MAGIC REALISM AND GOTHIC TRADITION
IN THE NOVELS OF ANGELA CARTER

ABSTRACT
OF THE
THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
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IN
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BY
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at discovering and analysing Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition in the novels of Angela Carter.

Carter believed human beings to be the pure product of history, culture and circumstances. True to her own view, the author's life - her childhood days; the influence of her family (grandmother and parents); the war years (World War II); her life in Bristol; the era in which she lived - the counter culture of the 60s; and her career as a journalist - played a significant role in making her the indomitable and richly talented writer she was. These aspects of her life also provide an autobiographical quality to some of her novels. Her degree in Medieval literature (which lends an allegorical dimension to her novels); her vast reading of eccentric and eclectic literature, and her travels enriched her intellectual acumen and stimulated her artistic ingenuity.

Carter's iconoclasm - her vision of unshackling reality; creating a new liberated world; and a utopian vision of the freedom of woman is reflected in her writings. A break with conventions and traditions runs through her narratives. The novelist has appropriated magic realist techniques in conjunction with the Gothic nomenclature to subvert the boundaries of conventional narrative strategies; displace traditionally established discourses; and counter the established truths and values of Western culture. The magic realist and Gothic writings of Carter, become a medium of social, cultural and political critique.

The novelist has used Gothicism right from her first novel - which is more or less sustained through all her novels. She works within the framework of the classic Gothic literature and employs Gothic conventions, reworked/remoulded within the contemporary reality. The
Gothicism of her early novels paves way for the development of her later art - Magic Realism - her supreme achievement. Carter's early works are suffused with an ingenious display of generic traits of Gothicism along with Surrealism. Magic Realism and Surrealism can be realized as an outcome of the Gothic Tradition. The dissemination of Gothic features across texts and literary periods, distinguish the Gothic as a hybrid form – incorporating and transforming other literary modes as well as developing and altering its own conventions in relation to novel forms of writing.

The thesis consists of an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion. Each chapter has an introduction followed by the synoptic view of the plot of the text under study, a detailed, exhaustive analysis of the techniques involved and the conclusion reached. The Introduction to the thesis gives an insight into the life, career and extensive writings of Carter.

Chapter 1 presents an appraisal of the techniques under study - Magic Realism, Gothic Tradition and Surrealism. These strategies are the cornerstones of this research work. Therefore, a close assessment of these terms, the understanding of their historical background and their defining characteristics becomes imperative.

Chapter 2 analyses three novels of Carter - *Shadow Dance* (1966), *Several Perception* (1968) and *Love* (1971) - clubbed together because of the similarities and correspondences in style, thematic concerns, plot and their setting of the 1960s England. These early novels do not possess highly fantastical characters, events or supernatural elements. Nevertheless, their analysis becomes essential to understand the novelist's later skilful and imaginative engagement with Magic Realism. Carter's oeuvre needs to be read in continuum to realize her development from a realist to a magic realist writer. Carter's depiction of realism, aims at
discovering the mysterious and inexplicable relationship between man and his circumstances, and is aided by her use of Gothicism as well as her fantastical/surreal descriptions. The novels abound in surrealist imagery (chiefly depicted with the aid of dreams and hallucinations), carnival, myths and fairy tales which are often classified under the nomenclature of Magic Realism. Thus, these early novels depict Magic Realism in its nascent phase.

These novels possess distinctive Gothic spaces, themes and machinery. The decaying old houses where Honeybuzzard and Morris go to collect antiques, and the derelict Victorian house where Ghislaine is murdered (Shadow Dance); the disintegrating mansion, the site of a “Dionysiac” revel (Several Perceptions); and the desolate, decaying and alienated eighteenth century park (Love) are examples of the Gothic setting.

In Shadow Dance, Ghislaine with her hideous deformity – a “revolting scar” is the damsel in distress as well as the “monstrous feminine.” Honeybuzzard - the writer’s “fledgling figure”, who will graduate into the sexual predators and puppet masters of her later novels, is the vicious and brutal villain of the Gothic novels. The Gothic motif of conflict between good and evil is depicted through the character of Morris. Carter employs clichés of Gothic motifs like hooting of an owl, deserted cemetery, old churchyard along with the sinister suggestiveness of the night in various scenes of the book. The theme of search for identity which is central to many Gothic writings is depicted through the character of Joseph in Several Perceptions.

In Love, Annabel’s madness (inability to relate to the real world) - her hamartia, develops the Gothic premise of decay and imprisonment. Her suicide becomes her flight of escape - from the agonies of internal
(imaginative) and external (real) world, and from the shackles of patriarchy. Buzz with his diabolic appearance and homosexual leaning is the modern re-embodiment of the Gothic desperado. The novel also draws attention to the boundaries between sanity and madness; between upper middle-class and bourgeoisie.

Chapter 3 examines *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) wherein Carter blends biblical allusions, myths and fairy tales, to create a dream-like world. She successfully demythologizes the myth (Leda and the Swan) and fairy tales (Red Riding Hood, Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard) by dissecting them and making them less mysterious and mythical thus enabling the readers to connect and relate to them. Albeit *The Magic Toyshop* is structured like a fairy tale, it is not a traditional fantastic tale that aims to surprise. Her fantasy is deeply rooted in realism and aims at subverting traditional patterns of patriarchy, femininity and sexuality.

Uncle Philip’s dilapidated house; the once stately middle-class neighbourhood and park (where Finn takes Melanie for a walk), are the quintessential Gothic setting. Melanie is the re-embodiment of the Gothic heroine - a lonesome and vulnerable female. Uncle Philip is the impulsive and tyrannical Gothic male of the novel, who attempts to control Melanie’s sexuality through his puppet show. His character develops the Gothic theme of sexual and patriarchal oppression and the theme of imprisonment. The novel also deals with boundaries and transgression of boundaries - between a young girl and a woman; between upper middle class and the poor working class; and between the English and the Irish. The Gothic theme of incestuous relationships also finds place in the novel. The house (nurturing incestuous relationship) meets a destiny similar to that in conventional Gothic, when it is burnt down by Uncle Phillip.
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Melanie's desire of flight (a Gothic motif) is fulfilled when she and Finn break out of the burning house at Aunt Margaret's insistence.

Chapter 4 deals with *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972). The novelist like a true magic realist merges both a careful observation of the real and the power of imagination to create an artificial construct. The narrative begins with a realist description of the mundane city, followed by a detailed account of the fantastical invasion of the city by Doctor Hoffman's desire machines. The city is transformed into a realm of weird and bizarre happenings and an abode of evil - ghosts, apparitions, mirages, madness, death and decay. The meeting of the Minister with Dr Hoffman's emissary (a magical and mysterious presence) is suffused with Magic Realism - fusing of lights and flickering of flames. Carter has employed the "Kafkaesque" image of metamorphosis, in presentation of Albertina, who transforms herself into various fantastic forms. The travelling fair, peopled by bizarre and grotesque characters like the bearded Madame de la Barbe; the phallic female Mamie Buckskin; and the nine Moroccan acrobats is the re-creation of the carnivalesque by Carter. The novelist has also introduced the concept of hybridity (with the aid of the bizarre race of centaurs) - an important machinery employed by magic realist writers. The juxtaposition of the inharmonious groups of people - African tribe; the race of centaurs; the bestial whores in the "House of Anonymity"; and the eccentric assortment of characters of the travelling fair within the narrative lends a magical quality to it.

*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is replete with Gothic elements. The "Mansion of Midnight", the "House of Anonymity" and Dr Hoffman's "Wagnerian castle" provide the Gothic landscape. The narrative combines elements of both horror and romance and features both physical as well as psychological terror. Magicians, femme fatales,
supernatural, ghosts, devils, death, decay, madness, incest - intrinsic to the Gothic Tradition are close at hand.

Chapter 5 studies and analyses in detail *Nights at the Circus* (1984) - Carter's penultimate novel. The book is the epitome of her experimentation with Magic Realism - the brilliant unification of myth and reality, of implausible events and stark realism. Carter creates an entire world wherein the readers lose their ability to discriminate between the real and unreal. The juxtaposition of the fantastical presence of Fevvers against the dark and dismal reality; her metamorphosis into a hybrid bird-woman; her magical escape from the Grand Duke's palace; the travelling circus - with its array of eccentric characters; Walser's amnesia; the drumming trees; all lend the narrative a magic realist atmosphere. Keeping with the mysterious spirit of Magic Realism, the first pages of the book create a sense of disbelief that continues right till the end of the novel and Fevvers existence remains a chimera. At the same time the various references to the turn of the new century - 20th century and the major preoccupations of the time - female franchise, concept of New Woman, class struggle, etc., lend to the narrative a realistic quality/foundation.

Fevvers is the subversion of the "angelic" Gothic heroine and all that is considered feminine by social construct, nevertheless, like a Gothic heroine, she seduces Walser with her storytelling and hypnotizes him with her magical wings. She becomes the very embodiment of the Gothic heroine, when she is entrapped and imprisoned within the walls of distinctive Gothic spaces - Ma Nelson's brothel, Madame Shareck's Gothic museum, Rosencreutz's Gothic mansion, clown alley and Grand Duke's palace. The Gothic theme of decay is palpable both in concrete as
well as abstract form. The novel also depicts the boundary between the real and the fantastical; and between the elite and the outcast.

Chapter 6 discusses *Wise Children* (1991) in detail. The commingling of realistic details (the World War II, the changing city of London) and characters with elements of fantasy and the absurd give rise to Magic Realism in the text. The character of Peregrine; the superfluous presence of twins; the many coincidental links to Shakespeare; the Lynde Court party, the scene of the three weddings and Melchior Hazard’s centenary celebration (all characterised by absurdity, chaos and the carnivalesque); depiction of the world of theatrical illusion and make-believe (lights, camera, action); the non-linear depiction of time; the authorial reticence; the acceptance of fallibility of memory and unpredictability of narration by the narrator; the frequent shifts from the fantastical occurrence to the realistic happenings and vice versa add to the magic realist texture of the narrative and challenge the credibility of the readers. Carter heightens the intensity of the novel by weaving layers of meaning into the text with her implicit criticism of society.

*Wise Children* analogous to Gothic novels also posits the theme of decay, the premise of incestuous relationships and the great cultural divide of the British social system – North London and South London; the legitimate and illegitimate; tragedies/comedies of Shakespeare and music hall/pantomime etc.

The conclusion, offers a brief outline of findings of this study. The in-depth reading of Carter’s oeuvre, in order to discover and analyse Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition, also leads to a conclusion that though her early novels abound in surrealist descriptions, later as she matured as a writer, she distanced herself from Surrealism, as it was not serving her authorial intention/purpose - to bring about change and
create a new and liberated world. Thus Surrealism gradually gave way to Magic Realism, which was to become her finest achievement. Surrealism has been a major constituent of Magic Realism – which is a blend of fantasy and reality. The fantastical in Magic Realism, is often the product of surrealist imagery employed by the writers of this genre. But Magic Realism cannot be a part of Surrealism which deals with the overtly imaginative - the tousled and surreal world of the unconscious.

An important aspect to take cognition in these novels is that these techniques – Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition, gain in significance because of Carter’s use of language and style adopted, along with the bizarre situations and background settings. Contents and themes are consistent, but Carter’s artfulness lies in the variety and multitudinous description which rests on her style and expression. Her language adds to the profundity of the novel and leaves the readers marvelling at her vast reading and in-depth knowledge. On the other hand these techniques give her the licence to play with language and communicate her deepest concerns. Her writing – beautiful and intelligent, becomes an art form with infinite possibilities, empowered by her language. She is a magician who conjures up a dreamlike amalgamation of fantasy, horror and coarse realism often against a Gothic background and has the ability to transform the world into the magical with extreme artistry and the sheer power of her words.
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that Tasneem Noshi has completed her Ph.D. thesis, entitled

Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition in the Novels of Angela Carter

under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, this is her own work and is suitable for submission for evaluation, for the award of Ph.D. degree in English.

(Dr. Nikhat Taj)
Dedicated to My Parents
Preface

The initial rationale to take up this research study came from my supervisor Dr. Nikhat Taj. An introductory research and investigation highlighted the fact that Angela Carter is one of the lesser known writers in the subcontinent. A dearth of research interest in this area, especially in India, motivated an academic effort in this direction.

Angela Carter has written extensively. She has to her credit novels, short fiction, poetry collection, dramatic works, articles/works of journalism, children’s books, non-fiction and radio plays. She has also worked as editor and translator to many works. Two of her works namely Company of Wolves (1984) and The Magic Toyshop (1987) have been adapted as films and the screenplay for these was written by Carter herself. She is the author of nine novels namely – Shadow Dance aka Honeybuzzard (1966), The Magic Toyshop (1967), Several Perceptions (1968), Heroes and Villains (1969), Love (1971), Infernal Desire Machine of Doctor Hoffman aka War of Dreams (1972), The Passion of New Eve (1977), Nights at the Circus (1984) and Wise Children (1991). However only seven novels - Shadow Dance, Love, Several Perceptions, The Magic Toyshop, Infernal Desire Machine, Nights at the Circus and Wise Children have been included in the present study. The selected novels provide opportunity for an exhaustive and in-depth study in Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition. In course of this research work an attempt
has been made to study all the available critical material on Angela Carter so as to give a perspective and relevance to this study.

The two novels that have been left aside are – *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). Both these narratives have similar themes and are futuristic, post–apocalyptic and highly fantastical texts where Carter has skilfully reconstructed the post-holocaust-world for her readers, making them inconsistent with the Magical Realist and Gothic aspects of her novels taken up in this research study.

The thesis follows a simple methodology of organisation. It begins with an Introduction which gives an insight into the life and career of Carter. The Introduction is followed by six chapters and a Conclusion. The first chapter *Understanding Magic Realism, Gothic Tradition and Surrealism* gives an appraisal of the techniques under study along with their historical background. The Introduction together with the first chapter is crucial for understanding the research study. The second chapter analyses three novels of Carter - *Shadow Dance*, *Love* and *Several Perceptions*. These novels have been clubbed together not by their chronology but because of the similarities and correspondences they share, in their style, thematic concerns, plot as well as their setting of the 1960s England. Hereafter, the chapter division/analysis is based on chronological order. Each chapter has an introduction followed by the synoptic view of the plot of the text under study, a detailed, exhaustive and analytical study of the techniques involved and the conclusion reached.
Maximum effort has been taken to locate the magic realist and Gothic elements in the text. It is possible that certain facets/aspects have been overlooked due to the very complex nature of the study. The capitalisation of the terms – Magic/Magical Realism, Gothic Tradition and Surrealism in the thesis has been applied for the sake of emphasis. Sometimes repetition becomes inevitable due to the very nature of this study. Documentation has been done in accordance to the guidelines of MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers – Seventh Edition as far as possible. A select bibliography at the end lists the books and sources read and consulted for this research work.

It is hoped that the thesis will help widen the recognition and influence of Angela Carter to some degree and be useful for those who are interested in the study of Magic Realism and pave way for further research work in this realm.

(Tasneem Noshi)
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Finally, an honourable mention goes to my family and friends for their understanding and support. Deepest gratitude is owed to my beloved parents who have always inspired me with their hard work and perseverance; showered me with their indispensable love, prayers and blessings. Thanks to my sisters Aaisha, Fatima and Safia for their affection and motivation. I am also thankful to my keen-eyed and judicious brother Shakeeb, who volunteered to gather the primary sources for this research project during his stay in the United Kingdom and my diligent brother Mohammad for helping me with the final printing and compilation of this thesis. Sincere thanks are due to my dear friend Zeba for her treasured friendship and moral support over the years.

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For her, fiction was about asking questions. At a time when most British writers were entrenched in the drab realism that she rather disparagingly described as "the low mimetic," she was painting vivid pictures of fairy tale creatures and monsters in complex fusions of fantasy, Gothic, science fiction and romance. While her peers anatomised adultery in Hampstead, she was taking her characters on wild journeys into castles and caves, across Siberian deserts and into enchanted kingdoms where nothing was what it seemed. Richly playful, these dense, glittering fictions drew on ideas ranging from Melville to the Marquis de Sade, Barthes to de Beauvoir and feminist theory to Freud, but with the emphasis firmly on the seductive power of the storyteller. (Patterson)

Angela Carter - the “high sorceress” and the “benevolent witch-queen” (Rushdie) of English literature is a novelist, journalist, short story writer, dramatist and a critic all in one. In her works we come across a beautiful commingling of Magic Realism, fantasy, science fiction, Surrealism, Gothic tradition and other post modernist traits. We also witness an abundance of the distinctive motifs of Magic Realism. A few critics have perceived Carter not only as an exponent of Magic Realism but also as the “natural heiress of a northern Gothic Tradition” (Lurie). This distinction is an outcome of her novels which feature northern scenes of horror and infamy - a blend of the bizarre, the eerie and the haunted.
Angela Olive Stalker (her maiden name) was born in Eastbourne (Sussex) on 7th May 1940, to Olive (Farthing) Stalker and Hugh Alexander Stalker. Her father was a Scottish journalist and socialist working in London. During the war years, due to the bombing raids of the World War II, she was moved by her grandmother to Wath-upon-Dearne in South Yorkshire. She was thereafter brought up in London and attended the local grammar school. Carter describes her early years of upbringing and childhood as being carefree and nonchalant. She writes:

Life passed at a languorous pace, everything was gently untidy, and none of the clocks ever told the right time... (Carter, Mother 7)

A few important details of her family background need to be highlighted here. The “Imperial ring” about the wealth that her maternal grandfather (a soldier in India) left behind for her mother filled her childhood imagination. On the other hand her maternal grand-mother was a working class, matriarchal, domineering and tyrannizing feminist figure. Carter writes of her grandmother:

[She] was a woman of such physical and spiritual heaviness she seemed to have been born with a greater degree of gravity than most people. She came from a family where women rule the roost and she effortlessly imparted a sense of my sex’s ascendancy in the scheme of things... (Carter, Mother 4)

Most of Carter’s proximate female relatives including her mother were “strong women of striking candor and pragmatism” (VanderMeer). In
spite of all this, she suffered from teenage anorexia, which possibly sprung from low self-esteem and the possessive dominance of her mother, and fought to vanquish it.

These early years and influences played a very significant role in formulating her philosophy of life and in giving a new direction to her writing career in the future years. These influences surface when we turn to her works like *The Bloody Chamber* (1970) which is a collection of feminist fairy tales “firmly grounded in the popular Indo-European tradition.” In these she appears as an “old mother goose” who almost conjures the tales of *Bluebeard*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Carter’s mother – a voracious reader was yet another pivotal literary influence on her. She owes the knowledge of Shakespeare and other great names of English literature to her mother.

At the age of eighteen she decided to take up her father’s profession and began to work as a journalist on the *Croydon Advertiser*. In addition, she wrote records and reviews. Carter was distressed and disturbed by the closing of mines and the breaking of mining strikes in the 1960s and over the failure of socialist revolution in general. Her socialist leanings are apparent in her preoccupation with social justice (equal rights, access to further education, abortion laws, the position of black women) and are also reflective in her writings.

Carter moved to Bristol after her marriage to Paul Carter in 1960. She began studying English studies at the University of Bristol and
specialized in Medieval English literature in 1965. Carter once stated: “As a medievalist, I was trained to read books as having many layers” (Haffenden 87) and therefore, her novel(s) can be read and interpreted as an allegory - which holds possibilities of multiple levels and layers of meaning. Life and times in Bristol gave her opportunity to observe the bohemian, vagrant and erratic mode of existence in the side walk cafés and smoky backroom poetry reading sessions.

It was at Bristol, her childhood love for eclectic literature surfaced to express itself. Her works echo enormously the influence of various writers and authors belonging to different ages and genres. We find references to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Blake, Lawrence, Mansfield, Dickens, Woolf... the list being endless. We witness influence of theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, novels of Dostoyevsky and Balzac, Magic Realism of Garcia Marquez and Louis Borges, of Dadaism, Surrealism and psychoanalysis. Carter's taste was not just confined to English literature. She was also fond of French literature especially the works of Rimbaud and Racine. She was fascinated by the philosophy of De Sade and Bataille regarding sexuality, Irigaray and De Beauvoir for feminist theory and Genette and Roland Barthes for ideas concerning intertextuality and analysis of text. Writings of male authors like Marquis De Sade and Charles Baudelaire were also reappropriated by her in *The Sadeian Woman* (1978) and *Black Venus* (1985) respectively. This eclectic and eccentric borrowing from
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varied sources is a deliberate stratagem by Carter who in 1983 wrote in "Notes from the Frontline":

I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode. (Wandor 69)

It was during the 1960s that Carter ventured into novel writing. The period between 1965 and 1975 served as a rehearsal ground for the writer and gave her the required "apprenticeship" to emerge as a writer par excellence. Her early novels are set in Bristol where she had spent most of her time during the 60s. *Shadow Dance* aka *Honeybuzzard* (1966) her first novel was followed by *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) which won her the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1969. *Several Perceptions* came out in 1968 and brought her more acclaim and the Somerset Maugham Prize. *Heroes and Villains* was published in 1969. It deals with the changing gender roles and is set against the post-holocaust background. The above mentioned writings are considered to be the formative novels which helped to establish the literary reputation and credentials of Angela Carter. However, on the personal front, her life was undergoing an emotional upheaval – things were becoming complex and unaccommodating. In 1972, her twelve years of married life ended in a divorce.

At this critical juncture in her life, the proceeds of the Somerset Award as well as her fluency and competency in French and German provided her the means to travel and explore Asia, Europe and the United
States. She also sought freedom from the British culture which she saw as “a demolition site.” She went to Japan and lived in Tokyo for three years. Carter chose Japan because she “wanted to live for a while in a culture that is not now nor has ever been a Judaeo-Christian one, to see what it was like” (Carter, Nothing 28). Life was not easy for her. She had to work as a bar hostess, a model, a freelance journalist and had to take up various other odd jobs to eke out a living. Her life and experiences in Japan matured her intellectually and made her the “wilful, stubborn and outstanding writer she subsequently became.” It was in Japan where she learnt – “what it is to be a woman and become radicalized” (28). Caryl Phillips in an article titled Finding Oneself at Home correctly states – “It takes a politically determined, clear sighted and brave writer to purposefully embrace wilful exile.” Furthermore, she expresses that:

She [Carter] was fully aware of the fact that the very act of living in a country where she would be a complete outsider would bring her face to face with herself at a critical time in her literary development. Although she knew that, as an exceedingly smart and outspoken young woman, it was already somewhat problematic for her to feel fully at home in British society, she absolutely understood that in Japan it would be almost impossible for her to ever belong. In other words, by travelling to Japan she would, in a sense, be free to reinvent herself without having to wrestle with the multiple anxieties of belonging.

Angela Carter was an acute observer of the societies in which she lived and worked. Her authorial skills were sharpened (to a great extent)
by the travels she undertook. The travelling gifted her with a plethora of imagery which along with her other life experiences came to be incorporated in her writings from time to time. In Carter’s own words:

I’m basically trying to find out what certain configurations of imagery in our society, in our culture, really stand for, what they mean, underneath the kind of semi religious coating that makes people not particularly want to interfere with them. (Carter, Conversation 11-17)

During the 1970s, Carter lived in Bath and produced many of her famous works. She seemed to have reinvented herself and grown into a more accomplished and determined writer. Love was published in 1971. Shadow Dance (1966) Several Perceptions (1968) and Love (1971) are referred to as the “Bristol Trilogy.” Her novel The Infernal Desire Machine of Doctor Hoffman (1972) aka War of Dreams followed next. It is a bizarre journey through an anonymous South American country in which scenes of revulsion are infused with humour and poetry. It proved to be an epitome of the “ideas and ideals of surrealist beauty.” In 1976 she moved to London and the same year she got married to Mark Pearce, her second husband. Carter’s literary genius, her creative prowess and writing skills were at their zenith between 1975 and 1985. The Passion of New Eve (1977), “captures the essence” of the USA and is “ aflame with dangerous ideas and fantastical images” (VanderMeer). Nights at the Circus (1984) “successfully assimilates aspects of myth and folklore.” Some critics
consider this novel as the writer's *magnum opus*. *Wise Children* (1991) is a "witty and bawdy tale" with "a semblance of reality."

A prolific writer, Carter’s creativity knew no bounds. She kept experimenting and expressing herself in different forms of literary writing. Apart from the nine novels to her credit which will be discussed in this thesis, Angela Carter contributed many articles to - *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The New Statesman*. She also worked as a reviewer for *New Society* and *The Guardian* from 1966. All these articles and works of journalism are compiled together in *Shaking a Leg* and *Expletives Deleted*.

Carter also wrote for the radio, adapting a number of her short stories. She wrote two original dramas on Richard Dadd and Ronald Firbank for the radio. Two of her fictions have been adapted for the silver screen. *The Company of Wolves* is a film by Neil Jordan, based on some of the stories of *The Bloody Chamber* which emphasize the sexual connotations in them and *The Magic Toyshop* became a television film in 1987. Her radio play scripts, the two screenplays together with an unproduced screenplay - *The Christ Church Murder* and a libretto for an opera of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* are collected in *The Curious Room*. She was also the co-founder of Virago Press with Carmen Calil. She decided to become a part of this feminist publishing venture, and thus gave to women, their first independent literary voice. Carter's motive behind the decision to join Virago is apparent in the following quote by her:

> I am moved towards it by the desire that no daughter of mine should ever be in a position to be able to write. BY GRAND CENTRAL STATION I SAT DOWN AND WEPT, exquisite prose though it might contain. BY GRAND CENTRAL STATION I TORE OF HIS BALLS would be more like it, I should hope. (Sage, *Good* 525)


From 1970s to 1980s Carter kept herself occupied as a writer-in-residence at different universities in America and Australia including Sheffield University, Brown University, University of Adelaide, University of East Anglia and at other places like Austin Texas, Iowa City and Albany in New York state. She served as Arts Council fellow at Sheffield University, England and was visiting professor of creative writing at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. She also taught in Australia and East Anglia University, United Kingdom.

Angela Carter’s death at the age of 52, on February 16, 1992 from lung cancer came as a great loss to English literature. Her death robbed the English literary scene of “one of the most vivacious and compelling voices” (Carter, Infernal back cover) and brought to end an eventful life. Lorna Sage describes the life of Angela Carter thus:

Angela Carter’s life...is the story of someone walking a ‘tightrope’ where everything happened “on the edge” in no man’s land, among the debris of past convictions. (Death 236)

With the loss of the benign “witch queen” (Rushdie) who thought “like a devil” but wrote “like an angel”, critical attention to her fiction gained momentum. Her writings captivated and sought to gratify those craving for the “baroque and blood whimsy.” They not only tranquillized them but were sufficient to provoke their envy. In her book, The Fiction of
*Angela Carter*, Sarah Gambles writes that “Carter Studies” developed “into a fully-fledged discipline” (8) in 1994 with the publication of the first monograph on Carter’s work and the first collection of critical essays *Flesh and Mirror: Essays on the Work of Angela Carter* by Lorna Sage. In the same year, University of York held the first major academic conference on Carter. Elaine Jordan states that “in 1993-94 the British Academy were saying that for every three people who wanted to do a thesis on eighteenth-century writing, there were forty who wanted to write on Angela Carter” (82). David Punter, Gina Wisker, Ellen Cronan Rose, Sarah Gamble, Linden Peach, Magali Cornier Michael, Stephan Benson, Emma Parker, Lorna Sage and Jean Wyatt are some names whose critical books and essays have contributed to a great extent in the study and understanding of Angela Carter. Sarah Gamble gives an invigorating perspective of Carter in her critical books like *Angela Carter - A Literary Life, Angela Carter - A Readers Guide to Essential Criticism* and *Angela Carter - Writing from the Frontline*. Linden Peach’s book titled *Angela Carter* is a critical biography for general readers marked by sophistication and coherence and proves very useful. It is the enriched postulations of such writers and critics that has inspired and given the impetus and the rationale to take up this research study.

The topic of this research study is *Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition in the Novels of Angela Carter* but there are sections in the thesis beginning from chapter one where Surrealism has been dealt in detail. The first chapter gives an insight into the background history and
characteristics of Magic Realism, Gothic Tradition and Surrealism. Magic Realism and Surrealism are overlapping terms and often share similar characteristics, so it often becomes difficult to establish a clear dichotomy between the two. The magical in Magic Realism is often the product of Surrealism and surrealist techniques employed by the writer. Therefore, it becomes imperative to discuss it as a part of the thesis. The main aim of this research study is no doubt to highlight the Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition in the novels of Angela Carter. The secondary but still a significant aim is to widen the recognition and influence of the most original and disconcerting yet a splendid writer who has “produced what are among the greatest fantastical works of this century” (VanderMeer). Sadly, even today her existence is a matter of enigma for a vast majority of readers and writers in the country of her birth as well as in other parts of the world.
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Chapter 1

Understanding Magic Realism, Gothic Tradition and Surrealism

In a study on Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition in the Novels of Angela Carter, it seems reasonable as well as indispensable to begin with a detailed study of the terms - Magic Realism, Gothic Tradition and Surrealism. These techniques and strategies are the cornerstones on which this research work is based. Therefore, a close assessment of these terms and understanding of their historical background becomes imperative. The brief biographical history of the life and works of Angela Carter summarized in the Introduction along with the appraisal of these techniques under study will further assist in a better understanding of the novels:

Magical realism is, more than anything else, an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures . . . In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts . . . The principle thing is not the creation of imaginary beings or worlds but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances . . . In magical realism key events have no logical or psychological explanation. The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as the realists
did) or to wound it (as the surrealists did) but
to seize the mystery that breathes behind
things. (Carpentier, Baroque 121-123)

Magic Realism has its origin in the art world. The term marked a
departure from the extravagances of Expressionism and the return to
mundane subjects. It was first introduced by Franz Roh a German art
critic in 1924. To Roh, Magic Realism was not only an art category but also
“a way of representing life and responding to reality and pictorially
depicting the enigmas of reality.” The term was applied to the works of
German painters in 1920s known as the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New
Objectivity) movement who were opposed to the prevailing style of
Expressionism and Abstraction. The exponents of the movement were
distinguished for their realistic, often cynical style of painting with minute
details and concurrence of forward movement with a sense of distance.
They also dealt with the exterior of an object and by doing so aimed to
reach the spirit, the magic and the mystery beneath it. The intensity of
effort and approach in creating these paintings endowed them with a
strange yet magical, dream like quality. The incorporation of the
overtly/explicitly fantastic in Magic Realism is a later development. Some
artists associated with magic realist paintings are Ivan Albright, Paul
Cadmus, Philip Evergood, George Tooker, Marcela Donoso and Marcela
Donoso.

Few critics regard Magic Realism as a regional trend restricted to
the Latin American writers who are credited to have popularized it as a
literary form of writing. But a close look at the literatures of the world establishes the fact that this strategy was advocated by writers in different ages though the expression/term is a recent development. Magic Realism is in fact a universal phenomenon with a wide ranging history that has had prominent influence on the literatures of the world. A Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) used the term “lo real maravilloso” in the prologue to his novel *The Kingdom of this World* in 1949. For Carpentier, the “marvelous real” subsisted in its raw state, covert and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American. To quote Carpentier:

> The marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state. To begin with, the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith. (Marvelous 86)

The term Magic Realism is a derivation of “lo real maravilloso” - a Spanish term which when literally translated means “the marvellous real” or “the marvellous reality.” It is a narrative strategy and a concept of “heightened reality” characterized by two opposing views – one which is based on “rational view of reality” and the other on “the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality.” Thus, we witness the inclusion of fantastical or mythical element into realistic fiction. We are given a new
view of reality through symbolic or metaphoric structures. In 1955, Angel Flores applied the term (with some variation – referring to it as "magical realism") to Spanish-American writing. He considered Louis Borges (1899-1988) who published his Historia Universal de la Infamia in 1935 as the master of this form and suggested Franz Kafka as his European counterpart. Kafka’s The Metamorphosis (1915) was written in the magic realist tradition:

Magical realism expands the categories of the real so as to encompass myth, magic and other extraordinary phenomena in Nature or experience which European realism had tended to exclude. (Williamson 45)

The term was applied to the realm of fiction in 1960s by a Venezuelan essayist and critic Arturo Ulsar Pietri with reference to a specific South American genre but came in vogue only after the Nobel Prize winner Miguel Angel Asturias used the expression to define the style of his novels. Magic Realism found its fullest expression in Latin American writers like Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Miguel Angel Asturias, Julio Cortazar and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The most notable among them is the Colombian born Gabriel Garcia Marquez whose, One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) and Love in the Times of Cholera (1985) erase the dichotomy between reality and imagination, history and myth, memory and divination and “transcends the local world of the individual into a timeless unity of experience.” Marquez’s fiction echoes the strong influence of the Colombian history deep rooted in its culture.
He uses the technique of Magic Realism in his novels as well as in his short stories. Reality and fantasy are blended with such intricacy and craftsmanship that it becomes difficult to establish a dichotomy between them. The technique comes to life in Marquez's short story *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (1955) where an angel (an old man with enormous wings attached to his body) is on a mission to take away the soul of a dying child. A violent storm forces him to come falling to the Earth. Though stunned at finding the angel - a living myth, who is nevertheless covered in lice and dressed in rags, Pelayo and Elisenda (the two central characters of the story) do not question his existence. The angel becomes a catalyst for the recovery of the dying child and the poverty stricken family. The characters bound by their true human nature exploit the angel to earn financial gains until it flies off without the completion of its ordained assignment. The story ends at this juncture, unlike the happy ending of a fairy tale. The story is one of the most well-known examples of the magical realist style, combining the homely details of Pelayo and Elisenda's life with fantastic elements such as a flying man and a spider woman. The story reveals the writer's ability to narrate a fairy tale (the magical presence of an angel) in a realistic and a matter of fact tone.

The idea of mystery and terror often overpowers a magic realist's writing. Time is a patent and recurring theme which is distorted and is displayed as "cyclical." What happens once is destined to happen again. This leaves no scope for rejuvenation or any kind of joie de vivre. Instead
it gives rise to irony and paradox. Another composite theme among magical realists is the carnivalesque - a manifestation of the carnival in literature. It is a celebration of the body, the senses and human relationships aided by cultural manifestation of vibrant and multi-hued dresses, dances, music and theatre. Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has employed a number of supernatural motifs like flying carpets, levitations by means of chocolate, ghosts, insomnia plagues, telekinesis, prophecies, premonitions, alchemy, unexplainable deaths and inescapable smells, blood that flows upwards, landlocked galleons, a woman whose presence drives men mad and a bag of bones that clack constantly together. Remedios, the beauty suddenly ascending to the heaven while hanging out washing on the clothesline, highlights the fantastical element. Following the carnivalesque tradition, Marquez endows the character of Melquiades - an obese gypsy with supernatural powers. The novel contains potent and powerful imagery of contradictory physical revulsion and celebration; ambivalent and uncertain celebration and laughter; and the metamorphosis of human shapes typifying characteristics of Magical Realism.

To the magic realists, culture, history and geography are of great concern and significance as they help in the presentation of reality. Political struggles (upheavals, revolutions and corruptions) wars, civil wars, natural calamities, sufferings and death form important subjects. The supernatural in Magic Realism is often coupled with the irrational elements of the primitive and magical American and Indian mentality and
the reality is connected to the rationality of the European civilization. Some writers belonging to this genre have taken up the perspective of "the other." They assimilate history, which is reality, with fantasy to aid the restoring process of their respective culture and community after the gory history of the twentieth century which was the product of cultural and societal dissonance:

... the most dramatic effect of the colonization process is that the colonized are forced to occupy two conflicting worlds or spaces, referred to by Linda Hutcheon as a duality of "post-colonial doubled identity and history." In the Australian situation for example, colonisation effectively created a duality of worlds for the indigenous population. The "reason" and "logic" of European intellectual tradition collided with the "mysterious" and "mythic" perspective of the Aborigines. The settler colonists too were faced with the imposition of an imported world-view onto a new, and in many ways, alien physical space. In both instances the two worlds may be incompatible in many ways, but the colonized cannot avoid defining their identity in terms of the dual worlds or spaces they are forced to inhabit. (Baker)

There is no convenient and clear accord among critics about the characteristics and boundaries of Magic Realism. It largely refers to the fiction impelled by amalgamation of the real and the fantastic. The magic realists assimilate both an attentive observation of the real and the power of the imagination to construct that reality. Some of the distinctive features of a magic realist fiction can be summed up as follows - merging
of the realistic and bizarre; use of dreams; pervading sense of mystery; myths and fairy tales; dexterous time shifts; complex and even labyrinthine plot and narratives; and surrealistic descriptions. Another primary feature to be incorporated by magical realist writers is “hybridity” – a borrowed postcolonial technique. An amalgamation of two “conflicting polarities” or two “inharmonious” opposites is brought about like rational and irrational; natural and supernatural; western and indigenous; and urban and rural. For instance the character Azaro in Ben Okri’s novel *The Famished Road* believes a figure by the river to be the ferryman of the dead, only to discover later that she is in actual fact a hybrid woman, young in body but “with an old woman’s face.” This illustration can also be viewed as a synthesis of primitive ritual and custom.

The narrator in a magic realist piece of writing takes up an objective and dispassionate tone of complete equilibrium. He/she establishes an “ironic distance” from the magical world view so as not to compromise with realism. He does not express astonishment at any of the unrealistic happening that he narrates. He shows a strong faith, belief and respect for even the most unlikely event that is being recounted without raising questions on its authenticity, failing which the magic would lose its legitimacy and turn to be as volatile as a simple folk belief or a fragment of fantasy. “Authorial Reticence” guards the characters against formulating lucid judgment about the precision of events. There is a deliberate attempt on part of the author to withhold information about the accuracy of events and ideas expressed within the text. Justification of the supernatural
occurrences would make it less convincing and less valid. It would be regarded as a fake testimony or altogether be discarded. The following quote will elucidate this aspect further:

The tone that I eventually used in One Hundred Years of Solitude was based on the way my grandmother used to tell stories. She told things that sounded supernatural and fantastic, but she told them with complete naturalness.... What was most important was the expression she had on her face. She did not change her expression at all when telling her stories and everyone was surprised. In previous attempts to write, I tried to tell the story without believing in it. I discovered that what I had to do was believe in them myself and write them with the same expression with which my grandmother told them with a brick face. (Marquez)


Salman Rushdie’s allegorical novel *Midnight’s Children* (winner of the 1981 Booker Prize), with its mixture of fantasy, hybridity, history and verbal exuberance, is a fine example of Magic Realism. It is the fictional
autobiography of Saleem Sinai, born at the stroke of midnight on 15th August 1947. With his telepathic powers, he is able to establish contact with the other midnight’s children - the 1000 children born within an hour of India’s gaining independence. Saleem’s telepathic abilities, the midnight’s children and the cinema are the principle devices of Magic Realism. Leon Litvak states that the “self-referential narrative” (64) by Saleem and the magical nature of the events recounted in the book bear a resemblance to the *Arabian Nights*. The novel deals with India of the past and the contemporary India – “in its infancy, which, like Saleem, enjoys a fantastic tale and sees the magical as omnipresent” (68). Characters from Indian cultural history and those from western culture are fused together. Saleem - a mouthpiece of Rushdie, articulates the vision that the children can be viewed as “the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth ridden nation . . . or as the true hope of freedom. . . .” (Schurer 43). Saleem tries to come to terms with historical thinking and the complexity involved. Towards the end of the novel, he accepts the uncertainty of the disintegration of his country but at the same time is horrified at the prospect of annihilation:

. . . it is the privilege and the curse of midnight’s children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and be unable to live or die in peace. (Rushdie 463)

Many films can be said to follow the conventions of Magic Realism. Such films have added to the public awareness about this genre. The
success of many such films has also established the fact that there is interest and appreciation for this form of expression. The Tim Burton film *Big Fish* is replete with stories and memories including magical elements, which often seem “semi plausible.” *Daughters of the Dust* and *Antonia’s Line* are films rooted in historical detail and myth and incorporate symbolic rituals, legends and folklore. Magical elements are woven with political and post colonial themes in these films. Movies like *Pleasantville*, *What Dreams May Come*, *Excaliber*, *Pan’s Labyrinth*, *Times of the Gypsies*, *American Beauty*, *Amélie*, *Alice*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, and *Midnight in Paris* also follow a similar mode of expression to some degree. However, Magic Realism as a genre is not well developed and well established within films, therefore, it is difficult to refer to particular films that strictly adhere to the norms of Magic Realism.

The word “Gothic” is marked by multiplicity of meaning. It is not only a literary term but also a historical, artistic and an architectural term. According to the Chambers 21st century Dictionary, Gothic as a historical term is “belonging or relating to the Goths or their language.” As an architectural term it refers to “the medieval type of architecture, characterized by the use of the pointed arch and vault which spread through Western Europe between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.” As a literary term it is “belonging or relating to a type of literature dealing with mysterious or supernatural events in an eerie setting, popular in eighteenth century” (579).
The word "Gothic" has evolved from the word "Goth." “Goths” were “a member of an East Germanic people who invaded various parts of the Roman Empire between the third and fifth centuries" (579). They are believed to have originated in Scandinavia (Gotland) and moved to Ukraine before invading the Roman Empire. They are also alleged to be barbarians - cruel and bloodthirsty who weakened the political and ideological structure of the Roman Empire greatly. It was in the year 1611 that the word “Gothic” was first registered in connection to the language of the Goths. Since then the word has been broadly used but with varied connotations. The word “Gothic” means “Germanic”, “barbarous”, “medieval not classical” and also covers an architectural style distinct from Greek and Roman architectural form.

Gothic Art is concerned with the architecture, sculpture, painting and music that flourished in western and central Europe during the Middle Ages. The term was coined as a “stylistic insult” by the “classicizing Italian writers of the Renaissance who attributed the invention of the medieval architecture to the barbarian Gothic tribes that had destroyed the Roman Empire and its classical culture in the 5th century AD” (Footsteps). The Romans were perfectionists - faultless and accomplished but the wave of invaders “Goths” and “Vandals” destroyed their structural design and “introduced in their stead a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building . . . congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use or beauty” (Grigson 79). They brought an architectural sensibility which was distinct
from the naturalistic and idealistic; the subtle and the controlled classical Greco-Roman style and replaced it with uncontrolled and “larger than life” structures which were crude, grotesque and exaggerated, intended to invoke a strong emotional response like - awe, pity, compassion, horror or fear. With the coming of Renaissance and Enlightenment, anything medieval, came to be regarded as primitive and backward, associated with barbarism, brutality and superstition. “Gothic” in architecture refers to medieval architecture, dating from about the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. It is visible mainly in ecclesiastical buildings. The thirteenth century was referred to as “Gothic” during the Renaissance period. With passage of time, the term came to include the mysterious, superstitious and supernatural in architecture as well as writing.

The Gothic style expresses not only the universe in microcosm but also the essence of the catholic faith, the presence of a divine power and the “apocalyptic mood” of the period along with pagan symbolism. It imparts the theological message of “the great glory of God.” The “West Front” or the façade of a Gothic church or cathedral is so designed so as to evoke a powerful feeling of awe upon the approaching worshipper. A visitor entering a Gothic edifice feels small, feeble, and tiny in comparison to the size and height of the building which is far greater than the regular structure. The first feeling which the visitor encounters is of spirituality which is an outcome of vastness, height and symbolic dimensions and depictions.
Gothic Revival in architecture came between 1748 and 1777. Horace Walpole one of the “influential connoisseurs” purchased an unattractive box-shaped home called Strawberry Hill in Twickenham outside London and appointed a committee of expert architects to renovate it on Gothic lines (design motifs). This inspired various other Gothic Revival structures in Europe and America. The Gothic vogue continued into the 20th century but largely for ecclesiastical and university structures.

The origin of the Gothic novels is deeply rooted in the ancient classics of Homer, Dante and Thomas Malory. The dissatisfaction with the realistic novels of the mid eighteenth century, the revival of interest in heroic romances and in Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton led to the writing of Gothic novel. Shakespeare’s plays abound in supernatural and haunted scenes; the depiction of apparitions, forests, desolate heaths, thunder, lightning, rain, murders and prophecies infused fresh life into Gothic fiction. The comic scenes of Shakespeare also find place in Walpole’s Castle of Otranto and remain a key feature of Gothic Romance thereafter.

The Graveyard poets are taken to be the fountainhead of Gothic movement in literature. The Graveyard poetry which thrived during the first half of the eighteenth century was an exploration undertaken by man seeking a validation for the dark and inexplicable realm of death and the spiritual life of the hereafter. The Graveyard poetry with its temper of “elegiac pensiveness” and reflective obscurity had all the attributes of Gothic literature ranging from graves, churchyards, ruins, night to death
and ghosts. Some of the major works of the Graveyard school of poetry are Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts* (which came out between 1742 and 1745); Robert Blair’s *The Grave* (1743); James Hervey’s *Meditations among the Tombs* (1745 and 1747); Thomas Warton’s *On the Pleasure of Melancholy* (1747) and Thomas Gray’s well known *Elegy Written in Country Churchyard* (1751). The creed of sublime as represented by writers like Longinus, Edward Young and Edmund Brueke profoundly influenced many of the Gothic novelists. Brueke states: “Sublimity lies in intensity”, is attained by “revelation” and “illumination” and is the product of the “strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (64).

The Gothic novel also known as Gothic fiction and Gothic romance emerged in the late eighteenth century as a branch of the Romantic Movement in arts which marked the end of the Classical age in literature. It was a reaction against the supremacy of reason in the age of Enlightenment. Rationalism was substituted by suspense, wonder, mystery and fear. Three major writers who fashioned and supplemented this genre were Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis. The characteristics of their novels, eventually came to be classified under the nomenclature of Gothic literature.

The central theme of Gothic novels is the ongoing conflict between good and evil. The protagonist goes through extremes of anguish and distress but eventually it is always vice/evil which succumbs to virtue. The chief characters are therefore categorized into diabolical desperadoes -
symbolic of vice and angelic souls - specimens of true virtue. The term "Gothic" came to be applied to literary genre because the novels (Gothic) dealt not only with the emotional extremes and dark themes, but also found their settings in desolate and ruined castles, mansions, monasteries and buildings of Gothic style. The vast and complex; dark and gloomy; weird and mysterious setting of Gothic architectural buildings with their dark corridors, secret underground passages, huge clanging doors, and dungeons with grilled windows evoke feelings of horror, gloom and suspense. Screeching owls, hovering bats, howling wind, portentous darkness, uncanny and eerie murmurs of foliage under the soft melancholic moon - recapitulate the overall supernatural effect of the various occurrences:

In Gothic fiction the reader passes from the reasoned order of the everyday world into a dark region governed by supernatural beings, a region that inspires dread and horror, where decay abounds and death is always at hand. (Botting 196)

It was the fascination with the Gothic architectural forms and the spirit they stirred that gave rise to the first wave of Gothic Novels. In England, it began with the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). The supernatural elements, the inexplicable suspense and the medieval trappings in this tale of aberrant passion and unacknowledged guilt, which unfolds in Italy of the twelfth century, left the readers thrilled. It catered to the escapist tastes of the reading public and provided novelty of leisure to the affluent class. Walpole's innovative
use of Gothic castle, Gothic machinery, in the exploitation of nature to produce a mysterious and terror driven atmosphere and in the depiction of famed heroes, damsels in distress and other stock characters made him a leading novelist of the Gothic genre. These innovations – Gothic devices and motifs formed the conventions of Gothic novels and invited quick imitations by other novelists.

Ann Radcliffe – “the most successful practitioner of Gothic novel” came up with her novels - *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Radcliffe as a writer was endowed with exuberant, luxuriant and vehement imagination. Her novels were a general amalgamation of strained joys and horrors. The Gothic paraphernalia attained rationality in her hands; she gave explanations for mysterious happenings as “the supernatural continually fascinated her imagination, but in most cases reason and prudence induced her to disown its prompting” (Tompkins 260). Her novels are about flights of escape from an interfering, brutal and oppressive father, helpless and destitute orphan, damnable villain, a clandestine prisoner, string of mysterious happenings, web of deceit, and the records of long-buried crimes. The Gothic Architecture – ruins, abbeys and monasteries with “soundless avenues” and “air strikingly forlorn and solitary” in association with ghostly shapes moving with “no footsteps” but only “gliding” with “a rustling, as of garments” and “disappearing into the gloom” (Radcliffe 20) culminate the mysterious atmosphere. Stillness of deserted and sinister chambers is occasionally disturbed by appalling morose groans and
strange music. The possibility of the dead coming to earth to walk over the living is a source of comfort and terror simultaneously. Radcliffe provokes solicitous curiosity, heightens suspense and gloom by insinuation of things, hideous and awe-inspiring.

Matthew Lewis's successful yet controversial novel *The Monk* (1796) was deeply inspired by Ann Radcliffe and the German sensational horror tales of Goethe and Schiller. It revolves around Ambrosio - a lust driven monk whose obsession eventually paves way for moral debauchery, decadence and his eventual death and damnation. The seductive and labyrinthine path of vice seizes the monk, who moves from one hideous/nefarious act to another. He resorts to necromancy and black magic to consummate his lust. The portrayal of depraved monks, sadistic inquisitors and spectral nuns, and the scurrilous view of the Catholic Church by Matthew Lewis were important additions to the Gothic genre which influenced the established terror-writer Ann Radcliffe in her last novel *The Italian* (1797). *The Monk* contributed stalking spectres, devils, demons, sorcerers, magic mirrors and other appendages/accoutrements to the tales of terror.

Mary Shelley initiated the theme of the risk and dangers of science through her novel *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1818). The novel is a quintessential Gothic novel, exploring the theme of development of evil, man's fear of death and decay and the conflict between morality and science. The pervading atmosphere of mystery and gloom, cabbalistic creation of the monster, grotesque and gruesome
components like use of bodies of dead humans to create the monster and the use of omens and dreams, all conspire to create a Gothic masterpiece.

Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) with its psychological and physical portrayal of Melmoth - the central character in its extremes, who sold his soul to the devil to live another one hundred and fifty years, remains one of the greatest tales of mystery and horror. A transition in Gothic novels came with Edgar Allen Poe. His novels have a sense of unity of tone, mood and structure. They are a study of the psychological processes giving us an insight into the unconscious. Nineteenth century Gothic fiction is best represented by the writings of Mary Shelley, Edgar Allen Poe, Bronte sisters, Oscar Wilde and Henry James. The modern ghost stories are proceeds of the sceptical age that developed during the late nineteenth century. There was an upsurge in the horror tales in the twentieth century. The World War-I, its horrors, revulsion and devastations found an expression in the Gothic novels.

Many new variants of Gothic fiction developed like Modern Gothic, Southern Gothic and New American Gothic. Modern Gothics are novels written by women for women. Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* captures the essence of a Modern Gothic. Victorian Holt and Phyllis A. Whitney are two other novelists writing in similar style. Southern Gothic, which has a tendency towards the macabre and bizarre, finds resonance in the novels of William Faulkner, Truman Capote and Flannery O Conner. The contemporary writers James Purdy, Joyce Carol Oates and John Hawker are referred to as New American Gothic.
It is generally agreed that Gothicism is connected to Romanticism. The eighteenth century Gothic novelists are often viewed as the precursors to Romanticism. The writers of both these cults tend to escape into the make belief world of imagination, subverting/overthrowing the barriers of the real corporeal world. Moreover, both these movements are chronologically connected and deal with psychological processes.

*The Columbia Encyclopedia* defines Surrealism as “a literary and art movement influenced by Freudianism and dedicated to the expression of imagination as revealed in dreams, free of the conscious control of reason and free of convention.” The origin of the term “Surrealism” can be traced back to May 18, 1917, when Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) - the French poet writer and art critic coined the term in the programme notes describing the ballet *Parade* - a collaborative work by Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso and Léonide Massine. He wrote:

> From this new alliance, for until now stage sets and costumes on one side and choreography on the other had only a sham bond between them, there has come about, in Parade, a kind of super-realism ('sur-réalisme'), in which I see the starting point of a series of manifestations of this new spirit ('esprit nouveau'). (History)

Surrealism is an intellectual, artistic and cultural philosophy and movement which developed in painting, sculpture, literature and other realms of art during the 1920s. The movement is often considered an outgrowth of Dadaism, though, it projected a positive and constructive
message in contrast to the negativity and nihilistic protest promulgated by Dadaism\(^3\). This perplexing novel spirit surfaced in the world of art and letters initially in France. The movement soon spread to the rest of Europe and America. This spirit was a reaction against all restraints and rationalism of logical reason, yardsticks of morality and social and artistic principles which restricted the free functioning of the human mind. It was a revolution in the personal, cultural, social and political aspects of human experience, a call to unshackle and unleash the imagination and survey the tousled world of the unconscious. To the surrealists, art is not an end in itself but a mode of creating an understanding of all that is valuable, covert as well as astonishing in life. The surrealist works feature the element of surprise, unexpected juxtapositions and absurdism. There is nothing more sacred and surreal than the exportation of objects and events from the unconscious into the physical realm of the conscious. The subconscious is the bridge which widens the perception of both conscious and unconscious sensations.

The lineage of Surrealism can be traced back to Dante, Hieronymus Bosch, Marquis de Sade, Charles Fourier, and to the French poets like Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Apollinaire, and to the Italian painter, Giorgio de Chirico but André Breton (1896-1966) - a poet and critic is considered the initial proponent and “spokesman” of Surrealism in literature and visual arts. \textit{The Magnetic Fields} (1919) written by André Breton and Phillipe Soupault is considered by many to be the first truly surrealist text. Surrealism became an official movement and got a strong hold in
literature through Breton's first *Manifesto on Surrealism* in 1924 which outlined the ambitions of the new movement. Breton published two more surrealist manifestoes in 1930 and 1942. The *Surrealist Manifesto*, the journal *La Révolution surréaliste* and the Bureau of Surrealist Research (where the surrealist leaders held meetings and discussions) were the formative means of the developing surrealist movement. In his first manifesto, he defines the word Surrealism as “Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express - verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner - the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern” (Breton, Manifesto 22).

The philosophy of Surrealism is based on the “belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life” (22). Breton's Surrealism rejects the conscious fabrication of art and relies on the unconscious for inspiration and stimulation of art. He saw the unconscious as the fountainhead of imagination. Accessibility to this generally unexploited dominion by poets and painters augmented brilliance and genius in their respective fields:

Surrealism aims quite simply at the total recovery of our psychic force by a means which is nothing other than the dizzying descent into ourselves, the systematic illumination of
To him, art as access to the unconscious was more realistic than rationalist art works. Surrealism to Breton was “a means of reuniting conscious and unconscious realms of experience so completely, that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in an absolute reality, a surreality” (11).

Surrealism is grounded in the ideas of Hegel, Marx and Freud, and at the same time is innately dynamic and “dialectic in its thought.” Surrealists drew heavily from Sigmund Freud and his Psychoanalytical theories and “instilled new Freudian conclusions with the symbolist poetry of implication in order to expose the most elusive of objects: the human soul.” André Breton who was also trained in medicine and psychiatry, while serving in a neurological hospital, applied the psychoanalytic methods of Sigmund Freud on soldiers who were “shell-shocked” and traumatized. The most prominent and visible similarity in the vision of Breton’s Surrealism and Sigmund Freud is the emphasis on accessing the unconscious. Freud’s free association, dream analysis and the hidden unconscious, played vital role in formulating methods for the liberation of imagination by the surrealists. Other French writers like Comte de Lautréamont (1846-1870), Paul Elicard, Louis Aragon (1897-1982), Rene Crevel (1900-1935), Philippe Soupault (1897-1990),
Raymond Queneau (1903-1976) also became a part of this movement and are considered its literary descendants.

In painting, Surrealism was divided into two camps in view of the visual styles they depicted - Organic Surrealism and Narrative Surrealism. The organic Surrealists - Jean Arp, Max Ernst, Andre Masson, Yves Tanguy and Joan Miro, worked with forms which were imaginatively and emotionally expressive but non-representational. In contrast, the narrative Surrealists - Rene Magritte, Pierre Roy, Salvador Dali, and Paul Delvaux depicted hallucinatory world in which elements were specifically represented but made no rational sense. Surrealism - a series of creative acts of rebellion that attempts to unshackle the imagination, was initially associated with arts. However, with passage of time it influenced many other fields of creativity.

Two factions of Surrealism evolved, founded on deferring expressive methods. Automatism or absolute form of Surrealism is “a method of painting, drawing or writing in which conscious control is suppressed, allowing the subconscious to take over” (Norton 18). Surrealists regarded the mind as the only fountain of genuine knowledge and art. To ensure unrestricted functioning of the mind they turned to “automatic writing” - guided by the unconscious mind, the material of dreams, states between sleep and waking and hallucinations. Picasso was a practitioner of this form of Surrealism who did not adhere to the traditional artistic practices and products but based his work on the belief that “children’s ingenuity can provide essential access to the
unconscious.” Artists applied spontaneous techniques founded on the
“free association” concept in which conscious control was surrendered to
the unconscious mind.

True pioneers of Surrealism used automatism as a literary form -
that is, they wrote, whatever words came into their conscious mind and
considered these words as sacrosanct. They did not alter or revise what
they wrote, as it would hinder the free flow of creativity and the pure act of
creation. They thought, unconstrained flow of imagination would succeed
in establishing an affinity with the subconscious mind of their readers.
This purely psychic automatism was modified later by the conscious use,
especially in painting. The use of Automatic technique may be viewed as a
means of conditioning the subconscious as a perspective tool for creative
device; to know what is not knowable and to connect the unconnectable.
In short automatism is the suppression of conscious in favour of the
unconscious and is focused more on feeling and is less analytical. The
images which travel from subconscious to conscious should not be bound
by or burdened with meaning.

The second form of Surrealism is veristic Surrealism. Its split from
automatism was fundamentally due to the definition of the unconscious
by Carl Jung who believed that only the study of the artistic form could
best express the unconscious in Surrealism. According to surrealists,
Veristic surrealist aimed to communicate deeper thoughts by looking at
the metaphoric significance of the work and how it related to the universal
unconscious. Jung’s philosophy of the Universal Unconsciousness, states
that every individual possesses an inherent knowledge and understanding of images. These images are universal in nature and persist in most literature and art. Veristic school of Surrealism analysed the image with the hope of gaining access to and understanding the unconscious thoughts and behaviours.

Salvador Dali is an advocate of this category of Surrealism. His artistic fervour is evident, not only in his paintings but also in his films. He was the genius behind the art direction and design of the dream sequence in the Hitchcock film Spellbound, an epitome of Surrealism in films. His work juxtaposes opposing or “anachronistic” images with emphasis on the fact that art needs to be studied and mastered and that “the expression of the unconscious would spring from metaphor.” While Automatism focused on expressing subconscious ideas, Veristic Surrealists wanted to represent a connection between abstract and real material forms. In other words, while the Verists transformed objects from the real world into their paintings, the Automatists derived their imagery purely from spontaneous thought.

Surrealist writers André Breton, Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, and Jean Cocteau allowed their “subconscious hallucinations and sexual desires” to dictate the variety of images, symbols, and impressions they profusely juxtaposed. Their ultimate aim was to disintegrate the boundaries of the rational and the coherent.
The surrealists employed many techniques and art forms to gain access to the realm of unconsciousness. Dreams were one of the key mediums used by them to study the unconscious. The surrealists in analogue with Freud also believed that it was in dreams that our unconscious and primal desires are evident. The conflict between the ego - which guides our more civilized and rational patterns of behaviour and the id - which directs our primordial instincts and desires gives rise to absurdities in dreams. Our primal desires are repressed in the unconscious part of our minds as these desires run in conflict with the social expectations. These desires reveal themselves, when the conscious relaxes its hold like in dreams, myths, and anomalous and abnormal patterns of behaviour, slips of tongues, accidents and art. The metamorphosis of one entity into another also appealed to the surrealist artists. Mythology was another element or technique which fascinated the followers of this genre because of its significance for non-western civilization. Freudianism believed that the oriental civilization was more in tune with nature whereas western civilization was slowly drifting away from its primal nature. Freud believed in latent psychological desires of human beings. Carl Jung spoke of mythology as the “collective unconscious” - the intrinsic component of every human psyche which is universal and is shared by all humanity at large.

The following quote by André Breton from *The Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1930) sums up the philosophy of Surrealism effectively:
Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. Now, search as one may, one will never find any other motivating force in the activities of the Surrealists than the hope of finding and fixing this point. From this it becomes obvious how absurd it would be to define Surrealism solely as constructive or destructive: the point to which we are referring is a fortiori that point where construction and destruction can no longer be brandished one against the other. It is also clear that Surrealism is not interested in giving very serious consideration to anything that happens outside of itself, under the guise of art, or even anti-art, of philosophy or anti-philosophy — in short, at anything not aimed at the annihilation of the being into a diamond, all blind and interior, which is no more the soul of ice than that of fire. (Breton, Manifestoes 123-124)

To conclude, Surrealism is a literary and art movement heavily influenced by Freudianism. It attempts to express the mechanisms/functioning of the subconscious which is sometimes also revealed in dreams and hallucinations. The movement is distinguished by fantastic and bizarre imagery and inharmonious and discordant juxtaposition of subject matter. It ranks among the most prominent and instrumental European movements of the early half of the twentieth century. The presence of surrealists like André Breton, Masson, Matta, etc., in the United States during the World War II (1939-1945) led Martica
Swaine to refer to this phase of Surrealism as “Surrealism in Exile.” It gave impetus to the development of American Abstract Expressionist painters like A. Gorky, Robert Motherwell and others. Surrealism also influenced the works of Latin American artists such as Frida Kahlo and Wifredo Lam. Many significant literary movements in the post-modern era (later half of the 20th century) and their themes and techniques were directly or indirectly influenced by Surrealism. Surrealism paved the way for later movements such as Abstract Expressionism and Magic Realism. Playwrights of Theatre of Absurd like Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett are heavily influenced by Surrealism. The Stream of Consciousness technique of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce has surrealist connections and undertones.

As mentioned earlier, the central aim of this research work is to discover and analyse elements of Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition in the novels of Angela Carter. Surrealism and surrealistic descriptions form an integral part of magic realist narratives; Magic Realism with its juxtaposition of the mundane and the dream-like has some apparent similarities to Surrealism. In spite of the discernible similitude they are not the same. Therefore, it becomes necessary to discuss it as a part of this chapter. Magic Realism focuses on the material object and the actual existence of things in the world, whereas Surrealism explores the mind, the imagination and delves into the more cerebral, intellectual, psychological and subconscious reality. While Magic Realism is more concerned with the outer existence of things, Surrealism deals with their
inner being. In Magic Realism there is always a "strained" association between the real and the fantastic, the plausible and the implausible. Some critics view the fantastic happenings in Magic realist writings as a metaphor for the widespread psychic pain which is an outcome of the World Wars, colonialism and the complexity of modern life. In Surrealism reality is completely obliterated and metaphors replace the rational and mundane world of the real.
Notes

1. A modernist movement which began in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. It advocated a style of art (painting, drawing, sculpting, etc.,) in which forms derived from nature are distorted or exaggerated and colours are intensified to evoke emotions, moods and ideas.

2. Sublime in literary criticism is grandeur of thought, emotion and spirit that characterizes great literature. Longinus defines the literary sublime as "excellence in language", the "expression of a great spirit" and the power to provoke "ecstasy".

3. Dadaism was an art movement of the European avant-garde in the early 20th century which began in Zurich, in 1916. It was a revolt by certain painters and writers in France, Germany, and Switzerland against arrogance and conceit in conventional art and Western society. The followers of this movement, illustrated absurdity through paintings of useless machines and collages of discarded bits and pieces and thus, expressed their cynicism about traditional concepts of form and their denunciation of established views and ideas of beauty.
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Chapter 2

Shadow Dance (1966), Several Perceptions (1968) and Love (1971)

This chapter deals with the “little-known” novels of Carter - Shadow Dance (1966), Several Perceptions (1968) and Love (1971). These three novels have been referred to as “Bristol Trilogy” (25) by Marc O’Day. The simple reason of such a reference may be that these books were written in Bristol. The narratives are also a realist depiction of the “provincial bohemia” (25) of the 60s and share similar settings, themes, plot structures and narrative techniques. The plots and themes of these novels deal with “youthful death” and the ways in which women are perceived and treated in the society. Shadow Dance and Love have greater similarity as both deal with a love triangle involving a young woman and two young men and they end with the death of the woman. A direct bearing on Carter’s own experiences in Bristol seems to impart substantial poignancy and authenticity to the texts. The narratives deal with the dirty, scruffy, drunk and vile low life of the society which was an outgrowth of the counterculture of the sixties. The varied characters of the novels work on various short term jobs in factories; they are junk dealers or teachers, or students at a university, and in an art school or “comprehensive school” (Love 8). Basically the youth occupies the centre-
stage, yet one finds a middle aged psychiatrist *(Love 55)*, an ageing prostitute *(Several Perceptions 48)* and parents *(Shadow Dance, Several Perceptions, Love)* who either make rare appearances or are found dwelling in the minds of their children, as part of these narratives. The background and locale of the novels are various private spaces like bedsits, flats and houses; public places such as cafes, bars, pubs, ballrooms, junk shops, auction rooms, museums, libraries, hospitals, zoo, Labour exchange; and open-air locations like streets and parks to complete the marvellously evoked provincial urban landscape of the early 1960s.

Angela Carter's first novel *Shadow Dance* was published in England by Heinemann in 1966 and in the United States of America by Simon and Schuster in 1967 under the name of *Honeybuzzard*. The publication of the book led Anthony Burges to admit that:

I read the book with admiration, horror and other relevant emotions... Angela Carter has remarkable descriptive gifts, a powerful imagination, and.... a capacity for looking at the mess of contemporary life totally without flinching. *(Shadow, back cover)*

*Shadow Dance* is an atypical “Carterian” novel. If read as part of a continuum of Carter's work, one can fascinatingly see the gradual growth/development of the writer from a realist narrator to a magic realist. Some critics have referred to the book as a “beautifully written soap opera” which reached excellence in the sharply malicious novel *Love.*
A number of themes introduced in *Shadow Dance* are worked upon to recur in the later fictions by the novelist. The writer’s preoccupation with the destructive effect of patriarchy on either of the sexes is more evident in her early novels. *Shadow Dance* being her first work of fiction is most concerned with a consciousness of the violence and oppression which accompanies the feminine. At the surface level, the novel is primarily a character study of dreadfully vicious and sadistic people like Honeybuzzard and Ghislaine and a circle of pub companions and their families in a wretched provincial city of England. The story is a third person narrative, viewed and narrated through the eye of Honeybuzzard’s best friend - Morris, who is also his business partner. Both are antique dealers who make living by collecting antiques and kitschy items from ruins (condemned, decaying, crumbling, soon to be demolished houses) and selling them.

The novel begins when Morris encounters Ghislaine - recently discharged from the hospital, in the pub. The once beautiful girl “like moonlight and daisies” (*Shadow 3*) has suddenly turned into a “bride of Frankenstein” (4). She now carries an awful scar on her face which leaves her “dreadful” and “repulsive” (49). The official story is that a gang of teenagers raped her and inflicted that wound on her. The truth is that Honeybuzzard is the real perpetrator but Ghislaine’s love for him leaves him scot-free. Honeybuzzard who had been away returns with Emily, his new girlfriend from London who eventually gets pregnant with his child. The plot consists of various junk-hunting ventures of Honeybuzzard and
Morris and reaches its conclusion when Honeybuzzard takes Ghislaine to a derelict Victorian house and murders her in a “blasphemous ritual.”

The novel is a “modern day horror story” wherein the old and the new order uncomfortably persist side by side but slowly “the familiar old world becomes strange and uncanny in its phantasmagoric change” (Peng 102). Carter seems to side with the old and the disgusting. On one of their nocturnal scavenging raids, Honeybuzzard and Morris find a bundle of old clothes, with a piece of sticking-plaster in one pocket. “That's poignant, isn't it, a used bit of Elastoplast,” Morris says, but Honeybuzzard replies: “It's too new to be poignant. It's disgusting” (Shadow 131). Carter considers human beings to be the product of historical and cultural changes and circumstances. The characters are naive and guilty; righteous and corrupt; and powerful and feeble at the same time. These universal binaries and emotional extremities are so strongly imbued in human beings that readers can relate to the characters as they read about them. The identities people wear change constantly, as individuals reinvent themselves according to the prevailing situations. This aspect is visible in the character of Honeybuzzard who indulges in a similar kind of conscious shifting of identity. He seeks forgiveness from Morris pretending to be somebody else and not himself; lisping in a baby voice, he calls out: “Honey Thorry” (119). The following statement by Honeybuzzard makes his penchant for the conscious changing of identity more obvious:

I like - you know - to slip in and out of me. I would like to be somebody different every
morning. Me and not me. I would like to have a cupboard bulging with all different bodies and faces and choose a fresh one every morning. (78)

His playing in and out of various characters, symbolizes the radical rejection of the conventional view of identity. Honeybuzzard's changing identity in Shadow Dance is perceived as perilous because shifting of identity is acceptable in Carter's fiction on the condition that "when it is done with due recognition of the rights of others" (Day 18) and only when it does not exploit others or restrain their liberty.

Shadow Dance does not possess fantastic characters like Fewvers with wings as in the Nights at the Circus (1984) for this novel marks the beginning of Carter as a novelist and Magic Realism seems to be in its nascent stage. A close and deep study of the novel gives a broader perspective of the techniques employed by her. The novelist "confronts reality and tries to untangle it" but the medium she uses to depict reality is Magic Realism and Gothicism. The imagery used is Gothic but the description is fantastical and surreal. She makes an attempt to discover "the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances." The point to be marked here is how far Carter has succeeded in unravelling these mysteries. There are no vivid aspects of Magic Realism in the text though Carter has employed dreams and surrealist descriptions within her narrative which are characteristics of, and integral to magic realist fiction.

After his first encounter with the scarred Ghislaine, Morris walks back home from the café under "a deep blue, secret and mysterious sky
with a low, white satin moon appliquéd on its bosom..." (Shadow 11). He begins to imagine himself to be “the last man left alive in the world.” His imagination becomes so powerful that it grows into a conviction and subsumes his immediate existence and reality:

The fantasy grew into a conviction; the invisible cut healed up and vanished. The empty houses appeared to him like rocks or cliffs, the parked cars at the road-side abandoned shells of deep-sea creatures, pearly Argonauts or giant sea snails. (Shadow 11-12)

There are sections where dreams are described in detail and when the dreams, which are an expression of the unconscious mind, take hold of Morris they touch borders of Surrealism. Guilt is a part of both conscious and unconscious mind of Morris. He lives constantly “in a state of guilty fear, starting at sudden noises, frightened of shadows” (39) and is tormented by recurrent dreams of mutation of Ghislaine’s face. His guilt becomes a moment of reality and he has to shrug it off:

But he was terribly weary; he ran out of himself at every pore... So he slept, but not for long, for he had bad dreams. He dreamed he was cutting her face with a jagged shard of broken glass and blood was running on her breasts not only from her but from himself, from his cut head... A voice repeated over and over: ‘There is too much blood.’ He realized, after a time, that it was his own voice. (18)

The surrealist pattern of Shadow Dance can be discerned in the portrayal of Ghislaine, in Honeybuzzard’s transgressive play, Morris’s transgressive dreams and imagination, and his surrealist perception of
reality. Ghislaine is suggestive of various surrealists portraits of mutilated women with combination of contradictory characteristics – beauty and ugliness, innocence and eroticism and the grotesque:

The whole cheek was a mass of corrugated white flesh, like a bowl of blancmange a child has played with and not eaten. Through this devastation ran a deep central trough that went right down her throat under the collar of her coat. . . . But the other half of the face was fresh and young and smooth and warm as fruit in the sunlight. The two sides of the moon juxtaposed. (Shadow 152–53)

Honeybuzzard’s bedroom is furnished like a surrealist collage where anything and everything is crammed in and juxtaposed: “The room was a crystallization of the personality Honeybuzzard presented to the world” (98).

In chapter 1, Morris narrates an episode where Honeybuzzard and Ghislaine had spent one whole afternoon working on some pornographic photographs of themselves. Ghislaine posed “contorted herself, spread herself wide, and arrayed herself in a bizarre variety of accessories” (17) like rhino whips, clanking spurs and stag’s head. Morris remarks that “the images of the two lovely, strong, young bodies had a certain strange and surreal beauty.” Within this description Carter also uses the term “Memento Mori” (remember you must die). At yet another place, Carter mentions the name of Salvador Dali while describing Honeybuzzard’s “fine, curling moustaches” which were once charred by exploding cigarettes. This makes it evident that while Carter was writing Shadow
Dance, Magic Realism and Surrealism and the ideas related to them were beginning to take shape in her mind but it is only in the later novels that these techniques are elaborately worked upon.

Carter is not only a postmodern feminist writer but also a “Gothicist.” Most of the critics of the Carterian oeuvre tend to overlook the imperative writing tradition – the Gothic, which plays a very significant role in her provocative, subversive and controversial novels of sexual identity. The writer has used the Gothic all along, ever since her first novel Shadow Dance (1966), yet she is not exclusively a conventional writer of Gothic fiction. The Carterian Gothic tradition is greatly influenced by Hoffman and Poe. This is established by the following quote from the Afterword to Fireworks (1974):

Though it took me a long time to realize why I like them, I’d always been fond of Poe, and Hoffman.... The Gothic tradition in which Poe writes grandly ignores the value system of our institution; it deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism.... Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural - and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact... It retains a singular moral function - that of provoking unease. (133)

Angela Carter views Gothic Tradition as a provocative and invigorative form of writing and uses it mostly to “parody its theatrics of horror.” Her Gothic parody is in fact “a double play, a postmodern mimicking of Gothic horror which is itself theatrical” (Peng 101). In Shadow Dance, the Gothic horror and revulsion is very distinct. Behind
the tale of male camaraderie is a ghastly and grisly tale of transgressive murder and self-immolation. The novel explores the youth revolt of the sixties and examines the concept of grotesque. It deals with “nocturnal” characters that live in the shadow and dusk of their own “wasteland” and question their own reality. These creatures of the night are familiar and abhorrent at the same time; they exist in the debris of the decaying and disintegrating society.

The story unfolds in a bar, where Ghislaine “chinked” (Shadow 1) her way through the door and “rang a carillon on the green tiles”, similar to that caused by dropping of coins. Ghislaine was “a soft and dewy young girl” (2) similar to those “in a picture book.” She also possessed “soft baby cheeks”, “half open mouth”, “long, yellow, milkmaid hair” and “big brown eyes.” While describing the beautiful, “white and golden girl” Carter builds up an atmosphere of the upcoming horror by the use of horrible eerie images. She describes Ghislaine’s eyes with their dark lashes sweeping “over half her cheeks” by employing farfetched images like the following:

.....her eyes were so big and brown they seemed to gobble up her face, as those of a bush baby do. They were as big as the eyes of the dog with eyes as big as cartwheels in the fairy story; and as brown as wood or those painted on Egyptian mummy cases. (2)

Then against the foil of her beauty is presented the horror of her scarred face. Beauty transforms into a hideous deformity. The readers are given a
The disfigured girl with the "revolting scar" on her face is the damsel in distress as well as the "monstrous feminine" of this novel – Gothic motifs employed by Carter. The scar also symbolizes the bodily harm and wound which is another Gothic element used by the author. She looms in the background of the novel as an ominous and menacing figure and haunts the textual world as well as the men of this world with her "bleeding sexuality." She shouts outside the doors "let me in! Let me in!" (154) but being a monster - "a femme fatale, whose kiss is death" (117), she has to be shut out. Her presence gives rise to horror and terror which is yet another Gothic element employed by Carter. She comes back to Honeybuzzard despite being mutilated and abandoned by him: "I've
learned my lesson, I can’t live without you, you are my master, do what you like with me” (Shadow 166). Ghislaine represents the negative image of “sexual women” bound by the shackles of obedience and passivity that was prevalent in the original Gothic fiction. Like the “dehumanized creatures” and “madwoman in the attic” of the Gothic novels, Ghislaine had also lost her sanity and control over her passions and thus had to be silenced.

The conflict between good and evil as depicted in the character of Morris is also a Gothic motif. Morris is Honeybuzzard’s “passive collaborator.” He is not only his partner in the antique business but also becomes his partner in crime. He is aware of the fact that Honeybuzzard, his alter-ego was behind the brutal and gruesome act. On one hand he is constantly overcome by fearful guilt but is too weak to take a stand against him, yet at another moment he justifies Honeybuzzard’s act saying he tried to “teach her a lesson” for her unguarded sexuality and promiscuity. Honeybuzzard dared to act out what Morris “had always wanted but never defined” (177). Ghislaine’s death at Honeybuzzard’s hand is viewed by Morris as “filling up her voracity once and for all by cramming with death the hungry mouth between her thighs” (178). Towards the end of the story, Morris slays his own conscience - surrenders and abandons his pursuit for justice. Morris is the youth dissatisfied as well as paralyzed with the decaying culture. The last line of the novel informs us that “Morris vanished into the shadows” (182). He returns back to the vicious and destructive world of Honeybuzzard, knowing well that it was the same
world that had messed up his life and proved fatal to Ghislaine and would ultimately destroy and ruin Honeybuzzard too. He feels incapable of deceiving the world which made up his past as well as his present; a world entirely overshadowed by Honeybuzzard.

Honeybuzzard as his name implies is “an irreconcilable combination of the sweet and predatory” (Gamble, *Writing* 52). He is the malignant, amoral, asexual, cruel and capricious anti-hero. He comes out as a monstrous figure and the vicious and brutal villain of the Gothic novels. He is the “fledgling figure” of Carter, who with an obsession for making Jumping Jacks, and fantasy of playing chess with men and women, will mature into the sexual predators and puppet masters of her later novels. In this book lie the premonition of Carter’s later novel *The Magic Toyshop* and the figure of the ominous Uncle Philip. Both of these characters are pure product of patriarchy and a culture which has been oppressive and tyrannical to women. He sees other human beings as mere objects and aesthetic pieces to manipulate and play with to liberate them of their “shadow” existence.

We also get a feel of Gothic eeriness when within the realist and the magical narration Carter gives the readers clichés of Gothic motifs like hooting of an “owl, hooded in a tree” (*Shadow* 12), “deserted cemetery”, “old churchyard” along with sinister suggestiveness of the “night” in various scenes of the book. Ghislaine haunts Morris’s imagination to the extent that he imagines her following him everywhere he goes:
The fresh green breath of the night moved and shivered around him and chilled him to the bone. He was afraid when he heard footsteps behind him; was she coming after him, like a fury...? (Shadow 12)

The Gothic revulsion and creepiness reaches its height towards the end of the story in chapter 12, when Morris accompanies Emily to one of the dilapidated and soon to be demolished houses, in order to locate Honeybuzzard. They crossed the roof of one house and made an entry into the second house through its “disordered attics” (175). Morris led Emily into the “hot darkness” where there was neither sound nor “glimmer of any light” but “as they crept cautiously down the next flight of stairs, he saw a yellow satin seeping round the edges of the door on the floor below...” (176). The room was glowing with lighted candles and the silence was so intense that it was almost audible. The darkness, the silence and stillness add to the Gothic atmosphere and provide a strong setting for the horrendous murder of Ghislaine. The scene of the murder is not only marked by Gothic eeriness but is also a display of eroticism and death brought together in a manner fundamental to Surrealism:

A collapsible trestle table had been assembled in the middle of the floor... On the table lay a mound, covered with a chequered tablecloth... Morris became painfully conscious of the beating of his heart... Naked, Ghislaine lay on her back with her hands crossed on her breasts, so that her nipples poked between her fingers like the muzzles of inquisitive white mice. Her eyes were shut down with pennies, two on each eyelid, and her mouth gaped open
a little. There were deep black fingermarks in her throat. With pity and tenderness, for the first time unmixed with any other feeling, Morris saw that her fingernails were bitten down to the quick and how shadows smoothed out the cratered surface of her cheek and how the chopped tufts of golden hair had grown no farther than an inch or so below her ears and how there was soft, blonde down on the motionless flesh of her stomach. (Shadow 176-177)

The description of the setting in which Ghislaine lay dead is followed by yet another horrific depiction of her slayer - Honeybuzzard who appears as a madman (another Gothic motif) holding a candle in his left hand and cradling something (a plaster Christ) in his right hand:

His hair trailed like mad Ophelia’s and his eyes were too large for his head. The angles and planes of the skull were showing through the flesh. What was familiar about him seemed pared away, the daytime flesh carved off his bones so that he appeared to them, finally, naked and elementary and unknowable in the integrity of his own skeleton, in the night. Under his breath, he sang a song they could not hear. (179)

Some of the recurrent Gothic motifs in Angela Carter’s writing are the automaton/android, the monstrous feminine, the haunted houses and the play of the double. David Punter’s observation that critics in the 1990s have found themselves “at a peculiar confluence between the major motifs of Gothic and a set of ways of thinking increasingly current in contemporary criticism and theory” (2), makes Carter’s association of the
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Gothic and the postmodern more vivid. The points of convergence are the uncanny, phantoms, the spectres, the crypts and “bodily harm and the wound.” Punter further states that the convergence also divulges how contemporary theory is troubled by “the uncanny nature of knowledge itself” and “haunted, like Gothic, by the weight of a history, just behind its shoulder, which proves resistant not only to understanding but, more importantly to change” (3).

The decaying old houses where Honeybuzzard and Morris go to collect antique items, are a sign of cultural ruins and remains, as well as the Gothic image of a repulsive and oppressive domestic space. The ruins and junk of the novel symbolize old, outdated cultural values. The buildings, which were once a part of the old age charm, are now in a dilapidated state - decayed and shattered but the values they symbolize, still hold power and force to wreck contemporary life.

All the characters in the novel are strongly written except that of the “flamboyantly violent” Honeybuzzard, who appears to be an “androgynous” character with sadistic tendencies. Sarah Gambles remarks:

...you have to recognize that he alone belongs to two worlds, in gender terms and in terms just as vital to Carter the writer, the real (life) and the shadow (art). He is on the fault line, an early embodiment of the conviction that the fantastical and the actual can exist on the same plane. (17)
The novelist has not given any explanation for this potent tendency in this character or any substantiation as to what was the reason behind the mutilation of Ghislaine's face or other happenings in the novel; she leaves it entirely to the imagination of the readers to decipher and analyse. Perhaps, Carter was just trying to depict "the mess of contemporary life" as pointed out by Borges as well as trying to write in the way of Poe and Hoffman with the aim of "provoking unease" as she herself had stated once. Carter, like the counterculture of the sixties was trying to meditate a fictional world free from any kind of moral and traditional manacle in an attempt to capsize the belief system of the prevalent times.

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The novel Several Perceptions which is signed "March - December 1967" by Carter, won the Somerset Maugham Award when first published in 1968. This book is the most vivid and vibrant assessment of the 60s by the novelist. The myth of "the flower power generation" with its essentials like spontaneity, open emotion, sexual liberation and visceral engagement is skilfully perpetuated in this book. A group of this generation was also engaged with the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement. The narrative also shows Carter's growing fascination with Freud and her progression towards perfection as a writer and a story-teller. As a "social realist" she is also seen to be getting influenced with the power of the fantastical but has yet to explore completely the realm of the magical.
Joseph Harker is the protagonist of *Several Perceptions*. He is a twenty-two-years-old—"self-styled nihilist", a profligate and a "disoriented rebel" without any aspiration. He seems to be in quest for meaning of life and existence. Partially dejected on being abandoned by his girlfriend Charlotte and partially by the war and violence prevalent in his times, he decides to take his own life, believing that "a dead lover is in the strongest position of all since the remorse of grief will make a stone throb like a heart" (*Several* 19) and thus he would also escape from the "world of paralogic and irrationality" (20). His preferred mode of suicide and bidding farewell to "earth's dubious bliss" (19) is the lethal coal gas. A point to be noticed is that unlike *Shadow Dance* and *Love*, in this novel, not a woman but a young man is haunted by death and the suicide attempt is made in the first chapter and not towards the end of the novel. The chosen method of committing suicide is gas in all these three novels. Morris also considers a similar mode of committing suicide - "always one way out" (*Shadow* 14) in the opening chapter of *Shadow Dance*. Fortunately, Joseph is saved by a girl called Anne Blossom living on the floor below his flat. She was the first to discover him "charred and unconscious" (*Several* 24).

Joseph like most of the flower power generation, leads a life without direction. The beginning of the novel notifies that he works in a mortuary "cleaning and laying out the dead" (7) but later he is shown to be "subsisting upon unemployment benefit" (22). His disillusionment arises largely from his sense of worthlessness; his lack of confidence in not
knowing where he fits into the sphere of things; in fact what he should resent and protest against. There is plenty to choose from, with hostilities in Vietnam being on the top of his list, however there is no “real sense of involvement” (Several 64) in him to alleviate those sufferings and miseries through a genuine means like taking up voluntary service or joining organised protest. That Joseph had taken “this dreadful tragedy of war as a symbolic event” (Several 64) is pointed out by Ransom - the psychiatrist thus:

“... you draw a simple melodramatic conclusion from this complex tragedy - you use it as a symbol for your rejection of a world to which you cannot relate, perhaps because of your immaturity.” (64)

Instead of undertaking any radical action, he frees a badger from the local zoo, conceives a bizarre joke and sends a turd airmail to Lyndon Johnson (the then President of the United States) and falls in love with Mrs Boulder “the neighbourhood love-machine” (23) who is also his best friend Viv’s mother. His Christmas celebrations commence with “a bewildering state of sexual discovery” with Mrs Boulder (a woman fit to be his mother) and culminate with the dancing at a “Dionysiac” (11) revel.

At this stage of Carter’s writing career Magic Realism was still in its nascent phase. As a technique it had yet to evolve to become the modus operandi in the novels to come. In this book, the magic realistic elements are few and minor. As discussed in chapter 1, dreams are one of the primary constituents of Magic Realism; they occupy a very significant
place in the Carterian compositions. Dreams are a language of imagery which range from the normal, the fantastical to the surreal. Forms of dream, include the frightening or upsetting nightmare, erotic dreams with sexual images and nocturnal emission. Joseph, the anti-hero like many of the central characters in Carter's novels is tormented by dreams. “Every minute of the lonely nights was filled with dreams of fires quenched with blood and bloody beaks of birds of prey and bombs blossoming like roses with bloody petals over the Mekong Delta” (Several 4-5) He was baffled to find himself and “his wary, sallow, ill-looking ferociously private face” (5) dominating most of his dreams:

This was one of his dreams. It was spring and he was walking in a formal garden. Tulips and children’s heads were arranged like apples on a shelf in a store, in neat rows. The tulips swayed and the children smiled with red mouths. Innocent sunlight shone on everything. Along came a man in heavy boots and trampled down the flower bed, both tulips and children; juicy stalks and fragile bones went snap. Blood and sap spurted on all sides. Joseph flung himself on the man and tried to choke him or gouge out his eyes but his hands made no impression for his body was, in the dream, insubstantial as smoke. When the last child’s head was irrevocably smashed, the murderer turned his face to Joseph and Joseph realized he was looking at his own face. Then he woke up and broke his mirror so it would never tell the truth again, if it had ever told the truth before. (3)

It is in these dream sequences that the imaginative ingenuity of the writer surfaces. Carter gives expression to flights of fancy and uninhibited
and unbridled imagination. Surrealism takes hold of Carter's mind in these dream sequences through ingenious expressions; concurrence of seemingly incongruous images following the logic of free association. The incongruity of “tulips” and “children's head” arranged in a garden cannot go unnoticed. There is another episode where Joseph narrates to the psychiatrist one of his dreams of being on an anvil and being made into guns, knives and iron crosses. At another place Joseph's “waking dream” is compressed into that second in which his eyes meet and communicate with that of Mrs Boulder in a cafe:

... he dived straight through these windows open on the virgin forests of her mind as if falling through a fantastic country of late medieval blues and greens, coming at last to rest a lawn beside a fountain where a young girl in a white dress trimmed with pearls cradled in her lap the horned head of a lascivious unicorn without knowing what he represented. (Several 73)

Next in the series of his hallucinations is Mrs Boulder in his ice-cream bowl and he scooping up “greedy fistfuls” of her rich and creamy “delicious viscera” (76). These dreams remind us of Freud's theory of struggle between ego and id leading to oddity and inconsistency in dreams. A constant war between ego and id is taking place in Joseph's mind and finally his primal desire - the id over-powers his ego and forces him into a wanton and salacious stint with Mrs Boulder, towards the end of the novel. Carter's interest in Surrealism and its technique of assembling different forms to create a collage - a new whole becomes
clearly apparent in the novel. There is a segment which describes the wall in Joseph's room being covered with photographs from different periods of his life:

There were some pictures tacked to the wall. Lee Harvey Oswald, handcuffed between policemen, about to be shot, wild as a badger. A colour photograph, from Paris Match, of a square of elegant houses and within these pleasant boundaries, a living sunset, a Buddhist monk whose saffron robes turned red as he burned alive. Also a calendar of the previous year advertising a brand of soft drinks by means of a picture of a laughing girl in a white, sleeveless, polo-neck sweater sucking this soft drink through a straw. And a huge dewy pin-up of Marilyn Monroe. (Several 15)

A predominantly complex magic realist aspect and mode of expression is the "carnivalesque" which is also present in this novel. Beverley Kyte (one of the characters in the novel) organises a "Dionysiac" (11) revel on Christmas Eve in his shabby mansion where he lived with his mother among the "theatrical relics" (11). The revel with its merriment is a manifestation of a carnival and overshadows the realism of the earlier chapters. The house "blazed with lanterns" and fairy lights; "rang with music" and carol singers; and roared with "talk and laughter". The guests were dressed in "gipsyish clothes" of multi-coloured hues. Sunny is the Carterian madman, fool or clown who amuses those around him, playing tunes on his fiddle and violin. He plays like a "real maestro" and his "sweet, rich melody strung out upon the air like motes of honey or drops of gold" (141) and leave the listeners dumbstruck. The last scene of the
novel is highly theatrical and performance oriented. This carnivalesque like festivity anticipates the brilliance of lights, action and show of theatre which will be centre stage in Carter’s last novel *Wise Children* (1991).

The locale of the festivity is “a great Georgian palace friable with worm and rot” (11). It was a mausoleum, Kay’s dying mother had created for herself. She had bought the “dilapidated mansion” and turned it into a set for the major starring role never offered to her in the actual theatre. This mausoleum is a quintessential Gothic setting with “stately tall rooms”, “elegant hall where a languorously curved staircase rose up to monumental first-floor drawing room” (*Several* 127) suitable for dances and musicals and tangles of attics, lofts and cupboards and “doorways that led nowhere.” The mansion had rooms built in “grandiose style” influenced by Tzarist St Petersburg. The deteriorated floorboards, cracked ceilings, broken sashcords of windows, furled down wallpapers, the groaning, shaking and trembling staircase, rain coming into attics, the single lavatory that often refused to function - all this was a “surrounding of faked luxury and rampant neglect” (128). Everything - the massive photographs, the curtains, urns and the Egyptian and Chinese vases were “fly speckled and dusty.” The place was decaying and disintegrating and the grandeur was “slowly and inexorably falling down” (127).

It is this festivity which liberates Anne from her limp which is termed by Kay as a “hysterical paralysis” (145). Her limp was essentially her guilt of giving away her baby boy born out of wedlock. She perceived it to be a punishment “for giving herself away.” The spirit of the party which
is based on the ideals of flower power of the hippie-culture - love, peace, happiness and forgiveness wash away her guilt and she "continued to run up and down" filled with a new lease of life and "rippling with laughter like a quiet brook" (145). She throws away her ring in the fire and plans to burn the lock of her baby's hair she had preserved. Kay pitches his father's photograph in the fire and thus breaks all bonds with the past. Sunny who was considered as a tramp playing imaginary violin, plays the violin competently and thus proves that he had once been a talented and successful violinist. Mrs Boulder finds love with an African man who was going to carry her off to the romantic Ivory Coast as if she was the White Queen from Alice in Wonderland.

Carter in this novel visualizes a world which has broken up with the paternalistic order. This is the novelist's first experimentation with a subject which will recur in some of her subsequent works. The discussion Joseph has with Mrs Boulder in chapter 6 (after their sexual encounter) about Viv's father enlightens him thus:

'Who was Viv's father? I've often wondered, Viv is so unnaturally happy. He must have a good hereditary.'

'I'll never know for certain,' she said collectedly. 'Infact, it's in bad taste for you to ask.'

'Come off it,' said Joseph . . .

'Anyway, what does it matter?' she said. 'father is only a word at best of times but mother is a fact.'
'You mean, Father is only a hypothesis?' suggested Joseph.

'It was hard going at first but my boy, my Vivvy, made it all worth while.'

'You mean, father is a kind of wishful thinking,' pursued Joseph. 'Screw you, Ransome, my father figure.' (Several 116-117)

Joseph, born in a culture determined by the stereotypes of father figure, ultimately rejects that figure referring to it as “only an emanation, a sooth-me” (Several 147). Joseph – the dreamer, undergoes a metamorphosis, is “friends with time again” (146), learns to think and feel with his senses and decides to throw away his “book of facts.” His dreams which were once ruled by complexity and incongruity become simple. He becomes a citizen of “Kay’s floating world” (128) which is synonymous to that of the counterculture of the 60s. Joseph’s despair and desolation was the consequence of his own thoughts born out of his lack of perspective in life and his self-imposed isolation but is ultimately substituted by happiness and sunshine. The story ends on the Christmas morning when his cat gives birth to five kittens “all as white as snow and beautiful as stars.”(148) Along with these life-affirming symbols of regeneration and new beginning, Joseph felt “like a diver about to launch himself into eternity” (147).

The last chapter is an appropriate finale for a novel beginning with David Hume’s epigraph:

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

The closing section of the novel reads like a play in a theatre and appears analogous to Shakespearean comedies where the “psychological drama” of the first three acts paves way for the comic spirit and a happy ending. No perception or impression of the mind is stable and resolute and similarly as Hume states: “pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never exist at the same time.”

XXX

Love - Angela Carter’s fifth novel was written in 1969 and published in 1971. She captures the “waning” of the decade and bids adieu to the sixties through this novel. In her Afterword to the revised 1987 edition of the book, Angela Carter divulges the vague and obscure source of inspiration for this bohemian love story. She states:

I first got the idea for Love, from Benjamin Constant’s early nineteenth-century novel of sensibility, Adolphe; I was seized with the desire to write a modern day, demotic version of Adolphe, although I doubt anybody could spot the resemblance after I’d macerated the whole thing in triple-distilled essence of English provincial life. (Love 113)

This novel in sync with Carter’s earlier novel Shadow Dance depicts the smoke filled venues and the sexual license - the sex and drugs culture prevalent in the sixties. Patricia Juliana Smith in her essay All You Need Is ‘Love’: Angela Carter’s Novel of Sixties, Sex and Sensibility refers to this
sex and drugs culture as “elements of a greater phenomenon, the youth culture’s valorization of total freedom (or, more precisely, license), of boundless physical and mental sensation...” Lee Collins (one of the protagonists of the novel) discovers Annabel at a typical 60s rock and roll New Year party - completely insentient and unconscious under the influence of drugs:

On New Year’s morning, he woke up on a strange floor to find an unknown young girl in his arms. She opened her eyes and some kind of hunger, some kind of despair in her narrow face caught at Lee’s very tender heart. The room was full of darkness, silence and stale air. On a sofa a young man and a girl twined together under a Paisley shawl. (Love 15)

In this convoluted and complicated novel, Carter encapsulates a contemporary love story. It is a “disquieting but compelling” tale of a destructive emotional war between a “fragile young woman” - Annabel, her narcissist husband Lee and his troublesome, wild and unruly half-brother Buzz as they move through a labyrinth of vices - infidelity, estrangement, and lost associations. There is only a physical connection between these characters and that too is frangible, dithering and unstable. Love as the name implies is not centred on the romantic and sublime idea of love but deals with the facet of love which is violent and damaging. Carter in this book explores the idea of identity and ambiguity in relationships which is not guided by reason and the extent of limits and liberties of the individuals upon one another. As Patricia Juliana Smith
puts it, “through the medium of the ménage à trois [Love] takes stock of our cherished and reviled conventional gender roles and to what extent they have, while changing drastically, nonetheless stubbornly remained the same.” Emotionality, physicality and sensibility are taken to their limits to reveal their ominous and vicious dimensions.

A summary of the novel will make its understanding and analysis easier. Honeybuzzard of Carter’s first novel is resurrected in this novel again but as two different entities. Lee is the replica of Honeybuzzard’s beauty and Buzz is an embodiment of his dark, blasphemous brutality. Lee Collins was a university student who becomes a schoolteacher and works in a “comprehensive school” (Love 8). His father died when he was an infant, and his mother became a prostitute. Buzz was fathered by an American serviceman whom he thinks as an Indian and claimed his straight, coarse, sooty hair, high cheekbones and sallow complexion as proof of the fact. In due course of time, he develops psychotic propensities and becomes a voyeuristic photographer. When Lee was about eleven years of age their mother goes insane and their aunt - a radical woman adopted them, giving Lee his new name instead of Leon (his original). After their aunt’s death, Lee struggles through university while Buzz drifts through life and “steadfastly refused to learn anything useful” (12). The third significant character of the book is Annabel - a middle-class girl and an art-school student who lives in her own world of fantasy and hallucinations. Two months before Lee met her, she had tried committing suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping tablets but was rescued in time.
Lee comes across Annabel at a party while Buzz was away in North Africa. He takes her home and they start living together. When Annabel’s parents discover them, they are more or less forced into marriage.

Buzz eventually returns and moves himself in. He and Annabel form a strange association, for both of them share a common attribute that is the inability to engage with the real. They “became in a sense, accomplices” and “left Lee out of their plotting for he understood neither of them, although he loved them both” (Love 6). Lee is simply “an oblique character that glues the threesome together.” In the course of the narrative it is disclosed that in the early days of his relationship with Annabel, Lee was sleeping with the wife of his philosophy teacher. Again after his marriage with Annabel he enters into an affair with a woman called Carolyn. Carolyn had come over to Lee’s flat to attend a party organized by Buzz. Physically drawn towards each other they make love, after which Lee accompanies her home. This incident drives Annabel once again to attempt suicide. She slashes her wrist and thus ends up enjoying an extended stay in the National Health Service psychiatric hospital. The psychiatrist at the hospital explains to Lee that it was damaging for the unstable Annabel to stay with Buzz:

> There is a condition of shared or, rather, mutually stimulated psychotic disorder known as “folie a deux”. Your brother and your wife would appear excellent candidates for it. (60)

Lee banishes Buzz from his life who had been “a necessary attribute, an inevitable condition of life” (64) for him. He brings Annabel
home from the hospital who punishes Lee by "branding" him with a
tattoo. It is not long before another predicament drives Annabel once
again to attempt suicide – this time successfully. The book ends on a note
of dejection where the brothers "squabble drearily as to which of them was
most to blame" for Annabel's death, "for nothing but death is irreparable"
(Love 112).

The novel also includes an Afterword which Carter wrote twenty
years after it was initially written. It is an attempt by the novelist to revise
and update the text and describe the advancement of the surviving
characters into the anguish and distress of middle age. The relevance and
significance of the Afterword is from the feminist point of view. It
performs a didactic function and defines the "transformative power of the
women's movement" which brought "both women and men out of an
irrational chamber of horrors" (Day 64).

The narrative begins in winter. The sheet of cold white across the
canvas helps build the novels dark mood and "the penetrating aroma of
unhappiness" (Love 113). The opening lines of the novel not only
introduce the setting and the central female character of the novel -
Annabel but at the same time successfully build up an atmosphere of
terror and the impending "ambiguities" (1). It gives an early hint that the
cosmic powers will play their part in shaping the lives of the protagonists.
The setting is mundane without unequivocal fantastical elements but the
strangeness of the ordinary yet bizarre characters, coupled with the
heightened narration add to the magical feel of the story.
Smith considers *Love* similar to the "novel of sensibility and its literary first cousin, the gothic novel: the collision between the orderly, cool rationality of Augustan neoclassicism and pleasurable terrors of the imagination lurking at the heart of Romanticism." We witness heightened or excess of sensibility which renders Annabel inoperative and disables her perception of reality at the commencement of the novel and again at the end, before she commits suicide:

She was troubled by the over acuteness of the senses and wondered why they shouted so loudly upstairs or the cars outside made, today, such tigerish roarings. She was irritated rather than disturbed to sense occasionally the almost inarticulate breathings and the infinitely subtle movements of the figures on the wall and her sudden excess of sensibility made the paper between her fingers coarser than sandpaper. (*Love* 103)

The disturbance and commotion in Annabel's mind can be associated with her "excess of sensibility", with her fondness for Gothicism and Romanticism and also with the aesthetic philosophy of Dadaism and Surrealism. It is the surrealist quality of Annabel's sensibility which is accountable for her profound alienation and estrangement from the mundane world:

One day, Annabel saw the sun and moon in the sky at the same time. The sight filled her with a terror which entirely consumed her and did not leave her until the night closed in catastrophe for she had no instinct for self-preservation if she was confronted by ambiguities. (2)
Surrealist descriptions form an integral part of Magic Realist writings. The opposite polarities captured here, create a magical effect. Surrealism is marked by unnatural and irrational combination of images which would not be normally found together. With this description of “two contrary states at once” (Love 4) - the sun and the moon - day and night in the sky together which leaves Annabel appalled, Carter exhibits surrealist tendencies. The novelist further explains that “there was nothing in her mythology to help her resolve this conflict” (5). “Mythology” here refers to the “collective unconscious” shared by humanity at large - which also held fascination for the surrealists. We are also told about Annabel’s dreams and nightmares wherein her husband Lee emerges “in many hideous dream disguises.” Angela Carter’s surrealist tenor is highlighted in the following paragraph. We are given an insight into the inexplicability of Annabel’s personality and the thoughts, images and dreams which inhabited her mind:

Sometimes, during the day, she stopped, startled, before some familiar object because it seemed to have just changed its form back to the one she remembered after a brief, private period impersonating something quite strange, for she had the capacity for changing the appearance of the real world which is the price paid by those who take too subjective a view of it. All she apprehended through her senses she took only as objects for interpretation in the expressionist style and she saw, in everyday things, a world of mythic, fearful shapes of whose existence she was convinced although she never spoke of it to anyone; nor had she
ever suspected that everyday, sensuous human
practice might shape the real world. *(Love 3-4)*

We are also informed that Annabel’s “favourite painter was Max
Ernst” (31) - an advocate of Dadaism and later of Surrealism and whose
forte was collage making. Lee’s pristine white walled room takes on the
appearance of a surrealist painting/canvas after Annabel’s arrival. Her
grotesque drawings cover the walls and the rest of the house too become
littered and cluttered with an unusual muddle of things, so much so that
“one had to move around the room very carefully for fear of tripping over
things”*(Love 7)*. The cluttered, messy and claustrophobic world that
Annabel creates around herself “seemed to throb with a mute, inscrutable,
symbolic life; everything Annabel gathered around her evoked
correspondences in her mind so all these were the palpable evidence of
her own secrets...”*(7)*. The space around Annabel begins to function as a
mirror reflecting her subjective desires and “unspoken perversity” *(Soon
Ng 437)*.

There is another reference to the “workings of random chance so
much prized by the surrealist” *(Love 34)* in an incident where both Lee
and Annabel roll over the pastel crayons scattered on the sheets and her
back was dappled with patches and blotches of all the colours of the
rainbow and Lee was also marked everywhere with brilliant dusts and
darkly spotted with blood, each like “a canvas involuntarily patterned”
(34). The images in Annabel’s mind lacked continuity/connection and
conscious control of reason. This reminds us of the Dadaist anarchist
negation of sense and order and of the surrealist principle of subverting coherent and logical thought by allowing the unconscious to prevail and express itself:

As for Annabel, she was like a child who reconstructs the world according to its whims and so she chose to populate her home with imaginary animals because she preferred them to the drab fauna of reality. She quickly interpreted him into her mythology but if, first, he was a herbivorous lion, later he became a unicorn devouring raw meat and she never saw him the same twice, nor did these pictures have any continuity except for the constant romanticism of the imagery. She had no control over them, once they existed. And, as she drew him, so she saw him; he existed for her intermittently. *(Love 34-35)*

Theatre has been an important element to be incorporated in Magical Realist works. The narrative in the novel, strategically though obliquely summons the stage motif with the two most important locales - the park and the flat. Andrew Hock Soon Ng in the article *Subjecting Spaces: Angela Carter’s Love*, draws a similarity between the park gate and the door to Lee’s flat which “were never either open or closed” but “always a little ajar” (2) by comparing them to the stage door. One likeness that the three important characters in the novel share is an inclination toward theatrics and artificiality of behaviour which establish them as personalities lacking in depth/profundity. Lee has a different smile for different occasions “to smooth his passage through life” (19) and cries easily; Annabel, is in the habit of “performing symbolic actions” (101)
such as eating her wedding ring and tattooing her husband and Buzz, who lives behind his camera: “as if he could not trust his own eyes and had to check his vision by means of a third lens all the time so in the end he saw everything at second hand, without depths” (25). All the three characters are actors who at times are seen to be analysing their own actions and performance. After Annabel’s suicide attempt at the party, the happenings detailed are like a camera zooming from one scene to the other:

Afterwards, the events of the night seemed, to all who participated in them, like disparate sets of images shuffled together anyhow. A draped form on a stretcher; candles blown out by a strong wind; a knife; an operating theatre; blood; and bandages. In time the principle actors (the wife, the brothers, the mistress) assembled as coherent narrative from these images but each interpreted them differently and drew their own conclusions which were all quite dissimilar for each told himself the story as if he were the hero except for Lee who, by common choice, found himself the villain. (Love 43)

Annabel’s surrealist drawings, her fetishness for bizarre objects, her faking of her husband’s smile are all nothing but a glimpse of her acting skills. Exploiting this ability “she decides to embark upon a new career of deceit and she knew, if she were clever, she could behave exactly as she wished without censure or reprimand, almost as if she were invisible” (75). Before the curtains of the stage come down, Annabel “lay in her ultimate, shocking transformation; now she was a painted doll, bluish at the extremities” (112). Her triumph as an actor is established
with her performance in this final scene. At the same time, her death proves her defeat at the hands of patriarchy; her inability to connect with reality and the destruction of her "mythological edifice" led by a chain of events - Lee's adultery, Buzz's unfathomable mystery, her futile copulation with Buzz and their (Annabel's and Lee's) "mutual rape" by each other.

Ruins are an integral aspect of Gothic convention. This significant and pivotal Gothic feature finds place on the first page of the novel and the reader is introduced to a conventional eerie Gothic background. Annabel finds herself in an eighteenth century park surrounding "a mansion which had been pulled down long ago" (Love 6). The once "harmonious artificial wilderness" now stands "dishevelled by time" (1) with "spread[ing] green tangles." "The stable built on the lines of a miniature Parthenon, housing for Houyhnhnms rather than natural horses" and "the pillared portico" all stood bare and lonesome and silent. The serenity and the Mediterranean characteristic of the park held no appeal for Annabel, who was more attracted towards the "magic strangeness" and "curious silence" of the Gothic north.

Apart from these decaying ruins the central principle of decay in the novel is the growing madness that takes place in Annabel's mind. This insanity affects her physically as well as mentally. Annabel speedily decays into a ghost-like spectre "ghostly woman white as a winding sheet and shrouded in hair.... her hands... looked like dried flowers, nothing but veins and transparency" (62). Annabel had gone through her first breakdown (attempted suicide) before meeting Lee. Her relationship with
Lee seems to stabilize her for a while but her mental decay is supported and aggravated again by Buzz's (an accomplice and associate to her bizarre ways of viewing the internal and external world) return and by Lee's infidelity. Lee's deception again moves her to suicide. Buzz is another manifestation of mental decay which is underlined by his voyeurism. He clicked pictures of Annabel and Lee in bed and even while Annabel was bleeding to death. Her suicide attempt as well as her death create a new divide between the brothers and hasten the decay of their brotherly relations.

The Gothic heroines were embodiments of "physical and mental frailty" and "passive victimage" predisposed to weeping, fainting fits and dementia (madness). Annabel with her madness, her "other worldliness" (Love 7) and her fondness for "baroque harpsichord music" (17) is a postmodern reincarnation of the Gothic damsel in distress. Appalled and terrorized to see "two contrary states" (2) of the heavens, Annabel took the path through the long grass. She breathlessly "lurched and zigzagged" with erratic steps "at the whim of the roaring winds" (3) like a Gothic heroine "plastered in fear and trembling" breathlessly running away from the source of her distress (ghost, phantom, villain). Outwardly she appears very feeble and feminine - with "huge grey luminous eyes" (17) and very long hair. She was a strange and bizarre character "trampling in graves" to "catch her death" (7) and an "apparent indifference to the world outside her own immediate perception" (8). Even her husband Lee, felt
“like a lone explorer in an unknown country without a map to guide him”

*(Love 9)* when he was with her:

He was attracted to her because he was unsure of his effect upon her and became increasingly attached to her because of her strangeness which seemed to him qualitatively different but quantitatively akin to the strangeness he himself felt as though both could say to the world: ‘We are strangers here.’... He felt a sense of unspoken contact with her, like, that of two people from different countries who do not speak one another’s language thrust together in a third whose language neither understands. *(Love 17)*

Annabel’s strangeness of character is such that Carter is forced to remark in the Afterword that “even the women’s movement would have been of no help to her and alternative psychiatry would have only made things, if possible, worse” (113). Her mental illness also posits the premise of imprisonment which is central to Gothic Tradition. She is the prisoner of her own madness and her own strange and uncanny thoughts. Before meeting Annabel, Lee had been “perfectly free” (9). His freedom was reflected in his bedroom which was “always extraordinarily tidy, white as a tent” (14). It was furnished entirely by light and shade” free of any furniture except for a bed. Annabel’s entry into his life curbs his freedom. She imprisons him within the confines of her own world of dark and sinister green jungle, filled with “the dreary paraphernalia of romanticism” (7) and mythological brutes. For Lee, possessions and relationships were symbolic of responsibilities and restrictions. His
imprisonment at Annabel's hand becomes stronger after her suicide attempt, owing to a greater sense of responsibility for her and guilt for what has happened.

There are instances in the novel where Annabel's interactions with Lee and Buzz betray her feminine traits and reveal her as a "quasi-masculine" figure. On one hand she could move Lee with her feminine tears "pouring down" and on the other hand she could device a "baroque humiliation" (Love 69) and brand him with a tattoo. To castigate him she imprisons him with a tattoo where her name is written "indelibly in Gothic script... circle[d] with a heart" (69) which thus became "a certificate of possession which gave him the status of any other object in her collection" (70). The beautifully written tattoo scene is symbolic of her relationship with Lee which is guided by subjugation and control. Annabel also contrives a physical union with Buzz as yet another torment for Lee. Thus, the psychological connection between Annabel and Buzz ends in physical propinquity but this union also fails to attain inner fulfilment. Annabel "felt herself handled as unceremoniously as a fish on a slab, reduced only to anonymous flesh" (94). Lee guided by jealousy attempts to violate her, culminating in a "mutual rape" (97) that leads to his own depersonalization and the death of his wife.

Finally, it is Annabel who succeeds in engaging the two brothers in the battle of her own death, leaving them defeated and emasculated. Her inability to relate to the world of reality becomes her hamartia and leads to her suicide. The death of Annabel also highlights the Gothic motif of
flight in this narrative. The flights of escape from an interfering, brutal and oppressive father or a vicious villain of conventional Gothic novels is reworked by Carter to fit her narrative. Annabel’s suicide is her flight. Her suicide becomes a means of escape not only from the agonies of internal (imaginative) and external (real) world which liberates her from the shackles of patriarchy but also becomes a vehicle of revenge.

Buzz with his diabolic appearance - heavily lidded, dark, gleaming eyes and long thin hands (as if designed particularly for picking and stealing) is the Gothic desperado. He had “a disconcertingly sharp intelligence and a merciless self-absorption” (Love 12) and lived “at a conscious pitch of melodrama.” His exceedingly vicious and brutal disposition, his disconcerting ways, his deficient – sporadic and erratic verbal ability, and his complete lack of refinement and civility make him the modern re-embodiment of the Gothic villain. Though both Lee and Buzz are half brothers, there is an obvious spirit of antagonism in Buzz which compels him to draw Annabel to himself. Guided by this spirit of rivalry, Buzz “seethed with jealous fury” (24) night after night hearing the sounds and movements the lovers made and imagining their “unimaginable privacy” and union. He cursed them indignantly and obsessed himself with the idea of stabbing Lee and Annabel as they slept together; he obtained relief by taking voyeuristic photographs of their naked bodies.

In the first section of the story we are given a clue of Buzz being homosexual, when Lee informs Annabel of Buzz acquiring gonorrhea in
South Africa. Later we are informed that “he’s always been funny with girls” (98). In the Afterword, we are told about “homoerotic desire” (Soon Ng 415) of Buzz for his brother: “if there is one thing he [Buzz] would like to do before he dies, it is to fuck him [Lee]” (Love 117). This desire leaves us wondering, if the sexual tension encompassing the household was purely heterosexual or homosexual or both at the same time and as to who among Annabel and Lee was the real “object of desire” for Buzz.

The ambiguities of the Gothic boundaries of the ordinary and mysterious are set through the “collision between the orderly cool rationality” and Annabel’s “terror of the imagination” (Smith). The fundamental boundary in the novel is between sanity and madness. The Collins brothers’ first rendezvous with insanity was in childhood when their mother went absolutely mad in public. Lee is aware of the fact that Annabel is weird, skewed, unbalanced and unhinged; nonetheless he is still attracted to her “because of her strangeness which seemed to him qualitatively different” (Love 17). Love also draws attention to the boundaries between social classes. Annabel is from a rich middle-class background whereas Lee and Buzz are from working-class backgrounds. Annabel’s parents accept Lee partially because he is a university graduate and a teacher, and Buzz because they deem him a future artist – the new working class. The class division is highlighted again when Lee identifies that his university lecturer’s middle class wife (his mistress) romanticized him as a working-class “thug” (22). The characters of the Collins half-brothers, Buzz and Lee also symbolise boundaries of two diverse worlds.
Although they shared the same mother and were brought up by an aunt, they are foreign to each other through their fathers. Their appearance and behaviour speak of this difference of boundary.

The three novels analyzed in this chapter introduce the readers to Carter's ingenious and imaginative mind. As mentioned earlier, Carter's oeuvre needs to be read in continuum to realize the writer's development from a realist to a magic realist writer. *Shadow Dance, Several Perceptions* and *Love* provide the groundwork for Carter's later works. The novels deal with issues confronting a society which was undergoing a radical and sweeping change of values in face of the industrial and sexual revolution and present a detailed description of the England of 1960s. Carter unerringly represents the social, political, economic, moral and spiritual life of her times.

In these early novels Carter's fascination for Gothic Tradition and Surrealism is very evident but Magic Realism which was to become her forte was still in its early stage of development. The novels abound in Gothic imagery and are "littered" with surrealist descriptions which also occupy central place in Magic Realist narratives. An important aspect to take cognition in these novels is that these techniques gain in significance because of Angela Carter's use of language and style adopted along with the arising situations and background settings. Contents and themes are consistent but variety and multitudinous of description rests on her style and expression.
Notes

1. Carnival refers to cultural manifestations that take place in diverse related forms in the Americas, Europe, and the Caribbean; including particular language, dress, dance, music, theatre as well as the presence of a madman, fool, or clown. For a better understanding of carnival, see Danow.
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Chapter 3

The Magic Toyshop (1967)

Angela Carter’s second novel *The Magic Toyshop* was first published in 1967. It won the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1969 and brought her widely acclaimed readership as a major British author. The novel was made into a film in 1988 for which Carter herself wrote the screenplay. This book significantly anticipates the key features and aspects of her later ingenious works - allusions, myth, fairy tale, theatrical magic, suffering, revenge, incest and escape. Jeff VanderMeer in his essay on Angela Carter writes:

The Magic Toyshop deserves special mention among Carter’s early works because many of her “signatures” are already in place, including the evil puppet maker, the grotesquery of the puppets themselves, and her ability to create quick, charming brushstrokes of characterization.

The book revolves around the fifteen-year-old Melanie and her quest for love. It is a novel concerned with the theme of growing up - an adolescent girl’s dilemmas, her transformation into a woman, and the distress and elation she must endure in order to live and appreciate life. It surveys her past, present, and her ensuing future. Critics have referred to it variously as the novel about a young girl’s rite of passage, a patriarchal nuclear representation of the family set in a landscape of fairy tale and
myth, unquestionable filial obedience and societal gender stereotyping. We also witness the development of themes of sexual fantasy, absorption with fairy tales and the Freudian unconscious as well as the understanding of the nature and boundaries of patriarchy.

*The Magic Toyshop* opens into the world of the fifteen year-old Melanie, who is on the verge of becoming a young woman, delighting in her own reality and beauty. She is overcome by “sheer exhilaration at the supple surprise of herself now she was no longer a little girl” (*Toyshop 1*). Melanie gazed at herself in the mirror for hours; her thoughts were preoccupied with marriage, sexual fantasies, her prospective husband and children. She conjured her “phantom bridegroom” (3) so powerfully “to leap the spacetime barrier between them that she could almost feel his breath on her cheek and his voice husking ‘darling’” (2). Melanie along with her two siblings, twelve year-old brother Jonathon and five year old Victoria is left in the care of Mrs Rundle as her parents are away in America for her father’s lecture tour. They live a life of comfort in a large country house which “smelled of lavender furniture polish and money” (2).

One night while her parents were still away she wandered idly into their empty room, took out her mother’s “sliding satin” wedding dress from the trunk, dressed herself in it and went out into the garden. Once there, she is terrorised by the loneliness of the night and runs back to her house. On the way, branches tear her hair and thrash her face and the gravel path cut her feet. She reaches the door “bruised and bleeding” to
find it shut. Therefore, she climbs the apple tree and gets into the house through the open window of her room. By the time she reaches her haven, her mother's wedding dress is reduced to tatters:

The skirt hung in three detached panels and the scored and tattered sleeves hung to the bodice by a few threads only. Besides the dress was filthy, streaked with green from the tree and her own red blood. She had bled far more than she realised. She fingered the dress, stiff with horror. *(Toyshop 4)*

The next morning she receives a telegram informing her of the unexpected death of her parents in a plane crash due to an unannounced storm and an engine fault. Melanie feels an obscure responsibility for her parent's unfortunate demise and begins to blame herself for it:

'It is my fault,' she told the cat. Her voice wavered like waterweed. 'It is my fault because I wore her dress. If I hadn't spoiled her dress, everything would be all right. Oh, Mummy!' *(5)*

This incident leaves her feeling like "an amputee" as if "a part of herself . . . was killed . . ." *(6)* Melanie along with her siblings moves to south London, to be in the care of her tyrannical Uncle Philip Flower (her mother's estranged brother), an eccentric toymaker, a repressive and a perverted puppeteer. In the bizarre domain of the puppet maker's house, she meets Uncle Phillip's wife - Aunt Margaret who is dumb and her two brothers Francie - the violinist and the rakish Finn - "the puppeteer's rebellious apprentice." The brothers, alternatively fascinate and repulse Melanie. She begins to get sexually and romantically inclined towards
Finn. Once he takes her to a park (the remnant of the National Exhibition of 1852) for a walk and kisses her. Melanie is “convulsed with horror at this sensual and intimate connection, this rude encroachment on her physical privacy, this humiliation” (Toyshop 106).

At one of the puppet show organized by Uncle Philip for the family, Finn fails to manage his puppet dexterously. This fills Uncle Philip with rage; Finn is thrown on the floor and shoved “with the casual brutality of Nazi soldiers moving corpses in films of concentration camps” (132). Throughout the novel, Uncle Philip is shown to be hostile and antagonistic towards Finn. He is now convinced that Finn was inept at manoeuvring his puppets and he devises a new plan - of drafting Melanie – “the orphaned pubescent heroine” to perform with the puppets in a fusion of “puppets and people” (132). Aunt Margaret, Francie and Finn are all opposed to this new idea but nothing could alter Uncle Philip’s decision:

‘Why shouldn’t the girl do something for her keep? God knows she eats enough. She can act with my puppets up on my stage. She is not too big, she won’t be out of scale.’ He rubbed his hands with satisfaction. (133)

Uncle Philip assigns Finn to help Melanie hone her acting skills for the forthcoming show. Melanie notices a variation in Finn’s conduct; earlier he had been defiant and rebellious, but now he seemed bereft of all defiance; acquiescent to be controlled by Uncle Philip. However, Finn’s resistance returns when he declines the gratification of Melanie’s fantasy
of sex with him - an indulgence that would have been little more than a rape as desired and designed by Uncle Philip.

On the day of the puppet show, Melanie dressed in white arrives on stage. Uncle Philip, controlling the puppets and the voice-over, had arranged to recreate the rape of Leda (Melanie) by a swan, a clear reference to the classical mythology and Yeat’s famous poem, "Leda and the Swan." The puppet show reaches its climax when the “obscene swan” (Toyshop 176) mounts Melanie (who screams and kicks her feet in revulsion) and “settled on her loins” with its “beak dug deeply into the soft flesh” of her neck. The curtain falls amid “a patter of applause” but Melanie in a state of shock, feels disconnected, “detached, apart” (168). Dissatisfied with Melanie’s performance Uncle Philip slaps her.

After the show, while Uncle Philip takes Jonathan to a gathering of model boat enthusiasts on a man-made lake in the Home Counties, the rest of the family is left alone at the house to indulge in the festivity of their freedom. Uncle Philip’s puppet swan is destroyed by Finn and buried in the park next to the fallen Queen Victoria (symbolic of old values). Returning home he crawls into bed with Melanie who while comforting him arrives at the understanding that “they [Finn and Melanie] would get married one day and live together all their lives and there would always be pervasive squalor and dirt and mess and shabbiness, always, forever and forever” (177). Thus, Melanie is seen to be slowly discarding her constant desire for sensual excitement and coming to terms with life. Finn, too, seems to have arrived at a realization, when he decides for a complete
change over by washing himself clean and making up his mind not to abide by and endure Uncle Philip's dominance anymore; Finn's coup d'état (rebellion) is represented by his occupying Uncle Philip's seat at the dinner table. Meanwhile, Melanie learns of the incestuous relationship between Margaret and Francie.

On returning home, Uncle Philip is infuriated to discover the incestuous relationship of his wife and the rebellion of his household. In great indignation and ire, he sets the house on fire. The catastrophe shocks Aunt Margaret into speech. She speaks and urges Finn and Melanie to escape. They are able to do so just in time, as the house collapses and burns "like a giant chrysanthemum, all golden" (Toyshop 199). Both realize that their old world was shattered and gone and all they had was each other. The shocking finale of the narrative leaves some questions unanswered, as well as gives rise to a few more, including musings on the therapeutic as well as destructive power of love and intimacy.

The magic realists incorporate both a conscientious observation of the real and the power of the imagination to construct a reality. Carter's fiction is suffused with her boundless imagination. Although never stepping away from stark realism, her writing has a dreamlike quality that gives the impression that the characters live in a magical world. The first chapter of the novel is a stunning evocation of adolescence, an incredible piece of writing and an amazing start to the book. Melanie's disordered and chaotic thinking, her feeling of uncertain anticipations as she decides
to try her mother's wedding dress as though she was trying on the idea of growing into a woman, is beautifully captured and rendered with panache. Carter's writing makes everything come alive and palpable. She does not describe what the stairs, or the lawn, or the housekeeper's cat looks like; she writes what they think. Even inanimate objects seem to have their own views, their own agendas. Animating everything lends magic to the air. Yet, the narrative develops within a framework of realism. It sets up oddly conventional expectations, fulfils them and then returns back to the absurd.

Uncle Phillip is a toymaker – a literal and metaphoric puppet master. His world should be vibrant, magical and innocent - surrounded by objects which fire the imagination but instead his is a dismal world ruled by brutality and violence where self expression is forbidden. Melanie is forced to play a human puppet in a puppet show. All the characters - Aunt Margaret, Francie and Finn, are dehumanized and reduced to being puppet like creatures manipulated by Philip. This amalgamation of the real (human) and the magical (puppet) by the novelist gives rise to Magic Realism. The fantastic atmosphere surrounding the frightening Uncle Philip, his surreal puppets and the darkness and sensuality of the text add to the magical experience.

One of the distinctive features of a magic realist fiction is the use of dreams, myths and fairy tales. The Magic Toyshop is structured like a fairy tale (though devoid of any absolute fantastic elements) with an orphaned heroine embarking on a voyage of self discovery, facing hurdles,
and learning to steer through formerly unknown and unfamiliar situations. Melanie, thus finds herself thrown into a weird, alien world inhabited by grotesque characters. Sarah Gamble compares Melanie to Alice in Wonderland, as she moves "into a dimension where the real and the fantastic mix and mingle... However, this is no escapist fantasy, but one which like a fairy tale, is continually referring back to the social conditions out of which it is produced" (Writing 70). Carter has adopted an "anti-realist" style which aided by biblical allusion, fairy tales and myth lends a magical and fantastical feel to the novel. To put it in other words, she narrates a realistic tale but the style implemented has Gothic and mystical undertones. The techniques adopted by the novelist aid in "fictionality of realism" (Gamble, Fiction 23). Carter a true "demythologiser" makes these myths and fairy tales less mysterious and mythical. She gives a more human character to them thus permitting a more vivid perception and assessment. The beautiful and intricate weaving of these motifs, make readers better equipped to understand and interpret Melanie's hopes and fears and connect with them. Following is a section of an interview of the novelist by Anna Katsavos which will help in understanding the concept of "demythologising":

ANNA KATSAVOS: In "Notes From the Front Line" you say that you are not in the remythologising business but in the "demythologizing business." What exactly do you mean?

ANGELA CARTER: Well, I'm basically trying to find out what certain configurations of
imagery in our society, in our culture, really stand for, what they mean, underneath the kind of semireligious coating that makes people not particularly want to interfere with them.

AK: In what sense are you defining myth?

AC: In a sort of conventional sense; also in the sense that Roland Barthes uses it in Mythologies - ideas, images, stories that we tend to take on trust without thinking what they really mean, without trying to work out what, for example, the stories of the New Testament are really about.

AK: In modern poetry women openly use traditional figures of patriarchal mythology, figures like Circe, Leda, Helen, not only to reinvent them but to retell their stories, as you say in The Sadeian Woman, "in the service of women." To what extent do you rely on traditional mythical figures in your writing? Are you drawn more to a particular mythology than to another?

AC: I used to be more interested in it. I'm not generally interested in doing that. I mean I'm not terribly interested in these particular characters. The second novel that I wrote, a very long time ago, The Magic Toyshop, has a whole apparatus about Leda and the swan, and it turns out that the swan is just a puppet. I wrote that a very long time ago, when I really didn't know what I was doing, and even so it turns out that the swan is an artificial construct, a puppet, and, somebody, a man, is putting strings on the puppet. That was ages ago, over ten years ago, when I wrote that. The idea was in my mind before I had sorted it out. But I just stopped using these configurations
because they just stopped being useful to me.

(11-17)

Melanie is the Eve obsessed with her own beauty and transfixed by her image and reflection in the mirror. Her sexual and sensual impulse acts as temptation and prompts her to slide into her mother's wedding dress all “Moonlight, satin, roses” and venture out into the garden. The garden is filled with flowers of “un-guessable sweetness”, “dewy grass” murmuring and rippling, the fruit laden apple tree, trees “with a dreaming cargo of birds” (Toyshop 17). This lusciousness, luxuriance, fragrance and peace are symbolic of the Garden of Eden:

A fresh little grass-scented wind blew through the open window and stroked her neck, stirring her hair. Under the moon, the country spread out like a foreign and enchanted land, where the corn was orient and immortal wheat, neither sown nor reaped, terra incognita, untrodden by the foot of man, untouched by his hand. Virgin. (16)

According to some critics, Melanie's life lends itself beautifully to the biblical and religious allegory. Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden as a punishment for consuming the forbidden fruit is paralleled by Melanie's unwilling eviction from a life of luxury and comfort into a dismal world. At the core of this sentence is her intoxicating sexuality which forced her into her mother’s wedding gown and led to her loss of innocence. By wearing the wedding dress, Melanie tastes the forbidden fruit (gains sexual awareness) too early. The last scene of the novel which depicts Melanie and Finn facing “each other in a wild surmise” (200) in the garden, can be
connected to the moment of creation, as Adam and Eve stand prepared to meet the new world in the garden.

A very renowned myth which finds place in this novel is of Leda and the Swan. Uncle Philip through his puppet show recreates the magic of the myth where Zeus in the guise of a swan seduces Leda. Melanie playing Leda, “attempts to flee her heavenly visitant but his beauty and majesty bear her to ground” (Toyshop 166). Zeus – the swan is a puppet created by Uncle Philip. The juxtaposition of opposite polarities of a human being and puppet - the real and the unreal aided by Carter’s perfect portrayal and delineation of the scene appear as real and life like. The use of this motif also stresses Uncle Philip’s inner urge to reduce men and women of flesh and blood to puppets whose strings are controlled by his hands. Carter brilliantly reveals the thoughts going through Melanie’s disturbed mind as she played Leda:

... Uncle Philips, all clock-work, might rush out and savage her. This possibility seemed real and awful. All her laughter was snuffed out. She was hallucinated; she felt herself not herself, wrenched from her own personality, watching this whole fantasy from another place; and, in this staged fantasy, anything was possible. Even that the swan, the mocked up swan, might assume reality itself and rape this girl in a blizzard of white feathers. The swan towered over the black-haired girl who was Melanie and who was not. (166)

Carter employs a variety of classic fairy tales to depict the predicament of Melanie and her siblings. Fairy tales were initially used to
instruct children, especially girls on the verge of adolescence about morals and their expected societal roles and behaviours. The trials, the girls in the fairy tales “undergo describe a symbolic as well as a literal process of transformation: from childhood to maturity, from victim to heroine, from incompleteness to wholeness” (Lowry). Carter has made a reference to a variety of fairy tales but these allusions are paradoxical as Melanie’s life becomes a harsh fairy tale at an age when children of the bygone eras would have been hearing them:

Fairy-tales can smuggle a disturbing theme across the borders of consciousness without pushing the receivers' faces in it. They've been told to children and youths for centuries for this reason: they're stories about family strife and sexual danger, about intellectual curiosity and impatience with social hierarchy, but they remain in disguise, in the land of far away and long ago and once upon a time. (Lucky)

This novel carries various allusions to the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood which has numerous interpretations. The most significant and convincing being the “puberty ritual” of red Riding Hood - a little girl being transformed into an adult woman; her sexual awakening and rebirth into a new person. This tale is appropriately used to portray the regeneration of Melanie who passes through similar stages and finally evolves into a new person. Uncle Philip, when he orders Finn to “rehearse a rape” with Melanie, is behaving in a manner comparable to Red Riding Hood’s mother. They both are conscious of the dangers involved but still encourage the act. Finn portrayed as a wolf here, (but unlike the fairy tale)
comprehends that his position is being abused and restrains himself both mentally and physically. On the way to her uncle’s house, Melanie notices the shops being “brightly lighted” (Toyshop 38) and delightfully coloured. This parallels the distractions Red Riding Hood encounters on her way to grandma’s house. Before they enter their Uncle’s “dimly lit” house (39), “Finn pushed at the door, which stuck momentarily on a thick doormat as if unwilling to let them in” (39). This not only contrasts the ease with which the wolf enters the grandmother’s house but also demonstrates the magnitude of the task - both emotional and physical that Melanie faces to settle herself in a new gloomy and dismal world.

There is also an allusion to Madame de Beaumont’s version of Beauty and the Beast. Melanie had always dreamed of a handsome, well-groomed and rich bridegroom who could easily materialise her fantasies of a honeymoon in Cannes, Venice and Miami Beach. In reality, Finn has none of these attributes but still she accepts him because the mature Melanie realises that it is the beauty within which is of greater significance. Carter also uses Snow White, not only because the plot reflects a girl’s development into a young woman but also fits in with Carter’s theory of patriarchal society. In the English translation of Schneewittchen (meaning Snow White in German) by D.L. Ashliman, the dwarfs in the forest took pity on Snow White and said:

"If you will keep house for us, and cook, make beds, wash, sew, and knit, and keep everything clean and orderly, then you can stay with us,"
and you shall have everything that you want." (Grimm)

Uncle Philip too controls and domesticates Melanie in a similar manner - "Why shouldn't the girl do something for her keep?" (Toyshop 133). The use of mirrors is another point of reference that links the novel with the fairy tale. Melanie shatters the mirror after she learns about the death of her parents because in it she sees the reflection of the girl who killed her parents while in Snow White the mirror symbolised evil.

The novel also has undertones of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Melanie’s actions and disregard for her mother’s wedding dress is similar to Goldilocks’ using and damaging items belonging to others and finally being frightened by the bears and running away. Melanie is also aware of misdemeanour and believes it to be the cause of her parent’s death and her forced banishment from home. Carter refers to the fairy tale while describing Aunt Margaret eating “Baby Bear portion” (73) of the porridge, to highlight her fear arising from Uncle Philip’s presence.

The Chinese romantic fable Willow Pattern too has been referred by the novelist, when she describes Melanie’s feeling on Monday mornings:

... she would look at the little bridge on her willow pattern plate and she could run across it away from her Uncle Philip’s house to where flowering trees were. (74)

This tale is about a wealthy Mandarin’s beautiful daughter who falls in love with her father’s accounting assistant - a commoner. The father does
not approve of their relationship and arranges his daughter’s marriage to a powerful Duke on the day when blossoms fall from the willow tree but the lovers manage to escape (crossing a bridge) on the day of the wedding. However, one day the Duke learns of their refuge and sends his soldiers to capture them and puts the lovers to death. The gods, moved by their plight, transform the lovers into a pair of doves. Melanie and Finn, Aunt Margaret and Francie symbolise the lovers of the fairy tale while Uncle Philip represents the pitiless father.

The novel like magical realist stories has a dream-like landscape and takes the help of folk-lore and myth to question the true nature of reality. Carter by blending biblical allusions, myths and fairy tales with Melanie’s life – her hopes and fears, performs dual functions. She successfully demythologizes the myths and fairy tales by dissecting them, furthermore, she enables the readers to connect and relate to them. Carter was interested in the manner people perceived their experience(s) and mythology. In an interview with Rosemary Carroll, Carter asserts that by “taking apart mythologies”, she is able to “find out what basic, human stuff they are made of.” Secondly by merging these myths and fairy tales within her realist setting, themes and descriptions she was able to make her narratives appear magical and fictional.

Apparently, *The Magic Toyshop* does not appear to be Gothic. It is set in the recent past probably in the 1950s. Hundred years have passed since the National Exposition of 1852 is the obvious reference made by Finn as he walked with Melanie towards the “pleasure ground.” Nor do
the characters of the novel dwell in castles. However, the Gothic undertones make themselves felt in the distinct Gothic setting of the novel. Uncle Phillip's "chilly, high, inconvenient house with its threatening vistas of brown paint" (Toyshop 94) is located in a run-down and neglected south London suburb. The walls of the kitchen were grease streaked and those of the dining room were damp stained. The lavatory was devoid of hot water, soap, toilet paper and proper flushing system. The house was decaying and falling apart where its denizens "lived like pigs" (77). Finn takes Melanie for a walk one day and shows her a once stately middle-class neighbourhood but now a sad and depressed place "crumbling in decay," (98). The park - a vestige of the "vast Gothic castle, a sort of Highland fortress, only gargantuan, . . . made of papier-mâché specially treated to withstand the weather" (99). The castle with all its "goods and chattels and art and inventions" burnt down with flames in 1914 and all that remained was "the graveyard of a pleasure ground" which lay in "sodden neglect" and "pervasive despair" (100-101). Even the "Queen of the Wasteland" (103) - Queen Victoria's statue was "slime and fungus streaked" (104). It is in these decaying yet mystifying ruins of the pleasure garden that Finn kisses Melanie, paving way for "a real beginning of a deep mystery between them" (149).

The first indication of decay in Melanie's life appears with her mother's torn wedding dress, followed by the death of her parents - that is decay in its most prominent form. Melanie's psychological breakdown and her social decline from a middle class background to working class life at
Uncle Phillip's is also a form of decay. She finds herself in close proximity to “dirty and common” working class men for the first time in life:

Melanie began to smell the men. She was puzzled for some moments as to the source of the smell, so little did she expect her brothers would be so dirty... their smell filled her nostrils until she almost choked with it. And also with horror, for she had never sat close to men who smelt before. A ferocious, unwashed, animal reek came from them both. (Toyshop 83)

Decay in the personalities of the inhabitants of the house is also explicit. Aunt Margret's dumbness - “a terrible affliction” is also a form of decay as she is not able to express her thoughts and desires to anyone. Another example of the diminishing and decay of Melanie’s and Aunt Margret’s personalities is their external appearance and way of dressing. The “painfully thin” Aunt Margaret with “no blood at all showing in cheeks or narrow lips” (40) dressed plainly and unflatteringly is an embodiment of a personality slowly fading away. Elements of decay are also visible in Finn’s untidiness, his lack of hygiene, his discoloured teeth and decaying molar.

As in many Gothic novels, the protagonist in The Magic Toyshop is also a lonesome and vulnerable female who is faced with the uncertainties of interpersonal relationships, gender politics and people who want to exploit and control her. Melanie, her parents having died in a plane crash, is left at the mercy and shelter of Uncle Philip - a patriarch and “a monster
with a voice so loud she was afraid it would bring the roof down and bury them all . . ." (Toyshop 77). The man she finally wants “to be in love with” is no handsome, valiant and perfect prince but the dishevelled beatnik Finn. He explains to Melanie that she is attracted to him due to the “proximity” they share and because he is the only eligible man around. Melanie is the virgin curious of her own sexuality, eagerly waiting “in an agony of apprehension” (105) to experience the pleasures of her erotic awakening and to “get it over with.” She is the re-embodiment of the Gothic heroine in distress and loneliness. On the verge of adulthood, she needed the help and guidance of a mother figure but there was no one around to explain to her the truths of life, to soothe and smooth away her fears and “nervous, unlocalised excitement”(149). “She felt lonely and chilled, walking along the long, brown passages, past secret doors, shut tight. Bluebeard’s castle” (82). The moment Melanie is forced to play Leda, we as readers begin to fear the ulterior drive and violent schema of Philip Flower. Despite depicting Melanie’s dilemmas and fears concerning adulthood, Carter never portrays female sexuality (Melanie’s) as dangerous or threatening instead she describes it with vigour and vitality.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Honeybuzzard – the “fledgling figure” of Carter’s first novel Shadow Dance matures and evolves into the puppet master - Uncle Philip - “hewn and cut out of thunder itself” (92). He is the powerful, impulsive and tyrannical Gothic male of the novel. His character is a Gothic motif employed by Carter to depict yet another Gothic theme of sexual and patriarchal oppression. He
was a man of “immense, overwhelming figure” (69) who “ponderously seated himself, presiding majestically” (Toyshop 71) at the head of the table on a large chair. His “patriarchal majesty” and “authority was stifling.” He could not bear a woman in trousers and to him such a woman was synonymous to a harlot. His liking for “silent women” is apparent in the dumbness of his own wife - “struck dumb on her wedding day, she found her old voice again the day she was freed” (197). Aunt Margaret – an image of “passivity and dependence” (Wright, 141) trembled at his “leonine voice” (Toyshop 78), shuddered and was cowed by his presence. His presence was mostly accompanied by an “oppressive silence” (74). If anyone could speak, it was him alone. He comes across as a misogynist who “never talked to his wife except to bark brusque commands” (124). He kept her “bird-like” (42), imprisoned in a cage choked with a silver necklace. The tyrannical presence of this “beast of the Apocalypse” (77) snuffed out the freedom of the inhabitants of the house and “chilled the air through which he moved” (124).

His Victorian authoritarian impulse is palpable in his brutality, his viciousness and his queer puppet show. His ultimate aim is to turn his extended family into mere puppets. His mental illness is evident in his attempt to control Melanie’s sexuality by directing Finn to rehearse Leda and the Swan - a rape, with her and when he represents her as a puppet while staging the same. Melanie “is literally transformed into the doll of Uncle Phillip’s imaginings” (Wisker 122). Through the puppet show Uncle Phillip gives vent to his sexual fantasies of raping Melanie. His perversion
is highlighted when he examines Melanie before the performance and expresses his dissatisfaction by stating: “I wanted my Leda to be a little girl. Your tits are too big” (Toyshop 143).

When Melanie demands an explanation for Uncle Philips malevolence, Finn rightly points out “you’re so fresh and innocent, all of you, so you’re something to change and destroy” (152). He also signifies the patriarchal Augustan who has control over the long oppressed Irish race. Aunt Margaret with her red hair and fair skin and her two brothers Francie and Finn are Irish - the old Celtic lost race. The last pages of the book come alive with Uncle Philip's roaring voice and shouts of insane glee. We witness the extremity of his brute savagery when he finally sets the house on fire.

Gothic literature is concerned with boundaries and transgression of boundaries. The beginning of the novel portraits Melanie confronting the boundary between a young girl and a woman. Her foray into the garden dressed in her mother’s wedding dress is an attempt to explore and cross this boundary. Her parent’s untimely death forces Melanie and her siblings to give up the rich, luxurious middle-class life of rural comfort for a life of “down-on-its-luck South London” (39). The conflict between the upper middle class and the poor working class corresponds to the traditional Gothic opposition of the civilized with the barbaric. The boundary is perceptible and distinct in the standard of living of both the classes – their mode of dressing, their speech, accent and their leisure activities.
Yet another boundary which Carter highlights (though not explicitly) is that between the English and the Irish (foreigner). The untutored, untamed and uncivilized Maggie, Francie, and Finn (who represent the savage Irish race) were artists. Finn painted and danced, Maggie was a great cook, and all three played music. Melanie, who possessed none of these skills realizes how “they were red and had substance and she, Melanie, was forever grey, a shadow” (Toyshop 77). She also becomes conscious of the fact that among the Jowle siblings “love was almost palpable... warm as the fire, strong and smoothing as sweet tea” (43). This stands in opposition to the relationship between Melanie and her brother Jonathon which lacked the warmth and sweetness of love.

The theme of imprisonment is represented in The Magic Toyshop through the dictatorial and patriarchal Uncle Phillip. Melanie becomes aware of her captivity when she is informed by Finn regarding (what Uncle Phillip considered) the appropriate dress code for women. Finn explains to Melanie:

“He can’t abide a woman in trousers. He won’t have a woman in the shop if she’s got trousers on and he sees her. He shouts her out into the street for a harlot.” (Toyshop 62)

As mentioned earlier, Melanie is made to work in the toyshop to earn her maintenance and is even forced to play the part of Leda in one of Uncle Phillip’s private puppet shows. Uncle Phillip’s preference for “silent women” without a voice or opinion of their own is evident in the dumbness of his wife which “came to her on her wedding day, like a curse”
(Toyshop 37). Aunt Maggie's silence signifies her imprisonment through marriage to Uncle Philip. The most palpable symbol of the caging and possession of his wife is the choker (silver necklace) – the only piece of jewellery he ever gifted her. Even Finn and Francie live a caged existence. Uncle Phillip, who had taken them in when they were orphaned, made them earn their keep in his house. Finn being Uncle Phillip's apprentice, is the primary object of his violence and brutality and often came out of the workroom with swollen eyes and bruises. Melanie's two siblings are also imprisoned by the toy-maker. Victoria is included into the family as “Aunt Maggie's baby” and Jonathon with his extreme obsession for building ship models, willingly contributes for his maintenance by building ships that were sold in the shop.

“Vulnerable characters who find themselves in the clutches of MONSTERS or menaced by psychopaths retreat to the bestial logic of the haunted and instinctively search out safe haven” (Snodgrass 122). This gives rise to the flight motif in traditional Gothic. The idea of running away from Uncle Phillip's house occurs to Melanie following her first breakfast in her new home. The filthiness and squalor of the non-functional bathroom in contrast to her old bathroom - “a temple to cleanliness” (Toyshop 57) and the tyrannizing and terrifying presence of Uncle Phillip force her to think thus. She yearns for independence and imagines herself taking up a job and living by herself in a bed-sitting room: “Brewing Nescafe on her own gas-ring... and painting one wall geranium red and another cornflower blue and the others white.”
The thought of flight also occurs to her on Monday mornings when:

... she would look at the little bridge on her willow pattern plate and wish she could run across it away from her Uncle Phillip's house to where the flowering trees were. (74)

In spite of these thoughts she lacks the courage and the determination to escape. The first rebellion against the despotic Uncle Phillip comes from Finn. He chops Uncle Philip's Swan puppet (symbolizing him and his intentions) and occupies his place at the dinner table. When Uncle Phillip leaves for a day, the household resounds with gaiety and merriment till the time of his return. Uncle Phillip in a fit of anger sets the house on fire, when he discovers the covert incestuous love between Aunt Margaret and Francie. This incident liberates Aunt Maggie who “found her old voice again” (197) together with her strength and courage. In this closing section of the book Melanie's desire of flight is fulfilled when she and Finn break out of the burning house at Aunt Margaret's insistence.

The theme of incest introduced at the end of the novel is yet another essential Gothic motif. In spite of the social and moral embargo against it, incest has been a common theme to be incorporated in the early British and American Gothic novels. The main objective in the use of this striking motif was to highlight the instability of the social hierarchy. It was a symbolic petition to elders to understand and maintain their roles as compassionate guardians to their inferiors. Many writers and critics
treated incest as the incapacity to escape the wrongs of the past in order to build a faultless future. The novels predominantly depicted unwitting incest and its detection eventually resulted in tragic deaths, suicide, madness, ostracism or exile. By dwelling on such catastrophic consequences, the novelists expressed no literal fear of pervasive incest, but rather a fear of the alarming condition incest represents: the lack of a well-defined social system. Incest jeopardised familial relationships, leading to the disintegration of the family, the basic unit of a society:

In many gothic nineteenth-century works, including those of Edgar Allan Poe, this destruction of the family is often literal. In Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), for example, the incestuous family is doomed by its geographic isolation; the house is literally "closed in" by the surrounding lake. Secluded in this way, according to James B. Twitchell (1987), the Usher siblings "are hermetically sealed in the cocoon of family. For them there can be no sexual excursions beyond the family border and so they must collapse in on themselves."

(Dewsbury)

Incestuous relationships are a dominant feature of the Cartarian novels. The intimate scene between Aunt Margaret and Francie "locked together in the most primeval of passions" (Toyshop 195) leaves Melanie, who had never encountered it "wide-eyed and grave" with shock:

The fiddle and flute were cast down on the floor. Francie and Aunt Margaret embraced. It was a lover's embrace, annihilating the world, as if taking place at midnight on the crest of a hill, with a tearing wind beating the branches
above them. The brother and sister kneeled. 
*(Toyshop 193-194)*

Carter, by using this motif seems to emphasize that the seclusion and loneliness in which the characters lived was possibly responsible for this obnoxious perversion. The patriarchal rule of Uncle Phillip is transgressed by the incestuous relationship of his wife. The house (nurturing incestuous relationship) meets a destiny similar to that in conventional Gothic, when it is burnt down by Uncle Phillip along with the persons involved in the act.

*The Magic Toyshop* is supported by a fairy tale with strong Gothic features - the story of Bluebeard’s castle. Uncle Phillip, similar to Bluebeard is the sovereign of his house – a tyrant who imprisons his wife within the house. Like Bluebeard’s castle, Uncle Phillip’s house also hides secrets behind closed doors - secret of music and joy of the Jowle siblings and the secret of incestuous love of Maggie (his wife) and Francie (Maggie’s brother). Carter employs Charles Perrault’s *Bluebeard*, as a parallel to show Melanie overcome the revulsion of Finn’s “extraordinary, extravagant, almost passionate dirtiness” (96). This also reflects the wife’s reaction to Bluebeard’s repulsive defect. In Perrault’s version, the wife drops the key to the locked room in a pool of blood and stains it. The stain signifies double misdemeanour, moral as well as sexual. This is paralleled by Melanie’s original temptation of trying on her mother’s wedding dress and the development of the awareness of her own sexuality.
Bluebeard - the Gothic villain, in the fairy story owned a typical Gothic castle where he organised bountiful and generous parties. The guests were allowed access to all rooms but one which was kept locked. Similarly, in *The Magic Toyshop* no one is allowed to enter Uncle Philip’s workshop in his absence. In the fairy tale, the wife exposes Bluebeard’s horrid secret which led her brothers to kill him and burn down the castle. This is replicated in the novel through Uncle Philip’s discovery of his wife Margaret and her brother Francie’s incestuous relationship and the burning down of the house. As Francie appears to confront Uncle Philip he is described by Carter as emerging from: “one of the sinister doors of Bluebeard’s castle” (*Toyshop* 198). The house is also referred to as “Bluebeard’s castle” when Finn leads Melanie to his room to “rehearse”:

They climbed the stairs together past all the closed doors of Bluebeard’s castle. (145)

In Joseph Jacob’s translation of *Bluebeard* into English as *Mr. Fox* in 1890, Bluebeard’s fiancée manages to escape his clutches, with a detached hand. Melanie sees in the kitchen drawer “a hand, cut off”-“freshly severed hand, all bloody at the roots” (118). Francie tries to brush away this thought from Melanie’s mind by stating that “the distress of your loss might make you see things. It is only natural” (121). The author names Melanie’s teddy bear as Edward. This name too is borrowed from *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983), Margaret Atwood’s version of *Bluebeard*, in which she mentions “Edward Bear” as moniker for her husband.
The grotesque and terrifying toys hanging in the backdrop, are also a Gothic motif employed by the author. The sense of apprehension and anxiety which pervades the narrative and overwhelms the senses of the reader along with Carter’s use of language adds to the Gothic atmosphere of gory details.

_The Magic Toyshop_ written in the third person narrative, is an incredibly well-written, frightfully compelling and at the same time disturbing novel. Carter’s language is audacious, celebratory and full of life even when it is at its darkest. The strange rhythm and imagery are spellbinding. As a writer, she has a remarkable skill of exquisitely detailed writing which generates a mental picture rich in texture, colour and volume. Unvarying reference to facial features, fabrics, costumes and factual descriptions conjure up an almost theatrical dramatic picture, which draw the readers towards its dark, surreal and dreamlike world. “Carter’s imagination was theatrical in the red plush sense. She was a visionary props mistress: every toy in her magic toyshop was to marvel at... (Kellaway).

Endowed with a brilliant imagination and élan of style Carter comes across as a writer of intense and extraordinary tales for adults. Albeit _The Magic Toyshop_ is structured like a fairy tale, it is not a traditional fantastic tale that aims to surprise. Carter packs her writing with rich tapestry of literary references and “revisionary inquiries into folklore, legend and fairy-tale” thereby adding a magical and fantastical quality to it. She exploits the pattern of the tales and “demythologises”
them so as to allow the book to be read as a social and cultural critique.

Her fantasy is deeply rooted in realism and aims at subverting traditional patterns of patriarchy, femininity and sexuality.

Web. 28 March 2010.


Web. 15 October 2012.


Chapter 4

The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman

(1972)

As stated in the introduction of this study, the 1970s and 1980s were the most creative and flourishing period of Angela Carter's literary career. *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* was published in Great Britain by Rupert Hart – Davis in 1972 and in the United States of America by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., under the title *The War of Dreams* in 1973. This novel is founded on a strong and eclectic philosophical basis - Freudian psychoanalysis, De Sade's concept of sex, Alfred Jarry's science of imagery solutions - the pataphysics, Eric Satie's new perception of music, Magical Realism, Surrealism, Gothicism, Romanticism, Feminism, critical theory, postmodern miscellany and reappropriation and other branches of Continental philosophy.

The novel is a magical and satirical adventure, profoundly influenced by the picaresque tradition. Summarisation and classification of the novel becomes difficult and quagmireish on account of its diverse and rich texture. This book has been described as theoretical fiction, as it distinctly explores some of the theoretical and social issues of its time, particularly the counterculture, feminism, mass media, societal obsession with images and the schism between the rational from the irrational
(which arises out of our desires). Ali Smith considers this novel as one of those landmarks in storytelling which represents its time, defines its generation and thus shapes modern Britain.

The title *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, immediately recalls E.T.A Hoffman, the German Romantic writer of fantasy and horror. The theme as well as the plot structure of the novel corresponds to that of Hoffman's short story *The Sandman* (1816). In this short story, Professor Spalanzani, the scientist-father accidently creates desire through the creation of an automaton - daughter Olimpia, who incites Nathanael's (the protagonist) madness. Carter's Hoffman uses his daughter Albertina to produce desire which is challenged by Desiderio. The novel also brings to mind the name of Albert Hofmann, the Swiss scientist known for the synthesis of Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25); a chemical famous for inducing psychological effects and altered thinking process. The imagery employed by Carter seems very similar to those experienced by Albert Hofmann when he had accidently absorbed a small quantity of the LSD through his fingertips. To quote his words:

... affected by a remarkable restlessness, combined with a slight dizziness. At home I lay down and sank into a not unpleasant intoxicated-like condition, characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination. In a dreamlike state, with eyes closed (I found the daylight to be unpleasantly glaring), I perceived an uninterrupted stream of fantastic pictures, extraordinary shapes with intense, kaleidoscopic play of colours. After some two hours this condition faded away. (Hofmann 15)
The story evolves in the form of Desiderio's journey “through space and time, up a river, across a mountain, over the sea, through a forest” (*Infernal* 13) to reach the magician’s (Hoffman’s) castle. Carter’s description of Desiderio’s journey, follows the fantastical mode of writing of Homer, Swift and Carroll who used journey as a device to create a world of unbridled imagination. The introduction of the book summarises the entire novel as well as reveals the climax and the ending. The setting of the book is of an anonymous Latin American country. The protagonist is Desiderio - “the desired one” (54) which in Italian means wish, longing and desire, a name apt in context of the title and theme of the book. The novel is in the first person narrative, narrated from Desiderio's perspective. Desiderio - now an old man, sets to write down his memories of “the Great war” (11) which had come to an end fifty years ago. The outcome of his labour is a picaresque tale of heroic adventure dedicated to his ladylove.

He was “the confidential secretary to the Minister of Determination” (12) in the main city, which was “under siege” (15) by Doctor Hoffman's reality distorting machines. With the help of these machines Doctor Hoffman – “the diabolical” (11) adversary, enlarged the dimensions of time and space, allowing ever-changing mirages and illusion to dwell in the same dimension as the living which steered the city towards insanity. He was “waging a massive campaign against human reason itself” (11). Unlike Desiderio, many people had gone mad in reaction to the apparitions, and the city, severed from communication
with the outside world, became a place of widespread lunacy and crime, thus calling a state of emergency to be declared. Desiderio, leading an uninteresting life devoid of any passion, remains unaffected by these images. Though apathetic to these haunting phantoms, he is regularly visited every night by a woman “with flesh of glass” (Infernal 26), the manifestation of Albertina, Hoffman’s daughter and his prospective lover. One night, he dreams of a black swan, ugly yet marvellous, and with a look depicted as evil. Her swan song is described as “savage” - a “thrilling, erotic contralto” (31) and around her neck is a collar bearing the name, Albertina, who is to become the focal point of all Desiderio’s desire.

The first chapter, The City Under Siege describes in detail, the city before and after the siege and how and when things began to change. Readers are also given an insight into the family background and life of Dr Hoffman, who was some twenty years ago, a distinguished professor of physics at the university of P., but had suddenly vanished one day without leaving any trace. However, a few years later he started his experiments on the city in small ways. Also, noteworthy is the episode of the Minister’s rendezvous with the ambassador - Dr Hoffman’s special emissary. Desiderio, also accompanies the Minister to record the conversation which took place between the two. Later, under the decree of the Minister of Determination, Desiderio embarks on an expedition to find Hoffman. Thus begins the fantastical journey of Desiderio, in which he experiences a variety of pleasures and dangers. He finds himself involved in a number of
wild adventures featuring explicit scenes of eroticism that comprise sexual anathemas/taboos.

The second chapter of the novel, *The Mansion of Midnight* brings us to the first stop on Desiderio's journey. He encounters Doctor Hoffman's former physics professor who now worked as a blind peep-show proprietor. His visit to the sexualized exhibits of the peep-show present strange and grotesque images (of sexuality and death). He later discovered that the images of the peep-show, bore mysterious semblance to the events that had occurred within his own life. The exhibits of the peep-show were Doctor Hoffman's samples - his plan of action, which were an imperative part of his schemes. Desiderio's first destination is the Mayor's Office in town S., whose Mayor had disappeared. At the Mayor's home he fornicates with the Mayor's "beautiful somnambulist" (Infernal 48) daughter, Mary Anne (symbolic of the mad and drowning Ophelia) while she was in her sleep. When Mary Anne mysteriously turns up dead, Desiderio is charged for her murder; however, he succeeds to escape albeit with a bullet wound.

The chapter, *The River People*, shows Desiderio being saved by an Amerindian family that lives on barges and "sailed from ports to cities to ports as heedlessly as if the waterways were magic carpets of indifference" (70) and speak "a liquid and melodious language" (66). With these river people, he shares a common Indian background and almost marries Nao-Kurai's daughter. While he indulges in "elaborate love play" (85) with his would-be-child bride he also gets physically involved with the girl's
grandmother. The night before the wedding is scheduled, he begins to suspect them of intending to eat him (as they believed in old myths about the transfer of knowledge through anthropophagy) and thus runs away.

The fourth chapter, *The Acrobats of Desire* shows his return to the seaside town, where he joins the travelling show with the old professor, serving as his apprentice. He makes friends with a number of other performers and learns from the professor about Hoffman's past and the metaphysics behind the doctor's samples. But these blissful times too end with the arrival of nine Moroccan acrobats. They initially enthrall Desiderio with their astonishing performance but later rape him. Subsequently, a landslide accompanied with rain and wind destroys everything - the whole town, the blind philosopher, the circus carnival and the peep-show samples of Doctor Hoffman - “the greatest single weapon in his armoury” (*Infernal* 120), leaving Desiderio as the only survivor. The force of nature is shown to be so strong and so primal that all of Hoffmanian potential fall short of conquering it.

Shortly afterwards, he meets the megalomaniacal Lithuanian Count, who takes him into his company. The count is one of the most interesting characters in the novel and is clearly influenced by the Marquis de Sade. The Count believed himself to be an act of negation, “a blasphemous libertine” and “a blood-thirsty debauchee” (126). He is on the run from a black pimp who was chasing him on account of the murder of a prostitute in New Orleans. But in reality, the pimp is his dark half, a being willed in reality as a form of self-abuse. In their travels together the
Count wanting to indulge his baser instincts, goes to a brothel called the "House of Anonymity". There in a room of inhuman whores that seem as much animal as they are human, Desiderio meets Albertina disguised as one of the whores. From this point onward, Albertina uses her father's machines to travel with Desiderio, first as the Count's servant Lafleur and later as herself. Attempting to flee the pimp by sailing to Europe, the three end up being captured by pirates. In the chapter, _The Coast of Africa_ they encounter the Count's nemesis, this time as the chief of an African tribe. Desiderio, narrowly escapes becoming the victim of cannibalism while the Count meets his end being boiled in a pot by the cannibal chieftain. Desiderio continues his journey with Albertina (who has now revealed herself) into the nebulous time.

In _Lost in Nebulous Time_, they meet a strange and religiously rigid race of centaurs. The chapter brings to mind Swift's _Gulliver's Travels_ and appears to be Carter's most palpable homage to Swift. On the first night of their arrival Albertina is raped by the males of the town and Desiderio by the females. When the centaurs discover that Albertina is Desiderio's mate, they punish themselves (as self-flagellation was an essential aspect of their religion). Desiderio and Albertina spend some time as part of this society until they learn that their life is endangered yet again; for the centaurs intended to put them through a religious ceremony that would eventually kill them. Albertina sets fire to the area around them by her will power and summons one of her father's helicopters to carry them to his castle.
At Hoffman's castle, the Doctor explains his plans to reduce the world into its most basic constituents. Desiderio learns that Hoffman used the "Eroto-energy" (Infernal 206) produced by 50 copulating couples for his war against reality. He wanted to exploit Desiderio and Albertina for the same energy to propel the omnipotent desire machine. Though Desiderio loved Albertina, he ultimately chooses reality over the fulfilment of his desire when he kills both Doctor Hoffman and his daughter. As a result, Desiderio becomes the proclaimed hero of "the Great War" (11). Nevertheless, he continues to long for his dead lover. He could not renounce his own reality because he was jaded by the complexity of the "tumultuous and kinetic times" (11), and like the Minister, had an appreciation for "statis" and therefore desired for the anarchy to stop. He was also guided by his belief that "some things were necessarily impossible" (12).

Carter begins her novel with three perceptive and weighty epigraphs, one in French by Robert Desnos, one by Ludwig Wittgenstein and one by Alfred Jarry whose play Ubu Roi (1896) is often cited as a precursor to the surrealist theatre of the 1920s and 1930s. These quotes recapitulate the novelist's involvement with the imaginative and the fantastical, highlight her ideological and aesthetic purpose and underline the themes dealt within the book.

This novel can rightly be labelled as an embodiment of Magic Realism. The magical effect is created with the aid of Carter's exalted imagination and the power of her vision which is remarkable. The novelist
like a true magic realist merges both a careful observation of the real and the power of imagination to construct that reality. She begins the narrative with a realist description of the “solid”, “drab” (*Infernal* 15) and mundane city. The city built on a tidal river was populated with blacks, browns and Orientals. Though it was a rich and prosperous city which thrived on business yet parts of it were ugly due to the “picturesque squalor” (16) widespread in those parts. It had some notable buildings dating back to the colonial period like the Cathedral, the Opera House and several stone memorials. The realist description of the city is followed by the detailed account of its “phantasmagoric redefinition” (18) which was the outcome of Doctor Hoffman’s desire machines.

Life in the city is marked by weird and bizarre happenings and a “tempest of fantasy” (31). Sugar began to taste a little salty; a door which was always blue turned green; on one occasion the audience in the Opera house enjoying the performance of *The Magic Flute* turned to peacocks – “everyone in the gallery was wearing a green skull cap and behind each spectator stirred an incandescent, feathered fan” (17); every mind was filled with hallucinations; ministers at a meeting vomited throughout the proceedings; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was washed overboard; “cloud palaces erected themselves then silently toppled” (18); chanting pillars exploded in middle of a hymn which metamorphosed into street lamps and later into flowers at night. These are some very initial instances of the “disruptive coup” (17) of Dr Hoffman which seized the city and its inhabitants in a “feverish delirium” (18) and “orgiastic panic” (17). The
city “became the arbitrary realm of dream” (*Infernal* 18). The siege reaches its point of culmination when typhoid and cholera take a heavy toll and statistics of burglary, arson, robbery, violence, rape and suicide rise to “astronomical heights” (21). The city in unrest knows no segregation between the state of waking and sleeping and becomes a phantasmagoria – of bizarre images becoming real:

Dead children came calling in nightgowns, rubbing the sleep and grave dust from their eyes . . . pigeons lolloped from illusory pediment to window ledges like volatile, feathered madmen, chattering vile rhymes and laughing in hoarse, throaty voices, or perched upon chimney stacks shouting quotations from Hegel . . . I often glanced at my watch only to find its hands had been replaced by a healthy growth of ivy or honeysuckle which while I looked, writhed impudently all over its face, concealing it. (19-21)

Carter in such passages provides outstandingly engaging fantastic and dreamlike images. People either awake or asleep, see phantoms of “dead children” and “abandoned lovers” (19). The images of Dr Hoffman’s desire machines were so rampant that “there was no longer any way of guessing what one would see when one would open one’s eyes in the morning for other people’s dreams insidiously invaded the bedroom while one slept” (19). The widespread images obliterate the margins of the real and the fantastical.

Desiderio is also troubled by the constant hallucinations which occur as he is on the threshold of sleep:
... I would be visited by a young woman in a négligé made of fabric the colour and texture of the petals of poppies which clung about her but did not conceal her quite transparent flesh, so the exquisite filigree of her skeleton was revealed quite clearly . . . She did not speak; she did not smile. Except for those faint quiverings of her imaginable substance, she did not move . . .

... occasionally she left an imperative written in lipstick on my dusty windowpane . . .

BE AMOROUS! . . . BE MYSTERIOUS! . . .
DON'T THINK LOOK; . . . WHEN YOU BEGIN TO THINK, YOU LOSE THE POINT. (Infernal 25-26)

The meeting of the Minister with Dr Hoffman's emissary is suffused with Magic Realism. The moment the emissary entered the restaurant where the meeting was scheduled, the lights fused - "A dozen tiny fireflies clicked into life at the nozzle of a dozen cigarette lighters" (32). The flames of the candlesticks (brought in by the waiters) moved by the breeze that "seemed to play about him" (32). There was something magical and mysterious about his beauty, his "reptilian liquidity", his movement like "soft coils" and his "ambiguous sophistication" (32) that leave the Minister and Desiderio nervous and uneasy. The negotiations fail as the minister refused to be bought by the agent's offer. This meeting echoes Marlowe's Doctor Faustus where the protagonist sells his soul to the devil for knowledge and power. The envoy is symbolic of
Mephistopheles (the representative of the Devil) who had come to bargain for Doctor Faustus' soul. After the agent leaves, the Minister says:

'If I were a religious man, Desiderio,' . . . 'I would say we just survived an encounter with Mephistopheles.' *(Infernal 38)*

Carter has employed the "Kafkaesque" image of metamorphosis in the novel, which is an important machinery employed by various magic realist writers. The most remarkable example of metamorphosis in the novel is the character of Albertina who appears to Desiderio in "a series of marvellous shapes formed at random in the kaleidoscope of desire" (13). The change and metamorphosis the city was going through provides a suitable backdrop for the physical transformation of Albertina. She appears to Desiderio in various forms: as a "curious, persistent hallucination" (25) of a young woman; as the male emissary of Dr Hoffman; as the dead Mayor's adolescent daughter - Mary Anne; as one of the metamorphosing girls in the "House of Anonymity"; as the count's valet Lafleur and finally as a hermaphrodite at Hoffman's castle. The various fantastic images of Albertina add to the magical texture of the narrative by transgressing the boundaries between the real and the magical. These transformations also lay emphasis on the idea of the constant and all-encompassing change. The shifting portrayal and metamorphosis of Albertina from a woman to man and vice-versa also becomes a vehicle for transgressing the boundaries of gender roles. Carter
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has employed the mode to deconstruct and to demythologise patriarchal and cultural codes.

A very prominent characteristic of Magic Realism is the carnivalesque. The travelling fair, peopled by bizarre and grotesque characters described in the chapter *The Acrobats of Desire* is the recreation of the carnivalesque by Carter. Desiderio meets these characters while he worked as an assistant to the peep-show proprietor. Madame de la Barbe, the bearded woman or the “Bearded Bride” (*Infernal* 106) is the “immensely handsome, widely travelled and the loneliest woman in the world” (105). She is “penetrated” (106) by the onlooker’s eyes on account of her personality which is a juxtaposition of a beard and a bosom along with exceptionally maternal instincts. Another weird figure is of Mamie Buckskin – the “sharp-shooter” who “was a paradox: a fully phallic female with the bosom of a nursing mother and a gun, death dealing erectile tissue, perpetually at her thigh” (108). Then there is the Alligator Man who “suffered from no human feelings” (111). In the travelling fair he performs as a man standing in a glass water tank up to his neck. He cannot bear the sunlight and has “shivering fits if he is out of the water for more than two or three hours” (111). Carter also presents a team of nine Moroccan acrobats who join the travelling carnival. The acrobats “shared a similar, almost female sinuosity of spine and marked development of the pectorals” (112). They appeared as artificial “plastic anagrams” that “negated physicality” (113). Their mindboggling performance leaves Desiderio awestruck:
To enter their circular arena was to step directly into the realm of the marvellous. To the weird music of a flute played by a veiled child, they created all the images that the human body could possibly make – an abstract, geometrical dissection of flesh that left me breathless. (113)

They took their heads off their neck with unparalleled skill and grace and juggled with them “so that a fountain of heads rose and fell in the arena” (Infernal 113). This was followed by the dismemberment and juggling of other parts of their body one after the other to be finally joined by “eighteen fringed, unblinking eyes” (114).

Carter reveals a set of characters who challenge the standard patriarchal character formation. Madame de la Barbe and Madame Buckskin – figures containing both feminine and masculine features are used by her to subvert the ideals of femininity constructed by patriarchy. The Alligator man, who was sold by his father to a travelling showman at the age of twelve, grows outside the patriarchal family structure and thus builds an identity of his own. The reflection of the disintegrating bodies of the acrobats in the mirror not only multiplies them but also heightens and increases the sense of the magical. The magical images of disintegration suggest a yearning for the desires which are denied existence by the cultural system. Carter by resorting to the carnivalesque:

... supports the unsupportable, assails the unassailable, at times regards the supernatural as natural, takes fiction as truth, and makes the extra ordinary or “magical” as viable a possibility as the ordinary or “real” so that no
true distinction is perceived or acknowledged
between the two. (Danow 3)

Carter has also introduced the concept of hybridity in the novel which is an important characteristic employed by a number of magic realist writers. In the chapter, *Lost in Nebulous Time*, Desiderio and Albertina meet a bizarre race of centaurs. In Classical Mythology, Centaurs were a race of monsters having the head, trunk, and arms of a man, and the body and legs of a horse. Apart from the detailed description of the main city, Carter also introduces the readers to other cultures and societies like the African tribe, the race of centaurs, the bestial whores in the “House of Anonymity” and the eccentric assortment of characters who make up the travelling fair. The juxtaposition of these inharmonious groups of people within the narrative lends a magical quality to it.

As stated earlier, criticism of the society is often an inherent aspect of Magic Realism. The fantastic and magical in Carter's novel becomes a critique of social and cultural practices. The magical in Carter is always linked to the real. Critics and readers should attend to the real through allegorical and metaphorical readings. From this perspective *Desire Machine* can also be regarded as a didactic work written in the magical form. The following lines from “Notes from the Front Line” make it clear that the novelist should not be ghettoized as solely fantastical:

I became mildly irritated (I'm sorry) when people, as they sometimes do, ask me about the 'mythic quality' of work I've written lately. Because I believe that all myths are products of
the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the demythologising business.

*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) also represents the pinnacle of Carter's research and experimentation with Surrealism. Carter's essay "The Alchemy of the Word" is a testimony of her initial enchantment with Surrealism and also states the rationale behind her decision to give it up later. She writes:

Surrealist beauty is convulsive. That is, you feel it, you don't see it - it exists as an excitation of the nerves. The experience of the beautiful is, like the experience of desire, an abandonment to vertigo, yet the beautiful does not exist as such. What do exist are images or objects that are enigmatic, marvellously erotic – or juxtapositions of objects, or people, or ideas, that arbitrarily extend our notion of the connections it is possible to make. In a way, the beautiful is put at the service of liberty.

(73)

The novel brilliantly captures the thoughts and principles of Surrealism. Viewed from the surrealist perspective, Dr Hoffman is a pertinent reincarnation of Breton (the fountainhead of the surrealist movement) and his attacks on the city appears to be philosophically associated with the ideal of Breton that "Man must be in permanent revolt against limits of all kinds . . . [to] transform the world" (Caws 73). The book gives us a vague insight into Desiderio's background of which much is left unsaid. We are told that he is "the fatherless son of a known prostitute of Indian extraction" (*Infernal* 62) and the nuns took care of
him after his mother’s death. The vagueness of Desiderio’s past actually suits the novel’s purpose — in keeping with the surrealistic argument that only the present state of mind, awareness and response, is essential. Hoffman’s ideals are synonymous to those of the surrealist revolution. His agent had come to strike a deal with the Minister and find out the price at which Hoffman could buy him. The minister’s allegation and interrogation about the changing city and the chaos which comes with it, elicits the response “for the sake of liberty” from the ambassador. An answer that resonates with Carter’s belief and statement of “beauty in the service of liberty.”

The surrealists were profoundly influenced by Freud and his theory of psychoanalysis. This book is open to psychoanalytic analysis primarily for the dream interpretation and secondly for the focus on sexual desire and phallic images. The Count who had devoted his “life to the humiliation and exaltation of the flesh” (Infernal 126) is the most suitable subject for this analysis. His ultimate aim is to attain his desire without any thought of the outcome: “I set my course by the fitfulness of fortune and perceive my random signposts only by the inextinguishable flame of my lust” (123). He represents the id, or the unrestrained sexual desire which according to Freud, human-beings try to repress and restrain throughout their life. Apart from this, the numerous phallic images are also open to psychoanalytic interpretation. The most arresting example of this is the bizarre costume Desiderio and the Count dress themselves in at “the House of Anonymity” which obliterates their faces and expressions
but disgustingly highlights their phallus. Carter seems to mock the sense of power that is associated with the phallus in most cultures. The exhibits of the peep-show proprietor which were marked by bizarre, horrific and erotic quality share strong resemblance to the surreal paintings of Salvador Dali.

The journey of the surrealist adventure eventually brings Desiderio to Hoffman's castle. The rejection of his desires in the form of Doctor Hoffman's sexually ambivalent daughter Albertina, helps him restore reality but first he has to kill both the doctor and his beloved. Nevertheless, his lament and regret is evident from the following statement:

... I am so old and sad now, and, without her, condemned to live in a drab, colourless world, as though I were living in a faded daguerreotype. Therefore – I, Desiderio, dedicate all my memories to Albertina Hoffman with my insatiable tears. (Infernal 14)

Rejection of the imagination is evident in Desiderio's choice of reality over unreality. This also leads us to the conclusion that Carter had ultimately, rejected chaos, unreality and Surrealism. Carter in "The Alchemy of the Word" states the reason for giving up Surrealism:

... although I thought [the surrealists] were wonderful, I had to give them up in the end. They were, with a few patronized exceptions, all men and they told me that I was the source of all mystery, beauty, and otherness, because I was a woman – and I knew that was not true. I
knew I wanted my fair share of the imagination, too. Not an excessive amount, mind; I wasn’t greedy. Just an equal share in the right to vision. (73)

But as stated earlier, her imagination is linked to the real and is a vehicle used for the manifestation of the real world and deals with the significant literary issues of her times. In *The Infernal Desire Machines*, the most significant aspect dealt is the universal struggle between the rational and the irrational or in Freudian terms, the struggle between the ego and the id or the reality principle and the pleasure principle. Desiderio’s mind is a battleground where the conflict between logic and desire is constantly going on. He is fascinated as well as in love with Albertina but eventually he kills her - the fountainhead of his desire, thus emphasizing the triumph of logic and rationality. The novel not only revolves around the two conflicting characters of Desiderio and Dr Hoffman but also two rival realms of existence and two different meanings of truth. Dr Hoffman commits himself to subvert all that is guided by reason and illumination in the world of Desiderio by destroying the equilibrium and violating the spatial and chronological pattern. He endeavours to construct a civilization without the manacles and structures of rationality.

Doctor Hoffman’s desire machine is analogous to the mass media of the modern world. Television, internet, magazines and newspapers continually and persistently affect people’s life - their thoughts, emotions and beliefs. The images depicted by media are not always true and can be
sheer illusions. Thus, the modern man is also doomed to face a plight similar to that of Desiderio; how should mundane realities of our everyday life contend with the fantasies of our desires? He is in a constant battle to refrain himself from surrendering to the totality of images, and to distinguish between the genuine and fake/true and false.

*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is replete with Gothic elements. The narrative combines elements of both horror and romance and features both physical as well as psychological terror. Magicians, femme fatales, supernatural, ghosts, devils, death, decay, madness - intrinsic to the Gothic Tradition are close at hand. Readers of Gothic fiction pass from the logical order of everyday life into a sinister region governed by supernatural beings that inspires dread and horror. Dr Hoffman is the very embodiment of this movement. He is against everything that is guided by reason and rationality. He is the magician, the antagonist and the diabolical adversary, who with the assistance of the Desire Machines, transforms the city bustling with life and promise into an abode of evil - ghosts, apparitions, mirages, madness, death and decay.

Albertina - the name not only reminds us of Marcel Proust's Albertine from *In Search of Lost Time* who enslaves Marcel but her character is also the incarnation of the Gothic femme fatale. She is the mysterious and seductive enchantress who entangles her lover - Desiderio, in bonds of irresistible desire, leading him into dangerous and deadly situations. She uses all her feminine beauty, charm and sexuality to become the centre of his desires. If Desiderio signifies all things real and
rational, Albertina - an advocate of her father's ideas, plans and actions, stands for the unreal and the irrational. She also symbolizes all that is latent in Desiderio, particularly his desires and thus serves as his 'other'.

*The Mansion of Midnight* - “run down” and “forsaken” with “weeds . . . rooted in the gaps between the mossy tiles” surrounded by a garden “sunk in the neglect of years” (*Infernal* 50-51) and “wilderness” (55) is a traditional Gothic setting. The Gothic atmosphere of the mansion is aggravated by the presence of the Mayor’s “beautiful somnambulist” (56) daughter – Mary Anne who played “Debussy” and “Erik Satie” on the piano by candlelight which echoed amidst the ruins. She is a “slender”, “forlorn”, “desperate” and “pathetic” (53) apparition like being who heightens the eeriness of the place:

She did not look as if blood flowed through her veins but instead some other, less emphatic fluid infinitely less red. Her mouth was barely touched with palest pink . . . there was no tinge of any pink at all on her cheeks . . . she was almost hidden in her dress and her tiny face . . . looked even smaller . . . because of a disordered profusion of hair streaming down as straight as if she had just been plucked from the river . . . her hair and dress were stuck all over with twigs and petals from the garden. She looked like drowning Ophelia. (53)

In the chapter, *The Erotic Traveller*, Desiderio is initiated into the world of desires and sexual extremities by the Count who takes him to a Gothic brothel. The “House of Anonymity” was “a massive, sprawling edifice in the Gothic style of the late nineteenth century . . . built in louring
red brick” (129) and possessing a series of dark, gloomy and sinister corridors. The house was inhabited by strange and bizarre girls, locked up in cages and who “towered above us [them] like the goddesses of some forgotten theogeny” (132). These girls did not belong to the realm of humanity as they were “sinister, abdominal, inverted mutations, part clockwork, part vegetable and part brute.”

Carter conjures the Gothic past with the description of the tribe which Desiderio encounters on *The Coast of Africa*. The men and women of the tribe were of large built, dressed in long robes of coloured cotton and necklace of dried beans. “Their faces and chests were whorled and cicatrized with tribal marks, knife cuts discoloured because white clay had been rubbed into them” (*Infernal* 155). The barbaric/savage tribe comes alive with the description of their tribal chief and his cave “an arcade of human skeletons” (159); their ancient weapons, brass trumpets, hand drums, and furniture made of human bones and decorated with shells and feathers. The naked centaurs are yet another Gothic aspect in the novel. They with intricate tattoo work on their bodies “looked like Greek masterpieces” (172). They lived in “enormous stables”, indulged in “impassioned recital of their mythic past” (174), prayed at their “Holly Hill” (175) which was a dungheap and had “a deeply masochistic streak” (180).

Dr Hoffman’s “Wagnerian castle” (196) and “sumptuous country estate” (198) with battlements is an enchanted land of captivating beauty. It stands in “picaresque decay” against the edge of a cliff and to reach it, a
chasm - deep and wide has to be crossed with the aid of a fragile and narrow bridge. The grove around the castle is an arcadian world of fruits, flowers, birds, squirrels, rabbits and deer. However, on closer inspection, this “romantic memory in stone” (196) is a place - sinister, strange, menacing, “thick with dust and most satisfactory cobwebs” (Infernal 205) and houses the mad-magician, the corpse of his dead wife and the Desire Machines.

In the novel, the most potent manifestation of barbarity of both past and present is the depiction of violence in its diverse forms - domestic, political and sexual - murder, assassination, war, rape. The book is replete with horrific images which are a product of the all powerful Desire Machine - a vehicle Carter has employed to gratify her Gothic penchant as well as her surrealist cravings. There are explicit references to death and torture and “portrayal of extreme situations, mostly situations of terror” (Punter 8). Desiderio’s rape by the nine acrobats of desire is an epitome of physical as well as psychological terror:

I was trapped. I could not move. I was filled with impotent rage as the wave of eyes broke over me.

The pain was terrible. I was most intimately ravaged I do not know how many times. I wept, bled, slobbered and pleaded but nothing would appease a rapacity as remorseless and indifferent as the storm which raged outside and now reached a nightmarish hurricane. They stretched me on my face on a counterpane of pale orange artificial silk and
took it in turns to pin down my arms and legs. 
*(Infernal 117)*

Desiderio and Albertina go through a similar kind of terror – “pain and indignity of rape” (179) in the land of the centaurs. The experience which is awfully excruciating and annihilating, almost kills Albertina and leaves Desidorio painfully agitated. Even in the world of images, rape culture prevails, but in spite of this, Carter does not depict Albertina as a victim. Even the dreadful act cannot deprive her of her strength, beauty and desire - which is a quintessential trait of the Cartarian female protagonist.

This “undesirable desire” portrays her female character as both powerful and resilient, corresponding to her feminist views. Another macabre scene is the cannibalistic and ritualistic act of the African tribe, showing the count being ceremoniously cooked alive in a cauldron.

Desiderio’s covert sexual relationship with Aoi’s (the girl he was intimidated to marry) Grandma has incestuous overtones (a Gothic theme). He is shown to have no inhibition in yielding to his sexual desires throughout the novel. The rape of the sleeping Mary Anne, the continuous sexual play with the nine year old Aoi, the regular sex with mama, all give Desiderio a sense of power and authority over the women he interacts with. The instances of paedophilia and rape come to the foreground as he uses his sexuality. This assertion of masculine-supremacy through sex is inverted on Desiderio when he himself becomes an object of desire and is repeatedly raped by the Acrobats of Desire. The incident robs him of his masculine power. The sexual theme throughout the book has not only
Gothic undertones but posits a play with gender roles and suggests that sexual desire is all pervasive and dominant.

The killing of Dr Hoffman and Albertina by Desiderio at the end of the story, establishes the triumph of good over evil which is a central Gothic motif. Desiderio symbolises virtue as he chooses “the common good” over his own desire and love for Albertina. Gothic literature often relies heavily on the disturbing power of the unseen, and dwells into the primitive and the psychological to create terror by manipulating the undercurrents of the civilized mind. The exhibits of the peep-show proprietor are symbolic of the omens, portents and visions which are an integral part of the Gothic tradition. The exhibits are a clear indication of what awaits Desiderio on his journey, but he realizes this only later.

In addition to the above mentioned Gothic elements in the novel, the language, vocabulary and description used by the writer also play a significant role in creating the Gothic atmosphere. “Gothic is not merely a literary convention or a set of motifs; it is a language, [and] often an anti-historicizing language, which provides writers with the critical means of transferring an idea of the otherness of the past into the present” (Sage 1). The words “horror”, “horrid”, “corpse”, “infernal”, “diabolical”, “phantoms”, “ghosts”, “talisman” etc., add to the Gothic fervour of the novel. Gothic writing is very sensual as it evokes images, smells, tastes, textures and sounds in order to make the experience come alive to the reader.
The novel is the wildest of Carter's writings; the verbal feast and vivid imagery is served by the writer's inexhaustible imagination. Endless array of tools - eroticism, picaresque, Surrealism and humour - all collaborate to produce a book par excellence. Parts of the book read like a lesson in science. Carter's imagination and the use of diverse techniques lend to the novel a wide variety of themes and characters. The Magic Realist, Surrealist and Gothic mode of writing, posit the themes of the novel in a significant manner: the constant struggle between Rationality and Desire, the changing gender roles in the society and the search for true identity which are central to all the adventures that Desiderio undertakes.
Works Cited


Chapter 5

Nights at the Circus (1984)

_Nights at the Circus_ - Angela Carter’s penultimate novel was first published in 1984. The same year it won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction. The “polyphonic nature” and theoretical orientation of the novel makes it complex to read and analyse. The novel is a bizarre and cerebral fusion of storytelling and philosophy. It integrates manifold categories of fiction like postmodernism, Magical Realism and post feminism. In this carnivalesque and vibrant narrative, Carter juggles with many ideas (the modern world, freedom, gender, love), literary aspects and analyses the traditional structure of the fairy tale. The book is a story composed of many sub-stories, several episodes and a variety of characters, all having something to say; thus making it as much a celebration of storytelling as it is of language. Carter seems to possess a passion for stories and they, in her hands, become an end in themselves and not just a means to explore a theme.

_Nights at the Circus_, takes the readers along with Colonel Kearney’s circus on its Grand Imperial Tour over Europe and Asia. The novel is written in the style of a classic three act play, including a short Envoi which functions as an epilogue and is extremely theatrical in style, content and structure. The story is divided into three parts, titled _London, Petersburg and Siberia_. The magical journey begins in the year
1899 "the fag-end, smouldering cigar-butt, of a nineteenth century" (Nights 11) from London and moves on to Petersburg and then Siberia, where the characters are marooned for the rest of the novel. While in London, the setting is chiefly Fevvers' dressing room above the Alhambra Music Hall but the action that takes place in Fevvers' memoir, covers much of London and its vicinity. In Petersburg, the action takes place in three major locations: Clown Alley, Fevvers' hotel room, and the circus itself. The final section begins with the whole circus on a train crossing the Siberian wilds separating Europe and Asia, but the main action and conclusion of the story takes place in the freezing wintry forests of Transbaikalia.

The novel begins with Jack Walser - a young American reporter questioning Fevvers "for a series of interview tentatively entitled: "Great Humbugs of the world" (11). The interview takes place in her London dressing room "a masterpiece of exquisitely feminine squalor" (9) after her performance in the circus. The winged woman and her constant companion and caretaker Lizzie, take on the task of detailing her story of life - a tale of many struggles and few moments of joy. "Lor' love you, sir!" (7) Fevvers exclaims, and goes on to narrate the circumstances of her birth and upbringing. She recounts that she was found in a basket at the doorstep of a brothel; that she was not born but (like Helen of Troy) hatched:

And she who found me on the steps at Wapping, 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 eggshells, 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. (Nights 12)

As a child, Fewers explains, she was like all other children except for the raised lump on each shoulder and posed as a living statue of Cupid in the drawing room of the brothel with a “wreath of pink cotton roses” (23) and “toy bow and arrow.” But when she approached puberty, the “feathered appendages” (24) began to swell and at the age of fourteen she sprouted wings; thereafter Fewers started posing as the “Winged Victory” (25). Under Lizzie’s (the housekeeper of the brothel) supervision, she began taking lessons in flying. However, this phase of Fewers’ life comes to a sudden end when Ma Nelson – the head of the brothel slips on Whitechapel high street and falls in the path of a carriage and dies. As Ma Nelson had not left a will, “all her estate went by due process of law” (44) to her surviving elder brother who intended to make the house a hostel for fallen girls. The inmates of the house comply with the orders of the court but to be ousted from the place which had been their home, fills them with anger. Out of resentment they set fire to the house before parting ways. Fewers expresses the feelings of the inmates thus:

'We girls stood on the lawn and the morning wind off the river whipped our skirts about us. We shivered, from the cold, from anxiety, from sorrow at the end of one part of our lives and the exhilaration of our new beginnings. When
the fire had fairly taken hold, off we went, . . .
(Nights 50)

Thus, Fevvers and Lizzie now without shelter and work move in with Lizzie's sister and help her to run the family ice-cream parlour. However, when the family falls upon bad times and face financial adversity, Fevvers moves out. She accepts an invitation from the formidable Madame Schreck, who puts her as an exhibit in her unique freak show (and brothel) along with numerous other women with distinctive appearances. Sometime later, Madame Schreck sells her to an influential client - Christian Rosencreutz, who desired to sacrifice a winged virgo intacta in order to attain immortality. Using her “gilded sword” for self-defence and ability to fly, Fevvers makes a narrow escape and returns to Lizzie's sister's home. Soon, she gets an opportunity to join Colonel Kearney's circus as an aerialiste and thus begins her life of success and wide fame.

In course of the interview with Fevvers and her stepmother-come-mentor, the terse, magically gifted Liz, Walser is told the story of Fevvers life - a fantastic, mythic tale that stretches his imagination beyond the bounds of credibility and leaves him wonder-struck and hypnotized. Fevvers and Walser's first encounter is subtly combative and confrontational. Both are intrigued by the other. Walser is sceptical as well as confused and finds it difficult to believe the winged aerialiste and her fantastical tales. He is intent on revealing Fevvers as a hoax – a fraud, yet he is fascinated by her. The London section closes with Walser telling
his chief in the London office that he is going to follow Fewvers – the “Cockney Venus” (*Nights 7*), by signing up on Captain Kearney’s Grand Imperial Tour of circus:

I don’t think you realise how much I’d like a break from hard news chief... keep me away from the battlefield for a while! I need to be refreshed. I need to have my sense of wonder polished up again. What would you say to a series of inside stories of the exotic, of the marvellous, of laughter and tears and thrills and all? What if, of incognito, your correspondent follows the great confidence artiste in the history of the world to the world’s most fabulous cities? Through the trackless wastes of Siberia and then... even unto the Land of the Rising Sun? (90)

The next section of the book is titled *Petersburg*, since this “city built of hubris, imagination and desire” (97) is its setting and locale. The section depicts Walser, living in Clown Alley, typing his first impressions of the city. We are informed of Fewvers and Walser being engaged by Colonel Kearney’s Circus for their Grand Imperial Tour of Russia and Japan (to be followed by their Great Democratic Tour of the United States). Colonel Kearney after due consultation with his extraordinary pig Sybil has employed Walser as a clown in the circus. At this juncture the readers are introduced to the other members of the circus – a rather incredible, colourful and amusing lot.

The chaotic world of the circus is encapsulated in this section of the novel by a series of extraordinary, bizarre, incredible and absurd
happenings. Walser saves Mignon - “Ape-Man’s woman” (109) from being attacked by a tiger. Later he sneaks out of the circus to find Mignon, forsaken by both her husband and lover (Samson the Strong Man). He takes her to Fevvers’ hotel room for help, who presumes Walser to be in a relationship with Mignon. Though overcome with jealousy she does take care of Mignon. On discovering the beauty of her singing voice, she introduces her to the Princess of Abyssinia - a silent tiger tamer. The princess includes Mignon into her act with the dancing cats and Walser is enlisted as an associate. The Colonel unwillingly fires the Charivari family of “high wire dancers” (Nights 158) from the circus as they out of animosity had plotted to kill Fevvers’ during the band rehearsal. The Educated Apes break their contract and depart. Buffo the Great drinks to oblivion, loses his mind during that night’s act and tries to slaughter Walser. The Princess is forced to shoot one of her tigresses who attacks Mignon for dancing with her tiger mate during the tiger waltz.

“After the dizzy triumph of the Grand Gala opening” (173) Fevvers receives numerous invitations for solo performances and suppers, of which she accepts only that of the Grand Duke. After her final performance at Petersburg, she goes to the palace for her date with the Grand Duke where she nearly succumbs to his ardent advances but manages to escape from his clutches to reach the circus train as it was about to pull out of the station. The drunken clown mayhem; the strange self detesting monologues by the monstrous Buffo; and the ape act lead to the last scene which is by design both bewildering and mystifying. It
makes everything suspect to the bewildered reader and paves way for the implausible happenings of the closing segment.

The novel takes a really bizarre and almost mystical turn in the Siberia section. The train is attacked by a band of runaway prisoners, who believe (after reading in the newspaper) that Fewers is “intimate of the English royal family” (Nights 231) and the future daughter-in-law of the Queen of England. They think she could help them get in touch with the Tsar (husband of the Queen of England’s grand-daughter), and thus get his permission to return home to their native villages. The entire circus (except for Walser) is taken hostage by the convicts as the train has been damaged in the attack. Meanwhile, Walser is saved by a group of escaped murderesses and their lovers (their former guards). Since Walser has lost his memory (due to a blow on his head) in the train accident, the band of women leaves him to an approaching rescue party. However, Walser escapes into the woods before the rescue party reaches him and is taken under the protection of a village shaman. The shaman teaches him the ways of his people, believing him to be a kind of 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 ways and life.

The convicts holding Fewers and the others as captives are shocked into drunken mourning when told (by Fewers) that she cannot help them as what they have heard about her is false. Lizzie persuades the clowns to organise a show for the convicts to shake them out of their
mourning. During the show, all are caught in a blizzard which carries them away into the night. Those who remain of the circus, begin to walk in search of civilization. They stumble upon a dilapidated music school and take refuge with its owner, the Maestro. Fewvers and Lizzie leave the haven of the Maestro's school to look and search for Walser, whom they had seen in the woods one day. Meanwhile, Colonel Kearney goes in search for civilization, desirous yet again of setting up a more successful circus. However, Mignon, the Princess and Samson stay on with the Maestro at his music school. Fewvers succeeds in finding Walser and the story ends with them together at the dawn of the new century and her triumphant cry "to think I really fooled you" (Nights 294).

John Haffenden in Novelists in Interview speaks of Carter's Magic Realism thus:

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, and upon the institutions that condition their responses and contests. Richly imagined and stylistically uninhibited - with dehumanizing villains, exotic landscapes and lush sensuality - her fictions are in many ways parables of power, desire and subjection. (76)

Nights at the Circus is the epitome of Carters experimentation with Magic Realism - the brilliant unification of myth and reality, of implausible
events and stark realism. Carter creates an entire world till the readers lose their ability to discriminate between the real and unreal, that there exists “no difference between fact and fiction; instead, a sort of magic realism” (Nights 260). At the heart of this unconventional narrative is the myth of Leda and the Swan. Fewers like Helen of Troy was hatched from an egg. She is the magical, glorious, larger than life woman with wings, walking the thin line between a human and a bird. Her character is difficult to come to grips with due to the “physical otherness” bequeathed to her by the presence of wings on her shoulders. Carter places this fantastical and unnatural image of Fewers in a harsh and bleak background - among those who are considered the “worst class and defiled” (21). She grows up at a brothel among whores, serves at the museum of the “damned” and at the circus. The juxtaposition of the fantastical against the dark and dismal reality, lends this narrative a magic realist character. The novelist through the two central characters of Fewers and Walser, draws a distinction between the implausible and the plausible. Fewers’ position as half swan and half woman remains disputed, debatable and surreal while Walser’s role as the practical, hard-headed journalist, looking for facts with “the professional necessity to see all and believe nothing” (10) gives the story a realistic foundation.

Metamorphosis is an integral aspect of Magic Realism. The transformation of Fewers from a normal/regular child to a bird-woman – “a winged victory” and an “aerialiste” (7) is marvellously evoked by
Carter. Fewers wings – her “peculiar inheritance” came into being “unwilled”, “uncalled” and “involuntarily”:

... 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... (Nights 24)

After a failed attempt of flight and fully aware of the pain and risk involved, Fewers begins her endeavour to learn the “method of the act of flight” (32) under Lizzie’s guidance and tutelage. She started 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” (33).

One “Midsummer’s Night” (33) they (Fewers and Lizzie) decide to put their theory into practice. Fewers is “seized with a great fear” (34) that her wings might turn out to be like those of a hen or an ostrich or a “physical deceit, intended for show.” She is overcome by a strange terror, not only by the thoughts of bodily harm but also the harm of the soul if her attempt failed. “I [She] suffered the greatest conceivable terror of irreparable difference with which success in the attempt would mark me [her].” She fears the proof of her own “singularity.” In spite of the thoughts in her mind, Fewers pushes herself into the “transparent arms
of the wind” and succeeds. Her ability to fly becomes symbolic of her freedom and independence. Her training at an early age of playing to an admiring audience, exhibiting and selling her distinct talent comes handy when she joins the circus. She is whisked around by royalty and rich suitors and is paid huge sums of money for solo appearances and performances in which she wears her dazzling costumes and provides “spectacle” (Nights 185) and makes a show of herself. Metamorphosis of Fewers into a bird-woman also develops the premise of hybridity which is often associated with Magic Realism. Carter by depicting Fewers as a hybrid – part woman, part bird - challenges the boundary of sex and gender.

There are other characters in the novel that also undergo metamorphosis. Walser – the rational and practical “war correspondent” (90) obsessed with facts, also undergoes a transformation. 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 he comes in contact with the Shaman and his shadowy world of dreams and fantasy, he is reborn and “hatched out of the shell of unknowing” (294) as a new man. Fewvers too, has her share in his rebirth and metamorphosis. “In fooling Walser, Fewvers transformed his life. Dreams, fantasies and imaginings have now become a legitimate part of his consciousness” (Finney). The transformation in Walser’s ‘self’ is expressed thus:
He was as much himself again as he ever would be, and yet that 'self' would never be the same again for now he knew the meaning of fear as it defines itself in its most violent form, that is fear of death of the beloved, of the loss of the beloved, of the loss of love. It was the beginning of an anxiety that would never end... (*Nights* 292-93)

Even the innocent, vulnerable, dependent and submissive Mignon, is able to break out of an abusive life of subjugation and tyranny with her husband and embark on an empowered life. She may have been abused and beaten throughout her life, but her resilience and “febrile gaiety” (139) allow her to cling to life long enough for her fate to change. Samson, the “Strong Man” too, is transformed in the course of the novel. He acknowledges the fact that all his life he had abused women because he was “a coward, concealing the frailty of my [his] spirit behind the strength of my [his] body” (276) when in reality he “was too weak to bear the burden of any woman’s love.”

The description of the fantastical transition and transformation of Fevvers is merged with mundane details of “the friendly sound of Bow Bells” coming through the window, the winter sun shining, the great dome of St. Paul, Ma Nelson’s garden and the cherry tree. As the magical description of Fevvers first successful flight comes to an end, there is a silence in the room for a few minutes to be disturbed only by the “metallic tinkle” (37) of the hot-water pipes, the creaking of Lizzie’s handbag and the “Big Ben” eerily striking the same hour again and again. All these
minute but vivid details add to the authenticity of the experience of the magical flight and the story recounted by Fewers and Lizzie. The sense of verisimilitude achieved through the description of such details help the readers suspend his/her belief. Even Walser feels:

As if the room that had in some way, without his knowledge, been plucked out of its everyday, temporal continuum, had been held for a while above the spinning world and was now – dropped back into place. (Nights 87)

Fewers escape from the Grand Duke’s palace is a significant instance of Magic Realism. The Duke - “a great collector of all kinds of objects d’art and marvels” (187) had carefully plotted the scheme of her “objectification” into “only a bird in a gilded cage” (190). As Fewers, conscious of herself being in “imminent and deadly danger” (190), brings the Grand Duke to his sexual climax, the Petersburg section of the narrative, too reaches its climax. Fewers escapes in the Grand Duke’s toy train – a miniature Trans-Siberian Express. Time lapse, at this stage has been managed at the level of Magic Realism, blurring the magical moments (of the toy train) with hard reality (train to Siberia). Carter with extreme artistry, defies all laws of time and space to blur the border between the real and the unreal:

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, Fewers ran helter-skelter down the platform, opened the door of the first-class compartment and clambered abroad.

‘Look what a mess he’s made of your dress, the pig,’ said Lizzie.

The weeping girl threw herself into the woman’s arms. (Nights 192)

The “dark abyss of the night” in the Duke’s palace where she (Fevvers) had lost her magic sword, frightens and weakens her to such an extent that later she begins to connect the explosion of the train in Siberia with the Duke’s attack on her body and modesty and his desire to objectify her.

The magic realist element is magnificently manifest in Walser’s amnesia “that followed the blow on his head” (254) in the train explosion. The everyday and ordinary is discovered as something new as “all his previous experiences were rendered null and void” (253). Walser accepts the “system of belief” (252) 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” (253). 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...” (257). Walser – the once correspondent of truth and reality is juxtaposed against the bizarre and irrational world of the Shaman. Another magic realist element in the novel is of the “drumming” (257)
trees in the *Siberia* section, which are shown enjoying jokes at the Shaman’s expense. These trees drum and speak to the Shaman: “Yah! Fooled you!” and “I am the one.”

As stated earlier, Carnivalesque is an integral aspect of magic realist fiction. The travelling carnival as depicted in the earlier chapter - *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* reaches its culmination in this novel. Carter, in *Nights at the Circus* explores the positive “bright, life-affirming magical” (Danow 5) aspect as well as the negative the “dark, death embracing, horrific” aspect of the Carnival. The travelling circus of Colonel Kearney, provides a grand cum perfect backdrop to stimulate Carter’s inexorable imagination. It is the ideal medium - combining vaudeville, humour and the absurd to get closest to the murky world of decadence, of humanly produced magic and a sense of the marvellous and the magical.

The Circus lends the novel an extravagant and celebratory atmosphere. The set of vibrant, eccentric and captivating characters with their extraordinary and bizarre backgrounds, add to the carnivalesque chaos and commotion of the Circus. Colonel Kearney with his cigars, “full-tailed frock coat” (*Nights* 99) and “billycock hat” is the delirious, eccentric and prototypical patriotic American owner of the circus. He owns a pig called Sybil – his “pardner in the Ludic Game” who makes the big decisions for him. Then there are “Lamark’s Educated Apes” – a dozen chimpanzees who win their sovereignty by dedicating their spare time to learning. Buffo the Great, leads his troupe of white-face clowns and excels
in his performance as well as his philosophical “sermon” (120). His superior narration is underlined in the following lines:

‘We possess one privilege, one rare privilege, that makes of our outcast and disregarded state something wonderful, something precious. We can invent our own face! We make ourselves.’ (Nights 121)

Then there are others like the Princess of Abyssinia – “the lady with the big cat” (99), earth-shaking elephants, high-wire walkers. There is “no end to the marvels” on display in the novel. The novelist creates a cast of misfits and outcasts of the human race to occupy her pages and reserves the powerful impact of her brutal imagination for the incredibly horrid and macabre clowns who are synonymous to “disintegration, disaster [and] chaos” (242). The band of clowns in the book is the incarnation of the daemonic, the fountain of fanatical vigour that refuses to be captured or tamed. “Buffo the Great, the head clown, initiates Walser into clown philosophy in a ten page section destined to become the definitive statement on clown life and circus literature” (VanderMeer). It points to the savage absurdity that demeans man’s vain attempts at assigning himself/herself dignity and meaning; thus, the gloomy despair of the human condition is transformed into black humour. The dance of the clowns is a recurrent act used in the text, suggestive of apocalypse and doom:

It seemed that they were dancing the room apart. As the baboushka slept, her too, too solid kitchen fell into pieces under the blows of
their disorder as if it had been, all the time, an ingenious prop, and the purple Petersburg night inserted jagged wedges into the walls around the table on which these comedians cavorted with such little pleasure, in a dance which could have invoked the end of the world. (Nights 124)

Carter’s world if exotic is also filthy, earthy and erotic. Her persistent focus on the earthier, seamy sides of life - belching, farting, dirty dishes, dirty laundry, comical sex - all unnatural and disconcerting, are made to appear natural and commonplace. Colloquial crudeness emphasises the crude, coarse and vulgar culture of the circus. On the surface, all this seems to aid and give colour to a narrative which otherwise is intending to give voice and insight to serious issues. Embedded underneath the glitter and sparkle of circus costumes and circus life, are Carter’s major preoccupations – skilfully woven into her prose.

The author portrays the life-affirming and magical aspect of the carnivalesque in the Siberia section. Siberia serves as Carter’s vision of utopia – pristine and perfect. This part of the novel, becomes the catalysing agent for the literal as well as allegorical liberation of the characters from the narrow confines/boundaries of culture and society. The section brings the narrative to a close on a note of reconciliation, mirth and laughter:

The spiralling tornado of Fewers’ laughter began to twist and shudder across the entire globe, as if a spontaneous response to the giant
comedy that endlessly unfolded beneath it, until everything that lived and breathed, everywhere was laughing. (295)

The magic realist writings of Carter, read as a 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:

... the novels of Angela Carter including *Nights at the Circus* (1984), with its winged central character Fevvers arguably constitutes British fictions fullest engagement with magic realism synthesising the ordinary and everyday with an often utopian feminist world - view that both subverts and transcends patriarchy and conventional gender politics. (Padley 105)

Carter's work if approached through a feminist lens is a benchmark of feminist identity, relations between sexes and western culture's awakening to gender equality. The novel reads as an authorial comment on the life of women. The incidents in the first and second part of the book, mirror the suppression and injustices done to women and reflect the misery and pathetic state of womankind. Their sufferings and misery were an outcome of the patriarchal order, where women were destined to be silenced and victimised; to give and be the "pleasure of the eye" (*Nights* 185). The last section of *Nights at the Circus* celebrates the hope and belief in the power of rejuvenation in the woman condition:
For many women writers, magic realist techniques provided one of a number of ways in which patriarchal tenacity could be circumvented. The celebration of female experience, historically marginalised from novelistic discourse, could be made to co-exist alongside non-realistic characterisation and subject matter drawing on myth and fairytale to implicitly challenge the assumptions and preoccupations of male-canonical literature. (Padley 105)

Fevvers, with her empyreal, celestial, Olympian, larger-than-life splendour, exhibits a majestic supremacy in contrast to the other women of the novel, who are presented as thin, weak, old, exploited or in some other way abnormal and strange. Fevvers is viewed by several critics, as a winged version of the New Women who is able to break away from the shackles of “passivity and powerlessness” of the patriarchal nineteenth century set up, and move into the twentieth century of feminist liberation and emancipation. Her wings seem to symbolize the ambitions and triumph of the idea of the New Woman. She becomes the embodiment of the debate about woman and her nature. “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” (Nights 25).

Through Magic 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. Readers have to suspend their disbelief of magical events and concurrences both small and large in order to respond to the diverse experiences encompassed by the
text. The idea of a winged girl professing to have been hatched from an egg and who ends up as an *aerialiste* in a circus, itself requires a suspension of belief. Fevvers is an embodiment of what is real and what is not, through her own mythology and the mythic dimension of her persona posited at the beginning of the novel. The author manages to evoke such a sense of reality – part imaginary/fantastical and part real that the immediate surroundings of the real world translate as incoherent. The world depicted in the text seems so real that the readers own world becomes suspect. Readers have to open their eyes to this created world, accept its chaos, live amidst it and enjoy it, even if there exists no “categorical difference between seeing and believing” (*Nights* 260).

Keeping with the mysterious spirit of Magic Realism, the first pages of the book create a sense of disbelief, mystery and wonder as to whether Fevvers wings are real or not. This suspicion/doubt continues right till the end of the novel and nothing is established as true or false. Fevvers existence remains a chimera. Readers are at liberty to decipher for themselves, to believe or disbelieve. Knowing the secret of her wings would destroy the marvel and aura of her being which is related to them (wings). If the mystery gets exposed she would be unmasked as a fake or a freak.

The Magical Realism that imbues Carter’s tale is woven with innumerable allusions and references – biblical, mythical and literary. *Leda and the Swan, Jonah and the Whale, Shakespeare, Blake, Carroll, Dickens, Poe and Melville* all share the same platform. Shakespeare’s
"what a piece of work is man" from Hamlet is repeatedly used by Carter. William Blake’s famous poem, The Tyger from his collection Songs of Experience (1794) is reworked by Carter: “Authentic, fearfully symmetric tigers burning as brightly as those who had been lost” (Nights 249).

Carter’s Magic Realism is empowered by her exceptional use of language and word play. Her writing is replete with radiant images, startling word portraits, brilliant descriptions and humour (vulgar yet amusing) that give readers a glimpse of the diversity of her fictional world. Her prose is beautiful, intellectual, exuberant, theatrical, hilarious, vulgar, depressing, disturbing and sinister all at once. The incandescent prose, rich in detail and substance holds the reader under its spell from the beginning till the end. The text is full of baroque (exaggerated, extravagant, florid) prose, elegant narration, long words and rampant exclamations. Caught in the vortex of her narrative art and descriptive wonder, one goes along with the narrative flow trying to capture the essence of her tone, viewpoint and insightful commentary. Brilliance exists alongside sharp reminders of the layers of piss and dirt. There are sections which though rich in detail, are unmanageable, weighty and visceral; the ending is oblique – all of which make reading Carter, an exhausting yet beyond doubt a rich experience.

Fewers is the subversion of the “angelic” Gothic heroine and all that is considered feminine by social construct. Her first impression on Walser is her “physical ungainliness” (16). She is “divinely tall” at six feet two with an extremely ordinary face “broad and oval as a meat dish” (12).
Her voice is unfeminine, described as "clanging like dustbin lids" (7), "raucous and metallic... clanging of contralto or even baritone dustbins" (Nights 13). Her manners are coarse and unrefined – she "guffaws uproariously" (7), flashes her "indecorous eyes" at Walser, slaps her "marbly thighs" as she laughs, "pops the cork of a chilled magnum of champagne between her teeth" (8), and is a "spectacle of... gluttony" (22). The following lines describe her enormous appetite:

... she tucked into this earthiest, coarsest cabbies' fare with gargantuan enthusiasm. She gorged, she stuffed herself, she spilled gravy on herself, she sucked up peas from the knife; she had a gullet to match her size... she wiped her lips on her sleeves and belched. (22)

Fewvers narrating the story of her life is not generated or instigated by Walser's probing queries but is the outcome of her own initiative, will, motive and mood, the presence of Lizzie, and is fuelled by food and drink which "put fresh heart into the aeraliste" (53). In spite of her coarseness and crude manners, Fewvers, like the conventional Gothic heroine mesmerises Walser with her magical wings and champagne; seduces him with her storytelling. Walser who sets out to prove her hoax with the aid of his critical journalism, loses track of time and gets trapped and charmed by her narrative:

Her voice. It was as if Walser had become a prisoner of her voice, her cavernous, sombre voice... Musical as it strangely was, yet not a voice made for singing with; it comprised discords, her scale contained twelve tones...
her dark, rusty, dipping, swooping voice, imperious as a siren’s. (43)

He begins to feel like “a kitten tangling up in a ball of wool it had never intended to unravel in the first place” (*Nights* 40).

Madame Shareck – the “wicked puppet” (58) the “living skeleton”, the “bony woman” (59) is the Gothic uncanny apparition like being. This “Lady of Terror” whose “voice was like wind in graveyards” (58) owned a “museum of woman monsters” (55), which “catered for those who were troubled in their . . . souls” (57). The museum was inhabited by strange, grotesque and damned characters – “Dear old fanny Four-Eyes” (59), the “Sleeping Beauty”, the “Wiltshire Wonder” (not even three foot high), “Albert/Albertina” (a bipartite) and a girl called “Cobwebs” (60). Toussaint, the doorkeeper was a man “with no mouth” whose eyes were full of sorrow “of exile and of abandonment” (57).

The eerie 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” (55). The silent and chilly 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” (57). The knocker on the front door was “ominously bandaged up in crepe” that gave rise to a “soft, deathly thunder” (61) when knocked at. The ground floor of the museum which was known as “Down Below” or “The Abyss” (61) 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 “profane altars” (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” (Nights 62) to usher her client into the museum.

Another Gothic setting in the novel is the stately home of Mr Rosencreutz. The mansion was built in an antique Gothic style but its execution was new. It was made of raw bricks; its front door was made of fumed oak and fresh brass plates and had an “antechamber of large, square-hewn stones” (74). “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.” The eeriness of the place grows with the howling of a dog somewhere in the vicinity. Fevvers on entering the house feels, as if she was “magically transported into an earlier age.”

Fevvers is a “winged victory” and her appearance defies those of the conventional Gothic heroine. Nevertheless she becomes the very embodiment of the Gothic heroine, when she is entrapped and imprisoned within the walls of Gothic spaces – Ma Nelson’s brothel, Madame Shareck’s Gothic museum, Rosencreutz’s Gothic mansion, clown alley and Grand Duke’s palace.
Gothic literature is concerned with boundaries and transgression of boundaries as discussed in the earlier chapters. The most prominent boundary in this novel is the boundary between the real and the fantastical. The beatings of Fevvers’ wings disturb Walser and make him lose his mind and his composure temporarily. Her (Fevvers’) 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 and has to undergo many trials and tribulations. 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 indistinctness and ambiguity of Fevvers’ reality and existence is the very spirit and essence of her personality and individuality. This quintessential ambiguity arrests and holds the imagination of her audience:

... 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! (Nights 15)

Yet another boundary depicted in the novel is the one that exists between the rich and the poor or between the elite and the outcast. The rich squander their money on “bright, pretty, useless things” (185).
Christian Rosencrantz 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” (Nights 161). Another divide that exists in the novel is between the civilised world (as depicted in the London and Petersburg section) which is burdened by history, culture and society and the uncivilised world (as depicted in Siberia) which “possessed none of the implausibility of authentic history” (253).

The Gothic concept of decay can appropriately be applied to Nights at the Circus. Decay in the novel is palpable both in concrete as well as abstract form. Carter’s narrative lens zooms through the “exquisitely feminine squalor” (9) of Fevvers’ dressing room, to the poor and scantily clad women and children collecting coal in the wee hours of the morning on the roads of London, through “stinking alleys” (103), “gloomy . . . stark tenements”, “beastly backside” (104) of Petersburg, to the locale of the circus “splashed with pigeon droppings” (105). The flashy and garish exterior of the circus along with its pulsating, mean, degraded, ugly and repulsive inside is extensively explored by the writer. The “elegant” (105), the “sumptuous” and “queasy luxury” of the circus is permeated with grime:
the aroma of horse dung and lion piss permeated ever inch of the building's fabric, so that the titillating contradiction between the soft, white shoulders of the lovely ladies whom young army officers escorted there and the hairy pelts of the beasts in the ring resolved in the night-time intermingling of French perfume and the essence of steppe and jungle in which musk and civet revealed themselves as common elements. (Nights 105)

Herr M – the undertaker who “was sincerely fascinated by the art and craft of illusion” (135) cheated people by pretending to call the spirit of their dead (female) loved ones to earth. With the aid of devices like a projector, a wind machine and a torch, he transformed his drawing room into a Gothic site where in the “darkness” (137), “soft breeze” (136), “purple clouds of incense” (137) and “reticulated fronds of fern”, the spirit/ghost of the dead came visiting the earth. Conscious of Mignon’s “great resemblance to a spectre” (133) he employed her for “personating the dead, and posing for their photographs” (134).

Nights at the Circus is a work of infinite beauty, of numerous sparkling figures, boundless possibilities and impossibilities. Carter emerges as a master teller of tales with an extraordinary gift for language and a willingness and eagerness to take risks. She is the quintessential "ex-centric" author - writing subversively from the edge, displacing conventionally established discourse. She portrays a broader canvas of experience by relentlessly discussing the undiscussed. The novel exhibits splendid craftsmanship and venerable intellect underneath, accentuated
by the rich portrayal of Magic Realism and the use of the Gothic. There is an atypical and unusual kind of fantasy, blatant barefaced absurdity and wicked word-play. It is a pleasantly captivating read that exposes the grotesque (ugly, gross, bizarre) of feminine seduction and sexuality, desire and power. Substantial subjects and themes lie beneath the surface of the story such as class struggle, patriarchy, sexuality, nature of reality vs. illusion. Through riveting twists and turns in the plot, equilibrium and harmony is achieved in the novel.
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   <http://www.csulb.edu/~bhfinney/AngelaCarter.html>


Chapter 6

Wise Children (1991)

The novel *Wise Children* (1991) is the “final legacy” of Angela Carter. It is believed that she wrote it after being diagnosed of cancer and died “the year after its publication, so it takes crowning place in her now recognisably revolutionary literary project” (*Wise* vii). It is a grand and befitting finale to Carter's glorious writing career. The poignant refrain - “What a joy it is to dance and sing!” running through the pages of the book, echo repeatedly the spirit of carpe diem, an expression and celebration of life and a boundless craving for life. Speaking to Scott Bradfield, Carter confessed the book to be her favourite as she “felt it was time to write about my [her] country, and Wise Children is all about England--London especially.” The city (London) where she grew up was rapidly changing and disappearing. The novel is an attempt by the novelist to preserve the London she knew and remembers, so that her son Alexander and the future generations would get a glimpse and whiff of what it was like.

*Wise Children* gives expression to Carter's unrelenting endeavour to depict “the obscurity allocated to women in a male-dominated society” (Gambles 164), “the complex ideas about paternity” and “Shakespeare as a cultural ideology” (Bradbury 188). Furthermore, the book also deals with the social system; the snobbery, hypocrisy and pretentions of the British
cultural divide of the British social system:

It's very broadly about class, about our two distinct cultures in Britain," Carter explained. "The absolute fissure between bourgeois culture and nonbourgeois culture. The absolute division between people who go to the National Theatre, say, and the sort who frequented the old time music halls. You've got this one class in Britain which pretends to be so proper and respectable, but all the time they're completely repressed. This other culture they're trying so hard to distance themselves from--the live sex shows, the louts, the hooligans--is their culture, too. They just don't know it yet." (Bradfield)

All these significant themes are explored through the trivial "comedies and tragedies" of relationships and affairs of the Hazard family. The novel draws its title from a dialogue of Launcelot addressed to his father, Old Gobbo in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (Act II scene-2):

Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me: it is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son. Give me your blessing; truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but in the end truth will out. (196)

Carter revises the dialogue so as to make it contextually suitable for her novel: "It's a wise child that knows its own father;... 'But wiser yet the father who knows his own child" (Wise 73).
Wise Children is a giddy saga of an extremely eccentric British theatrical family. The story is narrated by Dora Chance (the readers oscillate between past and present) as she recounts the experiences of the childhood, youth and old age which she shared with her twin sister Nora. The novel opens on the scene of the seventy-fifth birthday of the twin sisters (also Shakespeare’s birth anniversary), when an invitation arrives at their South London house from the Hazard estate for Melchior’s centenarian celebration. As the twins ponder over what to wear for the occasion, Dora, who has taken on the unofficial duty of preserving her family’s tale for posterity, reflects upon the past events of their riotous life. Speaking of “origins and past history” (Wise 11) she mentions that the theatrical world of her grandparents - Ranulph and Estella Hazard, was a complex Shakespearean maze of conspiracy and relationships, where Lears fell in love with their Cordelias and Othellos murdered their Desdemonas. Ranulph murdered Estella and Cassius Booth (with whom she had an affair) before killing himself. Their fraternal twin sons, Melchior and Peregrine moved on with their respective lives. While Melchior finally settled down in England, Peregrine remained a wanderer.

The “lucky Chances” - the identical twin sisters, Dora and Nora Chance are the illegitimate and unacknowledged daughters of Sir Melchior Hazard, the greatest Shakespearean actor of his times. They “went on to the halls” (11) to become vaudeville performers. Dora comments “Chance by name, Chance by nature. We were not planned” (24). The twin sisters were the product of a covert affair between Kitty - an
orphan chambermaid (their mother) and Melchior (the prospective thespian) who lodged at the boarding house owned by Grandma Chance. Their mother died in child birth and the landlady (Grandma Chance), brought them up out of sheer love. When Melchior denied his paternity, it was his younger brother, Peregrine, who out of a sense of duty, took up their guardianship. Theatre was in their blood and in course of time with their hard work and vigour they become the most celebrated dancing girls in London.

The first chapter begins with Tristram’s (son of Melchior by his third marriage) arrival. He informs the Chance sisters of the disappearance of his girlfriend Tiffany (Dora and Nora's godchild), who has gone missing after appearing on his trashy television show "Lashings of Lolly" in a state of delusion. The fact that she was pregnant with his child, and his refusal to forge a commitment, “I’m not ready . . . I can’t take the responsibility” (Wise 44) unhinges her. Later, the police recovered a body from the river, believed to be of Tiffany.

Chapter two of the book reads like a fairy tale, using the flashback technique, it gives a retrospective view of the past life of the Chance Sisters. Dora takes the readers down memory lane, to their childhood days and the day of their seventh birthday, when Grandma Chance, dressed them like princesses and took them to their first matinee, as a treat. This was the beginning of their passionate lifelong romance with the stage. That very day, the sisters got the first glimpse of their biological father when Grandma spots Melchior and points him out to them. The curiosity
to know their father “took root” (*Wise* 57) in them and with passage of time “the curiosity turned into a yearning, a longing.” A toy theatre as a birthday present from Peregrine awaited the girls on their return from the theatre.

Next Dora narrates about a family outing to Brighton planned by Peregrine. Outside the Theatre Royal, the girls see the poster of their father and “longed and longed to push through the glass doors” and feast their eyes on the sight of their “gloriously handsome”, “gifted” and “sensationally applauded genius” (70) father. Peregrine takes them to Melchior’s dressing room. But to their “bitterest disappointment” (72), their “father’s eyes skidded right over” them and they are forced to leave the place “unkissed”, “unwelcomed” and “unacknowledged” (73).

The sisters grow up and come of age. Peregrine goes bankrupt by the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the sisters are forced to earn their livelihood by becoming song and dance girls at the halls. Their growing up is marked by their rising interest in sexuality. Of the two, Nora, was more curious and “had a passion to know about Life, all its dirty corners” (81) and hence loses her virginity, gets pregnant and eventually haemorrhages and miscarries. On their seventeenth birthday, Dora swaps her identity and perfume with Nora in order to share her boyfriend. The same night at a party, Dora meets Melchior who gives the sisters “a very special birthday present” (87) - to star with him in the Shakespearean play *What You Will*. Thus, the night of her seventeenth birthday turns out to be very special for Dora:
...I never felt more grown-up in all my life ever after than I did that early morning, watching my shadow teeter-totter home in front of me in those sexy shoes. Because during the night that now was over, I had made love to a boy for the first time; and my father had kissed me, for the first time; I had heard my name would be up in lights on Shaftesbury Avenue, for the first time, and I was choked up inside with the pleasure and the terror of the world. (Wise 87)

The Lynde Court party (for the Shakespearian play) introduces the carnivalesque elements into the narrative: transgressive behaviour, mocking humour and grotesque. Nora’s boyfriend mistakes Dora for Nora yet again. Genghis Khan, a film producer leaves his lighted cigar on the table (to dance with Nora) which sets the tablecloth alight and eventually the entire mansion – thus, disrupting the party and forcing everybody to move outside. However, the chapter ends on a happy note with Peregrine saving both Nora as well as the Melchior’s paper crown and Genghis Khan announcing that he would take “all fabulously talented people” (108) present there (Lynde Court) to Hollywood.

The next chapter, describing the shooting of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the United States, has many similarities to Shakespeare’s plays. The first reading of it gives an overwhelming impression of chaos and confusion. Three marriages are depicted to take place - Melchior to Daisy Duck, Nora to Tony and Dora to Genghis Khan - all a result of conspiracies, misunderstandings, revenge and mistaken identities. A further twist is introduced and is subsequently resolved when Genghis
Khan’s ex-wife “who loved her man so much she was prepared to turn herself into a rough copy of his beloved for his sake” (Wise 155) appears on the scene. She had taken the help of cosmetic surgery to become a replica of Dora. She pleads with Dora to give back her husband who out of sympathy willingly hides behind a mask so that the ex-Mrs. Khan could marry him again. The wedding announcement leaves Tony’s mother outraged; she “gibbering with fury” (159) empties “a vat of marina sauce” on Nora and as a consequence Nora’s marriage with Tony is called off. After wrapping up the shooting of the film, both Dora and Nora as “sadder and wiser girls” (161) return home with Grandma Chance.

Dora’s affair with Irish - a writer, a playwright and also her most significant lover, gives expression to the sensual and sexual indulgences of an essential promiscuous society. He was attracted to Dora’s beauty and her “conspicuous unrefinement” (123) while Dora was lured by his “potent charm”, “vulnerability”, “soft, light baritone” and his “wasted talents” (120). His presence filled the vacuum created by the lack of education in her life. Yet, at the same time she is seen sleeping with her German tutor, thus, proving to be a “lecherous”, “treacherous” and “deceitful” opportunist.

After Grandma Chance’s death (chapter 4), the Chance sister’s life is marked by loss, sadness, tears and melancholy:

Nora and I sat down right here, in the breakfast room, in these very armchairs, and listened to the silence in the long, narrow house where we would live alone, in future,
and had a good cry, just the two of us, for this was Childhood's end with a vengeance and we were truly on our own, now good and proper.

We hadn't just lost Grandma, either. She was the only witness of the day our mother died when we were born, and she took with her the last living memory of that ghost without a face. All our childhood went with her into oblivion, so we were bereft both of her in person and of a good deal of ourselves, too. (Wise 164)

The house where the sisters were born and brought up was now ruled by silence and “was nothing but a barn” (165). Peregrine, who was missing at Grandma’s death and funeral, reappears at Saskia’s and Imogen’s (Melchior’s daughters) birthday party. The sisters receive a surprise gift from their father, Melchior - a stepmother; when he announces his intention of marrying Cordelia (Saskia’s best friend). The announcement leaves the sisters in a state of shock and hysterical outburst.

Dora and Nora, who had been invited by Lady Atlanta (Melchior’s first wife), are mute spectators to the ongoing drama. After the party, while Peregrine embarks upon yet another journey to the jungle, the Chance sisters return home. Later that night, they are informed about Lady Atlanta’s accident (tumbled down the shiny uncarpeted stairs) that had dislocated her spine, never to walk again. While she lay “in a heap at the stairfoot” (179), she is left abandoned by her daughters - Saskia and Imogen who leave home with their possessions. It is alleged that she (Lady Atlanta) might have been pushed down by them but the idea remains unconfirmed as Lady Atlanta remains tight-lipped about it. It is
the Chance sisters who then bring her home to 49 Bard Road and take care of her as a family. At this point, the readers are brought out of the flashback into the present, where the Chance sisters are checking “out their wardrobes for their smartest gowns” (Wise 186) and are engaged in preparations to celebrate their father's centenary party.

The final chapter of the novel sees the sisters going to their father's hundredth birthday party along with Lady Atlanta in a wheelchair. Outside the Hazard residence, Dora and Nora are met by Gorgeous George (of chapter 2), who had enacted Bottom, the weaver in The Dream, and was now an old and a homeless destitute, begging for money. Dora gives him 20 pounds (with the face of Shakespeare printed on it) on the condition that he “would spend it all on drink” (197). There are unanticipated, profligate and surprise entries to the party. A motley crowd of characters that had been missing from the scene/action or were presumed to be dead all reappear. The first to enter was Daisy Duck who was accompanied by “a fanfare of baroque trumpets” (201). Next comes the cake, a model of the Globe Theatre “big enough to ring a hundred candles all around the roof” (205) baked by Saskia - her masterpiece. But before Melchior's knife “descends” on the cake there is a “tremendous knocking at the front door” and amidst the thrill and “genial tempest” of “laughter like sweet thunder” (206), Peregrine makes a magical entry. He also brings with him a trunk, out of which the pretty Tiffany (assumed dead in chapter 1), steps out. Tristram goes down on his knees to seek her forgiveness but instead she retorts: “I wouldn’t marry you if you were the
last man in the world. Marry your auntie, instead” (Wise 211). By auntie she means Saskia whose clandestine relations with Tristram had been the main cause of the discord in their (Tristam’s and Tiffany’s) relationship. Another discovery is made thereafter - Saskia has tried to kill her father by poisoning the cake. Truths and secrets tumble out: Saskia and Imogen turn out to be Peregrine’s biological daughters who had been robbing their mother of her money and home, the public announcement of Dora and Nora being Melchior’s daughters, all come to light in Lady Atlanta Hazard’s rhetorical speech as she speaks of her loneliness.

The story comes full circle in this chapter with all the secrets being unravelled. The Chance sisters are acknowledged by Melchior as his daughters and showered with the love and attention that was denied to them in the past. At this juncture, Dora and Peregrine are shown making love. In the course of their conversation certain doubts are sorted out: Dora “seized with panic, and a crippling doubt” (222) asks Peregrine, if he was her father by any chance. Perry declines this assertion yet at the same time expresses his doubt that Grandma might have been their mother (though without any concrete evidence). However, Dora assures Perry that if they were her daughters: “she would have been proud as a peacock, she’d never have made up some cock and bull story about a chambermaid” (223). Together, they search for the cardboard crown and present it to Melchior to cheer him up. Peregrine surprises the Chance sisters by presenting them with a baby each - “Brown as a quail, round as an egg, sleepy as a pear” (226). The three months old twins - a boy and a girl, were
Gareth’s offspring who had been in America. All this leads to an atmosphere of “laughter, forgiveness, generosity, reconciliation” (Wise 227). The sisters walk back home all ecstatic, for “the barren heath was bloomed, the fire that was almost out sprung back to life...” They break into song and dance in the middle of the street to serenade the babies. And the novel ends with the lines - “What a joy it is to dance and sing!” (232).

Magical Realism forms an integral aspect of the narrative design/structure of Wise Children. The comingling of realistic details of everyday happenings and characters with elements of fantasy and wonder gives rise to Magic Realism. Carter blends the absurd with realism and thus magical elements appear in an otherwise realist setting. The most compelling manifestation of Magic Realism in the novel is the character of Peregrine. He is monumental - "the size of a warehouse, bigger, the size of a tower block" (206) and is an embodiment of the magical and the carnivalesque - a travelling carnival always on the move, propelled by the restlessness and agitation of his nature.

He is one exceptional character in the novel, who carries an air of magic and unpredictability about him. He is a magician who could produce white doves from knotted handkerchief (31), make a full set of china and cutlery disappear after an afternoon picnic (62), extract a couple of cream buns from Grandma Chance’s cleavage (73), as well as remove a scarlet macaw from Melchior’s tights (133). No one ever knows where he might be or when he would appear. If there is an occasion to be
celebrated, the prospect of Perry turning up can never be completely overlooked. He appears from nowhere at every party - be it Saskia and Imogen’s birthday party, the scene of the multiple weddings at the end of *The Dream*, and at Melchior’s centenarian celebration, when he makes a magical and mystical entry and with him “blew dozens and dozens of butterflies” (Wise 207) of multiple hues. The butterflies bring to mind, the character of Mauricio Babilonia from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (a quintessential magic realist text) who is constantly swarmed by yellow butterflies.

Wherever Peregrine appears, he is accompanied by fun, humour, laughter, revelry, magic and pandemonium. He has a laugh which like Dora’s is full and infectious - raising the spirit of those around him into a celebratory state. It is he, who first accepts Dora and Nora as family, when they were small; introduces them to the magic of the phonograph and the joy of song and dance. Again when they are thirteen, he sweeps them off for a picnic in Brighton, where, once more, they enjoy and have fun with good food, good company and soaring spirits. Apart from his conjuring talents and spirit of revelry, events often seem to become a little bizarre in his presence. On one occasion, Perry suggests that the sisters dance: "As I remember it, a band struck up out of nowhere.... Or perhaps it was Perry on his harmonica, all the time, who provided the music, so that we could dance for him"(68). Later, even stranger things follow:

Peregrine spread his arms as wide as wings and gathered up the orphan girls, pressed us so
close we crushed against his waistcoat, bruising our cheeks on his braces' buttons. Or perhaps he slipped one of us in each pocket of his jacket. Or he crushed us far inside his shirt, against his soft, warm belly, to be sustained by the thumping comfort of his heart. And then, hup! he did a back-flip out of the window with us, saving us. (Wise 72)

His licentious behaviour is evident in his affair with Lady Atlanta and the fact that Saskia and Imogen were his biological daughters. His profligacy reaches its height, when we learn of his incestuous relationship with Dora. Readers are also given an account of their coupling at Melchior’s birthday party. He truly lives up to his own statement “Life is a carnival”. Everything about Peregrine - his appearance, his size, how he always seems to disappear and then turn up miraculously, the extravagance of his character together with his magical presence lend a magic realist character to the narrative.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the narrative is the never ending string of fraternal and identical twins in the cast of characters. The sheer range of characters, together with the complexity of their relationships heightens the Magic Realism of the text. There are five pairs of twins in the novel – Melchior and Peregrine Hazard, Dora and Nora Chance, Saskia and Imogen Hazard, Tristram and Gareth Hazard, unnamed three month old babies – a boy and a girl. The varied and alluring range of dualities presented by the plethora of twins in the novel cannot be overlooked. The presence of these numerous twins, adds to the
absurdity as well as the magical character of the novel. It depicts a world of chaos and anarchy. The uniformity is a result of pairing of so many characters by virtue of their birth as twins, and the chaos ensues from the erroneous identities. The dualities and inversions are analogous to those in carnivalesque tradition and some renowned Shakespearean works, which are recognized for a similar array of twins giving rise to utter comic confusions. The superfluous presence of twins in the family challenges the credibility of the readers and gives a call to the willing suspension of disbelief.

The novel follows a nonlinear pattern of time and events, the fluctuations and oscillations from present to past, from one generation to the other and vice versa which are all skilfully manipulated. The events described are surreal, bizarre and chaotic but brilliantly vivid. Dora in narrating the history of her family, willingly rejects the choice of a chronological and sequential account in favour of an effervescent and escalating style. She holds back an account in the middle in order to leap several generations back into the past and delights her readers with an evocation of her grandparents even though they do not have any direct relation to the scene being recounted. She gives an account of her childhood days, switches on to describe Grandma Chance’s death when they were about to turn thirty and again describes an event which occurred when they were fifteen. This non-linear depiction of time is also a mode employed by magic realist writers. The fluctuation of time and
events, the wide array of characters and the unbelievable sets of twins add
to the commotion and chaos of the novel.

The Chance sisters meeting with Grandma Chance’s ghost before they go to Melchior’s 100th birthday is an eerie, fantastical happening within a realist setting; the instance has strong undertones of Magic Realism. In Grandma Chance’s bedroom where they stored their “cast-offs” (Wise 190) - clothes, the sisters while looking at their old dresses, find “Grandma’s bits and pieces” - her hat, gloves, stockings, corsets etc “cascade out of the wardrobe.” They feel that Grandma was trying to tell them something and could even hear her voice:

‘She’s telling us Memory Lane is a dead end,’ I said. I could hear her voice clear as a bell: Come off it, girls! Pluck the day! You ain’t dead, yet! You have got a party to go to! Expect the worst, hope for the best!’ (190)

Magical feel of the novel is accentuated by the inversion of hierarchies and delineation of an inverted and chaotic world of excesses. Dora and Nora - the daughters of Melchior (the greatest Shakespearean actor of his times) lead a life of vaudeville song and dance girls though by birth they deserved a better life. But both their social hierarchy and their destinies get inverted. They finally receive the much deserved recognition of being Melchior’s daughters only at the end of the novel. Another inversion of hierarchy is evident in Lady Atlanta - the once young, glamorous and beautiful wife of Melchior who is forced to lead a life of
obscurity in her old age - left to the kindness and generosity of the Chance sisters and confined to her wheelchair in the basement of 42 Bard Street.

The novel is underpinned by opposites and contradictions - like the North London and South London; the legitimate and the illegitimate; the right side of the track and the wrong side of the track; the high and low culture; and music hall and pantomime in opposition to the tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare. Depiction of such conflicting polarities is an important characteristic of Magic Realism. Similar opposition is also portrayed in the characters of Melchior and Peregrine; Nora and Dora; and Saskia and Imogen. Carter represents the tragic and comic visage of the theatre through the characters of the fraternal twin brothers - Melchior and Peregrine. The dark, serious and mournful Melchior is the quintessential tragic hero and the bright, spontaneous and fun loving Peregrine is the typical comic character. The novelist is never explicit about this association but nevertheless the idea is reinforced. At the surface, Dora and Nora – the identical twins are different from each other only by the different perfumes – Shalimar and Mitsouko they wear, still they are asymmetrical and inversions of each other. As Dora explains:

All the same, identical we may be, but symmetrical - never. For the body itself isn’t symmetrical. One of your feet is bound to be bigger than the other, one ear will leak more wax. (Wise 5)

Saskia and Imogen - “the darling buds of May”, who were born to a life of better opportunity and decency are inversion of the Chance sisters. They
are insensitive and malevolent beings who do not take responsibility of their own invalid mother. Dora and Nora in spite of their crude south London background, their promiscuous and licentious leanings are generous and affectionate. It is they who take in Lady Atlanta Hazard after she is abandoned by her own daughters and husband. Nora’s passion for life is contrasted with Imogen’s penchant of falling to sleep in any circumstance, while Dora has an innate feeling of abhorrence for Saskia ever since her infancy days.

Carter, with extreme dexterity, has reincarnated and reawakened the spirit of carnival with its social/political/aesthetic possibilities which is a much privileged feature of Magic Realist narratives. The Lynde Court party for the Shakespearean play is an epitome of Magic Realism characterised by absurdity, chaos and carnivalesque as it “celebrates the body, the senses and the unofficial, uncannonized relations that nonetheless exist, . . . alongside the official recognized forms of human intercourse” (Danow 3). Over-indulgence in eating, drinking and sexual activity is the natural order of things at this gathering. Dora and the waiter (Nora’s boyfriend) stealthily sneak “up the black oak staircase” (Wise 99) to have sex while Nora flirts with Genghis Khan - the American film producer. Genghis Khan leaves his lighted cigar on the table to dance with Nora, causing the tablecloth to catch fire. Deeply engrossed in the celebration of the body, no one notices the fire, till it spreads all over the place and creates a pandemonium. While Lynde court blazed, Nora and the waiter “naked as nature intended” (101), escape through the window
and unable to resist their “urgent promptings” (106) of passion continue with their sexual engagement in a shrubbery; Melchior enjoys a glass of champagne by the “fireside” (Wise 104) and mourns the loss of his “old crown of gilded cardboard” (106) which his father had worn while playing Lear. The odd, bizarre and abnormal behaviour portrayed by these characters while the house burned, seems implausible. This episode is evocative of “carnival time” – which gives licence to liberate from all reserve, decency and etiquette. At the same time it is a stinging critique of the behaviour and life style of the upper class and thus performs a significant function of Magic Realism which is an "implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite" (Williams 194).

Melchior Hazard’s centenary celebration is also marked by magic realist elements. The most singular being Peregrine’s unexpected and magical reappearance at the bash which “upstaged . . . plausibility” (Wise 207). He was followed by a swarm of “flapping” and “swirling” butterflies of different colours. The cake “hovered” and “veered off to one side” and the “chandelier shook” (207) at the approach of the “material ghost.” Imogen’s “bronze shift sequined in scales” and her headwear – “fishbowl on her head with a fish in it” (204) which was her way of promoting her programme for kids - Goldie the Goldfish is ridiculous to the point of absurdity. The scene in which the seventy five year old Dora and the centenarian Peregrine are shown making love, is totally bizarre: “… the agitation of the steel bed began to make the chandelier downstairs directly beneath it, shiver,” (220) to such an extent that Nora who was downstairs
began to think that “the grand bouncing” would “fuck the house down” (220) along with the chandelier. The lights, camera and action, along with “drumrolls” (Wise 206), “baroque trumpets” (201) and the “uproar and commotion” (208) create a total bedlam at the party.

Carter’s love for the “make-believe” world and films was a life-long interest. It began during her childhood, when she accompanied her father to the cinemas. This particular interest finds expression in her novels. Carter, has travelled a long way from the private puppet show of The Magic Toyshop, to the vaudeville, the theatre and Hollywood as depicted in Wise Children. Her obsession with performance can be traced right from her first novel Shadow Dance, where Honeybuzzard with a penchant for making Jumping Jacks, also loved to “slip in and out” of himself. In Love, Lee has a different smile for different occasions whereas Annabel and Buzz thrive on melodrama. Uncle Philip in The Magic Toyshop considers the others around him as puppets and forces them to play different roles in his puppet shows.

Carter in Wise Children, deploys the tricks of pantomime and music hall – the bawdy and popular arts that gave rise to the cinema (in turn, harking back to magic lanterns, fairy tales and oral storytelling). Performance and theatre occupy a pivotal place in the novel. The inclusion of these aspects of the “make-believe” world within a realist text with rational aims and objectives makes this novel a Magic Realist work. The novel is divided into five chapters corresponding to the five acts of theatrical drama. Dora’s love and obsession with the stage prompts her to
make various theatrical references and at times even the simple details are presented in a way that make them similar to an act taking place on the stage. “I made my bow five minutes ahead of Nora” (2); “The curtain call of my career as a lover.” The Chance sisters’ first encounter with the stage that left them “mute with ecstasy” is described by Carter thus:

. . . and the wonderful curtain that hung between us and pleasure, the curtain that in delicious agony of anticipation, we knew would soon rise and then and then...what wonderful secrets would be revealed to us

‘You just wait and see,’ said Grandma.

The lights went down, the bottom of the curtain glowed. I loved it and have always loved it best of all, the moment when the lights go down, the curtain glows, you know that something wonderful is going to happen. It doesn’t matter if what happens next spoils everything; the anticipation itself is always pure. (Wise 54)

At the wedding party, Puck of The Dream makes a call for the “willing suspension of disbelief”: ‘It was only a paper moon, sailing over a cardboard sea. But it wouldn’t be make-believe, if you would believe in me...’ (157). Carter too, in guise of Dora - the narrator, seems to be conveying a similar appeal to the readers.

The verisimilitude in the novel is highly credible and compelling. Fiction is a marvel due to its “vivid evocation of reality, rather than because it is actually real.” The many mention of Melchior's "cardboard
crown, with the gold paint peeling off" (105) which Dora refers to as "a flimsy bit of make-believe", Peregrine's thrilling magical tricks, all the "behind-the-scene" technicalities of the set and the visual effects that are involved in making a believable and plausible drama, effectively create a semblance of reality.

There is a scene in the enchanted wood, where art (imaginary) and life (reality), suddenly gaze at each other, as Dora confronts her fiancé's ex-wife:

I saw my double. I saw myself, me, in my Peaseblossom costume, large as life, like looking in a mirror.

First off, I thought it was Nora, up to something, but it put its finger to its lips, to shush me, and I got a whiff of Mitsouko and then I saw it was a replica. A hand-made, custom-built replica, a wonder of the plastic surgeon's art....

"And after all, she looked very lifelike, I must say, if not, when I looked more closely, not all that much like me, more like a blurred photocopy or an artist's impression..." (Wise 155)

Later, Dora learns that Genghis Khan's ex-wife had gone under the knife and taken help of plastic-surgery to win back her ex-husband whom she loved madly. She had got her face and body parts altered in order to resemble her husband's new love Dora, and she becomes a close replica of her. Dora and Genghiz Khan are believed to be a loving couple by the
outside world but in reality Dora is well aware that their relationship was far from genuine, that Genghiz khan's proposal was not guided by love but by some ulterior motive. It is the love of ex- Mrs. Khan which is true and indisputable.

Carter speaks through the voice of Dora Chance – the high-spirited, deliciously witty chronicler, with strong feminist leanings and an exclusively inexorable appetite for drama. To the readers, Dora – the narrator comes across as being intelligent, articulate, gentle, loving and lewd; vulgar, disrespectful and forthright. Her narration is distinct by absolute candour as she readily accepts the fallibility of her memory and unpredictability of her narration. She comes clean about the omissions she chooses to make of the various faux pas of her life and of the periods of her life. Time and time again she expresses: "I have a memory, though I know it cannot be a true one . . ." (Wise 72), "I could have sworn that . . ." (217), "these days, half a century and more later, I might think I did not live but dreamed that night . . ." (158) and "I misremember. It was sixty-odd years ago you know" (68). Such confessions by the narrator are cues of "fictionality." At the same time she quotes songs from her distant past, memories are brought back to life through smells of perfumes and the narration of riveting episodes. This adds to the credibility of the novel and lures the readers into believing them; blending seamlessly the ordinary (real) and extraordinary (magical).

The book engages those who have knowledge and fondness for Shakespeare, whom Carter considered as "a champion of popular culture
and of illiterate and semi-literate communities” (Sanders 38). The novel is bursting with the Shakespearean paraphernalia of - twins, bastards, misshapen creatures, mistaken identities - ensuing confusion; “bed swaps” and “bed tricks”; strange lands (Hollywood); and effervescent characters from every walk of life. For the author, the Shakespearean plays become a medium for exploration of the different themes because they “dealt with comparable issues of sexuality and performance, social and geographical boundaries, and other kinds of luminal experience to do with time and the potential in our lives for the magical, the supernatural or otherworldly” (Sanders 39). Readers take delight in the very many reverberations of - King Lear, Winter’s Tale and Tempest, among others. The many “coincidental” links to Shakespeare and the intertextuality involved call for “the willing suspension of belief.”

The Gothic premise of decay is evident in the ageing of the various characters in the novel. Dora and Nora - the once “slim and trim and tender” dancing girls and “teenage sexpots” (Wise 94) are transformed into septuagenarian old ladies with “crow’s-feet, the grey hair and turkey wobblers” (208). Lady Atlanta Hazard – “the most beautiful woman of her time” (194) is confined to a wheelchair following an accidental fall. The “gloriously handsome” Melchior Hazard was now “a touch unsteady on his pins, inclined to wobble” (218). There were others like “My Lady Margarine” who tried defying age by “nip and tuck” (199) and Daisy Duck who took the help of “hormone replacement therapy” (202). The fall of the British Empire, too, is commented upon in a chance meeting with
Gorgeous George outside the Hazard residence at Melchior’s birthday party, when Nora ironically reflected “Lo, how the mighty have fallen” (196), after taking a look at the outlines of Europe and Africa tattooed on his torso. The decay of the once “Clown Number One to the British Empire” (Wise 150-51) becomes a metaphor for the decay of the once powerful British Empire.

The Gothic theme of incest recurs in almost all the novels of Carter. Many Incestuous relationships have been depicted in Wise Children along with the various illicit relationships. Dora’s incestuous relationship with Peregrine (her fraternal Uncle) begins when she was thirteen. “I thought I must have had it off with Peregrine!!! Dread and delight coursed through my veins; I thought what have I done...” (63). In the last chapter, Carter establishes the fact of their being a couple by recounting their copulation which had the power to “fuck the house down” (220). Lady Atlanta Hazard’s covert incestuous relationship with Peregrine (her brother-in-law) is acknowledged at Melchior’s birthday party by the Lady herself. The relationship grew while Melchior was engaged in his “titanic conquest” and Lady Atlanta “was left lonely, with [her] empty womb” (216). Saskia and Imogen turn out to be Peregrine’s biological daughters. Another case of incest is the relationship between Saskia and Tristram her half-brother and her best friend’s son.

Wise Children depicts Carter as “a mellowing writer . . . settling into an avuncular middle-age” (Gamble 164). The appalling violence and brutality of the earlier novels is replaced by “geniality.” Though less
ornamented, the narrative still reverberates with energy, exuberance and “high-kicking gusto.” The novel is written in an unmistakably Cartarian style but it seems far more light-hearted than her early books like Love or The Magic Toyshop. The narrative is also infused with autobiographical elements from Carter’s own family history. The accounts of the war years have a direct link to Carter’s life as a child at Wath-upon-Dearne during the wartime. The delineation of the character of Grandma Chance: “She was our air-raid shelter; she was our entertainment; she was our breast” (Wise 29) links her directly to Carter’s maternal grandmother who was a woman of “physical and spiritual heaviness.” Carter’s Aunt Cynthia (Aunt Kitty – her moniker) was the inspiration behind the portrayal of the Chance sisters. The novelist manages to evoke a vivid picture of the numerous characters with such vital interest, that the readers get trapped in the story of their life.

The novel takes the readers on an adventure through London, Brixton, Brighton and across Atlantic to New York and Hollywood. Wise Children is bawdy, sentimental, dazzling and warm, evoking laughter and tears all at once. “A diabolically clever mix of pathos and humour maintains the balance between realism and a sense of the ridiculous which is unmistakeably Carter. Her legendary tongue twisting, mind bending, linguistic pyrotechnics is in full flower and display throughout” (Wise, back cover).

Wise Children deals with events that encroach into the fantastical as well as realistic domains without permanently inhabiting either of
them. Dora - the narrator makes frequent shifts from the fantastical occurrence to the realistic happenings and vice versa. Carter heightens the intensity of the novel by weaving layers of meaning into the text. The events narrated, often function at a literal, referential and metaphoric level. Magic Realism – with its varying constituents/elements, performs diverse functions in the novel. At times it lends the narrative an emotional quality or gives it a metaphoric significance. On very many occasions, it evokes cultural subtleties and nuances, offering an assessment of human nature and an implicit critique of society. The narrative celebrates the cycle of life, death and transformation and at the same time draws our attention towards - the transience of human life. The conclusion of the novel is marked by hope and optimism/birth and regeneration which fit with its unrealistic and magical aspect and the dramatic nature of all the major characters and the relationships they share.
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Conclusion

Carter believed human beings to be the pure product of history, culture and circumstances. True to her own view, the author’s life – her childhood days; the influence of her family (grandmother and parents); the war years (World War II); her life in Bristol; the era in which she lived - the counter culture of the 60s; and her career as a journalist – played a significant role in making her the indomitable and richly talented writer she was. These aspects of her life also provide an autobiographical quality to some of her novels. Her degree in Medieval literature (which lends an allegorical dimension to her novels); her vast reading of eccentric and eclectic literature, and her travels enriched her intellectual acumen and stimulated her artistic ingenuity.

Carter’s iconoclasm - her vision of unshackling reality and creating a new liberated world and a utopian vision of the freedom of woman is reflected in her writings. A break with conventions and traditions runs through her narratives. The novelist has appropriated magic realist techniques in conjunction with the Gothic nomenclature to subvert the boundaries of conventional narrative strategies; displace traditionally established discourses; and counter the established truths and values of Western culture. Carter views Gothic Tradition as a provocative and invigorative form of writing and has used Gothicism right from her first novel. The Gothic Tradition is more or less sustained through all her novels. She works within the framework of the classic Gothic literature
and employs Gothic conventions, reworked/remoulded within the contemporary reality. The Gothicism of her early novels paves way for the development of her later art - Magic Realism - her supreme achievement. Her early works are suffused with an ingenious display of generic traits of Gothicism along with Surrealism (dreams and hallucinations).

Magic Realism and Surrealism can be realized as an outcome of the Gothic Tradition. The dissemination of Gothic features across texts and literary periods, distinguish the Gothic as a hybrid form – incorporating and transforming other literary modes as well as developing and altering its own conventions in relation to novel forms of writing.

Carter's essay “The Alchemy of Word” states her early fascination with Surrealism which was on account of its ideal of “beauty at the service of liberty.” The writer considered the surrealist imagery as “enigmatic”, “marvelously erotic” which is felt “as an excitation of the nerves.” The essay also states the rationale behind her decision to give it up later, which was chiefly due to the negative image of woman, as viewed and portrayed by most of the surrealist avant-gardes.

The in-depth reading and analysis of Carter's oeuvre, leads to the conclusion that though her early novels abound in surrealist descriptions, later as she matured as a writer, she distanced herself from Surrealism, as it was not serving her authorial intention/purpose - to bring about change and create a new and liberated world. Thus Surrealism gradually gave way to Magic Realism, which was to become her finest achievement.
Surrealism has been a major constituent of Magic Realism – which is an amalgamation of fantasy and reality. The fantastical in Magic Realism, is often the product of surrealist imagery employed by the writers of this genre. But Magic Realism cannot be a part of Surrealism which deals with the overtly imaginative - the tousled and surreal world of the unconscious.

Magic Realism is a literary genre and a narrative technique characterized by the equal acceptance of the ordinary/mundane and the extraordinary/bizarre. The technique blurs the distinction between reality and fantasy by blending both these aspects within a text. In spite of the presence of the fantastical, the narrative is grounded in reality through social, political and historical references. This unification of fantasy and reality can best be represented by Carter’s Nights at the Circus – a perfect embodiment of Magic Realism. The explicitly fantastical character of Fevvers – the magical, glorious, larger than life woman with wings, walking the thin line between human and bird, is juxtaposed against the mundane and drab realities. The various references to the turn of the new century – 20th century and the major preoccupation of the time – female franchise, concept of New Woman, class struggle, etc., lend to the narrative a realistic quality/foundation.

Angela Carter’s Night at the Circus (1984) and Wise Children (1991) along with Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis (1915); Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) and Love in the Times of Cholera (1985); Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1980); are considered to be some of the seminal works of Magic Realism.
Though there is no clear accord among critics regarding the characteristics of Magic Realism, yet, there are a set of constituents which are significant markers of the technique. The most essential feature of Magic Realism is the merging of the realistic and the bizarre. The realist reference to the World War II, the changing city of London together with fantastic, strange and absurd events, situations and characters in *Wise Children* exemplifies this aspect. Another important feature of magic realist narratives is the pervading sense of mystery. The mystery of Ghislaine's horrific scar in *Shadow Dance* and the vagueness of Fevvers' wings in *Nights at the Circus* continue right till the end of the novels. Use of myths, fairy tales, dreams and surrealistic descriptions are also crucial to Magic Realism. Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* is a beautiful blend of myth and fairy tale. *Shadow Dance, Love, Several Perception and The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* depict the surreal world of dreams. *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is also the epitome of Carter's use of surrealist imagery and description.

Dexterous time shifts; complex and even labyrinthine plot and narratives, as depicted in *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children* are also integral aspects of Magic Realism. These two narratives are marked by complexity, chiefly due to the wide array of characters and the relationships they share. Authorial reticence is yet another element of magic realist narratives. Carter does not give explanation for the bizarre happenings or the justification of an action by a character in almost all of her novels and withholds certain information and omits certain episodes
as in *Wise Children*. Use of the carnivalesque tradition and hybridity – the amalgamation of inharmonious opposites, are also vital to magic realist fiction. The “Dionysiac” revel in *Several Perceptions*; the travelling fair and the travelling circus in *Infernal Desire Machines* and *Nights at the Circus* respectively; and the Lynde court party in *Wise Children* are the recreation of the carnivalesque by Carter. Fewvers is a hybrid woman with wings in *Nights at the Circus*. Criticism of the society is inherent to Magic Realism and all the novels of Carter perform this function in some way or the other.

The expression “Gothic” was coined by the writers of the Renaissance, who accredited the creation of the medieval architecture to the barbarian Gothic tribes. The Gothic architecture is distinct on account of its uncontrolled, grotesque, exaggerated structures which invoke a strong emotional response – awe, pity, fear, horror, compassion. The Wagnerian castle of Dr Hoffman, built on the edge of a cliff in *Infernal Desire Machines* and the house of Mr Rosencreutz situated in wooded hills in *Nights at the Circus*, which transports Fewvers’ into an earlier age, are distinct examples of Gothic architecture. The loneliness, the silence and the mystery of these places is aggravated by the prospect of the impending danger.

With the passage of time, the term “Gothic” came to include the mysterious, superstitious and supernatural in architecture as well as in writing and became intrinsic to Gothic fiction. It refers to a group of novels written between the 1760s and the 1820s (Horace Walpole, Ann
Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Mary Shelley and Charles Maturin being some of the major Gothic writers. The Gothic writing is characterised by - ruins, abbeys and monasteries; dark, gloomy, deserted and sinister settings; mystery and terror driven atmosphere; a constant conflict between good and evil; presence of diabolical desperadoes, angelic souls, damsels in distress; stalking spectres, devils, demons, sorcerers, magic mirrors; omens and dreams.

The novels of Angela Carter abound in Gothic spaces - the decaying old houses where Honeybuzzard and Morris go to collect antiques and the derelict Victorian house where Ghislaine lay murdered (Shadow Dance); the sinister and lonely Mansion of Midnight (The Infernal Desire Machines). The Gothic theme of decay, imprisonment, flight and boundary is perceptible in most of the novels of Carter. The theme of conflict between good and evil is highlighted in the character of Morris in Shadow Dance. The Gothic premise of incest surfaces in many novels of Carter - the incestuous relationship between siblings (The Magic Toyshop); and the relationship between Dora and Peregrine (Wise Children). The theme of search for identity which is central to many Gothic writings also surfaces in Carter’s opus. It is depicted in the character of Joseph (Several Perceptions) and Desiderio (Infernal Desire Machines).

The characters of Honeybuzzard in Shadow Dance and Buzz in Love are examples of the diabolical desperado. Ghislaine in Shadow Dance and Annabel as depicted in the opening pages of the novel Love are
the re-creation of the Gothic heroine, the damsel in distress. The Gothic array of bizarre characters – disfigured, monstrous, spectral, hybrid – all find place in Carter’s novels: the scarred Ghislaine (Shadow Dance); “Dear old Fanny Four-Eyes”, Toussaint - devoid of a mouth and Madame Shareck – the skeletal woman and spectre like being (Nights at the Circus).

Surrealism as a literary and art movement is heavily influenced by Freudianism. It attempts to express the mechanisms/functioning of the subconscious which get revealed in dreams and hallucinations. Surrealism and surrealist descriptions form an integral part of magic realist narratives; Magic Realism with its juxtaposition of the mundane and the dream-like has some apparent similarities to Surrealism. In spite of the discernible similitude they are not the same. Therefore, it becomes necessary to discuss it as a part of this study.

Magic Realism focuses on the material object and the actual existence of things in the world, whereas Surrealism explores the mind, the imagination and delves into the more cerebral, intellectual, psychological and subconscious reality. While Magic Realism is more concerned with the outer existence of things, Surrealism deals with their inner being. In Magic Realism there is always a “strained” association between the real and the fantastic, the plausible and the implausible. Some critics view the fantastic happenings in Magic realist writings as a metaphor for the widespread psychic pain which is an outcome of the World Wars, colonialism and the complexity of modern life. In Surrealism
reality is completely obliterated and metaphors replace the rational and mundane and the real.

Carter's early novels *Shadow Dance* (1966), *Several Perception* (1968) and *Love* (1971) are not exclusively magic realist narratives; they do not possess highly fantastical characters or events and supernatural elements. Nevertheless, the analysis of these novels becomes essential to understand the novelist's later ingenious and imaginative engagement with Magic Realism. Carter's oeuvre needs to be read in continuum to realize the writer's development from a realist to a magic realist writer. These novels provide the groundwork for Carter's later works. The novels depict the realism of the 60s; the “provincial bohemia”; detailed description of England and the issues confronting the society which was undergoing a “phantasmagoric redefinition” (Carter, *Infernal* 18) of values in face of the industrial and sexual revolution. The novelist unerringly represents the social, political, economic, moral and spiritual life of her times.

Carter's depiction of realism, which aims at discovering the mysterious and inexplicable relationship between man and his circumstances, is aided by her use of Gothicism as well as her fantastical/surreal descriptions. These novels abound in surrealist imagery (chiefly depicted with the aid of dreams and hallucinations), carnival, myths and fairy tales which are often classified under the nomenclature of Magic Realism. Thus, these early novels depict Magic Realism in its nascent phase.
In *Shadow Dance*, the Gothic horror and revulsion is very distinct. Ghislaine with her hideous deformity - a “revolting scar” (Gothic motif) on her face is the damsel in distress as well as the “monstrous feminine” of this novel. She looms in the background of the novel as an ominous and menacing figure and haunts the textual world with her “bleeding sexuality.” She represents the negative image of “sexual women” bound by the shackles of obedience and passivity that was prevalent in the original Gothic fiction. Like the “dehumanized creatures” and “madwoman in the attic” of the Gothic novels, Ghislaine had also lost her sanity and control over her passions and thus had to be silenced. Honeybuzzard - the malignant, amoral, asexual, cruel and capricious anti-hero, is the vicious and brutal villain of the Gothic novels. He is the writer’s “fledgling figure”, who with his obsession for making Jumping Jacks, and fantasy of playing chess with men and women, will graduate into the sexual predators and puppet masters of her later novels.

The conflict between good and evil as depicted in the character of Morris is also a prominent Gothic motif employed by Carter. The decaying old houses where Honeybuzzard and Morris go to collect antiques, and the derelict Victorian house where Ghislaine was murdered, is a Gothic image of a repulsive and oppressive domestic space. We also get a feel of Gothic eeriness when within the realist and the magical narration Carter gives the readers clichés of Gothic motifs like hooting of an “owl, hooded in a tree” (*Shadow* 12), “deserted cemetery”, “old churchyard” along with the sinister suggestiveness of the “night” in various scenes of the book.
The crumbling, disintegrating and dilapidated mansion in *Several Perceptions* where Beverley Kyte organises a “Dionysiac” revel on Christmas Eve is a distinct Gothic space.

In *Love*, the desolate, decaying and alienated eighteenth century park, where Annabel finds herself, is a Gothic landscape. The central principle of decay in the novel is Annabel’s growing madness which affects her physically as well as mentally and reduces her into a ghost-like spectre. Outwardly, Annabel appears a passive and submissive victim resembling a Gothic heroine – feeble and feminine, but she defies her feminine traits when she devises the punishment for Lee’s infidelity and brands him with a tattoo. Her mental illness also posits the premise of imprisonment which is central to Gothic Tradition. She is the prisoner of her own madness and her own strange and uncanny thoughts. She also imprisons Lee within the confines of her own dark and sinister world. Lee’s imprisonment at Annabel’s hand becomes stronger after her suicide attempt; the tattoo being a certificate of his subjugation. Her suicide becomes her flight of escape, not only from the agonies of internal (imaginative) and external (real) world, but also liberates her from the shackles of patriarchy and becomes a vehicle of revenge. Buzz with his diabolic appearance and homosexual leaning is the modern reincarnation of the Gothic desperado. *Love* also draws attention to the boundaries between sanity and madness; between upper middle-class and bourgeoisie.
The Magic Toyshop like magical realist stories has a dream-like landscape and takes the help of fairy tale, folklore and myth to question the true nature of reality. Carter considered myths and fairy tales to be the fiction of the poor and the illiterate and thus an integral part of the European oral tradition. The novelist, by blending biblical allusions, myths and fairy tales with Melanie’s life – her hopes and fears, performs dual functions. She successfully demythologizes the myths and fairy tales by dissecting them, furthermore, she enables the readers to connect and relate to them. Carter was interested in the manner people perceived their experience(s) and mythology. The author - a true "demythologiser" makes these myths and fairy tales less mysterious and mythical. She gives a more human character to them thus permitting a more vivid perception and assessment. Albeit The Magic Toyshop is structured like a fairy tale, it is not a traditional fantastic tale that aims to surprise. Carter packs her writing with a rich tapestry of literary references and as critics have pointed out with “revisionary inquiries into folklore, legend and fairy-tale”, thereby adding a magical and fantastical quality to it. She exploits the pattern of the tales and “demythologises” them so as to allow the book to be read as a social and cultural critique. Her fantasy is deeply rooted in realism and aims at subverting traditional patterns of patriarchy, femininity and sexuality.

Uncle Philip’s dilapidated house located in a run-down and neglected south London suburb and the once stately middle-class neighbourhood and park, where Finn takes Melanie for a walk one day, is
the quintessential Gothic setting. Melanie is the re-embodiment of the Gothic heroine; a lonesome and vulnerable female who is faced with the uncertainties of interpersonal relationships and gender politics. Uncle Philip is the powerful, impulsive and tyrannical Gothic male of the novel whose character develops the Gothic theme of sexual and patriarchal oppression as well as the theme of imprisonment. His Victorian authoritarian impulse is palpable in his brutality, his viciousness, his queer puppet show and in his attempt to control Melanie's sexuality. The novel also deals with boundaries and transgression of boundaries - between a young girl and a woman; between upper middle class and the poor working class; and between the English and the Irish. The Gothic theme of incestuous relationships is a dominant feature of the Cartarian novels. The intimate scene between Aunt Margaret and Francie leaves Melanie stunned. The house (nurturing incestuous relationship) meets a destiny similar to that in conventional Gothic, when it is burnt down by Uncle Phillip along with the persons involved in the act. Melanie's desire of flight is fulfilled when she and Finn break out of the burning house at Aunt Margaret's insistence.

The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman can rightly be labelled as an embodiment of Magic Realism. The novelist like a true magic realist merges both a careful observation of the real and the power of imagination to create an artificial construct. She begins the narrative with a realist description of the mundane city, followed by the detailed account of the fantastical invasion of the city, by Doctor Hoffman's desire
machines. The city becomes a realm of weird and bizarre happenings and an abode of evil - ghosts, apparitions, mirages, madness, death and decay.

The meeting of the Minister with Dr Hoffman’s emissary is suffused with Magic Realism – fusing of lights and flickering of flames with the magical and mysterious presence of the emissary. Carter has employed the "Kafkaesque" image of metamorphosis, in presentation of Albertina, who transforms herself and appears in various fantastic forms throughout the novel. The travelling fair, peopled by bizarre and grotesque characters like the bearded Madame de la Barbe; Mamie Buckskin – a phallic female with a bosom; and the nine Moroccan acrobats; is the re-creation of the carnivalesque by Carter. The novelist has also introduced the concept of hybridity (with the aid of the bizarre race of centaurs), which is an important machinery employed by magic realist writers. The juxtaposition of the inharmonious groups of people - African tribe; the race of centaur; the bestial whores in the “House of Anonymity”; and the eccentric assortment of characters of the travelling fair within the narrative lends a magical quality to it.

*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is replete with Gothic elements. The “Mansion of Midnight”, the “House of Anonymity” and Dr Hoffman’s “Wagnerian castle” provide the Gothic landscape. The narrative combines elements of both horror and romance and features both physical as well as psychological terror. Magicians, femme fatales, supernatural, ghosts, devils, death, decay, madness, incest - intrinsic to the Gothic Tradition are close at hand.
Nights at the Circus, Carter's penultimate novel, is the epitome of her experimentation with Magic Realism - the brilliant unification of myth and reality, of implausible events and stark realism. Carter creates an entire world until the readers lose their ability to discriminate between the real and unreal. The juxtaposition of the fantastical presence of Fewvers against the dark and dismal reality; her metamorphosis into a hybrid bird-woman; her magical escape from the Grand Duke's palace; the travelling circus - with its array of eccentric characters; Walser's amnesia; the drumming trees; all lend the narrative a magic realist atmosphere. Keeping with the mysterious spirit of Magic Realism the first pages of the book create a sense of disbelief that continues right till the end of the novel and Fewvers existence remains a chimera.

Fewvers is the subversion of the "angelic" Gothic heroine and all that is considered feminine by social construct, nevertheless, like Scheherazade and a Gothic heroine, she seduces Walser with her storytelling and hypnotizes him with her magical wings. Fewvers becomes the very embodiment of the Gothic heroine, when she is entrapped and imprisoned within the walls of distinctive Gothic spaces – Ma Nelson's brothel, Madame Shareck's Gothic museum, Rosencreutz's Gothic mansion, clown alley and Grand Duke's palace. The novel also depicts the boundary between the real and the fantastical; and between the elite and the outcast. The Gothic theme of decay is palpable both in concrete as well as abstract form.
The commingling of realistic details of everyday happenings and characters with elements of fantasy and the absurd give rise to Magic Realism in *Wise Children*. The most compelling manifestation of Magic Realism in the novel is the character of Peregrine who is always accompanied by fun, humour, laughter, revelry, magic and pandemonium. The Lynde Court party, the scene of the three weddings and Melchior Hazard’s centenary celebration are all characterised by absurdity, chaos and the carnivalesque. Depiction of the world of theatrical illusion and make-believe - the lights, the camera, the action, add to the magic realist texture of the narrative and call for the “willing suspension of disbelief.” The superfluous presence of twins; the many coincidental links to Shakespeare; the non-linear depiction of time; the authorial reticence; the acceptance of fallibility of memory and unpredictability of narration by Dora - the narrator; challenges the credibility of the readers.

*Wise Children*, as a novel deals with events that encroach into the fantastical as well as realistic domains without permanently inhabiting either of them. Dora - the narrator makes frequent shifts from the fantastical occurrence to the realistic happenings and vice versa. Carter heightens the intensity of the novel by weaving layers of meaning into the text with her implicit criticism of society.

Carter can truly be seen as the master of description, of metaphor and alliterations. Her writing is characterized by ease and sensuality. Arresting and haunting images and situations lend the narratives a riveting as well as a shocking character. Her interest and engagement in
the changing intellectual debates of her times and her wide range of reading led to the emergence of new facets in her writings. In her hand literature, philosophy and cultural studies all come together. The magic realist and Gothic writings of Carter, read as a social, cultural and political critique. She takes up an indirect approach to communicate her message by incorporating myth, fantasy and allegory. Everyday realism is depicted in a figurative way to communicate issues close to the author’s heart – sexual identity, patriarchy, gender roles, feminist identity, class struggle and nature of reality vs. Illusion.

Carter’s use of Magic Realism and Gothicism gives her the licence to play with language as well as helps her to communicate her deepest concerns. Writing in her hand becomes an art form with infinite possibilities. Her writing has a beauty and intelligence endowed to it by the power of her language. Her ideas get emphasised and empowered by her beautiful, sublime, lush and playful language and adds to the charm of the imagined, fantastical world. She is a magician who conjures up a dreamlike amalgamation of fantasy, horror and coarse realism often against a Gothic background. Carter has the ability to transform the world into the magical with the sheer power of her words and language. She is a wordsmith who weaves words with extreme artistry. The varied tones, the rhythm and the frequent inbuilt literary allusions are a celebration of her luxuriant use of language.

An important aspect to take cognition in these novels is that these techniques – Magic Realism and Gothic Tradition, gain in significance
because of Angela Carter's use of language and style adopted, along with the bizarre situations and background settings. Contents and themes are consistent, but Carter's ingenious artfulness lies in the variety and multitudinous of description which rests on her style and expression. Her language thus, adds to the profundity of the novel and leaves the readers marvelling at her vast reading and in-depth knowledge.

Carter's fiction is "open-ended" and interpretations of her œuvre are very subjective and wholly dependent on the reader's perception. Readers and critics are sure to find new inferences and aspects every time they delve into these novels. New meanings unfold as a result of the vast reading by the novelist, and the different techniques, the reappropriations and variety of ideas borrowed from different writers. The vigorous and dynamic nature of the novels allow for varied types of analysis and a range of methodologies to be applied to them. This is what makes Carter's novels difficult to read. Most books immediately lend themselves to a theory or the other and thus allow the reader to establish a method of analyzing the book. Carter's novels seem to keep the reader off-balance with suppressed excitement and uncertainty of expectations.

Carter proves to be one of the most influential writers of the century. Her writing is inventive, brilliant, amorous, mysterious, amusing and serious – all at once. "What a performance! Such style! Such vigour!" (Carter, Nights 90).
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