SEVEN JOURNEYS, SEVEN NOVELS- ANGELA CARTER'S FICTION

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Abstract

Angela Carter's fiction constantly evokes boundaries and borderlines, with places, states, conditions merging into one another. This analysis of her novels brings to the forefront ambiguous characters, neither children nor adults, suspended in a point between the end of one journey and the beginning of another. You are invited on their journey within liminal settings, such as the toyshop, the pub, the father's house, in seven of Angela Carter's novels.

Keywords: confinement, flight, heterotopia, liminality, space

Introduction

Angela Carter is a central figure of the British contemporary literature, whose novels 'are like nobody else's' (*Burning your Boats,* 1996:3) as S. Rushdie commented in the introduction to her collected short stories. Her fiction is difficult to place in a literary current, for her use of any conventions is motivated by her desire to subvert. The fantasy features in her novels are under rational control and function as symbols of allegories, as she declared: 'I do put everything in a novel to be *read*…on as many levels as you can comfortably cope with at the time…' (Day, 1998:9)

A.Gasiorek has described her work as walking 'the tightrope between carnivalesque fantasy and rational critique' (1995:135), in accord with M. Warner: 'For a fantasist, Carter kept her feet on the ground…For her fantasy always turns back its eyes to stare hard at reality, never losing sight of material conditions' (1992:25). Her escapist vision grounded into reality has led critics to label her as a magical realist writer. W. Farris (1995:171) established some characteristics that magical realist works have, and Carter's novels share 'the extensive use of detail' which renders 'realistic descriptions', 'the closeness of worlds' or 'near-merging of realms'(1995:172), the interrogation of 'received ideas about time, space, identity' (ibid.), a metafictional dimension, and 'a carnivalesque spirit' (1995:182).

The present chronological presentation of Angela Carter's novels focuses on the ambiguity of space, divided into **external**, **internal**, and **corporeal.** The external spaces are defined by geographical dimensions, material objects and the dimension of time. The internal spaces concern the characters employment of the senses to record external ones. If their perceptions are distorted the reader is given a grotesque representation of external spaces on the one hand, or the characters create a parallel space in their mind, populated by Gothic nightmares and crises. The corporeal spaces refer to gender representations and power roles, and are governed by instinct.

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Confinement

Chronologically, *Shadow Dance*, *The Magic Toyshop* and *Several Perceptions* are her first three novels, but *Love,* her fifth, is closer to *Shadow Dance* and *Several Perceptions* in narrative style and major themes. They are set in the 1960s Bristol and invite a reading from a realistic perspective. Marc O'Day places *Shadow Dance*, *Several Perceptions* and *Love* together in what he calls 'The Bristol Trilogy' (Sage, 1994b:24) pointing out the difference between these novels and the rest which he labels as 'magical realist'.

The events happen in a variety of everyday, local private and public spaces. This realism is however, a surface one, as neither the characters not the spaces depicted relate to the real world on a mimetic way. The main role of the spatial coordinates of the area of Bristol is to produce an imaginary response to the provincial life, as they are all sites where the boundaries between art and life become blurred.

Shadow Dance (1966) examines the destructive effect of patriarchal culture on both women and men. In 1988 Angela Carter observed that 'towards the end of the sixties it started to feel like living on a demolition site' (Sage, 1994: 12). The main characters, Morris and Honeybuzzard, try to make a living on stealing Victoriana from condemned houses and trying to sell them later on. The ruined and the junk are symbolic of old and outdated values. Victorian buildings are shattered but the values they symbolize remain powerful enough to shatter contemporary lives.

Besides their passion for old things, they also share the beautiful Ghislane. After a one night stand with her he asks Honeybuzzard to teach her a lesson, and although it is not clearly stated, the general assumption is that the author of Ghislane's mutilation is Honeybuzzard. Ghislaine's scar is a boundary-line deviding her face into two halves, while to Morris it represents the break between past, when she was 'a beautiful girl, a white and golden girl, like moon-light on daisies' (*Shadow Dance,* 3) and a present which has turned her into an ugly creature, with Morris's complicity. Morris has entered a world between past and present, reality and fantasy, composed of 'leftovers, quotes, copies, *déjà vu*' (Sage, 1994:19).

She haunts him throughout the novel, provoking pity, disgust, eventually fear. Honeybuzzard returns from London with Emily, a new girlfriend, whose attitude announces the independent women in Angela Carter's coming novels. Emily discovers she is pregnant by Honeybuzzard and is able to escape his influence. On the other hand, Ghislane is the perfect example of the submissive woman, as she asks for Honeybuzzard's forgiveness, casting him in the role of her master and acknowledging his power over her life. There are tense moments in the novel, as well as instances that point to a possible happy ending, which proves false, because Morris's state will dramatically change on his realization that Honeybuzzard has killed Ghislane. Emily rejects the patriarchal perversities and the past and her rejection is manifested through her destruction of the paraphernalia in Honeybuzzard's room when she understands he is a murderer:

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> He followed her back down the stairs… In the backyard, she stuffed two frilled shirts and a string vest into the dustbin and stirred the fire.
> 'What are you doing, Emily?' he asked.
> 'Burning him, the bastard. Burning him all up.' *(Shadow Dance, 164)*

Her act of burning Honeybuzzard's objects, icons of his perverse and murderous nature, marks her power to set herself free and to choose life. Morris, on the other hand, wants to follow her but he is haunted by Ghislaine who, in his nightmares, takes the form of a succubus, a witch-like siren who draws him to destruction. He cannot betray Honeybuzzard so he will be trapped in the values of a destructive pas, the prison of the male characters in the novel. The last line informs us that 'Morris vanished into the shadows' (*Shadow Dance,* 182) while Emily feels sick because of her pregnancy, the symbol of hope.

Several Perceptions (1968) is a retrospective narrative in the third person. Joseph Harker is prey to dreams and phantasies, haunted not by a woman, like Morris, but by death. He lives in the attic of a crumbling house, surrounded by dirt and a collage of pictures from different periods, evoking despair. He is described as 'shipwrecked in time' (*Several Perceptions,* 40), cut off from all the social norms. It is this sense of despair that leads him to suicide in the first chapter. The explosion stops his alarm clock, affecting Joseph's perception of time. Cause and effect, a staple of realism, do not function any more as Joseph feels he has 'stumbled upon a formula that annihilated causation and now anything was possible, rain would fall upwards and sparrows begin to recite the Apocalypse' (*Several Perceptions,* 22).

All the characters live a personal tragedy and their destinies cross, culminating in an optimistic atmosphere. The factual and the fantastic mix, as everything is filtered through the consciousness of the main character. In his dreams, the negative aspects of his subconscious are exposed. The boundaries between fact and fiction, reality and dream are blurred, so the two planes no longer alternate, but overlap, affecting the balance of the reader's position as well. Joseph's name is Harker, the same as that of the narrator in Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* In one of his dreams he recreates his ex- girlfriend, Charlotte, as a vampire in Dracula's castle.

The party which concludes the novel takes place at Kay's house, but the description of the site sets it outside conventional realist narrative, as 'things were happening without a sequence, there was no flow or pattern of events' (52). The ending of the novel is theatrical, set somewhere between reality and illusion, as announced in the epigraph:

> The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance, pass, re-pass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. *(Several Perceptions, 5)*

Kay's environment is a huge, crumbling mansion that has been turned into a shrine of a mythical past by his mother. But it becomes the scene of a party, having mirrors hung on every wall so that spatial perspective becomes distorted, making the participants 'in their

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gipsyish clothes of so many colours…seem…fragments in a giant kaleidoscope kept continually on the turn by a child's restless hand or pieces of disintegrated rainbow'. (*Several Perceptions,* 126)

Shadow Dance and *Several Perceptions* are full of imagery suggestive of borderlines and liminal spaces, which are no sooner evoked than transgressed. The border between subjectivity and objectivity is impossible to draw, so the reader is lured into an environment where the validity of everything is open to question.

Love (1971) deals with a triangle of three people. Annabel, an art student, who has had two suicide attempts before meeting Lee, an orphan teacher who lives in the same flat with his half-brother Buzz, a voyeuristic photographer. Annabel and Lee have an affair and are forced to marry by the girl's parents, but after their marriage Lee has an affair with Joanne. When Joanne takes Lee home to her bed they pass through the wrought iron gates of the park which 'neither permitted nor denied access' (110), disolving the stability of the any reference point. The novel suggests that one way of approaching things is realism, but there are others, like the myriad of intertextual references which confer a hybrid nature on all Angela Carter's novels.

The opening paragraph takes the reader into a world rendered a nightmare by the filter of an insane imagination. Annabel is presented as occupying a world where the boundaries between reality and illusion have become blurred, as in *Several Perceptions*:

> One day, Annabel saw the sun and the moon in the sky at the same time. The sight fills her with a terror which entirely consumed her…*(Love, 1)*
> All she apprehended through her senses she took only as objects for interpretation in the expressionist style and she saw, in everyday things, a world of mythic, fearful shapes. *(Love, 3-4)*

Her mind is on the point of losing the balance of her faculties. There's an infinite sense of sorrow possessing Annabel and 'she had impressed her sorrow so deeply on the essential wood and brick of the place, she knew for certain nobody could ever be happy there again' (*Love,* 71) She detaches herself from the real world, 'spending more and more time gazing into space' (id.). Her suffering increases, her failure to convince herself that she is alive becomes so intense, that she decides to commit suicide, not before throwing away the clock, the symbol of the conventional measurement of time. Buzz cheats on her in the meantime and the novel ends with the parallel presentation of Buzz's affair and Annabel's suicide.

The Magic Toyshop (1967) thematically and chronologically stands in-between *Shadow Dance* and *Several Perceptions*, being neither as nihilistic as the former nor as exuberant as the latter, drawing more than the two on fairytale and folklore. It shares the same preoccupation with 'recycling', breaking down cultural codes and reassembling them in new combinations.

The novel starts with Melanie's exploration of her body as an uncharted landscape. She experiences an inexplicable joy on becoming aware of her position in-between a

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woman and a girl. The continent of America serves as a metaphor for the body: 'the summer she was fifteen, Melanie discovered she was made of flesh and blood. O, my America, my new found land' (*The Magic Toyshop,* 1).

When Melanie's parents die in an airplane crash, she, along with her brother Jonathon and sister Victoria, are sent to live with their uncle Philip in London. This change of scene brings the setting on a realm of the marginal, where everything is possible. Melanie becomes an Alice falling down the rabbit hole into a world where the real and the fantastic dimensions mingle, as Lorna Sage puts it 'which works according to the laws of dream, fairytales, myths and magic' (1994:15)

This fantasy is not an escapist one, it refers back to the social conditions which have produced it. Melanie moves from a middle-class life 'in a house in the country, with a bedroom each and several to spare, and a Shetland pony in a field', (*The Magic Toyshop,* 7) to an urban environment evoking the landscape of the sixties, a wreckage of past glories, where she will have to fight the dominant discourse of patriarchy. In Uncle Phillip's house she discovers once more how dangerous it is to confuse reality and fantasy: the puppets seem real, everything seems to have a life, the wallpaper seems to grow thorns, and Melanie feels she has entered Bluebeard's castle, having 'married the shaddows' (*The Magic Toyshop,* 77).

Uncle Philip, as the personification of patriarchy, rules the world. The message conveyed in his shows is that patriarchal power turns people into puppets, depriving them of autonomous life:

> Melanie had not been down to the work-room since her very first morning; …On the wall was a poster in crude colours announcing: 'GRAND PERFORMANCE –FLOWER'S PUPPET MICROCOSM,' with a great figure recognisably Uncle Phillip by virtue of the moustache and wing collar, holding the ball of the world in his hand. *(The Magic Toyshop, 126)*

Finn's covert resistance to Uncle Phillip's domination turns into rebellion when he destroys his puppet swan. Finn's gesture brigs him independence and power to act. Throughout the novel there are allusions to the biblical fable of the Garden of Eden, the fall of humankind and its expulsion from Eden. At the end of the novel Melanie and Finn are ready to leave the garden of a neighbour's house, but not as the sinful children of a wrathful God.

Angela Carter admitted that she saw the novel in terms of the 'Fortunate Fall': 'I took the Fortunate Fall as meaning that it was a good thing to get out of that place. The intention was that the toyshop itself should be a secularised Eden' (Haffenden, 1985, 80)

The garden they are in is a ruined one, so the ending is ambiguous. Lorna Sage comments that Melanie 'learns to dream prophetically' (1994, 6) and that she rescues her brother from the fire by dreaming him out of it and on on of his ships. Her second 'prophetic vision' (*The Magic Toyshop*, 177) is of her life with Finn, surrounded by dirt and crying babies, which renders her future freedom as another trap. Even if everything is gone in

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the fire, the poetic language of the closing words of the novel seems to bring back the myth.

The Magic Toyshop is about the excessive obsession of creating a fantasy world. *Heroes and Villains* (1969) is about the power of myth in a postapocalyptic landscape. They represent Angela Carter's first explorations of speculative fiction, fantasy, a genre resulting from an 'attempt to compensate for a lack coming from cultural constraints' in Rosemary Jackson's (1981:3) words. Angela Carter's fantasy worlds draw more on Gothic conventions, they are dark, dangerous, dystopias in which cruelty and manipulation rule. Often her fiction is set in the future but the future setting has not necessarily escaped it. It is an arena in which she is free to approach a present that is distorted by the attitudes of an old world.

Marianne leaves the security of the remains of civilised society, the world of the 'Professors' to join an outside tribe, that of the 'Barbarians', crossing the treshold from one world to another.

A nuclear war has turned the world into a Gothic fantasy where three groups are left. The community of the Professors lives in underground bunkers, guarded by soldiers, hoping to 'resurect the gone world in a gentler shape, and try to keep destruction outside' (*Heroes and Villains,* 8). The Barbarians live outside, they are nomadic scavengers who have learnt to survive in a chaotic landscape, stealing from the Professors what they cannot procure for themselves. The Out People are the radiation mutants who live beyond the pale of the Barbarians. There is no rigid binarism between these societies. The post-apocalyptic world is a narrative space for the exploration of the blurring of boundaries and of their artificiality.

The Professors want to exclude everything that is barbaric out of their system, but fail to notice how disturbing ther world is: everyone is 'clean and proper' (*Heroes and Villains,* 4), but the suicide rate is very high. The rationalism that governs their society is extreme, leaving its mark on the girl's memories:

> when she was a child, encapsulated in a safe, white tower with unreason at bay outside, beyond the barbed wire, a community so rational that when her white rabbit died they cut it open to find out why. *(Heroes and Villains, 77)*

Marianne opts for chaos, 'the opposite pole of boredom' (*Heroes and Villains,* 11), entering the outside world of ruins and forests inhabited by the Barbarians, one of whom she has witnessed murdering her brother, but still haunts her dreams

The conventional binarism between civilised and barbarian is challenged in the first part of the novel, as Jewel proves to be an educated thinker, who recites poetry and knows the Latin name of the adder that has bitten the girl, while treating her wound with a folk remedy. The Barbarians inhabit thus a third space, in-between the lines drawn by conventional division.

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Rousseau's myth of the noble savage is invoked at the beginning, only to be denied by the society of the Barbarians who value family relations, and Marianne, the product of a so called civilised world, who is the outsider.

The Professors' art is knowledge of the past, but what they try to preserve is anachronistic. There is no interaction with the present, the language of the past is losing meaning, and the concepts in the dictionaries have no valid context: 'these words had ceased to describe facts and stood only for ideas or memories' (*Heroes and Villains,* 7).

Towards the end of the novel, a sick and drugged Marianne admits: 'When I was a little girl, we played at heroes and villains but now I don't know which is which any more, nor who is who, and what can I trust if not appearances?' (*Heroes and Villains,* 125)

Her choice is to bring her kind of order into chaos and change it from the inside, turning herself into the 'tiger –lady' who will rule the Barb 'with a rod of iron' (*Heroes and Villains,* 150) She refuses to accept the oppositions reason-unreason, noble-savage, man-woman, based on a patriarchal structure, and will combine the energy of the Barbarians with the reason of her former community, animated by desire.

After the publication of *Heroes and Villains* Angela Carter spent two years in Japan, 'the place where she lost and found herself' (Sage,1994:27), willing to experience the feeling of estrangement, and the results are shared in her stories. During her stay there that she completed *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972).

In a letter to Lorna Sage (1994:34), Angela Carter characterised *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* as a dispute 'between reason and passions, which it resolves in favour of reason' and Susan Robin Suleiman described it as a 'postmodernist novel in its preoccupation with possible worlds or ontologies' (Sage, 1994:102). The novel is concerned with gaps between memory and event, desire and actualisation, history and fiction, and they are spaces with interpretive potential that the reader activates in the process of reading.

The narrator, Desiderio, tells the story of his life retrospectively, starting with the days of his youth in a Latin American city under a siege. He admits that he cannot remember exactly how the Reality War began, and at the end of the novel his account is fairytale like: 'There was once a young man…' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman,* 166). The values of reason, defended by the Minister of Determination are assaulted by the powers of Dr. Hoffman, representing passion, imagination, an active absence of reason:

> I lived in the city when our adversary, the diabolical Dr. Hoffman, filled it with mirages in order to drive us all mad. Nothing in the city was what it seemed – nothing at all! Because Dr. Hoffman, you see, was waging a massive campaign against human reason itself.
>
> *(The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, 11)*

Dr. Hoffman has built 'gigantic generators' which 'sent out a series of seismic vibrations' to disrupt the 'conventional time and space equation' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman,* 17) that has been the support of the rational world. No

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classifications based on rational criteria are possible. The result is an apocalyptic breakdown of order which the Minister of Determination decides to stop, sending Desiderio on a mission to assasinate Dr. Hoffman. The picaresque account of Desiderio's experiences in the realm of the Nebulous Time ends successfully, and we are brought back to the normalised city in the days of Desiderio's old age.

Desiderio's dreams are populated by a mysterious being who takes different shapes, associated with the name Albertina, who appears in different guises before coming to him as she really is, an ideal 'other' sustained through the power of Desiderio's desire. The gaps present in Desiderio's memory are more evident in his discussion of her, a woman that 'only memory and imagination could devise' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman,* 13).

In each episode of his travels Desiderio looks for inclusion. He has no origin, no family, no status, and it is his position on the margins that allows him to escape danger every time.

Albertina is her father's accomplice in his drive to control fantasy by manipulating the energies of desire. But Desiderio will not accept this slavery to Dr. Hoffman's manipulation of desire, as 'reason was stamped into me as if it were a chromosome, even if I loved the high priestess of passion' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* 195), so he kills them both: 'I might not want the Minister's world but I did not want the Doctor's world either' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman,* 207). This represents the Minister's triumph, with time beginning again, and the citizens living on in a state of figurative boredom, as they 'do not know how to name their desires, so the desires do not exist' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman,* 207). Desiderio is a hero in the city, but desire has destroyed both its object and subject. Angela Carter suggests that there is a need for a rational restraint of desire, even if it does not necessarily ensure the disappearance of extreme desires. Desiderio, the hero, remains in his old age frustrated by his mind's fading image of Albertina: 'Unbidden, she comes' (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman,* 221).

In 'Notes From the Front Line' Angela Carter claimed that *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) was intended as an 'anti-mythic novel', written with the intent to break down the processes by which 'the social fictions which regulate out lives' (Gamble, 1997:12) are created.

Evelyn comes from outside the conventional boundaries of the society in which he lives, being a transexual. He is on his last night in a fantasy London in 1970 and before setting off he goes to watch one of Tristessa de St. Ange's films. Watching her, Eve comments on the difference between 'the dream itself made flesh although the flesh I knew her in was not flesh itself but only a moving picture of flech, real but not substantial'.(*The Passion of New Eve,* 7) The cinema screen is the boundary between fantasy and reality, between the dream factory which shapes the public taste and the reality ouside, which Eve is still able to delimit.

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He describes his movement from London to NewYork and to the desert. The myth of America as the land of possibility is inverted since the desert is conventionally regarded as a space of sterility and death. The New York Eve arrives in is a city of 'lurid, Gothic darkness' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 10) where violence and disorder rule and society has broken down into sects and guerrilla bands. Eve regards himself as a spectator to all this, refusing to believe that he has entered another world:

> That the city had become nothing but a gigantic metaphor for death kept me, in my innocence, all agong in my ring-side seat. The movie ran towards its last reel. What excitement!' *(The Passion of New Eve, 15)*

America is a place which can only be understood through reference to fiction or copies. Angela Carter takes up Baudrillard's view in this case: 'you should not begin with the city and move inwards to the screen;you should begin with the screen and move outwards to the city'. (1988:56)

The negative aspect of chaos is celebrated by the appearance of Leilah, 'a girl all softly black in colour – nigredo, the stage of darkness' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 14) whom Eve uses as sexual object until he gets bored with her. He leaves for the desert, bearing the guilt of her abortion and the resulting mutilation: 'I would go to the desert…there I thought I might find the most elusive if chimeras, myself' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 38). The symbol of sterility is further represented by the desert and Eve starts to feel it inside: 'I have found a landscape that matches the landscape of my heart' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 41) His geographical movement does not take him away from chaos, but towards it, 'speeding towards the enigma I had left behind – the dark room, the mirror, the woman' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 39)

The desert is a place of death and simulation, where he is captured by a band of feminist guerrillas controlled by Mother, who transforms Evelyn into a woman, but only physically, in order to complete her plan of re-organising history in the feminine mode.
Eve is in love with a fantasy, as at the centre of the narrative and of the desert lies Tristessa's Grand Illusion. While Eve is a man who looks like a woman, Tristessa is a man dressed as a woman masquerading as Woman, in whose face is reflected 'all the desolation of America' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 121). In the womb-like labyrinth where Eve looks for meanings time follows a backward order, rendered through a cinematic metaphor:

> Rivers neatly roll up on themselves like spools of film and turn in on their own sources. The final drops of the Mississippi, the Ohio, the Hudson, tremble on a blade of grass; the sun dries them up, the grass sinks back into the earth. *(The Passion of New Eve, 185)*

The fleshy caves on the beach represent the labyrinth Eve has to cross in order to re-discover him/herself but what s/he finds there are tokens from the past which s/he no

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longer needs. This journey will take him/her away from Mother or mythology. The answer lies outside and it is that time cannot run backwards.
Eve goes away, leaving myth behind. His/her assertion at the end of the novel that 'we start from our conclusions' (*The Passion of New Eve,* 191) may be related to the novel's epigraph from John Locke 'In the beginning all the world was America'. America is both the origin of and the future where Western capitalist societies have to start from.

Conclusion

As far as the **external spaces** are concerned, the geographical delimitations are symbolical. *Several Perceptions*, *Shadow Dance*, *Love* are set in a urban landscape which bears the marks of decay. The counterculture of the 1960s is celebrated though the dandy figures who move about destroying either the others or themselves. Domestic space is a site of conflicts in *The Magic Toyshop* and *Love*, rendering the concept of the family as being more of a figure of speech. The journey, in the geographical sense, is present as a motif with Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* and preserved in her other novels, with a discernable difference in its engines. The characters in *Several Perceptions, Shadow Dance*, *Love* stay within the same area and try to escape a claustrophobic feeling with little or no success. In *Heroes and Villains*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *The Passion of New Eve* the geographical realms turn into landscapes of the future or the past, opening the door to **internal spaces**, of memory in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *The Passion of New Eve*. The tensions that animate the minds of the characters are dominant in *Shadow Dance, Several Perceptions, Love*, and gradually give way to awareness in *Heroes and Villains*, resolution with the shadows in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, hope for new beginnings in *The Passion of New Eve*. *Several Perceptions*, *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *The Passion of New Eve*, may be entirely regarded as internal spaces since the perspective is that of a character, disguised as a third person narration.

Corporeal spaces are sites of continuous struggle in all the novels. Women are victims, men are opressors in *Shadow Dance, Several Perceptions*, *Love*, *The Magic Toyshop*. *Heroes and Villains* foregrounds the femininity of men and masculinity of women at the level of the mind. Metamorphosis is celebrated in *The Passion of New Eve*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, as Angela Carter underlines the priviledged position of men in view of celebrating the women's body as a site which gives them power to undermine established orders. Gender is not written on the body, and transcends the binary oposition male-female. Space is neither fixed, nor limited. If realism closes the barrier of possibilities, Angela Carter turns to the Gothic confinements. Myth and fairy-tale bind her stories with the oral literature or the profane. The linearity of temporal dimensions is broken and ddichotomies such as in/out, life/death, fact/fiction, past/future, self/other, sacred/profane no longer function, pointing to the dissolution of any stable point of reference.

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