

Kasdi Merbah University-Ouargla
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Letters and English Language



Dissertation

Academic Master

Domain: Letters and Foreign Languages

Field: English Language and Literature

Specialty: literature & civilization

Submitted by: **Fouzia** **Hayet**

Brella **Meddahi**

The Implementation of Magical Realism in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English
Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master
Degree in literature & civilization**

Publicly defended

On: 14/06/2020

Before the jury:

Mrs. Hind Hanafi

Supervisor KMU- Ouargla

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Mrs. Farida SAADOUNE

President KMU- Ouargla

Academic Year: 2019-2020

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Dedication

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Abstract

This dissertation aims at exploring Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* in the light of magical realism. It provides a detailed reading for the theoretical frame work, Faris's theory. As well as an examination of the elements of magical realism and exploration the writer's intention behind their use. To this end, the study adopted a descriptive analytical design. Thus, the qualitative approach was used by which instances were extracted to explore magical realism. The latter was treated in order to analyze Angela Carter's motives behind its use. The researchers relied on Faris's *magical realism theory* as a support to the analysis. It is inferred that the novel of *Nights at the Circus* belongs to magical realism as it contains many characteristic features suggested by Faris from the 'irreducible elements of magic' to the 'reader's hesitation'. Carter perfectly used the magical realism mode to achieve feminist goals. She utilizes it to depict the unfair society in an indirect way. In addition, she explains the Western society's preconceived notions about female identity, and liberation. She tries to change realities, invert them, balance the scales of power between sexes, and free her heroine from the oppressive patriarchy, women used to suffer from. To achieve her goals, she empowers the female characters in the novel with supernatural appearances and magical powers that allow them to create their own space. Thus, magical realism is a well-suited means to fulfill her subversive objective, since it allowed the construction of an alternative reality based on a blend of real and supernatural.

Keywords: magical realism, Faris's *magical realism theory*, feminism, gender equality.

List of Abbreviations

MR: Magical Realism.

NC: Nights at the Circus.

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General

Introduction

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Topic

Postcolonial writers used words, which they consider more powerful than weapons, in their fight against oppression. They felt the need to speak out the truth in a different way. A way to reveal people's natural experiences using unnatural elements. Thus, they undoubtedly adopted magical realism. The latter, and despite its popularity, still has no agreed definition among writers and critics as well.

Literature has thousands of threads that can be woven to form a good piece of art. Fantasy and realism, for instance, when combined together, they create magical realism. Magical realism is an aesthetic style of writing in which fantastical elements are blended into a realistic atmosphere in order to access a deeper understanding of reality. These magical elements are explained like normal occurrences in a way that allows the 'real' and the 'supernatural' to be accepted in the same stream of thought.

It could be assumed that in recent years magical realism has become the most popularly used term referring to a particular narrative mode. This new companion becomes highly adopted by writers because it offers them an opportunity to write against totalitarian regimes as it allows them reverse the hierarchical order and reshape the hegemonies of any given society. As the postcolonial critic Brenda Cooper notes, 'Magical realism at its best opposes fundamentalism and purity; it is at odds with racism, ethnicity and the quest for tap roots, origins and homogeneity.' (22) This is the key to its recent popularity as a mode of fiction, particularly in Latin America and the postcolonial English-speaking world.

Rather than being a recent phenomenon associated with the emergence of Latin American literature, the history of magical realism goes back to the early 1920s. Although the terms undergoes through many radical changes of meaning, the essence of the terms remain the same; to describe unusual attitude in a usual one. However, varying attitudes to the concept of magic produce a wide variety of magical realism writers and magic realism works.

Magical realism works often touch upon social and political issues in a manner of implicit criticism of society. In super naturalizing certain events, magic elements are combined with the real to encompass the untold realities. With the combination of ordinary and extraordinary events to co-exist, magical realism allows multiple realities to exist, which would not have been possible otherwise.

Women's experience of reality is a denial of access to power then it becomes necessary to create an alternative one. Therefore, many female writers adopt MR so as to explore

women's magical strength and potentials; and Angela Carter was among them. The feminist writer blended the everyday with the miraculous; the historical with the fabulous to construct the hybrid, the miracle *Nights at Circus*. The novel is an exemplary piece of MR through which she received a great praise, status and popular recognition.

Motivation

Carter is now widely accepted as one of Britain's most distinctive and original twentieth-century female writers, and it was with this novel, *Nights at the Circus*, that this reputation was finally established. As many observers have acknowledged was the product of what Sage has described as 'the hinge-moment or turning point' (34) in Carter's career. These facts attract the researchers' curiosity to do further research on the novel trying to find what is so special with it, and why it gains such a status and recognition among readers and critics as well. Therefore, this humble work is an attempt to examine the novel delves deeper trying to explore its significance by choosing MR area.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims at:

- Analyzing "*Nights at the Circus*" in the light of magical realism.
- Examining the elements of magical realism and exploring the writer's intention behind their use.

Statement of the Problem

Magical realism was initially considered a purely Latin American phenomenon especially after the incredible success of Gabriel García Márquez's 1967 novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and the following Latin American literary 'Boom' of the late 1960s and 70s. It, then, has come to be regarded as a mode available to postcolonial writers in general providing them with means to challenge the dominant Western world-view. Therefore, critics when dealing with magical realist texts, rarely analyze British works assuming that there fiction is magical free; however, "If magic realism has not been found in fiction from Britain, it is not because it is not there, but because critics have not looked for it." (Hegerfeldt 7) In fact, Many British writers adopt the mode and published many magical realism works; Angela Carter is the best example. She treats supernaturals as if they are perfectly acceptable and understandable aspects of everyday life in her master

piece *Nights at the Circus*. Thus, this study is an attempt to diagnose the implementation of magical realism in the corpus looking whether the British novelist Carter manages the mode as skillfully as Latin Americans did; by Comparing Faris's magical realism characteristic features with those in Carter's novel. It is also attempted to identify the intention behind the use of the mode.

Research Questions

In order to conduct this study, it is attempted to answer the questions below:

- What are the magical realist characteristic features employed by Angela Carter?
- What is Carter's intention behind the use of magical realism in the novel?

Research Hypotheses

In the pursuit of the proposed aims and in order to answer the already mentioned questions, it is hypothesized that:

- Carter MR is unique, in a way that she employs most of its characteristic features.
- Cater employs MR skillfully to create a female space by trying to free her heroines from the oppressive patriarchy, lifting them out of myths that they have been placed in, and stepping them out of the stereotypic roles they were given.
- Cater adopts the mode to change realities, invert them, balance the scales of power between sexes.

Methodology

In order to confirm the stated hypotheses, a descriptive analytical design will be adopted. Therefore, the qualitative approach will be put forward by which instances will be extracted to explore MR. The latter will be treated so as to analyze Angela Carter's motives behind its use. And for the research to win credibility, accuracy and reliability, the researchers will rely on *Faris's magical realism theory* as a support to the analysis.

Structure of the Dissertation

This limited body of research will be divided into three main chapters. The first chapter will be devoted to a detailed reading to Faris's theory of magical realism and the characteristic features of the mode. In addition to providing an overview of magical realism outlining Faris's perspective concerning its roots and history. The second chapter,

however, will shedlight the author's life, tendencies, feminism... to have a clear understanding of the novel which will be dealt with at the same chapter. The corpus will be critically read and analyzed. The final chapter will analyze the MR elements found in the novel to explore their feminist significance and Carter's intention behind their use.

Chapter One:
**Faris's Theory of Magical
Realism**

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1.1. Introduction

Magical realism (MR) is a very obscure style of writing to be properly defined, and maybe this is the beauty of it. Yet, most writers see MR as a mode of writing which simply shows the presence of supernatural or magical elements in otherwise normal natural world. That is to say, it accepts the presence of such elements as normal. Thus, it is a unique style of fiction in which the magic integrates with the real allowing unspoken voices to structure their political, cultural and other unheard realities. Moreover, by combining the natural and supernatural elements, magical realism authorizes multiple facts to co-exist. Wendy Faris chooses to define MR by discussing the narrative techniques that name any magical realist work. Therefore, in her books, she introduces those specific characteristic features underlying MR. She believes that magical realism has been universally successful because those elements enable it to be used worldwide. She writes, 'I think it is not too much to propose that because of the high quality and widespread diffusion of the texts that it has been producing, magical realism may constitute the single most important mode in contemporary international fiction.' (14) Hence, this chapter is an attempt to discuss MR according to Faris's perspective by examining her theory of the five elements that form the building blocks of magical realism. However, before digging deeper and having a detailed analysis of the theory, it is more systematic to start with an overall understanding of the mode.

1.1. Understanding Magical Realism

In order to understand the MR, a trial will be made to provide some definitions of it.

1.1.1. The Problem of Defining Magical Realism

The term magical realism has been a contradictory subject to be defined for many critics. Actually, the difficulty of defining it goes back to its origins not only the literary one but also the art of painting. Magical realism thrives as a result of the pictorial art from the beginning of the twentieth century. However, when it was adopted to the field of literature, some criticism around the term appeared. Some critics choose to abandon the term. Emir Rodrfiguez Monegal described it by 'formula which does not work. That is: instead of stimulating critical dialogue, it paralyzes it; instead of allowing communication, it interrupts it; instead of throwing

light on the work, it makes it obscure.'(qtd. in Ruth 2) Another debatable point was the geographical origin of this mode. Some believe that MR is purely American as David K. Danow suggests, 'magical realist texts derive from a host of Latin American realities. Among the more apparent sources are an imposing geography, composed of daunting natural barriers.'(71) Whereas, others like Faris argues that it is a worldwide literary mode.

Yet, those controversy comments did not disrupt the international accomplishments of the mode. A plethora of works were done under the umbrella of magical realism such as: Patrick Süskind, *Perfume*, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novels, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*.

1.1.2. Different Definitions of Magical Realism

Though there is no approved definition of MR, all critics agree on the fact that magical realism contains supernatural elements in an ordinary settings. Here are some definitions provided by writers and critics.

William Spindler sees that magic realism is 'the exact opposite, in fact, of what the original term signified' (8)

Angle Flores defined it as 'peculiar fusion of dear and reality' that is to say 'the amalgamation of reality and fantasy.' (189)

Hancock believes that writers have to work hard to invent this kind of reality where the marvellous exists in the real. (31)

Chanady states:

In both these cases, we have a coherent code of the supernatural, or a set of norms which guide the characters' interpretation of their surroundings according to a world view that differs from that of logic and reason [...] The difference is that the irrational world view in one represents the primitive American mentality, while in the other, it corresponds to European superstitions (85)

Isabel Allende sees that magical realism as a literary device or a way of seeing in which there is space for the invisible forces that move the world like dreams, legends, myths, emotion, passion, history...and that all these forces find a place in the unexplainable aspects of magical realism. She adds that magic realism is universal with the capacity to see write about all the aspects of reality (60)

Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines magical realism as a literary genre or style associated especially with Latin America that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms defines: 'Magic Realism as a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical elements are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the reliable tone of objective, realistic report.'

According to Wikipedia Magical realism, magic realism, or marvelous realism is a style of fiction that paints a realistic view of the modern world while also adding magical elements. It is sometimes called fabulism, in reference to the conventions of fables, myths, and allegory. Magical realism, perhaps the most common term, often refers to fiction and literature in particular. It is considered a subgenre of fantasy.

Salman Rushdie describes it as:

Magical realism isn't just a fad...The fable, the surreal story, is just another way of getting at the truth, and if it has good, deep roots in the real—the 'realism' part of magic realism—then it can intensify a reader's experience of the truth, crystallize it in to words and images that stay with one. That is the appeal. (3)

Wendy Faris chooses to express her viewpoint toward MR through the introduction of her five characteristic features of any MR work.

1. 3. The Historical Review of Faris's Theory

In this part, a historical review will be undertaken in order to grasp Faris' theoretical model of magical realist narrative. That is, the definition of this literary genre according to historical review.

Faris names her five elements (the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, merging realms and the distortion of time, space and identity) as a result of her exploration of the historical origins of magical realism.

Actually, the problem of defining the term 'magical realism' comes from its heterogeneous usage in different domains as Anne Hegerfeldt states in her book *Lies that Tell the Truth*.(12) In addition, Faris suggests that MR has its origins in a pictorial term used by an art critic Franz Roh. He utilizes it to refer to post-expressionist painting trend, in 1925, which had distinct features from the expressionism art trend prevalent at that time. (15-31)

Thus, MR is said to be traced to Roh's structure. He introduces a new way of presenting reality. For him, in order to portray something realistically does not mean to copy; yet by including and normalizing the magic elements.(25) Faris illustrates that Roh, in his 1925 essay, describes art techniques for realizing the miraculous. She cites Roh, 'the point is not to discover the spirit beginning with objects but, on the contrary, to discover objects beginning with the spirit.'(65) Hegerfeldt believed that the German art critic Franz Roh helped to spread the term in Europe then in Latin America. Furthermore, he identifies a new magical realist style and sets down twenty two characteristics so as to differentiate this specific style of painting. (qtd. in Hegerfeldt 13)

Hegerfeldt reports that the appropriation of Roh's explanation of both 'magic' and realism. He connects the meaning of magic to the opposite of realistic. However, he was very careful in defining his post expressionists; unlike 'fantastic', that is to say non realistic objects. He defines 'magic' as 'the new style seeks to recreate the ordinary objects in such a manner that it would be seen in a new, unfamiliar way.'(13)

Moreover, Faris defines 'Magical realism' by 'combining realism and the fantastic so that 'the marvellous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them', confirms much of Roh's perspective.(7) Faris writes 'Magical realism is a narrative that is imbued with a visionary power that gives witness and reports events that humans ordinarily do not and, therefore, suggests the existence of forces that are not encompassed by reference to ordinary human perceptions of a purely material reality, or to empirical explanations.'(7)

Like Roh, with his 'Magischer Realismus', Faris is suggesting that MR opens the door for different perceptions to be listened to (ways of interpreting the world) other than those 'formulated in empirically based discourse.'(7) In this way, she sees MR is the literary tool where supernatural occurrences introduce unexplainable things in a realistic tone.

According to Faris in MR, narration can be magical or real, but integrates within one literary text to form a mullato reality.(21) That is to say as Roh suggests, 'the new way of seeing and rendering the everyday', thereby 'creating a new world view.'(36) Faris sees that this distinctive feature of binary opposition, the magical and the real, makes the mode attractive to authors who aim at expressing their

perspectives. In addition, she thinks that it serves as the best tool to articulate political, cultural or social beliefs that are not shared by Western mainstream society. In *Ordinary Enchantments* Faris writes:

Magical realism has become so important as a mode of expression worldwide, especially in postcolonial cultures, because it has provided the literary ground for significant cultural work; within its texts, marginal voices, submerged traditions, and emergent literatures have developed and created masterpieces.(38)

Furthermore, Faris argues that MR originated in Europe developing from surrealism, the same way as Roh's 'Magischer Realismus' developed from expressionism. She suggests that surrealism 'challenged the tradition of realism, encouraging excursions into the surreal, beyond conscious reason into realms of dream, myth, unconscious, and primitive culture.'(34) According to her, this became the 'essential difference between the two, surrealism was an intellectual, social and political movement while magical realism was essentially a mode of writing that revealed psychological, social, emotional and political motivations, after some scrutiny.'(7)

Faris believes that the most important step that helped the flourishing of MR mode in America is the coming of European minds as a result of World War Two.

In the 1960's, though there were many writers in America who paved the way, the remarkable success of the Colombian writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* secured magical realism as a worldwide mode. Thanks to this work, MR nowadays is seen as Latin American event known as 'el boom.' (Faris 33)

According to Faris, by the 1960s and onwards, Latin American works of MR were read all over the world and they carried out post-colonial voices. Moreover, she explains the usefulness of this trend for authors as many of them could speak out their misery. As an example, Miguel Angel Asturias, a contemporary of Carpentier, drew on the colonial oppression of indigenous peoples to portray suppressed 'sensibilities'(37) The word 'oppression' is suitable as it helps to explain the motive for Latin American writers to engage so enthusiastically in the mode. As Faris outlines in her opening statements in *Ordinary Enchantments*: 'Furthermore, the combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusion of different cultural traditions, means magical realism reflects, in both

its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much of postcolonial society.’(50) In other words, Faris is saying that MR emerged to allow multiple realities to co-exist, which would not be possible otherwise. That is to say, a conduit for expressing ‘cultural loss and recovery’ experienced by communities and individuals that have been colonised or oppressed.(134)

Faris speaks about the literary critics and authors of MR that discuss the origins of the mode, Carpentier and Asturias in particular. Many writers refused to admit the European origins of magical realism.(134) American Fiction, justifies that MR was a continuation of the romantic realist tradition of Spanish literature (with its origins in Cervantes) and its European counterparts but in its Latin American form it was distinguished.(109-118) Chanady suggests that, ‘magical realism can hold a position as both particularly Latin American and [still] owe much of its lineage to European influences.’(125-144)

While many critics like to consider MR as a Latin American literary movement, the mode, in fact, owes its origins to Europe starting and that it ‘extends beyond ‘el boom’ because she believes that magical realism is not just a postcolonial style. It also structures innovation and the re-emergence of submerged narrative traditions in metropolitan centres throughout the world.(2) She further explains that: ‘Magical realism's multi-cultural perspectives originated in the peripheral and colonised regions of the East: Latin America and the Caribbean, India, Eastern Europe, Africa. But the mode is becoming less and less marginalised, even though it retains the charm of the marginal position’ (29) Actually, Faris' diction and choice of the term ‘marginal position’ here, has a relation with other terms such as: ‘submerged traditions’ and ‘emergent literatures’, which she uses to describe any nation, community or person who does not have the right to say any word because of the dominant group.(37) She uses the term emotionally to stress the existence of ‘other voices’ in magical realism.

However, according to Faris, in contemporary MR other minorities and marginalised voices, not only post-colonial, neo-colonial and emerging cultures, are using this mode to express their dissatisfaction. Faris, for example, dedicates a full chapter to feminist voices expressed in magical realism fictions.

Magical realism appeared firstly in Europe derived from an art movement known as ‘Magischer Realismus’, migrated to Latin America where it became

renowned as ‘el boom’ and emerged all over the world as a style that enables the expression of unheard voices. It is these three historical landmarks that have shaped MR as a narrative technique. In the words of Faris:

Contemporary magical realism has developed as a narrative mode that produces fictions in diverse cultural traditions, its continuing popularity ensuring those productions a growing international audience...which may encourage toleration of the dissonance caused by radically different voices, is being integrated into cultural consciousness, and not only in postcolonial situations. (169)

By reviewing the historical perspective of magical realism theory, Faris concludes by forming the characteristic features presented in the following part.

1.4. The Characteristic Features of Magical Realism

Faris B Whendy introduces two kinds of characteristic features of magical realism: the basic characteristic features and the secondary characteristic ones.

1.4.1. The Basic Characteristic Features

In order to identify the nature and cultural work of magical realism, Wendy Faris has suggested five primary characteristics of the mode. First, the text contains an ‘irreducible element’ of magic; second, the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world; third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; fourth, the narrative merges different realms; and, finally, MR disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity.

1.4.1.1. The Irreducible Element

The irreducible element refers to the element of magic structured in the text. In other words, an event occurs that cannot be explained according to the laws of the universe as they are formulated according to empirically based discourse.’(7) Therefore, Faris explains that the reader may face difficulty to differentiate between real and magic events in such fictions.(7) To clarify this idea, she refers to Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved* she considers a good example to explain the events that cannot be understood by logical standards. In this story, a child named Beloved is murdered by Seth, her mother. Years later, the child materializes as a grown person to torture her mother. The reader is not pretty sure whether Beloved has really

returned alive or as a ghost. The details that surround her returned presence suggests she is alive. This cannot be verified according to logic. Even so, the writer leads the reader to accept the phenomenon by having other characters hesitate over it, a woman questioning the death of the child whether it was real or just pretend (16) Faris refers also to the end of the novel where *Beloved* has just dissolved into the ether; Morrison writes in the closing chapter, ‘...those who had spoken to her...began to believe that, other than what they themselves were thinking, she hadn’t said anything at all.’ Faris suggests that the MR writings lead the readers to question themselves as well as their thoughts.(17)

In her analysis of the irreducible element, Faris refers to the detailed realistic description of the events as if it is really occurred from which the irreducible element emerged. In fact, she explains, ‘one of the most immediately striking ways in which MR imbricates the extraordinary within the ordinary’ — or the use of text to disrupt what at first appears to be a realist representation — is through the accumulation of realistic details to describe impossible events.’(14) By this, Faris means that the exaggeration of detail acts to unite the incredible within the real world.

1.4.1.2. The Phenomenal World / The Detailed Description

Faris's second characteristic feature is the phenomenal world which she defines as 'the realism of magical realism.'(14) By this specific characteristic, the narrator provides a detailed description for the events suggesting the existence of the phenomenal world. Faris believes that this element is the existence of the mysterious realm of the spirit. This phenomenal world exists but is modified by being, as she explains, ‘grounded textually in a traditionally realistic, even explicitly factual, manner.’ Furthermore, she articulates that magical realism may contain magic and folk wisdom. However, the real facts are valuable.(58)

Faris distinguishes the phenomenal world from much fantasy and allegory. She asks us to differentiate between a general fantasy and MR. The narrator in MR, purposefully, still leaves the reader in some uncertainty about how this intrinsically special and unique, magical realism narrative technique is different. Faris’ references to ‘grounding’, ‘traditionally realistic’, ‘history’, and ‘factual’ are in her definition. She once again suggests the implied meaning in her definition: ‘magical

realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvellous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them.’(7) However, the difference between the irreducible element and the phenomenal world is not clearly stated by Faris. As a conclusion, the irreducible elements might be components within the text while the phenomenal world, the hybrid world created by the co-existence of the magical and the real, is the whole text, the complete narrative.(39)

1.4.1.3. Element of Unsettling Doubts

As discussed in previously, Faris suggests, magical realism is defined by the way in which the irreducible causes the reader to hesitate. She adds that the reader might be exposed to some unsettling doubts in order to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events. In magical realist texts household objects fly, people die and return to life: tears become potions; sneezes become rubies.(81) As readers, these uncommon appearances in a narrative, that otherwise and importantly seems to be a representation of reality, cause us to call in question.

Faris confirmed this by bringing literary texts which combined the marvellous actions with the ones that follow the rules of physical universe, so we are puzzled about their existence.

1.4.1.4. Merging Realms

The element of merging realms is the state in which the writer integrates different universes, the realm of magic and that of reality. Faris believes that magical realist narrative creates a narrative space that we might call the ‘ineffable in-between’...a space in which the magical and the real co-exist.(47) Yet, according to her, this space, though it may use elements from magical world, is not supernatural such as a secret garden, heaven, the underworld, or a mythical past. The space lies somewhere between reality and fantasy. As Faris explains further:

The magical realism vision exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions. Ghosts and texts, or people and words that seem ghostly, inhabit these two-sided mirrors, many times situated between two worlds of life and death; they enlarge the space of intersection where a number of magically real fictions exist.(21-22)

In here, Faris is stressing the power of magical realism in serving the needs implicitly. Using the literary technique of magic realism; marginalised people and minorities were able to articulate their needs. In addition, it extends the co existence of more than one reality in the same text.

According to Faris, this textual space in magical realism is often used to merge two opposite worlds within one text such as the earth and heaven.(21) This reflecting of different domains illustrates the “binary nature: the forced relationship of irreconcilable terms”, the magical and the real.(186)

The irreducible elements makes the reader hesitate, and conjure a phenomenal, appear in the space between the magical and the real. Merging realms grow from that space and reveal other ways of interpreting and understanding the universe.

1.4.1.5. Disruption of Time, Space and Identity

According to Faris, 'Magical realism disturbs accepted ideas about time, space and identity.'(7) For example, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, ‘Four years, eleven months and two days of rain, an insomnia plague that erases the past and the meaning of words, and a room where it is always March and always Monday’. Such description disrupts the sense of time, space and identity.(23) Faris sees that MR pushes readers to wonder what kind of beings we are seeing. It is not so much a question of how but of what.(31)

Faris thinks that this mode of fiction introduces ‘a confusion between what exists outside the subject and what only exists as a function of it...what is truly ‘empirical’, and what is, under the appearances of the sensory world, only pseudo matter, endowed with a purely mental truth.’(104) Furthermore, Faris examines how the piece of work contains complex details about time, space and identity in order to leave the reader in uncertainty.

1.4.2. The Secondary Characteristic Features

Faris believes that there is other list of secondary elements which help in creating a magical realist style. She presents eight accessory specifications as following.

1.4.2.1. Metafictional Dimensions

The first secondary characteristic feature mentioned by Faris is Metafictional dimensions. She states:

Metafictional dimensions are common in contemporary magical realism: the texts provide commentaries on themselves, often complete with occasional mises-en-abyme—those miniature emblematic textual self-portraits. Thus the magical power of fiction itself, the capacities of mind that make it possible, and the elements out of which it is made—signs, images, metaphors, narrators, narratees—may be foregrounded (175)

In other words, the metafictional work provides self-reflexive comments that will call attention to the writing process itself. In addition, it is a tool that forces the reader to confront the differences between reality and fiction, the line between what is real and what is pretend to be. Patricia Waugh also introduces a comprehensive definition by describing it as ‘fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality’ (2)

1.4.2.2. Verbal Magic

Faris believes that any fictional work may present a strong relationship between the words, linguistic form, and the world, the experience, ‘The reader may experience a particular kind of verbal magic—a closing of the gap between words and the world, or a demonstration of what we might call the linguistic nature of experience.’ (176) Verbal magic is the endowment of works of fiction with powers that do not naturally have in the real world. Faris explains this in her book by providing an example:

This magic happens when a metaphor is made real: we often say that blood is thicker than water, for example, and sure enough, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when Jose Arcadio Buendia shoots himself, a trickle of his blood “came out under the door, ... went out into the street, ... went down steps and climbed over curbs, ... turned a corner to the right and another to the left,” and once inside the Buendia house, hugged the walls “so as not to stain things,” and came out in his mother Ursula’s kitchen. (129-30)

Moreover, Urban Dictionary describes ‘verbal magic’ as: ‘to have word skills. It portrays the vibe, feeling or mood of said individual with ‘verbal magic’ skill set. It is not something all have access to, it is a gift. Like a pet rock. It comes from a

mixture of words, verbal and magic. Verbal meaning spoken words. Magic meaning makes this words work for you.’

1.4.2.3. Child-like Features

Faris suggests that sometimes the narrator goes back to the late-twentieth-century adult readers and use certain childlike specifications. Those primitive characteristics are presented in such a fact way that leads us to believe them, as a child.

1.4.2.4. Repetition

Faris explains how the repetition of certain details may help the narrator to express magic. Though repetition is a technique that might be used in many literary texts. Yet, in MR texts it occurs frequently. Faris writes:

They return with an unusual and uncanny frequency, confusing further our received notions of similarity and difference. Interestingly enough, ghosts, which figure in many magical realist fictions, or people who seem ghostly, resemble two-sided mirrors, situated between the two worlds of life and death, and hence they serve to enlarge that space of intersection where magically real fictions exist. A variation on this mirror phenomenon is the occurrence of reversals of various kinds-plot- mirroring, so to speak. This is a common feature in all literature, of course, but in these texts it occurs with particular frequency and highlights the metaphysically revisionist agenda of magical realism.(177)

1.4.2.5. Metamorphoses

Metamorphosis is the transition or the switch from an immature and childish form to an adult form in distinct stages. In addition, it is the noticeable change in a character, function, appearance, or condition. Faris confirms that metamorphoses emphasis the shift from one realm to another which strengthens the magic.(178) In her book, she exemplifies by Distant Relations young Victor and Andre Heredia when they changed into a sinister twin fetus.

1.4.2.6. Anti-bureaucratic Elements

Many pieces of writing express, whether explicitly or implicitly, the political view of the narrator. In other words, magical realism enables writers to articulate their experiences. Faris agrees with that and writes:

Many of these texts take a position that is anti-bureaucratic, and so they often use their magic against the established social order. Saleem's midnight congress is a clear alternative to the Congress Party, which the narrator seems to believe, maintains a death grip on Indian political life; his magic is explicitly used against the "black widow" Gandhi's magic. The univocal authority of one voice from above is questioned by the cacophony of many voices from all over.(179)

1.4.2.7. Ancient System of Belief

For Faris, the magical realist texts borrow the superstitious atmosphere from the ancient system of belief. She argues:

the superstitious atmosphere of Perfume we hear that the inhabitants of the Grasse region believed that their 'only possible refuge from this monster... was under the... gaze of the Madonna'; 'other, quicker wits banded together in occult groups' and hired 'at great expense a certified witch from Gourdon'; 'still others ... put their money on the most modern scientific methods, magnetizing their houses, hypnotizing their daughters, gathering in their salons for secret fluidal meetings, and employing telepathy to drive off the murderer's spirit.(182)

1.4.2.8. Mysterious Sense of Collective Relatedness

Faris highlights the existence of the communal magic. That is to say, the literary works of MR focus on the sense of collective relatedness rather than individual memories. The element of magic is treated as universally accepted issue. Faris explains this point by an example from *Beloved*, she writes:

Beloved, takes an unusual turn here, because, as we have noted, right at the end we get what could be interpreted as a disclaimer concerning her magical existence. The people who had seen her 'forgot her like a bad dream, and finally realized they couldn't remember or repeat a single thing she said, and began to believe that, other than what they themselves were thinking, she hadn't said anything at all.' In the final analysis, though, her existence remains shadowy, for we can - and perhaps should - discount this disclaimer, this after-the-fact rejection of her magic, and consider that just because the people 'began to believe' this, it is only part of the whole story.(183)

1.5. Faris's Magical Feminism

Faris illustrates in her book that MR function ideologically creating a space for distinctive voices such as the female one. Therefore, the feminine element in MR was clearly stated by her as she dedicates a full chapter to discuss this issue. In fact, magical realism is a distinguishing form of writing that places two opposites together to make a complex meaning. Thus, it enables the writers to express events from a female-oriented perspective. Faris suggests that the first wave of MR was led by male writers; however, female voices have been rapidly surfacing to say aloud the sufferance of women across the globe. Yet, she confirmed that there are no specifications related to the gender of the writer. In other words the characteristic features of MR remain the same whether the writer is a male or a female. She writes:

Categories and boundaries are especially problematic in this area, and textual modes that we may associate with a particular gender are not necessarily correlated with the corresponding sex of the author. As Shari Benstock has asked, 'Isn't it precisely 'the feminine' in Joyce's writings and Derrida's that carries me along?'(9) But there are many points of convergence between postmodernism, post colonialism, and much feminist thought: all of them have been concerned with investigating possibilities for transgressing boundaries and limits, including, especially, the opposition between selves and others, and with questioning dualistic modes of thought.(171)

She concludes by naming some women writers who have used this mode in their works that are centered on women's experience and women's issue, such as Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison, Laura Esquivel, Ana Castillo, and Marie Darrieussecq.

1.6. Conclusion

To sum up, magical realism succeeds to prove itself as a literary mode in all over the world through which many writers could express their cultural, social and political experiences in a profound way. This chapter aimed at understanding magical realism by presenting different definition of the term . Actually, magical realism is a crucial topic which is, even nowadays, difficult to be defined properly because of the sources that have shaped it. Thus, Faris theoretical model has been chosen to limit this present study. Moreover, this chapter aimed at presenting the historical review from the art theory of Roh and surrealism to the renowned post-

colonial literature of the mid twentieth century and into contemporary literatures across the globe:

Contemporary magical realism has developed as a narrative mode that produces fictions in diverse cultural traditions, its continuing popularity ensuring those productions a growing international audience...which may encourage toleration of the dissonance caused by radically different voices, is being integrated into cultural consciousness, and not only in postcolonial situations. (169)

Faris defined MR as the literary mode that enables multiple interpretations for the text by combining the real with the magic. In addition, she outlines the major and the secondary characteristic features that name the magical work, and more importantly she established a link between the use of the mode to achieve feminist purposes.

Chapter Two

Author and Corpus:

Analytical Overview

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2.1. Introduction

Angela Carter is a talented writer who is known by the use of extraordinary techniques in her writings. Her techniques and strategies vary according to the message she wants to achieve. She, for example, employs magical realism interwoven with historical facts and existing figures of 19th the century to be mixed with fairy tales to achieve feminist goals in *Nights at the Circus*. Therefore, this chapter, therefore, provides a preview of both Angela Carter and the novel. It deals in the first part with the background information about the author, her works, her style of writing, her feminist viewpoints. It also outlines the major tendencies and topics of her rich oeuvre in order to find a link between her life and the corpus. The second part, however, spotlights on the corpus itself; it outlines its plot, its main characters, its major themes... to provide a framework for the novel's analysis.

2.2. Understanding Angela Carter (1940-1992)

This part will introduce Carter's life and her main tendencies, language and style of writing etc.

2.2.1. Biography

Angela Carter was considered as one of the most original, stylish writers in English in the 20th century .She was born in 1940 and grew up in a quiet, middle-class family in suburb of London. She spent three years living in Japan (1969–72) where she became interested in Japanese surrealism. She got her first a job as a reporter at early age. Nevertheless, her career was not restricted by her 'demonic inaccuracy as regards fact.'(Kemp qtd. in Gamble 7) She published nine novels and series of short stories; the *Shadow Dance* (1965) which gains her public attention, *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), which was awarded the *John Llewellyn Rhys Prize*, *Heroes and villains* (1969), *Love* (1971). Despite her successful literary career, she decided to leave Britain to Japan, after winning the *Somerset Maugham Award* for her novel *Several Perceptions* (1968). Unlike her career, her personal life was a failure; therefore she decided to seek shelter and distraction in her travel to Japan. The novels she wrote during her stay in Japan are, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) and *The Passion of New Eve*(1977). As a matter of fact, Carter did not experience an upward swing in her career until the 1980s. Attention of both reviewers and readers was awakened by her second volume of short stories; *The Bloody Chamber*(1979). This collection of rewritten traditional fairy tales

contributed to her further acknowledgement and recognition among her audience. By the publication of her eighth novel, *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Carter gains international recognition. Many considered this success as a change in her method. Her last novel, *Wise Children* (1991) is surrounded by a bleak atmosphere stemming from her serious illness and consequent death.

Thus, during her life's career, Carter managed to bring into existence nine novels, four collections of short stories and three volumes of non-fiction work. Apart from this, she wrote poetry, radio plays, film scripts, children's fiction etc.

2.2.2. General Tendencies of Carter's Writing

Carter becomes well known within critics as she provides them with many works to critique. Yet, it is not the variety of her works which makes her famous; it is rather its depth. Carter's aim is not to merely entertain her readers but to also make them think and question the prevalent concepts and systems of thought. Her crucial assumption about the role of literature was that it should 'instruct as well as divert.'(qtd. in Gamble 8) She encourages the reader to delve deep and to recognize the real meaning of her texts. As she said in an interview with John Haffenden, 'I do put everything into the novel to be read, the way you are supposed to read *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* – on as many levels as you can comfortably cope with at the time.'(qtd. in Gamble 9) Carter's work is rich of various kinds of materials and techniques. She, for example, mingles sub-genres (fairy tales, gothic, romance etc.) with references to well-established novels, Shakespeare's plays, magical realism ,psychoanalysis...in a way that she effortlessly manages to dissolve their stereotypes and the traditional hierarchy of them- which was exactly found in *Nights at the Circus*. Her strategy of borrowing from various sources, genres and modes is an intentional one, 'I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old.' (Carter qtd. in Gamble 9)

To sum up, Carter is an author who was famous for writing about topics and ideas like: depiction of sexuality, portrayal of gender, disruption of myths, use of rich intertextual references, dissolving of generic classification, particular use of magical realism. However, she never showed the way she wanted to be understood. She believed that fiction should be open-ended and minds-opening so that everyone could read it in his or her own terms.

2.2.2.1. Carter's Rejection of Realism

Carter finds realism incapable of creating any change in the world view so she simply rejects it and chooses magic to engage thoughtfully with the oppressive realities of the society. Margaret Atwood argues that Carter suffered for not writing realism. She said that Carter was writing a different kind of thing that people didn't know what to call. (qtd. in *Radical Writing* par. 3) Carter's characters were circus performers, puppet-masters and many-breasted mother goddesses. Her work is often described as 'magical realism'. For many readers, Carter's work was their first encounter outside realism. Anne Enright says, 'I am reared on Irish Naturalism, cups of tea and rashers in the pan, and there is Angela Carter, with flying women and glamour and eggs made from jewels.' (qtd. in *Radical Writing* par.3) She adds that, in 1980s, magical realism comes from the periphery, it comes from the colonies, it comes from women, it doesn't come from people who own the world.

2.2.2.2. Carter's Twist of Fairy Tales

Another strategy followed by Angela Carter is her ability to twist fairy tale with her work so as to create amazing hybrids, yet, in an original different way. Carter admits, 'I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old.' (qtd. in Gamble 9) In their early forms, fairy tales were dark, violent stories as the Bluebeard who murdered his wives, Cinderella's stepsisters who sliced off sections off their feet to fit the glass slipper and pregnant Rapunzel was sent to give birth alone in the desert. Things have been changed over time in which they have become sanitized to suit the tastes of younger audiences or adapted by film companies into sweeter stories with a leading princess, a strong hero and a 'happily-ever-after' ending. Angela Carter's approach was quite different. Jeanette Winterson says, 'What Angela Carter did with fairy tales was to take the stories that we all know like Bluebeard or Beauty and the Beast and turn them inside out. Take the components that were familiar and make them into something that gave women back the power.' (qtd. in *Radical Writing* par. 3) Carter put women at the center of the stories and gave them agency over their fate.

Nights the Circus is an example of her novels in which she blends fairy tale and inverts them most of the time. She alludes several times to the European fairy-tale tradition. Walser, for instance, is likened to 'the boy in the fairy story who does not know how to shiver.' (NC10) Fevvers' teeth are 'big and carnivorous as those of Red Riding Hood's grandmother.' (NC18) Yet, to reach feminist purposes, she inverts common fairy tales

motifs when Fevvers (the princess) can rescue Walser (the prince) from his Siberian exile. Another fairy tale referred over and over again is 'Sleeping Beauty.'

2.2.2.3. Carter's Feminism

The aspect of feminism was one of the areas in which Carter employs in all of her works by which she had a great influence upon her audience. Women are at the center of Carter's work. Winterson says, 'She was trying to lift women out of the many myths that they'd been placed in. Men have written fictions about women forever. And she was trying to get away from those particular male-authored fictions and say maybe we should write other kinds of stories about women?'(qtd. in *Radical Writing* par.1) Carter's writing is not anti-man, but anti-misogyny, Atwood reinforces this idea in the same site, saying that Carter was interested in a balance of scales. Not that women were more powerful than men, but in order to actually have anything that is not just dependency or sucking up or controlling, you have to have equality.(par.3) she hated the idea of women's suffering and wants them to seize what they needed; power, freedom, sex, workThroughout her writings, Carter undertakes a feminist critique of the Western tradition and culture. She deconstructs the myths, in which women are Otherized and pictured as sex symbols mainly. She argues that the sense of female sexual identity as portrayed by the patriarchy is deeply inconvenient and unacceptable. Carter believes that it is a learned pattern which is socially and personally restraining and thus needs to be questioned and then perhaps re-constructed. This need, as Carter believes, 'is not purely an area of women's interest, because men live in myths about women as well and they are influenced by them even more since women, at least deep inside their souls, know that these myths are not based on truth.'(Haffenden 91)

Based on the theory of binary oppositions, women in the Western societies were seen as weak, subordinate, driven by emotions only, passive, and incapable beings. Their position was defined by men who considered themselves leaders, strong, dominant, reasonable, active and capable. Carter questions the credibility of those oppositions and tries to re-establish them. In her works, she deliberates her heroines from the patriarchal oppression-throughout the history- and aims to reach the state of balance by subverting gender stereotypes; she also strives for balance between the sexes (male\female) (Atwood qtd. in Lorna 120). She tries to prevent women from identifying with images of themselves as victims of patriarchal oppression. Simply, she wants to provoke her audience to think out of stereotypical habits of thought. Carter also pays attention to the distribution of power between sexes. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter warns, 'if women allow themselves to be

consoled for their culturally determined lack of access to the modes of intellectual debate by the invocation of hypothetical great goddesses, they are simply flattering themselves into submission.’(qtd. in Gamble 114)

2.2.2.4. Carter’s Language and Style

Carter's works are strong, hybrid cocktail with various ingredients. They are rich, highly expressive, and full of figurative language. Carter’s language can be described as baroque, sensual and decorative. It can also be compared to a thick layer which is composed of surface meanings and deep intended meaning. Her language is characterized by her specific style that is full of allusions, allegories, fantasy and realism blend ...She uses many registers; from obsolete, clichés to a current jargon of the street. Her prose is beautiful, intellectual, theatrical, hilarious, vulgar, and rich of details. Her writings are full of exaggerated prose, elegant narration that holds the reader under their spell from the beginning till the end. Her heavy baroque style is not always appreciated by readers because it is difficult to understand. It is likely for the reader to get lost in the tenants of her style; even Carter herself admits that the reader may miss the deeper meaning behind her artificial and crazy theatricality.(Franková qtd. in Gamble 115) Carolyn admits that Carter's style in *The Nights at the Circus (1984)* is sweet as he said that the reader begins to feel like a child who has spent all his allowance on some pounds of chocolate, sweets, chip, cookies and eaten every one of them down to the last crumb. [...], *Nights at the Circus* is delicious, a sweet for the mind, but after a while it’s hard not to get a little queasy (7).Carter herself adopts this style labeling it *mannerism*.

2.2.2.5. Carter's Magical Realism

Carter's novels and short stories are undoubtedly magical realist ones. In her work, magical realism goes under the umbrella of postmodernism. The ingredients of magical realism are mixed in a postmodernist way. Carter's use of magical realism is unique. She did not share the life and experience of colonized nations; her cultural background was entirely different and therefore she used another cultural material to fuel her magical realism. She tries to criticize real social and political constructs and attitudes.

Her works are extravagant fabrication in a realistic frame, fantastic twists of the plot, or other encounters with the supernatural, infusion of fairy tale, folklore or mythic strands. (Franková qtd. in Gamble 115) All these features created what he called ‘Carterland’. For

Carter, everything needs to be put into account either real or unreal, particularly; the unreal ones like freaks, cannibals, fairies, monsters...to create a rich story, new creatures and occurrences. Carter's use of MR increases through her extensive travels to the United States, Asia, Australia and Europe. There, she adopted a stranger's view on Britain and British culture. Sarah Sceats argues that Carter employed magical realism to experience 'the other' and disturb her sense of the center. Carter does no longer perceive Britain (or the West) as the only common world.(qtd. in Hart and Ouang 143)

2.3. A Critical Reading of *Nights at the Circus*

Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* is a highly original and influential work of modern British literature which was published in 1984. It combines a fantastically creative plot with a strong political undertone. Through the novel, one can better understand Angela Carter's life, political and social viewpoints, the literary genres she adopts, and the conditions of Britain in the 1980s.

2.3.1. Historical Context

The novel is set in 1899, a turning point, in Britain and world history. While writing this novel was influenced by the surrounding events of the period. The period between the novel's setting (1899) and publication (1984) comprises the end of 19th and the 20th century, a time when great transformations happened, including the end of the Victorian era, the Russian revolutions of 1905 /1917, and World Wars I and II. Carter notes 'I am the pure product of an advanced, industrialized, post-imperialist country in decline.'(qtd. in Peach 13) The setting dictates much of the novel's content and its characters. The female characters, in particular, encompass a transition between one century to the next. Lizzie's character for example, represents the protector of Fevvers, and women's rights as well. She is the symbol of the 19th century's suffrage movement. The women of Ma Nelson's brothel are referred to as suffragists; that is to say they are depicted as forward-thinking women. Jack Walser's character also encompasses 19th century thoughts in his pragmatic approach to life, while many members of the circus represent a transition towards a new century.

2.3.2. Plot Summary

Nights at the Circus is often considered Carter's masterpiece. The novel turns around a winged heroine Fevvers, the Cockney Venus having a bizarre adventurous path. The narratives take place in various places, including the whorehouse, the museum of female

monsters, the circus, the prison and so on. Carter employs the classic three act play style, including a short Envoi. She divides the novel into three main parts, titled: London, Petersburg and Siberia where the magical journey begins; in the year 1899 ‘the fag-end, smouldering cigar-butt, of a nineteenth century.’(NC11)

Nights at the Circus begins with Jack Walser, a young American journalist, conducting an interview with Fevvers, the winged woman, in an attempt to find the truth behind her myth. Walser is trying to replace Fevvers' false story with a true version of his own in which he exposes the myth of the winged lady as a fraud.

The first act of the novel takes place in Fevvers' changing room ‘a masterpiece of exquisitely feminine squalor.’(NC9) after one of her performances at the circus. The reader is directly confronted with the events of the story, without any previous introduction. Fevvers starts introducing the way she was born even before she was asked by Walser. Instead of following the usual dualistic structure of an interview, she immediately and carelessly takes the reins of the dialogue. This demonstrates the role of the female ‘carnavalesque’ in challenging dominant patriarchal culture represented by Walser. ‘Lor' love you, sir!’(NC7) Fevvers exclaims and directly starts recounting the circumstances of her birth. She states that she was found in a basket at the doorstep of a brothel and that she was not born (like Helen of Troy) but hatched:

And she who found me on the steps at wrapping, me in the laundry basket in which persons unknown left me, a little babe most lovingly packed up in new straw sweetly sleeping among a litter of broken egg-shells, she who stumbled over this poor, abandoned creature clasped me that moment in her arms out of the abundant goodness of her heart and took me in.(NC12)

Fevvers lives a normal life as any other child of her age except for the raised lump on her shoulders. However, things have changed the moment she approached puberty. The ‘feathered appendages’ (NC 24) began to swell and at the age of fourteen she sprouted wings; and her nickname changed into the ‘Winged Victory.’ (NC 25) Under Lizzie's supervision, she begins taking lessons in flying. However, this phase of Fevvers' life comes to a sudden end with Ma Nelson's - the head of the brothel- death. As Ma Nelson had not left a will, ‘all her estate went by due process of law.’(NC44) Thus, Fevvers and Lizzie remain without shelter which leads them to move to Lizzie's sister. However, when the family faces hard times and financial problems, Fevvers moves out to Madame Schreck's house. The latter puts her -as an exhibit- in her unique freak show along with other women

with distinctive appearances. Days later, Madame Schreck sells her to a rich client - Christian Rosencreutz, who attempts to sacrifice her for his own well-being. 'the *aerialiste*, who now shifted from one buttock to the other and— 'better out than in, sir'—let a ripping fart ring round the room' (NC23) Fevvers rejects her role as sacrificial angel and escapes the trap Rosencreutz sets for her using her wings. This is another important aspect of her wings, the ability to escape the many snares set for her, mostly by sadistic men. (in short, as an allegorical figure, Fevvers represents the hope and freedom for women on the eve of the twentieth century, but also the struggle and uncertainty that faced them).

Days after, she gets an opportunity to join Colonel Kearney's circus as an aerialist and there begins her life of a fantastic, mythic tale that stretches Walser's imagination beyond the bounds of credibility and leaves him wonder-struck and hypnotized.

Fevvers and Walser's first contact is combative and confrontational. Walser is skeptical as well as confused and finds it difficult to believe the winged *aerialiste* and her fantastical tales. His main purpose is revealing Fevvers as a hoax - a fraud, yet he is fascinated, bewitched by her and confused by a mystical event that happened. The first section of the novel closes Fevvers' story late at night.

The second part of the book is entitled *Petersburg*, a 'city built of hubris, imagination and desire.' (NC 97) It deals with the circus and its performance in Russia standing practically at the door of revolution. The reader is informed that the Colonel Kearney's Circus is preparing for their Grand Imperial Tour of Russia and Japan and that Walser joins the circus to work as a clown to be close Fevvers so as to continue his investigations.

The circus is a setting where extraordinary, bizarre and incredible happenings take place. The circus is run by Colonel Kearney and his pig Sybil with her gift of prophecy. Many characters are introduced like the mute princess of Abyssinia and her dancing tigers, the Ape-Man and his team of intelligent apes, the group of clowns led by the Great Buffo... in an attractive dreamlike way. Walser repeatedly gets into troublesome situations from which he is always rescued by Fevvers. While she continues to be a praised star and the main attraction of the spectacle, Walser has transformed from being a journalist to being a clown no longer able to write reports due to his arm injury. 'After the dizzy triumph of the Grand Gala opening' (NC173) Fevvers receives numerous invitations of which she accepts only that of the Grand Duke. Fevvers almost meets her end on a visit to Rosencreutz (Grand Duke) who wants to enslave her. Fortunately she manages to escape, thanks to some mysterious magical trick, and get into the train leaving St. Petersburg and taking the whole circus towards Siberia. At this point the third act begins.

The last part of the novel takes place in *Siberia* in a trans-Siberian express taking the circus across to Japan. However, the journey comes to a grief with the train being blown by brigands and all circus members being kidnapped [except Walser]. Many circus' animals die, the crew is scattered, and Fevvers and Walser were parted for the first time. He sadly, loses his memory and his sense of self, and wanders alone aimlessly through the forest. After spending days in the forest, he meets a Shaman who takes him as his apprentice and becomes his spiritual guide. In course of time, he regains a fragment of his memory and language, which the shaman infers as signs from the gods. Gradually, Walser gets integrated into the village's life. Eventually they find a village of the renegades who have caused the train's explosion in order to gain Fevvers and use her alleged contacts to the Royal Family for their own political purpose. These aspirations disappear into thin air after they discover they have believed cheap newspaper gossips and that she cannot be of any use in their affair. After a huge storm, blows the insane clowns are blown away and the remaining of the circus, begin their walk in search of civilization and Fevvers and Lizzie leave the Maestro's school to look for Walser whom they eventually find, and the story ends with them together at the dawn of the new century. Their reunion, the integration of New Man and New Woman, signifies the better world for women in the future, in which men no longer take superior position and women do not exist only as belongings to men.

2.3.3. Main Themes in *Nights at the Circus*

Various themes are developed in the novel, however, the major ones are:

2.3.3.1. Appearance versus Reality

The idea of appearance versus reality is found throughout the whole story. The truth about Fevvers' wings is the major dilemma in the novel. Although Fevvers appears as a human being, she carries wings which she claims are inherited from her ancestors. Similarly, the women in the brothel who apparently work as prostitutes are self-sufficient, forward thinking women whom Lizzie compares to suffragists. Other characters who strengthen the theme of appearance versus reality are the clowns. They are seen as the happiest members of the troupe by the audience, while, they are miserable and treated badly. Even animals don't appear as they; they are endowed with magical features and are

taken out of their conventional boxes. Through these magical elements and more, Carter tests the reader's perception of reality.

2.2.3.2. Deception

Deception is another theme found in the novel. It is well exemplified when Fevvers tells stories of her past that seem unbelievable. She wants people to believe that she was hatched from an egg and that she her wings are real. Neither the audience nor the reader can assume that everything about her is real and further doubts rise due to her final sentence when she claims that she fooled Walser. The reader, thus, is left questioning whether the real deception relates to Fevvers' wings or to her virginity.

Walser, too, uses deception of his own to expose her deception. He flatters Fevvers by telling her he is writing a story about her in order to gain her trust so he can learn her secrets.

Another character who uses deception is The Colonel. He does so to make a profit and sells all the tickets. He also uses the circus performers and sells false stories to the newspapers about Fevvers.

2.3.3.3. Class and Wealth

Another apparent issue in *Nights at the Circus* is that of social class. Fevvers chooses to start her story with the idea of hatching from an egg because it is more impressive than being raised in a brothel in order to be accepted by high society. The circus is another setting that represents social class. Fevvers, for example, is at the top of the class system, while the clowns are at the bottom. They are considered inferior to the rest of the troupe. Carter draws particular attention to the class dynamics in many parts of the novel where she describes the poor living conditions of the clowns in the circus. Similarly, Walser loses his social power when he becomes a clown in the travelling circus.

2.2.3.4. Individualism

The novel supports of individualism. Most characters reject the conventional, stereotypic gender and social roles pre-established by their society. They resist and insist to remain true to their individual selves. Neither women nor animals stick to their oppressive standard of the 19th century's roles. Walser for example, finds his true self through his journey. Additionally, Fevvers' image as half swan and half human is ambiguous

throughout the novel and Walser's quest for the truth behind her famous wings further emphasizes the value of true identity and self-reliance over facades and. Lizzie and the other women in the brothel support the concept of individualism, as they remain self-reliant and look down upon marriage as an obstacle. In terms of individualism, each of the circus performers has his/he own personality. These unique people use their individual talents to make the circus a success. Fevvers has a magnetic personality that draws people to her. She has her own brand of individualism that makes her stand apart from others. Her wings give her the ability to rise above others and make the impression she desires.

2.2.3.5. Time

Time is a major theme found in the novel. It is both considered a theme and among the magical features the novel characterized with. It has been manipulated by Ma Nelson who keeps a broken clock that always registers twelve at the brothel. She keeps the curtains closed so that the brothel remains always dark. This suspension of time can be disorienting. When Ma Nelson dies, Fevvers takes the clock to give her the power over time. The concept of time therefore, is hazy throughout this novel. It is also identified when Walser hears the Big Ben clock striking midnight three times within one night. For the first time that night, Walser was seriously discomposd. 'Hey, there! didn't that clock strike midnight just a while ago, after the night watchman came around?' 'Did it sir? How could it have, sir? Oh, dear, no, sir!'(NC42) Indeed, as Fevvers and Lizzie reveal in the Envoi, they had previously tricked Walser and purposefully played with his perception of time using Ma Nelson's clock.

2.3.4. A Brief Description of Characters

- The novel is an amalgamation between two types of characters; real and magical ones.
- **Fevvers:** The big, beautiful aerialist (half blonde bombshell, half angel, half bird) who kicks the story off, shifts to the shadows in the middle section, and almost disappears before she tries to tie it all together at the very end.
 - **Walser:** The US journalist who interviews Fevvers, and then joins the circus to get the truth.
 - **Lizzie:** Fevvers' adoptive mother and support system, who always knows what to do, sometimes perhaps supernaturally.
 - **Madame Schreck:** The owner of the freakish whorehouse who originally employs Fevvers.

- **Christian Rosencreutz:** The religious maniac who buys Fevvers from Schreck and from whom Fevvers escapes to save her life.
- **Colonel Kearney:** The outlandish owner of the circus that employs Fevvers and leads the circus to its final resting place.
- **Sybil:** Kearney's absurdly intelligent pet pig that makes Kearney's major decisions.
- **The Princess of Abyssinia:** The silent but talented tiger tamer for the circus.
- **Mignon:** The absurdly thin young woman who escapes from her abusive husband to work with the Princess of Abyssinia and her tigers.
- **The Strong Man:** The traditional muscle-head who unsuccessfully courts Mignon and deals with The Educated Apes.
- **The Professor of The Educated Apes:** The leader who parodies academics and appears more human than some of the other acts.
- **Buffo the Great:** The head of the clowns who is eventually driven crazy by the clowns and the circus.
- **Olga Alexandrovna:** An escaped prisoner who assists the troubled circus performers in Siberia.
- **The Shaman:** The spiritual leader who saves Walser and helps him restore his memory in Siberia.
- **The Maestro:** The music school teacher who also helps the doomed circus performers in Siberia.

2.3.5. Allusions in *Nights at the Circus*

Carter is a very talented and well-equipped author. She has a great knowledge of different works of her field, and this appears clearly in her novel, in which she alludes to works (religious and non-religious).

2.3.5.1. Biblical Allusions

Many biblical references could be detected while reading the novel. For instance, Carter references to the fallen angel, *Lucifer* when she describes Fevvers' first attempt to fly.

‘Like Lucifer, I fell. Down, down, down I tumbled being with a bump on the Persian rug below me...’ (NC 30). This claims that Fevvers is a fallen angel, rebelliously resisting the patriarchal thinking of the 19th century just like Lucifer who revolts against God.

In addition, Rosencreutz, an obsessive customer of Madame Shreck's, refers to Fevvers as Azrael, Flora, Venus and Gabriel. 'Azrael, Azrail, Ashriel, Azriel, Azarail, Gabriel; dark angel of many names. Welcome to me, from your home in the third heaven. See, I welcome you with roses no less paradoxically vernal than your presence, who like Persephone, comes from the Land of the Dead to herald new life!' (NC75) 'Flora; Azrael; Venus Pandemos! These are but a few of the many names with which I might honour my goddess...' (NC 77)

Rosencreutz believes Fevvers to be the fountain of youth and consequently wishes to sacrifice her to remain young. His treatment of Fevvers reflects men's way of thinking of women as not having value for their actual essence.

2.3.5.2. Allusions to other Works

Carter brings a rich assortment of literary and theoretical influences; the novel alludes to Greek myth, European fairy tales, Shakespeare, Poe...

2.3.5.2.1. Büchner's *Woyzeck*: The tale of Mignon's father killing her mother as a result of sleeping around with soldiers is an allusion to Büchner's play *Woyzeck* which predicts what it meant to be human and the case of being from the poor classes of society.

2.3.5.2.2. Hesse's *Demian*: Through the course of events, Fevvers continually refers to Walser's need to break out of his shell and into self-realization and individuality. This idea is borrowed from Hesse's novel *Demian* that posits the struggle between good and evil and its relationship to the individual. Moreover, Hesse -in his work- stands on the philosophies of Nietzsche, Freud, and Jung to present his views of the subjectivism which refers to the individual and his ability to become human by breaking the shell that society imposed over him.

2.3.5.2.3. Ibsen's *A Doll's House*: There are many references in the novel that refer back to Ibsen's play, the most obvious references are usually to the title.

2.3.5.2.4. Shakespeare's plays: Numerous allusions are made to scenes and characters from Shakespeare's plays. *Twelfth Night's Malvolio* and *Macbeth's Lady Macbeth* are both introduced as parallels to the novel's characters, referencing either their modes of dress or attitude.

2.3.5.2.5. Poe's *Annabel Lee*: Herr M references to this poem when he clarifies why he can only summon female ghosts, 'Because, he implied [...]he himself, once, long ago, in a

kingdom by the sea... Her highborn kinsmen arrived, in due course, and took her away.'(NC 160)

2.3.5.2.6. Melville' *Moby-Dick*: Carter also references Ishmael, the protagonist and sole narrator of, *Moby-Dick* in describing the journalist Walser. 'Call him Ishmael; but Ishmael with an expense account, and, besides, a thatch of unruly flaxen hair, a ruddy, pleasant, square-jawed face and eyes the cool grey of skepticism.'(NC10) Carter compares Walser to Ishmael in the sense that he looks like an outsider travelling the Earth. Similar to Melville's narrator, Walser considers himself the sole narrator, wishing to expose Fevvers. In a further similarity, Walser withdraws and becomes a commentator since Fevvers and Lizzie take their turn as the narrators of their own story.

2.3.5.2.7. Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*: Many of the remarkable occurrences and exaggerated or absurd characters reflect Carroll's Alice books (*Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*), and the journey of the Hunting of the Snark. Walser himself quotes Alice after realizing that his watch stopped precisely at midnight.

2.3.5.2.8. Fairy Tales: Carter alludes to several traditional fairy tales. She for instance, references to *Sleeping Beauty*, *Red Riding Hood*...However, she often inverts the sex of the characters especially changing the protagonist to a female. For example, Fevvers often acts as Walser's Prince Charming, rescuing him several times.

2.3.6. The Novel's Affiliation

Nights at the Circus is categorized as a postmodern feminist and post-feminist novel.

2.3.6.1. A Postmodernist Novel

Nights at the Circus is categorized as a postmodern narrative because of the magical elements' inclusion and the complexity of language. The mystery surrounding Fevvers and the reality of her wings drives the novel to be among the ambiguous postmodern pieces of work. Walser's first skepticism towards Fevvers' wings reflects of postmodern thoughts .Women, too, embody postmodern thoughts in their questioning of patriarchal social norms and preconceptions. As the characters make the transition into a new century, they begin to embrace new ideas and ways of life. This transition towards the new is reflected in every aspect of the novel; the story itself is a new and unique.

2.3.6.2. A Feminist and Post-Feminist Novel

Carter holds both feminist and post-feminist views in her novel. Feminist viewpoints, in the sense that the women of the novel represent the suffragists and the entire women's suffrage movement of the 19th/20th century. Fevvers, Lizzie and the remaining female characters represent the New Woman, a feminist ideal of a woman who pushes against the limits of the male-dominated society with her entirely new way of thinking. However, the fact that women are depicted as strong, independent thinkers that can overcome their restrictive gender roles is more connected to post-feminist thought. In post-feminism women are no longer seen as victims and traditional feminism is no longer applicable in the contemporary society. Many characters challenge the conventional social and gender roles of their times and remain true to themselves therefore praising individualism. The women do not follow their nineteenth century gender roles nor do the animals behave in the way that would be expected. Lizzie and the other women in the brothel support the concept of individualism when they remain independent and describe marriage as a socially acceptable form of slavery.

2.4. Conclusion

Despite appearing later in her career, *Nights at the Circus* stands as the most famous novel of Carter's career in terms of bringing her greater recognition. The novel is an amalgamation of various categories of fiction like postmodernism, magical realism, feminism and post feminism; in which Carter deals with many ideas, literary aspects, and mixes fairy tales and actual history for her own purposes. The novel is a mirror of women's oppression, injustice, suffering and misery which were the outcome of the patriarchal order, where women were destined to be silenced and victimized; to be the 'pleasure of the eye.'(NC185) Though the novel's content seem unreal, it is so true since it represents a clear link between her life, feminism, political and social surroundings. Another key aspect that is reflected in the novel is her internationalism (influence of other European cultures and non-Western traditions of literature and philosophy) which seems quite clear in the 'Grand Imperial Tour, to Russia and then Japan' Fevvers will do and the ship will take; 'ship to Seattle, for the start of a Grand Democratic Tour of the United States of America.'(NC11)

Chapter Three:
Magical Realism in *Nights*
***at the Circus* and its**
Feminist Reading

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3.1. Introduction

Night at the Circus has attracted critical attention from various perspectives including post structuralism, gender studies, postmodernism and psychoanalysis and magical realism. And the latter is this study's main interest; Carter skillfully blends myth with reality to create an entire world where readers lose their ability to differentiate between real and unreal. 'no difference between fact and fiction; instead, a sort of magic realism.' (NC260) In describing Carter's magical realism, John Haffenden says:

The term 'magical realist' might well have been invented to describe Angela Carter, novelist, journalist, feminist. Her gift of outrageous fantastication, resourcefully drawing on folklore and fairy tale, enables her to conjure fabulous countries which have close designs upon the ways and means of real men and women... (76)

In this chapter, it is attempted to examine the elements of magical realism depending on Faris's theory, in addition to its critical reading, a trial is made to explore the intention behind their implication. Magical realism is employed by Carter in order to challenge aspects of the dominant culture, the patriarchal social system and acts as an alternative world, an escape from oppression. Thus, the novel calls for a critical feminist reading.

3.2. Magical Realism in *Nights at the Circus*

In the light of Faris's definition of magical realism as mentioned earlier, Carter presents two levels of reality, the natural and the supernatural. She uses various realistic elements to root her novel in the real world. She, for example, references the actual places in London, such as St Paul's, Chelsea Bridge or Trafalgar Square, or by placing actual products and labels, such as Golden Syrup. She also portrays fantastical events in a realistic way. In addition, she brings fables and myths into contemporary social relevance. Carter treats the supernatural elements as if they were regular occurrences and presents them in a way that allows the real and the fantastic to coexist next to each other. She, moreover, places this fantastical and unnatural image of Fevvers 'the winged woman' in a harsh background among those who are considered the 'worst class and defiled.' (NC21) She sets the mode to the text by introducing the magical descriptions as real right from the beginning:

Lor' love you, sir!'Fevver sang out in a voice that clanged like dustbin lids 'As to my place of birth, why, I first saw light of day right here in smoky old, London didn't I! Not billed the 'cockney venus', for nothing, sir, though they could just as well 'eve called me 'Helen of the High

Wire', due to the unusual circumstances in which I come ashore -- for I never docked via what you might call the Normal channels, Sir, oh, dear me, no; but, just like Helen of Troy, was Hatched. "Hatched out of a bloody great egg while Bow Bells rang, as ever is!'"[...] But these notorious and much-debated wings, the source of her fame, were stowed away for the night under the soiled quilting of her baby-blues a tin dressing gown, where they made an uncomfortable-looking pair of bulges, shuddering the surface of the taut fabric from time to time as if desirous of breaking loose.(NC7)

3.2.1. The Irreducible Element of Magic

The first characteristic feature of magical realism mentioned by Faris is the 'irreducible element of magic'. The latter keeps appearing throughout the novel especially in the first section in which Fevvers' story creates a feeling of supernatural and magical by presenting the extraordinary alongside with ordinary events. The fact that Fevvers was left in a basket on the doorstep of a brothel raised by prostitutes and still virgin is a reality that readers may encounter in fairy tales only but not in a real life:

When I was a baby, you could have distinguished me in a crowd of foundlings only by just this little bit of down, of yellow fluff, on my back, on top of both my shoulder blades. Just like the fluff on a chick, it was. and she who found me sleeping among a litter of broken eggshells...(NC 11)

Fevvers keeps giving facts which are presented as if they were fables. She, indeed, does not know her parents, and was found in a basket along with some broken egg shells. She claims to be hatched from an egg like Hellen of Troy. Along with her possessing (a pair of wings), these are the facts, no matter how fabulous they are. This leads Fevvers to the conclusion that she was not born like a normal human being. While she pursues the career of an aerialist, the general audience refer to her as 'A fabulous bird-woman' (NC15) because of her wings which most people are confused and wondering if they are real:

Heroine of the hour, object of learned discussion and profane surmised, this Hellen lunched a thousand quips, mostly on the lewd side(have you heard the one about how fevers got it up for the travelling salesman...) Her name was not on the lips of all...'how does she do it?' And then 'Do you think she's real?'(NC12)

Fevvers reacts immediately to her audience' confusion when she goes on stage in order to prove that she is real and that she could fly. She asked them to look at her: 'LOOK AT ME! With a grand, proud, ironic grace, she exhibited herself before the eyes of the.' (NC15) This is the performance of her wings and her myth which is widely accepted as

surprising and extraordinary but authentic and true at the same train of thought. Though Fevvers' wings are treated as marvelous, they are considered reality, and this is the essence of magical realism:

She rose up on tiptoe and slowly twirled round, giving the spectators a comprehensive view of her back: seeing is believing. Then she spread out her superb, heavy arms in a backwards gesture of benediction and, as she did so, her wings spread, too, a polychromatic unfolding fully six feet across, spread of an eagle a condor, an albatross fed to excess on the same diet that makes flamingoes pink. Oooooooh! The gasps of the beholders sent a wind of wonder rippling through the theatre. (NC15)

Fevvers' claims that she has been hatched makes her different from other women and her wings stress the idea of freedom and liberation. Carter creates her as supernatural being and gives her wings in order to help her escape from the nets of the of the 19th century patriarchal culture and oppression into a new age, the 20th century feminist haven of freedom. These images, Palmer asserts, 'represent ideas of liberation and rebirth, acts of resistance against patriarchy are represented...A reevaluation of female experience takes place and the emergence of a female counter culture is celebrated.'(180)

Fevvers's ability to fly represents the new liberated woman of the 20th century 'that just now is waiting in the wings, the New Age in which no woman will be bound to the ground.' (NC25) Fevvers is certainly imagined as a prototype of the new, liberated woman of the 20th. Carter has set the novel in 1899, the year that the British Parliament was debating a motion on Votes for Women; a fact alluded to in the novel.

Paulina Palmer argued that in *Nights at the Circus* '[a]cts of resistance against patriarchy are represented . . . A reevaluation of female experience takes place and the emergence of a female counter-culture is celebrated.' (180)

Carter, thus, chooses a mythical character- a winged woman- and takes her out of myth and makes her real- an unconventional real- a political activist; a feminist to break stereotypical definitions of female identity for the sake of cultural and ideological balance of the society which Carter wishes to change.

That was the magical. The realism, however, is represented by the second protagonist, Jack Walser who is suspicious about whether Fevvers is real or a fraud. He tries to define what Fevvers is and knows the truth behind her story. He is trying to prove she is fraud with fake wings '...in secular age an authentic miracle must purport to be a hoax, in order to gain credit in the world...' (NC16) Walser stands for patriarchal thoughts, which tend to control things. He overvalues himself thinking he could fool Fevvers and make her admits

she is a fraud; however, things turn just the opposite. At the beginning of the novel, he represents the rational point of view and the voice of the reason untampered with a false notion and magical thinking:

by all laws of evolution and human reason, ought to posse no arms at all, for it's her arms that ought to be her wings!...would you believe a lady with four arms, all perfect like a Hindu goddess hinged on either side of those shoulders...Now, wings without arms is one impossible thing; but wings with arms is the impossible made doubly unlikely -- the impossible squared.(NC 15-16)

During the interview, Fevvers is fully in charge of her narrative as well as her identity. She gives an account of her life, in which she explains the days she had in the brothel and in the museum of female monsters. Her account of her formal life illustrates how women are defined and isolated according to patriarchal thoughts. Men are the active bearers of the look. While women are the passive objects of it. Fevvers claims 'I was nought but painted, glided sign of love and, you might say, that so it was I served my apprenticeship in being looked at- being the object of the eye of the beholder.'(NC 23)

To challenge these thoughts, Fevvers does her best to narrate her life story as powerful as she can to attract his attention as she recognizes that overt resistance to male representation of the female under these circumstances is doomed to failure. She seduces Walser into her magical version of reality by employing the supernatural and traps him there, not permitting him to escape until she has succeeded to undermine all of his preconceptions and previous thoughts.

Fevvers' feminist, magic-realist space is used against the masculine element, manipulating and altering him to suit her own needs and desires. Walser starts to see glimpses of marvelous reality around him and the more Fevvers progresses with her story, the more he becomes less doubtful and less critical though the story itself becomes more mysterious and dreamlike. Fevvers was able to change power scales and makes herself the active subject of her narrative.

Sally Robinson states that *Nights at the circus*'s main aim is to enact the contradiction between woman as an object of official narratives and women as subjects of self-narratives; the text enacts a conflict between the female protagonist's story and the story male reporter wanted to tell about her.(123)

Moreover, Delbaere Garant explains that in this genre, ' The interpenetration of the magic and the real is no longer metaphorical but literal; the landscape is no longer passive but active — invading, trapping, dragging away, etc. ' (qtd. in Henitiuk 420)

Similarly, Carter gives agency to the women in the brothel -thought they work as prostitutes-, they are simultaneously self-sufficient, forward thinking women. Lizzie even compares them to suffragists. They are given magical features and are taken out of their conventional boxes. By doing so, Carter infuses the story with underlying political and social messages and implicitly addresses everyday concerns through an engaging and playful form. She cleverly transforms social messages; that woman also has a voice, a power and independent identity.

The 'irreducible element of magic' keeps occurring in the novel. Madame Shareck - the 'wicked puppet'(NC58) the 'living skeleton', the 'bony woman' (NC59) is one of them. This 'Lady of Terror' whose 'voice was like wind in graveyards' (NC58) owned a 'museum of woman monsters.'(NC55) The museum was inhabited by strange, grotesque and damned characters - the 'Sleeping Beauty', the 'Wiltshire Wonder' (not even three foot high), 'Albert/Albertina'(a bipartite) and a girl called 'Cobwebs.'(NC60) Toussaint, the doorkeeper was a man 'with no mouth' whose eyes were full of sorrow 'of exile and of abandonment.'(NC57) The museum is a distinctive Gothic space with its 'triple locked doors, doors that opened reluctantly, with great rattling of bolts and chains, and then swung to with a long groan as of despair' (NC55) The silent house was 'a gloomy pile' with 'a melancholy garden... of worn grass and leafless trees' and a facade that was blackened by soot as if 'in mourning.'(NC57) The knocker on the front door was 'ominously bandaged up in crepe' that gave rise to a 'soft, deathly thunder' (NC61) when knocked at. The ground floor of the museum which was known as 'Down Below' or 'The Abyss'(NC61) was constructed in the form of a vault or crypt 'with wormy beams overhead and nasty damp flagstones underfoot.' Stone niches were cut out in the slimy wall in which the monstrous girls were made to stand, with curtains and a small burning lamp in front of them. The upper floor was called the 'Black Theatre'. The visitors had to dress themselves in one of the various bizarre costumes provided by the museum. Toussaint played 'heartening tune' on the harmonium 'concealed behind a pierced Gothic fold-screen' and the 'old hag' (Madame Shareck) carried a lantern - 'a penny candle in a skull'(NC62) to usher her client into the museum.

Yet, another impossible creature, and therefore a fantastical one, is Fanny Four-Eyes who has an additional pair of eyes. 'Fanny comes to the museum out of her own will because —She saw too much of the world altogether; and therefore —She chooses to rest with all of us other dispossessed creatures, for whom there was no earthly use.' (NC57) And Schreck would say: 'Look at him, Fanny'. So Fanny takes off her blindfold and gives

him a smile. Then Madame Schreck would say 'I said, Look At him, Fanny'. At which she pulls up her shift. 'For, where she should have had nipples, she had eyes', then Madame Schreck says 'Look at him properly, Fanny'. Then those two other eyes of hers would open. They were a shepherd's blue, same as the eyes in her head; not big, but very bright.'(NC69)

The more one reads the novel the more he/she confronts with extraordinary characters; like the Princess of Abyssinia – 'the lady with the big cat' (NC99), earth- shaking elephants, high-wire walkers, the 'drumming' (NC257) trees which speak to the Shaman.

As it is noticed, most of the above mentioned characters are universal myth and fairy tales' female characters. Carter explores the world of myth and fairy tale not just for the sake of exploration, however, she meant to comment on the real world and evoke social change. In one of her interviews, Carter stresses the fact that 'there is a materiality to imaginative life and imaginative experience which should be taken quite seriously.'(Haffendem 85)

In an interview with Anna Katsavos, Carter commented that ' It's not very pleasant for women to find out how they are represented in the world. '(16) The museum female characters are a representative mirror of the suppression and injustices done to women and reflect the misery of womankind. Their sufferings and misery were an outcome of the patriarchal order, where women were destined to be silenced and victimized; to give and be the 'pleasure of the eye.'(NC185) By choosing myths and fairy tales' frame, Carter wants to change the realities of women. She wants to invert the passivity women's lives as it is used to be portrayed. She gives the reader a new version of women who does not wait for the prince to wake her up as the sleeping beauty did.

Indeed, these are Carter's feminist and political views; she believes that gender stereotypes have their roots in both myth and fairy tale and contemporary social, religious and political life as well.

Magic keeps growing in the novel not only in events and characters, but also in items which have magical value as well. For example, Fevvers' sword which she gets from Ma-Nelson, using it in posing as the Winged Victory, only to lose it later in her struggle with Grand Duke. This sword, as a mythological piece of armor, brings her protection and success. After losing it, luck seems to leave her. Father Time is another magical object which is operated somehow by Lizzie to fool Walser about time. Another peel of magic is stripped down after the women are deprived of this artifact, leaving them to their wits only.

3.2.2. Merging Realms

There is no end to the marvels in the novel. Another prominent feature found in this novel- according to Faris's theory- is 'the closeness and the near merging of two realms'. The first two prominent realms are the real and the fantastical. Fevvers bridges the gap between the world of the myths and reality. For that reason, it is hard to say whether she is magical or real. In this regard, 'real' is not simply what happens every day in the ordinary lives of the characters, and 'magic' is not a far-fetched fantasy or myth; 'magic' and 'real' are merged together and coexist. Reality to Carter is a hybrid between the two. It could even get difficult to decide which one is more real. The beatings of Fevvers' wings disturb Walser and make him lose his mind and his composure temporarily. Her appearance challenges Walser's logical mind and serves to intimidate his journalistic ideals and principles as a correspondent of truth and reality. He feels that he is incapable of determining the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Fevvers is a narrator whose reliability is constantly under suspicion. Her wings are her unique feature which cannot fuse into the audience's and the reader's conception of reality. They constantly threaten their logical and rational mind:

...the wings of the birds are nothing more than the forelegs, or, as we would say, the arms, and the skeleton of a wing does indeed show elbow, wrists and fingers, all complete. So if this lovely lady is indeed, as her publicity alleges, a fabulous bird-woman, then she by all the laws of evolution and human reason ought to possess no arms at all, for it's her arms that ought to be her wings!(NC15)

The novel moves between these two realms. Fevvers starts from being a mythical fictional character and ends in a real one. The frequent question 'is she fact or is she fiction?' as the novel moves forward could be replaced with 'is she fact or is she still fiction?' or 'could she become fact?'

Although Ma Nelson is a believable, realistic character and both Fevvers and Lizzie, call her a proper lady, she seems anything but ordinary and therefore belonging to the realm of the supernatural. Still there are some characters in the book that are described as fantastical, such as Toussaint, a mouth-less, Fanny Four-Eyes or Madame Schreck, the Living Skeleton. Ma Nelson is a realistic character that seems fantastical; Toussaint, however, is her opposite. Though he seems even more realistic than she does, he belongs to the realm of the supernatural. Despite the fact that his condition is seemingly believable, it would be impossible for a person to survive 'That self-same fellow with no mouth, poor

thing, opens the door to me after a good deal of unbolting from the inside, and bids me come in with eloquent gestures of his hands. I never saw eyes so full of sorrow as his were,

The magic in the novel is that of mythological, supernatural female characters who come out and move in their ordinary life. Their life's improvements belong to the two realms. Fevvers and the myth of 'the winged woman' which is consequently put in that basket of broken shells left at the door of a brothel. What starts sprouting on Fevvers' shoulders is a physical reproduction of two mythical wings. Fevvers from the brothel and the Winged Victory come together and are joined according to Carter's feminist views. And magic is the coming together of these two. These are, indeed, Carter's social and feminist views.

Another intersection of the 'two realms' can be identified in the world of the rich and that of the poor. The rich squander their money on 'bright, pretty, useless things'.(NC185) Christian Rosencreutz who desired to sacrifice Fevvers to attain immortality and the Grand Duke who wanted to objectify her are both representatives of this class. Whereas, Fevvers, the inmates of the whorehouse, the monstrous women of the museum and the members of the circus are the pariahs, who provide pleasure of the body. These outcasts are 'denied the human privilege of flesh and blood, always the object of the observer, never the subject of sympathy, an alien creature forever estranged.'(NC161)

3.2.3. Anti- Bureaucratic Elements

The magic realist writings of Carter are read as social, cultural and political critique. She takes up an indirect approach to communicate her message by incorporating myth, fantasy and allegory. The amalgamation of the real and the mythical enables her to construct as well as deconstruct societal codes. She portrays how men, especially, the rich ones hold oppressive thoughts for women and have seen them as objects to fulfill their wants and desires:

Nights at the Circus (1984), with its winged central character Fevvers arguably constitutes British fictions fullest engagement with magical realism synthesizing the ordinary and every day with an often Utopian feminist world – view that both subverts and transcends patriarchy and conventional gender politics.(Padley 105)

Faris states what makes any piece of fiction, magical realist is when the language is used extravagantly, expending its resources beyond its referential needs.(184) That what Carter exactly does in the novel. She playfully uses the language for specific purposes. She plays

everything, nothing seems as it has to be, even the animals are endowed with magical features and are taken out of their conventional boxes. Through these magical elements, Carter is able to test the readers' perceptions of reality and challenges them to question their surroundings.

She cleverly chooses the circus to be a setting where extraordinary takes place. It is a world in which a chain of commands are absent and rules are broken. Clowns and performers, together with animals, shape a world in which things are turned upside down; which is another feature of magical realist text as mentioned by Faris 'Many of these texts take apposition that is anti-bureaucratic, and so they often use their magic against the established social order.'(179) In this sense, the circus becomes a place where the conventional hierarchical orders are broken; in which animals rule, pigs and chimps are more intelligent than men. Colonel Kearney – the owner of the circus – trusts his pig to an extent that she makes decision in his stead. He, for instance, asks her opinion to whether he should hire Walser or not. Similarly Lamarck's Educated Apes, a group of chimpanzees are more clever than their masters. They are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. Their leader, the Professor, can easily get rid of Monsieur Lamarck and forces Colonel Kearney to sign a new, more profitable contract with the apes, written by the apes themselves:

The chimps put themselves through their own paces; the trainer's woman was no more than their keeper and Monsieur Lamarck, a feckless drunkard, left them to rehearse on their own (...)The Professor's face, grinning like a Cheshire cat, was not six inches from Walser's own as he popped it on. Their eyes met (...)Then the Professor, as if acknowledging their meeting across the gulf of strangeness, pressed his tough forefinger down on Walser's painted smile, bidding him be silent.(NC107-108) The very end of the Petersburg Section sees Fevvers escaping from the Grand Duke by means of jumping on the model train, the legend The Trans-Siberian express. (NC191)

Animals are endowed with magical features and are taken out of their conventional boxes. Through these magical elements, Carter tests the reader's perception of reality and challenges all to question their surroundings. The circus as Hegerfeldt says is 'an eminently suitable setting for magic realist fiction' arguing that 'the similarities between the circus... and the world of magic realist fiction are so appealing that the circus has been abused as a real-life substitute for magic realism.'(130)

The circus -in *Nights at the Circus*- is as a site of female 'carnavalesque', too, where patriarchal relationships are reversed and social hierarchies are challenged. Walser

personifies dominant patriarchal culture in the face of a low popular one represented by Fevvers. However, as he follows Fevvers to Petersburg, Walser joins the circus and loses all his privileges as a powerful patriarchal figure, and is eventually ‘hired cheaply’ to make a fool of himself as a clown in a circus to be deprived of his status as a prestigious reporter associated with ‘high’ culture. He is no longer a journalist masquerading as a clown; willy-nilly, force of circumstance has turned him into a real clown, for all practical purposes, and, what’s more, a clown with an injured arm; ‘wounded warrior’ clown.(NC145) Unlike Fevvers who maintains a position of authority.

Therefore, through a reversal of the traditional gender roles, that is, depicting Walser in the position of object and Fevvers in the position of subject, Carter not only subverts the gender hierarchies but also challenges the rational/irrational dichotomy.(Mirmusa 148)

The symbolism made, here, is explicit at several points, and Carter has described it in an interview, explaining that the novel ‘is set at exactly the moment in European history when things began to change. It’s set at that time quite deliberately, and [Fevvers] is the new woman.’(Carter qtd. in Day 172) The six-foot-tall winged working girl of humble origins and immodest ambitions is a powerful symbol of the possibilities for women inherent at the end of the nineteenth century—a time when the concept of the new woman gained currency. This is clearly identified when Ma Nelson compares Fevvers to *new woman* in a new age to stress her freedom and liberation. ‘Oh, my little one, I think you must be the pure child of the century that just now is waiting in the wings, the *New Age* in which no women will be bound down to the ground.’(NC 25)

3.2.4. The Phenomenal World / The Detailed Description

Another characteristic feature found in the novel is the detailed description of the objects, settings, and characters. The details given to the real contribute to make it fantastic. ‘Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world—this is the realism in magic realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory...Realistic descriptions create a fictional world that resembles the one we live in .In many instances by excessive use of details.’(Faris 169) Carter tries successfully to flood the reader with quite ordinary things that seem stranger, or characters that become larger than life, and make the whole narrative grotesque and magical.

The description of Mr. Rosencreutz’s home, for instance, seems magical .It was built in an old style but its execution was recent. The was built of raw bricks, whereas, the entrance door was made of fumed oak and had an ‘antechamber of large, square-hewn

stones'. (NC74) 'The fingernail moon with a star in its arms' floating above the turrets, adds to the romantic as well as the sinister atmosphere of the house, covered with ivy and situated in the 'secrecy of wooded hills.'(NC74) The eeriness of the place grows with the howling of a dog somewhere in the vicinity. When Fevvers enters the house, she feels as if she was magically travelled into an earlier age.

As mentioned above, the exceptional description and details is a feature of magical realist texts. These details contribute to a specific, *baroque* atmosphere. The phenomenal world can be observed, especially, in the vivid descriptions of locations and objects or the portrayal of characters that creates lively and engaging pictures. The object may be nothing but ordinary; yet the careful description makes it seem magical:

As for the drawing-room, in which I played the living statue all my girlhood, it was on the first floor and you reached it by a mighty marble staircase that went up with a flourish like, pardon me, a whore's bum. This staircase had a marvelous banister of wrought iron, all garlands of fruit, flowers and the heads of satyrs, with a wonderfully slippery marble handrail down which, in my light-hearted childhood I was accustomed, pigtailed whisking behind me, to slide. Only those games I played before opening time, because nothing put off respectable patrons like those whom Nelson preferred so much as the sight of a child in a whorehouse. (NC29)

Paradoxically, the more realistic details the description is, the more magical the object or situation appears. The magical realistic narrative is filled with useless details that serve no function other than to create a sense of the concrete real. In this manner, the reader starts to accept things less familiar in the same train of thought portrayed in a similar carefully detailed manner. This method of description is more important than the object described.

Another detailed description appears in the novel is that of Fevvers' room during the conversation with Walser. It is mentioned that:

Something underlay the solid composite of perfume and grease paint. Air didn't seem to move; it was in lump and beneath was a shy thing about Fevvers. There are some shiny scales in the ice that the novel wants to consider as the \source of the marine aroma-something shy about the Cockney Venus-that underlay the hot, solid, composite of perfume, sweat, greasepaint and raw leaking gas that made you feel you breathed the air in Fevvers 'dressing-room in lumps.'(NC 8)

Hence, Carter's magical realism is empowered by her exceptional use of language and word play. Her writing is full of elegant images, strong word portraits, brilliant descriptions that give the reader a glimpse of the diversity of her fictional world.

3.2.5. Disruption of Time and Space

The concept of time and space is another magical realist feature the novel characterized with. 'This element creates a break between reality and fantasy therefore contributing to the element of the supernatural. These fictions question received ideas about time, space, and identity.'(Faris 173) Carter manipulates time and space in several places in the novel.

This distortion of time begins with Fevvers pausing the clock when narrating her tale, weaving a spell to Walser who seeks to expose her; she creates an unreal dimension where Big Ben can strike midnight three times within one night, she stops time in a try to tell her story in order to control her own fate. Walser was seriously angry; 'Hey, there! didn't that clock strike midnight just a while ago, after the night watchman came around?' Did it sir? How could it have, sir? Oh, dear, no, sir!'(NC42) 'Her voice. It was as if Walser had become a prisoner of her voice, her cavernous, somber voice, a voice made for shouting about the tempest, her voice of a celestial fishwife.'(NC 43)

London's great clock tower is defeated by Ma Nelson's magical clock that has been transferred from woman to another. It has served as one of Lizzie and Fevvers' most priceless possession that helps them to co-opt time itself into a highly female empowerment scheme:

For the things my foster mother can pull off when she sets her mind to it, you'd not believe! Shrinkings and swellings and clocks running ahead or behind you like frisky dogs; but there's a logic to it, some logic of scale and dimension that won't be meddled with, which she alone keeps the key of, like she keeps the key of Nelson's timepiece stowed away in her handbag [...] (NC 199)

When the clock is lost, troubles begin, 'we'll soon lose track of time, and then what will become of us.'(NC 226) The two women are no longer able to maintain control over the magical sphere they have built around themselves. They 'elementary household lack magic' (NC 271), like hair color. Fevvers suffers a fracture of one of her wings which lead to her physical and emotional states' decline.

Time is also seen as being controlled in the brothel, where time is manipulated by Ma Nelson who keeps a broken clock that always registers twelve. She keeps the curtains closed so that the brothel is always in darkness. This suspension of time can be

disorienting. Fevvers takes the clock when Ma Nelson dies to give her the power over time.

The phenomenon of time is thus presented in the sense that Carter challenges normal course of some events throughout the novel. Such magical and disorientating manipulation of time reinforces the idea of time as a relative concept which can be personalized.

Another trick played with time is done when Fevvers and Lizzie met Walser. Fevvers is surprised and wonders how he has grown such a long beard in one week. But it's not a week since we all parted company! You can't go native in a week! 'I don't know if it is only a week since we lost him', said Lizzie' (287). Lizzie thinks that time is passing 'marvelous swiftly and that their time is running out.'(287)

The most significant distortion of time and space is displayed in the final part of Fevvers' struggle with the Grand Duke. The scene is full of weird events happening at the same time. While Fevvers stimulates Grand Duke, the automatic orchestra 'lays down the geometrics of the plausible' (NC191) and the ice-carved statue of Fevvers collapses into the remains of caviar. The bitter knowledge that she has been fooled heartens Fevvers into action:

She dropped the toy train on the Isfahan runner –mercifully, it landed on its wheels – as, with a grunt and whistle of expelled breath, the Grand Duke ejaculated. In those few seconds of his lapse of consciousness Fevvers ran helter-skelter down the platform opened the door of the first-class compartment and clambered aboard. (NC192)

It seems as if Fevvers chooses the right moment of Duke's unconsciousness to beat him and the laws of space-time continuum as well, and as a result of her self-confidence, she manages to displace herself magically. Her will is what enables her to change the outer realities and escape the given time and space and thus her suffering. The scene stresses the significance of the power of consciousness in women's liberation.

In the last part, Siberia becomes a symbolic representation of freedom from control and social restraints. The rationality of the western civilization is being substituted with Eastern spirituality within the amnesiac Walser, who flees into the forests and is taken by the shaman who teaches him many spiritual things.

Such magical but disorientating manipulation of time is typical of Carter's stretching and convergence of time elsewhere in the novel – St. Petersburg is already framed as a city that 'does not exist anymore.'(NC 96) Yet it also reinforces the idea that time is a relative concept which can be used and refigured, both in the service of patriarchy and to

undermine it; Walser, whose confidence partly rests on his certainty in obtaining proof and establishing objective reality is certainly unnerved. It reminds readers again that they are reading a story and that one of the facilities of fiction is to stretch, compress and converge time.

3.2.6. Metamorphoses

Metamorphosis is an integral aspect of magical realism stressed by Faris. Though the feature is considered as a secondary one, it is a key element in the novel. The transformation of Fewers from a normal regular child to a bird-woman ‘a winged victory’ (NC 7) is marvelously evoked by Carter. Fevvers wings - her ‘peculiar inheritance (NC24) came into being ‘unwilled’, ‘uncalled for’...and ‘involuntarily’(NC24):

one morning in my fourteenth year, rising from my truckle bed in the attic . . . I had taken off my little white nightgown in order to perform my matutinal ablutions at my little dresser when there was a great ripping in the hind-quarters of my chemise and,... suddenly there broke forth . . . these wings of mine! Still adolescent, as yet, not half their adult size, and moist, sticky, like freshly unfurled foliage.(NC 24)

After many failed trials of flight full of risk and pain, Fevvers finally, decides to learn the ‘method of the act of flight’(NC32) under Lizzie's guidance and encouragement. She starts studying birds and their ‘airy medium’ and observing the pigeons who had built a nest upon the window pediment of her attic with ‘customary diligence.’(NC33) One ‘Midsummer's Night’(NC33) they (Fevvers and Lizzie) decide to put their theory into practice. Fevvers is ‘seized with a great fear’(NC34) that her wings might turn out to be like those of a hen or an ostrich or a ‘physical deceit, intended for show.’ She fears the soul's harm not the bodily one if her attempt fails. She fears the proof of her own singularity. In spite of the thoughts in her mind, Fevvers pushes herself into the ‘transparent arms of the wind’(NC34) and succeeds. Metamorphosis of Fevvers into a bird-woman also develops the premise of hybridity which is often associated with Magical Realism. Carter by depicting Fevvers as a hybrid - part woman, part bird - challenges the boundary of sex and gender.

Fevvers' ability to fly becomes symbolic of her freedom and independence. The wings help her to escape from the nets of the of the patriarchal 19th century culture into the 20th century feminist haven of freedom .Paulina Palmer is one of the critics who stresses that Carter's new mode of writing in *Nights at the Circus* is much more liberating for

women. Fevvers' wings are an assertion of a woman's right to soar. She claims that 'The image of the puppet, Carter often uses to depict women's position in society, is no longer central to the text.'(180) For Palmer, in *Nights at the Circus*, this image is replaced by the images of Fevvers's miraculous wings which make her body 'the abode of limitless freedom.'(180)

Another character that undergoes in the process of metamorphosis is Walser - the rational person 'war correspondent.' (NC90) He goes through a deep transformation where he loses his memory in the train accident. His amnesia leads his mind to become a tabula rasa. He forgets his own identity - his name, his mother tongue as well as all the cultural and materialistic constructs he had been exposed to. After meeting the Shaman and his shadowy world of dreams and fantasy, he is reborn and 'hatched out of the shell of unknowing' (NC294) as a new man. Walser accepts the 'system of belief' (NC252) of the Shaman without questioning. The Shaman who 'was the pedant of pedants' lived in a world of dreams and his 'main, pressing, urgent, arduous task . . . was the interpretation of the visible world about him via the information he acquired through dreaming.' (NC253) Even his bear 'was both a real, furry and beloved bear and, at the same time, a transcendental kind of meta-bear, a minor deity...' (NC257) Walser the once correspondent of truth and reality is juxtaposed against the bizarre and irrational world of the Shaman.

3.2.7. Element of Unsettling Doubts

Through magical realism, Carter is able to address everyday concerns in an interesting and playful manner; yet at the same time she seems to be testing the reader's perception of reality. The latter is another important feature in novel that has to do with Faris's elements of magical realism. "The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events—and hence experiences some unsettling doubts, often 'hallucination or miracle?' (171) The reader, as a result of Walser's thinking, starts to suspect that Fevvers' account of her life is untrue or comprised of dreaming about the past – either way it adds to the overall atmosphere of the marvelous. Shall I believe it? or shall I pretend to believe it? '...are they in reality mother and daughter?'(NC28) The idea of a winged girl claiming to have been hatched from an egg and who ends up as an aerialist in a circus, itself requires a suspension of belief. However, The author manages to evoke such a sense of reality using her own narrative technique, thus, the world depicted in the text seems so real that the reader's own world becomes suspect. The reader has to open eyes

his/her to this dreamlike world, accepts its chaos, live it and enjoy it, even if there exists no 'categorical difference between seeing and believing.'(NC260)

Following the mysterious spirit of magical realism, the first pages of the novel creates a sense of disbelief, mystery and wonder as to whether or not Fevvers' wings are real. This suspicion continues till the end of the narrative and nothing is clearly established as true or false. Fevvers' existence remains an illusion. The reader is free to believe or disbelieve.

3.2.8. Metafictional Dimensions

Finally, Carter uses the device of metafiction to raise the reader's doubts and hesitations about Fevvers' genuineness. Obviously, one would believe Fevvers really existed and participated in women's suffrage. Carter wishes to provoke the reader to question Fevvers' wings and personality. Moreover, she encourages him/her to challenge all the previously fixed conceptions that stuck women in an inferior position. Carter sets the novel into this era of time because of many reasons. She tries to compare the 19th and the 20th century women's situation in terms of liberation, freedom, and gender role in order to show the importance of these topics. Despite of the mythical characters and the bizarre events of it, the book embodies political and social messages. It references to the suffragist movement in the 19th /20th century, and deals with the social issues of patriarchy and individual rights. The novel falls in magical realist scope makes it read as both realistic and/or symbolic. And the author, as she usual, neither gives information nor explains her intentions in order to make the mysterious even more disturbing. The established world-view in the novel (realism) is disturbed by extraordinary events (magical) which do not fit into the common norms of logic and make it is difficult to accept.

Conclusion

To conclude, *Nights at the Circus* proves to be among the strongest magical realism novels since it contains most of its characteristic features stated by Faris, from the basic features like 'irreducible elements of magic' to the secondary features like 'reader's hesitation'. The novel treats the supernatural elements as established parts of the real world. It blends different settings to create a deeper reality. A reality which is never clearly told; it is, however, due to the reader to grasp and understand. Carter chooses a mythical character- a winged woman- and takes her out of myth and makes her real- an unconventional real- a political activist; a feminist to break stereotypical definitions of female identity for the sake of cultural and ideological balance of the society which Carter

wishes to change. Carter, thus, chooses MR because it suits her feminist motives. Carter has her own thoughts of feminism in which she tries to undermine male-dominated society by rewriting its history with a supernatural strong heroine. A hybrid female, half woman half bird, Sofie Fevvers who is the representative of *the New Woman*. The woman of the 20th century, the woman who is able to escape the trappings and break away from the bonds of passivity and powerlessness of the patriarchal 19th century. Her wings seem to symbolize ambitions, freedom and liberation. 'She is the pure child of the century that now is waiting in the wings, the New Age in which no woman will be bound down to ground.'(NC 25)

General Conclusion

The corpus of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* was analyzed to explore the characteristic features of MR and the author's motives behind using them. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation was not only to analyze Carter's unique style (the surface layer of her writing) but also to delve deeper in order to explore the hidden meaning of her fiction.

In order to present a clear understanding for the theoretical frame work followed in this work, the first chapter was devoted to Faris's MR. The chapter presented an overview on the topic, discussed its historical review on which Faris stands to define the term, highlighted its characteristic features, and offered a general review of Faris's magical feminism. The second chapter, however, focused on analyzing the author's tendencies of life to recognize the link between Carter and the corpus which was analyzed at the same chapter. Our humble study closed with a critical analysis of the corpus underlying all the MR elements and their feminist significance.

This work stands on the analytical descriptive approach through selecting and analyzing the main MR elements' substances. Thus, we have followed the qualitative design.

Nights at the Circus manages to be one of the most magical and realist book ever since it contains numerous characteristic features of magical realism stated by Faris. It blends the fantastical and the real conditions of everyday living in a way that the reader cannot even differentiate the two. Carter employed the mode skillfully as she managed to bring magic to the slums of London with as much beauty as any Latin American author.

Carter chooses MR because it is a well-suited means to fulfill her subversive objective, since it allowed the construction of an alternative reality based on a blend of real and supernatural. The use of time and space, and the implausibility of events and actions all have the effect of evoking characteristically magical feminist associations. As Johnson states, Carter's personal as well as literary affinity with this genre of the fantastic is related to her feminism.(70–81) Carter displays her own brand of feminism in which she attempts to undermine male-dominated society by rewriting its history with fantastically strong and wild heroine. The winged Fevvers who is seen by many critics as a version of *the New Woman*. The woman that is able to escape the trappings and break away from the bonds of passivity and powerlessness of the patriarchal 19th century set up and move into the 20th century feminist freedom. Her wings seem to symbolize the ambitions, freedom and liberation of the New Woman. 'She is the pure child of the century that now is waiting in the wings, the New Age in which no woman will be bound down to ground.'(NC 25)

MR, thus, is employed by Carter as a means to express a protest against the Western society's stereotypic notions about women, female identity and liberation. She changed realities, inverted them, balanced the scales of power between sexes, and freed her heroine from the oppressive patriarchy, women used to suffer from. To achieve her goals, she empowered the female characters in the novel with supernatural appearances and magical powers that allow them to create their own space.

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الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الي استكشاف رواية (ليالي في السرك) للروائية البريطانية المشهورة " أنجيلا كارتر " في ضوء الواقعية السحرية . اعتمدت الأطروحة في الجانب النظري علي نظرية فارس حول الواقعية السحرية وقد شرحت بالتفصيل في المحور الأول . بالإضافة إلى فحص عناصر الواقعية السحرية واستكشاف هدف الكاتب وراء استخدامها. وتحقيقا لهذه الغاية ، اعتمدت الدراسة تصميمًا تحليليًا وصفيًا . وهكذا، استخدم النهج النوعي الذي تم من خلاله الانتقاص من الحقائق لاستكشاف الواقعية السحرية. تم علاج الأخير من أجل تحليل دوافع أنجيلا كارتر وراء استخدامه. اعتمد الباحثون على نظرية واقعية فارس السحرية كتحليل دعم. يستنتج أن الرواية تنتمي للواقعية السحرية لاحتوائها على العديد من ال خصائص المقترحة من قبل فا رس من "العناصر غير القابلة للاختزال من السحر" إلى "تردد القارئ". (كارتر) استخدم السيد (مود) بشكل مثالي لتحقيق الأهداف النسوية وهي تستخدمها لتصوير المجتمع غير العادل بطريقة غير مباشرة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك ، تشرح أفكار المجتمع الغربي المسبقة عن هوية المرأة وتحريرها. وتحاول تغيير الحقائق، وقلبها، وموازنة ميزان السلطة بين الجنسين، وتحرير بطلتها من النظام الأبوي القمعي، الذي كانت المرأة تعاني منه لتحقيق أهدافها، ووضحت في الرواية كيف يمكن للشخصيات النسائية أن تخلق مساحتها الخاصة من خلال استخدام المظاهر الخارقة للطبيعة والقوى السحرية. ومنه الواقعية السحرية هي مناسبة تماما لمواجهة واقع النسوة، لأنه يسمح ببقاء واقع بديل من خلال مزج الحقيقي و الخارق.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الواقعية السحرية، نظرية فارس للواقعية السحرية، المساواة بين الجنسين.

Résumé

Cette thèse vise à explorer *Nights at the Circus* d'Angela Carter au à la lumière du réalisme magique. Il fournit une lecture détaillée pour le travail de cadre théorique, la théorie de Faris. Ainsi qu'un examen des éléments de réalisme magique et d'exploration de l'intention de l'écrivain derrière leur utilisation. À cette fin, l'étude a adopté un plan analytique descriptif. Ainsi, l'approche qualitative a été utilisée par laquelle les instances étaient extraites pour explorer le réalisme magique. Ce dernier a été traité afin d'analyser les motivations d'Angela Carter derrière son utilisation. Les chercheurs se sont appuyés sur la théorie du réalisme magique de Faris pour soutenir l'analyse. On en déduit que le roman des nuits au Cirque appartient au réalisme magique. Il contient de nombreuses caractéristiques suggérées par Faris des "éléments irréductibles de la magie" à "l'hésitation du lecteur". Carter a parfaitement utilisé le mode MR pour atteindre des objectifs féministes. Elle l'utilise pour représenter la société injuste d'une manière indirecte. En outre, elle explique les idées préconçues de la société occidentale sur l'identité féminine et la libération. Elle essaie de changer les réalités, de les inverser, d'équilibrer les échelles de pouvoir entre les sexes et de libérer son héroïne du Patriarcat oppressif dont souffraient les femmes. Pour atteindre ses objectifs, elle habilite les personnages féminins du roman avec des apparences surnaturelles et des pouvoirs magiques qui leur permettent de créer leur propre espace. Ainsi, le réalisme magique est un moyen bien adapté pour atteindre son objectif subversif, car il a permis la construction d'une réalité alternative basée sur un mélange de réel et de surnaturel dans un espace indifférencié.

Mots-clés: réalisme magique, théorie du réalisme magique de Faris, féminisme.