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### Historical Blend into the Fantastical World of Angela Carter's Nights at the Circus

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The reality of History is not fixed as we assume it to be. Fevvers the protagonist in *Nights at the Circus*, with her fantastic wings serves as the symbol of concept as “New Women” who seeks to deconstruct the Patriarchal Identity. She dramatizes the view that history is not true and is a perception of how an individual view the society. Pertaining to the above-mentioned notion, this paper aims to deconstruct the belief that history is true and Carter reconstructs it by making history as giving importance to women present in the society.

The term Magical Realism first applied to European pictorial art, is now applied to American literary text within the context of Post-Colonial thought. For most of the critics, the term should only be discussed in this context. But Magical Realism can be linked to many theoretical perspectives like psychological thought, historiography and fantasy. Many Magical realist fictions engage in creating a specific version of the historical events.

*Nights at the Circus*, a postmodern novel by Carter combines fantasy to talk about history. Feminists consider history by uniting Fantasy and Historiographical Metafiction. Historiographic Metafiction is an attempt to construct and re-write history from a Feminist perspective. The novel traces back the history of 1890's.

The picaresque novel *Nights at the Circus* narrates the magical adventures of an aerialist. Walsler the journalist gives a new definition to her. Fevvers earlier stage talks about how women are confined to patriarchal society. The world in the circus touches upon how hierarchy is reversed. Carter rewrites history in a way that women are not only equal to men but are also stronger than them. They break the fetters of Patriarchal society Carter's eighth novel *Nights at the Circus* published in 1894 takes the reader along with Colonel Kearney's circus on its Grand Imperial tour. The chief concern of Carter's novel is how individuals want their society to be. Therefore, we can say that the novel subverts the notion of history.

Carter in her novel attempted to challenge the false assumption that the role and position of women is fixed. Carter gives Fevvers the wings which helped her gain financial freedom and liberated her from male dominated society. It also helped her to escape the reality of how women should be. Carter tries to claim that history is something that is constructed and not that what exists.

Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* with her wings is a “New Woman” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She deconstructs the Patriarchal identity imposed on her. For Fevvers clock is the symbol of history. The novel is a different Magical Realism as Carter plots history. This paper talks about history seen through the lens of Magical Realism in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*.

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The women were always deprived during the period when the novel was written. But the Feminist Postmodernists have strengthened them. According to this claim history paid tribute to deprived women. Historiography and Historiographic Metafiction are feminist Postmodern attempt to re-write history through fantasy.

Without refusing the Fantastic and Magical events the historical events are anchored in the novel. It is a period that witnessed the women's right and equality. The novel presents Fevvers to be hungry for money.

The novel draws a parallel to the public figure Margaret Thatcher. In 1980, this period was characterised by Capitalism that was reserved for males. But Carter's attempt to compare Fevvers' with the iron lady is to state that women could also be liberal. Fevvers economic freedom and success paralleled to Margaret Thatcher's development of British Capitalism.

Carter talks about the parliamentary Rosencreutz as a psychologically troubled rich male. He bought Fevvers from Madame Schrek's museum to extract a substance from her body that would keep him immortal. But Fevvers escape gothic house denotes women liberation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Fantastical device here gets its meaning in regards to history.

Fevvers foster mother, Lizzie played an important role in shaping the character of Fevvers. Lizzie being a radical feminist claimed that women should walk hand in hand with men. For her women should rewrite history. On the other hand, Fevvers is not bothered to value the society she lives. She is empowered by her abnormality. Carter re-defines the concept of Women by reconstructing history. Carter takes a mixture of fantasy and history to bring a new perspective to the novel.

Lizzie stands as a symbol of women's political activism. Ma Nelson's brothel promoted female activism. Therefore, we can say that inside the fantastical and magical world we come across proofs from history which highlights Feminism. Carter believes in equality. Carter associates Lizzie's name with leaders in politics. She does this by intermingling history and fantasy to recreate male history.

Ma Nelson, the owner of the brothel is alluded to Lord Horatio Nelson, who died in the Battle of Trafalgar Square. When Fevvers introduces her to Walser, the journalist she calls her "Nelson" and Ma Nelson is equally strong as Lord Nelson. After Ma Nelson died Fevvers took charge. Carter aims to talk about history through fantasy in the novel.

Carter's *Nights at the Circus* is merely a make and believe novel. She makes use of Magical Realism to explore aspects of Patriarchal Culture. She wanted to subvert existing order in the society thus she incorporates fantasy into history. Therefore, her novel can be associated with social and political nature.

She is concerned with the biased notion of history were women are excluded and seeks to rewrite history in order to include the women. This is evident with the presentation of winged women, Fevvers who is in itself a mixture of illusion and reality. Fevvers views her body as a symbol of earning. Walser tries to find the reality and the facts associated with Fevvers birth. But Lizzie, Fevvers foster mother thwarts his effort. This makes Walser wonder about belief and disbelief. Fevvers states that she was hatched and not born creating further confusion.

Carter's Magical Realism can be viewed through social, cultural and political criticism. Intermingling the real and magical helps her to deconstruct the social beliefs. Postmodern historical novel has the tendency to deconstruct history. The authors intentionally recreate history. It does not mean History is undermined, but it motivates the writer to recreate. As Hutcheon states:

The provisional indeterminate nature of historical knowledge is certainly not a discovery of postmodernism. Nor is the questioning of the ontological and epistemological status of historical “fact” or the distrust of seeming neutrality and objectivity of recounting. But the concentration of these problematizations in postmodern art is not something we can ignore. (88, Hutcheon)

The process of writing history gets a new definition, in terms of Postmodernism. Postmodern Historiography is imaginary reconstruction of history. Historiographic Metafiction raises question between fiction and history. The idea of blurring fact and fiction makes her imagination to be believed and makes history interesting. Her use of Magical Realism creates fantasy among the readers.

The act of mixing fantasy with history brings three-dimension view to the novel. The first is related to the explanations of history available, the second one is the fictionalized form of history and the third one fiction itself. Therefore, we can state that Postmodernist approaches history differently by challenging the notion of history in itself. Thus, History is not an authentic record of the past. Postmodern writers question the boundaries between fact and fiction.

Carter narrates history in ironical manner. History is not true and is a narrative of a fiction. She subverts Patriarchy and deconstructs the entire system which indicate double voicedness. She attacks the metanarratives that are biased against women and brings out an alternative version of the same historical period.

Carter weaves magic into reality to symbolise reality. She adopts Magical realism as a Postmodern narrative to express the cultural context and recreate her version of history by making the society women centric. Works of Magical Realism, thus can be claimed to touch upon social issues and criticizes the social notions. The reality of such representations and fantasy conveys a sense of despair over the claim that they are possible. *Nights at the Circus* moves back and forth claiming to be hybrid in nature. Carter’s novels are empowering.

Fevvers never feels ashamed to narrate her story. She grew up to be a woman who is solely responsible for her happiness. Carter exploits the power of men to create an identity for women. She intentionally overdoes things. By doing so she is creating a society and subverts the idea of history as a concept in itself.

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