Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature

A LACANIAN READING OF ANGELA CARTER'S *THE INFERNAL DESIRE MACHINES OF DOCTOR HOFFMAN* AND *NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS*

Yağmur Telorman

Master's Thesis

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KABUL VE ONAY

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Yağmur TELORMAN

To my beloved mother...

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ÖZET

TELORMAN, Yağmur. *Angela Carter'ın* Doktor Hoffman'ın Şeytani Arzu Makineleri *ve* Sirk Geceleri *Romanlarının Lacancı Analizi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2014.

Bu çalışma Angela Carter'ın *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* ve *Nights at the Circus* romanlarını, Lacan'ın üç düzeni (İmgesel, Simgesel, Gerçek), Ayna Evresi, Baba'nın Temel Yasası, nihaî arzu nesnesi ve söylemsel şekilde inşa edilmiş gerçeklik kavramları açısından incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada bahsi geçen romanların Baba'nın Adı'ndan etkilenen çocuk gelişimi, arzu ve fantezilerin çocuğun özneye dönüşmesindeki rolü, çocuğun öznelleştirilme süreci, söylemin yapısökümü ve kimliğin tekrar inşası konularının önemini, gerçekliğin farklı katmanları ve düzeyleri bağlamında yansıttığı öne sürülmektedir. Bu bakımdan, çalışmanın başında hem Freudcu hem de Lacancı psikanalizin esasları ve bu esaslar üzerinden romanlar üzerine yapılan çalışmanın çerçevesi tanıtılmaktadır.

Giriş bölümünde, psikanalizin doğuşu ve Batı düşüncesine katkıları ele alınmaktadır. Aynı bölümde, Freud'un teorisi ve bu teorinin, Lacan'ın yapısalcılık sonrası psikanalizine evrimi incelenmektedir. Freud'un Lacancı yeniden yorumunun metinsel çözümlemeye uygun oluşunun sebepleri açıklanmaktadır.

Tezin birinci bölümü, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* romanında ana karakterin yolculuğunun, Lacancı açıdan çocuğun özneye dönüşme yolculuğu olarak yorumlanabileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu edebî eser, gerçekliğin söylemsel olarak inşa edildiğini göstermekte ve söylemin, çocuğun gelişimsel süreci boyunca neyi ne şekilde arzulayacağını belirleyişini yansıtmaktadır.

İkinci bölüm, *Nights at the Circus* romanında gelişim evrelerinin yeniden yaşanması ile kimliğin inşası ve yeniden inşası konusunu incelemektedir. Ana karakterler üzerinden Ayna Evresi, Oidipus Karmaşası ve belirli bir gerçeklik seviyesini sürdürmek amacıyla insanın kendi tanımlarını yapabilme özgürlüğü tartışılmıştır.

Sonuç bölümünde, iki romanın da bilinçdışı ve gerçeklik hakkında, insan algısının söylem tarafından şekillendirilmesi açısından değerli bir anlayışın gelişmesini sağladıkları açıklanmıştır. Ayrıca, bu iki romanın Lacancı yorumlarının ortaya

koyduğu benzerlikler ve zıtlıklara yer verilmiştir. Lacancı yazım analizi ile romanların özdönüşümsel özelliğine vurgu yapılmıştır. Romanların roman yazmı ve kullandıkları dil aracılığıyla farklı gerçeklikler kurgulama üzerine oluşunun, gerçekliğin söylem tarafından inşa edildiği yönündeki Lacancı düşünceyi açıkça yansıttığı ileri sürülmüştür. Özdönüşümsel karakterin de, söylem ve gerçeklik tarafından öznelleştirilme sürecinin farkına varan öznenin parodisi olduğu ve öznenin seçme özgürlüğünü kazanabilmek için, söylemin otoriter gücüne boyun eğmek yerine bu güce meydan okuması gerektiği tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Angela Carter*, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, Nights at the Circus*, İmgesel Düzen, Simgesel Düzen, Gerçek, Ayna Evresi, arzu, söylem, gerçeklik.

ABSTRACT

TELORMAN, Yağmur. *A Lacanian Reading of Angela Carter's* The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman *and* Nights at the Circus, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2014.

The aim of this study is to examine Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* with regard to the Lacanian concepts of three Orders, which are the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, the Mirror Stage, the Father, the ultimate object of desire and discursive reality. It is argued in this study that these novels can be analysed according to Lacanian theory of the infantile development, the name of the Father, desire and fantasies in the constitution of human subjectivity, the subjectification process of the infant, deconstruction of discourse and reconstruction of identity with respect to the different layers and levels of reality. In this regard, at the beginning, the fundamentals of both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and through these methods, the framework of the study on these novels are introduced.

In the introduction part, the birth of psychoanalysis and the contributions provided for the Western thought by the psychoanalytic method are discussed. Then, the Freudian theory and its evolution into the Lacanian post-structuralist psychoanalysis is explained. Through a comparison between Freudian and Lacanian methods, it is also clarified that Lacan's re-interpretation of the Freudian thought is suitable for textual analysis.

The first chapter of the thesis introduces a Lacanian interpretation of the main character's journey as the journey of the infant towards transforming into the human subject in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. This literary work portrays the Lacanian idea that reality is discursively constructed through the internalisation of the Primordial Law and reflects how discourse determines what and in what way the infant desires throughout his/her developmental journey.

In the second chapter the analysis focuses on the construction and reconstruction of the identity by re-experiencing the developmental stages in *Nights at the Circus*. Through

the main characters, the Mirror Stage, the Oedipus Complex and the freedom to make definitions in order to maintain a particular level of reality are discussed.

In the conclusion part, it is stated that both of the novels provide a valuable insight into both the unconscious and reality which reveals how the human perception is moulded by discourse. Additionally, the similarities and contrasts between the Lacanian reading of these two novels are examined. Through a Lacanian textual analysis, the novels' self-reflexive quality is revealed. It is argued that as these novels reveal the process of writing novels and creating different realities through the language they use, they vividly reflect the Lacanian idea that reality is constructed by discourse. It is also argued that the self-reflexive character is a parody of the subject who becomes aware of the process of subjectification by discourse and reality and that this process should be challenged by the subject in order to establish freedom of choice instead of obeying the authoritative power of discourse.

Key Words

Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *Nights at the Circus*, Imaginary Order, Symbolic Order, the Real, the Mirror Stage, desire, discourse, reality.

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INTRODUCTION

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

As for psychoanalysis, it's neither more,
nor less than blackmail.
(James Joyce – in an interview to Djuna Barnes)

Since the beginnings of Western Philosophy, humankind has always been placed at the centre of thought as a rational, stable and self-conscious being, as can be understood from the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Protagoras's (c. 490 BC – c. 420 BC) positioning of man, which summarizes the way of thinking in his time; "man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not" (Plato 171). Bertrand Russell interprets this quotation as meaning that each man has his own capability of measuring all things (155). Although Protagoras's thought is presumably based on the deceitfulness of the human senses in its presupposition that there is no objective truth and that "one opinion can be better than another, though it cannot be truer" (Russell 155), this thought shaped the pre-Socratic and Socratic assumption that man is at the centre of all the natural phenomena. It can be seen from the philosophies of the pre-Socratic and Socratic philosophers of the Classical Age, such as Democritus, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, that what was important about nature and all the natural phenomena was the way it was perceived by a conscious human mind which can understand, explain and express them. For these main philosophers of the western world, as can be understood from Protagoras's thought, what escapes perception was not so important as to discuss or think about, since it cannot be understood, explained or expressed. So, philosophy had aimed at tracing all the perceivable phenomena, centering the thought around the idea of a unified, knowable and conscious self, until Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the Austrian neurologist of Jewish origin, who later became known as the founding father of psychoanalysis, in *fin-de-siécle*, propounded and developed his revolutionary

analytical method, in broad terms psychoanalysis, which introduced his ideas on the imperceptible corners of human mind first to the psychiatric, then to the philosophical and critical circles.

Freud's ideas on the unconscious, the layered structure of the psyche and the infantile sexual development shifted the perspective from the phenomena in the outer world to the inner world of humankind itself, which was accepted as totally unified then. As Rafey Habib states "[t]he positing of the unconscious as the ultimate source and explanation of human thought and behaviour represented a radical disruption of the main streams of Western thought which, since Aristotle, had held that man was essentially a rational being" (571). But the radical shift in this understanding brought forth the question that what if some imperceptible phenomena in the inner world overshadows, determines and even shatters one's perception and expression of the outer world. If humankind's perception of nature is determined by some imperceptible phenomena beyond one's consciousness, the positioning of human as a unified and self-conscious mind which is capable of measuring all the perceptible phenomena is shaken, because it means that humankind does not have total control over their perception and expression of the conceivable phenomena, which leads the philosophic circle one step beyond, towards the exploration of the human mind.

Moreover, this new perspective, which supports the idea that the inner world of the human mind determines one's perception of the outer world, emphasised the idea that the alleged freewill of humans in their behaviour, attitudes and acts might not be as free as it had been thought of. The alleged freedom to act is, almost all the time, influenced, overseen, controlled and filtered by the dynamics of the unconscious although the human subject is unaware that his/her unconscious has such an authoritative power over one's actions. With the perspectives of Freud, who has generally been accepted as the father of the traditional psychoanalysis, and one of his many followers, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), the French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist who is generally regarded as "the most controversial psycho-analyst since Freud" (Macey xiv), and his re-reading and re-interpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis which initiated a post-structuralist psychoanalytical theory, the inner dynamics of the unconscious and the human psyche has gained a still growing

importance as a force that regulates one's perception and expression of the outer world.

In this thesis, the English novelist Angela Carter's (1940-1992) novels, *The Infenal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* will be analysed in accordance with Lacan's re-reading of Freud's psychoanalysis and Lacanian concepts of the unconscious, infantile development and discursive reality.

Freud defines the unconscious as "any mental process the existence of which we are obliged to assume – because, for instance, we infer it in some way from its effects – but of which we are not directly aware" (*New Introductory* 12). He explains that the unconscious is one of the physical systems which is not only outside the field of consciousness at a given time, but also radically separated from consciousness by repression[i] as a result of repression's function of "rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness" ("Repression" 99). The unconscious is the entity from which one's actions emanate and through which these actions can be explained, since it is the domain which involves some particular desires repressed under the authority of the societal norms and rules.

Lacan finds Freud's conceptualisation of the unconscious as completely original and emphasises this originality over the way many of Freud's predecessors used the term, arguing that the unconscious is not merely the opposite of the consciousness. For him, "a large number of physical effects that are quite legitimately designated as unconscious, in the sense of excluding the characteristics of consciousness, are nonetheless with-out any relation to the unconscious in the Freudian sense" (*Ecrits* 163). In this regard, he insists on the fact that it is not possible to equate the unconscious with that which is repressed. Unlike many of Freud's followers, Lacan does not reduce the meaning of the unconscious to being "merely a set of instincts" (*Ecrits* 147). He argues that the unconscious is not primordial or instinctual, but primarily linguistic, an argument which makes Lacan stand out among other Freudian analysts. For him, the unconscious is "structured like a language" (*Seminar 3* 167). He re-interprets Freud's dream symbolism and finds out that Freud himself excludes word-presentations from the unconscious by way of introducing metonymy and

metaphor which, for Lacan, shows that Freud was aware of the fact that it is structured like the signification process[ii]. Lacan grounds his conceptualisation of the unconscious on the fact that "we only grasp the unconscious finally when it is explicated, in that part of it which is articulated by passing into words" (*Seminar 7* 32). Furthermore, Lacan defines the unconscious as a discourse by saying "[o]ne should see in the unconscious the effects of speech on the subject[iii]" (*Seminar 7* 126). In other words, one should catch the traces of the signifier on the subject, in that "the signifier is what is repressed and what returns in the formations of the unconscious (symptoms, jokes, parapraxes, dramas, etc.)" (Evans 220). On this point Jan Marta points out that "[u]nlike Freud, Lacan did not view the subject as having neuroses but as being spoken by a disturbed unconscious" and comes to the conclusion that it is not the subject speaking his/her unconscious, but it is "[t]he unconscious that speaks the subject" (52). The unconscious is, thus, not interior. On the contrary, as the signification process is intersubjective, the unconscious is "transindividual" and hence, "outside" (*Ecrits* 49).

The aforementioned repressions and the imposition of the societal norms that Freud claims to be engraved on the unconscious occur during the psycho-sexual development from infancy onwards. As the role the infantile sexual development plays in repression is critical, Freud grounds his theory on this significant process. For him, the biological urges of the infant gives start to the sexual development of the child, as can be understood from Terry Eagleton's statement which explains the Freudian concept of sexuality where "sexuality has been born as a kind of drive which was at first inseparable from biological instinct" (133), because the child discovers that satisfying a biological need is also pleasurable. In this sense, the birth of sexuality is triggered by the basic biological drives to survive and, as Eagleton explains it, separates itself out from biological instinct and attains a certain autonomy, which means that the biological drive to survive not only leads up to the birth of sexuality, but also to the development of it (133). A healthy progress of infantile sexual development is of utmost importance, since it is this period that introduces the individual into a normal sexual life and a future stability of the psyche. In what way the infant learns the definition of a normal sexual life and knows how to reach a stable condition in his/her inner psyche is a possible question that comes to mind. This question has an especially

important role in understanding and analysing the infant's subjectification process and the construction of the sexual identity.

Freud offers a chart which portrays psyche as a systematic and fragmented entity comprised of three basic psychic agencies: id, ego and super ego. As he states in his *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, "[t]o the oldest of the mental provinces or agencies we give the name of *id*" (151, italics in original). It is an inborn agency and "contains everything that is inherited" and "that is fixed in the constitution" (152). It can be considered as a storage for psychic energy and, for Freud, as the part of our psyche where urges and instincts are organised in a somatic way while finding their first mental expression "in the forms unknown to us" (156). As can be understood from Freud's words, id dwells in the unconscious, although its source of energy is totally biological, namely the instincts. For it is the instincts that fill id with energy, it does not have a unified will, and it behaves only instinctually, even disregarding the contradiction among the impulses, and thus, functions in accordance with the inexorable Pleasure Principle. Pleasure Principle is a system in which, under an unpleasant state of tension originated in any given process, the subject automatically determines for itself such a path that "its ultimate issue coincides with a relaxation of this tension, i.e. with avoidance of pain or with the production of pleasure" (*Beyond* 41). Pleasure Principle, thus, works in two different ways; either the instinctual demands of id must be satisfied in utmost immediacy in order to avoid tension, or the satisfaction of the demand must be imagined, rather fantasized through Primary Process, also known as the instinctual thought, which is defined by Freud as the processes in the id which obey the laws that regulate the unconscious. For Freud "processes in the unconscious or in the id obey different laws from those in the preconscious ego" and he names "these laws in their totality the primary process" (*An Outline* 48) while he names the laws which regulate the events in the ego the Secondary Process.

The second psychic organisation, the ego, is generally considered to dwell within the borders of the consciousness although Freud clearly emphasises that the processes in the ego are not all conscious and "large parts of the Ego may remain unconscious indefinitely" (*The Problem* 76). That is why it is more accurate to place the ego in the

state of “preconscious” (*The Problem* 77). Because, despite the fact that the ego is mostly conscious, it is protected by some unconscious processes, namely the defense mechanisms, from external psychological threats. Unlike id, the ego is not inborn. It emerges within the second six months after birth and it is id and id’s need of a regulatory organisation which would act “as an intermediary between the id and the external world” (*An Outline* 82) that entail the emergence of the ego. While fulfilling this intermediatory task, the ego acts in accordance with the Reality Principle, focusing on the reality of the external world, and, by relieving the tensions of id through its regulative, planning and decisive functions, it makes use of the Secondary Process.

As a result of id’s realisation that its wish for its instinctual needs to be immediately satisfied contradicts with the demands of reality, the super ego begins to take its shape. For Freud, the super ego develops throughout the whole childhood period, and although its emergence is entailed by the ego and its aforementioned intermediatory function, the super ego’s activity is unconscious. The ego needs a system to regulate the actions of id, and a part of it evolves into the super ego; especially after the restrictions of the parents on the way the infant displays his/her basic urges and his/her needs appear. The parents, at first stage, are the ones who determine what is acceptable and what is not, thus the formation of the super ego begins in order to establish a balance between these restrictions and the basic urges. For Freud, the super ego may bring new needs to the fore, but “its chief function remains the limitations of the satisfactions” (*An Outline* 176).

Freud supports the idea that the source of human behaviour is the interaction between these three mental forces which constitute the dynamic of one’s personality. These psychic agencies are in a constant struggle to meet their own aim and throughout one’s childhood, their struggle causes a personal conflict between the demands of the id and the demands of the outer world that is to be solved by the child for a future stability of the psyche.

Freud offers three major stages of infantile sexual and emotional development each of which is characterised by a specific erotogenic zone and a particular psychic conflict; the first of which is oral period that falls between the first and eighteenth months of the

infant's life. As mentioned above, the biological instinct of the infant to survive gives birth to sexuality, and nourishment is one of the most important biological necessities. As Freud points out "[h]ere, the sexual activity is not yet separated from the taking of nourishment and the contrasts within it are not yet differentiated" (*Three Contributions* 142). As can be seen from Freud's statement, the baby sucks his mother's breast in order to withstand hunger merely out of biological need, but gradually the baby comes to the realisation that satisfying a need is pleasurable as well. So, "[t]he baby's mouth becomes not only an organ of its biological survival, but an 'erotogenic zone'" (Eagleton 133), as the infant's mouth, lips and tongue becomes the mediators of pleasure. The fact that the child acts in accordance with the pleasure principle as the social prohibitions have not yet been imposed on him/her leads one to the conclusion that the id has the control in the inner psyche of the child. In this first phase of psycho-sexual development, the earliest glimpses of sexuality can be observed and the conflict arises from the fact that the mother's breast is not always there for the infant to suck and the child enters into a seach for another object that can substitute for the mother's breast. So, s/he is introduced into a new form of thought, primary process, or rather, fantasies. For Freud,

> As a remnant of this fictitious phase of organisation forced on us by pathology, we can consider thumbsucking. Here the sexual activity became separated from the nourishment activity and the strange object [the mother's breast] was given up in favour of one from his own body [the thumb]. (*Three Contributions* 145)

Therefore, it can be said that, towards the end of the oral period, the infant becomes capable of differentiating pleasure from nourishment and when the mother's breast is absent, the infant fantasizes about that object and takes pleasure from sucking his/her thumb although no nourishment is obtained.

The second phase falls between the eighteenth month and third year of the infant, the period in which s/he enters the process of being toilet trained. In this phase, the infant is under the pressure of his/her parents and in a painful process of learning the earliest social prohibitions. S/he realizes that emptying his/her bowels, or holding back or expulsing the excrement, in more specific words, his/her discovery of the fact that s/he

is able to establish control over his/her own body is pleasurable. This makes the anus the erotogenic zone for this period, and thus names it the anal period, or, in Freud's words, "the sadistic-anal organisation" (*Three Contributions* 212) for the infant enjoys irritating his/her parents by disregarding the social prohibitions while s/he holds back or expulses the excrement. In this period, the conflict that the child needs to solve is linked to the prohibitions, punishments and rewards of the parents. The child discovers that like him/her, the outer world has demands and that s/he will be punished whenever s/he disregards these demands and rewarded whenever s/he obeys the rules. Through this painful process, the id's need for an intermediary emerges and the formation of the ego begins.

The third phase, the phallic period, falls between the age of three and five in which "for both sexes, the penis (and what corresponds to it in the girl) achieves an importance which can no longer be overlooked" (*New Introductory* 57). In this period, the infant becomes aware of his/her genitals and discovers that touching the penis or the clitoris is pleasurable. Therefore, the erotogenic parts of this period are the genitals. The basis of sexuality that will be experienced by the infant after puberty is constituted in this phase. This last phase of infantile psycho-sexual development is generally regarded as the most important one by the psychoanalysts for the fact that, at around age of four, the infant faces the most significant conflict which greatly influences the personality and later life of the infant; the Oedipus Complex.

By the time the infant, male or female, enters into the phallic phase, the mother becomes the ultimate object of pleasure, satisfaction and desire. The discovery that the infant has to share the mother with the father mortifies the child and leads him/her to struggle with the father. However, the unavoidable authority of the father and his ability to punish arouses the fear of castration in the child. The male infant observes the female and upon discovering she has no penis, assumes that the female is a castrated male. So, he fears being castrated as a punishment for his desire for the mother. For the female infant, the case is a bit different. The female infant, observing the male has a penis, thinks that her father has already punished her, from which the penis envy grows. Freud states that "under the influence of her penis-envy the girl is driven from her attachment to her mother, and enters the Oedipus situation, as though

it were a haven of refuge" (*New Introductory* 148). At first, Freud thought that the female infant yearns for the father and sees the mother as a rival to herself, thinking that the mother obtains what the female infant desires, which is the penis. However, in his later work, it can be seen that Freud abandons this thought and brings forth the idea that the dynamics of Oedipal suffering in the female is not so different from that of the male. He empasises that both the male and the female infant yearn for obtaining the mother and are in a struggle against the father. The only difference between the ways through which each of them experiences the Oedipus Complex lies in the fear of castration; the male one fears to be castrated by the father, while the female one thinks that she has already been castrated. Freud thinks that the female suffers from "fear of the loss of love [of the mother], obviously a continuation of the fear of the infant at the breast" (*New Introductory* 164) as the female thinks that she will lose the love of the mother as she herself has no penis while the male one fears the loss of his penis for he assumes that the mother will not love him if he loses it. So, the fear of castration by the father forces the child to repress his/her desire for the mother into the unconscious. Discovering that s/he will never obtain the mother, the infant falls into mourning and melancholy. Freud gives mourning a special position in this period since mourning has the important task of dissolving the ties of the infant to his/her object of desire, i.e. the mother, which leads the infant to the solution of the conflict s/he faces during this period.

The Oedipal conflict is solved when the male identifies himself with the father who had probably experienced the same fear before, and the female with the mother thinking that she was also castrated in her infancy. In this sense, the real castration lies in the triumph of the societal norms over the infant since, as Freud points out, "[c]astration has a place, too, in the Oedipus legend for the blinding with which Oedipus punished himself after the discovery of his crime is [...] a symbolic substitute for castration" (*An Outline* 165). As can be seen, since the fear of castration of the child by the father is an imaginary one, the real castration is the child's punishing of himself/herself for his/her desire for the mother with this imaginary fear. This self-punishment shows that the child has internalised the father's authority and the prohibition of incest. So, it can be said that the norms of the outer world win against

the child's struggle to act in accordance with the pleasure principle. In this sense, the subject has castrated himself/herself during this particular stage of infantile development throughout his/her way to the resolution of the Oedipal conflict. After resolution, the child enters into the process of internalising the social order and ethics, during which the super ego is developed. A healthy solution to this complex is of utmost importance regarding the psycho-sexual development. Because if the infant cannot solve it, it may cause self-accusation in sexual life, fear of intimate relationship or difficulties in familial and other emotional relationships.

In parallel with Freud, Lacan argues that the infantile development is really important in the formation of personality although he later becomes critical of the Freudian development for various reasons. Lacan argues that unlike such a developmental reading assumes, a final synthesis of sexuality is neither probable nor normal, since such a synthesis does not exist. Therefore, he totally rejects the concept of a final pychosexual stage which leads the subject to a mature relationship with the object, because "the subject is irremediably split and the metonymy of desire is unstoppable" (Evans 41). Lacan points out that "the object which corresponds to an advanced stage of instinctual maturity is a rediscovered object" (*Seminar 4* 15). In other words, the final stage of maturity, if such a stage is possible, is nothing more than the infant's re-encounter with the object of his/her earliest satisfactions. In this sense, as Lacan points out, these psycho-sexual stages are "ordered in the retroaction of the Oedipus Complex" (*Ecrits* 197). They are not chronologically ordered moments of a child's development in contrast to the common psychoanalytic understanding, but essentially "timeless structures which are projected retroactively onto the past" (Evans 41). Freud was also so close to such an understanding as can be seen from his principle of "repetition compulsion" which is a phenomenon occuring in the unconscious mind "based upon the instinctual activity [...] powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle" ("The Uncanny" 96). Freud assumes that a subject has an unconscious tendency to recreate unpleasant events, crises, dilemmas and complexes "as soon as a given state of things is upset" (*New Introductory* 53). In this sense, the basis of Lacan's theory of a timeless and retroactive structure of infantile development is Freud's principle of repetition compulsion.

Instead of taking sexuality as its basis, Lacan prefers to illustrate his developmental stages with reference to the acquisition of language, which makes the re-interpretation of Freud a post-structuralist one. According to Lacan's contemporary psycholinguists, for the acquisition of language a certain biological maturity was indispensible; the infant's tongue, lips and vocal folds have to reach a particular level of maturity which makes speech only possible through a series of biologically predetermined stages such as babbling, phoneme acquisition, isolated words and then complex sentences. Since such a thought merely deals with "the emergence, properly speaking, of a phenomenon" (*Seminar 1* 179), Lacan does not support it. In contrast, Lacan is much more interested in "the way language positions the subject in a symbolic structure" (Evans 41) than he is in the external appearance of language. For him, "the child already has an initial appreciation of the symbolism of language" (*Seminar 1* 179) well before one can observe the conceivable phenomena. That is why he grounds his own re-interpretation of infantile psychic development on linguistics.

For Lacan, psychic development of an individual begins with the Imaginary Phase. At this very early phase, from the infant's point of view, there is no dinstinction between himself/herself and the outer world of which mother is an important part. This also means that there is no distinction between the subject and the object, in this case the mother, at all. There is only wholeness, unity and full integrity in this imaginary world. Lacan calls it "imaginary" as in this earliest phase, the infant perceives the world only through images (*Ecrits* 723). Just like Freud positions the mother as the provider of every need of the infant, Lacan stresses child's perception of wholeness with his/her mother, which is actually an illusion that will be shaken through the Mirror Stage, which falls roughly between the sixth to eighteenth months. The Mirror Stage is considered the paradigm of the Imaginary Order, or a permanent structure of subjectivity, rather than a specific moment in the infant's life for it only marks the beginning of the formation of the ego (*Ecrits* 23). Regarding Freudian stage of Primary Narcissism, Lacan argues that the infant becomes fascinated with his/her own image in the mirror and at first, as s/he thinks all the world is whole with him, the infant could not perceive that what s/he sees in the mirror is his/her own body as a whole (*Ecrits* 23). When the infant moves his/her bodily parts and sees the reflection of the

movements, s/he gradually discovers that s/he is looking at his own body, which leads the infant to the identification with this mirror-image and to a complete mastery upon the bodily movements. Moreover, the identification with the image of the self has an alienating function, because "the child assumes a 'me' that is radically exterior, strictly inaccessible and unveraciously complete" (Nobus 117). Thus, the infant experiences a sort of in-betweenness; on the one hand, s/he has the deceptive thought that s/he is one with the world around him/her including the image in the mirror, and on the other hand, this very image is the proof that s/he is not whole with the world, which makes this new experience exterior to his/her fragmented physical reality and this new 'me' inaccessible as it is outside of the child's experience. Hence, this creates alienation along with identification. Lacan calls this "alienating identity" in which the infant perceives the image both as a part of himself/herself and as something other than himself/herself (*Ecrits* 25). Such an alienation from, along with an identification with, the image is crucial for the infant to start the formation of the ego.

Regarding the aforementioned concepts, it can be said that the Imaginary Phase and the Mirror Stage that follows it correspond to the Freudian pre-Oedipal phases. What follows these two stages is the Oedipus Complex, which aroused controversy among the psychiatric circles of Freud's age and which has a really important place in Lacanian thinking since Lacan regards it as the central complex in the unconscious for the reasons soon to be discussed.

Lacan's radical re-reading of Freud lies especially in his re-interpretation of the Oedipus Complex. As Lacan emphasises, the infant's sense of unity with the mother dominates the Imaginary Phase, and the disturbance comes in the advent of the father which marks the beginning of the Oedipus Complex. From then on, the child is forced to repress his/her desire for the mother to the unconscious. Lacan argues that at this stage, the father represents "the Primordial Law" (*Ecrits* 49) which denotes the prohibition of incest by introducing the infant "nom-du-pére" (name of the father) or "non-du-pére" (no of the father) with a pun on the French pronunciation of nasal sounds. As Eagleton states "[t]he father signifies [...] the social taboo of incest: the child is disturbed in its libidinal relation with the mother and must begin to recognize in the figure of the father that a wider familial and social network exists of which it is

only a part" (143). In this sense, the child understands that s/he has never been the centre and that there is an authoritative power which is represented by the father and father is the rule-maker. The father determines for how long and in what way the child may possess the mother. With 'the name of the Father' coming to the scene, the child is introduced into a phallogocentric[iv] world and language, and it becomes rather 'no of the Father' as it restricts the child's desire for the mother by imposing the Primordial Law. As Lacan points out, the Primordial Law is

> that which, in regulating marriage ties, superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely its subjective pivot, revealed by the modern tendency to reduce to the mother and the sister the objects forbidden to the subjects choice, although full licence outside of these is not yet entirely open. (*Ecrits* 49)

From Lacan's statement it can be understood that the Oedipal Stage, with its prohibitions, restrictions and reductions, operates just like the language itself. The father's discursive impositions, although they seem to reduce the prohibition only to incest, actually signifies numerous prohibitions under the surface. The name of the Father is a signifier of a prohibitive discourse and beneath the authoritative power of it, it is possible to observe an endless network of signifiers. Moreover, the child's role in this network is already determined by the Law of the Father. As Malcolm Bowie argues, nom-du-pére "refers not to the real father, nor to the imaginary father, but to the symbolic father" (ix). In this respect, just as the concept of father in Oedipus Complex is universalized by Freud, the physical body of the father may be gone; it is the transcendental discursive existence of the father that imposes the Law on the child, not the real father. As a discourse, his name is inevitably passed from one generation to the other. That is why it is called "the name of the Father" instead of "father". What Lacan especially emphasises is this discursive nature of the Father, as can be understood from his following statement:

> [t]he unconscious is the discourse of the Other. The discourse of the Other [...] is the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated. I am one of its links, It is the discourse of my father for instance, in so far as my father made mistakes which I am absolutely condemned to reproduce [...] because I am obliged to pick up again the discourse he

> bequathed to me, not simply because I am his son, but because one can't stop the chain of discourse, and it is precisely my duty to transmit it in its aberrant form to someone else. (*Seminar 4* 49)

In this sense, the symbolic Father constructs how the infant perceives the world for the rest of his/her life, and it is his discursive authority that introduces the infant to the Symbolic Order which is composed of words, structured like the language, is conducted as the language does, and in which, as post-structuralist understanding of language suggests, there is no signified to reach but only a chain of endless signifiers each of which leads to one another.

The Symbolic Order is entered simultaneously with the acquisition of language, and it is a world of lack and absence which the infant never experienced before. The prohibition of the Father which forces the child to renounce his/her ties to the mother signifies the absence. The child is now excluded from the mother, which leads him/her to a painful realisation. What is more painful for the child is the realisation that s/he has now entered the Symbolic Order and since s/he will have to use language to communicate with the other subjects in order to express his/her thoughts, feelings and experiences for the rest of his/her whole life, there is no escape from the Symbolic Order and s/he can no longer return to the Imaginary Phase.

In this new reality, a sign stands for a lack because the object it signifies is always absent. In this realm, a signifier can never reach a signified, rather it can only lead to another signifier, and they altogether construct an endless chain of signifiers. Such a vicious circle in which the infant is stuck immediately creates 'desire'; a desire which the infant strives to satisfy throughout his/her entire life. As Eagleton states "[l]anguage divides up the fullness of the imaginary: we will now never be able to find rest in the single object, the final meaning, which will make sense of the others" (145) and for all through his/her life, the individual will yearn for the lack of the original object, namely, his/her mother's desire for the infant. As it is no longer possible for the infant to return to the Imaginary Phase, s/he tries to replace the mother with other objects that will provide temporary moments of satisfaction throughout his/her quest to become whole with the object one more time. However, as the desire springs from a

lack, and as it is filtered through discourse which is external and other for the individual, it is not the desire of the infant, but actually the desire of the Other:

> This moment [from the dissolution of the specular *I* into the social *I*] in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jelaousy [...], the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations. (*Ecrits* 42)

What Lacan suggests here is that the child gradually becomes affiliated with language and thus becomes a social subject. In this sense, the infant's entrance into the Symbolic Order opens up an abyss between the infant as a subject (or as the subject s/he perceives himself/herself to be) and the objects around him/her. In this realm that s/he will henceforth belong to, the child is no longer in unity with the objects and s/he is condemned to perceive them as objects with which s/he can no longer identify. They are merely "forms of otherness or foreignness to [the infant's] identity; his relation to these objects will assume the form of desire" (Habib 592). Because all these objects which the subject thought to be integrated with himself/herself are de-nested from him/her by the imposition of the differential system of language and signification. The experience of these objects and the world to which these objects belong are no longer pure, but rather socially and discursively filtered and constructed. In other words, the infant's reality is constructed through discourse and this very discourse determines what and how the infant desires. Before proceeding with further explanations of the nature of desire, it is essential to define what the Real is, the third phase of Lacan's developmental periods.

Perhaps one of the most difficult Lacanian concepts is the Real which is, as a course of its nature, troublesome and almost impossible to describe. Since it is "the domain of whatever subsists outside symbolisation" (*Ecrits* 388), it is "not a 'thing:' it is not a material object in the world or the human body or even 'reality'" (Homer 81). When the child enters into the Symbolic Order, the world begins to operate through symbols and signifiers; a process of signification in general which is perceived by the infant as the reality that surrounds him. The real Real is out of this reality. The child experiences desire for a pre-determined object through a pre-determined path and it is discourse

that determines it. However, his/her needs, which trigger the desire, come from an unknown source, from a domain beyond language and reality, a domain that "resists symbolisation absolutely" (*Seminar 1* 66). Lacan calls this domain the Real, and argues that it is unspeakable and pre-symbolic, because once the infant tries to express his/her need, that need becomes a sign, and thus a part of the discursively constructed reality (*Ecrits* 85). Madan Sarup explains the Real as "the domain of the inexpressible, of what cannot be spoken about, for it does not belong to language" (154). In this regard, it exists only theoretically, and yet it is out of our reach and observation and beyond our control. The only proof that it exists is the biological needs that one experiences which are beyond signification before they are expressed. As Sean Homer states "the real is the brute pre-symbolic reality that returns to its place in the form of a need, such as hunger. The real is thus closely associated with the body prior to its symbolization" (82), before the word "hunger" is articulated, which means that it manifests itself only in the form of a biological need. Then, one can only know that the Real exists because "we experience it and it enters discourse as a sign – the infant's crying, but the place from which it originates is beyond symbolization" (Homer 82). While symbolisation is constituted in terms of oppositions, the Real is undifferentiated, or, as Lacan puts it, "the Real is absolutely without fissure" (*Seminar 2* 97). Hence, as it is these oppositions that make it possible to define something, even the attempt to define the Real is ludicrous since such an attempt contradicts the pre-symbolic nature of the Real.

Although the instinctual demands of the infant coming from the Real trigger desire, desire actually springs from a lack as mentioned above. The original lack from which desire springs is, according to Lacan, the *phallus* (*Ecrits* 221). While discussing Freudian Oedipus, it is mentioned that the male infant fears castration and the female one has the *penisneid* (*Ecrits* 221), the penis-envy. Lacan makes further explanation on this issue throughout his paper on the meaning and significance of the phallus in the infantile development. Lacan points out that the infant, male or female, desires to be the desire of the mother, more specifically, s/he wishes to be desired by the mother, and thinking that the mother's desire is penis, in Lacanian terms, the phallus, "the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire" (*Ecrits* 221). At this point,

Lacan differentiates the phallus from penis since the phallus is something more than "the organ, penis or clitoris, that it symbolizes" (*Ecrits* 218). It is a function, a metaphor, the ultimate object of desire, or, in Lacan's words, "the privileged signifier" (*Ecrits* 220). Although both the male infant and the father have the physical substitutes of the phallus, they do not have the real phallus, because while the mother supposedly desires the penis, the phallus stands for being the desire of the mother.

The phallus is the conceptualisation of the penis as the object of desire of the mother. For both male and female infant lack the phallus, they are mortified by the knowledge that they cannot be the desire of the mother. In this sense, what the infant does not have, or rather what the infant lacks, has a more important status in his/her life than what s/he has. This lack wounds the narcissistic ego of the infant and the primary narcissism is ruined, which leads him/her to further alienation from his body which has been started during the Mirror Stage. Clinically, the symptoms of a ruined narcissism can be observed as shame, feeling of insufficiency, guilt, loss of self-respect, etc. (Tura 33), a situation which shows that what Freud defines as the castration of the self by the infant has been completed and the outer world, thus the Symbolic Order, achieves to establish authority over the child. It is the reason why Lacan places the phallus "in the place of the Other" (*Ecrits* 220), thus the phallus is within the place of the Symbolic since, for Lacan, the phallus can only be understood as a signifier. Lacan claims that as no individual possesses the phallus, it is the signifier of the lack in the being of the infant (*Ecrits* 219) which means, as Madan Sarup explains, "[t]he subject is constituted in lack" (94). In this sense, desire is a relation of being to lack. No object can satisfy desire, but, by the course of desire's nature, the subject's actual wish is not to satisfy the desire in the first place.

The subject wants to chase the desire, fears the loss of the object as, for Lacan, what causes anxiety is not the fear of impossibility to reach the object, rather it is the fear of disappearance of the lack, and once the subject reaches the object, the lack, thus the motive behind life, naturally disappears. So, lack is indispensible for the individual to go on living and, in this sense, the subject's wish is to circle around the object, since it is not enough to reach the object. The subject wants to become the object (of desire of the mother) which is, for Lacan, the phallus from infancy onwards. However, with

his/her entrance into the social prohibitions, initiated with the imposition of the Primordial Law, s/he is obliged to repress his/her desire into the unconscious. For that reason the phallus is always already absent, and since the beginning of the infant's self-awareness, the phallus has been repressed to the unconscious. This situation is called *urverdrangung* (*Ecrits* 218), the primal repression. The primally repressed has never been present to the subject's consciousness; "it is primordially and structurally excluded" (Sarup 95). That is why "desire does not know its object, has no (conscious) idea of its object" (Sarup 94). The phallus, in this sense, is the original signifier, which remains undefined: as a desire it initiates the chain of desires, and as a signifier it gives start to the endless chain of signifiers since "it is the signifier, intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" (*Ecrits* 218). Therefore, the phallus is the "signifier of the signifiers, the representation of signification and language" (Sarup 94). It can be said that no subject is aware of its existence by solid proof, but all subjects perceive its presence by means of its absence, which makes the phallus not the meaning, the ultimate signified, or the final truth, but the starting point of the infinite circling and network of signifiers. So, the phallus, by the course of its nature, has no definition and hence cannot be returned or imagined, even fantasised, which makes desire unsatisfiable forever, and "the phallic signifier is [unsatisfiable desire's] mark" which signs "the conjunction of desire [...] with the threat or nostalgia[v] of lacking it" (*Ecrits* 221).

As mentioned earlier, for Lacan, the discourse imposed on the infant when s/he enters into the Symbolic Order through which the infant expresses his/her demand for satisfaction constructs desire by shaping the infant's biological needs that comes from the Real. Moreover, "discourse's moulding of needs leaves not satisfaction but *desire*, which runs on in the chain of signifiers" (Selden 158, italics in original) or rather, the chain of desires. This means that from the moment the infant enters discourse till the end of his/her life, desire always exists and insists. Lacan deploys a Freudian term to clarify the nature of desire; for him, desire "ex-sists" (*Ecrits* 201) meaning that although the individual is inextricably intermingled with desire, it is also external and other to him/her as it is filtered through discourse. Desire, hence, both *ex*ists and in*sists*, and since our needs are moulded and mediated by discourse which operates

through signifiers, the fulfillment never brings satisfaction, but it leads to another lack and hence to another object, just like a signifier leading to another one. So, the satisfaction is always already postponed just like the signified. Discourse, which is conveyed customarily within language, is called the big Other, with a capital O as it was once constructed outside the individual not in accordance with his/her wishes. Therefore, according to Lacan, one's desire is actually the desire of the Other "as being the locus of the Other" (*Ecrits* 201) as it is filtered through and imposed by discourse which is the other. In arguing that speech originates not in the ego, nor in the subject, but in the Other, Lacan uses the capital O, since the Other dominates one's whole reality and it is impossible to assimilate through identification, and since he regards the Other as language over which man has no control. So, it can be said that for Lacan, the individual thinks s/he speaks the language, but actually language speaks him/her since it is discourse which determines what the individual speaks. Since it is impossible for an individual to think without a language, and as the language cannot be used without the effect of discourse, the language that the individual speaks reveals the influence of discourse on his/her unconscious. That is why Lacan suggests what the individual says is determined by the language that s/he uses, thus the language speaks the individual.

In relation to desire and lack, Lacan developed another concept, namely *objet-petit-a*. As noted earlier, the fulfillment of desire never brings satisfaction, but rather it bears a new lack and leads to another desire and this runs on in a chain of desires throughout one's life. Objet-petit-a is the object of the little other, that is "the other which isn't another at all, since it is essentially coupled with the ego, in a relationship which is always reflexive, interchangeable" (*Seminar 2* 321). In this sense, it is the other which is not actually other, but a reflection and projection of the ego and which belongs to the Imaginary Order. Later, Lacan begins to conceive it as the object of desire. In his seminar in 1960, Lacan borrows the term *agalma* (an ornament or an offering to the gods) from Plato's *Symposium* and makes an analogy between agalma and objet-petit-a. Just like agalma which is a precious object hidden in a valueless box, objet-petit-a is the object of desire which one seeks in the Other (*Seminar 8* 177). In this regard, man's search for the object of desire is in vain as it is in the Imaginary although one looks for it in the Symbolic. It is the object that sets desire in motion, and its lack is

indispensible for the individual to carry out his life. As discussed earlier, the fear of the disappearance of lack is the main cause behind anxiety and it leads the individual to evade reaching the object since reaching it would make it disappear. Therefore, the drives do not try to attain the objet-petit-a, but rather they circle around it – that is what makes them different from biological urges and instincts according to Freud – (*Seminar 11* 179). Thus, objet-petit-a is "both the object of anxiety, and the final irreducible reserve of libido" (Evans 129).

For Lacan, the pleasure principle functions as a limit to enjoyment, which means that it is the law that commands the subject to enjoy as little as possible. The subject, however, always attempts to transgress the prohibitions, to go beyond the pleasure principle (*Seminar 4* 21). Going beyond the pleasure principle does not mean having more pleasure but pain since there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear, which makes it, in Lacan's words, "painful principle" (*Seminar 4* 32). This is what Lacan calls *jouissance* in French, and it is generally left untranslated in the translations of Lacan's work for, as a term, it includes both joy and pain. As it is mentioned earlier, Freud draws a distinction between drives and instincts, since drives can never be satisfied and they do not aim at an object but at circling around it. For Lacan, the repetition of this movement is the true jouissance. Moreover, in "The Other Side of Psychoanalysis", Lacan introduces the term "surplus-jouissance" after explaining that objet-petit-a has actually no value and still, it persists for the mere sake of jouissance and that is why objet-petit-a is the excess of it, thus the surplus-jouissance (*Ecrits* 24).

At this point, Lacan derives another concept from Freud, which is fantasy. The concept of fantasy is central to Freud's work. In 1897, Freud recognised that some of the recorded memories of seduction, collected from the patients, are the product of fantasy rather than traces of actual sexual abuse (*Repression* 93). Freud's thoughts on this issue appear to imply that fantasy is an illusory product of imagination and it is totally opposed to reality. In Freudian psychoanalysis, however, as reality itself is a problematic concept and as there is no single correct way of perceiving it, such a thought on fantasy cannot be accepted. Reality is itself discursively constructed. So, as a result of the discursive nature of memories, fantasy consists of traces from memories

which are moulded under the influence of the unconscious and thus, fantasy is constructed. In accordance with this idea, Freud uses the term fantasy "to denote a scene which is presented to the imagination and which stages an unconscious desire" (Evans 61).

Lacan accepts Freud's aforementioned formulations of fantasy and, in addition to that, he puts an emphasis on the protective function of fantasy. In his fourth seminar, he makes an analogy between fantasy and cinema. For him, the fantasy scene resembles to a frozen image on a screen. The film may be stopped in order to skip the upcoming traumatic scene. Likewise, the fantasy scene is a frozen scene that acts as a defense mechanism which veils castration and lack (*Seminar 4* 119). Hence, Lacan characterises fantasy by fixation and immobility, and it must be conceived as a way of defense against castration and the lack in the Other. Also, one of the points that should be remembered about fantasy is the fact that "any attempt to reduce it to imagination [...] is a permanent misconception" because it is always "an image set to work in a signifying structure" (*Ecrits* 272). In this regard, fantasy cannot be considered out of the signification process.

The basic terms and principles that Freudian and Lacanian critical theories generally make use of draw a borderline between Freud and Lacan. That is why it is necessary to compare Freudian and Lacanian methods in order to decide which one is more applicable for textual analysis. Maud Ellmann claims that by both psychiatric authorities and literary critics, Freudian psychoanalysis has often been viewed with a certain suspicion, since it arouses "a peculiar form of irritation" (1) which may be caused by Freud's revealing of the most repressed fantasies and feelings, and his direct criticism of the social norms and ethics. For Ellmann, many critics tend to ignore Freud's criticism of society, and turn their attention to the individualistic side of Freudian method. She goes on explaining that in literary studies, psychoanalytic criticism generally sacrifices the verbal surface of the texts, in other words their textuality, for the sake of their depths in which the Freudian motifs supposedly and unconsciously encrypted, and this sacrifice, although is imaginative, "overlooks the literary resonance of the text and also suggests a strange anatomical naivety" (Ellmann 2), which means that such a reading focuses on the content and ignores the "temporal

dimension of the narrative" (Ellmann 2). Through this method, the text tells the interpreters more about themselves then it tells about the author. However, "only by attending to the rhetoric of the texts, to the echoes and recesses of the words themselves, can we recognise the otherness of literature, its recalcitrance as well as its susceptibility to theorisation" (Ellmann 3). In this sense, this method displaces the focus of analysis from the textuality of the literary text to its content, more specifically, to its characters. Regarding the nature of the Freudian reading, it can be concluded that an analysis through Freudian method does not justify the depth of the text, rather it justifies the method through the text since it leads the analyst to trace the principles of Freudian psychoanalysis through the text rather than to explore the depths of the text itself. However, the goal of literary criticism is not justifying theories, Rather but to come up with an argument on a work that a writer expresses his/her personal perspective, worldview, judgements and critique on particular issues. Without examining the word choices, literary devices and structures that compose the text, it would be impossible to demonstrate why the author has chosen to use those particular elements of writing in order to depict reality and convey his/her message. Since Freudian reading restricts the critic on textual analysis, the central theory of this thesis is not classical psychoanalytic method, but the post-structuralist version of it, Lacanian theory, which, unlike classical psychoanalysis, includes the text itself along with the content.

Furthermore, Lacanian psychoanalysis has a post-structuralist attitude in its approach to the inner dynamics of the unconscious and human subjectivity. First of all, Lacanian thought does not believe in the possibility of a static definition of reality and normality since Lacan "rejects that reality can be captured in language" (Marta 51) as language is a signification process that can never be sufficient enough to convey experience. Such a thought gives psychoanalysis a domain in the semiotics and locates Lacanian theory among the post-Sassurean theories which generally support the idea that a signifier never reaches a signified but keeps relating to other signifiers and all the signifiers build a vast network which makes it inconclusive to search for a final signified. Along with the post-Sassurean theories, Lacanian psychoanalysis "privileges the materiality of language, forcing the reader back to the signifier" (Marta 51). Therefore, reading

texts from Lacanian perspective is more healthy, elaborate and reliable compared to Freudian theory since it never disregards the textuality of the text, trickiness of reality as a discursively constructed structure, slipperiness of language and its insufficiency as a medium of expression. However, it would not be fair to condemn Freud and Freudian thinking. As Lacan argues in his paper on the significance of the phallus, the contemporary linguistics was not at all available to Freud (*Ecrits* 265). For a thorough psychoanalytic reading, one should never disregard Freud (for he was the forefather of the fundamental principles and theories of Lacanian psychoanalysis), but should be nurtured by him to the extend that remains within the borders of post-structural thinking. It is for the fact that post-structuralism and Lacan's theory share such fundamental qualities, reading a variety of postmodern texts from Lacanian perspective is possible.

It is possible to observe the Lacanian developmental journey of the infant towards his/her subjectification by the discourse, discursive nature of the reality which is reflected by the textuality in the novels of Angela Carter. Especially the novels *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* vividly portray the infantile development and the reality's constructed nature through their motif of journey, the main characters and textuality.

Born Angela Olive Stalker in Eastbourne, Angela Carter was one of the most prolific British writers of her age not only as a novelist but in many other fields as well. During the war years, her parents had to send her to live with her maternal grandmother in south Yorkshire where she spent her childhood. She attended Streatham and Clapham High School in south London and after that she became a journalist on *Croydon Advertiser*. After attending University of Bristol to study English Literature, in 1960, she married Paul Carter. She wrote two novels during her marriage; *Shadow Dance* (1966) and *The Magic Toyshop* (1967). She got divorced before travelling to Japan using the proceeds of Somerset Maugham Award she recieved for her successful work *Several Perceptions* (1968). She spent two years in Tokyo where she, in her own words, "learnt what it is to be a woman and became radicalised" (*Nothing Sacred* 46). She wrote *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and *Love* (1970) along with her experiences in Japan in her articles for *New Society* and in her short stories collected in *Fireworks:*

Nine Profane Pieces (1974). She also claimed that the traces of her experience there can be seen in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972). After Japan, she travelled to the United States, Asia and Europe, and began to work as a writer in residence, visiting professor and tutor in writing at Brown University, the University of Adelaide, and the University of East Anglia in the late 70s and 80s. Between the years 1976 and 78, she was the Arts Council of Great Britain Fellow in Sheffield. In 1977, in the year that her novel, *The Passion of the New Eve*, was published, she married and had a son. Later, she published *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) and one of her most controversial essays, *The Sadeian Woman and Ideology of Pornography* (1979). The latter work deconstructs the arguments that lay beneath the former and "it is about desire and its destruction, the self-immolation of women, how women collude and connive with their condition of enslavement" which revealed that "[s]he was much more independent-minded than the traditional feminists of her time" (Warner 2012). In 1984, she published one of her most known novels, *Nights at the Circus*, which won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for literature in the same year, and in 1991, she published her final novel, *Wise Children*. As to her non-fictional works, her articles in *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *New Statesman* are collected in *Shaking a Leg* (1968), and she wrote two radio dramas along with the dramas adapted from her short stories. She was also actively involved in the film adaptations of her *Company of Wolves* (1984) and *The Magic Toyshop* alongside her other produced and unproduced screenplays and dramatic writings. She was a prolific writer in various fields, from dramas to children's stories, until she passed away aged 51 in 1992 because of lung cancer from which she had been suffering for almost a year.

For Linden Peach, Carter's novels, short-fiction, children's fiction and non-fiction interconnect although she "was always interested […] in blurring the boundaries between them, challenging our perceptions of what we mean, for example, by a short story or a novel" (3). The subversive and contentious nature of her work is mostly what lies beneath the great contributions she made to the development of the English novel, such as her magic realism, surrealist writing and weird feminism. Her non-realistic but profoundly philosophical writing explores, through a great deal of implications of cultural criticism, the actualities that many people experience. As

Peach states, "her novels deconstruct the processes that produce social structures and shared meanings" (4). Her novels deny, resist and subvert definitions and frames of all kind, from literary to sexual, religious and even ontological. What is more interesting is that it is not easy, and from time to time impossible, to locate a particular world view in her writing. Through her masterly subversions, she disrupts the common "socio-historical assumptions and conventions which have prescribed and organised our thinking" (Peach 6).

Although Carter argues, in *The Sadeian Woman*, that it is essential for the artist to know the world, she almost never applies social realism as a technique in her novels if not to subvert or mock the technique. Her novels, on the contrary, can be considered as ludic and characterised by linguistic play the purpose of which is, again, subversion. For Dennis Potter, as societies change, different techniques are required to cope with and mock or criticise the new shapes of them (Gilbert 31). Carter's greatest contribution to literature and, particularly, to the English novel is her playfulness on language and subversive techniques. While social realist fiction presents the general plot by naturalising it "so that we trust what we are reading" (Peach 6), Carter applies alienating techniques in her non-realistic fiction which "distances, or even alienates, us: we are disturbed, puzzled, confused and possibly very critical of what we are reading" (Peach 6). Defamiliarisation in literature is applied mostly with the aim of presenting a common experience as foreign and strange to the readers in order to make them aware of the details and nuances that are impossible for them to perceive. Such writers have the purpose of making readers critical towards their every day life by puzzling and shocking them. Such is the aim of Carter's fiction; by applying defamiliarisation to her novels, she raises everyday things, in Willett's words on the technique, "above the level of the obvious and automatic" (92). Supporting this idea, Elaine Jordan states that "there are no naturalistically credible imitations of experience in Carter's work and no role models either, not in any simple sense" (121). The reason for that is the subversive and alienating nature of Carter's novels which aims at presenting everyday conceptualisations not as how they are perceived, but as how they are not perceived in order to make the reader aware of the reality that s/he lives in by way of shock and irritation. This subversive nature of Carter's "strange, ribald novels –

undecorous, overripe and mocking tales in which nothing is sacred and natural" is what makes her "the one-off" (Gerrard 20). In relation to this, Peach suggests that "Carter's fiction encourages us to perceive for ourselves the processes that produce social structures, sociohistorical concepts and cultural artefacts" (9), and presents Carter's persistent demythologising of the idealisation of the mother figure as an example. Carter's work generally includes ironic or parodical descriptions of women and mother is the chief figure the definition of which Carter subverts. Carter's purpose of including such descriptions in her work is mainly to expose the fact that common definitions and conceptualisations of women as mother are constructed only to obscure "a socially conditioned female subjectivity and sexuality under a blanket of myth" (Robinson 118). This means that, as Carter believes, the definition of femininity is a socially constructed one and the socially defined female is a myth which covers the conditioned nature of female subjectivity and sexuality.

Another characteristic of her novels is, according to Peach, the post-war traumas that Carter experienced as a child and youngster. Peach claims that Carter's fiction owes its savage and ribald style, and melancholic and depressive athmosphere to her post-war upbringing (13). Indeed, Carter, in her early novels, depicts Britain as dark, depressive, at a loss, decline in prestige, and melancholic, even romantic. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the infant's realisation that the mother is gone and lost forever, and that it is not possible to obtain the mother any more creates a depressive state, mourning and melancholy in the child (*Seminar 4* 195). After two world wars and the loss of the colonies, the long expected democracy achieved to leave the queen powerless, and with the economical decline, Britain lost its former glory. This depiction of Britain in "a condition of loss" as a nation which "after 1945, began to separate from its mythical mother" may point to the psychoanalytical concept mentioned above (Peach 14). Supporting this idea, in Carter's novels, it is often possible to observe characters experiencing the loss of their mothers such as Morris in *Shadow Dance*, Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop*, Lee in *Love* or Desiderio in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman.* All these characters suffer from the loss of their mothers and seek another object to replace that loss with, which often proves to be insufficient or inefficient. In this sense, Carter seems to be interested in mourning

and melancholic figures for whom "sadness is in reality the only object" (Kristeva 185 qtd. in Lechte).

Along with the other characteristics of Carter's novels, her constant references to mythology, the Bible, European literary works, films and art, fairy tales, opera, ballet, music, and linguistic and psychoanalytic theories may be among the most important ones. For Peach, Carter often "refers to two or three different frameworks for the same referent in the same paragraph" (18). It is obvious that her voice as a novelist can be located in the intertextual nature of her work. Her education at Bristol University indicates that she was especially interested in and familiar with the French Symbolists and Dadaists, and with Shakespeare and medieval literature the traces of which are obvious in her work. In accordance with its intense intertextual nature, one can call Carter's work, in Kristeva's words, a *mosaique de citations*. Although Carter's intertextuality covers the features of what Kristeva defines as *intertextualité,* (qtd. in Lechte 104, Kristeva's definition includes not only literature, but art in general – i.e. music, dance, drama, painting etc.), what is characteristic about the intertextual quality of Carter's novels is her purpose of employing such a technique. She actually makes use of intertextuality for alienating and defamiliarising purposes. As Peach argues, "Carter renders Western culture as foreign. The texts are driven by the twin processes of 'defamiliarisation' – making literary and the familiar strange – and 'deconstruction'" (19) and in developing such a purpose, the influence of Japan is of utmost importance. Peach regards Carter's visit to Japan as a "watershed" (21) in her literary career for the fact that it developed a "more pronounced sense of artificiality of culture and of the self as a product of social and cultural processes" observable in her later novels (21). Supporting this idea, Lorna Sage points out that Japan "confirmed [Carter] in her sense of strangeness" (29).

A Lacanian reading of Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) and *Nights at the Circus* (1984) helps clarify Carter's major concerns about the construction of identities and particularly gendered identities, and the depths of the human psyche and human subjectivity with respect to the discourse and discursive reality. Carter's surrealist novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, portrays human subjects who are enslaved by their fantasies and desires constructed by

the machines invented by a sadistic scientist. In the Lacanian sense, the reality modifying machines can be considered discourse and the creator of them, Doctor Hoffman, the Father. The imperious power of the scientist, Doctor Hoffman, creates a new form of reality where nothing is bound by the normal rules of physics, and like the Father in the Lacanian psychoanalytical context, he imposes his own discourse on people, forcing the people into a painful passage to his own Symbolic Order. In such a disastrous situation, Desiderio, the main character of the novel, sets off for a journey to find and assassinate Doctor Hoffman. However, several times, Desiderio becomes the slave of his constucted fantasies. Throughout his journey, the reader follows the development in Desiderio step by step through the mazes of his unconscious. In the first chapter, the reading of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* focuses mainly upon Desiderio and Hoffman, but roles and analyses of the other characters, such as Albertina, Count and the Minister, are also indispensible for a full analysis of the novel. This said, the novel is examined within the framework of Lacanian developmental stages and acquisition of language in connection to 'the name of the father', the Lacanian phallus, Imaginary and Symbolic orders, concepts under the heading of desire, desire of the Other and objet-petit a, the concept of jouissance and surplus jouissance. The subversive and blurring nature of the text and the detailed manner of the narration is also discussed from Lacanian perspective along with the characters and the context. It is concluded that, through its characters and textuality, the novel suggests that the reality is a discursive construction and can be deconstructed in order to escape from the impositions, restrictions and prohibitions of phallogocentric discourse.

In *Nights at the Circus*, Carter deals with the deceptiveness of what can be seen and experienced, and questions the reality through her characters, Fevvers, a winged aerialiste with a fabulous appearance, and Walser, a journalist, who, obsessed with the unbelievable story of Fevvers, is determined to discover the truth about her. In the first half of the novel, the reader is introduced to the story of Fevvers narrated by herself, and her own unconscious and Lacanian infantile development are revealed through this narration. In the second half, Walser's development and his journey to find the truth about Fevvers who later becomes his object of desire is dealt with. Walser's growing

obsession, his temporary amnesia which leads him to re-experience the developmental stages of Lacan, Fevver's extended Mirror Stage and freedom to make her own definitions reflect and exemplify the Lacanian conceptualisations discussed above. In this novel, also, the three phases of infantile development, the formation of the subject, search for the Real, the nature of desire, the constructed nature of reality and its unreliability as a referent, and other concepts related to these terms can be observed. In the second chapter of the thesis, as a result of the analysis of the novel and its textuality discussed in the light of the concepts mentioned above, it is concluded that gendered definitions are discursively constructed and in order to become a free subject, one can deconstruct the reality and discourse that is imposed on him/her by the societal powers, by making his/her own definitions.

Both *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* portray how the boundaries between reality and fantasy are blurred, how the infant travels through the developmental stages and Lacanian three Orders towards his/her transformation into the human subject, exploring the ways in which desire is determined by the discursive powers, and the relationship between the subject and the object. These two novels are specifically chosen in order to examine thoroughly the workings and functions of the human subjectivity, especially under the influence of the Father. They provide valuable perspectives for understanding the mechanisms and functions of human psyche, which influences, overshadows and determines the perception of the outer world. The new approaches in the psychoanalytical conceptualizations provide new discursive paradigms concerning human subjectivity in its relations to the imperious powers of discourse and language. Therefore, in this study, it is concluded that as all the reality is constructed by discourse in Lacanian understanding of language and as the deceitfulness of the unconscious, which is structured like a language, is undeniable in perceiving the outer world, the boundaries between reality and unreality can be blurred and the reality as humankind experiences it can be questioned. The roles of the Father and the mother in infantile development, the power of the discourse and the struggle of the ego between the super ego and the id, the location of the Real and desire, and the relationship between the subject and the

object is specifically discussed in the context of the novels *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus*.

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENTAL JOURNEY OF A YOUNG MAN: A LACANIAN READING OF *THE INFERNAL DESIRE MACHINES OF DOCTOR HOFFMAN*

But he did not understand the price. Mortals never do.
They only see the prize, their heart's desire, their dream...
But the price of getting what you want, is getting what you once wanted.
(Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman, Vol. 3: Dream Country*)

Every life is inexplicable, I kept telling myself.
No matter how many facts are told, no matter how many
details are given, the essential thing resists telling.
(Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy*)

Most of the critics agree on the assumption that although Angela Carter had always been an experimental and remarkably a marginal writer with "a powerful imagination [...] a capacity for looking at the mess of contemporary experience without flinching" (Burgess qtd. in Sage 51), after her three-year trip to Japan, Carter's experimental tone gained strength and became even more characteristic. According to Bristow and Broughton, during Carter's time in Japan, her fiction "became more speculative, intellectually more demanding, and increasingly absorbed with sexual perversity" (3). Carter produced *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (henceforth *The Infernal*) just after she left Japan. The novel is generally considered "her most philosophically complex novel [...] which reveals her deep acquintance with Freudian thought, Levi-Strauss's anthropological research, and the surrealism of André Breton" (Bristow and Broughton 3) as, in *The Infernal*, Carter deals with the infant's struggle between the demands of the id on the one hand and the super ego on the other through

his/her formation of the ego. Also, her characters encounter anthropologically different cultures during their journey through a series of surreal adventures in the unconscious. Taking a general look at her fiction, right from her first novel, *Shadow Dance* (1966), to her last, *Wise Children* (1991), one can see that Carter's work exposes a fascinating arrangement of cultural and cross-cultural references which are de-nested from the cultural codes embedded on the human unconscious. As "Lacan understands the human being as an organism-in-culture" (Lopez 9), by her arrangement of cultural and cross-cultural references, Carter portrays the "process of internalising culture" which "takes place when the individual enters the symbolic order of language" (Lopez 9).

It is evident from Carter's fiction that while deconstructing the culture in order to portray the individual's internalisation of it, she makes a brilliant use of fantasy, myths and legends, and of surrealism in terms of technique. Her anti-realist style and turn to legends, fairy tales and the Gothic was not simply to create or explore other worlds, the domains which enabled her to express her critical thoughts on this world and to simulate and subvert the human life and human nature itself on a fabulous ground, but to work "within and against the conventions of these genres because they contained a significant cultural knowledge about the power that narratives of many different kinds exert on historical processes" (Bristow and Broughton 13). Therefore, if *The Infernal* is to be considered a novel which is fed by some genres as travel writing, science fiction, fantasy, myth making, and Gothic, it should be noted that Carter's use of these genres is not only to elaborate her fiction and narrative, but also to subvert such genres and, through such subversion, to achieve a thorough understanding of them in order to explore and portray the human nature and its history of evolution under the domination of different types of societal powers. As Elaine Jordan observes, a "persistent typology of characters in Angela Carter's writing links societies dominated by some absolute ideal of scientific reason with societies dominated by magic ritual and theosophy" (34) and that Carter's fiction is populated by both "scientific manipulators" such as Doctor Hoffman, and "shamanistic myth-makers" such as Nao-Kurai, whose lust for knowledge, desire to be the power-holder, and "will to experiment with people and their consciousness" (34) are pretty much the same. Also, judging from another character from the novel, named the Count, it is possible to say that building separate

stacks of characters standing for the possible (science) and the impossible (myth) side by side in the same novel was not challenging enough for Carter, since she wanted to blur all the boundaries between reality and illusion. Thus, she built a character, namely the Count, who stands for reality and illusion at the same time, never prioritizing one over the other, through being his "own anti-thesis" (*The Infernal* 106). So, the novel lays bare Desiderio's journey through a fantasy world which "embodies a power to influence, distort, but also reconstruct" (Bristow and Broughton 14) the real world which is also a journey to the depths of the unconscious, and it illustrates the development of a young man's pyche at a time when his reality is attacked by another, during which he seeks for a father figure to serve, his ultimate object of desire, the final meaning of human life, and the boundaries between what is real and what is not. In this sense, Lacan's theories are so applicable to the novel that throughout the whole novel, Desiderio's developmental phases overlap Lacanian phases of the psyche, portraying the individual's initiation into language and also adulthood in the most accurate way.

In this chapter, through the Lacanian reading of *The Infernal*, the infant's developmental journey and the process of the infant's initiation into and subjectification by reality which is constructed by discourse are detailly evaluated. Judging from the self-reflexive quality of the text, it is argued that this novel, which is about the creation of a novel, vividly portrays the formation of the free subject who chooses to follow his/her own decisions and definitions instead of obeying the norms, restrictions and prohibitions of the discursive reality.

In *The Infernal*, the story is told by Desiderio, the main character, whose name means "the desired one" (*The Infernal* 58), 50 years after a war between a demonic scientist named Hoffman and the Minister of Determination, who rules the city where Desiderio was born and has spent his life so far. Desiderio's memoir begins with a preface written, again, by Desiderio in which he introduces himself, his story, the reasons why he is writing it, and the only thing he always pursued during his adventures, that is Hoffman's daughter Albertina. At the end of the preface, Desiderio expresses his profound grief for being the murderer of the one with whom he was deeply in love, arousing a curiosity on the reasons behind his decision to kill her.

After his short introduction, Desiderio depicts his hometown in detail sieged by Hoffman and his machines which distort reality and produce powerful illusions which are very difficult to distinguish real objects and events. Also, Hoffman sends his guerillas into the town to take control of the city. The Minister and his scientists develop defense strategies against Hoffman's attacks but all of them turn out to be useless. Desiderio is a very close and loyal servant to the Minister and he sees the Minister as a father figure. After Hoffman sends his ambassador for negotiations on the Minister's surrender, the Minister realises the gravity of the situation and sends Desiderio on a mission to assassinate Hoffman.

In the mean time, a ghost-like girl begins to haunt Desiderio's dreams and gradually becomes the only thing Desiderio wants to obtain. Later, it is understood that this girl, who appears in many disguises throughout Desiderio's journey, is no one but Albertina. Desiderio leaves the city in order to find Hoffman's castle. Throughout his fabulous journey, he encounters many extraordinary characters whom he depicts in a really detailed and realistic manner: the somnambulist young girl, the River People who seem to be the descendants of the same ancestors as that of Desiderio, people travelling with the circus that Desiderio joins, the Acrobats of Desire who rape Desiderio, the Count who is capable of distorting the reality, the pirates that worship a giant sword, the black pimp and his female army, the centaurs and, finally, Desiderio's target, Hoffman, the criminal genius. Before he notices Hoffman's corrupted sense of conscience and malevolent intention to dominate the world, Desiderio is ready to serve him as he loves his daughter so dearly and is easily seduced by her. However, Desiderio changes his mind at the last moment and kills both Hoffman and Albertina, destroys the reality modifying machines and escapes from the castle. When he returns to his hometown, he is welcomed as a war hero although he does not want to be known as one. He never sees himself as a hero. He still grieves for he has lost Albertina forever.

According to the Lacanian method, while reading a text, its textuality should be evaluated as well. Having an episodic structure, in which each chapter is linked by two particular characters, Desiderio and Albertina, yet held apart by its individual plot, the text of *The Infernal* consists of various individual subplots with the connective quality

of some points that contribute to the main plot. Regarding this episodic style, it can be said that the textuality of the novel goes parallel with the Lacanian method in the sense that Lacan also examines the infantile psychic development by dividing it into certain periods each of which has its own beginning and end, conflicts and climax while each period contributes to the whole developmental journey and linked together with the other periods by the same main character, i. e. the subject. So, for the Lacanian reader, as the episodic plot structure of *The Infernal* goes parallel with the episodic structure of the Lacanian infantile development, it is possible to read the novel as the infantile development of Desiderio. In this sense, each subplot that *The Infernal* contains can be associated with Lacan's developmental stages both in textuality and context, and the main character, Desiderio, can be regarded as the Lacanian subject. As is examined thoroughly in this chapter under the title "The Father", in the first chapter of the novel, "The City Under Siege," Desiderio is a Lacanian infant experiencing the Imaginary Order. In the second chapter, "The Mansion of Midnight," he is introduced to the Mirror Stage, and throughout the remaining chapters, he enters Symbolic Order, experiences an Oedipal crisis, chases his object of desire and at the end of his journey, he is dragged into melancholy upon realizing that the object of desire, thus ultimate satisfaction, cannot be reached since it is impossible to find it in the Order of the Symbolic.

Desire and desire's true nature in the Lacanian sense is central to *The Infernal* as "desire stands as the central presence/absence around which subjectivity is constructed" (Lopez 9) in the Lacanian theory. As it is stated in the Introduction, desire springs from a lack, an absent signifier, in other words the phallus, which cannot be found in the Symbolic Order as, it is the original signifier, the initiator of the language and discourse, which, if found, may lead the subject to the final meaning. Desiderio, just like the Lacanian subject, lacks the phallus and throughout the novel, he goes on his quest as a result of his desire to find it. His desire for his object is so powerful that, Hoffman plans to use Desiderio's libidinal energy in order to feed his reality modifying machines and obtain a power which will enable him to achieve world domination. As this lack sets desire in motion on an endless chain of desires, just like the original signifier starts an infinite chain of signifiers, and gives the subject the

motive to live on, it gives Desiderio the motive to go on his journey. As the original object of desire, which is being the desire of the mother, in other words obtaining the phallus, which the infant thinks is what the mother desires, is always already absent in the Symbolic Order, the subject chases objects that can substitute for it, and these substitutes are called "objet-petit-a" (*Seminar 8* 177) and thus Albertina becomes the objet-petit-a for Desiderio in his search for the phallus. When the subject obtains his/her object of desire, the lack that provides motivation to live on dissappears. If the lack of the object disappears, the subject loses his/her motive to live on. In this sense, what the subject really desires is not obtaining the objet-petit-a. On the contrary, the subject wishes to chase it forever. That is why, just at the last moment before Desiderio obtains Albertina, he gives her up and kills her, thus prevents himself from getting his object of desire forever as he realizes that possessing the object will not provide him a final satisfaction. On the contrary, it will destroy his motives behind living on and will imprison him into a ring of eternal recurrence, without an aim or a final destination. Desiderio's fear of losing the lack by obtaining the object shows that he, as a bidding of his human nature, chooses to preserve his eternal pursuit of the object and, thus, after all, he is a human being. Discovering that reaching the object is necessarily impossible, Desiderio is dragged into melancholy and mourning like the Lacanian infant. Desiderio's pursuit of Albertina is closely evaluated from the Lacanian perspective, and through this evaluation, the true nature of desire and its discursive nature is revealed under the title "The Object" in this chapter.

The novel is a first-person narrative, in which the events that happen 50 years before Desiderio decides to narrate them are written only from Desiderio's point of view, and what the other characters say can only be read from Desiderio's accounts of them. Although Hoffman is long dead, Desiderio's narration is very detailed and he seems to "remember everything perfectly" (*The Infernal* 3). He can even give a very clear report of Albertina's explanations as to how her father's machines work even though Desiderio does not understand what she says but nods anyway "to save face" (*The Infernal* 205). The detailed manner of his accounts seems to have the purpose of increasing the verisimilitude of his story while the events that he claims to have experienced are mostly unbelievable. However, through the explanations of the peep-

show proprietor, the novel itself conveys that an account gets even more unreliable as the person describing it goes into minute detail. In this sense, as the unconscious speaks the subject, the Lacanian reader may not be sure about what Desiderio has experienced, but s/he can definitely be sure about how he has experienced it, as Desiderio unintentionally discloses the real events while depicting them in minute detail. This gives the textuality of *The Infernal* a self-reflexive quality. The text of the novel, by depicting the unbelievable in the most realistic way, reveals the truth that it is a novel about how to write fiction. Until the very end of the novel, the reader is aware of the fact that this truth, which simultaneously reveals and hides itself, is hidden under the account of Desiderio, and in this chapter, the truth behind the narration is discovered through a Lacanian reading of the novel under the title "The Machines."

1.1. THE FATHER

Desiderio is a young man living in an unnamed city in South America. His mother was a prostitute who has gone religious in her old age, and Desiderio does not know who his father is. The only thing Desiderio knows about him is that he was a Native American, an assumption which he deduces from his "Indian extraction" (*The Infernal* 10). However, his father's origins are not so clear. He may either be a Red Indian of North America, or may come from one of the Mayan cultures of the South, which is more likely for when Desiderio meets the River People, for the first time in his life he feels "the strongest sense of home-coming" (*The Infernal* 86) from which one can assume that Desiderio's unknown father may be one of them whose historical and mystical lore show similarity to that of the Mayan cultures.

So, his father's physical existence may be absent, but Desiderio carries the distinctive appearance that he inherited from his father everywhere he goes. Sometimes this appearance gets Desiderio into trouble among people who have discriminative conceptions, while sometimes it helps Desiderio and even saves his life as can be seen from the River People's hospitality towards him. Whatever the outcome is, Desiderio, whose father is always absent, still carries his father's influence as a blessing or a curse. This corresponds to the Lacanian concept of the phallus which is defined by

Lacan as an abstract notion which exists with its absence as it "appears in the place of the lack of the signifier in the Other" (*Seminar 8* 278). In other words, since the infant wants to be the desire of the mother, he wants to obtain the father's position, and for the infant, it is only possible through obtaining the father's penis, what the infant supposes is the object of desire of the mother, yet even the father himself lacks it for the object of desire is, naturally and necessarily, beyond the subject's reach. This makes the phallus a lack and in this sense, the phallus is "the original signifier" (*Ecrits* 285), and causes the notion of Father to be transcendental, which means the physical body of the father may be gone, but his influence, authority and prohibitions always remain. This is what Lacan means by "nom-du-peré" (*Ecrits* 67): Father's name is enough to convey his existence, his physical being is not needed.

Such is Desiderio's case; he has never known his father, but his inheritance and restrictions always remind Desiderio of their existence. Moreover, his father's absence in Desiderio's life urges Desiderio to seek for a master that he can follow as the lack that his father's absence causes gives way to a never-ending chain of signifiers and sends Desiderio on a mission to find the phallus. Whenever he encounters a strong male character, Desiderio immediately tries to see whether that man may be a master he can serve, or a leader he can follow, or, the father that he seeks for. Desiderio himself remarks "perhaps I was indeed looking for a master – perhaps the whole history of my adventure could be titled 'Desiderio in Search of a Master' " (*The Infernal* 231) which reveals that he is aware of his own search for a father figure.

Throughout his pursuit of the phallus, Desiderio tries to see his father in characters such as Nao-Kurai, the leader of the River People, the peep-show proprietor who was the master of the peep-machine, and Doctor Hoffman, the master of reality-modifying machines whom Desiderio sets off for a journey to assassinate.

In his hometown, which is as unnamed as his parentage, thus indefinite, Desiderio is always willing to serve the Minister of Determination who, according to Desiderio, "possesse[s] supernatural strength of mind to have stood out so long and it [is] his phenomenal intransigence alone which upheld the city" (*The Infernal* 26). The Minister does not seem to "suffer from the paradoxically substantial mirages that

blighted everyone else's lives" for he believes that "[i]t [is not] a matter of human beings representing this reality in their minds: they could access it pure" (Day 66-67). This character of the Minister seems to be parallel with the Lacanian infant's misconception (in the Imaginary Order until the Mirror Stage) that the world is unified with him, thus the infant can purely access to the reality and the reality is exactly how s/he perceives it.

Desiderio seems to enjoy serving this powerful male figure and speaking highly of him, and the Minister is not only a father figure for Desiderio; with his position and power, he is a symbolic father for the whole city. If the city is considered to be a Symbolic Order per se as a close community which has its own rules, order and reality that is attacked by another one, the Minister is the one to be placed as the rule maker and conveyer of the law and restrictions for he has the full control over the city's reality with his "immense computer centre which would formulate a systematic procedure for calculating the varifiable self-consistency of any given object" (*The Infernal* 20). Also, the Minister is the one who determines whether the people's experiences are real or not as the name of his position, the Minister of Determination, suggests. Moreover, The Minister has the control of the police force, named the Determination Police, which serves his purposes of protecting the city's reality against Hoffman's metaphysical attacks. As can be seen, the Minister has a great central power, and he is determined to maintain this position and never surrender to Hoffman. The Minister "sees the human imagination as an undisciplined and even dangerous faculty" (Day 67) as human imagination is slippery, unreliable and abstract. So, it is impossible to control and consequently it turns into a dangerous weapon in the hands of Hoffman. For the Minister, there is no "slippage between a word and the object to which it refers; boundaries, rules and hierarchies are clearly defined" (Peach 102) which renders the Minister a structuralist outlook. On the other hand, "Hoffman's world is one of the *simulacra* where signifier and signified bear only the most arbitrary relationship to each other" (Peach 102 , italics in original) which appropriates Hoffman's attitude, and places it close to that of the post-structuralist. When Hoffman's use of fantasies and aim to objectify the desires is taken into consideration, the war between the Minister and the Doctor becomes "a war between the Reality

Principle and the Pleasure Principle" (Peach 100). With the Minister on one hand representing the super ego, and Hoffman on the other representing the id, Desiderio becomes the Lacanian infant who has to solve the conflict between these two unconscious structures through the formation of the ego.

However, when Desiderio's position in the city and in the whole novel as the main character is taken into consideration, the Lacanian positions of both the Minister and the city might be different. Both the city and the Minister remain nameless throughout the novel, which makes them indefinite, and leaves them out of the Symbolic. The Minister could be any minister in the world, and the city could be any city as well which can be imagined, as Carter speaks of it, as "an inventory of imaginary cities" (Carter qtd. in Sage 56). They are portrayed not with their names but by how they are experienced by Desiderio. Although they are not given any names by which they could be signified and join the never-ending network of signifiers, Desiderio depicts them in minute detail and it is his experience which makes them unique. So, it is never known who exactly the Minister is or where exactly the city is located. The only certainty about them is how they were perceived by Desiderio. If the novel is considered a Lacanian developmental journey and Desiderio the Lacanian infant who experiences a development, the journey's starting point, in this case, the city, should be observed as to whether it bears any resemblance to the start of Lacan's developmental stages which is the Imaginary Order.

The introduction of the first chapter has a descriptive narration. The whole chapter until the arrival of Hoffman's ambassador is full of depictions of the city, the Minister and information about Hoffman's background. Desiderio depicts Hoffman's attacks, guerillas, distortions of reality, and the Minister's defensive strategies, laboratories and theories in a detailed manner. There are so few words that suggest action. Inspite of the ongoing war, the intensity of the depictions and the immense usage of adjectives instead of verbs draw the picture of a stable city. Such a static and closed city, given to the fact that it is Desiderio's birthplace, can be interpreted as the Imaginary Order in the Lacanian sense which is a stable period in which the infant perceives the world through images instead of words and names of the objects, and has the misconception that s/he is one with his/her environment. Moreover, there are no mirrors in the city for

the Minister has all the mirrors broken in order to prevent Hoffman from using them as weapons to modify the current reality.

Considering the fact that many other works of Angela Carter such as *Nights at the Circus* include at least one important scene with mirrors, it seems that "[t]he mirror, of course, is one of Carter's favourite motifs: to gaze in the mirror is to perceive oneself as other, to address oneself as other" (Bannock 201) since seeing his/her own reflection in the mirror challenges the way one perceives himself/herself and creates an alienation from his/her reflection. Likewise, as the mirror is what changes the imaginary reality in the Lacanian theory in suggesting that when the infant sees himself/herself in the mirror, s/he both identifies himself/herself with the image s/he sees and feels alienated from it for what s/he sees is against how he perceives himself/herself. In this sense, Hoffman's use of mirrors for his metaphysical assaults gains importance for the Lacanian reader. Simultaneously identifying with and being alienated from his/her mirror image, the infant is led towards an exit from the Imaginary phase. So, as there are no mirrors in the city, it can be suggested that Desiderio, as an infant, has not experienced the Mirror Stage in the first chapter. Thus, it can be said that Desiderio is in the Imaginary Order while he is still in the city. Also, the Minister, whom Desiderio regards as a father, is a powerful, determined and unshakable figure with a "touch of scholasticism" (*The Infernal* 20), an aspect that also contributes to his unquestionable authority. Desiderio struggles to negate the new reality imposed by Hoffman, yet, when the novel's plotline is taken into consideration, it is the Minister's determination to resist Hoffman that gives way to the war and to Desiderio's journey into the signification process, from a world of nameless characters to a world full of characters with names.

The second chapter, "The Mansion of Midnight," is the one where, arguably, Desiderio experiences the Mirror Stage. After Desiderio's sexual intercourse with the somnambulist young girl named Mary Anne, whose father, the Mayor, has mysteriously gone missing, Desiderio sees the girl in her room brushing her hair who "smile[s] at [him] remotely in the mirror" (*The Infernal* 61). They do not stare at each other directly. Their eyes meet in the mirror. Mary Anne does not remember what has passed between Desiderio and herself the night before. Although Desiderio expects a

trace of memory in her eyes, he cannot find it and feels "bewildered" (*The Infernal* 61) to see Mary Anne acting as a stranger although they are supposed to be very intimate. Also,just like the infant who thinks that all the world is one with himself/herself, and gets disappointed when s/he sees the images in the mirror are separate, Desiderio thinks that he became one with Mary Anne through sexual intercourse at night, yet in the morning, he sees a total stranger in the mirror who is painfully separate from himself. Thus, he makes his entrance into the Mirror Stage.

Desiderio fully experiences the Mirror Stage when he walks towards Mary Anne and sees his own image in the mirror after a long time:

> I saw my own reflection for the first time since the beginning of the war. I saw that I was aged a little and was now as cynical as a satyr in a Renaissance painting. My face, poor mother, had all the inscrutability of the Indian. I greeted myself like a friend. (*The Infernal* 62)

So, Desiderio expects his appearance to be the same as how it was before the war and gets surprised upon seeing that he has changed a little, and yet still carrying his father's legacy on his face although he does not feel as a Native American. At that moment, Desiderio recognises himself in the mirror yet simultaneously feels alienated from his own image. It can be clearly understood from how he greets his image in the mirror. He greets himself, which shows that he knows it is his own image, yet the way he does it is like greeting a friend which shows that he sees himself like a stranger at the same time.

When Mary Anne dies, the peep-show proprietor and the people living in the town lay the blame on Desiderio, and he is taken under custody by the Determination Police. As soon as Desiderio experiences the Mirror Stage, he is seen as an outlaw by the police force of his hometown, which clearly indicates his alienation from the Imaginary Order. After his escape from the Mayor's office which he achieves by means of climbing through the chimney, as an outcast, he has to leave behind his hometown and his identity to which he hopes to return someday. He changes his clothes in order not to be recognised by the police. He tries to get in contact with the Minister, but it seems that the city is cut off from the rest of the world due to the ongoing war. The awful

truth immediately becomes obvious to Desiderio. He is now casted out of the Imaginary Order and there is no turning back to it, which means he has to go on his journey and needs to learn and adopt the rules, prohibitions and restrictions of this new reality, in other words, the Symbolic Order, in order to survive.

The Infernal "feature[s] a number of differently organised social structures" and Desiderio has to "assume in serial fashion a number of different identities" (Peach 99). Each of the communities that Desiderio encounters after the Mirror Stage seems to have established their own social order through their own linguistic system, and given the episodic structure of the novel, each of these communities can be interpreted as different Symbolic Orders of which Desiderio becomes a part by acquiring their languages and discourses. With the acquisition of language comes the obtaining of the rules, restrictions and norms of the community moulded by the discourse. In line with the Lacanian infant introduced to the Symbolic Order by the Father, every single one of these communities has an authoritative father figure who invites Desiderio into their community and discourse.

While Desiderio tries to find his father figure, the chieftain of the River People (the first of the Symbolic Orders that Desiderio finds himself in), Nao-Kurai, is the first of the father figures he encounters on his way. Desiderio is saved by him thanks to his Indian appearance, and is accepted to the River People's society in a really short time for the same reason. Theirs is an isolated society which is "entirely self-contained" with an "absolutely consistent logic which owed little or nothing to the world outside" (*The Infernal* 79). Desiderio quickly learns their language which is functional rather than elaborate. This language "posed philosophical as well as linguistic problems" (*The Infernal* 80) such as the problematic plurality of the words, the lack of difference between the particular and the universal, and the lack of abstract nouns and the verb "to be". Such qualities of their language reflect their way of life. As the unconscious speaks the subject, judging from their language, it is not surprising to see that the River People live "with a complex, hesitant, but absolute immediacy" (*The Infernal* 81). Their way of life and the language they speak are so parallel. The more Desiderio gets hold of their language, the more he absorbs their way of life. Living among the River People provides Desiderio with a perfect hiding place from the Determination Police.

However, Desiderio is not only grateful for such a shelter, he also loves these people as he states: “some streak of atavistic, never-before acknowledged longing in my heart now found itself satisfied” (*The Infernal* 86). As he goes on learning their language, he even decides to abandon his quest and live among these people where he feels “the strongest sense of home-coming” (*The Infernal* 86). The first reason why he feels this way can be attributed to the Indian extraction which he inherited from his father.

As the infant feels safe and secure when s/he is one with the mother who is the provider of all needs, the River People embraces Desiderio like a mother embraces her child, and they provide not only his biological needs, but his emotional needs as well. As an infant who has just left the Imaginary Order, Desiderio looks for the place to which he really belongs, and where he feels at one with his environment like he used to do when he was in the Imaginary Order. The ultimate desire of the Lacanian infant is to be desired by the mother. During the Imaginary phase, the infant feels calm, peaceful and relaxed as s/he has the delusion that s/he is completely unified with the mother. However, during and after the Mirror Stage, the infant realizes that he is not at one with the mother and there is an authoritative figure named the Father who decides when and in what way the infant can possess the mother’s desire. That is why the infant longs for a return to the Imaginary Order where s/he is in coalescence with the mother. According to Lacan, fantasy is a defensive mechanism for the reason that fantasizing something that is impossible to achieve or obtain protects the infant or the subject from the anxiety caused by the lack of it. Knowing that it is impossible to turn back to the Imaginary phase, the infant often fantasises about it or looks for the substitutes of the Imaginary Order that gives him/her the same feeling of unity or “home-coming” in the Symbolic Order. So, it can be suggested that Desiderio as a Lacanian infant who has just left the Imaginary Order is in need of such a substitute, and thus wants to be accepted into the River People’s Symbolic Order.

Hence, Desiderio decides to adopt the River People’s lifestyle and in order to do that, he not only learns their language, but internalizes it as well. Once he internalizes it, the social codes and law are also embedded onto his mind, as he says: “soon, my new language came to my tongue before my former one” (*The Infernal* 86-87). Just like the Lacanian infant, through the acquisition of language, Desiderio is introduced to the

Symbolic Order which constructs the infant's reality and experience and constructs him/her as a subject of that particular signification chain for it is "language [that] constructs reality" and "our sense of ourselves; it may even construct [...] 'ourselves'" (Lopez 5). In this process of subjectification, Desiderio has a new name, thus a place, in their language, which is "Kiku" meaning "the foundling bird" (*The Infernal*) For Linden Peach, the name Kiku "is much closer to the kind of sound that an infant would make at its mother's breast" (104). Thus, it can be said that Desiderio feels as though he was at the Imaginary Phase when he was one with his mother, and that feeling is supported by his name in the discourse of the River People. However, gradually, especially after he sees Albertina's face on the gipsy dancer's face in the market, Desiderio begins to feel trapped and he secretly longs for freedom. The "community spirit" and the "lack of self" in the Symbolic Order which Desiderio can observe in the River People's society causes him to "sense a singular incapacity to being, that sad, self-imposed limitation of experience" (*The Infernal* 100) in himself. In this sense, Desiderio was an infant before leaving his hometown and now, he is a growing man who can criticise the society that he is stuck in. So it is possible to say that he achieves a maturity and understanding reached through the acquisition of language.

Nao-Kurai, the chieftain of the tribes, is the one who teaches Desiderio the River People's language, which locates him as the father of the River People and of Desiderio as the conveyer of the law. Desiderio already sees him as a father figure and remarks, "Nao-Kurai might have been my father, from appereances; and I loved him already" (*The Infernal* 92). The most remarkable thing about Nao-Kurai is that although he possesses the hold of the common tongue to some extent which is vital for the River People's trade with the people living on land, as for the strict solid structure of his mind which deprives him of abstract thinking, he cannot learn how to read and write. Actually, none of the members of the tribes can. Since they lack abstract thinking, they cannot ascribe sounds to letters. They are astonished to see that Desiderio knows how to read and write. At that point Nao-Kurai decides to adopt him as his son by arranging Desiderio's marriage to his daughter, whose name is Aoi, and through that, he plans to adopt Desiderio's skills as well. However, upon seeing that

learning how to read and write is impossible, Nao-Kurai looks for the solution in the ancient lore of his people.

When Nao-Kurai inadvertantly speaks of a highly Freudian story about the discovery of fire, Desiderio sees Nao-Kurai's awful intention to kill his adopted son. According to the story, a snake spits its venom between a young girl's legs and another snake that grows within her womb keeps her warm and exits from her vagina from time to time in order to show the girl its fire. The snake, which can be interpreted as a phallic symbol, impregnates the young girl, and the fire in the girl's womb can be deduced as the symbol of life. Later in the story, to steal the secret of fire from the snake, the members of the tribe lure it out and upon seeing that none of them is able to learn how to light a fire, they cut the snake into pieces and eat it one by one, until "they could all make fire" (*The Infernal* 104). So, eating Desiderio to learn the secret of letters is Nao-Kurai's real plan. Eating Desiderio can be also considered as absorbing him into the society, thus into the Symbolic Order, for through that way Desiderio's pieces will be a part of the River People by entering into their bodies, their blood and, through their expected acquisition of reading skills, their souls.

Cutting Desiderio into pieces and the knife with which Aoi sleeps is in fact a form of the fear of castration. The Lacanian infant has an imaginary fear of castration, and conforms to the Father's Primordial Law at the end of the Oedipal Complex. But the real castration of the infant is the society's success to establish authority over the infant through the infant's internalisation of the societal authority. In this sense, Desiderio's willingness to give his own flesh and blood to the River People suggests that he has internalised this society's laws, rules, and reality.

> I fell down on my knee beside them, ready at that moment to pledge myself entirely to them, in whatever form they pleased, if they thought it would do them any good. I was almost overcome with trust and good faith. I do believe that I was crying, young fool that I was. (*The Infernal* 106)

As can be seen, Desiderio would be ready to give his flesh to the River People if he thought it would enable them to learn how to read and write. He is ready to accept the societal norms and law, and to be a part of them. However, he sees the absurdity of the

situation and realizes that living among the River People is not a real return to the Imaginary phase. Therefore, he reluctantly leaves the River People before his castration is complete.

After his escape from the River People, Desiderio encounters the peep-show proprietor again, who tries to cause Desiderio's death by provoking the people against him upon Mary Anne's death. The proprietor says that Hoffman's orders have changed and that he will keep him company during his journey towards Hoffman's castle. He is the one who gives Desiderio his quest back and, thus, sets the chain of signification in motion again to which Desiderio (unconsciously) needs to adapt himself. Desiderio finds himself in another Symbolic Order, which is remarkably different from that of the River People, and in this new reality, Hoffman is the law-maker and the central authority, from which one can deduce that Hoffman is the authoritative Father of the reality that he tries to spread all over the world. Hoffman sends his agent as a physical symbol of himself, which is the proprietor, "the keeper of his museum" (*The Infernal*), for Desiderio to learn the principles of his theories and machines. To learn the fundamentals of Hoffman's scientific theories and how his machines work is metaphorically to learn the dynamics of the Symbolic Order that Hoffman has constructed. As an infant for whom there is no turning back to the Imaginary phase, Desiderio unconsciously sees the peep-show proprietor as a father figure, and accepts his guidance during this phase of his journey. He even feels an intimacy with the proprietor and "could not help beginning to feel affection for him" (*The Infernal* 117). Until the end of their journey with the circus, it can be seen that Desiderio chooses the proprietor as the master he serves and the father he follows, and changes his own identity in every detail: "I tailored my hair and moustache to new shapes and threw away my Indian clothes, putting on instead some dark, sober garments which came with my new identity" (*The Infernal* 112).

When Desiderio joins the traveling circus, he finds himself in a completely different community than the previous ones. This new community, which can be interpreted as a new Symbolic Order, has its own norms and laws. Even though it seems like a marginal group for an outsider's eye with its abnormal members who are cast out of the society for various reasons, Desiderio's observation that "[t]hey were not in the

least aware how extraordinary they were" (155) reveal that they have built their own small society the norms of which are determined in accordance with their own reality through the language they use. As the Alligator Man, who was born with a genetic affliction inherited from his mother, says "Freak [...] is the norm" (*The Infernal* 130) which shows that the members of the circus use some words that the outer society uses for insult in order to describe something completely normal for themselves. Mamie Buckskin is another freak that travels with the circus. She was an excellent shooter and a paradox according to Desiderio as he says that she is "a fully phallic female with the bosom of a nursing mother and a gun, death dealing erectile tissue, perpetually at her thigh" (*The Infernal* 127). After his sexual intercourse with this unusually masculine yet attractive woman, Desiderio experiences his most extraordinary orgy:

> I must admit I did indeed experience Mendoza's durationless infinity. I should say I substantiated his theory for I have an idea how long the orgy lasted after we did indeed tumble into the morass of satin limbs and flailing hooves and, had there been a clock in the van, I am sure it would have exploded. (*The Infernal* 129)

The reason why Desiderio has not enjoyed such a timeless pleasure before is because he was not aware that such a thing could possibly happen. He could only experience it after the peep-show proprietor mentions Mendoza's theory of durationless infinity. The Lacanian subject can imagine and think only through signs and the proprietor says one of Hoffman's main principles is that "everything it is possible to imagine can also exist" (*The Infernal* 113). However, the subject needs signs that enable him/her to imagine. Hoffman places the necessary signs into his own Symbolic Order, and only after Desiderio hears about Mendoza's theory, it enters into Desiderio's discourse, thus becomes imaginable and then real.

Gradually, Desiderio adapts himself to the discourse of the circus and puts aside his prejudices against these unusual people. His initiation into this new community, in other words his castration by this small society, is completed after the arrival of the Acrobats of Desire. These Moroccan acrobats join the travelling circus with their astonishing show which consists of a series of acrobatic acts which are beyond all the principles of Physics. Desiderio goes to see every show of them and tries to discover

the trick behind their act yet never manages to do that. One night, Desiderio gets sexually violated by all nine of the acrobats. Upon this violent act, his entrance into the discourse of "the freak" becomes complete, which implies to the Lacanian reader that the Acrobats of Desire are Hoffman's agents whose task is to initiate Desiderio into the Symbolic Order constructed by Hoffman, because Hoffman's plan is to form a subject out of Desiderio whose eroto-energy which springs from his passion for Albertina is enough to feed his reality modifying machines. To achieve his aim, he imposes on Desiderio the discourse he constructed as. In Derrida's words, "the conscious and speaking subject depends upon the system of differences and the movement of *différance*" (*Positions* 29, italics in original) meaning that subjectivity can only be produced through discursive practices. As Chris Weedon explains, "[l]anguage constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific" (21). That is why Hoffman has Desiderio initiated into the reality that he constructed: his aim is to subjectify Desiderio to his own discourse in order to use his eroto-energy.

From how Desiderio describes his sexual violation, by the acrobats, one can deduce that it stands for a symbolic initiation that takes place in the unconscious:

> I lay on the coverlet and I think that I was calling for my mother, although it was probably Albertina. After a time, Mohammad came, fed me more coffee and, I think a little arak and held me in a fairly warm and comforting embrace, murmuring to me in his vile French that I had been initiated – although into what I had no idea. (*The Infernal* 139)

As can be seen from the passage, Desiderio calls for his mother, from whom he is detached completely, and he cannot tell his mother from Albertina, which shows that Desiderio's objet-petit-a is Albertina while the original object he chases is being his mother's desire, which is signified by the phallus. His initiator, named Mohammad, tries to comfort Desiderio as he has no evil intention. The acrobats initiate Desiderio just because it is necessary, inevitable and natural to be initiated into the Symbolic Order. It should be noted that Mohammad speaks in French, a languge foreign to Desiderio, which implies that Desiderio, like the Lacanian infant, suddenly finds himself in a discourse which is other to him. Moreover, as the Lacanian castration is

not an actual one but happens in the unconscious, Desiderio is not aware of what he is initiated into.

One of the first things that Desiderio spots when he enters the caravan is the eunuch that serves the acrobats. He is a boy aged six or seven who seems "to go in almighty fear of his protectors" (*The Infernal* 137). The eunuch can be considered as the symbol of the castrated infant and his fear of his masters shows that he has already internalised the social order. In this sense, he is a reflection of Desiderio and the harbinger of Desiderio's initiation, especially when Desiderio expresses his own fear of the acrobats: "I longed to be gone, but did not dare to move until they ordered me" (*The Infernal* 139). So, it is clear that Desiderio is in fear, he cannot dare to move unless they order him to do so. This indicates that Desiderio has internalised the castration act and his castration, thus initiation into the Symbolic Order, is complete.

After the destruction of the samples, which can be interpreted as differentiated elements, or signifiers, by the landslide, the signification chain that Hoffman's peep-show has built is deconstructed, and Desiderio finds himself in the Nebulous Time. The meaning of the word "nebulous" – lacking definition or definitive content – suggests that this chaotic period has no signifiers to build a signification process to enable the individual to experience it. That is why, this period can be interpreted as the Lacanian Real.

For Lacan, the Real is one of the three Orders along with the Imaginary and the Symbolic, and is located completely out of the Symbolic Order. While the Symbolic Order consists of differentiated components called signifiers, the Real is "undifferentiated" and "absolutely without fissure" (*Seminar 2* 97). The Real "resists symbolisation absolutely" (*Seminar 1* 66) and is a "domain of whatever subsists outside symbolisation" (*Ecrits* 388). In this sense, as the Real is impossibe to articulate within the Symbolic Order, it is impossible to imagine. It exists only on a pre-empirical level; when nature is experienced by the individual whose perspective is filtered through discourse, it loses its position in the Real and becomes a signifier. So, the Real is the domain that is beyond any signification process, thus unreachable, inexplicable and pre-symbolic.

Desiderio causes a landslide which destroys Hoffman's whole set of samples that can be interpreted as the signifiers through which the signification chain constructed by Hoffman entails.

> [...] we were quite outside the formal rules of time and place and, in fact, had been so since I met her in her disguise. We moved through the landscape of Nebulous Time her father had brought into being but could no longer control because the sets of samples were buried under a mountain. (*The Infernal* 200)

Now Hoffman has no control over the signification process as he does not have the signifiers out of which he makes definitions. So, Desiderio travels through a chaotic land, full of plants, animals and perils beyond imagination "where there [is] nothing that [is] not marvellous" (*The Infernal* 204).

During their journey, Desiderio and Albertina come across centaurs who have a speech from which

> we could not understand a single word and that, I [Desiderio] realized when I learned a little of their speech, was because it possessed neither grammar nor vocabulary. It was only a play of sounds. (*The Infernal* 209)

As can be seen, even the language of the centaurs does not seem to be an actual language as it has no grammatical rules or vocabulary to signify anything. It is just a set of communicative sounds that helps them conduct daily life and religious practices. So, language of the inhabitants of the Nebulous Time is as indefinite and impossible as the Real itself, as the Real also, in Lacan's words, is "the impossible" (*Seminar 11* 167).

Also, this feature of impossibility "lends the Real its essentially traumatic quality" (Evans 163). Indeed, their journey through the Nebulous Time turns out to be a traumatic experience for Desiderio and Albertina. Albertina is raped by all the male centaurs and Desiderio has to watch his object of desire being sexually violated numerous times.

> At the back of my mind flickered a teasing image, that of a young girl trampled by horses. I could not remember when or where I had seen it, but it was the most graphic and haunting of memories and a voice in my mind, the cracked, hoarse drunken voice of the dead peep-show proprietor, told me that I was somehow, all unknowing, the instigator of this horror. My pain and agitation increased beyond all measure. (*The Infernal* 217-18)

So, watching Albertina being raped by the centaurs is traumatic for not only she is Desiderio's object of desire, but also Desiderio is responsible both for the landslide and the rape. Desiderio was unaware of the fact that toying with the machine would cause such a traumatic experience. Now he realises the true power of the machines and experiences the trauma of the Real caused by the destruction of the samples which can be interpreted as the deconstruction of the signification process. However, Albertina seems to be

> convinced that even though every male in the village had obtained carnal knowledge of her, the beasts were still only emanations of her own desires, dredged up and objectively reified from the dark abysses of the unconscious. (*The Infernal* 225-26)

Therefore, as the Real is independent from the discourse and both Albertina and Desiderio experiences the reality without the filter of it, Desiderio realises that Hoffman's constructed reality is conducted by a discourse in which their desires are substantialised.

After many adventures and a persistent pursuit of his object of desire which helps his maturation, Desiderio finds Hoffman's castle and it is time to meet the father whose absolute authority is about to dominate the world. From this teutonic castle, which is not really a castle but a country house constructed in such fashion, Hoffman modifies the current reality, and imposes his own reality in which he holds the authority to determine the principles. He even re-writes history. Desiderio sees Van Gogh writing *Wuthering Heights* and Milton painting frescos in Sistine Chapel depicted in the paintings inside the castle. On this issue, Albertina remarks "when my father rewrites history books, these are some of the things that everyone will suddenly perceive to have always been true" (*The Infernal* 241). As can be understood from her explanation,

Hoffman tries to change the reality in such a radical way that he wants people to think what they see, know or experience has always been real. He does not want people to be aware of the fact that there was once a reality in which *The Wuthering Heights* was written by Emily Brontë, and that now they live in an altered reality. His alterations on the reality are not simple illusions, but radical ones. He tries to change the whole reality, with its history, present and future.

When Desiderio meets Hoffman, he sees a quiet and calm man with a "perfect, restrained reason" (*The Infernal* 242). Hoffman does not only insist on his reality, but he believes, or more accurately, knows that his reality is true. Since reality is a debatable notion, highly artificial and outside the Real as it is experienced through discourse, the post-structural view of Lacan assumes that there is not one single reality. In this sense, Hoffman believes that he has a rightful cause. His aim is to liberate people from the current reality, but he is not able to see that imposing another reality on people is not liberating them. He castrates the infants, forces them to internalise his own reality and turns them into his subjects like he did to Desiderio. Desiderio has been trying to find a father to follow and a master to serve. He has felt that Hoffman may be the one. However, discussing his theories and principles with Hoffman himself in his laboratories in the very source of the discourse, Desiderio discovers the truth about the doctor. Hoffman no longer seems to be the father that Desiderio is looking for because he is, obviously, a hypocrite. As Desiderio utters:

> Besides, he was a hypocrite. He penned desire in a cage and said: 'Look! I have liberated desire!' He was a hypocrite. So I, a hypocrite on a less dramatic scale, I hypocritically killed him, did I? (*The Infernal* 253)

In this sense, Hoffman sees that everything that originally derives from the Real is in the cage of signification and he wants to deconstruct it. What makes him a hypocrite is his plan to reconstruct the cage placing himself as the sole authority. For Aidan Day,

> [...] Desiderio doesn't go along with the idea that releasing the unconscious, enabling the imagination to actualise its longings and fantasies, is really some kind of liberation, [...] in the chaos that has been let loose by Hoffman and his principle of actualised desire, there is [...] promiscous criminality, grotesquerie and violence. (81)

So, Desiderio realizes that what the doctor tries to do is not so different from how the world actually is. He is not liberating anything, he is just putting desire and fantasies in another cage. Hoffman's hypocrisy shows that he, thus the father, is a human, not a God. He has a Faustian, tragic fault, which is pride. His unimpressed attitude towards his own inventions also epitomises his pride.

With his qualities, Hoffman bears a remarkable resemblance to the Lacanian concept of Father. So, it can be said that Desiderio does indeed find the Father he has been looking for. Just like the Lacanian Father who determines when and in what way the infant is allowed to obtain the mother, Hoffman determines when Desiderio can acquire Albertina as Albertina always says "no" to Desiderio's inclination to have her. So, it is not Albertina who says "no" to Desiderio but her father. In this sense, Albertina's rejections can be interpreted as "non du peré" (no of the Father), a wordplay which Lacan uses to explain the Primordial Law of the Father.

Moreover, similar to the Father, Hoffman tries to impose his discourse on the infant, in this case Desiderio, who has just left the Imaginary Order. Hoffman is the Father of this discourse in the sense that all the principles, laws, restrictions and prohibitions especially to what extent the infant can obtain the mother, and even the historical events, are determined by him. However, Desiderio is able to see that he will be a sex slave in Hoffman's prison, that Hoffman is a human being and not unreachable which leads Desiderio to question and challenge the ideas of Hoffman. So, he realises that Hoffman's intention is not to liberate but to enslave. Upon such a realisation, Desiderio discovers that he can never obtain Albertina, the mother, freely and absolutely. He can only get hold of her under Hoffman's, the Father's, restrictive authority.

Desiderio's final realisation about Hoffman puts forward the idea that reality is questionable and more than one reality is possible. Desiderio's whole developmental journey, his imprisonment in the Symbolic Order, his forced initiation into the discourse that challenges the previous one, and the subjectification process that Hoffman, who can be considered as the Other, performs on Desiderio, in other words the infant, introduces the idea that reality is only experienced through the filter of discourse, that through the acquisition of language and discourse, the infant is

transformed to a subject and stuck within an artificial, discursively and ideologically constructed reality, and that this reality is questionable. Desiderio's final decision is to kill Hoffman instead of obeying his demands, destroy his reality modifying machines and escape the castle, and this final decision can be interpreted as an action which enables Desiderio to deconstruct the imposed discursive reality through his own freewill. In this sense, as observed in *The Infernal*, the imposed discourse is possible to deconstruct. Through this deconstruction process, it is possible to put the concrete definitions, labels, prejudices, restrictions and norms aside in order to become a subject who can make his/her own decisions and conduct his/her life through freewill instead of being a slave of the discourse imposed by the Father, which is *other* to the infant.

Desiderio eliminates the Father, or the Other, by killing Hoffman. He thus solves the Oedipal Complex and becomes a conscious individual instead of a mindless slave of Hoffman. However, after Desiderio escapes from the castle and returns home, he sees that killing Hoffman is not the end of it, because the world for the sake of which he has fought has lost its colours, and he no longer feels himself attached to it:

> On I went, through the lifeless vegetation of winter, and I thought myself free from all the clouds of attachment because I was a traveller who had denied his proper destination I saw no colours anywhere around me. The food I begged from the cottagers had no savour of either sweetness or rankness. I knew I was condemned to disillusionment in perpetuity. (*The Infernal* 269-270)

As can be seen, Desiderio knows that he is damned to disappointment and melancholy; upon killing Hoffman, he discovers that he still carries the lack which has introduced Desiderio into the Symbolic Order. He is not the Desiderio he used to be now, and home is no longer the Imaginary phase he has always wanted to turn back to since Desiderio has a lack carved onto his unconscious and has to carry it forever which has caused Desiderio to acquire the discourse that constructs reality, and there is no longer hope to turn back. At home, Desiderio longs for death because the end of perception is the only escape from the Symbolic Order. Therefore, "[l]ike Oedipus, Desiderio eventually rids the city of its pollution but has to pay a price for his victory and his new-found knowledge" (Peach 101). Most clearly, the price he pays is the lack of Albertina, and the knowledge he attains is that it has already been impossible to obtain

his object of desire even when they first met as obtaining her is always already postponed by her father. In this sense, it can be said that Desiderio has no escape from the Primordial Law conveyed by nom-du-peré even after killing the actual father.

1.2.THE OBJECT

It can be seen that before Desiderio leaves his hometown, the Imaginary phase, he is content and peaceful, even bored, as he is not aware of the lack in his life. After he is visited by the mysterious, etherial girl named Albertina in his dreams, he is filled with a willingness to seek his object of desire. He is gradually seduced by this beautiful young girl through some imperatives written by her on his windowpane: "BE AMOROUS! [...] BE MYSTERIOUS! [...] DON'T THINK, LOOK. [...] WHEN YOU BEGIN TO THINK, YOU LOSE THE POINT" (*The Infernal* 23). This is the first time Desiderio is disturbed by the discourse. Instead of showing images, Albertina makes contact with Desiderio through words. In another dream, Desiderio finds himself on an island covered with pines, which is "in the middle of an immense lake" (*The Infernal* 28) which may be considered as the mother's womb, or as the Imaginary Order in Lacanian sense. Desiderio says "I waited, for the dream imperiously demanded that I wait" (*The Infernal* 28) which immediately reveals that Desiderio is under the control of a greater power, which is most probably the discursive authority. After some time, Desiderio sees "the object of [his] vigil" (*The Infernal* 28) in which the word choice of Desiderio is especially important in the sense that he uses the word "object" to depict the black swan that is approaching around whose neck Desiderio notices a golden collar on which it is written "ALBERTINA" (*The Infernal* 29). If the black swan is considered a signifier of femininity, the name on the golden collar asserts that the swan stands for Albertina. Also, since the swan is the object of Desiderio's biding, it can be suggested that Albertina is the object of Desiderio's eternal pursuit.

Beside Desiderio, Albertina is the first character with a name, which places her in the order of the Symbolic, and the dream including the black swan is the first time when Desiderio's desire is named and when Desiderio sees his object of desire. He has the first traces of his object's physical existence when Hoffman's emissary arrives.

Desiderio quickly realizes that the ambassador is Albertina herself and after that moment, it is inevitable that Desiderio goes on a journey after his object of desire. During his quest for Albertina, he encounters some other objects which provide him with temporary satisfaction. However, the temporality of satisfaction always leads Desiderio to another lack upon which Desiderio realizes that what he is actually after is obtaining Albertina for nothing else could provide the serenity that he is looking for.

Mary Anne is the first one that temporarily satisfies Desiderio. His intercourse with Mary Anne is Desiderio's first sexual experience as can be understood from his words, "under all my indifferences, I was an exceedingly romantic young man yet, until that time, circumstances had never presented me with a sufficiently grand opportunity to exercise my pent-up passion" (*The Infernal* 42). However, the next morning, he feels so alienated from the one that shared his experience with him when he notices that Mary Anne does not remember what happened at the previous night. In the Lacanian sense, Desiderio's experience seems to be similar to the infant's first encounter with sexuality. The infant takes pleasure form the nourishment provided by the mother's breast and when the breast is absent, thumb sucking substitutes for it. The infant takes pleasure form sucking his/her thumb while no nourishment is provided which is the infant's first sexual pleasure. In this sense, Desiderio can be said to be temporarily satisfied with Mary Anne on his journey towards his true object of desire, but seeing that Mary Anne has no memory of it, Desiderio feels disappointed just like the infant who gets dissappointed with his/her thumb when s/he actually needs nourishment. Therefore, as Lacanian psychoanalysis suggests, after Desiderio reaches one of the objects that temporarily substitutes for the ultimate object of desire, the lack does not disappear. On the contrary, it leads to another lack which urges Desiderio to go on his journey.

Another temporal satisfaction is provided by Nao-Kurai's daughter, Aoi, and her grandmother called Mama. Among the River People, the highly Freudian quality of Desiderio's desires is revealed as can be understood from his statement: "[i]ndeed, I was growing almost reconciled to mothers" (*The Infernal* 98). It can be seen that Desiderio begins to associate his need for sexual satisfaction with mothers. He even relates his sexual appetite, which seems to be impossible to satisfy, to his mother's

promiscuity. What he does not know at this stage is that his appetite is difficult to satisfy as satisfaction upon obtaining an object does, by its nature, lead to a need for more until the subject reaches his/her ultimate object of desire.

Every night, Desiderio's underage fianceé satisfies Desiderio in a masturbatory way as the River People's social code forbids the couples to have sexual intercourse before marriage. However, their masturbatory act is not enough for Desiderio, and he finds himself interested in the Mama of the tribe of which Desiderio is almost a part. He states that

> those nights of autumn passed in elaborate love play with my erotic, giggling toy, everynight adorned with different coloured bows, while in the mornings I screwed the toy's grandmother up against the wall. I began to feel like a love slave. (*The Infernal* 98)

As can be seen from Desiderio's statement, just as he begins to feel trapped in the discourse of the River People, Desiderio also feels that he is a sex slave used by Mama, the mother of the tribe, yet it is not what he truly desires. Rather, he is "the desired one" (*The Infernal* 58), as his name asserts, in River People's discourse. Just before he leaves the tribe, for some further evidence to prove himself that Nao-Kurai plans to cut him into pieces, Desiderio enters the main cabin and sees Aoi sleeping with a knife. He discovers that all the time he has had the misconception that he has been accepted as a family member by the River People and that he is desired by Aoi and Mama, while their only purpose is in fact to kill Desiderio to obtain his reading and writing skills. So, Desiderio leaves his two lovers, who provided temporary satisfaction, with a lack even greater than the lack he had before he met the River People and, soon, finds himself on his way towards his ultimate object of desire. After his initiation into the Symbolic Order by the Acrobats of Desire, he does not ever chase another object but Albertina.

After the landslide that kills almost all the members of the fair, Desiderio meets one of the most extraordinary and powerful characters in the novel, named the Count, who is "in fact [...] a fusion of de Sade and Dracula" (Peach 110). For the Count, Hoffman's "liberation of desire leads to an endless search for increasingly perverse manifestations to satisfy an insatiable and increasingly sadistic appetite" (Peach 110). Yet, however

he seems to have a demented and pervert mind, The Count is actually a man of great will and authority. As later revealed by Albertina, he has a supernatural skill to will his desires and thus to objectify them which makes him even more powerful than Hoffman for The Count is, without any means, capable of doing what Hoffman can only achieve by means of his machines.

As Desiderio says "[e]verything about [the Count] was excessive" (*The Infernal* 146) and when this excessiveness is combined with the Count's pervert fantasies which are syntheses of orgy and gore, he can be considered as the embodiment of "surplus-jouissance" in the Lacanian sense. For Lacan, the subject's actual wish is to chase after the object forever, which means going beyond the pleasure principle towards pain – the pain caused by the lack of the object that the subject enjoys. Lacan calls this pain enjoyed by the subject "jouissance," (a term that is left in French in translations as its meaning simultaneously includes joy and pain) and obtaining the objet-petit-a "suplus-jouissance" as it is the excess of it. As the Count tells more about himself, it is revealed that he has tasted every pleasure excessively throughout his life. However, he still remains unsatisfied and desires to go beyond the excess of pleasure. He talks about a prostitute that he suffocated during a sexual intercourse. Since then, he has been chased by the vengeful black pimp who owned the woman. But as the story goes on, it is revealed that the black pimp goes beyond his physical body and becomes the symbol of the Count's ultimate object of desire which the Count both craves for and is horrified to obtain. As reaching temporary satisfaction leaves a lack and leads the subject to another object, the Count has travelled from one object to another throughout his life and has explored all the boundaries of pleasure. Now he wants to experience jouissance and knows that he can reach true jouissance only through naming his pain, which can be interpreted as the entrance of pain into the Count's discourse as a signifier. As he has the peculiar ability to objectify his desires by willing them, he has materialised his longing for jouissance as the black pimp who is obviously a projection of the Count himself. However, the Count fears obtaining his object of desire as much as he wishes to get it. In accordance wtih the Lacanian theory that the subject fears obtaining the ultimate object of desire as it means the disappearance of the lack, he runs away from the black pimp. But his escape from the

black pimp is actually what drives the Count closer to him. In this sense, the black pimp is The Count's objet-petit-a, and in the Lacanian sense, the black pimp has actually no value yet persists as the Count's only desire is the repetition of his circling around the object, and to reach both the pleasure of and suffering from chasing the object forever, which is the true jouissance. However, the black pimp catches the Count eventually and upon reaching the object, the Count's lack disappears and he learns to name his pain (thus pain enters his discourse), loses his motivation to live on and dies suffering from surplus-jouissance just after he shouts in joy: "I am in pain! I've learned to name my pain!" (*The Infernal* 196).

It should be noted that The Count is a character which can be considered as a reflection of Desiderio in the sense that both characters desire for more after each temporary satisfaction they receive, and the Count is a foreshadowing of what would happen to Desiderio if he chooses to obtain Albertina. However, Desiderio's real desire is not to obtain Albertina but to bear the lack Albertina leaves in him forever as stated earlier. That is why he kills Albertina.

Aidan Day claims that "Albertina is a type of the male fantasy of an ideal female 'other': mysterious and alluring" (81). Indeed, even before getting to know Albertina, Desiderio has always been after her. He dreams about Albertina before he leaves his hometown. He sees illusions of her frequently such as the doll in the peep-show and the gipsy dancer's face both of which bear resemblence to Albertina. When Desiderio finds her in the brothel that he visits with The Count, he is astonished by her eccentric beauty, and he and Albertina hug each other as if they knew each other for a very long time. However, every time they reunite, Albertina quickly disappears. Desiderio cannot see Albertina's face on the face of the gipsy dancer upon his second look, or Albertina vanishes while Desiderio is holding her in his arms when the brothel is attacked by the Determination Police. Even when Desiderio and Albertina unite and spend a long time together among the centaurs, Albertina always rejects having a sexual intercourse with Desiderio, and postpones it by saying that time is not yet right. She imbues that Desiderio has to wait until a predetermined time for everything to be perfect, but never reveals the reasons behind the obligation to wait. As can be seen, Albertina does not actually desire Desiderio like he desires her. She is always

controlled and Desiderio's obtainment of her is restricted by a greater power, and the power-holder is Hoffman, Albertina's father.

Albertina has been a tool in her father's hands that enables him to achieve his aim to dominate the world. As revealed in the final chapter of the novel, Hoffman wants to use Desiderio's libidinal energy, which the doctor calls the "eroto-energy" (*The Infernal* 254) which derives from his desire for Albertina, to activate his reality modifying machines. So, just like the discourse imposed by the father, Hoffman determines what and how the infant, in this case Desiderio, desires. By sending illusions and dreams about Albertina, and finally his daughter in flesh and blood, to Desiderio, Hoffman forces Desiderio to desire and chase Albertina, similar to the discourse which embeds what to desire on the infant's unconscious through language. Also, Hoffman introduces the Primordial Law by restricting when, how and to what extent Desiderio may acquire Albertina, and as a loyal servant, Albertina is willing to obey her father's restrictions until he achieves his aims. In this sense, the discourse that Desiderio was initiated into by Hoffman constructs Desiderio's desire for Albertina by shaping his biological needs, in this case his sexual need, in order to use his libidinal energy. Since the desire is *other* as it is filtered through and constructed by the discourse, for Lacan, one's desire is actually the desire of the Other. Therefore, it can be said that Desiderio assumes that he desires Albertina, but actually Hoffman has forced Desiderio to desire her and as Hoffman is the Other, Desiderio's desire for Albertina is actually Hoffman's desire to activate his machines, which posits Hoffman as the father, the insistent discourse, Desiderio as the subject with a desire moulded by the discourse, and Albertina as the objet-petit-a.

For Lacan, as there is no object that can satisfy desire, the subject's actual wish is not to obtain the object as, for him, what causes anxiety in the subject is the possibility that the object may disappear causing the subject to lose the motive to live on. The subject actually desires to chase the object in eternity. In this sense, Desiderio, as a bidding of his human nature, chooses to preserve his eternal pursuit of the object and at that moment when Desiderio says "[t]he time was ripe. My bride was waiting. We had her father's blessing" (*The Infernal* 263), he abandons Albertina and runs away from her.

As Albertina tries to catch Desiderio with a knife in her hand, Desiderio kills Albertina. After painfully reporting Albertina's death, Desiderio remarks

> Why should I tell you how I killed Albertina? I think I killed her to stop her killing me. I think that was the case. I am almost sure it was the case. Almost certain. (*The Infernal* 265)

Desiderio seems to have doubts on the reasons why he kills Albertina. He tries to convince himself that he kills her just to defend himself. However, deep down in his unconscious, he seems to know that it is not the case. Most probably, as can be deduced from Desiderio's doubtful tone, he killed Albertina willingly as a result of his fear of obtaining the object and losing his aim of life, which is to chase his desire.

On the other hand, as the infant desires to be the desire of the mother, upon seeing that the mother desires the father, the infant tries to eliminate the restrictions and prohibitions imposed on by the father to obtain the mother freely. In this sense, Desiderio's true desire is to be desired by Albertina. However, just before he reaches her, Desiderio realises that Albertina does not purely desire Desiderio. She is a servant of Hoffman, the father, and for that reason she has always prevented Desiderio from obtaining her until they arrive at Hoffman's castle. So, Albertina wishes to help her father achieve his aims and lures Desiderio into the energy source of the machines where Desiderio will be trapped and used until Hoffman dominates the world. In parallel with the Lacanian infant, who realises that it is impossible to achieve being the desire of the mother and to eliminate the father's influence on her, Desiderio discovers that he has never been desired by Albertina, and Albertina has always been an apparatus used by Hoffman.

> As soon as I saw [the empty cubicle], I knew it was my marriage bed. The time was ripe. My bride was waiting. We had her father's blessing. [...] Our long delayed but so greatly longed-for conjunction would spurt such a charge of energy our infinity would fill the world and, in this experimental void, the Doctor would descend on the city and his liberation would begin. (*The Infernal* 263)

Evidently, Desiderio sees that his desire for Albertina was actually constructed by Hoffman, and Hoffman's plan is to use the libidinal energy that emerges from

Desiderio's great desire for Albertina to achieve his own aims. So, Desiderio sees that he cannot obtain Albertina without his father's "blessing;" it is impossible to reach the ultimate object of desire without the interventions, regulations and restrictions of the Other. Desiderio can obtain the object only if the Father allows or wishes it. Therefore, it can be said that Desiderio kills Albertina not only because of the fear of obtaining the object, but as a result of his discovery that it is impossible to reach the ultimate object, the final satisfaction, thus the final meaning. Desiderio is dragged into the melancholy like the Lacanian infant who cannot find the phallus, the original signifier, that would lead him/her to the final meaning, the ultimate object of desire. Like the infant that achieves to solve the Oedipal conflict, Desiderio mourns for killing Albertina for the rest of his life.

1.3.THE MACHINES

It is obvious that Hoffman's attack to the city is a metaphysical one no matter how Hoffman grounds his theory on physics and some formulations on distorting the current reality through creating lifelike illusions and hallucinations. These illusions and hallucinations are very powerful and efficient because "the enemy is not simply outside the city. The imaginative power of the human mind exists inside the minds of the inhabitants of the city" (Day 71). One powerful weapon that Hoffman uses to disturb and subvert this imaginative power is the mirror. For the mirror "establishes a different space where our notions of self undergo radical change" and suggests "the instability of the 'real' on this side of the looking-glass" (Jackson 87-88). In parallel with the Lacanian assumption that the infant is introduced into the symbolic reality through the Mirror Stage, Hoffman uses mirrors to impose his own reality on the people living in the city which leads the Minister to have all the mirrors broken for protection against Hoffman's lifelike illusions. When Hoffman's ambassador shows a mirror to the Minister so that he can see his own image, the Minister, in Desiderio's words, "covered his eyes and screamed but almost at once regained his composure" (*The Infernal* 38). As can be understood from Desiderio's depiction, the Minister is horrified upon seeing his own reflection in the mirror for, as Lacan suggests, the

reflection in the mirror has an alienating function for the infant as the infant suddenly realises that reality is so different from how s/he perceives it. In this sense, Hoffman uses the mirrors as a weapon since they make the people in the city feel alienated from the reality as they perceive it.

However, mirrors are Hoffman's side weapon as the mirror has only a transitive function between the Imaginary and Symbolic phases. Hoffman's main weapon is his reality modifying machines. These machines that Hoffman invented are powered by the intense libidinal energy produced by desires of people, and the peep-show is the prototype of these machines. Although the peep-show seems to be a cheap entertainment in a camper van travelling from one region to another, it is actually a really powerful and dangerous weapon. The machine consists of several boxes decorated in a grotesque way each of which is in the shape of an oven with a pair of binoculars at the front. The observer sees a scene inside composed of highly realistic dolls and props which depicts gory and erotic vistas that provoke one's unconscious desires and libinal urges. When the observer, or the voyeur, sees the images in the machine, s/he produces a kind of libidinal energy and the scenes reach their aim to objectify desires.

The first scene Desiderio sees in the peep-show is called "I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE" (*The Infernal* 45). It is a scene in which the mother's womb is depicted. In the Lacanian sense, the infant wishes to go back to the mother's womb, which is his/her peaceful birthplace, and for Lacan, this wish is actually the desire to go obtain the mother in order to reunite and become one with her which will enable him/her to return to the Imaginary Order. In the Imaginary Order, the infant is one with his/her environment and as there are no definitions or signifiers, in other words, there is no lack caused by the absence of the original signifier, there is no phallogocentric discourse that imposes the father's regulations on obtaining the mother. The infant longs for this phase when s/he could obtain the mother without any restriction. Desiderio observes a forest which can be seen through a vagina in the machine; a closed area where it is always spring, which can be interpreted as an allusion to the peaceful athmosphere of the Imaginary Order. Then Desiderio sees a castle with "many torture chambers" (*The Infernal* 46). It can be said that the castle stands for the

Father that shadows the peace in the Imaginary Order by introducing the Primordial Law to the infant, and it houses many torture chambers as the Father is the domineering power which imposes the restrictions on obtaining the mother through introducing the infant into discourse. This first scene can be considered as a harbinger of the upcoming events in the novel as Desiderio sets off for a journey from his hometown disturbed by an imperious outside force to find Hoffman's castle in order to prevent him from achieving world domination. Desiderio as the Lacanian infant leaves the Imaginary Order, which is disturbed by the symbolisation process, with a lack that urges him to go and find his object of desire, which is the phallus. For him, the only way to obtain it is to eliminate the Father. It should be noted that the phallus cannot be found in the order of the symbolic as it is always already absent, hence finding the phallus which will enable the infant to reach the mother is actually the infant's fantasy. In this sense, the machine is a device that stages the infant's fantasies and through the energy that comes out of his/her libidinal urges upon seeing what s/he desires the most, it objectifies the infant's desires. It corresponds to Lacan's definition of fantasy as "an image set to work in a signifying structure" (*Ecrits* 272) which enables the infant to stage obtaining the object of desire in his/her unconscious.

Moreover, the landslide that kills all the members of the travelling fair, including the Acrobats of Desire and the peep-show proprietor, and destroys Hoffman's samples is accidentally caused by Desiderio. Hoffman builds the discourse in which desires are actualised by means of these "magic samples" (*The Infernal* 122). Aidan Day explains that "these are something like paradigms of everything that may exist in the universe, everything mental or corporeal" (77). Likewise, Desiderio says that these samples "did indeed represent everything it was possible to believe" (*The Infernal* 126) and it is Desiderio who arranges the landslide scene without any reason that he is aware of (most probably because of an unconscious wish) even though the proprietor strictly forbids him to touch the samples. As later explained by Desiderio, it was the combination of his unconscious composition of the scene and the intense libidinal energy produced by the acrobats during Desiderio's initiation that caused the landslide. So, it can be said that Hoffman's machines work through three steps: first the scene is

fantasized by the subject, then it is staged in the machines, and then becomes real, or enters discourse.

When Albertina is raped by a number of centaurs, Desiderio remembers a scene that he has seen in the peep-show which depicts a woman being trampled by the horses. Albertina explains that the scene composed in the peep-show stages her own fantasy. As Desiderio remarks "she was convinced that [...] the beasts were still only emanations of her own desires, dredged up and objectively reified from the dark abysses of the unconscious" (*The Infernal* 226). Therefore, when fantasy is considered as a scene where the wishes of the id are staged especially when a particular wish is impossible to be fulfilled, one can assume that the drama in the novel is constructed in the form of three structurally similar scenes; the Primal scene, the fantasy stage, which is depicted in the second scene, the peep-show, which is objectified in the third scene, the discursive reality. In this sense, the text is constructed upon the following positions; the unconscious, the Other represented by Hoffman, and the discourse of the Other represented by Hoffman's constructed reality. As can be observed from the plotline of the novel, these positions repeat each other insistently. However, these three positions should never be considered as chronologically ordered as the fantasies are created by discourse and the unconscious is constructed within the discursive reality. These three positions, as Lacan's theory of l'automatisme de repetition (based on Freud's repetition compulsion) presumes, are phases that conduct retroactively. Just as it is impossible to say where the symbolic process starts for the reason that the original signifier is always already absent, trying to locate the starting point of the process of these three phases that construct reality is equally in vain for the same reason.

Since the unconscious is produced by the discourse of the Other, it is possible to grasp the unconscious of an individual when the structure of his/her relations to the Other, which constitutes him/her as a subject, is grabbed, and that is exactly how Hoffman's machines work. By means of his machines, Hoffman has the control of the relations between Desiderio and discourse which enables him to grasp Desiderio's unconscious. He gives shape to Desiderio's unconscious through the scenes in the machines, and plunges these scenes into discourse, making it visceral and real. Thus he constitutes Desiderio as a subject, just like the Other constitutes the infant as a subject through

discourse. In this sense, Desiderio is the subject of the text. In accordance with that, as stated earlier, the story is told through a first-person narration and the narrator is none other than Desiderio himself.

Told by Desiderio fifty years after the war, the text has an indirect quality. The Minister, the Count, Hoffman and Albertina are, in fact, depicted by Desiderio's accounts. So, the whole text is an indirect speech and the story can only be known as it is reported by Desiderio. Desiderio has a very detailed tone as if he is trying to increase the verisimilitude of the story with the purpose of persuading the reader of the authenticity of the text. However, the text itself claims that, in the peep-show proprietor's words, "if a thing were sufficiently artificial, it became absolutely equivalent to the genuine" (*The Infernal* 120). In this sense, Desiderio's accounts are already unreliable, but they get even more unreliable as Desiderio goes into detail as they are about events that happened fifty years ago, and it is unlikely even for Desiderio to remember such minute details. Thus, throughout his narration, Desiderio simultaneously reveals the truth under the manifest surface of his story and postpones it by blurring this surface by means of details. Such a notion of truth similar to the Lacanian signification process. The phallus, the original signifier, is indefinite just like the final meaning which is impossible to reach as the phallus is absent. While chasing his/her true object of desire, which is the phallus, the subject replaces it with objet-petit-a which is definite, and through that s/he tries to define the phallus and the final meaning (obtaining the phallus) in order to find them in the Symbolic Order. However, by their nature, the original signifier and the final meaning should remain indefinite and the subject removes further from the phallus and postpones the final meaning upon his/her attempts to define them. So, Desiderio's detailed narration reveals the dynamics of human unconscious which unwillingly postpones obtaining the object and looks for it in the Symbolic Order while it is impossible to find.

As can be seen, while Desiderio goes into detail of the narration to make his story sufficiently artificial and tries to make it equivalent to the genuine, the text itself reminds the reader of the fact that what they are reading is nothing more than fiction. So, the real events may never be revealed, but how Desiderio experienced them and how Desiderio's unconscious manifests itself in his speech can be known. Since the

unconscious is discursively constructed, it is not the subject that speaks his/her unconscious, but the unconscious that speaks the subject. Therefore, while Desiderio narrates the events, his unconscious, thus the discourse imposed by Hoffman is revealed. Since the unreliability of the events grows higher as Desiderio depicts them in minute detail, one can deduce that Desiderio's story is not a real one, that he speaks from his unconscious, and since this unconscious is constructed by discourse, the events in the novel are creations of Hoffman's machines. These machines constitute the Other, for the Father's discourse is other to the infant and Hoffman's machines represent the Father's discourse. In this sense, every chapter in the novel may be considered as a scene from the peep-show which gets more artificial as its verisimilitude increases, and the reader observes the scenes from peep-holes. This leads to the idea that even the first chapter and the city under attack may actually be constructed scenes. Finally, when the three-staged structure of the drama, the truth that simultaneously discloses and reveals itself, and the idea that Desiderio's journey is built by the scenes in the peep-show, thus by the Other, are combined, it is obvious that Hoffman is an author and Angela Carter tells the story of the creation of a novel. In this sense, Hoffman's laboratories are a representation of the creative mind and Desiderio's developmental journey represents the development of a text. Desiderio, the main character of the novel, is the only one that can resist Hoffman's illusions, survive his metaphysical attacks and achieve to assassinate him because he is aware of the fact that he is the main character in *The Infernal*, although he never knows what will happen next, but bored already, as can be understood from his indifferent attitude towards the war:

> I felt as if I was watching a film in which the Minister was the hero and the unseen Doctor certainly the villain; but it was an endless film and I found it boring for none of the characters engaged my sympathy. (*The Infernal* 22)

So, Desiderio perceives his life like a boring narration and finds himself criticising the characters and the plotline, and this self-reflexivity of him is what enables Desiderio to assassinate Hoffman. After killing him and Albertina, Desiderio states:

> [...] for everything stopped immediately as soon as he was dead, of course, and the love slaves disbanded, for concreticised desires could not survive without their eroto-energy and... But I knew nothing of that. Those are the dreary ends of the plot. (*The Infernal* 267-268)

From his remark it can be seen that Desiderio finds himself explaining things on which he is not supposed to have any knowledge. It is as if he self-reflexively acts like an author who tries to speak with the character's voice, but cannot achieve it. In this sense, it is possible to say that the free subject who is capable of making his/her own decisions as s/he gradually becomes aware of the reality's constructed nature and the impositions of the discourse that construct reality is parodied in Desiderio.

As *The Infernal*'s Lacanian reading exposes, the novel is about the universal developmental journey of an infant and his acquisition of language, the subject's infinite chase after the object reflected in the signification process, reality's discursively constructed quality, and the impossibility to find the original signifier and finally to reach the final meaning through language. Moreover, it is observed that *The Infernal* is about the process of writing a novel which bears resemblance to the Lacanian signification process, and the development of a text which is similar to the Lacanian development of the infant in many aspects.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT TO THE NEW WOMAN

OF THE NEW CENTURY:

A LACANIAN READING OF ANGELA CARTER'S *NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS*

"One can't believe impossible things."
"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen.
"When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day.
Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things
before breakfast."
(Lewis Carroll, *Through The Looking-Glass*)

Similar to *The Infernal*, *Nights at the Circus* is a novel about the infantile developmental journey, the acquisition of language and discourse, the discursive nature of reality, the blurred boundaries between reality and illusion, and the Real when read from the Lacanian perspective. In this chapter, the developmental journeys of Fevvers towards being the New Woman and Walser towards being the New Man of the new century is closely analysed, and the discursively constructed definitions of the gendered identities are revealed. The transformation of these two main characters into free subjects who are capable of making their own definitions instead of accepting the discursively constructed ones is detailly examined. Also, Fevvers is regarded as a Lacanian object, and the true nature of the object and the inaccessibility of the ultimate object of desire are observed.

First published in 1984, *Nights at the Circus* (henceforward *Nights*), Angela Carter's eighth novel, which is "[w]ithout doubt [...] Carter's most commercially successful book of her career" (Gamble 136), is a less Lacanian and more feminist novel when compared to *The Infernal*. Setting in *fin de siecle* - the turn from the nineteenth century to the twentieth - *Nights* is about a character named Fevvers and her development into

the "New Woman" (*Nights* 334) of the new century, and Walser's changing into the "New Man" (*Nights* 334) which is suitable as a lover to the modern woman. As Palmer states, in *Nights*, Carter "treats themes relating to liberation and change, [and] acts of resistance against the patriarchy are represented. The deconstruction of femininity and masculinity is explored" (180). So, the novel is about the deconstruction of the conventional definitions of gendered identities in which "Fevvers symbolises that gathering of confidence among women in the late nineteenth century which led to the gains in self-possession and autonomy made by women in the twentieth century" (Day 176). From Beth A. Boehm's perspective, *Nights* is about the conventional discourse of the contemporary reader, which is symbolised by Walser, and the author's, in this case Fevvers's, struggle to change the reader into a reconstructed reader, "one who demands not 'are you fact or are you fiction'" and to define "[t]he new relations between Fevvers as performing artist and Walser as appreciative reader" (202). However, either the gathering of confidence Aidan Day mentions, or redefining the relations between the writer and the reader that Boehm refers to does not seem to be achieved so easily or all of a sudden, without a developmental process. Just like Angela Carter says in an interview to Anna Kastavos, a woman with wings who renews the world is "how wonderful... how terrific. [...] Well, no; it's not going to be as easy as that" (par. 17).

In *Nights at the* Circus, it is obvious that "Carter's main focus regarding identity [...] is to reveal the fictional nature of gender, which is the crux of identity" (Root 4). Throughout the novel, although born with wings and an extraordinary body as a good start, Fevvers seems to have a Lacanian journey during which she abandons the Imaginary Order, passes the Mirror Stage, and solves the Oedipal conflict towards transforming into the symbol of the New Woman that corresponds to how Carter defines one of de Sade's characters, Julliette; "a figure of whom minds have as yet no conception, who is rising out of mankind, and will have wings and who will renew the world" (*The Sadeian Woman* 44). As gender is a socially constructed element of the identity, Fevvers's growing into a mature, free and powerful New Woman through the infantile development lets the Lacanian reader take a detailed look at the discursive construction and reconstruction of the gendered identities.

Not only Fevvers, but Walser also experiences a developmental journey throughout the reconstruction of his (male) identity. Having a cynical attitude towards any story, this young American journalist jumps from one discourse to another recklessly as a result of his passion to disprove Fevvers's implausible personal history and extraordinary appearance which gradually turns out to be a persistent pursuit of his object of desire in the Lacanian sense. Especially during his temporary amnesia, Walser seems to regress to the Imaginary phase of his life which enables him to start over his mental development and to reconstruct his discursively created identity in the guidance of a shamanistic Transbaikalian tribe. Walser and Fevvers's reunion takes place in the untouched, vast Siberian steppes "all white with snow as if under dustsheets, as if laid away eternally as soon as brought back from the shop, never to be used or touch" (*Nights* 232) which can be interpreted as the Lacanian Real where Fevvers defeats the melancholy coming after the solution of the Lacanian Oedipus Complex (her encounter with the Grand Duke) and Walser successfully grows into the new man of the century. In the final scene of the novel, Fevvers's joyful laugh dominates the whole reality of the novel which suggests that the whole novel is a "humbug" in Walser's terms, fictitious yet real in accordance with the novel's own reality. This final scene can be interpreted as a self-reflexive one as it suggests that Fevvers is aware of the fact that she and Walser are living in a fictitious world and gives the novel the character of metafiction as it shows that the novel as a whole is about fiction writing.

Nights begins in London near the end of the 19th century. The main character, Sophie Fevvers, the famous winged trapeze with an extraordinary huge body gives an interview to Jack Walser, a sceptical American journalist and the writer of a series of interviews entitled "Great Humbugs of the World" (*Nights* 8). Fevvers claims that her wings are real and that she hatched like a bird unlike ordinary children. She is found in a London street by her foster mother, Lizzie, who is also present during the interview and who intervenes and tells some parts of Fevver's story herself. According to Fevver's accounts, she grew up at Ma Nelson's brothel by Lizzie. Ma Nelson never presents her to customers. Instead, she exhibits Fevvers as a living statue in the reception hall first as Cupid with a bow and arrow, and then as the Winged Victory with a sword in her hand. When Fevvers's wings are grown enough, Lizzie pushes

Fevvers from the top of the brothel, and they discover that Fevvers can actually fly. After Ma Nelson's unexpected death, her brother, who is a clergyman, inherits the brothel. Instead of giving it to him, the girls prefer to burn the house down. Lizzie and Fevvers go to live a peaceful life with Lizzie's relatives who run an ice-cream parlour. However, after a series of unfortunate events, Fevvers feels obligated to accept Ma Schreck's job offer in her "Museum Of Woman Monsters" (*Nights* 61) which is actually a combination of a freak show and a brothel. While working for the fearsome and greedy Madame Schreck who pays no wages to any of her employees, Fevvers catches the attention of a rich and powerful man named Christian Rosencreutz, who is actually a member of Parliament with a lust for immortality. Fevvers is sold to this nobleman for a considerable price and attacked by him in his mansion during a rite for immortality. She narrowly escapes from the mansion with the help of her sword and happily reunites with Lizzie. Afterwards, she joins Cirque d'Hiver and begins her career as an aerialiste achieving a great fame all around the world.

Unconvinced, Walser decides to join Colonel Kearney's circus to follow Fevvers throughout her world tour. He is determined to reveal the truth behind Fevvers's personal history and her extraodinary looks. Colonel employs Walser as a clown and during his journey with the circus, Walser meets extraordinary characters such as Buffo (the chief clown), Princess Of Abyssinia (the silent tiger tamer), the Professor (the chief monkey of the show called Educating Apes) and Sybil (the Colonel's pig with an ability to tell fortune). Walser tries to adapt himself to the life in Clown Alley, gets scientifically examined by the apes, nearly gets killed by a tigress and by Buffo the Great who loses his mind during a performance. During his career as a clown, Walser falls in love with Fevvers who also has obvious interest in him.

At the last night of the circus in St. Petersburg, Fevvers is invited to dine with a Russian Grand Duke who is apparently very rich. Tempted by the huge diamonds sent by the Duke, Fevvers accepts the invitation. After a recital of Grand Duke's automatons (a kind of mechanical humanoid), the Duke takes Fevvers to show her his collection of Fabergé eggs. There he breaks Fevvers's sword and sexually violates her before Fevvers opens an egg and finds a miniature Trans-Siberian Express through which she manages to escape the mansion.

The final episode opens with Fevvers's melancholic expressions while the train is crossing Asia. The train gets attacked by a band of runaway outlaws with an explosion. After the explosion, all the members of the circus, except for Walser who goes missing, are taken to the outlaws' encampment. Walser is found by a band of murderesses who have escaped from a near prison in the shape of a panopticon with the help of their former guards. Upon seeing that Walser has amnesia, they leave him at the train wreck to an approaching rescue party. Walser flees to the woods and is found by a shaman who takes Walser as his apprentice.

Meanwhile, it is revealed that the runaway outlaws attacked the train to capture Fevvers, who is said to be the fiancee of the Prince of Wales. Fevvers tells them that it is only a rumour and entirely untrue. To cheer the disappointed outlaws up, the clowns perform a show in memory of Buffo and all the clowns and convicts are swept away by a sudden blizzard which is obviously triggered by the clowns' show. Fevvers and the remaining members of the circus find a music school by the river and take shelter there. While Fevvers is continuously worried for Walser, she sees a completely different Walser riding a rein deer. She tries to fly to him but cannot levitate due to her broken wing. Walser and the members of the tribe who follow him disappear in the woods. Fevvers and Lizzie go after him and finally, the lovers reunite just as the new century dawns and the novel ends with Fevvers's joyful laugh and triumphant cry: "to think I really fooled you" (*Nights* 350).

Like *The Infernal*, *Nights* also has an episodic structure. The novel consists of three episodes. The first one is "London" in which Fevvers tells her own personal history to Walser in an interview in Alhambra Theater. The story is mostly told by Fevvers although Lizzie intervenes and tells some parts of the story from her own perspective. So, the story can only be known from Fevver's perspective and, as Lacanian thinking asserts, since the unconscious speaks the subject, Fevvers's unconscious and the way she perceives reality are introduced in this first episode. For the Lacanian reader, as the reality cannot be perceived the same by everyone, there are more than one reality depending on discourse through which the subjects perceive reality. In this sense, as the Lacanian reader can only know about the events in the story as they are perceived by Fevvers, it is possible to say that Fevvers's first person narration constructs her own

reality moulded by the discourse she uses while narrating it. So, Fevvers can be located as the writer of the story, which places Walser as the reader, or the audience, of Fevvers.

Similar to Desiderio in *The Infernal*, Fevvers employs a detailed manner while reporting her fabulous story of infantile development. She seems to remember every detail of her personal history, even the detailed accounts of other characters and the exact words they use, which makes her story even less credible. Likewise, as Fevvers goes into detail, the plausibility of the story decreases as it is hard to believe that Fevvers remembers every minute detail. On the one hand, it seems as if Fevvers tries to convince Walser that no matter how incredible her story is, it is entirely true. On the other hand, through her actions, manners and attitudes, Fevvers always reminds Walser of the question her audience mostly asks: "Is she real or is she fiction" (*Nights* 3). Fevvers seems to maintain Walser's doubts about her own factuality. However, for the Lacanian reader, Fevvers is entirely factual in accordance with the novel's own discourse and reality as Fevvers, with her first person narration, is the decisive power of the discourse in the first episode along with her authority over time given by Ma Nelson's clock and the phallic symbol of authority by Ma Nelson's sword.

The second episode is titled "Petersburg" and takes place in Colonel Kearney's circus in the Russian city St. Petersburg. The episode is entirely written in the third person narration which allows the writer to enter the other characters' minds and to narrate their personal histories. This episode mostly focuses on Walser and the growing love interest between Fevvers and him. In this episode, several characters are introduced and their different discourses are discussed. Walser as a man who has never been interested in his own self and who lacked self-consciousness, finds himself in an entirely foreign discourse in the Clown Alley and is forced to "make a fool of [him]self" (*Nights* 118) and grows an interest in his own personality and aim of life. His passion to spoil Fevvers's unnatural appearance changes into a chase after Fevvers, who becomes Walser's object of desire and the aim of life in the Lacanian sense.

In the third episode, "Siberia," it can be seen that the narration is partly from Fevvers's and partly from a third person's perspective as if Fevvers borrows the pen from Carter

from time to time "leaving us hard-pressed to determine, definitively, the origin or authority of any narrative discourse" (Gustar 182). Throughout her journey towards Walser, Fevvers describes her deep melancholy and hopelessness while Walser is in a state of deep amnesia and is reconstructing his self, living among a Transbaikalian tribe. This tribe has their own Mongolian dialect and discourse according to which their social structure is built. However, they use the discourse just for the physical life. While they are in a trance, they experience a collective dream world and there, they have their own astral discourse which needs no auditory language. With its vast, empty and white vista, Siberia appears to be the Real, which is the domain beyond signification in the Lacanian sense.

2.1. FEVVERS AS THE SUBJECT

It can be said that the London part of the novel is about Fevvers's Lacanian developmental journey as Fevvers tells Walser how she was born, where she was grew up and what adventures she has been through until she becomes a famous aerialiste. In this section, Fevvers's infantile journey is detailly examined and her development into a free subject is discussed from the Lacanian perspective.

Fevvers claims that unlike any other children, she was not given birth, but "just like Helen of Troy, was hatched" (*Nights* 3). This act of hatching may be considered as a metaphor. For Ricarda Schmidt, this notion of hatching means that Fevvers "fantasizes a beginning for herself outside the Oedipal triangle, outside the Law of the Father" (*Nights* 67). Being outside the Law of the Father in the Lacanian sense means being "outside all the essentialist determinations prescribed by that Law" (Day 181). In other words, it means that Fevvers is not enslaved by the phallogocentric discourse and has no name of the Father that can restrain Fevvers from obtaining mother, in other words, Fevvers lacks the lack.

Fevvers uses hatching metaphor to imply that "gendered identity is something that is not given but is made and can be remade" (Day 181). By using the metaphor, Fevvers claims that her identity is not given to her but it is something Fevvers has built herself.

The Lacanian idea that the subjectification process (in other words, building the identity of the infant) is highly influenced by the Father's Primordial Law and name explains Fevvers's female identity which is out of the ordinary as much as her body. First of all, in contrast to the accepted definition of the Victorian woman who "would be stoical, motherly, submissive and chaste" (Paxman 228), Fevvers is a working girl grown up in a brothel, which is totally unacceptable for the common patriarchal mentality in the Victorian Age for "innocence and inexperience and a cultivated fragility were the characteristic attributes of the Victorian girl" (Klein 264). So, Fevvers would be considered a fallen woman if she considered herself as one. However, as Fevvers does not have a male authority, a father figure in her life to introduce her into discourse as a typical Victorian woman, she seems to define herself and build her own identity through her story, and especially through her manners. Although she is a beautiful woman and acts with grace when she is on stage, Fevvers's manners are not of a refined woman in her personal life:

> [...] her mouth was too full for a ripost as she tucked into this earthiest, coarsest cabbies' fare with gargantuan enthusiasm. She gorged, she stuffed herself, she spilled the gravy on herself, she sucked up peas from the knife; she had a gullet to match her size and table manners of the Elizabethan variety [...] she wiped her lips on her sleeve and belched. (*Nights* 21)

She is also flirtatious towards Walser, which is unacceptable as a manner in the Victorian society:

> At that she batted her eyelids like a flirt. She lowered her voice to a whisper, so that Walser needs must lean forward in turn to hear her; her breath flavoured with champagne, warmed his cheek. (*Nights* 24)

As her coarse, coquettish and pretended manners suggest, Fevvers chooses not to be a restraint, ideal Victorian woman whose definition is discursively constructed. As Morris claims, "she fully embodies the vertiginous freedom of self-making" (157). Despite her female body, she has the freedom of choice and making her own definitions about her identity along with her economical freedom; a freedom which is attributed to men in the Victorian Age. Even Walser wonders "is she really a man?" (*Nights* 37). She even has a sword, a phallic symbol, which not only protects her from

assaults and violations (especially the sexual ones), but symbolizes that Fevvers has the phallus, the masculine power, to make and impose definitions in the Lacanian sense. Since she lacks the name of the Father, Fevvers places herself as the father of her own identity and discourse, in other words, as the author of her own story as previously discussed. As Lacan sees it, the lack of the phallus carves an unfilled space onto the infant's unconscious which leads him/her to pursue his/her objet-petit-a and to enter into the Symbolic Order. However, Fevvers "does not bear the scar of loss" (Russo 139), the lack in the Lacanian sense, as she thinks she already has the phallus. This postpones her entrance into the Symbolic Order.

As Hardin claims, gendered identity is based on "superficial and substanceless signifiers such as clothes, makeup, hair style, and even occupation" (79). Similarly, with her manners, attitude, cosmetics and masculine freedom, Fevvers has an idiosyncratic definition of her own self, which leaves her out of the common definition of the Victorian woman. With her physical appearance, she looks like an angel, but she is definitely not the angel in the house. She is the symbol of the transformed New Woman of the approaching 20th century, who will be capable of defining herself, free from any phallogocentric definition. In Fevvers's words, the new woman will "no longer [be] an imagined fiction but a plain fact" (*Nights* 339).

Although Fevvers lacks a father in her life, she has a powerful mother figure, named Lizzie, Fevvers's foster mother who claims to have found her at a London alley hatched from an egg. Despite substituting for a physical mother, Lizzie cannot be interpreted as a Lacanian mother for Lizzie does not seem to be the one Fevvers wishes to obtain or wants to return to. Telling Fevvers's story together, Lizzie increases the plausibility of the story while being an entirely plausible character, she makes Fevvers even more implausible by contrast. Lizzie seems to be the signifier of the fallen woman in the Victorian discourse, as Walser observes, "there [is] ex-whore written all over her" (*Nights* 10). Lizzie and Fevvers are two contrasting characters: while Lizzie is a tiny, ugly, old and rational lady maid, Fevvers is her huge and beautiful master who tells irrational stories. In this sense, while Fevvers is the symbol of the New Woman, Lizzie stands for the Old Woman, and "Fevvers's character as the New Woman is imbued with the rationality fed her by Lizzie" (Day 182). Therefore, by

their contrasting characteristics, these two women actually complete each other, and no matter how contrasting they are, Fevvers is brought up by this wise activist and always helped by her during her infantile development. The basis of the construction of the New Woman represented by Fevvers is actually the Old Woman represented by Lizzie. In the first place, Lizzie is the one who brings Fevvers to the brothel, where Fevvers experienced the Imaginary Phase of her life. In the second place, by calling her Fevvers, Lizzie introduces this unbelievable creature into the discourse and Fevvers takes her place in the discursively constructed reality, which initiates the forming of her identity.

In the third place, Lizze is the one who pushes Fevvers from the rooftop which corresponds to one of the most important moments in Fevvers's entire life, because only after she is pushed from the rooftop does Fevvers discover that she can actually fly. At first, Fevvers is "seized with a great fear" (*Nights* 36) not because of the possibility that she may discover her wings are not for physical use and she may actually die, but she "suffer[s] the greatest conceivable terror of the irreparable difference with which success in the attempt would mark [her]" (*Nights* 36). Because if she can fly, she will be left out of the norm and will be a paradox against the discursive reality. Thus, she will enter the discourse as a freak, as once the Lacanian infant joins the chain of signification when s/he learns that s/he is not unified with his/her environment, there is no turning back to the Imaginary Order. That is why every infant wants to remain in the Imaginary where s/he is safe and secure. Lizzie remarks:

> Yet, if it could speak, would not any wise child cry out from the womb: "Keep me in the darkness here! Keep me warm! Keep me in contingency!" But nature will not be denied. So this young creature cried out to me, that she would not be what she must become, and, although her pleading moved me until tears blinded my own eyes, I knew that what will be, must be and so - I pushed. (*Nights* 36)

As can be seen, Fevvers changes her mind at the last moment and struggles in order to avoid discovering "the proof of [her] own singularity" (*Nights* 36). Fevvers has considered herself as a part of the reality, but if she sees that she can fly, she will know that she does not belong to the reality. In this sense, Fevvers corresponds with the Lacanian infant who experiences himself/herself as one with his/her environment but is

gradually introduced to the Symbolic Order through the acquisition of language by discovering that his/her environment consists of individual objects each of which has its own name. Eventually, Fevvers discovers that she can fly, and is indeed unique in parallel with the Lacanian infant who discovers that s/he is detached from his/her environment and is actually singular.

The brothel, where Fevvers has grown up, functions as the Imaginary Order for it keeps the real life outside with its windows always wide shut and "shielded [Fevvers] for so long from the tempests of misfortune and kept [her] youthful wings from dragging in the mud (*Nights* 25) of the society outside. That "wholly female world" (*Nights* 42) within the brothel keeps the phallogocentric world outside and although it serves the patriarchal mentality's purpose, the brothel never accepts it inside except for evenings:

> However, until Liz opened the door and let the men in, when all girls needs must jump to attention and behave like women, you might say that, in our well-ordered habitation, all was "luxe, calme et volupté", although not quite as the poet imagined. We all engaged in our intellectual, artistic or political [...] pursuits [...]. (*Nights* 43)

As can be seen, until the outer society has access into the brothel the prostitutes mind their own intellectual pursuits just like a Lacanian infant who has no knowledge of the Symbolic Order that surrounds him/her. The prostitutes have knowledge of the discursively constructed society but they prefer to keep it out and to live in their own closed community, because the master narratives outside "place man in the position of questing, speaking subject, and woman in the non-position of object who is *subject to* male regulation, exploitation and violence" (Robinson 108). Knowing that, the girls inside the brothel form a group independent from the outer world the members of which form a wholeness which is "governed by a sweet and loving reason" in "benign silence" (*Nights* 42) and this inert condition of the brothel reminds the Lacanian reader of the Imaginary Order for the prostitutes do not use the discourse of the outside society but perceive it through the images of their customers. Also, the absence of the Father within the walls of the brothel may suggest that Fevvers experiences the

Imaginary phase of her life within the brothel and the outer society is completely other to her.

When the doors of the brothel are opened and let the society without in, the girls inside begin to "behave like women" (*Nights* 42), in other words, behave in accordance with the definitions of a fallen woman offered by the phallogocentric discourse of the outer society or the discourse of the Other. This suggests that identity, in this case gendered identity, is constructed by the discourse and the girls inside do not consider themselves as the Victorian fallen woman and keep themselves out of that discursively constructed identity in their private lives. So, their perception of themselves is different from how the reailty outside perceives them, just like the Lacanian infant at the Imaginary phase whose perception of himself/herself is different from how the outer reality defines him/her.

The Lacanian infant's delusional perception of himself/herself as a whole with all the objects around him/her is shaken with the acquisition of language which introduces the name of the Father. Upon observing his/her own image in the mirror, as the mirror reflects the reality as it is without the filter of discourse, the infant realises that his/her perception of himself/herself is actually different from the reality and that s/he is not at one with his/her environment. This causes a simultaneous identification with and alienation from his/her corporeality. In parallel with this theory, when Ma Nelson unexpectedly passes away, Fevvers and other girls in the brothel find themselves forced out of the Imaginary phase into the Symbolic Order. The process begins with the arrival of the name of the Father. Upon Ma Nelson's death, the brothel is inherited by her brother who is "a dissenting cleric [...] crying "Let the wages of sir pay for the Good Lord's work!"" (*Nights* 48). So, not a biological but an ecclesiastical father invades the Imaginary Phase inside the brothel and imposes the name of God (with the title "Lord" that suggests a male God) which can be interpreted as a transcendental father figure, that is, in this case, the Lacanian Father. The brother's intention is "to make of his inheritance a hostel for fallen girls" (*Nights* 49) and he asks the prostitutes either to stay and accept that they are indeed fallen (thus internalise the phallogocentric definition of the fallen woman which would deprive them of the freedom to make their own definitions) or to leave the house by the next morning and "go out on the

common"(*Nights* 4). Either way means that they have to make their entrance into the Symbolic Order from which there is no escape as Ma Nelson, the mother that protected them from outside, is gone forever. However, they all decide to leave the house as there is a possibility that they can keep their economic freedom.

Before leaving the house, in order to take one last look at the room where they have spent their lives so far, the girls in the brothel throw open the curtains which have always been shut as far as they can remember. To their astonishment, they

> saw, now, what we had never seen before; how the moth had nibbled the upholstery, the mice had gnawed away the Persian carpets and dust caked all the cornices. The luxury of that place had been nothing but illusion, created by the candles of midnight, and in the dawn, all was sere, worn-out decay. (*Nights* 54)

So, it can be said that, when lit by the real light from outside instead of the candle light, the girls could see that the room that they have lived happily within is in fact an ugly and old place contrary to their delusional perception of it. This, in the Lacanian sense, can be interpreted as the infant's realisation that the reality is so different from what s/he perceives. However, the ultimate realisation, which causes an alienation, comes during the Mirror Stage:

> The gilding on the mirrors was all tarnished and a bloom of dust obscured the glass so that, when we looked within them, there we saw, not the fresh young women that we were, but the hags we would become, and knew that, we too, like pleasures, were mortal. (*Nights* 54)

When read from the Lacanian perspective, Fevvers's account of what they see in the mirror describes their Mirror Stage. Before they open the curtains, they perceived their environment as a pleasant and beautiful house, and they had the delusion that the house would preserve this state forever. They perceived themselves as entities that would stay forever young, just like the Lacanian infant who has the delusion that s/he would be one with his/her mother forever, thus gets disappointed upon learning that s/he is actually separate from her when s/he sees his/her own image in the mirror. Likewise, the girls observe their reflections in the mirrors which were covered with "a bloom of

dust" that can be interpreted as the filter of reality, and realises the truth that their youth is only temporary and they are inevitably mortal. Just before leaving the house, the girls burn the place down knowing that there is no return to the brothel, just like the Lacanian infant knowing that there is no turn back to the Imaginary Order.

After leaving the brothel, Lizze and Fevvers go to stay with Lizzie's relatives living at Battersea and help them run their ice-cream business. They are warmly welcomed there; "the little nieces and nephews jumping up from the breakfast table to throw their arms around us, Isotta running to put fresh coffee on" (*Nights* 56). It is a warm and peaceful family life waiting for them. However, after a dramatic turn of events, the whole family suddenly find themselves in need of money. Just as they fall into an economic crisis, "the strangest old lady" (*Nights* 60) that Fevvers has ever seen enters the ice-cream shop and proposes a position with a good income in her "Museum of Woman Monsters" (*Nights* 61). This grotesque and mysterious woman who "never lifts her veil" (*Nights* 61) and who is always hidden behind it is Madame Schreck. The loss of economic freedom deprives Fevvers of her freedom to define herself. So, Madame Schreck, who can be interpreted as the symbol of the discourse of the Other, appears at the hour of need. As Fevvers loses the power to define herself, the discourse which is Other to Fevvers defines her as a female freak. This can be considered as the victory of the discursively constructed reality, which manifests itself through a series of discursive norms and definitions, over Fevvers. For the sake of her newly adopted family and survival of all of them, including Fevvers in the reality they are stuck in, Fevvers feels obliged to accept this job offer and gives herself to Madame Schreck for an amount of wage which she never actually receives.

In Schreck's museum, Fevvers finds herself in an entirely different Symbolic Order the discourse of which is determined by Schreck herself. The Madame is the rule-maker and authority in this environment. First of all, knowing that economic power would enable her employees to define themselves as something other than a freak, she never pays wages to them. When a girl gets a tip from a customer, Schreck "always [takes] charges of that" (*Nights* 69). So, she does not even let the girls save the tips that they receive. As for the wages, although the girls are "supposed to get a tenner a week each, basic, with bonuses per trick" (*Nights* 70) Schreck keeps back half of it for the expense

of the accomodation, and they "never [see] a penny of" the other half as "she put[s] it away for [them] in her safe" (*Nights* 70). So, Madame Schreck can be considered the power-holder and rule-maker who defines her employees as freaks and thus stands for the discourse of the Other. So, it can be said that inside her brothel, Madame Schreck undertakes the role of a tyrannical Lacanian Other, "[f]or, the moment that her front door shut behind you, you were her prisoner; indeed, you were her slave" (*Nights* 70) just like the infant finds himself/herself enslaved by the discourse of the Other when s/he enters the Symbolic Order.

Madame Schreck's house serves the most repressed and forbidden fantasies. In this sense, it contrasts Ma Nelson's brothel for that brothel would serve the desires of an outer society which is constructed in accordance with the definitive norms while this one serves the desires of those whose fantasies, such as having sexual intercourse with Albert/Albertina (a hermaphrodite working for Madame Schreck), are not acceptable in the society that they belong to and should remain repressed into the unconscious during their normal life if they do not want to be othered or defined as freaks.The customers internalised the discourse of the Other and the society's norms are embedded into their unconscious so strongly that when they enter Madame Schreck's house, they "rummage among the clabber in the big wardrobe and rig [themselves] out in a cassock, or a ballet dancer's frock, or whatever they fanc[y]" (*Nights* 68). In the Lacanian sense, changing the attire may be interpreted as changing the identity. So, the customers can be said to borrow a different identity while entering the house and leave their discursively constructed identities at the door. In this sense, the customers choose their guise for the identity that they secretly wish to adopt deep down in their unconscious. Thus, with an identity they unconsciously desire, the customers enter the place where their most repressed desires and fantasies are stored.

Indeed, Madame Schreck's brothel is designed just like the unconscious. The woman monsters wait for the customers downstairs, in "a sort of vault or crypt" which they called "Down Below" or "The Abyss" (*Nights* 68). Both in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, downstairs and vaults, cellars or crypts are often associated with the depths of the unconscious. In this sense, it can be said that the customers go downstairs in order to find their most repressed desires. After they pick it up, they go upstairs, "to

what Madame Schreck called the 'Black Theatre'" (*Nights* 69) where customers may perform their repressed desires. The name "Black Theatre" reminds the Lacanian reader of the Lacanian concept of fantasy which is regarded by Lacan as a stage on which the repressed desires are performed. It can also be regarded as a defense mechanism which helps taming the id's demands especially when the id's desires totally contradict with the demands of the super ego, in other words, the discursively constructed reality and its definitions. In this sense, Madame's Black Theatre can be considered as the fantasy stage where the customers may perform the desires of their id which contradict with what the society expects of them.

Fevvers achieves to escape the museum and after a series of adventures, she finds herself telling her story to Walser in her dressing room at Alhambra Music Hall. During her stay in Madame Schreck's museum, she discovers that she can use her extraordinary looks, and begins to "make a living by flaunting both the wings and femininity upon which her stage persona is based" (Root 13). Her occupation as an aerialiste also joins her definition of herself for "[t]his self-conscious masquerade gives Fevvers power over her representation" (Root 14). So, as Robinson remarks

> While Fevvers is placed as the objecrt of various male gazes in the text, she simultaneously places herself as the subject of her own story. Her strategy to this end is to turn the gaze on herself by actively staging her difference and by intervening into the hom(m)osexual economy that requires Woman be made into a fetish-object to safeguard male subjectivity. [...] *Nights at the Circus* disrupts [this economy] through what feminist film theorists have called the subversive potential of the feminine masquerade. This strategy is akin to what Irigaray calls mimicry; a self-conscious performance, by women, of the place traditionally assigned to Woman, within narrative and other discourse. It is by this and other strategies that Fewers appropriates the gaze to herself as an index of her subjective agency, and simultaneously, gains control over her narrative. (23-24)

As explained above, Fevvers is the object of the male gaze and that is what gives her control over her own subjectivity as she knows how to manipulate the male gaze. On the issue of the gaze, Lacan borrows from Sartre in his first seminar: "My fundamental connection with the Other must be able to be referred back to my permanent

possibility of *being seen* by the Other" (Sartre 256, italics in original). That means a subject needs the gaze of the Other, in other words, the Father, or the discourse, in order to realise that s/he is a subject. In this sense, Fevvers builds a definition of herself as a successful and charming winged aerialiste who is a wonder, and wears it like an armour to protect herself from being defined as a freak. Then, she represents herself with that definition, and, by hiding the truth about herself (that she is indeed a freak), she leaves the male gaze, or the Other, no choice but to see her in that armour. That is how Fevvers manipulates the male gaze in order to be initiated into the discourse of the Other as a wonder instead of a freak.

Even though Fevvers seems to have perfected the definition of her own self, her developmental journey does not end where her story ends. Throughout her story, there is no incident that can be interpreted as the Lacanian Oedipus Complex, which enables the infant to internalise the discourse, to realise that the object of desire is impossible to obtain as obtaining it has always already been restricted by the Father, and which drives the infant to melancholy. Instead, Fevvers seems to experience an extended Mirror Stage as can be deduced from her obsession with mirrors throughout the novel. During the interview, she continuously checks her own reflection in the mirror. As Russo claims, Fevvers "loops and somersaults backward as well as forward in the plot, expanding the spatial dimensions of female spectacularity but never leaving the mirror entirely behind" (139). Even at one moment, "she streche[s] herself suddenly and hugely, extending every muscle as a cat does, until it seem[s] she intend[s] to fill up all the mirror" (*Nights* 57). As the mirror reflects the crude reality, it is as if Fevvers, as a character that contradicts with the reality, tries to fill up the mirror with her image in order to prove herself that she is a fact as her reflection in the mirror suggests. In this sense, Fevvers, in this sense, is a Lacanian infant who has not yet left the Mirror Stage behind, but is stuck at that phase and still experiences alienation from her reflection in the mirror upon her identification with it.

Fevvers can be said to experience the Oedipal Complex when she meets the Grand Duke in St. Petersburg. Grand Duke is one of the fans of Fevvers who is apparently a Russian aristocrat. He invites Fevvers to dinner at his mansion and Fevvers accepts his invitation for "he is so rich that Money hasn't any meaning for him" (*Nights* 218-219).

The invitation is sent to Fevvers with a diamond bracelet and a pair of diamond earrings which promises "the diamond riviere to match" (*Nights* 212) if she agrees to go "alone" and "unaccompanied" (*Nights* 211). Upon seeing the promise, Fevvers accepts the invitation without any hesitation. Fevvers is a free woman who can make her own definitions, but mostly her freedom is a result of her wealth. So, Fevvers believes that anything can be sold or done in order to make more money and, with this idea in mind, Fevvers mostly acts greedily. Lizzie sees Fevvers's greed and says "If you think I'd lift a finger to help you, you've got another thing coming, my girl. Sheer greed, that's what it is" (*Nights* 212). As the wise Old Woman, Lizzie disapproves of Fevvers's greed and tries to warn her but Fevvers acts independently for she she cannot see that greed is her weak point and that she is obsessed with economic power. She even sees "no death in snow" but "festive sparkle of the frosty lights that [makes] her think of diamonds" (*Nights* 216). In this sense, Fevvers is not mature enough to abolish her greed which is eventually used against her by the Grand Duke.

One of the first remarkable things that Fevvers notices when she enters the mansion is her life-size, "full spread, styling and smiling" (*Nights* 218) statue made out of ice and the promised diamond riviere round its neck which makes Fevvers "choke on the baulked greed" (*Nights* 218). Although she is blinded by greed, she begins to feel restless because of the Grand Duke's greeting and the ice-sculpture. Especially after she sees the Grand Duke writes her first name, Sophia, with the vodka glasses and drinks thirty-five shots of vodka and still manages to remain on his feet, Fevvers "form[s] the opinion the Grand Duke was not as other men" and wishes "after all, that she had let Lizzie come along" (*Nights* 219). Therefore, although Fevvers forces herself to stay in order to obtain the diamonds, she begins to feel uneasy and wants Lizzie, her mother-figure, a reminder of the Imaginary phase, to be with her right now for protection. She is not fully aware of the danger, but she feels that the Grand Duke is not like any other men that she has dealt with so far. She feels that the Grand Duke is beyond them, which indicates that he can be associated with the Lacanian concept of transcendental Father.

The Grand Duke shows Fevvers his clockwork orchestra which is composed of life-like automatons that the Duke can fully control by pressing buttons. They look so life-

like that Fevvers, although she herself is a character whose existence cannot be scientifically explained, tries to convince herself that such clockwork mechanisms are actually probable:

> Fevvers thought: there's a musical box inside the bird. And, anyone who could make a grandfather clock could put that harpy together. And, the gong is sounded by electrical impulses. All the same, the hairs on her nape rose and the Grand Duke turned to her a satisfied smile, as if, all along, he intended her to be afraid of him. (*Nights* 221)

As can be seen, just like Walser who tries to prove that Fevvers is not real, Fevvers here tries to reveal the probability of the automatons. However, she feels scared as she begins to realise that the Grand Duke's intention is to add Fevvers to his collection. In the Lacanian sense, Fevvers fears being subjectified by the Grand Duke. The Duke is a powerful and rich man who has total control over the automatons and these characteristics are of the Father who, by the discourse he imposes on the infant with his Primordial Law, is a tyrannical figure that regulates when and to what extent the infant may obtain the mother. In this sense, in order to establish authority over Fevvers, the Grand Duke intimidates her. Just like the Lacanian infant who has an imaginary fear of being castrated by the Father if s/he does not comply with the Primordial Law, Fevvers fears that the Duke may take what Fevvers values the most, which is her freedom. She does not fear his physical power or political force. She fears the unknown; the mysterious, imperious power of the Duke against which she most probably has no means to protect herself.

While inspecting the Grand Duke's collection of Fabergé Eggs, the Duke forces Fevvers to uncover her wings. He even touches the wings despite Fevvers's objections. As his hands investigate Fevvers's body inside her dress, he finds Ma Nelson's sword which Fevvers always keep in its hiding place in her corset:

> 'Give me that back-'
> But he held the lethal toy out of her reach, examining it curiously, chuckling under his moustache before he bent his knee to snap the sword in two across it. (*Nights* 224-225)

Ma Nelson's sword is a very precious item for Fevvers as it symbolizes the paternal authority; it has a phallic shape and it is a weapon for men. Fevvers keeps it with her everywhere she goes not only for protection. The sword can be interpreted as the Father's phallus which, according to the delusional belief of the Lacanian infant, renders him the power to impose the Primordial Law on the infant. As argued above, the Lacanian infant desires to be desired by the mother, and thinks that the mother's desire is the phallus and the Father has the phallus which gives him the authority to restrict and regulate when and to what extent the infant may obtain the mother. Discursively, the Primordial Law and the lack of the phallus become embedded into the language, that is to say it is the discourse through which the Father imposes the Primordial Law; by defining himself as the Father who is the rule-maker and the infant as the infant who is obliged to obey the rules of the Father, which leads the child to solve the Oedipal conflict. Like the Lacanian infant, Fevvers resists the discourse of the Father and does not let the (transcendental) Father define herself and make her own definitions. If the sword is interpreted as the phallus, it can be said that when the sword is with her, Fevvers feels that it protects her freedom not only from a physical threat, but from a discursive one as well. Having the phallus with her, Fevvers thinks that she is entirely independent from the phallogocentric definitions of woman, that she has the freedom to define herself, and that she has the discursive power of the Father. That is why seeing the sword broken is shocking and traumatic for Fevvers. The Grand Duke, the Father, breaks the "toy" and deprives Fevvers, the infant, of all the authority she has, which shows that the sword is not actually the phallus, but a substitute for it which fills the space that the lack causes in Fevvers's psyche. Actually she has never had the phallus for it is, as the original signifier, always already absent: "Now she was defenceless. She could have wept" (*Nights* 225). Indeed, after Fevvers loses her weapon to the Grand Duke in his frozen palace, "she [loses] some of that sense of her own magnificence which had previously sustained her trajectory" (*Nights* 323).

While examining the eggs, the Grand Duke opens one of them with a key and it reveals a tiny tree with fruits on it, all made of precious stones. The Duke

> touched one of these fruits. It, too, split open and out flew the smallest of all possible birds, made of red gold. It moved its head from side to

> side, flapped its wings and opened its beak and a shrill sweet warbling came out: “Only a bird in a gilded cage.” (*Nights* 224)

Despite having been made of precious stones and ore, the tiny clockwork mechanisms in the eggs are so realistic that Fevvers discovers the “imminent and deadly danger” (*Nights* 224) that awaits her, especially after seeing another egg with a tiny, empty cage inside: let along being life-like, all the automatons that these eggs contain may actually be real and Fevvers herself may be about to join the Duke’s collection. Upon reaching this conclusion, Fevvers escapes through the tiny, clockwork replica of the Trans-Siberian Express and when she enters the replica, she suddenly finds herself in the real train. So, just like Doctor Hoffman’s machines in *The Infernal*, the Grand Duke’s collection can be considered as samples through which he can manipulate the reality by constructing discourse, and the gallery can be considered as the creative mind of the author. Such an idea locates the Grand Duke as the authoritative Father who, with his impositions, determines the discourse that the infant has to use. He tries to subjectify Fevvers for his own pleasure and personal use, like Hoffman tries to subjectify Desiderio in *The Infernal*.

Getting violated by the Duke and being exposed to great fear and worry, Fevvers realises, in the Lacanian sense, that she cannot outwit the Father, that she cannot stay neither in the Imaginary nor in the Mirror Stage forever since entering the Symbolic Order is inevitable. What is even more traumatic is the fact that her greed alone is responsible for what happened in the mansion, which causes her to feel weak and to see that she is not as powerful as she used to think. As a token of elimination of her greed, she gives her diamonds to Little Ivan, a Russian boy who works for the circus, which shows that she has maturated:

> [Walser] was struck dumb to see Fevvers, raddled with tears, hair coming down again, gypsy dress ripped and clotted with semen, trying as best she could do to cover her bare breasts with a filthy bu incontrovertible tangle of pin feathers. (*Nights* 227)

Fevvers is in tears because she falls into a deep melancholy upon seeing the truth that she does not have total control over her own life and discourse. Her ripped dress “clotted with semen” shows that Fevvers’s perception of the reality is no longer pure

but stained and filtered by the phallogocentric discourse. In fact, her perception has never been pure and always been filtered, and the realisation of that, along with the realisation that the phallus has always already been absent and she has never obtained it, is what drives Fevvers to the Lacanian infant's melancholy. So, upon losing her sword, Fevvers realises that she cannot ever reach her ultimate object of desire, which is the return to the Imaginary Order, for the phallus has always already been absent. Now, knowing that obtaining the ultimate object of desire is imposibble, Fevvers needs a substitute for it and she unconsciously chooses Walser whom she has actually chosen long before the Oedipal Complex.

Before Fevvers meets the Duke, Walser brings Mignon to Fevvers in order to protect the girl from her angry husband's fists and he perceives that "[Fevvers] believe[s] Mignon to be his mistress and [is] - heaven be praised! – consumed with jealousy" (*Nights* 166) which shows that Fevvers has an obvious interest in Walser. Later, when Fevvers discovers that Walser did not spend the night with Mignon, as she says to Walser: "I hear […] you walked out on Death-warmed-up, last night, after all that. Seems like I got it wrong, love. Seems like you weren't knocking her off, after all" (*Nights* 182-83) with "a mysterious coquettishness" (*Nights* 183). Hence, as an infant still experiencing the Mirror Stage, Fevvers is aware of the fact that the reality is different from how she perceives it but resists to perceive the reality as she sees it in the mirror. Instead, she tries to "fill up" the mirrors with her own reality, or discourse, as she tries to do during the interview in order to ignore the reality that the mirror reflects. In this sense, she is partly aware of the fact that reaching the object of desire (the final meaning) is impossible in the discursively constructed reality as she is already detached from the mother (as the infant realizes that seeing his/her own independent image in the mirror) but she postpones facing it as she wants to remain the sole determining authority of her own discourse. Yet she unconsciously chooses Walser as her objet-petit-a, the substitute for her ultimate object of desire.

Only after the Oedipal stage, that is meeting the Duke, does Fevvers realize that she can never be independent from the discourse of the Other, that she has never had the phallus of her own discourse since her own discourse is imaginary and not real. Fevvers faces the fact that her misconception of being her own mistress has always

been a delusional belief, that she has always been detached from her object of desire and that her Imaginary Order in which she thought that she was united with her environment and had the total control of it, was indeed imaginary. She finds herself trapped into the discourse of the Other in the Duke's mansion, and makes her escape through a replica of the Trans-Siberian Express which is in an egg. Therefore, it can be said that Fevvers re-hatches and an entirely new Fevvers is born, who is scarred by the lack of the phallus, disappointed to see that her own reality, which is constructed by her own discourse, has shattered (deconstructed) and in deep melancholy. Fevvers states:

> as if the enormous anguish that I felt, this anguish of the solitude of our abandoned state in this world that is perfectly sufficient to itself without us – as if my sudden and irrational despair hooked itself on to a rational grief and clung there for dear life. (*Nights* 235)

These words that Fevvers utters at the beginning of their journey through the tundra shows how irrationally she grieves and that she and the others who are on the same train do not belong to the world outside.

Thus starts Fevvers's journey through the Siberian steppes which stands for the Lacanian Real. While travelling through the snowy landscape which is "as if under dustsheets", Fevvers describes the terrain as "the middle of nowhere" (*Nights* 233).

> Nowhere, one of those words, like 'nothing' that opens itself inside you like a void. And were we not progressing through the vastness of nothing to the extremities of nowhere? (*Nights* 233)

The emptiness of the vast, white land remote from any settlement indicates the nebulousness of the Lacanian Real which is indefinite and pre-symbolic; it is the domain which the subject cannot experience purely. Since the perception of the subject is filtered through discourse, the Real is the crude reality that can never be experienced unless the discourse itself is deconstructed. As Fevvers's own discourse has been shattered and deconstructed upon solving the Oedipus Complex, she finds herself in the middle of an indefinite, vast, blank sheet which is impossible to describe. All she can say to describe the tundra is "nowhere" or "nothing" for the reason that there are no signifiers that she can use to describe the pre-symbolic Real where, as Fevvers

states, they "have no right to be" (*Nights* 234) and which is a world "that is perfectly sufficient to itself wtihout [them]" (*Nights* 235).

Now that Fevvers has faced the Oedipal Conflict, her interest in her objet-petit-a, Walser, grows even stronger and she seems to accept and even welcome him unconsciously as the object that she already wants and will pursue forever.

> Underneath his make-up, that face like a beloved face known long ago, and lost, and now returned, although I never knew him before, although he is a stranger, still that face which I have always loved before I ever saw it so that to see him is to remember. (*Nights* 240)

As Fevvers's description of him suggests, Walser bears a remarkable resemblance to the Lacanian objet-petit-a. Fevvers considers him a returned object, lost and found, which facilitates the sense of returning to the Imaginary Order. Regarding Fevvers's feeling of knowing Walser before, although he is a stranger, is parallel with the feeling of the infant at the Mirror Stage; upon seeing himself/herself as separated from his/her environment, thus from the mother, which is the infant's object of desire, s/he feels both an identification (s/he knows that the mother that s/he has been united is the same mother with the one now the mirror reflects) and alienation (s/he realizes that how s/he perceived the mother is different from how the mother actually is). In this sense, as the object of desire belongs to the Imaginary Order although one looks for it in the Symbolic and while doing so, replaces it with objet-petit-a, Walser reminds Fevvers of the vague memories of the Imaginary Order where Fevvers wants to return and this places Walser as Fevvers's objet-petit-a.

With a traumatic "thunderous boom" (*Nights* 240) the train explodes and the passengers in the train, including Fevvers and Walser, find themselves in the Real, a deconstructed discourse, for Ma Nelson's clock is lost, which leads them to a timeless domain, and Fevvers loses the sight of her objet-petit-a and Walser his memories. On the empty Siberian steppes, the ordinary laws of time and space do not operate as they form a certain discourse, a constructed reality, through their definitions of the universe, whereas the Real is completely out of the discourse. Once a *thing* (an item, an urge, a feeling, a state of being) is caught in the dialectic of experience and is defined, or signified, in accordance with a particular discourse, it loses its crude pre-symbolic

existence, thus leaves the domain of the Real, and becomes a sign. In this sense, since the Real is the domain of "the impossible" (*Seminar 11* 167), anything that is improbable in the discursively constructed reality may be probable in the Real. Desires and feelings may be unleashed for the reason that nothing in the Real is limited to the discourse. So, the chaotic madness unleashed by the show which is performed by the clowns to cheer the outlaws up causes a blizzard that wipes out all the clowns and outlaws. The sense of time is also chaotic on the Siberian steppes. For Walser, time passes so fast that he grows a long beard and learns how to ride a rein deer whereas for Fevvers and Lizzie, it has been only a week since the explosion.

During her journey through the tundra, Fevvers finds out that her appearance is gradually and swiftly changing. It is revealed that blonde is not her natural hair colour, and her wings are actually brown instead of "a kind of blonde, only a little darker than the hair on my head, more the colour of that on my private ahem parts" (*Nights* 25) as Fevvers told Walser during the interview. She has dyed her feathers purple and red and under that colour, she has always defined herself as blonde but her blondness has always been fake and now "her heart [is] breaking when she look[s] in the mirror and [sees] her brilliant colours withering away" (*Nights* 323), because now, during her journey through the Real, her colours wither like the discourse that filters her perception of reality and the mirror reflects merely the crude reality about her. Upon seeing the truth about herself in the mirror, from which she feels completely alienated, Fevvers comes to a full realisation that she is not the mistress of her own definitions as those definitions are merely illusions and not true at all. This leads Fevvers to complete her Mirror Stage. With her artificial manners, exaggerated coquettishness and fake colours, she is not the symbol of the New Woman, but a parody of it. For that reason, she needs Walser, who has written down Fevvers as she has defined it, in order to prove herself that she is fact and not fiction:

> The young American it was who kept the whole story of the old Fevvers in his notebooks; she longed for him to tell her she was true. She longed to see herself reflected in all her remembered splendour in his grey eyes. She longed; she yearned. (*Nights* 324)

This also explains why Walser reminds Fevvers of the Imaginary Order. Since the journalist knows Fevvers as the way she has introduced herself, Fevvers, now facing the reality that she is not how she has always defined herself, needs Walser's perception of her in order to feel that she returned to the Imaginary Order.

However, when she finds Walser, she notices that Walser is no longer the young American journalist she knew. Walser is stuck in an entirely new Symbolic Order among the shamanic Transbaikalian tribe and adopted their reality in which Fevvers is not a woman, but a "bear-spirit" (*Nights* 343). She finds herself in the middle of a shamanic rite the aim of which is to make her "fade away as quickly as possible" (*Nights* 343). Indeed, as the rite goes on, Fevvers feels "herself turning, willy-nilly, from a woman into an idea" (*Nights* 343). In the Lacanian sense, the Shaman and his apprentice, Walser, absorb the image of Fevvers into their own discourse not as a woman, but as a spirit. Thus, they define her as an idea and their rite transforms Fevvers, who is dominated by their discourse now, into one. She tries to see herself in Walser's eyes which once recognised the Fevvers that she herself has defined. She notices herself in his eyes "at last, swimming into definition, like the image on photographic paper; but, instead of Fevvers, she [sees] two perfect miniatures of a dream" (*Nights* 344). As Fevvers cannot see the Fevvers of her own discourse in Walser's eyes, she "suffer[s] the worst crisis of her life: 'Am I fact? Or am I fiction? Am I what I know I am? Or am I what he thinks I am?'" (*Nights* 344).

In the Lacanian sense, such a crisis is in line with the idea of the trauma that the infant suffers upon seeing himself/herself in the mirror, just like Fevvers sees herself in Walser's eyes. The Lacanian infant cannot easily comprehend which one is real; what s/he sees in the mirror or what s/he feels about himself/herself. Similar to the infant at the Mirror Stage, Fevvers faces her own crude reality reflected in Walser's eyes as a "perfect miniature" and her Mirror Stage is complete. However, with Lizzie's help, she quickly recovers from the shock and spreads her wings, puts on her regular artificial smile and sees her old self in "the eyes fixed upon her with astonishment, with awe, the eyes that [tell] her who she was" (*Nights* 345). When Walser recovers from amnesia and recognises Fevvers, although his perspective and perception are not the same as those of Walser in the dressing-room at Alhambra Music Hall, he identifies

Fevvers as the old, magnificient, fabulous Fevvers. However, now that Walser is a completely new man, Fevvers's reunion with him is not a total return to the Imaginary Order as it is absolutely impossible once the infant experiences the Mirror Stage.

Just as Walser recovers from the amnesia, he begins interrogating Fevvers: "What is your name? Have you a soul? Can you love?" (*Nights* 345). Fevvers, bewildered by happiness, cries "That's the way to start the interview! […] Get out your pencil and we'll begin" (*Nights* 345). In the Lacanian sense, Fevvers's answer implies that the New Walser whose perception is deconstructed by the amnesia and now reconstructing itself, and the New Fevvers, who has recently solved the Oedipal Complex, has concluded her extended Mirror Stage and has entered the Symbolic Order, need to do another interview in order to re-define the New Woman and the New Man of the upcoming century together. The self-reflexive ending of the novel should especially be noted.

> 'Fevvers, only one question… Why did you go to such lenghts, once upon a time, to convince me you were the "only fully-feathered intacta in the history of the world"?'
> She began to laugh.
> 'I fooled you, then!' she said. 'Gawd, I fooled you!'
> She laughed so much the bed shook.
> 'You mustn't believe what you write in the papers![…] To think I fooled you!' (*Nights* 349)

As Gustar argues, "that our confidence is solely tried, particularly our confidence in narrative identities, as these are constructed through realist modes of representation and Oedipal textual mechanics" (174) as Walser's, and the general reader's, understanding of Fevvers's identity is based upon the conventional definitions of femininity. However, Fevvers's claim that she has fooled Walser and her imperious laughter which dominates all the characters of the novel suggests that right from the beginning, Fevvers has created herself out of those conventional definitions. As discussed above, Fevvers is obsessed with the freedom to define herself. Thus, in the final scene, it is revealed that everything about Fevvers, including her personal history and wings, are factual only in the boundaries of the fiction created by Fevvers, in parallel with Day's remark; "she is both fiction *and* fact. She's been composed or

written into being and in that sense is fictional. But that composition, that 'fiction' is now true and the fact" (181). Now that Fevvers has faced the Mirror Stage and entered the Symbolic Order, she is aware of the fact that she is a fictional character in a novel. So, since the beginning of the novel, she has been writing her own history and experiences, similar to an infant in the Imaginary Order who imagines his/her own reality in the way s/he perceives it. She has resisted the novel's reality through her intentionally extended Mirror Stage by favouring her own reality over the novel's reality. However, in the end, she is obliged to conform to the novel's discursive reality and her laughter is her confession of how she has fooled Walser, the Lacanian and the general reader, by pretending to be a factual character who is completely without self-reflexivity.

2.2. FEVVERS AS THE OBJECT

While illustrating Fevvers's infantile development and subjectification process through her acquisition of the discourse and extended Mirror Stage, *Nights* occasionally portrays Fevvers as a desired object, especially by Walser, Christian Rosencreutz and the Grand Duke. In this section, the main character Fevvers will be analysed as a Lacanian object of desire.

Fevvers's effort "to act natural" eventually leads her to "act flamboyantly artificial" (Russo 139) and her artificiality, which is reflected in her artificially polite manners, implausible story and wings, can be considered the discursively constructed and artifical objet-petit-a. As the Lacanian theory asserts, it is the discourse that imposes on the subject what and how s/he desires. As stated above, Fevvers holds the power to define herself and make her own definitions. Through her own discourse which is built by the story she tells, the manners she assumes, and the cosmetics she uses, Fevvers constructs herself as a fabulous, unlikely and far-fetched ideal woman who stands before Walser's incredulous eyes in flesh and blood. In paralel with the nature of the object of desire, the subjects that pursue Fevvers can see that she exists but cannot obtain her for the fact that Fevvers never accepts that she is a fact. She keeps feeding the doubts of those who pursue her through a clever and persevering propagation of the

question: “Is she fact or is she fiction?” (*Nights* 3). Hence, she remains visible and out of reach by her principle that demands “[l]ook, not touch” (*Nights* 13) which is parallel to the nature of the object of desire that necessarily remains out of the subject’s reach. Knowing that Fevvers is a fact would discursively construct her identity as a freak. Moreover, proving her actuality would reduce her value to an obtained object (which has no value). However, believing that she is a fact, with the connotation that there is a possibility for her to be fiction, makes her attractive, unreachable and maintains the pursuit of her. Since “seeing is believing” (*Nights* 13), Fevvers does not allow anyone to touch her.

It should be noted that Fevvers does not consciously construct herself as an object. Her action is more like an unconscious defense mechanism. Like the infant who desires to be desired by the mother, Fevvers desires to be desired by the Other, that is the Symbolic Order, for the fact that through that way, she will not be defined as a freak by the discourse and can protect herself from being enslaved by the Other, just like she was enslaved by Madame Schreck. For that reason, Fevvers is terrified by the possibility that she gets obliged to reveal the truth about herself. So, when the Charivaris, the family of high-wire artists, attempt to assassinate Fevvers during the rehearsals, what she fears is not death:

> If she were indeed a *lusus naturae*, a prodigy, then - she was no longer a wonder.
> She would no longer be an extraordinary woman, no more the Greatest *Aerialiste* in the world but – a freak. Marvellous indeed, but a marvellous monster, […] always the object of the observer, never the subject of sympathy, an alien creature forever estranged. […] As a symbolic woman, she has a meaning, as an anomaly, none. (*Nights* 188)

So, Fevvers is not afraid of death, but she is afraid of being left with no choice but to use her wings to save herself which would reveal that she can actually fly, and that she is real. That would break the spell of the unknown that she casts by her disguise of the fictional. If her actuality is proven, she will enter the discursive reality as a freak, and she will be rejected by the discursively constructed society as her weirdness is against the norms. She will be an obtained object without value, without a meaning. Therefore,

in order to prevent herself from being defined as a freak by the Symbolic Order, the factual Fevvers constructs a fictional Fevvers, which is not a fact, but a belief, a possibility.

As Fevvers bears the characteristics of an object of desire, along with her admirers and audience, there are two especially significant characters that wish to obtain Fevvers the first one of which is a powerful and rich Member of Parliament named Christian Rozencreutz. Rozencreutz buys Fevvers from Madame Schreck for a considerably high price. When Fevvers is forcibly taken to Rozencreutz's mansion, she deduces from his intensive use of sexual connotation that his intention is coitus. But later, it is revealed that Rozencreutz has the delusion that Fevvers is Azrael, the Angel of Death, and Rozencreutz wants to kill her in order to achieve immortality. He defines Fevvers as

> lady of the hub of the celestial wheel, creature half of earth and half of air, virgin and whore, reconciler of fundament and firmament, reconciler of opposing states through the meditation of your ambivalent body, reconciler of the Grand opposites of death and life […] wait with me for the hour when it is neither dark nor light […] when you shall give yourself to me but I shall not possess you. (*Nights* 93)

As can be seen, Rozencreutz sees Fevvers as the reconciler of the grand oppositions, and believes that she can also reconcile life and death. In this sense, when he says that Fevvers will give herself but he will not obtain her, he unconsciously refers to the nature of the Lacanian object of desire. The desire of the subject who is in constant pursuit of the object is not to obtain it, since once s/he obtains the object, the urge to pursue, the motive to live on, disappears. According to Lacanian theory of desire, what the subject actually desires is to maintain the pursuit, to circle around the object and never to reach it. In this sense, Rosencreutz speaks of what he really desires. He wants the object to come to him but he never desires to obtain it.

Lacan claims that the death drive, the unconscious wish of the human subject to die, is "a nostalgia for a lost harmony, a desire to return to the preoedipal fusion with the mother" (Evans 33) yet he places the death drive into the Order of the Symbolic which, he claims, has the tendency to produce repetition and the subject has the tendency to

go beyond the pleasure principle to obtain the surplus-jouissance. Since the subject desires to pursue the object of desire, which is being the desire of the mother, the pursuit itself is the jouissance and for Lacan, death, the exit from the Symbolic Order and the return to the mother, is the excess of it "where enjoyment is experienced as suffering" (Evans 34). In this sense, Rozencreutz wants to postpone his death just like the subject who desires to postpone his/her obtainment of the object and the immortality, in the Lacanian sense, stands for the eternal chase after the object. By killing Azrael, Rozencreutz will eliminate his ultimate object of desire, thus avoid attainment to it. However, Fevvers achieves to escape from the mansion leaving Rozencreutz "to see his fleshy bottle of *elixum vitae* take off" (*Nights* 95, italics in original) and fly through the window.

As the object of desire, Fevvers has a very significant place in Walser's life. Despite all the adventures and dangers he has been through and all the experience he has, no experience has "altered to any great degree the invisible child inside the man" for "Walser [has] not experienced his experience *as* experience" (*Nights* 7, italics in original). So, Walser can be regarded as the Lacanian infant who does not have a fully developed self consciousness yet.

> Yet there remained something a little unfinished about him. […] There was scarcely any of those little, what you might call *personal* touches to his personality […], it was almost as if himself were an *objet-trouvé*, for, subjectively, *himself* he never found, since it was not his *self* which he sought. (*Nights* 7, italics in original)

In this sense, Walser does not have sufficient knowledge about himself to be matured. He is not a Lacanian infant, but can be regarded as one since, although he is already introduced into the Symbolic Order as can be understood from his scepticism against anything that is a paradox against the reality, his subjectification is not yet finished. That makes him a suitable man to evolve into the New Man of the New Age for his identity is not fully constructed yet. Because of his "professional necessity to see all and believe nothing" (*Nights* 6), Walser becomes obsessed with disproving Fevvers and decides to follow her during her world tour in order to find proof against her. Throughout his journey after Fevvers, which is also his developmental process, he

gradually and unconsciously constructs his own identity by assuming different identities in a serial fashion.

One of the identities he assumes during his journey is that of the clown. Walser is accepted to Colonel Kearney's circus as a clown. When he puts on his make-up for the first time, he experiences a secondary Mirror Stage:

> When Walser first put on his make up, he looked in the mirror and he did not recognise himself. As he contemplated the stranger peering interrogatively back at him out of the glass, he felt the beginnings of a vertigious sense of freedom […] the freedom that lies behind the mask, within dissimulation, the freedom to juggle with being, and, indeed, with the language which is vital to our being that lies at the heart of burlesque. (*Nights* 119)

Similar to the infant at the Mirror Stage, Walser in his newly assumed identity feels alienation from "the stranger" that he sees in the mirror while he is completely aware of the fact that it is none other than himself. As it marks his entrance into a new Symbolic Order which runs on different norms and rules than the previous one, he feels a sense of freedom from the previous order. Now, he adopts the discourse of the burlesque which grants him the freedom to act in the absurd way of the clown as the absurd is the norm in this new discourse. The Colonel demands Walser to "[m]ake a fool of [him]self" (*Nights* 118) and during his unfortunate encounter with the tigress while trying to save Mignon, Walser gets injured and now he is obliged to abandon his profession as a journalist as he can no longer write. "He is no longer a journalist masquerading as a clown; wily-nilly, force of circumstance has turned him into a *real* clown" (*Nights* 169, italics in original). After he is scarred by the tigress and fully becomes a clown, Walser's obsession to negate Fevvers transforms into a desire for her. Now that Fevvers and Walser are stuck in the same discourse, that is the discourse of the circus, Walser falls in love with Fevvers and apparently Fevvers also has interest in him.

When the Trans-Siberian Express is attacked by the outlaws, Walser loses his memory and returns to the Imaginary Order. He calls the murderess that finds him "Mama" (*Nights* 262) thinking that she is his mother. The murderess notices that

Walser "like the landscape, is a perfect blank" (*Nights* 262). Now Walser is ready to reconstruct his identity all over again, and this enables him to evolve into the New Man of the coming century.

> He rubbed his hand on his belly in a circular motion and searched the absence that had been his memory but he could find nothing there to tell him what to say. So he kept on rubbing. (*Nights* 263)

As can be seen, Walser has lost his language and he cannot find a way to express his urges which belong to the real. His urge of hunger is real as he does not experience it through the discourse. However, when he expresses it with the motion of his hand, his Real urge enters the discourse as a sign and is filtered by it, and the murderess understands that he is hungry.

In search of the murderess that abandons him, Walser gets lost in the wood and meets the Shaman who is the father figure who will introduce Walser into the Symbolic Order, but this one is the Symbolic Order of the shamanic Trans-Baikalian tribe. During the daily-life, they have a certain social order to conduct their daily tasks, religious and social practices, etc. However, actually they live in the Real, that indefinite realm beyond experience:

> And even when his eyes were open, you might have said the Shaman lived in a dream. But so did they all. They shared a common dream, which was their world, and it should rather be called an 'idea' than a 'dream', since it constituted their entire sense of ivied reality which impinged on *real* reality only inadvertently. (*Nights* 299, italics in original)

So, the dream reality of the tribe has no definitions, no language or discourse, to limit how they experience and express. They communicate through their set of collective hallucinations without any alterations caused by the discourse. That is why it is "foolproof" (*Nights* 299). They have an impossible discourse in the Real which is the "domain of the impossible" (*Seminar 11* 167).

Walser's every sound, every movement and everything that he tells only make sense when interpreted by the Shaman. This corresponds to Carter's explanation (during an interview to John Haffenden) on the shamanic tribe that "[o]f course, every social

system tends to denaturize people, it's one of the things about living in groups; since you can't live on your own and retain your social identity" (Haffenden 75) for "the question of illusion – what is real and what is not real – comes up again there, in a tribal group which has different epistemology" (Haffenden 76). So, every individual can only attain an identity among the society's discourse in which s/he lives and now that Walser assumes the identity of a shamanist tribesman, and as the Shaman is the conveyor of the discourse, Walser can only have a meaning, or identity, when interpreted by a discourse. Now, Walser is defined as a spiritual being, or the possessed apprentice of the Shaman. However, as he recovers from the memory loss, he attains some hints about his past such as his name, Walser. So, gradually, by combining his previous identities and the new one, Walser constructs a new identity. Now that he has deconstructed his previously assumed identities, he achieves to get rid of the past prejudices, concrete definitions and labels that were embedded to his unconscious by the discourse. Now he is more open-minded and has a deconstructive sense of the binary oppositions. That is to say, his identity is constructed among the tribal people for whom there is no distinction between what is real and what is not for there are different levels of reality instead of one concrete reality. When Fevvers and Walser reunite, Fevvers realises that Walser

> was not the man he had been or would ever be again; some other men had hatched him out. For a moment, she was anxious as to whom this reconstructed Walser might turn out to be. (*Nights* 345)

So, the self constructed New Woman and the reconstructed New Man of the New Century unite, both emotionally and physically, in the cabin of the Shaman who belongs to the Old World. For Day, "[t]he relationship between Walser and Fevvers is based not on the principle of dominator and dominated, but on the idea of love between equals" (193). For that reason, Fevvers and Walser together form the New Couple of the twentieth century as their relationship deconstructs the conventional understanding of the male-female relationships. Finally, the novel closes during the first break of dawn of the year 1900.

As the Lacanian reading of Angela Carter's *Nights* suggests, the novel is about the construction of the identities, especially the gendered ones. Through the character

Fevvers, the extraordinary winged aerialiste with a world-wide fame who resists to be defined as a freak, the developmental journey of an infant, in the novel's case, of the New Woman of the 20th century, is portrayed. The male protagonist of the novel, Walser, as a Lacanian subject, is selfless at first, and then assumes different identities while pursuing his object of desire. After a severe amnesia, he reconstructs his own self by combining the ancient with the modernity and through a deconstructive sense of the Grand Narratives. When the relationship between these two characters is regarded, it can be seen that through imposing her own discourse and forcing Walser to believe her, Fevvers assumes the place of the writer and through his questions and scepticism, Walser can be located as the general reader. Correspondingly, the love between these two characters actually "characterizes not the fictional interactions *in* the text's world, but rather the interactions *between* the text and its world on the one hand, and the reader and his or her own world on the other" (McHale 227, italics in original). In this sense, "authors love their characters and texts seduce their readers; factual worlds embrace fictional worlds" (Boehm 202-3). Thus, the novel is not only about the construction of gendered identities, but the development of the writer into the new writer who is greedy neither for money nor for verisimilitude, and the reconstruction of the new reader who is not obsessed with credibility and who treats the fictional text as fiction for s/he disgregards any possible distinction between fact and fiction.

CONCLUSION

And so the first chapter of my life went up in flames, sir.
(Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus*)

The philosophical interest in the human unconscious and dupeable perception of reality is a rather recent one. Before the twentieth century, philosophers have always considered humankind as a rational and self-conscious being whose perception of reality is absolutely reliable on experiencing and expressing nature. Humankind who was presumed to be capable of rendering what s/he experienced with absolute accuracy has always been placed at the centre of Western thought . So, any phenomenon that cannot be perceived has been left out of the domain that Western philosophy is interested in. Until the Late Modern Age (which falls roughly between the years 1850 and 1950) Psychology, the study of mental functioning and behaviours, was a branch of Western metaphysics of thought. In 1879, Psychology became a branch independent from Philosophy and the interest in the unconscious, the obscure part of the human mind, began to grow. By the end of the century, Sigmund Freud's systematic method for studying and understanding the human unconscious and the dynamics of psyche, which is called psychoanalysis, introduced the idea that the unconscious is a part of the human mind which filters, alters and even shatters the humankind's perception of the reality. Freud's ideas and studies have caused a radical shift in the Western thought. With his method, the unseen phenomena has gained a significance which is as remarkable as the importance of the perceivable phenomena and it is understood that such a perception that is filtered and altered by some inner dynamics that the humankind has no control of is not as reliable as it was considered to be.

One of Freud's contemporaries, Ferdinand de Saussure's Linguistic theory and Freudian therapy bear a resemblance in the sense that when Saussure claims the language to be affected by human mind, Freud suggests the language that the patient uses is filtered by the unconscious. Regarding this parallel between Saussurean and Freudian theories, Jacques Lacan combined psychoanalysis with linguistics and

propounded a post-structuralist linguistic psychoanalysis based on his re-reading and re-interpretation of the Freudian method. Through his combination of the post-structuralist linguistics and Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacan suggested the idea that the infantile development of the psyche is a linguistic one and he centered his theory around the acquisition of the language, putting the emphasis on the socially constructed discourse and the reality which can only be perceived through the discourse. The Lacanian psychoanalysis is a post-structuralist method as it claims that obtaining the object leads to another one instead of providing the subject with satisfaction and never leads to the ultimate object of desire, which is similar to the language in which a signifier leads to another one instead of the signified, the final meaning, that is always already postponed. Moreover, it should be noted that as a post-structuralist theory, the Lacanian psychoanalysis is suitable for textual analysis for the fact that the claim that the unconscious speaks the subject, the Lacanian method never disregards textuality. On the contrary, the textuality of a literary text is of great significance for the Lacanian reader for it is textuality that reveals the dynamics of the unconscious.

From the Lacanian perspective, Angela Carter's novels, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* represent the developmental journey of the Lacanian infant and portray the connection between the acquisition of language, or the entrance into the discourse and the unconscious. These two novels illustrate the construction of the human subject with regard to the constructed reality which is built through the phallogocentric discourse. In both of the novels, the Imaginary Order, the Mirror Stage and the Symbolic Order (and more than one Symbolic Order) are portrayed through a series of adventures that the main characters experience. It is concluded in this study, when read in accordance with the Lacanian theory, these two novels suggest that instead of one concrete definition of reality, there are more than one layers of reality. In this sense, reality is a changable notion as it is a product of discourse. Since these novels are about writing novels, which means that they portray the process of creative writing, they vividly depict the construction of a reality in the Lacanian sense, and support the idea that more than one reality is possible.

In *The Infernal*, the main character Desiderio begins his adventures in his hometown which can be interpreted as the Imaginary phase in the Lacanian sense. The peaceful hometown of Desiderio and the reality as its residents experience it is disturbed by another level of reality created by Doctor Hoffman, just like the infant's perception of reality is disturbed by the socially constructed reality at the Mirror Stage. Desiderio's gradual acquisition of language starts with the seductive words which are written on the window pane by Albertina, the Doctor's daughter who is sent by him to haunt Desiderio's dream and teach Desiderio how and what to desire. In this sense, the Doctor assumes the role of the transcendental Father who introduces himself to the infant and gradually detaches him/her from the mother with his presence. So, Albertina's approaches to Desiderio under her father's orders gradually separate him from the Imaginary Order. Desiderio is sent by the Minister on a mission to assassinate the Doctor to put an end to the metaphysical attacks. At the beginning of his journey, Desiderio experiences the Mirror Stage and sees himself as a stranger in the mirror for it has been a long time since he last saw himself in the mirror. What he sees in the mirror causes an alienation from his own reflection in parallel to the infant who is disappointed to see himself/herself is actually separate from his/her environment and the mother. Just as Desiderio experiences the Mirror Stage, he finds himself cast out of the hometown, the Imaginary Order, and sees that there is no turning back to there which is also parallel with what the infant experiences according to the Lacanian theory. Then, Desiderio goes on his journey to find the Father and the ultimate object of desire, Albertina. Throughout his journey, he assumes different identities and travels through different Symbolic Orders, and while doing that, he unconsciously tries to find the identity and the Symbolic Order which suits him the best. However, the initiation into the Symbolic Order that the Father forces the child to enter by his restrictions, regulations and prohibitions is inevitable and Hoffman sends his agents, the Acrobats of Desire, to initiate Desiderio into his own reality. Hoffman's aim is revealed later in the novel; he wants to turn Desiderio into his own subject, in other words his own slave, in order to use Desiderio's powerful libidinal energy which springs from his intense desire for Albertina to power his reality modifying machines that will grant the Doctor world domination. However, just before Desiderio obtains Albertina, he realises the Doctor's plan, and comes at the most painful realisation that Albertina has

never desired Desiderio but followed her Father's orders. The infant's ultimate object of desire is to be desired by the mother, and the infant has the delusion that s/he is separated from the mother by the Father and the mother's desire is limited by the Father's presence. During the Lacanian Oedipal phase, the infant realises that the mother has never been united with the infant and the infant has never been the sole desire of the mother. So, seeing that Albertina's own desire for Desiderio has always been regulated by the Father, Desiderio falls into disappointment. Also, as desire's true nature necessitates, obtaining the object causes the lack and the motive to live on to disappear. That is why what the subject truely desires is the eternal pursuit of the object. In this sense, instead of obtaining Albertina and enslaving himself to an aimless recurrence as the battery of Hoffman's machines, Desiderio chooses to kill Albertina as well as his father and escapes the castle with a broken heart and the lack carved on his unconscious which is natural and necessary for living on.

Not only does the novel portray the Lacanian infantile development in a vivid manner, it also exposes the creation and dynamics of the discursively constructed reality. Through its three-staged system (fantasy scene, staged in the machines, objectified in reality), the novel shows that the discourse is a system constructed by the Other (everything that is other to the infant's perception of reality – Symbolic Order and the Father are Other to the infant), and imposed on the infant by the Father (which is not the physical but the transcendental father) and his Primordial Law (the prohibition of incest with the mother). Also, it suggests that just like the hallucinations and life-like illusions created by Hoffman can be considered as a reality, the reality that the human kind perceives may be a constructed one (which is, in the Lacanian sense, a discursively constructed one), just like the novel's reality is a construction of the author's creative mind. Hoffman's machines can be considered as the creative mind, and Hoffman can be considered as the writer as every scene that he arranges in the scenes are realised, just like the scenes that are created by the author are consistent with the novel's reality. This situates Desiderio as the postmodern reader who also participates in the writing of the novel with their interpretations and reactions (Desiderio participates in Hoffman's reality making when he causes a land slide through a scene he composes in the peep-show). In this sense, the novel portrays the

process of constructing reality and suggests that there may be more than one reality, and that reality and illusion should not be considered contrasting notions. On the contrary, there is no illusion as there are different layers and levels of reality. With the portrayal of the Lacanian Orders and developmental stages, the true nature of desire and the dynamics of the discourse and unconscious, also with the three layered structure of the narration which runs retroactively instead of chronologically, it is as though *The Infernal* is written as a detailed application of the whole Lacanian theory to literature in one single novel.

It is possible to observe the Lacanian developmental stages and the three Orders in the *Nights* although not as clearly as it is in *The Infernal*. *Nights* exposes the infantile development as experienced by Fevvers and re-experienced by Walser. The personal history of Fevvers reveals how the infant experiences the Imaginary phase. Fevvers's Imaginary Order comes to an end with Ma Nelson's death, in other words, the loss of the mother. The Father's Primordial Law introduces itself through the arrival of Ma Nelson's brother who casts the prostitutes, or the infants, out of the brothel into the Symbolic Order outside, which is phallogocentric and other to Fevvers and her friends. Just before leaving the brothel, they experience the Mirror Stage and realise the truth about themselves, that they are indeed mortal in contrast to their delusion of immortality both of the house and themselves, in parallel with the Lacanian infant who has the misconception that s/he is one with the mother and that Imaginary phase will never end. However, in contrast to Desiderio who finds himself in the Symbolic Order just after he experiences the Mirror Stage, Fevvers decides to extend her own Mirror Stage and keeps resisting the discursively constructed reality for the reason that if she gives in to the reality that is Other to her, she will be defined as a freak and be alienated by its discourse. Instead, she chooses to remain fabulous by keeping the truth about herself as a secret, until she is forced to reveal herself and loses her symbolic phallus (Ma Nelson's sword), which gives her the power to define herself and protects her from being defined by the Other, to the Grand Duke. Similar to Hoffman's magic samples, the Grand Duke has a set of Fabergé Eggs inside of which there are some miniature figures that can act as the samples of the reality. In this sense, he can be considered as the Lacanian Father, and the Other, who has the control of the infant's

perception of the reality. After Fevvers narrowly escapes from the Duke's mansion, she falls into melancholy in parallel with the Lacanian infant at the post-Oedipal stage.

Walser re-experiences the developmental stages and just like Desiderio, throughout the novel he assumes different identities during his pursuit of the object of desire, Fevvers. At first, Walser's sole aim is to disprove Fevvers as a wonder with her extraordinary looks, but later, as he enters the same discourse as Fevvers through a secondary Mirror Stage (when he applies the clown make-up), he gradually falls in love with her as Fevvers is no longer Other to him. Being a part of the circus as a clown, he accompanies Fevvers during her world tour and is gradually absorbed by the discourse of the circus in which Fevvers is not freakish but absolutely wonderous. So, Walser puts the idea that Fevvers is a humbug aside, and gradually realises that whether Fevvers is fact or fiction is of no importance. After his severe amnesia at the Siberian steppes, which leads him to re-experience the Imaginary Order and the entrance into the Symbolic Order, Walser re-constructs his identity as the New Man of the century on the ruins of his old identity. While he searches for his self in the astral discourse of the Transbaikalian tribe, Fevvers completes her Mirror Stage by observing the real Fevvers which is revealed as there is no cosmetics in the wilderness to hide it, and realises that she needs Walser to prove herself that the ideal Fevvers is also real for Walser is the one who knows Fevvers as she wants to be known.

These two novels by Angela Carter have several points in common such as the motif of journey, episodic structure and self-reflexivity. As it is seen at the closing scene of *Nights*, Fevvers is a self-reflexive character just like Desiderio. While Desiderio is writing his memoirs, his detailed manner, bored and criticising attitude, and some parts of the story which cannot be known by Desiderio suggest that Desiderio is aware of the fact that he is a character in a work of fiction. Similarly, in the final part of *Nights*, upon Walser's question about her enthusiasm to prove herself to be real, Fevvers begins laughing in a joyful and victorious manner while she keeps saying that she has fooled Walser. This asserts that Fevvers also is a self-reflexive character. Similar to *The Infernal*, *Nights* is a novel about writing fiction and building a reality through a creative process. In order to keep her definition as a wonder and to prevent herself from being defined as a freak by the discourse of the Other, by assuming the phallic

authority of the Father, Fevvers makes her own definitions through the story she tells and cosmetics she uses,which corresponds to the discursive construction of the reality and to the creation of fiction. This locates Fevvers as the author of her own fiction, and Walser as the curious and resisting reader who later takes part in the creation of the novel and re-constructs his/her identity as the postmodern reader. Fevvers absorbs this reader into her own fiction just like the author does, and fools him/her by persuading them that she is fact while she is actually fiction. It should be noted that Fevvers can only exist if the reader, in this case Walser, believes in her for it is what places Fevvers into the discourse and makes her exist.

In both novels, at a particular moment, the signification chain in which the characters are stuck in is deconstructed, in *The Infernal* by the destruction of the samples, and in *Nights* by the explosion of the train. The characters find themselves in a realm that is out of the discourse, which is the Real in the Lacanian sense. As the human subject can only experience the reality through discourse, it is impossible for him/her to perceive the nature as it really is unless the discourse is deconstructed which causes a trauma upon discovering that the real Real is absolutely different on the pre-symbolic level. This causes the characters to reach a deeper understanding of reality (Desiderio realises the truth about Albertina, Fevvers about herself and Walser about Fevvers) and leads them to a kind of further maturity while portraying the probable outcomes of a deconstructed discourse.

When read from the Lacanian perspective, it can be observed that *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter skillfully deal with the discursive development of the infant's psyche, the infant's entrance into the Symbolic Order and the discursively constructed reality through the acquisition of the language and the imposition of the name of the Father, and the idea that instead of one concrete reality and illusion, there are different layers and levels of reality as reality can only be perceived through discourse. They reach the boundaries of the signification process and discourse through their exploration of the psyche's development, integral parts of the unconscious and the dynamics of desire and fantasy. They even violate those boundaries by going beyond the discourse and portraying the Real. Also, these novels which are concerned with the construction of reality and the

process of creative writing, provide valuable perspectives for understanding the unconscious as it is structured like the language, and the chain of desire that is similar to the signification chain. Additionally, especially with regard to the Lacanian psychoanalysis, these novels provide a different understanding about the importance of the deconstruction of the discourse which is believed to have a limiting function on the human subject's perception of reality by Lacan.

[i] One of the most basic defense mechanisms by means of which the subject "disposes of undesirable demands" under the "domination of the external world" (*An Outline* 35).

[ii]According to Sassurean understanding of signification process, a sign consists of the form of the sign, namely "the signifier", and the meaning of the sign, i.e. "the signified" (Sassure 646). Ferdinand de Sassure claims that, placing the structure of the sign and its meaning, thus "presence" at the centre (which gives presence privilege over absence), a signifier leads to a signified, hence giving the sign a meaning, and signifiers only have meaning in relation to other signifiers (Sassure 648-649). The post-structural understanding of the signification process challanges the ideas that meaning must be placed at the centre and presence must be privileged over absence, because, for the post-Sassureans, the meaning that a sign leads to may not be one and since, according to Sassure, signifiers have meaning in relation to other signifiers, what is absent in a signifier when compared to others plays an important role in giving meaning to it as well. For Jacques Derrida, each term of a binary opposition, such as presence/absence, cannot exist without reference to the other. Therefore, signifiers, instead of leading to a signified, or a meaning, lead to another signifier, creating an endless network of signifiers which constantly lead to one another, never reaching one final meaning. In this sense, "the signifier always already functions as a signifier" (*Of Grammatology* 8). As a post-Sassurean theorist, Lacan refers to the post-structural understanding of the signification process when he claims that the unconscious is structured like a language.

[iii]Lacan prefers to call individuals "subjects" because he thinks reality is constructed by language and the "self" is represented with "I" while speaking, which is the "subject" of the sentence.

[iv]Phallogocentricism is a neologism in critical theory that is coined by Jacques Derrida which refers to the supposition of the deconstructive theory that phallus, i.e. the masculine, is privileged in the construction of meaning.

[v]Lacan uses the word *nostalgia* instead of deprivation in "the third meaning" of the word: "unsatisfied past desire" (Sarup 94).

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