (1997) states, in her comparison of Carter's other novels of the sixties *Shadow Dance*, *Several Perceptions* and *Heroes and Villains*, that *The Magic Toyshop* is "woman-centered" (p. 68) text and "the narrative point of view is gendered female, and the system it is up against is much more specifically patriarchal" (p. 68). Melanie, as some

other female characters of Carter's novels and rewritten fairy-tails, is a heroine who refuses to be a victim. Moreover, Gamble (1997) continues that the text of *The Magic Toyshop* is "breaking down norms, conventions and cultural codes and reassembling them in new combinations" (p. 69). The outcome of such dramatic shifts exposes the characters to uncertainty in the novel. *The Magic Toyshop* is indeed a captivating story blending the atmosphere of the tumultuous decade with places and characters that could be true in reader's mind.

Carter's literary works have been studied extensively, for example, from the perspective of women's studies. However, due to Carter's early death from cancer in 1992, she may not be that familiar to the contemporary readers. Furthermore, novels have been studied due to the perception that they may contain autobiographical material about the author. Thus, my study may provide an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of Angela Carter's life, the novel *The Magic Toyshop*, and how they could be intertwined. However, the reader should bear in mind that my study and analysis are based on my interpretation of the possible findings, on my understanding of the readings completed for the thesis and represent my viewpoints. The thesis tries not to provide an unconditional truth nor a comprehensive review of Carter's life and her literary production.

The overall structure of the thesis takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. The second chapter focuses on biographical research including a brief overview to the relevant concepts and to the recent developments in the field of biographical writing. Angela Carter's biography is placed in the second chapter as well. The third chapter is concerned with the novel *The Magic Toyshop*. The fourth chapter introduces the present study with the aim and research question, data, and the methods of analysis. The fifth chapter analyses and discusses the findings organised chronologically in three different blocs. Finally, the conclusion gives a summary.

2 BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Biographical research studies the lives of individuals. Roberts (2002) states that biographical research "...seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future" (p. 1). In biographical research, diaries, personal notes, letters, and biographical writings as well as interviews become important material for the researcher. According to Roberts (2002), biographical writings also include researcher's narration and reflexivity at least to some extent. They increase the readability and interest of the biography.

Biographical research has traditionally focused on the life spans of remarkable persons such as authors, celebrities, politicians, and heads of states. Furthermore, the tradition of biographical writing is long. The early biographies were mostly written of men and by male writers. We know from history such biographies as *The Parallel Lives* of Greek and Roman men written by the Greek philosopher Plutarchus ("Plutarchus," 2024) as early as around AD 66, or the *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) written by James Boswell ("James Boswell", 2024), which has been revered for its perfection and unique style.

According to Roberts (2002), the current trend of development of the biographical research is connected to the changes in other fields of study throughout the social sciences. Moreover, the information of biographies can be gathered in many ways and for multiple objectives, but "biographical research is part of a movement to reveal and understand the 'personal' and its interlinking with the immediate and wider social context and political practices" (p. 31). Roberts (2002) continues that biographical research has been used to comprehend many areas of life and "to give voice to those who are largely unheard; and to trace the effects of migration and other social upheavals" (p. 31). He concludes that with the biographical research both history and current social questions can be studied. As Roberts (2002) notes, biographical research provides important insights into the changes encountered in life and how these shifts

shape people's perception of the world. Biographical research is leaning on autobiographies and biographies because they provide valuable information. I will explore the concepts of autobiography and biography in the next section.

2.1 Autobiography and biography

It is important to clarify the meaning of the concepts autobiography and biography. Roberts (2002) defines these terms as follows. An autobiography is "an account by an individual of their life in written or oral form. Additional visual material may be given (photographs) and the life may be presented in the form of video or DC" (Glossary section, para. 2). In other words, the person herself/himself is the author. By contrast, a biography is "an account of an individual life written by another. It is the practice of writing about a person" (Glossary section, para. 3). Both concepts are examined in the following paragraphs.

Traditionally, autobiographies are writings about a person and her/his life. However, of particular interest is Roberts' (2002, p. 69) discussion that novels have been studied in connection with autobiographical research as they provide insights into the author's inner and outer life. The author may reveal such thoughts and feelings of self in a novel that otherwise would not be possible. Roberts (2002, p. 69) mentions the novel *David Copperfield* (1850) written by Charles Dickens which has been examined for its autobiographical features. Morris (1993) mentions Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth* (1929) as an autobiographical novel in which the heroine Marie is considered to be the author herself (p. 60). Bennett and Royle (2009) mention J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) as an example of "mixing of novel and (auto)biography" (p. 20) and which arises the question of "the relationship between literary texts, narrators, characters and authors" (p. 20). Namely, the usage of "I" as the narrator in a novel can confuse the reader to think that the "I" is the author and further leads the reader to speculate between the authenticity and fiction of the text.

Moreover, Morris (1993) states that Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is an argumentative text criticising the lack of autonomy and possibilities of women writers compared to the men of the same eras (p. 58), and Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) could be seen to secretly illustrate fear that women may feel in childbirth (p. 77). O'Day (1994) has named Carter's novels *Shadow Dance* (1966), *Several Perceptions* (1968) and *Love* (1971) "The Bristol Trilogy" (p. 25) due to the "...many formal and thematic elements they share" (p. 25). Even though the city of Bristol is not mentioned as the scene of these novels, O'Day (1994) argues that due to the external evidence the autobiographical connection to Carter's life is obvious. Firstly, the novels provide realist descriptions of the cultural and countercultural atmospheres of the

1960s in which Carter herself lived. Secondly, the indoor and outdoor places are traceable into real life houses, shops, streets, and parks, and thirdly, the characters of the novels represent the people Carter knew, met, and was surrounded in Bristol, but were camouflaged for the novels. Intriguingly, Carter has described that her kind of writing "... is a process of self-analysis, of interpreting one's imagery and constantly mining inside oneself" (Gordon, 2016, p. 89).

Novels can contain truth and have real-life equivalents. An insightful thought presented by Bennett and Royle (2009) is that "literary texts can generate powerful feelings of identification, not only between reader and character but also, perhaps more enigmatically, between reader and author" (p. 20). In other words, the texts may lead the reader to feel and think that they have a perfect idea of what the author is writing about and the reader may even have similar experiences to the characters in the novel. Munro (1982) emphasizes that authors can use something real as the source for inspiration without any specific purpose to expose the truth. Because of this reason, however, stories can constitute the truth for the reader leading to delusive conclusions.

Regarding biographies, Hakosalo et al. (2014, pp. 8-9) explain that first of all, a biography means a writing of a life and a presentation of a person written by somebody else. Second, a biography follows and studies the life span of somebody usually in a chronological order and tries to explain the life of the same. Third, a biography attempts to recognize and analyse the influences the person has had on other people, or, for example, on the development of art and science. Fourth, to explain somebody's life span and the impact of one's actions, the biographer needs to know and understand the context in which life of the researched person has taken place and how various kinds of agents and powers have influenced on this person. Finally, a biography aims to give an own voice to the person and bring out her/his own experiences, thoughts, and attitudes.

However, Rahkonen (1995, p. 153) suggests that biographies should be considered as stories which are texts with their own logic and narrative formulas. He further quotes Goethe (1956) who has said that "a biography is fiction and true". On the other hand, Roberts (2002) argues that "...biography is considered within literary study and criticism as a genre of writing about another" (p. 52) and continues by referring to Yow (1994, p. 167) that "...as literary biographical writing itself has developed it has drawn on psychology and other disciplines to explore the influences on the individual's perceptions of life and interactions with others" (p. 52). The use of different disciplines in biographical writing deepens the understanding of the person and the biographical writing becomes more interesting.

On the other hand, Vilkkko (1995, p. 163) highlights that the feelings the reader of biographical texts confronts are important in interpreting and understanding somebody else and her/his life. The reader is communicating with the text by using

“empathetic reading” and with an attitude that gives room and possibility to see the similarities and especially the differences in each other’s lives. Similarly, Hakosalo et al. (2014, pp. 15-16) argue that biographical writings are a way to learn about personal feelings and the cultural atmosphere that has been valid during a certain period. Furthermore, they state that biographical works often describe the history of feelings and the expression of emotions, and without the feelings it would be difficult to write an interesting biography and make the choices and motivation of a person meaningful.

In summary, autobiographies and biographies do not necessarily only describe somebody’s life, but also the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of a person. In addition, authors may include biographical features into their novels.

2.2 The recent developments of the biographical writing

The writing style of the biographies are changing since the biographers are taking diverse kinds of approaches to the persons they are writing about and to the construction of their biographical works. Gustafsson (2024, April 17, Yle) writes about publisher Anna-Riikka Carlson who has written a biographical kind of book of author Eeva Kilpi (*Rakas Eeva Kilpi. Nämä juhlat jatkuvat vielä*, 2024, WSOY). The book is based on discussions between Carlson and Kilpi taken place during Carlson’s visits to Kilpi. These encounters and conversations were so impressive that Carlson began to write them down and these notes are the basics for the book. The book breaks the conventional formula of the traditional biography, for example, it does not cover Kilpi’s life in chronological order and it does not attempt to give a complete view on the author. Instead, it pictures Kilpi as a person and a thinker. Furthermore, the book is about Carlson. Namely, after considerable amount of thought, Carlson decided to include herself in the narrative, since the book is also about the friendship of Kilpi and Carlson. Carlson argues that “...today it is understood that it is impossible to author a complete story of somebody and that has encouraged writers to experiment. It is interesting to see how the traditional biography is shaken and renewed” (cited in Gustafsson, 2024, para. 17).

Similarly, Kylmälä (2024, April 22, Yle) suggests that there is a substantial change going on regarding biographies. Today, biographies are often based on conversations between the biographer and the person. Dialog based biographies have been written, for instance, about the former President of Finland Tarja Halonen, the author and actor Pirkko Saisio, the pop singer Antti Tuisku and the motorsports racing driver Kimi Räikkönen. Kylmälä (2024) states that the development of the social media and the various channels people are communicating with each other today have impacted on the attitudes towards biographies; they are small and approachable and everyone has

a biography, not only the high-ups of society. The means to create new kinds of biographical texts are developing continuously. By using monology and the pronoun “you” instead of “I” or “she/he,” when writing about the person, the reader is positioned differently compared to the earlier biographies which are traditionally written in the third person. Kylmä (2024) finds that, consequently, with the new ways of writing biographical works the reader has direct access to the life and voice of the personality.

On the other hand, it is not always possible to meet the person the biography is about and there might be limitations concerning the economical and practical resources the biographer (or the person) has at his/her disposal. For this reason, taking into use new kinds of ways to write biographies could be challenging. For example, Gordon (2016) could not meet Angela Carter in person, but he interviewed Carter’s family and friends and studied Carter’s biographical documents and other material for his biography of Angela Carter.

2.3 The biography of Angela Carter, nee Stalker

2.3.1 Angela Stalker’s early years from 1940 to 1951

Angela Olive Stalker was born during the Second World War on the 7th of May in 1940 in Eastbourne, East Sussex. Gordon (2016, pp. 15-16) writes that Angela was the second child of Hugh and Olive Stalker. Angela’s older brother Hughie was 12 years old and had been evacuated to the southeast coast in 1939 to escape the war and the anticipated bombings of London. Olive and Hugh had rented a flat in Eastbourne to be with their son. Soon after Angela’s birth, the British troops had to be evacuated from Dunkirk and the south coast of England became a front line. The family returned to London, but as London was heavily bombarded by the Germans, Angela’s maternal grandmother Jane Farthing came to the rescue. She took Olive, Hughie, and Angela to Wath-upon-Deerne in Yorkshire where she had earlier lived. Life was safer there during the war, but quite different from London. Angela’s father stayed in London and continued his work as a journalist. According to Sage (1994), the move “from south London back to the gritty coal-mining village of Wath-upon-Deerne...” (p. 5) was a jump downwards in class. Similarly, Melanie and her siblings must move from their better living conditions to their Uncle Philip’s lower circumstances in South London in *The Magic Toyshop*.

Grandmother Jane run the household with dominant grip and raised her grandchildren the way she liked. Angela’s mother Olive had not the strength to go against Jane’s wishes. However, grandmother Jane had obviously a soft spot on Angela.

Gordon (2016) states that “her grandmother told her stories and sang to her, taught her to whistle and to ‘snawk’ (that is, to steal) coal for the fire, and generally set about moulding her into the kind of self-sufficient girl her own London-bred daughters were not” (p. 17). Sage (1994, p. 6) argues that grandmother had a strong influence on Carter’s later works and refers to a citation from Carter, published in the *New Review* series on “Family Life” in 1976, in which grandmother is described as follows:

was a woman of such physical and spiritual heaviness she seemed to have been born with a greater degree of gravity than most people. She came from a community where women rule the roost... Her personality had an architectonic quality; I think of her when I see some of the great London railway termini, especially Saint Pancras, with its soot and turrets, and she overshadowed her own daughters, whom she did not understand – my mother, who liked things to be nice; my dotty aunt. (FL 43–4)

In the same vein, Gordon (2016) argues that the strong role of the grandmother is reflected in Carter’s later production when women are depicted with “toughness, earthiness, and folksy wisdom” (p. 17), whereas the weaker role of her own mother has impacted to rare visibility of mothers in Carter’s works, “and are never anything like Olive” (p. 17). However, Carter herself has said that it has nothing to do with her own mother, but the power mothers have (Sage, 1994, p. 6). Peach (1998/2009) suggests that the influence of Carter’s grandmother Jane made her to see the industrial Britain “matriarchal” and “a community where women ruled the roost” (pp. 168-169). In *The Magic Toyshop*, Melanie admires her mother, who otherwise is a distant character, dies, and is present only in Melanie’s own thoughts. Yet, the housekeeper Mrs Rundle’s character in the novel seems to have similarities to Carter’s maternal grandmother Jane.

Gordon (2016) continues that when the war was over in 1945 the Stalkers moved back to London to the same house they had left five years earlier. Olive and Hugh adored Angela and spoiled her with delicacies, toys, and clothes. Occasionally, her father took her to cinema, which made an indelible impression on her. As quoted in Sage (1994), Angela speaks warmly about her father having had “very little ... to do with the stern fearful face of the Father in patriarchy...there was no fear” (p. 6). Gordon (2016, pp. 18-20) goes on to say that mother Olive had an overprotective and intimate relationship with Angela, which was emphasized more when brother Hughie left home for his studies. This too close relation seems to have led to strained feelings between Angela and her mother later. Angela was lonely, yet imaginative child. At home, she spent her days mostly on her own by listening to radio, writing, and reading fairy tales. One of Angela’s favourite stories in her childhood was F.H. Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*. The story tells about a pampered and self-willed girl, whose parents die abroad and, thus, is sent to live in the magical house of her maternal uncle, whom she has never met. All such features, which can be found in Carter’s novel *The Magic Toyshop* and as suggested also by Gordon (2016).

In his research, Gordon (2016, pp. 22-25) found out that Angela suffered from obesity and stammering in her early school years. Gordon (2016) continues that the overweight made Angela clumsy and prohibited her to move properly and play with other school children. That could have made her feel different from other children. Otherwise, Angela did well in school, especially in English. In 1951, she won an essay competition designed for school children. Later in the same year, she attended a high school for girls. I propose that the experiences of Carter's early childhood years have been included in *The Magic Toyshop* in the characters of Victoria and Melanie. Gordon (2016) suggests that Melanie is "the first incarnation of a character who appears in several of Angela Carter's early short stories...a neurotic teenage girl, clever, bored and self-absorbed" (p. 89). Moreover, Gordon (2016) states that Carter has later in the 1980s called Melanie "the bourgeois virgin" (p. 89) and that Melanie must have been Carter herself. In the next section, Angela's teenage and young adult years will be walked through.

2.3.2 The teenager and young adult, the years from 1951 to 1960

At the age of eleven, Angela attended the Streatham Hill & Clapham High in London. The school was renowned for its history of having been sent girls to university since the end of the 19th century and its ambitious goals to educate women beyond "needlework and domestic studies" (Gordon, 2016, p. 26). The curriculum of the school included subjects such as music, arts, drama, literature, Latin, and the pupils made class trips to galleries and museums. Gordon (2016, pp. 27-28) reports that the Egyptian collection of the British Museum fascinated Angela so much that she wrote a poem "The Valley of the Kings" about it. The poem was published in the school magazine in 1952 as follows:

Thebes, ancient capital of Egypt,
Deep in slumber lay,
Sleeping against the sorrows
Of another day.

The priests in the temples,
Chanted psalms and praises,
'Amen-Ra!' the voices cried.
'Amen-Ra, we thank thee greatly -

Another night has died!

In the tombs so far away,
Ancient kings long vigil keep,
Till the last bright day is ended
And the earth shall ever sleep.

Thebes is dead, its temples dead
No more do beggars crave
A little food, or money, maybe,
All is silent as the grave.

In the tombs so far away,
Ancient kings long vigil keep,
Till the last bright day is ended,
And all the earth shall sleep.

The poem is gloomy for an eleven-year-old girl. Gordon (2016) argues that the poem's tone reveals Angela's unusual state of mind during the early high school years culminating in a thought that she "had no right to be in the world" (p. 29). He describes Angela as "a child who was increasingly isolating herself in a mental world constructed from reading and her own imagination" (p. 28). Despite of her immature age "The King of the Valley" shows Angela's sensitivity towards the history of the ancient culture and her burgeoning understanding of death. She managed to capture the essence of what she saw and felt among the museum's ancient Egyptian objects. Furthermore, her imagination and writing skills are clearly visible in the poem. The gloominess and eerie atmosphere of the poem is echoed in *The Magic Toyshop*.

The overprotective upbringing as well as Olive's tight control over her daughter made Angela lose her privacy, senses of independency, and individuality. The result was that she became unhappy. Growing up as a teenager in the postwar Britain of the 1950s, sex was still a taboo subject and was not freely spoken about at homes. Although, for instance, contraception had become known in Britain already in the 1920s

(Burns, 2010, p. 194). It was common that young girls and boys did not have much knowledge of sex or had proper sexuality education. The general idea was that sex belonged to marriage. Gordon (2016) suggests that Angela's observations and thoughts of puberty are reflected in Melanie's character in *The Magic Toyshop*. In the same vein, Gamble (2006, p. 29) notes that Carter's teenage years could be reflected in *The Magic Toyshop* and continues with Carter's own words after Carter had reread the novel in the 1980s:

When the book came out in 1967...it was reviewed as a kind of fairy story. But when I read it again I was very struck with the intense sense of adolescent longing in it, an extraordinary sexual yearning. What it reminded me of was endless afternoons alone in a room smelling of sun-warmed carpet, stuck in the Sargasso Sea of adolescence when it seems that you are never going to grow up. ⁸⁵

Carter continues by saying that *The Magic Toyshop* is set in the 1950s when she was 13 or 14 and how London was quite different back then. The thought seemed to have filled her with nostalgic for the London that was not the same anymore. Similarly, Gordon (2016) suggests that "the 1950s detail, the carefully textured south London backdrop, the atmosphere of sexual longing and compromised privacy were all taken from her childhood" (p. 90).

Based on Gordon's (2016) research, it seems that at the age of seventeen, Angela began to change her life against her mother's wishes. She lost weight, she began to buy her own clothes and dressed up the way she liked. By the time Angela was eighteen, she looked hugely different and radical according to the dress code of the 1950s family girl. Gordon (2016) describes that Angela chose tight black clothes which typically included "black-mesh stockings, spike-heeled shoes, bum-hugging skirt, jacket with a black fox collar" (p. 33). The family was astonished by her transformation and thought that she looked like a "sylph," "beatnik," and "pencil-thin" (p. 33). In addition, Angela began to smoke and swear. All this was too much for her mother and the quarrels between Angela and her mother began leading to a worsening relation with the two of them.

Sage (1994) writes that Angela's youth was "traumatic", because she suffered from anorexia, and that her "tall, big-boned body and her intransigent spirit had been at odds with the ways women were expected to be, inside or outside" (p. 24). Sage (1994) continues that later, when Angela talked about her teenage years she reflected them with a joke: "I now [1983] recall this period with intense embarrassment, because my parents' concern to protect me from predatory boys was only equalled by the enthusiasm with which the boys I did indeed occasionally meet protected themselves against me" (p. 24). Noteworthy, trauma is standing out in *The Magic Toyshop*, as will be later discussed in the thesis.

With reference to Gordon (2016, pp. 36-37), Angela was a filmgoer and was fascinated by the films she saw. She was enthusiastic about English and French literature

and studied them at school. She studied Geoffrey Chaucer, Andrew Marvell, and William Blake, and found French poetry of Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud particularly interesting. Gordon (2016) states that the French poetry made Angela realize that she wanted to become a writer. In addition, the works of James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, Herman Melville, and Arthur Firbank engraved Angela's mind. In 1958, Angela took her final exams in English and French and left school. She did not apply to university despite of that her teachers encouraged her to do so. The reason was her mother's intention to move with her should she move from London to some other university location. Instead, she got a job at the Croydon Advertiser newspaper with the help of her father. At the age of nineteen, Angela met Paul Carter, her future first husband.

2.3.3 Marriage to Paul Carter, the years from 1960 to 1967

Gordon (2016, pp. 43-48) writes that Paul Carter was a chemist by profession, but worked also in a small record shop in Kensington. He was very shy and mild-mannered and presumably the first man who got interested in Angela. Paul played many instruments and sang well. He was enthusiastic about folk music and taught Angela "everything she knew about traditional music" (p. 44). Although they were temperamentally quite opposed they shared some same interests, for example, they became activists and campaigned against nuclear arms. Paul proposed Angela in 1959. Her parents were unwilling to agree to the marriage, but Angela was persistent, and the wedding took place in 1960, when Angela was only 20 years old. Paul was a few years older than Angela. They moved to a flat and made a home of their own. Angela had succeeded to flown out of her mother's overprotective nest.

According to Sage (1994), Angela's first marriage was:

a more or less desperate measure, with her making the running ('somebody who would go to Godard movies with me and on CND marches and even have sexual intercourse with me, though he insisted we should be engaged first' (F.23). (p. 24)

Gordon (2016) supports this thought and claims that despite the freedom marriage brought to Angela she later has said that marriage was an excuse to escape from her parents' house. Nevertheless, she seemed to have liked to decorate and organize her own home and keep her kitchen in good order: "...sense of perfect order...that I get when I open my kitchen cupboard & see the tins & jars & packages & smell the faint rich coffee smell" (p. 48). However, it may have been that she did not like the other household duties that much. Angela learned to cook, and they asked friends over to eat and listen to music. The idyllic looking young couple's life began to change when they moved to Bristol due to Paul's work.

Gordon (2016, pp. 52-54) notes that Angela became a writer in Bristol. The reasons for that were practical. The role of a housewife did not suit her, especially according to the British standards of the 1960s. She tried to get a job but was not successful. Moreover, she had no friends in Bristol and spent much of the day alone. She got lonely and bored. "I must strive to be an artist, after all," she finally reasoned (p. 54). In 1961, she began to write a diary which she continued doing until her death in 1992. During this time, she also began to write poems and prose fiction, yet being afraid that she would not become a good writer: "I'm intelligent, I know, but untrained & without discipline, so that simply living is gradually blunting my mind, tarnishing it like silver" (p. 54). Paul and Angela were childless, but the reason for that is unclear. In *The Magic Toyshop*, Aunt Margaret does not have her own children but instantly creates a natural mother-baby bond with Victoria whom she adores. A story written by Angela during the Bristol years has survived and is called "The Baby." Gordon (2016) argues that it is a portrayal of Angela's and Paul's marriage:

It concerns a young married couple, not unlike Angela and Paul. The man is 'some years older' than the woman and has a 'playful way of speaking to her, as though she were a child': he is prone to worrying and brooding, and has 'an unreasoning anger when something thwarted him...when a cinema was so full they could not get in; when they got on the wrong train; once, when he had lost a glove'. She thinks of herself as 'the girl who would never be free again, secured with not one but a million chains of love'. There is a listlessness to the story: the woman gets pregnant, and begins to feel increasingly distant from her husband. They have a row - a minor squabble, about nothing really - and it ends with him sulking in bed, and her crying beside him in the darkness: 'She thought that when the baby came, she would have something she could call her own and love on her own conditions...And as she wept, her allegiance to her husband was crumbling; she owed more allegiance to the still fish-shaped embryo that swam in her womb'. (p. 55)

Apparently, Paul began to change. Gordon reports (2016, pp. 55-66) that Paul had difficult moods varying from some kind of depression to sulkiness and silences which were difficult for Angela to bear. Their relationship was not developing the way they wanted. Paul might have expected Angela to be and act as a proper wife, taking care of him and their home, whereas Angela wanted to write, feel loved by his husband, and be free from the ordinary and usual role wives of the 1960s were supposed to have. However, despite of their differences and gradual alienation from each other they continued with their marriage in Bristol with friends visiting, getting a cat, and continuing living their own way. During this time Angela wrote and managed to publish some of her early works, but was continuously not happy. Her uncle Cecil Farthing noticed that Angela was not content with her life and put forward a proposal for university studies (Gordon 2016, p. 67). Angela thought that studying would do good for her writing and would provide assurance should she not succeed in the writing career. She was accepted and with the help of a student grant Angela began her BA studies in English at the University of Bristol in 1962. At last, she was out of the house with more money of her own than she had ever had. The mental illness, feeling

of confinement, and lack of own money are some of the many themes in *The Magic Toyshop* as will be demonstrated later in the thesis.

Life may not have been easy for the couple since Paul's depression seemed to have developed into a more serious phase. Gordon (2016, pp. 74-87) suggests that the unpleasant atmosphere they had in the house made Angela escape to reading and studying. In addition, during the university years she wrote her first novel the *Shadow Dance* which was published in 1966, when Angela was 26 years old. Before that, however, and as Paul was feeling better, he and Angela were able to make a journey to Ireland to experience among other things folk music. This could be reflected in *The Magic Toyshop* in the Irish origins of Aunt Margaret and her brothers Finn and Francie and their enthusiasm for playing Irish music. Gordon (2016, p 90) argues that Finn and Francie are like the Irish folk musicians Carters knew while living in Bristol.

Gordon (pp. 89, 91) explains that Angela began to write *The Magic Toyshop* in November 1965 and by the end of January 1966, she had written most of it. The writing speed seemed to have been dizzying. Simultaneously, Angela wrote other novels as well, therefore, *The Magic Toyshop* was published until in June 1967. The Carters continued their marriage, but it was challenging because of Paul's mental issues. Angela did think to leave him, but hesitated to do that for many reasons; one could have been that the divorces were socially unacceptable according to the customs of the 1960s Britain.

Gamble (1997) implies "a failing marriage" (p. 16). Moreover, Gordon (2016) argues that Angela's "domestic situation made her feel infantilised" (p. 90), and that the feelings Angela experienced during the time can be seen in *The Magic Toyshop*, for example, that Uncle Philip's character in the novel is "a grotesquely exaggerated version of Paul Carter..." (p. 90). Indeed, one viewpoint to Uncle Philip's odd behaviour could be his mental instability. Peach (1998/2009) supports Gordon's view and argues that Uncle Philip is "...so obsessive and violent, ...that he appears to have serious and deep-rooted psychological problems" (p. 73).

Eventually, the Carter's divorced in 1972 (Sage, 1994) and Angela began to shape her life the way she wanted. Like Gordon, I suggest that Angela took elements from her own marriage with Paul Carter into the novel *The Magic Toyshop*. I will revert to this in the Analysis and Discussion chapter of the thesis. The next chapter is concerned with *The Magic Toyshop* as follows.

3 THE MAGIC TOYSHOP

3.1 The plot of the novel

This section introduces the plot of the novel *The Magic Toyshop* (hereafter also MT) in brief. However, before I continue further, the reader should know that the edition of the novel read is a hardback edition published in 2008 by Virago Press. Carmen Callil has written the introduction to it. The novel is fictional and tells, for example, about family relations, marriage, and growing up. It is exhausting with many themes such as secrets, confinement, trauma, dreams, and violence portraying the social conditions of families of two different classes in the post-war Britain. The novel could also be understood as a “symbolic autobiography,” an expression Carter used in describing fiction (Gordon, 2016, p. 89).

3.1.1 The beginning

The story begins with Melanie, a beautiful fifteen-year-old girl on the threshold of adulthood, examining herself in her own room infatuated with what she saw in the mirror: “she embarked on a tranced voyage, exploring the whole of herself, clambering her own mountain ranges, penetrating the moist richness of her secret valleys, ...the heart fluttered under the flesh like a bird...to navel (which was a mysterious cavern or grotto)” (MT, p. 1). She dreams of adulthood with youthful enthusiasm; what it would be like for her, would she get married, have sex, and children. She lives with her younger siblings Jonathon (12) and Victoria (5) in a big country house looked after by the housekeeper Mrs Rundle and her cat while the parents are on a tour abroad. Victoria is “a round, golden pigeon who cooed” (MT, p. 6). Mrs Rundle pampers her; Victoria sits on her knee and listens to the songs Mrs Rundle sings to her.

Jonathon makes models of sailing ships and dreams of the sea. Mrs Rundle feeds the children with various versions of bread pudding and roast beef and potatoes on Sundays after the church. Melanie has learned to dislike the bread pudding, because she is afraid to become fat and then “nobody would ever love her and she would die virgin” (MT, p. 4).

One night, when Melanie feels sleepless she gets up and begins to wander alone around the quiet house. She examines her parents’ bedroom and the people in her parents’ wedding picture. Among them is Uncle Philip, her mother’s only brother, with a blank expression on his face. Melanie continues studying the room in her own thoughts and dreams, tries her mother’s parfum and on a whim casts a die and decides to dress in her mother’s wedding gown (MT, p. 17). Then she steps out in the garden which looks fascinating in the moonlight. Suddenly, she realizes that the vast sky was “too big for her” and “she was too young for it” (MT, p. 20). In a panic, she rushes back to the house only finding out that the front door had been accidentally locked. She climbs the apple tree and manages to get in through the open window of her room, but the wedding dress is ruined for good.

The next morning a telegram is brought informing that the parents have died in a plane crash. Melanie is traumatised by the news. She is vomiting, crying, and accusing herself of the death. She breaks her own mirror, tears the photograph of her parents into pieces and smashes the frame. In addition, she ruins her parents’ room. Finally, Mrs Rundle finds Melanie on the landing in chock (MT, pp. 29-30):

On the landing, to her surprise, she heard a low wailing. She followed the unexpected sound. She found Melanie sitting cross-legged on a pile of ripped-up nightdresses. There was an oppressive stench of Chanel No. 5 from a litter of broken bottles. Melanie sat with her face screwed up. Covered with lipstick and mascara, her face was a formalised mask of crimson and black and from her open mouth issued a wordless stream of dismay. Mrs Rundle had seen a good many things in her time and took things in her stride.

She had to force Melanie's hot, tense fingers apart to take the telegram from her. Melanie took no notice of Mrs Rundle at all. Mrs Rundle got out her reading glasses from her apron pocket, polished them and read the telegram. She shook her head slowly. She put her arms round Melanie but Melanie was unbending as wood, and wailing. So she left her alone and stumped heavily downstairs.

After the house of their parents has been auctioned, the siblings are sent by train to their uncle’s custody in London and their lives are changed for good.

3.1.2 Life above the toyshop

Uncle Philip is a toymaker living above his toyshop with his Irish wife Margaret and her two brothers Finn and Francie. The toyshop lies “between a failed, boarded-up jeweller’s and a grocer’s displaying a windowful of sunshine cornflakes” and “was a dark cavern of a shop, so dimly lit one did not at first notice it as it bowed its head

under the tenement above" (MT, p. 43). The new home has a strange atmosphere with a cuckoo clock with a stuffed bird, weary looking rooms without any mirrors or books, and a bloody hand in a drawer Melanie happened to open (MT, p. 132).

Aunt Margaret is "a bird-like herself, in her hither-and-thither movements and a certain gesture she had of nodding her head like a sparrow picking up crumbs. A black bird with a red crest and no song to sing" (MT, p. 47). She adores Victoria and once put in her arms by Finn "she sighed and cuddled the baby with the convulsive, unpractised hug of a woman, who, against her desire, has had no children" (MT, p. 45). She is confined in the unsuitable marriage with Uncle Philip visible in her dumbness and in the limited space she has in the house and not outside. Especially, the choker made to her by Uncle Philip ironically as a wedding gift is a horrible sign of vicious control and power over his wife. The choker was so tightly put around Aunt Margaret's neck that she "had to carry her head high and haughty as the Queen of Assyria, but above it her eyes were anxious and sad and not proud at all" (MT, p. 126). The choker made her eat "only with utmost difficulty" (MT, p. 126) and when drinking the only thing "she could do was to sip painfully at a meagre cup of tea and toy with a few shoots of mustard and cress, although she had prepared the extensive meal" (MT, p. 127).

Uncle Philip has the decision-making power in the house. The women are not allowed to wear trousers or makeup and are permitted to speak only when they are spoken to since Uncle Philip preferred "silent women" (MT, p. 70). Uncle Philip controls the finances. Aunt Margaret and Melanie are not trusted with money, because "...for the Flowers had credit at all the shops with which they dealt and Uncle Philip paid the bills quarterly, by cheque" (MT, p. 99). Uncle Philip uses domestic violence to put everybody else down in the house. Melanie grows to fear him and "trembled involuntarily when she saw him" (MT, p. 102) and "sensed his irrational violence in the air about him" (MT, p. 103). Uncle Philip has a theatre downstairs with real-size dolls and puppets. He organizes plays there forcing the household to watch and attend the odd and disgusting spectacles, for example, a play of the Leda and the Swan in which Melanie is taking Leda's role. In the role, Melanie is attacked and metaphorically raped by the puppet-swan directed by Uncle Philip (MT, pp. 183-188). Melanie is traumatized again.

3.1.3 The freedom

Aunt Margaret, Francie, Finn, Melanie, and Jonathon (Victoria is too young) are fighting against Uncle Philip's control and the captivity-like conditions in the house in their own ways: Aunt Margaret and her brother Francie are having a secret and incestuous relationship, the growing attraction between Melanie and Finn and their escape plans, Jonathan immersing himself in building ships, Finn's drawings, and the

Irish music and dancing they share, when Uncle Philip is out of town (MT, pp. 56-58, 214-215). In addition, Finn destroys the puppet-swan by chopping it into pieces and by doing so gains back his self-respect (MT, pp. 191-195).

At the end of the story, Uncle Philip comes home sooner than he was expected and undiscovers Aunt Margaret's and Francie's secretive relationship and sets the house on fire with blind rage. The family members began to run out of the burning house. Aunt Margaret finds her courage and receives her voice back in the turmoil. Melanie and Finn are saved. They confront their situation "in a wild surmise" (MT, p. 220) not knowing what life will bring to them. It is unclear what happens to the other family members. The reader is left in bewilderment.

3.2 Critical approaches to *The Magic Toyshop*

3.2.1 Women and homes in *The Magic Toyshop*

In her book *Women in the 1960s: Angela Carter's The Magic Toyshop*, Kunz (2015) studies the representations of women in the novel and argues that women are seen "as brides, mothers, housewives, puppets, daughters, objects, wives, consumers and victims" (p. 4), none of which suited the character of Melanie, and that these conventional roles are challenged by Carter from "the female narrative point of view" (p. 4). Kunz discusses about Carter's observations of the transition time of the 1960s when life of the western world was undergoing many radical changes, for instance, women began to demand the same rights men had and the alteration from patriarchalism towards independency and equality with men began to take place in earnest. Kunz (2015) reports that women began to work more outside their homes since new inventions made the household duties easier and timesaving to do. Fashion was shaping the appearances of women and gave them various kinds of possibilities to express themselves. Education became more accessible for women and people read more. Through legislation, for example, divorce and abortion were made possible for women (though were confronted with mixed feelings). Kunz (2015) claims that Carter "sensed this moment but did not know where it was going to lead and what it would offer women" (p. 3). In addition, Kunz argues that the novel *The Magic Toyshop* is reflecting the changes that happened in society in the 1960s and Melanie, the protagonist of the novel, is "guiding the reader through these pending seismic changes" (p. 3).

According to Kunz (2015), Melanie is first of all developing from a teenage girl exploring her own body and imagining herself both as a muse of great masters and as an object to a male gaze, towards the bridal, mothering role of a married woman and housewife. Secondly, Melanie is seen in a dominant role as an observer spying on

Aunt Margaret and her siblings in the kitchen and Finn in his room. The spying reverses the roles of Melanie and the male gazer who is usually considered the observer (p. 20). Thirdly, Melanie is victimized under the callous Uncle Philip with his absurd dress codes and other house rules. She is made a puppet; a helpless doll obeying the patriarch and who is submitted to metaphorical swan rape in one of Uncle Philip's theatre plays. Finally, Melanie finds her own self-esteem, her own mind and breaks out of the patriarchal pressure together with Finn, another young character growing up in the novel.

Aunt Margaret is without a voice and ownership of her own self. Kunz (2015) describes her the kind of woman who is suppressing her true emotions out of fear due to the domestic violence her husband is using as a means of maintaining terror and power among the family. Still, Aunt Margaret takes care of the household duties quietly and "performs all motherly deeds that have to be done" (p. 31). She does not have own children; therefore, she takes Victoria under her loving wings. She is an object for Uncle Philip who has marked her with a too tight collar around her neck as a symbol of male power over women. However, Kunz (p. 31-32) gives some strength to Aunt Margaret and suggests that Aunt Margaret's silence is a way to hide her true feelings of resistance and hatred for Uncle Philip, and the secret she and her brother Francie share (also qtd. by Mills et al. in Gamble, 2001, p. 37). Similarly, Martin (2009) argues that Aunt Margaret's silence is "a refusal to speak the language of patriarchal power" (p. 12).

Kunz (2015) also presents ideas from Wyatt (n.d., 564-565) and Peach (1998, p. 197) concerning Aunt Margaret's dreary costume she is wearing on Sundays. The dress is seen as representations of "masquerade of femininity" (p. 32) and "the perfect castrated woman," (p. 32) and as a merger of the "menopausal identity with widowhood" (p. 32). In addition, Kunz (2015) quotes Müller (1997, pp. 90-91) in describing the friendship that develops between Melanie and Aunt Margaret after they have realized that they are both "poor women prisoners" (p. 32) in similar powerless position in the house. At the end, Aunt Margaret can set herself free from the suppressing marriage and life with Uncle Philip.

Mrs Rundle's character is found negatively by Kunz (2015) (and by Müller, 1997, whom Kunz quotes). Mrs Rundle has never been married, but uses the married form, since she had always wanted to get married and the title "Mrs" is appropriate for a woman of her fifties. She has old-fashioned manners, and she obeys the rules of the patriarchal society and "in doing that she embodies the tradition of female subordination..." (p. 28). Kunz (2015) continues that Mrs Rundle cannot be a role model to Melanie who is young and looking for her own identity in the world.

The meaning of the dolls is discussed in Donna Mitchell's (2016) article *Leda or Living Doll? Women as Dolls in Angela Carter's The Magic Toyshop*. Mitchell (2016) sees

the dolls as representatives of the female identity and performativity and reflects on Andrew Hock Soon Ng's (2015) criticism in *Women and Domestic Space in Contemporary Gothic Narratives: The House as Subject*, in which the home in connection with the toy shop is suggested to be a theatre box and the family members as actors obeying Uncle Philip's despotic rules.

Gamble (2006) discusses Carter's conception of home and domestic in her article "There's No Place Like Home": *Angela Carter's Rewritings of the Domestic*, and argues that Carter described homes as places to move away and then return, but to a different kind of home, a changed one. Furthermore, Carter depicted interiors so that they "reflect the inner lives of their inhabitants" (p. 279). Thus, there are two different kinds of homes and landscapes in *The Magic Toyshop*; in the beginning of the novel Melanie and her siblings live in their parents' elegant country house, where life is convenient and upper-class like. Their life changes dramatically after their parents die and the house is auctioned. After a train journey, they find themselves in dismal living conditions in a bizarre home above a toyshop owned by their weird Uncle Philip somewhere in South London.

3.2.2 Secret and trauma in *The Magic Toyshop*

Carter was familiar with psychology and Freud's theories, for instance, she read Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* while studying in the University of Bristol and got interested in R. D. Laing's approach to mental illnesses (Gordon, 2016, pp. 70-71, 108). Thus, the knowledge of Freud and Laing could have been tapped into Carter's works. McCartney explains in *Psychoanalytic literary theory* (n.d., p. 596) the principles of psychoanalysis based on Freud. In short, an individual has an unconscious and conscious mind. The thoughts of the unconscious mind are hidden and secret, and sometimes so dreadful that they cannot be revealed, for example, Aunt Margaret and her brother Francie has a closely guarded secret, an incestuous relationship in the novel.

Melanie is traumatized in *The Magic Toyshop* and Aunt Margaret is dumb due to something bad that happened during her and Uncle Philip's wedding night. Moreover, suffering from trauma or living in a traumatic environment can make a person feel like being prisoned in one's own body and mind. McWilliams' article of "Architectures of exile: confinement, insularity, and escape in William Trevor's *Felicia's journey*" (2010), discusses on the cultural, historical, and traditional reasons, such as religion and the patriarchal society of Ireland, why Irish women have had little possibilities to enlarge their lives outside their homes until the 20th Century. They were bound to stay in the narrow environment of home and take care of the domestic duties. Immigration from Ireland to England made them often look like outsiders in English society. Intriguingly, the article describes similarities to Carter's novel, for example, the

prison-like conditions Aunt Margaret as an Irish woman has in her marriage with Uncle Philip and under his power inside the house.

Carter was interested in power and how it was manifested between women and men and in a patriarchal society. In the article "*Nobody's Meat*": *Revisiting Rape and Sexual Trauma Through Angela Carter*, Baker (2009, pp. 61-62) brings forward thoughts on the recurring theme of rape in Carter's fiction; a rape is seen to show power and control over women, and women respond to trauma individually and in different, not necessarily traditionally understood ways. Baker (2009) suggests that Carter's main points are firstly, not to submit oneself to sexual violence, but to stand out and defend oneself, and secondly, instead of being the victim to be the heroine and survive. Melanie, although badly traumatized in connection with Uncle Philip's theatre play in which the puppet-swan metaphorically rapes her, survives, and becomes the heroine of her own story. Likewise, Aunt Margaret finds her own voice and power during the house fire and is freed from the trauma.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

4.1 The aim and the research question

The aim of my thesis is to explore the life span of the British author Angela Carter (1940–1992) and her novel *The Magic Toyshop* (1967/2008) and to find out similarities and resemblances between her life and the novel. The methods used for the study are biographical criticism and close reading. My study is limited to cover the period from Carter's birth in 1940 to the publication of the novel in 1967. The research question is:

What resemblances could be found when comparing Carter's life experiences during 1940–1967 with some of the characters and the course of events in *The Magic Toyshop*?

I have brought attention to Carter's course of life through research written by Gordon (2016), Sage (1994), Gamble (1997, 2006) and Peach (1998/2009). Their relationship with Carter was unlike, of which reason they have used diverse kinds of material and spent various amounts of time in establishing their narratives of Carter.

Gordon's (2016) biographical research on Carter is the most recent and presumably the most thorough to date. On the other hand, Sage (1994) knew Carter personally and was able to give insight into Carter's life from the perspectives the other researchers could not have done. Gamble (1997, 2006) and Peach (1998/2009) have particularly accomplished studies on Carter's literary production; therefore, they have been able to enlighten the novel from the viewpoints of literary criticism alongside Carter's life span.

The earlier studies indicate the possibility that *The Magic Toyshop* contains autobiographical information about Carter. However, I believe that my study may bring some new perspectives to the topic and deepen the view that the novel may contain

autobiographical features of Carter's life. Next, I will give the rationale behind the selection of the data for the thesis.

4.2 Data

The research draws on two data sets: 1) The biography of Angela Carter's life for the period of 1940-1967, and 2) Angela Carter's novel, *The Magic Toyshop*. Angela Carter's (1940-1992) life from her birth to the year 1967 when *The Magic Toyshop* was published is walked through with the help of biographical writings. I am drawing on Edmund Gordon's (2016) book *The Invention of Angela Carter*, since his major biographical research provides a wide overview of Angela Carter's life. There is some 'magic in the air' since Gordon's interest in Angela Carter developed when he had read *The Magic Toyshop*. I agree on Gordon's (2016) thoughts on the novel that he was "...stunned by the fearless quality of the imagination on display and by the luminous beauty of the prose" (p. 417). Gordon's book is a comprehensive work resulting from his thorough examination of Carter's life. Namely, for five years Gordon studied the letters Carter wrote to her closest friends, her diaries, and many books written about her. Most importantly, Gordon met and discussed Carter's family members and friends. He was a devoted researcher and even made the same train journey through Russia to Japan which Carter had done and visited the same places in Shinjuku in Japan Carter had in the 1970s. However, the book is not exhaustive, and Gordon may have taken liberties in describing some events of Carter's life due to lack of documentation. He has also observed the possibility that Carter as a storyteller tended to exaggerate events.

Lorna Sage's (1994) book *Angela Carter* is another source that I rely on in my study of Carter's biography. Sage was a close friend to Carter and knew her personally since the mid-1970s until Carter's death in 1992. In her short book, Sage examines Carter's life in connection with the novels she wrote and states that Carter "...belongs among the fabulists and tale-spinners, the mockers and speculators and iconoclasts and utopians" (Sage, 1994, p. 1). Furthermore, Sage describes Carter's character and presents reasoning on the written expressions and choices Carter took regarding her novels, for example, in *The Magic Toyshop*. Sage (1994) suggests that *The Magic Toyshop* explains "the past's meanings for Carter" (p. 16). Sage seems to refer to Carter's idea that getting ahead in life sometimes requires stepping out of one's comfort zone and face events that were not planned. Sage (1994) argues that the same approach is used in *The Magic Toyshop*: Melanie, the protagonist of the novel, needs to walk backwards, that is to move from better living conditions to worse, and through difficulties gain a better future, just like Alice in the *Alice through the Looking Glass*, because "the past is the nearest route to the future" (p. 16).

The third book my biographical study of Angela Carter is based on is Sarah Gamble's *Angela Carter Writing from the Front Line* (1997). Gamble (1997) did not know Carter in person but lays the foundations of her critical study by arguing that Carter interacted with "the cultural environment within which she wrote" (p. 3), but was doing it outside the mainstream in her own extreme position ready to challenge the prevalent beliefs. Gamble (1997) is studying Carter's writings such as essays, articles, and reviews, of which some are considered autobiographical, and finds that they are not very reliable and contain some "...references to her own family history and to important events in her life which shaped her as a writer" (p. 7). Anyway, as Gamble (1997) argues, Carter's own writings about her life could help the readers to understand her fiction. In one of her interviews published in 1984, Carter has said "You write from your own history" (Gamble, 1997, p. 14).

Gamble's more recent book *Angela Carter: A Literary Life* (2006) is presenting Carter through a collection of Carter's essays and journalism from 1960 onwards published under the name *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism*. Carter's texts have been collected from student magazines, *New Statesman*, *Nova*, *Vogue*, and the *London Review of Books* (The Estate of Angela Carter). According to Gamble (2006), Carter was cautious about her private life, but wrote still some autobiographical essays, for instance, concerning her childhood and observations of life. The reader may notice similarities between her life events and her fiction, and Carter could have taken inspiration from her life to her writings. Gamble (2006) suggests that Carter's writing style is "not quite autobiography and not quite fiction" (p. 2). Thus, the reader should bear in mind that autobiographical writing does not necessarily mean the same as the truth.

Peach's book *Angela Carter* (1998/2009) is providing contemporary critical approaches to her work. The insights regarding *The Magic Toyshop* have offered valuable information and ideas for the thesis, for instance, how to understand the characters of the novel and the concept of the female body.

4.3 The methods of analysis

In the present study, I am going to use the methods of biographical criticism and close reading. Biographical criticism offers an analytical approach to explore a writer's autobiography and/or biography in connection with the literal works of the author. The goal is to find resemblances between these two and interpret them accordingly. Korhonen (2008, p. 25) states that the 19th century literary research was interested in how the literal work had been accomplished; therefore, the writer and her/his life, background, and surroundings became key area of research. Korhonen (2008, pp. 25 - 26) continues that since then new literary research theories have been developed

which have concentrated to study the text and language such as the Russian formalism, structuralism, and the American new criticism which was pondering upon the literal work itself. Later came Marxism studying the meaning of the context, feminism giving a voice to women writers, and other more contemporary theories which were influenced by the developments among other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and culture.

Despite of the developments of the literary theories, biographical criticism has stayed in use in exploring authors and their works, thus has been chosen for the method of analysis for the thesis. The concept of close reading is near to the biographical criticism in that it provides a possibility to interpretation of a read text. Therefore, close reading is part of the methods chosen for the thesis and will be introduced next in brief.

Close reading refers to the detailed analysis and interpretation of written texts. According to Brummett (2019), "close reading is mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings; often, that understanding is shared with others in the form of a criticism or critical analysis" (p. 8). For the thesis, I have read biographical texts of Angela Carter and the novel *The Magic Toyshop* by using the close reading method.

During the analysis, I paid attention to the similarities between Carter's life span from her birth to the publication of *The Magic Toyshop* in 1967 and the characters and events in the whole novel. I compared the novel with the biographical information about Carter's life and searched for resemblances. The findings were many, since the novel is abundant in such themes, allusions, and meanings, which were possible to connect to Carter's life experiences. In the findings, I will point out the similarities that I found personally interesting. I will begin the analysis by discussing the findings concerning Carter's childhood and the childhood of the children in the novel. After this, I will compare Carter's youth with the character of Melanie's youth. Finally, the marital lives of Angela and Paul Carter and the characters of Aunt Margaret and Uncle Philip (the Fowlers) are analysed and discussed.

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 The early childhood of Angela Carter and the children of the novel

In comparing Angela Carter's early childhood years to the life of the children in *The Magic Toyshop*, some similarities can be found. Firstly, baby Angela has a resemblance to baby Victoria's character in the novel. Gordon's (2016) biography of Carter relates that Angela was loved and pampered by her parents and in large by her maternal grandmother Jane. Baby Victoria's character is described as "a round, golden pigeon who cooed" and "a lily of the field" rolling in the sun and chuckling (MT, p. 6). They both have such qualities which are usually connected to happy and content babies.

Secondly, Angela's grandmother Jane and Mrs. Rundle, the housekeeper in the novel, have similar character traits. Grandmother Jane had a soft spot for Angela, for instance, she sang and told stories to Angela (Gordon, 2016). Similarly, Mrs Rundle sings songs to baby Victoria (MT, p. 6). In addition, Gordon (2016) describes grandmother Jane as a strong, earthy, capable, and trustworthy storyteller who loved and pampered children and took care of the household with firm hands. In the novel, Mrs Rundle takes care of the household and the children while their parents are abroad. She has an old-fashioned aura of dignity about her visible in the married form she has adopted to herself, although she was not married, and in her speaking style which was "an old-world, never-never land stateliness, like a duchess in a Whitehall farce" (MT, p. 3).

However, Kunz (2015) suggests that Mrs Rundle is an ironic figure in Carter's novel since she is given the features of a spinster who dreams of a marriage, has a cat and knits, is dressed in black, and always thinks about the household duties. Nevertheless, Sage (1994) argues that the influence of grandmother Jane was so strong that

it affected Carter's works later. Even Melanie, the protagonist of the novel, finds it important to send a postcard to Mrs Rundle after the children have moved under Uncle Philip's custody in the novel (MT, pp. 87-88). Mrs Rundle presents the motherly figure to Melanie in the absence of her own mother. Gordon (2016) suggests that grandmother Jane was so strong by nature that she edged out Angela's mother which could have led to the absence of mothers in Carter's novels or that mothers are somehow distant in her works. According to Sage (1994), Carter has said that the lack of mothers in her novels is about the power mothers have.

Thirdly, the rural living conditions of Angela's first five years in Wath-upon-Deerne in Yorkshire and the children in the country at the beginning of the novel resemble each other. Namely, although Britain was at war with Germany, life in Yorkshire was safe without a constant fear of bombing. Gordon (2016) states that Yorkshire provided basic needs and shelter for the Stalker family. Similarly, the children of the novel have a safe life in the country with Sunday churches and food on the table (MT, p. 8-9).

On the other hand, grandmother Jane's house in Wath-upon-Deerne was not furnished with the same conveniences than the Stalker's London house. Sage (1994) is of the opinion that the move from London to Wath-upon-Deerne was a shift downwards for the Stalker family. In the same way, the children of the novel are at first living in a luxurious country-house with "a bedroom each and several to spare, and a Shetland pony in a field, and an apple tree that held the moon in its twiggy fingers..." (MT, pp. 7-8). Later, the children move to Uncle Philip's custody and their living conditions change and worsen dramatically, for example, the lack of hot water and toilet paper in the bathroom become their everyday reality (MT, p. 61-62).

Finally, Carter has contrasted the wartime relocation of her family with the move of the children in the novel; the Stalkers moved from a house with conveniences in London to a simple country house in Yorkshire, while the children of the novel moved from a fine country house into a dreary house in London. The move of the children in the novel from the upper-class living conditions into a different kind of surrounding in London could also reflect the real life social and class differences and other changes of the 1950s and 1960s Britain, which Carter experienced and saw taking place in society. This is also suggested by Gordon (2016) and Gamble (1997, 2006), and described by Ford (1998/1992). For this reason, the novel can be argumentative.

5.2 Young Angela - young Melanie

To begin with, the visit to the British Museum and discovering the collection of the Egyptian items impressed young Angela in great deal. This is evident in the poem

“The King of the Valley” which she wrote at school afterwards. Gordon (2016) suggests that the poem is revealing young Angela’s feelings of isolation and the right to be in the world. The strange atmosphere of the poem is echoing in *The Magic Toyshop*. It is a feeling that the reader of the novel senses. The death’s presence and the gloominess of the poem can be found in the novel in relation to the death of the parents, the darkening day when the children and the brothers Finn and Francie are arriving at the toyshop, and in the description of the toyshop and its location in the novel:

The taxi climbed through gaunt, grey streets with, here and there, ragged October trees dropping sad leaves into a deepening, sheep-white and shaggy mist. Melancholy, down-on-its-luck South London. (MT, p. 42).

The sad feeling continues in the description of the toyshop:

Between a failed, boarded-up jeweller’s and a grocer’s displaying a windowful of sunshine cornflakes was a dark cavern of a shop, so dimly lit one did not at first notice it as it bowed its head under the tenement above...made such a murk together that very little could be seen. (MT, pp. 43-44).

Other depictions symbolizing lifelessness inside the toyshop are the stuffed birds looking so lifelike that Melanie thought they were real (MT, p. 46), the worn rooms, and the dim lighting. In addition, Carter has created the eerie atmosphere in the description of the characters and their behaviour, for instance, the dumbness of Aunt Margaret and her startling looking appearance. Carter has cleverly made her enter the story so that the light is behind her creating an effect of a horror movie:

A door opened and a light so bright and sudden it hurt their eyes spilled through from the back. Aunt Margaret. The light shining through her roughly heaped haycock of hair made it blaze so you might have thought you could warm your hands in it. She was a red woman, redder, even, than Finn and Francie. Her eyebrows were red as if thickly marked above her eyes with red ink but her face was colourless, no blood at all showing in cheeks or narrow lips. She was painfully thin. The high, family cheekbones stuck up gaunt and stark and her narrow shoulders jutted through the fabric of her sweater like bony wings. (MT, p. 45)

In addition, Peach (1998/2009) describes aptly that the creepy figure of Uncle Philip is present even when he enters the story later in the novel. According to Gamble (2006), houses reflect the inner lives of their inhabitants in Carter’s literal production and, indeed, none of the characters are content with their lives in the toyshop (except Victoria, who is too young to understand.)

The description of Melanie at the threshold of adulthood examining herself in peace in her own room in the novel is touchingly and beautifully written by Carter and reveals that somebody having gone through the same phase of development with similar kind of experiences has written it:

The summer she was fifteen, Melanie discovered she was made of flesh and blood. O, my America, my new found land. She embarked on a tranced voyage, exploring the whole of

herself, clambering her own mountain ranges, penetrating the moist richness of her secret valleys, a physiological Cortez, da Gama or Mungo Park. (MT, p. 1)

Studying herself in front of a mirror as an adolescent, admiring the reflection, and posing in attitudes young Melanie is like an incarnation of young Angela alone in her own room dreaming of growing up. Gordon (2016) and Gamble (2006) support this view. In addition, Carter has agreed on this comparison as stated earlier in section 2.3.2. Moreover, Carter shows the beauty of the female body in its natural and original form by describing it lyrically.

Kunz (2015) proposes that describing Melanie's study of her own body with scenic terms introduces the female body as nature with a woman explorer instead of a man, which in turn underlines independence and feminine ownership of self. The same insight is also introduced by Gordon (2016) and Gamble (2006) when they suggest that Carter sensed the changes that took place in the patriarchal society of the 1960s Britain and women's new place in it, and that the feelings and ideas of that time have been taken into her novels. Moreover, Peach (1998/2009) sees that by using words and expressions associated with natural environment such as a navel is "a mysterious cavern or grotto" (MT, p. 1) or that "the heart fluttered under the flesh like a bird under a blanket" (MT, p. 1) the female body is mystified and spiritualised.

Trauma and obesity are some of the themes standing out in *The Magic Toyshop* and resemble Carter's real-life experiences. As learned from Gordon (2016) and Sage (1994), young Angela suffered from obesity, stammering, and later of anorexia. Similarly, young Melanie is concerned of becoming fat because then "nobody would ever love her and she would die virgin" (MT, p. 4). Carter could have written this thought on Melanie out of her own experiences of the feelings and thoughts an over-weight young person could have had.

Another reason for Carter's trauma could have been her mother's overprotective and too intimate upbringing which made Angela feel trapped under her mother's will. Mitchell (2016) and Kunz (2015) suggest that the characters in the novel are like puppets obeying an authoritarian male who pulls the ropes of the helpless bodies. Carter has made Melanie to experience the feelings Carter herself went through when she was without any decision-making power or control over her own self and life. This is especially evident in Melanie's metaphorical rape in Uncle Philip's theatre. Carter is using rape for effect, to shock, and to demonstrate the importance of one's physical integrity. Baker (2019) proposes that with the theme of rape Carter's point is to teach women to refuse to be a victim, to stand out, and survive. Melanie recovered from the traumatic events she was subjected to under Uncle Philip's rule. Similarly, young Angela got well, grew up, and took the initiative of her own life despite her mother's resistance.

5.3 Angela's and Paul's marriage – Aunt Margaret's and Uncle Philip's marriage

Comparing the marital lives of Angela and Paul Carter and the characters of Aunt Margaret and Uncle Philip (the Flowers) in the novel, a few resemblances peek out. First of all, the theme of silence is striking in the novel visible in the dumbness of Aunt Margaret: “not a word can she speak...It is a terrible affliction; it came to her on her wedding day, like a curse. Her silence” (MT, p. 41). Kunz (2015) suggests that Aunt Margaret's dumbness is her hidden anger and revolt that she feels towards Uncle Philip and his violence. This seems like a rational theory, since out of pure self-preservation instinct it is sometimes wiser to stay silent with a difficult and violent person than line up against him and confront the unforeseeable consequences. Silence of the women is a house rule in the novel, namely, women were allowed to speak only when they were spoken to, since Uncle Philip preferred “silent women” (MT, p. 70). Silence is also visible in the form of a secret. The incestuous relationship of Aunt Margaret and her brother Francie must be kept secret; therefore, they live silently, invisible and in fear as if their minds were psychologically confined.

Furthermore, Peach (1998/2009) proposes that the character of Uncle Philip is suffering from a mental illness. For that reason, he could resemble Paul Carter, but not in the viciousness and cruelty of nature. I agree with Peach on her judgement of Uncle Philip, but also with Gordon (2016) on his opinion that Uncle Philip could be an exaggerated version of Paul Carter, when he suffered from the mood swings. The silence in the novel could reflect the fraught atmosphere Paul Carter's mental instability and his changing moods with periods of silence could have created in Carters' home. These periods were difficult to Angela to bear as suggested by Gordon (2016). The dismal thoughts and the miserable feelings that Angela experienced during the time could have been taken into the novel in the forms of dumbness, secret and insanity.

Second, the too tight choker Aunt Margaret wears on Sundays could depict the feelings of anxiety and confinement Angela felt in her marriage with Paul Carter. The choker was so tightly put around Aunt Margaret's neck that “she ate only with the utmost difficulty” (MT, p. 126) and made her “carry her head high and haughty as the Queen of Assyria, but above it her eyes were anxious and sad and not proud at all” (MT, p. 126). These depictions reveal the possibility that although Angela had managed to get away from her mother's strict supervision by marrying Paul and had received independency and freedom, she felt that she was trapped in the marriage. Sage (1994) describes the marriage as a desperate effort to get out of the parental control. Gordon (2016) supports this view and suggests that despite the freedom marriage brought to Angela she later has said that marriage was an excuse to escape from her parents' house.

Third, the impossibility of a divorce and the lack of own money are hindering barriers to Angela and to Aunt Margaret. In the novel, money is not trusted to Aunt Margaret (and Melanie) “for Flowers had credit at all the shops with which they dealt and Uncle Philip paid the bills quarterly, by cheque” (MT, p. 99). Gordon (2016) proposes that the housewife’s role was not suitable for Angela although it was a common role for women in the 1960s Britain and was assumably also expected from her by Paul. Staying alone at home without money of her own became stressful for Angela. Gamble (1997) suggests that the Carters were having a failing marriage. According to the customs of the 1960s, divorces were socially unacceptable and they were also financially uncertain for women. Similarly, Aunt Margaret is trapped in her marriage with Uncle Philip and could not divorce him partly for the same reasons as Angela had in her marriage with Paul; the social pressure was strongly against divorces and the lack of own money prevented pursuing life independently.

Finally, the theme of freedom is a similarity regarding Angela’s life and the characters of the novel. When Uncle Philip comes home earlier than expected and discovers Aunt Margaret in her brother’s arms, he sets the house on fire in a blind rage. Aunt Margaret receives her voice back in the turmoil: “Get out while there is time. I’ll keep the baby safe. Whatever happens, she’ll be safe” (MT, p. 220). Carter has given the voice back to Aunt Margaret as a symbolic sign of freedom; she is freed from the captivity of the marriage and the secret she had to keep for so long. Melanie is saved with Finn and they “faced each other in a wild surmise” (MT, p. 224). The end of the novel is a beginning of a new kind of life.

In the same vein, Angela got her freedom when she was accepted to the University of Bristol and was granted a student grant. They ensured her the possibility to get out of the house. Gordon (2016) suggests that Angela had never had so much money of her own before. Angela, Aunt Margaret, and Melanie break the valid rules, challenge their circumstances, leave the past behind, and begin new kind of lives. Aunt Margaret’s destiny is not known, but Angela became a writer.

6 CONCLUSION

The main goal of the current study was to demonstrate the connection between Angela Carter's (1940-1992) life experiences and her novel *The Magic Toyshop* (1967/2008) by searching and comparing similarities and resemblances between Carter's life and the novel. The methods of study were biographical criticism and closed reading. The research question was:

What resemblances could be found when comparing Carter's life experiences during 1940–1967 with some of the characters and the course of events in *The Magic Toyshop*?

The study focused on Angela Carter's life from her birth in 1940 to the publication year of the novel in 1967. In my study, I relied on the biographies, biographical texts, and viewpoints to Carter's literal production written by Sarah Gamble (1997, 2006), Edmund Gordon (2016), Linden Peach (1998/2009), and Lorna Sage (1994). The novel *The Magic Toyshop* was read by using close reading method. Furthermore, the previous critical approaches to the novel provided important insights from various perspectives.

The study has shown that there are potential connections between Angela Carter's life and the novel. First of all, baby Angela and baby Victoria's character in the novel have similarities. Carter was very well taken care of by her parents and her grandmother Jane. Similarly, baby Victoria is loved and pampered by the housekeeper Mrs Rundle and later Aunt Margaret in the novel. They both are happy and healthy babies.

Second, Carter's grandmother Jane and Mrs Rundle have similar characteristics. Grandmother Jane had a soft spot for baby Angela and sang songs to her. In the novel, Mrs Rundle sang songs to baby Victoria. Furthermore, Gordon (2016) describes grandmother Jane as a strong person with common sense who took care of the household

with determination. Mrs Rundle's character has the same earthiness and capabilities to take care of the house and the children when their parents are abroad in the novel. Intriguingly, Gordon (2016) suggests that grandmother Jane's strong personality affected Carter's works later so much that mothers are distant figures or absent in her fiction. However, Sage (1994) writes that Carter believed it is about the power mothers have instead of her own mother's personality.

Third, the change of the living conditions of Carter's family and the children of the novel has resemblances. Carter lived the first five years in Wath-upon-Dearne in Yorkshire, where her grandmother Jane had taken her and her family to escape the bombings of London. Life in Yorkshire was safer than in London. However, the conveniences in grandmother Jane's house were worse than in the family's London house. In the same vein, the children of the novel live safely in a luxurious house in the countryside. Later in the novel, Melanie and her siblings must leave their comfortable life in the country and move under their Uncle Philip's custody in London. Their much worse conditions above the toyshop are striking. Carter has contrasted the changes of her own family's living arrangements with the children of the novel; Carter's family moved from better house in London to a worse in the countryside whereas the children of the novel move from a lovely country house to a worse house in London. This suggests that Carter wanted to highlight the real life social and class differences of the British society of the time.

The fourth more interesting finding to emerge from this study is the parallel with the strange atmosphere of *The Magic Toyshop* and the poem "The King of the Valley" that young Carter wrote after she had paid a visit to the British Museum and had seen the collection of the Egyptian items. The presence of death is obvious in both. Gordon (2016) argues that the poem is revealing young Carter's feelings of isolation and the right to be in the world. The odd Egyptian items impressed Carter so much that she remembered the exceptional experience afterwards and included those feelings in the novel she was going through at the time. The eerie atmosphere is described in many ways in the novel; the parents of the children die, the strange location of the toyshop, the darkening day, the dim lighting, the creepy interior of the toyshop, the theatre downstairs with odd plays, the horror film like first appearance of Aunt Margaret in the novel, Uncle Philip's violent behaviour towards the family members, and his oppressive house rules.

The fifth finding is the resemblance between the description of young Melanie at the threshold of adulthood examining herself in peace in her own room and the young Carter longing for growing up in her own room. Gordon (2016) and Gamble (2006) support this view as well as Carter herself. Carter describes Melanie's body lyrically showing the beauty of the feminine body. Kunz (2015) sees that Carter loans expressions from the natural environment to show the woman as an explorer instead of a

man and that the woman has the ownership of the feminine body. On the other hand, Peach (1998/2009) suggests that by comparing a woman with nature is a means to mystify and spiritualize the female body.

Sixth, Melanie is worried about her weight in the novel. She does not want to become fat, because then nobody would love her. She is traumatized by the death of her parents and by the metaphorical rape arranged by Uncle Philip in his theatre. As reported by Sage (1994) and Gordon (2016), Carter's youth was traumatic as well. She suffered from obesity, stammering, and later of anorexia. Carter's and her mother's relationship was difficult because of her mother's overprotective upbringing. Carter made Melanie to suffer the same helpless feelings as Carter herself did when she was a young woman under her mother's will. Baker (2019) proposes that the theme of rape in Carter's novels demonstrates that women should not adopt the role of the victim, but to stand out and be the heroine of one's own life. Melanie recovers from the traumas and similarly, Carter got well and seized the initiative with her own life.

Seventh, comparing the marital lives of Angela and Paul Carter and Aunt Margaret and Uncle Philip (the Flowers) in the novel some similarities were found. The most important resemblance is the feeling of confinement in a marriage that both Angela and Aunt Margaret share. Angela spent long hours alone at home when her husband was at work. She was unable to find a job and had not money of her own which prohibited her to be independent. Similarly, Aunt Margaret is restricted to live inside the house and is not trusted with money since Uncle Philip administrates the finances of the family.

Furthermore, Paul Carter's mental instability, his swinging moods, and lengthy periods of silence created an unpleasant atmosphere at home. These periods were difficult to Angela to bear. In the novel, the theme of silence depicts the confinement realized in Aunt Margaret's dumbness, in the secret she is carrying silently, and in Uncle Philip's house rule that women were not allowed to speak unless they were spoken to. In addition, Uncle Philip's violent behaviour resembles insanity as proposed by Peach (1998/2009) and his character is as if an exaggerated version of Paul Carter when he was suffering from his changing moods, as suggested by Gordon (2016). An interesting insight presented by Kunz (2015) is that Aunt Margaret's dumbness is her hidden anger and revolt towards her husband and his viciousness.

The suffocating choker Aunt Margaret wears on Sundays is a sign of captivity that marriage means to her. Although Angela had got rid of the parental control of her parents by marrying Paul and for that reason had received freedom and independency, she began to feel trapped in her marriage. A divorce was not a real possibility to Aunt Margaret and Angela since they were socially unacceptable and financially uncertain for women of the time. Their marriages were not ideal ones. For these reasons, Angela Carter has included the feelings and thoughts of the difficulties she experienced in the

marriage with Paul in the novel in the forms of silence, insanity, and confinement. The way marriage is described in the novel could also be a way to question the meaning of a marriage as the only possibility for a woman and a man to be together.

Finally, the concept of freedom is an outstanding parallel in Angela's life and in the novel. When Uncle Philip finds out that Aunt Margaret and her brother Francie have an incestuous relationship he sets the toyshop on fire. Aunt Margaret recovers her voice in the turmoil which is a sign of freedom. Symbolically, the fire burns down the insanity of everything, frees the characters from the captivity of the house (toyshop) and Uncle Philip's patriarchalism, and exposes them to something new and better. Melanie is saved with Finn and they confront their future in astonishment. The destiny of the other characters is unknown. Likewise, Angela was freed from the house and its depressing atmosphere with money of her own when she began to study with the help of a student grant at the University of Bristol. Figuratively, Angela, Melanie, and Aunt Margaret break their chains, leave their pasts behind, and begin their new lives.

The findings of the study may not differ from the other researchers' results when studying Angela Carter's biography and the novel *The Magic Toyshop*. In the best possible case, my study results may deepen the understanding of the connection between Carter's life and the novel. However, the limitations of my study should be considered, namely, the scope of my thesis may be too narrow, since I am only studying a certain period of Angela Carter's life and one of her novels. In addition, biographical texts may include fiction, and although novels can reveal the feelings and thoughts of the author, it is impossible to provide the absolute truth. In the end, the question is about the interpretation of the reader and the researcher.

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