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THE SUPERNATURAL AS RESISTANCE IN ANGELA CARTER'S *NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS* AND TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of a Master's Degree (MA) in English

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DEDICATION

To my father, Robinson EBONG EBEH

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ABSTRACT

This study, titled "The Supernatural in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved"* examines supernatural elements as a tool through which these authors resist the plights they address in their texts. Angela Carter utilises supernatural elements to resist gender discrimination, while Toni Morrison makes use of supernatural elements to resist the traumatic memories of Slavery. This work is divided into an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. In order to critically analyse these texts from the perspective of supernatural elements as a form of resistance, Magic Realism and Psychoanalysis have been used. The study examines, through Magic Realism, the supernatural aspects of both texts, and through psychoanalysis, the psychological effects of gender discrimination on subjected females in. It is evident that Carter and Morrison, in their texts, portray the harsh realities of gender discrimination and Slavery through supernatural elements. Both authors establish that supernatural elements can be used as a tool to resist gender discrimination and to handle the trauma from Slavery. In addition, this work delineated that, gender discrimination and Slavery have painful repercussions on the characters in the texts under study, therefore, Angela Carter and Toni Morrison play the role of fighters and liberators as seen from the in-depth treatment they give to gender discrimination and Slavery through supernatural elements. Both authors sound a wake-up call on us all to resist the act of gender discrimination by practising equality between both genders, also, to resist dwelling in the traumatic memories of Slavery.

RESUME

Cette étude, intitulée «The Supernatural in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's Beloved» examine les éléments surnaturels comme un outil grâce auquel ces auteurs résistent aux situations difficiles qu'ils abordent dans leurs textes. Angela Carter utilise des éléments surnaturels pour résister à la discrimination sexuelle, tandis que Toni Morrison utilise des éléments surnaturels pour résister aux souvenirs traumatisants de l'esclavage. Ce travail est divisé en une introduction, quatre chapitres et une conclusion. Afin d'analyser de manière critique ces textes du point de vue des éléments surnaturels comme forme de résistance, le réalisme magique et la psychanalyse ont été utilisés. L'étude examine, à travers le réalisme magique, les aspects surnaturels des deux textes, et à travers la psychanalyse, les effets psychologiques de la discrimination sexuelle sur les femmes soumises. Il est évident que Carter et Morrison, dans leurs textes, dépeignent les dures réalités de la discrimination sexuelle et L'esclavage à travers des éléments surnaturels. Les deux auteurs établissent que des éléments surnaturels peuvent être utilisés comme un outil pour résister à la discrimination sexuelle et pour gérer le traumatisme de l'esclavage. De plus, ce travail a souligné que la discrimination de genre et l'esclavage ont des répercussions douloureuses sur les personnages des textes étudiés. Angela Carter et Toni Morrison jouent donc le rôle de combattantes et de libératrices, comme le montre le traitement en profondeur qu'elles accordent au genre. Discrimination et esclavage à travers des éléments surnaturels. Les deux auteurs lancent un signal d'alarme nous invitant tous à résister à l'acte de discrimination sexuelle en pratiquant l'égalité entre les deux sexes, ainsi qu'à résister aux souvenirs traumatisants de l'esclavage.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Literature has been used as a way of voicing thoughts or beliefs about the supernatural and its relation to the human mind. Throughout time, people have tried to put their thoughts down into something more concrete, into something that others would be able to either relate to, or which would create the basis of thought. The use of supernatural themes has enabled others to create a reality for their thoughts, fears and beliefs of both the world and the human mind. These themes have been able to give a new light on the meaning of reality. The authors, Angela Carter and Toni Morrison use supernatural elements in their texts *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved* with fantasy, which has been blended with real life. They use the narrative technique to blur the dissimilarity between fantasy and reality and provide an equal acceptance for the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* are both characterised by supernatural features as tools through which oppressed characters struggle to escape domination and oppression. As a broad term, supernatural elements can include horror fiction, fantasy, and even science fiction. Most often, the term supernatural refers to elements that cannot be explained by rational or scientific means and operate outside the rules of the physical world. The field of supernatural fiction has been popular in literature since the 1800s, crossing over into film and other media in the 20th and 21st centuries.

In Angela Carter's and Toni Morrison's novels *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved* respectively, there are supernatural elements throughout the stories that are connected to both the characters' personal pasts and their culture. The supernatural appears in a number of forms in both novels, but all of them have an irrevocable effect on the characters. Through ghosts and supernatural features, the characters are forced to face issues that affects them. The connection between the supernatural and these plights causes the characters to grow as individuals. In *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved*, the supernatural elements stand as a means through which these characters resist the issues addressed in both novel.

In both Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the incorporation of supernatural elements serves as a poignant means to address and resist pressing societal issues. While Carter utilizes the supernatural to challenge gender discrimination and societal norms, Morrison employs it to delve into the traumatic legacy of slavery in America. These novels offer a unique blend of fiction, fantasy, and social commentary, using the supernatural to shed light on complex and often overlooked aspects of gender inequality and historical trauma. By examining how these authors weave supernatural elements into their narratives, this dissertation aims to explore the intersection of literature, social critique, and the supernatural, offering a fresh perspective on how fiction can be a powerful tool for addressing pressing social issues.

Motivation

The researcher's motivation is particularly intrigued by the fact that, the modern man is aware, from experience and history that gender discrimination and Slavery violate human dignity and individual autonomy, and it is destructive to human life. This knowledge, however, has not deterred individuals, tribes and nations from practising such acts. The researcher is also of the view that, if patriarchal males believe in equal rights for all genders and slave owners also believed in dignity and equality, freedom and liberty and the right to fair treatment, then these acts that cause loss of dignity, autonomy and even lives, could be avoided. The authors under study were chosen because their works does not just portray the sad nature of gender discrimination and Slavery, but also condemn it.

Statement of the Research Problem

In the novels of Angela Carter and Toni Morrison under study, issues of gender and race stand out predominantly. Another remarkable observation is the fact that these authors portray race and gender in relation to the supernatural. Supernatural forces are brought to bear on the characters' experiences of race and gender. How this relationship operates in these novels is an issue of concern.

Research Questions

In relation to the observations above, a number of questions came to mind:

- In what ways do the Historical and Biographical realities inform the choice of the supernatural in the works under study?

- What issues do the characters in both novels face and how do the authors address these issues?
- How do Carter and Morrison use the supernatural as a way to resist the prevalence of the issues they address?

Research Hypothesis

This work is based on the hypothesis that, by employing supernatural elements to confront gender discrimination in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and the trauma of slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, both authors effectively challenge societal norms, offering a unique lens through which readers can engage with and reflect on complex issues of gender inequality and historical oppression,

Objective of the Study

This study aims at analysing *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison in the light of supernatural fiction and to discuss how they use supernatural elements to resist the injustice faced by the characters of both novels. It also seeks to explain the similar approach these authors adopt in order to resist the challenges faced by characters in their texts.

Significance of the Study

This study shows how both authors use supernatural elements as a means to resist the prominent societal ills in the society during the time they wrote. In this case, Angela Carter uses supernatural elements in her work, *Nights at the Circus,* to resist patriarchy, while Toni Morrison uses supernatural elements in her novel, *Beloved*, in order to resist Slavery.

Our dissertation discloses that gender discrimination and Slavery are closely related to supernatural fiction. This comparative study brings out the motive behind which the authors under study adopt supernatural fiction as a form of resistance. Though Carter and Morrison faced different plights in their societies, they are both committed writers that have the same vision when it comes to resisting these plights and they both rely on the supernatural.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to two novels, namely *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Other works by critics will be used to unveil the evils of gender

discrimination and Slavery. I shall also make use of relevant historical and biographical sources as the needs may be.

Definition of Key Term

The key term to be defined in this work is "the supernatural".

The term supernatural according to *The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, is defined as a phenomenon or event that is beyond the scope of scientific understanding or natural laws. According to *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the supernatural refers to anything that stretches, breaks or otherwise violates what we commonly think of as the laws of nature, which is the normal, accepted, and natural processes and phenomena of day-to-day living. According to Robert Bartlett in, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages*, the term supernatural was first used by Thomas Aquinas in his discussion of the Creation, where he states that "woman was produced from the rib of man through supernatural powers" (Bartlett 13).

According to Douglas Hill and Pat Williams in their book, *The Supernatural*, we can distinguish two aspects of the supernatural; supernatural powers and supernatural beings. The supernatural powers are those that people have believed, throughout history, which they possessed in themselves or could learn in order to acquire hidden knowledge and could achieve some non-physical control over physical nature. They are usually all lumped together under the general term "magic". The supernatural beings are those that, again throughout history, people have believed to inhabit darkness and the night, and that generally has inspired both fear and fascination in their believers. These are the ghosts, spirits, demons, and devils; the blood-sucking vampires, werewolves, and other evil and terrifying inhuman monsters. Add to these, the human beings—the magicians and the witches, the mediums and the ghost hunters, the devil worshippers and the cultists (17). While not qualifying supernatural powers as 'good' or 'evil', the supernatural beings Hill and Williams listed are exclusively evil and terrifying. Yet there is no reason not to include positively and/or neutrally construed beings in this category, like angels, spirit guides, unicorns, good fairies, elemental spirits and the like.

Structure of the Work

This work consists of an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. The Introduction handles the research problem, research questions, hypothesis, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of study, research motivation and definition of key term.

Chapter One is entitled "Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature" and explains the theories that will be used in the analysis of this work. The theories used for this work are Psychoanalysis and Magic Realism. In addition, this chapter also examines other academic works that have been written about the authors and the two texts under study.

Chapter Two, "Historical and Biographical Backgrounds" discusses the origin and historical development of supernatural fiction. It also presents the biographies of Angela Carter and Toni Morrison in a bid to highlight their life experiences that influenced their writings.

Chapter Three, "The Plight of the People: Gender Discrimination and Slavery". This chapter explains the problems the characters face in the novels as victims of patriarchy and Slavery. This chapter will be divided into two sections; the first section will discuss Carter's portrayal of gender discrimination in her text *Nights at the circus,* through the female characters, showing the struggles these female characters go through and the cruel treatment they receive as females, in a male-dominated environment. The second section of this chapter will focus on Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Toni Morrison, through her characters, will reveal the inhuman acts received by slaves from their cruel slave masters.

Chapter Four, "The Supernatural as Resistance." This chapter will highlight both authors' usage of supernatural fiction in their texts to resist patriarchy and Slavery. This chapter will also be divided into two sections; the first section will show how Carter uses supernatural female characters to resist patriarchy. While Morrison, in her text *Beloved*, shows how the dehumanising experience the slaves received under their slave masters affect them and how they deal with trying to forget their traumatic pasts. Morrison uses supernatural fiction through her character Beloved to bring back memories of the traumatic past, which pushes the character to confront and successfully resist their pasts.

The Conclusion summarises the work's major ideas from each chapter, stating how this work answered the questions raised in the introductory part of the research and how the aim and objective of this work was met.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter gives an insight into the critical tools that will be used for the analysis of the novels under study. The theories that will be used are Magic Realism and Psychoanalysis. It equally examines the literature that has been written on the texts under study.

Theoretical Framework

Criticism aims at evaluating, criticising and interpreting texts. It is a complex art, owing to the fact that its methods are subject to debate. It is therefore the task of the critic to enhance understanding of the text. Margaret A. Eisenhart in her work; *Conceptual Frameworks for Research Circa* defines theoretical framework as "a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory… constructed by using a coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships" (205). Thus, the theoretical framework consists of the selected theories that undergird a person's thinking with regard to how he/she understands and plans to approach their topic, as well as the concepts and definitions from that theory that are relevant to their topic. According to Shadrach A. Ambanasom, in his work, *Education of the Deprived: A Study of Four Cameroonian Playwrights*;

> *No single literary approach is valid for all works. No matter its claims and supposed validity, one should not carry a single approach blindly to a work of art; it is rather the work that calls forth the type of approach suitable for its apprehension. An approach that is only remotely relevant to a work of art may mislead its conceiver to condemn the creative writer for the wrong crime; it may force the critic to judge and crucify the artist for what he never set out to do in the first place. (p. 120)*

Simply put, the topic determines the type of theory to be used and if the theory is chosen wrongly, the entire work will be faulty and directionless. In light of the above statement, two theories have been judged suitable for this research. These are; Magic Realism and Psychoanalysis. Both theories are very pertinent to this study because they deal with the issues raised in the work.

Magic Realism is used by both authors in order to showcase the supernatural elements in the texts, which will stand as a means to resist gender discrimination and the trauma of Slavery. For Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus,* the supernatural character is the half bird, half-human protagonist, Fevvers, who resists gender discrimination. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* supernatural fiction is seen through the character Beloved, who is the ghost daughter of Sethe. Beloved plays an important role in the ex-slaves' success in resisting Slavery, which in this text, is seen in the past through traumatic memories. The second theory, which will be used in this work is Psychoanalysis, both authors utilise psychoanalysis to give an insight on the characters' minds and present psychoanalytical elements found in both texts like neuroses and trauma. The first theory that will be explained is Magic Realism.

The theory, Magic Realism, appeared in the 1920s and was introduced by the German historian and art critic, Franz Roh in his book *post-Expressionism, Magic realism: Problems of the Latest European Painting*. In this book, he described a group of painters who are now categorised generally as Post-Expressionists. Roh coined the term Magic Realism to celebrate these painters' return to realism after a decade or more of abstraction in art. In the introduction to this book, Roh states that; "with the word "magic" as opposed to "mystic", I wish to indicate that the mystery does not descend to the represented world but rather hides and palpitates behind it…"(Roh, 1). The term could be described as an oxymoron because it is built of two words which are completely opposite in meaning – "Realism" describes the real events in life, while "magic" consists of mystical events. The term Magic Realism was firstly introduced in painting then later appeared in cinema and has been used quite widely by people. In Roh's opinion, magic realism is "a way to uncover the mystery hidden in everyday reality" (1). The term "magic realism" extensively refers to the style of writing or technique, which includes supernatural events narrated realistically without any doubt about the improbability of the events. It questions the nature of reality and draws attention to the act of creation by using a new combination of fact and fancy.

The term "Magic Realism" was later explored in the 1940s by the Spanish American writers such as Miguel Angel Asturias and Alejo Carpentier in their representative novels *Men of Maize* and *The Kingdom of this World*, respectively. These writers employed many indigenous aspects like folklore, cultural beliefs, along with particular geographical, as well as political realities. In these novels, characters change into animals, slaves are helped by the dead, time sometimes move backward. This movement became popular in English with the publication of

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1970. Some female writers also used this technique; they are Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, Angela Carter, and Toni Morrison.

Roh, in *post- Expressionism, Magic realism: Problems of the Latest European Painting,* first used the term to describe a return to realism in painting after expressionism's abstract style. While realism was used to recognize a movement in the writing of novels during the nineteenth century and represents human life and experience in literature, expressionism does not use realistic descriptions of life and of the world, it instead includes unrealistic and emotional states of mind. Roh chooses the term magic realism instead of post–expressionism because he believes post–expressionism shows a chronological relationship. He states, "With the word "magic" as opposed to "mystic", I wish to indicate that the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it" (p. 16). Roh states that what distinguishes one phase of art from another is only through the use of the particular objects that artists observe.

According to the book *Magic Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* by Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, "to both pictorial art and literature without causing confusion because the two belong to a different medium of expression" (p 17-8). Even if there are similarities between magic realism in painting and in literature, they have different implications. At the same time, she says that we cannot abandon the term completely. Chanady does not mention how Roh's aesthetic definition of magic realism differs from those in the literature. She finds it helpful for developing a useful critical notion. Similarly, in the book *Lies that Tell the Truth: Magic Realism Seen through Contemporary Fiction from Britain,* Anne C. Hegerfeldt finds that many of Roh's aspects are totally related to technical features of painting. She discusses that, one central difference between Roh's definition and the current literary concept is in the meaning of the term magic. While magic, for Roh, refers to "the sense of newness with which quotidian reality is endowed through painterly emphasis on clarity and clinical detail," it now refers to the opposite of realistic" (p. 13). While Roh's magic realism tries "to show everyday objects are endowed with a sense of mystery and unreality," today's magic realism "springs from the naturalisation of fantastic occurrences" (p. 60)

Another significant figure in the development of magic realism in Europe is Massimo Bontempelli, an Italian poet, novelist, dramatist and critic. In 1926, Bontempelli founded *900 (Novacento),* a review in which he expressed his perspectives on contemporary matters. Mary Ann Witt in her book *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France* calls

Bontempelli the creator of magic realism in Italy. Bontempelli became secretary of the fascist syndicate of writers and authors in 1928. Witt finds Bontempelli's creation of myth "the most enthusiastic and most developed" (p. 109). She states that according to Bontempelli, the creation of new myths is imperious, due to the contemporary historical and political situation she states that World War I created a "tabula rasa" from which a new era is beginning (p. 109).

Bontempelli divides history into three periods: the classical, the romantic, and the present. The classical include the pre-Homeric times to the time of Christ; the romantic contains the beginnings of Christianity to World War I. From Bontempelli's point of view, Nietzsche is the pioneer of the third period and of fascism. As humanity starts again, we should "feel elementary" and rebuild from nothing, and create our own myths as it happened in the other periods (p. 109). How are we going to create this myth? Bontempelli's answer is that the style of the present age will be "'magic realism,' which conceives of art, not as an imitation of reality, but as an exploration of mystery and of daily life as a miraculous adventure" (p. 109). Bontempelli does not define myth in a clear way, but rather associates myth with politics; he sees fascism and communism as the new system for the new age. In the same way that politics rediscovers power, art is reviving magic; Moscow and Rome are the tombs of democracy; democracy's demise needs new myths and new art forms.

Explaining Bontempelli's devotion to fascism, Mary Ann Witt in her book *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France* quotes him, "My long-standing adherence to Fascism is due primarily to the fact that I considered it to be a frank political primitivism, which joyously and with one clean sweep cancelled the experiences of the outworn politics that had preceded it" (p. 109). At the same time, Bontempelli warns that the new start in politics and art is not total because we cannot become Adam, we have a past. He suggests that making new myth for the new men must be, "self-conscious". It should not be simple like the myths of the pre-Homeric (p. 110).

Comparing Roh and Novalis, Roh does not use magic as mystic. Like Novalis, he is not trying to find something supernatural in magic, which he views as something that is behind objective reality. In syncriticism, Novalis believes that the magical idealist should have the power "to make not only his thoughts into things but also his things into thoughts. He shows how the soul externalises itself in the things of nature as well as how the things of nature internalise themselves in the mind" (Witt, p. 427). Similarly, according to Roh, new objectivity [magic realism] is more than the simple respect for the objective world in which we are combined. Roh's and Novalis'

magical idealism hover between opposites: for Novalis, that of mind and body, internal sense and external sense, subjective and objective; for Roh, a double-sided art in which we can see a real, familiar and ordinary thing, plus its spirit.

Maggie Ann Bowers in her book *Magic Realism,* states that, Bontempelli was influenced by both surrealism and Roh's magic realism. From her point of view, Bontempelli's magic realism coincides with that of Roh. On this issue, she quotes Dombroski's observation that Bontempelli was concerned with presenting "the mysterious and fantastic quality of reality" (p. 12). She quotes Dombroski in that, before reading Roh, Bontempelli emphasised the role of the imagination and nature in his writing, "providing a preparation for the influence of Roh's search for the magic of life shown through the clarity of heightened realism" (p. 58). While Bontempelli applied magic realist thoughts to writing, Roh applied it to pictorial art.

Although Bontempelli introduced magic realism in a 1927 article, Guenther in her book "Magic Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts during the Weimar Republic", considered that he defined certain features of "realismomagico" in the first four issues of *900* and used the term in both a literary and artistic context (p. 60). Unlike Bowers, who refers to the adaptation of Bontempelli from Roh, Guenther states that whether Bontempelli borrowed the term from Roh or not cannot be determined with any degree of certainty (p. 60). However, she does try to establish links. Bontempelli cooperated on *Der Querschintt*, a prominent German artistic and literary journal in which essays about modern art appeared. It was in this journal that Hartlaub publicised his 1925 "Mannheim exhibit" (p. 60).

In the book entitled *Lies that Tell the Truth, Magic Realism Seen through Contemporary Fiction,* Hegerfeldt considers one important difference between Roh and Bontempelli's magic realism to be that the latter contains the use of realistic techniques to fantastic elements something Roh clearly omits (p. 15). In "Ordinary Enchantments, Magic Realism and the Remystification of Narrative", Faris writes that Bontempelli used magic realism to describe both painting and literature almost concurrently in 1926 (p. 39). At the same time, magic realism due to Roh's description of "European painting's movement back toward realism after expressionism" in 1925, includes the features from "visual history" (p. 39). In this case, its verbal representation cannot be well applied.

Both Roh's and Bontempelli's views on magic realism are presented between the World Wars and during the rise of modernism. Bontempelli believed that after World War I, we collectively needed to create a new myth, maybe because it could help bind people together. Magic

realism in this context is not an imitation of reality but an explanation of mystery and daily life as a miraculous adventure. His view is similar to that of Roh, who argues that in post-expressionism, the fantastic dreamscape has entirely disappeared and that our real world appears before our eyes. In other words, post-expressionism sought to reintegrate reality into the heart of visibility.

Another similarity lies in their view of magic and art. For Novalis magic is in art while art is discovering magic according to Bontempelli. Novalis says that there are two types of art for a magical idealist: the art of medicine and the art of poetry. It is through poetry that a magical idealist learns how to achieve a magical transformation of the sensible world. Bontempelli believes that in the same way that politics rediscovers power, art is reviving magic. Moscow and Rome are the tombs of democracy; democracy's demise needs new myths, and new art forms. Despite the differences in their views, Novalis, Roh and Bontempelli believed that magic realism encompassed the burden of unreality behind the reality. This is the point that links magic realism in Europe to its practitioners in Latin America, the place where it flourished.

According to Carpentier (1949), the marvellous reside in the cultural reality of Latin America itself, by virtue of the continuous clashes of disparate belief systems (European, indigenous, African) over five centuries of different history, and the hidden merging of different religions and cultures of thought generated by such clashes. The task of the artist is not to create the marvellous through any technical means, but rather to perceive and bring forth the hidden cultural and historical marvels that have long been waiting to be discovered. Following Carpentier, and yet admitting the role of technique, Haitian novelist Jacques Stephen Alexis (1956) opted instead for the term "realism merveilleux."

A second moment in the development of the term in Latin American literature came with the early attempts at a more precise critical definition. Initially, this took the form of a debate between critics Ángel Flores and Luis Leal. Flores in his article "Foundational essay; Magic realism in Spanish American Fiction" took a formalist approach, describing the term as an "amalgamation of realism and fantasy" distinguished by its preoccupation with style, precision and succinctness, a tight and logical plot, the transformation of everyday life into the awesome and unreal, the in temporal fluidity of the narrative, the rejection of sentimentality and lyrical effusions, and the predilection for the new and the surprising.

These traits, however, characterised modernist fiction as a whole and, therefore, were lacking in specificity. Flores cited as early precursors a wide array of authors of non-realist fiction,

such as Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Hoffman, the Grimm brothers, the dramatist Strindberg, Poe, Melville, and even Proust. But he held Kafka to be the purest literary exemplar and Giorgio de Chirico to be his counterpart in painting, arguing that their "cold and cerebral" style is what distinguished magic realism from the earlier, more romantic flights of fantasy that were based on atmosphere rather than technique. Indeed, with his reference to de Chirico and to "atmosphere" Flores appears to be alluding to, and revising, Bontempelli's "precisionerealistica e atmosferamagica." In regard to Latin American literature, Flores points to Borges as the initiator of magic realism, followed by the Argentines Bioy Casares, Silvina Ocampo, Mallea, Sábato, and Cortázar; the Uruguayan Onetti; the Chilean María Luisa Bombal' the Mexicans Arreola and Rulfo; and the Cubans Novás Calvo and Labrador Ruiz. Meanwhile, Borges, Bioy Casares, and Ocampo had famously edited their influential collection Antología de la literaturafantástica (1940), including a sampling of world literature since ancient times. Significantly, they defined their own work, not as magic realism, but as "fantastic literature".

Luis Leal in the book chapter entitled "Magic realism in Spanish American Literature" (1967) credits Flores with producing the first critical study of magic realism in literature, but disagrees with his definition and with his catalogue of magic-realist authors. He also recognizes Roh's first use of the term, but notes that, in Latin America, it is Carpentier who presents a more systematic and coherent view based on his concept of *lo real maravilloso*. Leal concludes that:

> *magic realism cannot be identified either with fantastic literature or with psychological literature... neither does it distort reality or create imagined worlds... The existence of the marvellous real is what started magical realist literature, which some critics claim is the truly American literature. (121–22)*

Thus, he sides with Carpentier's thematic approach and not with Borges' formalism. He agrees with some of the authors cited by Flores and adds a few of his own, notably the Venezuelan Rómulo Gallegos and the Cuban Félix Pita Rodríguez. The core difference between Flores and Leal, as well as between Borges and Carpentier, ultimately hinges on their emphasis on form (technique) versus content (the theme of the marvellous real).

A third moment in the development of the term, relevant not only to Latin America, but now also to world literature, arose in 1970, with the publication of Todorov's systematic study,

The Fantastic. Tzvetan Todorov defined the fantastic as the tension between the possibility of a rational explanation and the disquieting acceptance of the supernatural—the unsettling prospect that the "laws of nature" have been violated, thereby compromising the reader's sense of certainty and understanding of the world. To promote this tension, it is best if the narrator has a sceptical, scientific mind, such as that of a detective, who is constantly engaging in deductive reasoning and looking for clues that may lead to a rational explanation. Therefore, the fantastic is structurally related to detective fiction, as can be seen in the works of authors like Borges and Cortázar, whom critic Jaime Alazraki fittingly classified as "neo-fantastic"—as opposed to magic realism. As long as this tension or doubt persists, the effect of the fantastic is maintained. On the other hand, if the characters and narrator do not care to look for a rational explanation, but instead accept the events as normal, then the story belongs to the genre of the merveilleux (the marvellous), such as in the case of the fairy tale, which requires from the reader a suspension of disbelief. Todorov emphasises that any poetical or allegorical meaning would serve to naturalise or normalise the story, eliminate the doubt, and, therefore, destroying the tension of the fantastic, which requires a strictly literal reading. Finally, if a rational explanation prevails in the end, then the story is neither fantastic nor marvellous, but simply strange or uncanny.

By the mid-1970s, the popularity of the term had grown so much as to lead to numerous studies and almost as many competing definitions. At the landmark 1973 magic realism conference in Michigan, Yale critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal called the debate "a dialog among the deaf" and suggested that the term be discarded altogether. To begin with, one of the problems with Todorov's theory is that it reduces fiction to only three types of narrated events: the natural, the supernatural, and the strange or preternatural. Following this simplification, Anderson-Imbert suggested that Franz Roh's original dialectics (impressionism + expressionism = magic realism) could be transposed to literature as "a thesis: the category of the veridical, which produces 'realism'; an antithesis: the category of the supernatural, which produces the literature of 'the fantastic'; and a synthesis: the category of the strange, which produces 'magic realism'" (El realismomágico 9). This failed to resolve the problem because the delineation of the fantastic, while helping to narrow down the possibilities, ultimately could not establish what magic realism is, but only what it is not.

In the book *Marvelous Realism, (1980)*, Brazilian critic Irlemar Chiampi revisits Todorov's opposition between the "fantastic" (based on doubt and scepticism) and the "marvellous" (where the supernatural is unquestioningly accepted as normal). Following both Leal and Monegal, she

discards the term "magic realism" as being too imprecise and problematic and replaces it with "marvellous realism," which she argues is more amenable to definition because of its relation, not only to Todorov's theory, but also to Carpentier's doctrine that the marvellous real is a normal everyday occurrence in Latin America's marginalised cultures. Although Chiampi's study, published in the heyday of structuralism, appears excessively technical and abstract today, it does contribute the view that, in "marvellous realism," the natural and the supernatural appear as non-contradictory and that its core narrative technique is "the denaturalisation of the real and the naturalisation of the marvellous" (157–158). That is, the commonplace becomes defamiliarized when seen from a naïve perspective, whereas the miraculous is rendered commonplace from the standpoint of the believer. As Carpentier famously held in his prologue to *The Kingdom of This World*, "the phenomenon of the marvellous presupposes faith" (86).

In a different take on Todorov, Amaryll Chanady proposes, in her book *Magic Realism and The Fantastic,* three criteria for defining magic realism in contrast to the fantastic. She notes that the fantastic establishes an antinomy between the natural and the supernatural; it affirms the natural as valid such that the irruption of the supernatural creates an illogical situation; it presents a narrator who is reluctant to explain matters and resolve the antinomy. In contrast, magic realism presents, as an antinomy, two coherent perspectives in conflict, one based on a rational view of reality, and the other one on an acceptance of the supernatural as a normal everyday occurrence. However, according to Chanady, this second, coherent (but non-rational) perspective should not be unnecessarily restricted to that of a marginalised ethnic culture, but could also be that of an individual psyche (dreams, hallucinations, psychopathology, a child's perspective, etc.). The main difference vis-à-vis the fantastic would reside in the natural attitude with which the narrator accepts the irrational, thereby "resolving" the antinomy. Nevertheless, it may be objected that the narrator's natural attitude may be recognized as a necessary, but not as a sufficient condition for an accurate definition of magic realism.

In conclusion, it is important to note that, in theorising magic realism: the more precise and rigorous the definition, the fewer the works that meet such strict criteria. Conversely, the more inclusive the term, the vaguer the definition. In order to arrive at a suitable compromise, it is important to note that the single characteristic on which critics agree is that magic realism makes the extraordinary seem commonplace and vice versa. This is dependent on the non-conventional point of view of the "naïve" or "unreliable" narrator, such as the extremely detailed and matter-of-

fact description and narration of a rationally implausible event. In this regard, a further distinction may be drawn as to whether the point of view should be collective and culturally bound (that is, tied to a set of traditional beliefs shared by a particular cultural group) or individual and psychologically bound (that is, relative to an individual as a universal representative of the species, or of the human condition). Another literary approach used in our study is psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* refers to a method of treating somebody who has problems with their mental health, by encouraging them to talk about past experiences and feelings. Psychoanalysis is originally known as the method for healing people with mental illnesses by knowing the conscious and unconscious elements of their minds. It is also an approach to understand the behaviour of a person. Daniel K. stated in his book *Id, Ego and Superego (Appearance in Encyclopedia of Human Behaviour),* that "psychoanalysis is one of those rare intellectual achievements that had the effect of radically transforming human self-understanding" (25)

Psychoanalysis, according to McLeod S. in his book *Psychodynamic Approach. Simply Psychology* states that "psychoanalysis is a type of therapy that aims to release pent-up or repressed emotions and memories or to lead the client to catharsis or healing" (03). In other words, the goal of psychoanalysis is to bring out what exists at the unconsciousness. The goal is accomplished through talking to another person about the big questions in life, the things that matter, and delving into the complexities that lie beneath the simple-seeming surface.

Sigmund Freud was the first psychoanalyst and a pioneer in the recognition of the importance of unconscious mental activities. His theories on the inner workings of the human mind, which seemed so revolutionary at the turn of the century, are now wildly accepted by most schools of psychological thoughts. In 1896, Freud coined the term "psychoanalysis" and for the next forty years of his life, he worked on thoroughly developing its main principles, objectives, techniques and methodology.

Freud, in his book *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, explains the principal tenets on which psychoanalytic theory is based. He begins with an explanation of the three factors of the psychic apparatus; the id, the ego and the superego. The "ego" which corresponds to the sub-conscious part of the mind, the "superego" which corresponds to the conscience, and the "id" which corresponds to the unconscious of the human mind. These will be elaborated below.

We shall begin by looking at the id. According to Freud, the human mind has three main components to their personality that cause them to behave the way they do and make them who they are. One of these components, the id, is the part that we may consider the little devil, sitting on your shoulder, trying to get you to do all the things that feel good, even if they are wrong. More specifically, the id is the part of the human personality that is made up of all the inborn biological urges that seek out immediate gratification (guided by the pleasure principle), regardless of social values or consequences. For example, when you are in a bar and see a really attractive person who stirs some sexual feelings in you, the id is what is pushing you to simply go over to this person, grab them, and carry on your desires. Of course, you know that this is a completely unacceptable behaviour, so you do not do it, but the id does not care about that; it just wants, what it wants no matter what.

The id, according to Freud, is a mental process that is developed since from birth. Freud calls the id as a "cauldron of seething excitement", a primitive evil character brewing an overflowing potion of insatiable desires. The id is addicted to "pleasure"'; sexual, sensual, selfish, libidinal erotic pleasure. As Freud wrote in his book *The Ego and the Id* (1923) "The id knows no values, no good and evil, no morality, no time. The id is our animal nature, sometimes finding pleasure in releasing pure animal aggression, rage and destruction" (p 25).

The id is the only part of the personality present at birth. All human energy comes from the id. When activated by a need such as hunger, the id demands and insists that its needs be met. Energy is increased as pain increases and pleasure results when the high energy tension is reduced through the need for satisfaction and the organism returns to a balanced energy state called *homoeostasis.* The goal of the id is to reduce tension, minimise discomfort and to increase pleasure by gratifying inner desires, wishes and impulses. The energy of the id is the motivating force that powers all our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Repressing these drives leads to painful tension and anxiety. The id seeks to fulfil our deepest needs, feelings and desires and goes in relentless pursuits of pleasures. The id is largely unconscious and unorganized, selfishly demanding its own need and satisfaction. The id is blind, demanding and insistent, the source of all psychic energy.

The second part of the human psyche is called the Ego. According to Freud, the ego is the part of the personality that helps us deal with reality by mediating between the demands of the id, the superego and the environment. The ego prevents us from acting on every urge (produced by

the id) and from being so morally driven that we cannot function properly. The ego works according to the reality principle that helps to direct our unacceptable sexual and aggressive urges to more acceptable targets. For example, when you walk down the street, and see a very attractive person, the ego working on the reality principle, helps you to understand that it is not socially acceptable to cross the street, grab that person, and have sex with them. Instead, the ego tells us that there will be other, more appropriate people, places and times to fulfil these needs.

According to Anthony A. Welsh in his article "Psychoanalytical Psychology", our ego is the executive branch of our personality. The ego is the "mediator" between inner demands and outer reality. The goal of the ego is to make decisions as to what to do that will maximise the pleasure of the id while avoiding punishment and guilt from the superego. The ego responds to the "Reality Principle" and decides what you will do. The ego uses conscious thought and formulates plans of action to formulate needs. The ego constructs a rational plan to obtain pleasure consistent with moral codes, leading to feelings of pride and self-love, while avoiding feelings of guilt and inferiority.

The ego has no small task, for the will of the id is strong and insistent, while the superego presses the ego with a strong moral imperative. When there seems to be no obvious resolution for the problem between the id and superego, the ego denies or distorts reality so that it can reduce tension and anxiety. The tool we use to deny and distort reality and to defend our ego against anxiety is called "Ego Defense Mechanism". it prevents us from excessive neurotic anxiety and ensure the health, safety and sanity of the personality. Freud postulates that we need a strong ego to deal with the needs, wishes and problems of the id, the conflicting codes of ethics of the superego and with neurotic anxiety. The ego must be strong and rational to mediate the mind.

Ego defences enable the individual to cope with anxiety and may have adaptive value if they prevent the ego from being overwhelmed. Defences are normal behavioural responses to anxiety. They serve to reduce anxiety and to return the organism to homoeostasis. They can become problematic if overused as they become a way to avoid reality.

A person, who is mentally healthy, to Freud, has "Ego Strength", which is a strong sense of self that can decide how to productively handle psychic problems in the real world. The strong ego controls the personality and moderates conscious and unconscious drives, using reason. Freud wrote in his book *The Ego and Id* that "If the ego is obliged to admit its weakness, it breaks into

anxiety, realistic anxiety regarding the face of the external world, moral anxiety regarding the superego and the neurotic anxiety regarding the strengths of the passions of the id" (34).

This suggests that, when the ego, which represents our conscious self and rationality, is compelled to acknowledge its own weaknesses, it can result in different forms of anxiety. The realistic anxiety concerning the external world. This anxiety arises from the ego's recognition of its limitations and vulnerability when faced with the challenges and uncertainties of the external environment. It stems from the acknowledgement that the ego may not always have full control or understanding of the external circumstances it encounters. Secondly, the moral anxiety which is related to the superego. The superego represents our internalised moral standards and societal expectations. When the ego acknowledges its shortcomings in meeting these normal expectations, it can lead to moral anxiety. This anxiety arises from the fear of falling short of the moral ideas and facing potential guilt or shame. The third anxiety, which is neurotic anxiety, concerns the strength of the passions or desires of the id. The id represents our primal instincts and unconscious desires. When the ego recognizes its inability to fully control or restrain these powerful and often irrational impulses, it can result in neurotic anxiety. This anxiety arises from fear of being overwhelmed or consumed by these intense desires and potential consequences that may arise from them.

The ego consists of logical psychic processes and of making human actions easy. The ego includes the ability for making plans, overcoming the problem and creating kinds of techniques for adapting to the environment. The ego controls the powers of the id and guarantees the fluency of individual interactions in the environment.

Anna Freud, an Austrian-British psychoanalyst and the daughter of Sigmund Freud, states in her book *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* that there are ten defence mechanisms the ego uses in order for it to overcome anxiety and cope with "painful or unendurable ideas or effects" (42) which are repression, denial, projection, and identification with the aggressor.

Repression is, according to Bert Garssen in "Repression: Finding Our Way in the Maze of Concepts", the "tendency to inhibit the experience and the expression of negative feelings or unpleasant cognitions in order to prevent one's self-image from being threatened" (472). Michael Billing states in *Freudian Repression: Conversation Creating the Unconscious* that, Freud argues that there are two kinds of unconscious thoughts and the first kind consists of ordinary thoughts,

which can easily become conscious "These are thoughts which happen not to be occupying one's attention at any given moment." (15) but when attention turns to that specific thought, it becomes conscious. The second kind is the hidden thoughts that we keep secret from ourselves. These hidden thoughts are repressed because "these thoughts are so shocking or painful that something stops them from making the journey [to become conscious]" (16). Billing mentions that according to a study by Freud and Breur, "repression happens when painful events occur, which the patient can't deal with. However, other people can find the event so traumatic and the memories of such events too painful to recall that they cannot come to terms with the past" (18).

From this phrase, it is understood that, there are instances where the intensity of these painful events is so overwhelming that not only the individual who experience them, but also other people who become aware of the events, find them extremely traumatic. For these individuals, the memories of such events become deeply distressing and too agonising to consciously recall or confront. Consequently, they struggle to come to terms with these distressing experiences from their past. This difficulty in coming to terms with the past can manifest in various ways, such as persistent avoidance of related triggers, emotional numbing, or experiencing intense anxiety or distress when attempting to recall or discuss the traumatic events. The memories may be buried deep within the subconscious, making it challenging fie individuals to process and integrate them into their conscious understanding of their personal history.

Denial, as a defence mechanism, is used unconsciously by those who want to avoid dealing with painful situations or actions that they do not want to admit. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman in *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* states that:

> *Denial may be especially adaptive following trauma because it allows the interpretation process to proceed piecemeal. After suffering a serious personal trauma such as an accident or victimisation, there is often little that the person can do, and so denial does not prevent adaptive responses. Meanwhile, the task of coping with trauma involves restoring one's positive conceptions of self and world. (1110)*

In Janoff-Bulman's view, one starts by denying the trauma in general, and then the denial drops piece by piece allowing the person to begin the task of rebuilding those positive conception, as opposed to having to find some new interpretation all at once. Victims of trauma often use denial

as their defence mechanism to forget their traumatic past and move with future opportunities. The victims often act as if nothing happened, this type of mechanism is trying to protect the ego from the reality that brings disadvantage to their pride.

Another defence mechanism is that of projection, in which the individual sees his or her negative traits in others to avoid having to confront this trait in themselves. According to Baumeister et al., "Projection can be seen as defensive if perceiving the threatening trait in others helps the individual in some way to avoid recognizing it in himself or herself." (1090). Similarly, in the article "Stereotypes Focus Defensive projection", Govorun et al. note that projection occurs when a threat to the self-instigates a motivation to avoid recognizing negative qualities in the self. It is stated in the article that psychologically speaking "Seeing one's unwanted traits in others will necessarily make a person feel better about the self" (782).

Anna Freud explains that the defence mechanism, identification with the aggressor, is a combination of two mechanisms that are identification and projection, and it mainly implies that "by impersonating the aggressor, assuming his attributes or imitating his aggressions, [the individual] transforms himself from being the person threatened into the person who makes the threat." (113). So identification portrays the unconscious modelling of one's self upon another person's character and behaviour.

The third and last part of the human psyche is The Superego. Freud states that the superego is the judicial branch of the personality. It operates according to the "Ideal Principle". The moral side of the personality tells us what is right and what is wrong, good or bad. The superego is the "joy stopper" or the break to control the wild impulses of the id. The superego treats the id as a small child who needs discipline. Indeed, the superego was created from and consists of strict parental demands for behaviour. Fears from threats of punishment induced compliance. The superego asks questions as to whether we are being good or bad. This constant questioning of our motives and actions makes us nervous, producing what Freud names "Moral anxiety".

The superego is always talking to us in our mind. It has endless thoughts as to what we "should" do and punishes us internally with guilt even if we have not done the selfish deed yet. Within the superego lies the conscience, the judge that listens to our pleas, judges our guilt and hands out our punishment, depending upon our high moral codes of behaviour. The conscience makes us feel guilty even for our thoughts.

The psychoanalysis of childhood sexual development is a study that elaborates psychosexual development in infants and how this is represented as the child grows. The psychoanalysis in the infantry discovered how psychology plays a highly significant role rather than biology in the sexuality of human beings. Freud has versions on how sexual development is psychic rather than biological. He, Freud, notes how psychology achieves the progress in sexuality during the Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency and Genital stages in the descending order. Freud proposes five phases of psychic development.

The psychic development during the oral stage indicates that infants experience some sexual pleasures at exceptionally early ages. The infants will keep in mind the most pleasurable parts of the body, and will continue experiencing such pleasures every time. Babies suck lips, thumbs and other parts of the body they find pleasurable. This act may continue in some people until adulthood, meaning that sexuality is in the psyche, not in the biology. Lacan, on the other hand, argues that from zero to six months, the child is in the real stage. A child is in a mix of confusion involving needs, thoughts and perceptions. The body begins to fragment into several erogenous zones like the vagina, penis, anus and mouth.

Anal stage follows the sucking during two to four years of age. This is the stage when the child trains on matters of toilet usage and the cleanliness of their organs. The child, especially the male, learns how to hold the penis while urinating. This stage determines whether a person will be neat and smart or dirty after reaching adult age. Psychoanalysis postulates that children move from the upper oral to lower autogenic areas. Some feel that the organs are dirty, and some try to keep it clean, a sense that it is used for other purposes and should be kept clean.

It is further noted that phallus stage follows the anal, and it occurs at about the fourth year of development. The psychology revolves around the genitals, and the child becomes more interested in the genitals than other parts of the body. It is the stage where conflict of Oedipal begins, and the child gets attracted to the parent of the opposite sex. Other psychoanalysts referred to the conflict as Electra in females. The most important aspect of the phallic stage is the Oedipus complex. The term Oedipus complex comes from the Greek Myth *Oedipus* by Sophocles where Oedipus, a young man, kills his father and marries his mother. Upon discovering this, he pokes his eyes out and becomes blind. In the young boy, the Oedipus Complex arises because the boy develops sexual (pleasurable) desires for his mother. He wants to possess his mother exclusively

and get rid of his father to enable him, to do so. During the phallic stage, what the boy loves most is his penis. Hence he develops castration anxiety. The little boy then set out to resolve this problem by imitating, copying and joining in masculine dad-type behaviour. This is called identification, and is how the three-six-year-old boy resolves his Oedipus Complex.

Lacan shares the same idea with Freud, but he attributes this conflict to the acquisition of language. Girls have lesser psychosexual development than boys do. Girls develop penis envy while the boys will fear castration. Lacanian psychoanalysis equates this to the mirror stage when the child identifies the real being he or she is. A child admires the opposite sex and thinks the other is better than him, or her. This is when the male child develops self-ego over female child.

Freud discovered that latency phase follows where all the gratification the child was showing in the last three phases are solidified. This phase occurs during the ages of approximately 6 to 12 years old, following the phallic phase and preceding the genital stage. During the latency phase, the focus of psychosexual energy is temporarily diminished, and sexual desires and impulses are repressed. Instead, children direct their energy towards social, intellectual, and physical activities, such as school, hobbies and friendships. Freud believed that this phase allowed for the development of social and intellectual skills, as well as the resolution of conflicts from previous stages.

The last stage of infantile psychosexual development is called genital phase, which usually starts from puberty onwards. Psychic analysis reveals that a person detaches from the parents. It flashes back on the phallic phase and a person resolve what was not done in that stage, but now in a more organized way. It involves symbolic gratifications like relationship, love and adulthood responsibilities.

After an examination of the critical tools, Magic Realism and Psychoanalysis, that will be used in the novels under study, the second subsection of Chapter One will dwell on the review of literature related to the authors and the novels.

Review of Related Literature

According to John W. Creswell in his article "Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluation: Quantitative and Qualitative Research", a review of literature is "a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describe the past and current state of information, organizes the literature into topics and documents a need for a proposed study" (p 79).

From this quote, it is understood that a review of literature is a comprehensive and meticulously crafted written compilation that serves as a detailed summary of scholarly journal articles, books, and various other relevant documents. Its primary objective is to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing body of knowledge, pertaining to a specific subject or research area. By meticulously examining and analysing a wide range of published materials, the review of literature aims to describe and assess the historical progression as well as the current state of information related to the chosen topic. The first text from the texts under study, which review of related literature will be examined is *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.

Some reviewers are charmed by the opening section of this novel, but are later disappointed by, and condemn parts 2 and 3. For many of these reviewers, the control they praise within the text itself is intimately related to their own sense of control and subsequent loss of control, as readers. These reviewers relate to Walser, who at the beginning of the novel, gives the illusion of being in control, but finds his sense of control being eroded, though some of these reviewers point out that this shows a major fault in the novel. Such reviewers begin by praising the impressive opening of the text only to lament the subsequent breakdown of limits and desolation into chaos. Adam Mars-Jones, for example in "From Wonders to Prodigies" writes:

> *The first third of Angela Carter's new novel is a glorious piece of work, a set piece studded with set pieces… the balance tips at the beginning of the second section, and never manages to regain equilibrium… Nights at the Circus starts off in full commanding cry, and later disappoints the towering expectations it has created for itself. (1083)*

Adam Mare-Jones is dismayed when he can no longer reduce the narrative of *Nights at the Circus* to Walser's interpretation of Fevvers' story. He expected the storyline to continue with Walser being the interpreter and he claims that, without Fevvers' voice and Walser's point of view,

the narrative falters. He further states that "the point of view becomes curiously fragmented tending to see Fevvers through Walser's eyes while supplementing this partial perspective with a feverish omniscience elsewhere" (1083).

Paul Clay in "On the Wings of a New Age" claims that, at the beginning of the St Petersburg section, "Carter's energetic style begins turning an already complicated narrative into three ringed extravaganzas" (87). Richard Martin, in a review titled "Three Ring Circus in the American Book Review" also claims that the first section of the novel is "By far the most riveting and accomplished section of the novel" (12-13). This is seen from the opening pages of the text where Carter, through Walser and Fevvers' discussion, displays her ability to address profound themes and social issues such as gender identity, power dynamics and mystery, which creates an instant fascination and causes the readers to want to read more.

There is also one exemption to a role and this takes a form of a review by Michael Wood entitled; "Stories of Black and White" that states, "Things are clearer once you are given Fevvers' past life, and the novel moves from London to St Petersburg and Siberia". (Wood, 16). The criticism levelled at the later uncontrolled parts of Carter's novel are responses to the reviewers' own sense of disorientation as the novel beings to challenge the 'reporting' mode of reading.

Several reviewers also find faults with the sheer excess and elaborate invention, which characterises the middle section (and the opening of the Siberia section) of the text; it destroys the careful balance, and the enchantment of the opening. In *Wild Women, Brave Men*, by Amy E. Schwartz she states, "Such extravagant invention sometimes becomes a strain, not on readers' credibility but on their endurance (40).

The novel also dramatises other instances where Walser represents readers who abandon themselves to the text's control. Some reviewers respond to the novel in this way. According to Kathy Stephens in her article "Fitful Glimpses", she states "*Nights at the Circus*, is a sort of book that is more enjoyable to read than to reflect upon" (16). What does happen when a reviewer seizes to reflect upon a book? Some reviewers are caught up in the experience in the text and rather, they are unable to stand back and interpret. To review at all, the reviewers must establish some form of distance between themselves and the text, in order to describe the experience: some result to metaphor in order to compare it to other experiences which are beyond their control. These reviews

therefore do not report facts about the novel, or attempt to offer their readers the details rather, their own writing imitates the novel as they too celebrate the freedom to jungle with language.

Some reviewers describe *Nights at the Circus* as if it were a dream. Kathy Stephen states in her review in which she goes on to say *that:*

> *I dreamt I spent a spate of Nights at the Circus, recently. It was a particularly wild show, and every now and then I thought I would be overwhelmed; but I stayed with the dream secretly, not wanting it to end… it is rather like a violent dream: all-encompassing at the moment but somehow forgotten upon awakening, as though the mind could of bear the effect of holding it. (16)*

The difficulty of putting *Nights at the Circus* into perspective is the experience of trying to recall a dream which just eludes the memory. Other reviewers describe the novel in terms of the imagery of intoxication either alcohol or drugs. Harriet Gilbert notes how Fevvers and Lizzie remain sober while getting Walser drunk on champagne she draws an analogy between Walser's experience and her own encounter with the novel: the novel, she suggests in her article "Morning after the Night Before" (1984), maybe even more intoxicating:

> *It's Walser who feels that his brain is turning into bubbles as well he might. Angela Carter's Nights at the Circus has the same effect on the reader. And, more ebullient, even than Fevvers, Carter mixes the drinks: politics and magic, history and fantasy, lush sensuality and narrative conjuring, jokes, adventures, literary allusions, dialogue, dialect all poured into a glass the shape of a picaresque nineteenth-century novel… the effect is strange, exciting, alarming, not unequivocally pleasant… has Carter written the first addictive novel? (30)*

Carter's novel suggests that it be either looked at or looked through, but it is resistant to the latter, it appears to promise but denies the reader's control just as Fevvers appears to be offering Walser her life story but denies him the truth and the total control he seeks. Fevvers demands to be looked at, but cannot be grasped (in both physical and intellectual sense of the word), "Look, not touch… look! Hands off!" (15). The activity of reading and writing for these reviewers constitute a celebration of the text's multiplicity—a multiplicity which the novel itself both

celebrates and also criticises. What all these reviewers have in common, however, is a desire to see all and believe all.

In "Fresh Iconography", Harriet Blodgett analyses how Carter subverts female marginalisation in the novels *The Passion of New Eve* and *Nights at the Circus*. According to the author, patriarchal culture creates feminine symbols that are used to reinforce female submission, even when the imagery represents strong women, such as goddesses and other mythical characters. For Blodgett, Fevvers is a subversion of the nineteenth-century image of "the angel in the house: the incredible fiction of a pure, modest, giving, servitor without needs or libido of her own". Fevvers is an autonomous woman, and though she helps others, her main preoccupations are with herself and her desires. Carter also questions what is expected from women during marriages in a scene in which Fevvers asks Walser if a woman's honour is to be found in her vagina or in her spirit (135). For Blodgett, the novel not ending in marriage is also a form of subversion, since it presents a traditional narrative from lovers that are separated and reunited after hardships. But instead of marrying Walser, Fevvers reveals that her virginity was a fiction.

Abigail Dennis, in "The Spectacle of Her Gluttony", analyses how the many kinds of desire, and their consumption, are important to the construction of power relations in *Nights at the Circus.* Fevvers is the focus of consumption during her presentations, but she also has many urges, often in excessive ways. Dennis claims that food and appetite play a big part in the construction of the normative ideal of women. To the author, during the Victorian period, women were expected to demonstrate lack of appetite. Fevvers, however, shows her excessive appetite, at times even making a performance out of it. Fevvers eats bacon sandwiches in front of Walser, a food that was unbearable to him; she interrupts her narrative many times, all of them to open another bottle of champagne or to eat. She breaks many rules of etiquette, since she burps and farts during her meals, all the while checking how Walser reacts to her behaviour, which renders her eating a performance.

Fevvers's excessive behaviour, however, has negative implications. Her urge to acquire jewels and other expensive objects causes her many problems. Dennis relates this to the new social powers that women were beginning to acquire during the Victorian period, which, in the case of Fevvers, are used inconsequentially. But Dennis notes that there is a difference between Fevvers's consumption and that of the male characters', since the protagonist does not satiate her desires at the expense of others. In fact, whenever a marginal character is in trouble, Fevvers does whatever

is necessary to help, as in the case of Mignon, who was being abused and starved by her husband, when she is rescued and brought to Fevvers by Walser, she takes her in and feeds her. When Fevvers realises that Mignon could sing, she introduces her to the Princess of Abyssinia gives her a job and they eventually fall in love.

In "Freak Show Femininities", Erin Douglas discusses how freaks were treated as objects in the British Empire and how Angela Carter presents the Freak Show as a subversive space. Douglas claims that the Grand Imperial Tour, the name of the worldwide tour that Colonel Kearney's circus is presenting, works as a representation and justification of imperialism, as it considers the different deviant and abnormal, exhibiting people that break different kinds of norms as freaks. In this context, imperialism would be necessary to gather novelties to be exhibited. For the author, Fevvers's performances, not only on stage, but also as a woman, questions the British identity and normative femininity. Douglas notices, for instance, that Fevvers seems proud to be Cockney, which would distance her from the normative idea of a British identity. Douglas analyses the spectacle of the Princess of Abyssinia and Mignon as a challenge to heteronormative ideas about communion. She claims that "their spectacles represent pleasure, transformation and happiness of queer desires and relationships" (19) and notes that, they present the only extended display of pleasure in the novel. Both characters were victims of vicious men (in the case of the princess, represented by tigers), and both have marks of violence in their skins. They only find freedom and pleasure in each other, which Douglas understands as an inversion of the notion that only heterosexuality is desirable. The author notes, too, that their story is an inversion of traditional fairy tales, which frequently displays a heterosexual marriage. For the Princess and Mignon, however, their happiness only starts after they escape their marriages with men (and tigers).

André Pereira Feitosa's "Mulheres-Monstro e Espetáculos Circenses" analyses the aspects that make the characters in three novels, *Nights at the Circus* being one of them, grotesque, and what the implications of being outside the norms are. The characters in *Nights at the Circus* are mainly grotesque because of their body attributes. Fevvers, for instance, has wings; Albert/Albertina shares both sexes. In Fevvers's case, she is also grotesque due to excess, since she overeats and uses extreme amounts of makeup. Feitosa points out that anything that is different from the norm tends to be marginalised, which is the case with the grotesque characters in the novel. This is exemplified in the settings Carter chose, which are circuses, brothels and freak shows. Feitosa is also attentive to the scientific gaze, represented mainly through Walser, who

attempts to understand and categorise Fevvers's body. Feitosa also analyses how maternity is represented in the novels, claiming that they are grotesque since they do not conform to the norms. For the author, the Virgin Mary is one of the role models for what normative maternity should be, but Carter's novel represents motherhood and family in alternative ways. Fevvers, for instance, does not have a traditional family model, since she claims she was hatched from an egg. The characters that act as Fevvers' mothers seem to be quite the opposite of Virgin Mary: Mama Nelson is a brothel owner; Lizzie is a revolutionary and former prostitute. The notion of traditional family is also broken in the brothel, since it is composed exclusively of women.

Daniel Punday's "Narrative Performance in the Contemporary Monster Story" examines how the novel *Nights at the Circus* uses monsters to comment on storytelling itself. In the case of Carter's novel, Punday argues that Fevvers is used both to comment on the freedom achieved by women in the 20th century and to think about the problems of creating a woman that symbolises this kind of freedom. Punday begins his text by claiming that in the past, people understood monsters as signs that should be interpreted, but that by the end of the eighteenth century, this view had changed due to advances in medicine and because of a change in the way of understanding the body, from unified, to be made of composite parts. Punday claims that readers tend to interpret Fevvers as a symbol of female freedom, but that the clowns in the novel work in contrast to question that view. While Fevvers is presented as a whole and symbolic body, clowns have the ability to construct their own identities, possessing fragmentary bodies that at times, fall apart. If readers can easily attribute a meaning to Fevvers, this is not the case with the clowns, who literally deconstruct themselves, as in the scene in which their bodies fall apart. Punday interprets this contrast as a criticism on the way we give meaning to monsters.

Yiğit Sümbül, in "Womanliness as Masquerade", analyses how Fevvers uses mimicry and masquerade to subvert her expected role as a woman and to escape the male gaze. Based on Luce Irigaray's theories, Sümbül defines mimicry and masquerade as a way of transforming subordination into affirmation. With these strategies, women would use womanliness to appear to conform to the standards of femininity imposed on them, but they would subvert it by ironic repetition and exaggeration. In the novel, Fevvers never solves the mystery if she is fact or fiction, which Sümbül claims is an indication that she does not state if she is performing or being herself. Fevvers is aware that, since she is a freak and a woman, she cannot escape being objectified, so she makes herself an object through her performances to attempt to control her own image. One

of the main strategies she uses to subvert her womanliness is through exaggeration, which frequently appears in the vicious way she eats, in her exaggerated behaviour and costumes, and even in her size.

Abu Shahid Abdullah's "Fluids, Cages, and Boisterous Femininity" argues that *Nights at the Circus* uses the grotesque and the carnivalesque to challenge patriarchal norms. For Abdullah, Fevvers' eating is a breaking of norms, since she eats for pleasure in a time in which women were expected to mask their hunger. He claims that Fevvers' manners are grotesque because of excessiveness, since she gorges and spills food, and burps during her meals. Her manners on the table also have carnivalesque aspects, since she eats food from both high and low cultures. Abdullah describes her eating as a breaking of norms, because he claims that during the Victorian period, social classes were taught as well defined and social norms were heavily enforced.

Abdullah also highlights other scenes in which grotesque characteristics are used to subvert norms. He notes that in the panopticon scene, women use bodily fluids, which are abject elements often used to create a grotesque effect, to write notes and establish an escape plan from the prison. The female prisoners use what is usually rejected to attain freedom. Abdullah also notes that the text itself hints at excessiveness in passages that claims that Fevvers' breasts almost popped out of her corset, or that mention erupting skin, since excessiveness is one of the characteristics that Russo attributes to the female grotesque.

Margaret E. Toye's "Eating Their Way out of Patriarchy" presents an analysis of the passage of *Nights at the Circus* that depicts a panopticon of exclusively female prisoners. Toye claims that the panopticon works as a metaphor for the condition of women in patriarchal society as it separates them and makes them work against one another, though it demands their participation, consent, and collusion to do so. The prison fails, however, because women do not engage in the surveillance they were expected to. Though they could not talk to each other, they used food and abject elements to communicate and plan an escape. The prisoners used feces and menstrual blood to write messages, which were passed inside bread.

In Carter's panopticon, even the central guard, identified as the Countess P, is female. Toye compares the Countess with Madame Schreck, the owner of a freak museum in the novel: both are women who have power over other women and that exploit them. Unlike Schreck, a freak who owned a freak museum, the Countess is a prisoner, since she is in the panopticon for committing

the same crimes as the other women: that of attempting to murder or murdering their husbands. Toye understands the Countess as a criticism on the role of women in perpetuating patriarchal structures. Even though she is a prisoner too, the small amount of power she has turns her into a patriarchal figure.

A great part of the critics of *Nights at the Circus* treats the hybrid characters in the novel as freaks, though many of their aspects may also characterise them as monsters. In "Toward Situating the Victorian Freak", Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius question the position of freaks:

> *If people from different cultures and physical landscapes (e.g. Chinese or Africans) could be exhibited as freaks in the United States and Europe in the nineteenth century simply because they were culturally and socially different from Anglo-Americans and Anglo-Europeans, and if people with tattoos or very long hair or nails were (and remain) staples of freak shows, then we must recognize the way in which enfreakment is not just about nature's work but rather is created by the body, plus its context, plus individual choices. (4)*

For Tromp and Valerius, being a freak is as well founded in social position as in bodily difference. The authors also note, "Freak exhibitions in the nineteenth century did not offer stable definitions of the freak. Instead, they employed hyperbole, misrepresentation, elaborate costuming and staging, and narrative modes from the fantastic to the sentimental. They paired farce with medical description and scientific theories" (7). Freakishness was also created by many narrative strategies.

In "Freaklore", Joyce L. Huff claims that anybody that deviated from the norm could be "freakified." For Huff, freaks were understood in a binary opposition with the normative bodies, which also had their function:

> *Freakified bodies are represented as existing in a binary relationship to the norm. The logic upon which this binary is constructed aligns non-stigmatised bodies with the cultural ideal. What this opposition offers to subjects whose bodies are thus defined as normal is the illusion of freedom from the uncertainties, flux, and grotesqueries of bodily existence. This fiction can only be maintained, however, by the continued and systematic devaluation of the freakified body, for it is only by comparison with stigmatised subjects that "normal" ones appear free. (45)*

In Huff's discussion about freaks, he states that society constructs a binary relationship between "non-stigmatised" bodies, which align with the cultural ideal, and freaks that deviate from the

norm. The purpose of this binary is to provide a sense of freedom to those considered normal by contrasting them with the uncertainties, fluctuations, and grotesque aspects of bodily existence associated with the stigmatised bodies. However, maintaining this illusion of freedom requires the ongoing devaluation of the stigmatised bodies. By comparing the stigmatised individuals with those considered normal, the latter group appears to be free from constrains and challenges associated with the "freakified" bodies.

Set during the Reconstruction era in 1873, *Beloved*, Toni Morrison's fifth novel, plays a crucial role in her literary creation and brings Morrison to the forefront of American letters. Walter Clemon's high assessment in *Newsweek Magazine* states: "I think we have a masterpiece on our hand here" (p. 75) this is an indicative of the overwhelming praise *Beloved* received almost immediately. It is precisely due to the publication of *Beloved* that Toni Morrison won the *Anisfield-Wolf Book Award* in Race Relations and the *Melcher Book Award in the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction*. As Morrison's most stirring and mature masterpiece, *Beloved* is considered to be an immortal classic in the history of contemporary American literature. In the early year of 2006, The *New York Times* spoke highly of the novel as "Best American fiction in 25 years". Morrison's works have always represented and explored the theme of the Slavery, destiny and spiritual world of black people, with a focus on gender, race and culture as the main discourse. With the publication of *Beloved*, an ever-increasing number of reviews, essays and book-length studies from different kinds of perspectives have been done at home and abroad. So far, researchers at home and abroad have conducted in-depth research on the themes of the novel, the characteristics of black literature, ethnic issues, and physical politics from such theoretical perspectives as Post Colonialism, Narratology, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Trauma Theory, New Historicism, and Postmodern Realism. These diversified studies on the novel have achieved a huge success, though there are still several deficiencies in them.

As far as western critics and scholars are concerned, continuous interpretations on *Beloved* have been going on. As to studies on the characters of the novel, the essay "Daughters Signifying History: The Example of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", by Ashraf H. A. Rushdy places great emphasis on the historical symbolic connotation of the daughter Beloved. He holds the view that, while the character Beloved is "a symbol of an unrelenting criticism of the dehumanising function of the institution of Slavery" and embodies the past that must be remembered so as to be forgotten, Denver signifies "the embracing glance, the loving view, the need to remember" and she becomes

the site of hope (578). Therefore, Beloved, being the ghost daughter off Sethe, comes back to the novel to dig up buried traumatic memories of Slavery. While Denver, the Sethe's living daughter, stands as the only hope to a peaceful live for Sethe.

In a research conducted by Gengqing Chen and Weiwei Wang in an article entitled "Metaphorical Analysis of the Image of water in *Beloved*", they discuss the existence of water as a symbol in Morrison's *Beloved*. They chose three elements that consist of water; water itself, river and rain. They state that, water represents the memory of the main character, rain represents emancipation and river represents the history. This article helps in giving the basic understanding of meaning of water as a metaphorical symbol. They conclude that, metaphorical language (in Metaphorical Conceptual Theory, metaphoric is related to everyday life and water is part of everyday life) helps the reader to understand the theme of the novel through the description of water.

Teresa N. Washington's article "The Mother-Daughter Aje Relationship in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" does research on the relationship between mother and daughter. Teresa defines the term *Àjé* as "a Yuruba word and concept that describes a spiritual force that is thought to be inherited in African women. Additionally, spiritually empowered humans are called *Àjé" (*p. 171). In this article, Teresa talks on the spiritual relationship Sethe has with her dead daughter Beloved, who is an *Àjé*, she is depicted as a controlling matriarch who either forcefully or gently uses her powers for her own gain and she chooses to come back from the dead in order to have her mother's love and affection once again. According to Teresa, "The *Àjé* is a woman-owned and woman-administered force" (p. 172). Teresa goes to quote the Yuruba proverb that translates; "Instead of the *Àjé* changing for the better, she continues to have more children, producing more and more birds" (p. 172) which is clear in the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, "The devil child was clever, they thought, and beautiful. It had taken the shape of a pregnant woman, naked and smiling in the heat of the afternoon sun. Tender, black and glistening, she stood on long straight legs, her belly big and tight" (p. 308). Beloved, though a ghost, is presented as pregnant by Morrison at the end of the novel. Though she conceived though having sexual intercourse with Paul D, it wasn't certain that she would give birth to a "normal" human baby as she is a ghost, so from what Washington is saying, Beloved had the agenda of reproducing beings of her kind.

In the article "The Restorative Power of Sound: A Case of Communal Catharsis in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", Roxanne R. Reed probes into the spiritual leading role which the black women play. In this article, Roxanne explores the spiritual leadership of Baby Suggs as, according to her, "the 'goodness' of Baby Suggs' life-restoring spirit contends with the life-depleting 'evil' of Beloved's spirit" (56) and she plans on doing this by examining the role of music, sound utterance and melody, which serve to establish a communal sensibility. Roxanne in this article asserts that sound, embodied as cries and utterances, has significance that in many ways surpasses that of identifiable music. Reed situates that women's practices in the novel as a theological tradition that considers the unique experience of black spiritual leaders. She also writes;

> *Beloved evinces womanist theologising in two specific ways. One, which I have already alluded to, is the maternal, the passing down of survival wisdom through stories in the form of song; the second is preaching. Baby Suggs represents one of many maternal figures in the novel, but her preacher voice embodied as a feminine, more directly invokes a womanist interpretation of Morrison's text. (p. 59)*

Ultimately, the spiritual leadership of Baby Suggs provides the needed guidance in order for the community to attain its goal through the restoration of the novel's protagonist, Sethe.

Considering studies on themes of the novel, Barbara Schapiro's article "The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", analyses the theme of love and self in his paper. She writes about the relationship between the characters in *Beloved.* Sethe's experience as a slave pushes her to kill her daughter Beloved, when Schoolteacher; her former slave master arrives at her house to take her back as his slave. This is an act of love, as Sethe does this so her children will not go through the same fate she faced as a slave. As Barbara A. Schapiro put it, "Her humanity has been so violated by this man, and by her entire experience as a slave woman, that she kills her daughter to save her from a similar fate; she kills her to save her from psychic death" (p. 195). This act of love explained in this quote shows to what extend Sethe will go in order to shield her children from experiencing the horrors of Slavery. She kills Beloved not because she hates her but out of love and would do anything to protect her children.

Like this analysis discusses, Sethe killed Beloved to save her from mental death, a thing Sethe herself experienced. Sethe's emotional abilities are highly affected by her years as a slave,

her eyes are also described as empty, symbolising her emptiness inside and Schapiro also writes that "Her eyes reflects the psychic loss and denial of self she has experienced on all levels in her life" (p. 197). The murder of Beloved shows Sethe's unconditional love for her children, and when Beloved returns, the love will physically drain Sethe. Symbolising how loving Beloved, takes more humanity than Sethe has left after her life as a slave. Schapiro writes, "The dynamic suggests a mother being drained by the child's greedy, excessive need" (p. 198). Beloved, coming back into the life of Sethe, explains her desire to totally dominate her. She gradually chases Paul D out of 124 so he will not be able to take Sethe's attention from her and she fills Sethe's mind with gilt for killing her, in order to cause Sethe to devote her time to please her as compensation for her actions, thereby, also neglecting Denver.

Unlike Schapiro's article on love and self, Peggy Ochoa's paper "Morrison's *Beloved*: Allegorically Othering "White" Christianity" delves into religious theme of the novel. She starts this article by quoting some bible verses that somehow relates to some instances in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* she quotes *Songs of Solomon* (6:3) "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." And then she brings a similar passage from the text "I AM BELOVED and she is mine". Ochoa in this article aims to show Toni Morrison's reference to, and revision of Biblical passages especially a book from the Old Testament texts, Songs of Solomon in her 1987 novel *Beloved.* Ochoa writes:

> *Allusions to this most poignant and erotic passage of the Old Testament not only inform the relationships between Morrison's characters, but also contribute to her consideration of the relationship between black and white communities in the mid-nineteenth century United States. (p. 107)*

In Terry Paul Caesar's article, "Slavery and Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", he writes, "When Sethe tries to explain to Beloved why she cut her throat, she is explaining an anger handed down through generations of mothers who could have no control over their children's lives, nor voice in their upbringing" (112). During Slavery, slave masters were for the idea that slaves should reproduce so when these children get to a certain age, they are also taken as slaves. Many of these slaves had their children taken from them at childbirth, losing every right to their upbringing and never seeing them again. This is what Sethe was trying to avoid by killing Beloved,

she did not want her children to grow in such environment where they won't have any right to agency and humanity.

Here, further work is shown supporting the idea that unresolved emotions existed prior to the act of killing the infant. Caesar also states that "Toni Morrison's novel is discussed not as a presentation of Slavery but rather of motherhood" (111). The dehumanising event of disallowing the mother-child relationship disrupt the development of not only the child but also the mother herself. This shows that Morrison's novel *Beloved* engages the reader deeper than the chronicle of Slavery would, and takes the reader into the deep details of dehumanisation and the resulting trauma that Slavery possesses.

In a research conducted by Lindsay Green, an article entitled "Foregrounding Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*", she focuses on the woman character and the importance of a motherhood portrait. She compares the women in *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*, Sethe and Ruth. She argues that these two characters suffer from motherless experiences and how it influenced their lives in the future, especially Sethe who kills her own daughter in order to protect her from Slavery. Green states that "because these women are without mothers, the reader cannot help but notice that maternal absence shapes the way they behave" (39). This is clear as Sethe Kills Beloved because she did not want to lose her children the same way her mother lost her to Slavery

In the article "Toni Morrison: A Critical Companion", Missy Dehn Kubitschek is interested in the physical and psychological states of slaves. She traces the historical background of the novel, the period of Slavery and reconstruction. She also analyses the character traits of the characters in the novel, demonstrating how their actions led to plot advancements. She claims that if the physical and the psychology aspects are not taken into consideration, the reconstruction of characters cannot be complete. She also examines thematic concerns such as Slavery and racial discrimination. Finally, she discusses some elements of style.

In relation to the historical and literary context of *Beloved,* Kubitschek portrays the influence of elements of Black History in Morrison's works. She asserts that Morrison borrows from various mythologies, including Greek mythology. However, Kubitschek does not say how and why Morrison's *Beloved* is influenced by supernatural elements.

Deborah Horvitz in her article, "Nameless Ghosts: Possessions and Dispossessions in *Beloved*", focuses on the role of the ghost in the story. According to Horvitz, Beloved is an

incarnation of Sethe's grandmother and she also stands for all women who were "stolen from Africa" for Slavery in the New World. Thus owing to the Middle Passage, *Beloved* establishes a link between Africa and America. Horvitz also comments on the mother-daughter relationship in *Beloved*. She states that the severed mother-daughter relationship is the cause of the psychological disintegration suffered by Beloved, Sethe and Denver. Horvitz's analysis of the relationship between Sethe, Beloved and Denver underlines the relationship attached to the mother-child relationship. Slavery had its toll on the lives of the blacks whose psychology was shattered by broken family links. Horvitz seems to focus wholly on the cruelty of tearing families apart. She leaves out other prominent horrifying elements like rape, death, decay, haunted houses, apparitions, etc.

While Horvitz lay emphasis on the role of the ghost in *Beloved*, critics like Ashraf H.A. Rushdy and Linda Krumbolz are interested in the past in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. To them, the past is an important part of the present. In the article "Daughters Signifying History: the Example of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", Rushdy states that Beloved and Denver represent two aspects of history which are oppression and joy, forgetfulness and remembering, unforgiving and loving. He emphasises that Morrison seeks to remember the horrors of Slavery so that forgetting may become possible. It is in remembering that a proper burial shall be given to the millions unceremoniously buried. In addition, he underlines Morrison's usage of the African tradition of storytelling in which memory and articulation are indispensable for self-understanding and self-claiming.

Linda Krumbolz in the article "The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", asserts that the past is inevitable. She equates "personal trauma" with "National trauma" and concludes that history can rescue the individual from present pain, suffering, agony and torture.

It is necessary to note the importance of history as treated by Rushdy and Krumbolz in their articles. However, history does not serve to forget as Rushdy would have it; it rather serves to forgive and learn from errors of the past. Slavery, in the past, now described as racism, in the present, can only produce the same consequences; fear, resistance, insecurity, violence and hostility. Such vices and more will leave the world unfit for any race.

A research from Nidhi Khatana, an article entitled "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Rediscovering History", discusses that the novel *Beloved* shows that history influences the events of the future. In her article, she argues that;

> *Beloved negotiates history as a narrative of the ownership of the most concrete fact of human existence as well as the most abstract of human relationships. It is a history and a representation of the complexities of love and sexual attraction. It foregrounds the dialogic tendencies of memory and its imaginative capacity to construct and reconstruct the significance of the past. (104-107)*

In the essay "Narrating the Self: Aspects of Moral Psychology in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" by Thomas M. Linehan, we see some of the psychological and moral constituents, especially the latter, associated with becoming and being a person in this novel. This explores the moral psychology problems of the blacks.

This present study departs from the above works on *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved* in the sense that, it does not only handle the struggles of subjected females in *Nights at the Circus* or the dehumanisation of Slavery in *Beloved*; it also shows how Carter, through her character Fevvers, and Morrison, through the character *Beloved,* makes use of supernatural elements to resist female subjection and the trauma from Slavery. This comparative work studies two texts; *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved* from the perspective of gender discrimination and Slavery by utilising supernatural elements as a tool to resist these issues mentioned above, which no other critic nor researcher has ever written about. This present work therefore, is coming to add to the body of the critical and interpretative arts of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a comparative study.

This chapter has dealt with the theoretical framework that will be used in our study and the review of literature that is related to the authors and the works under study. It has explained why Magic Realism and Psychoanalysis are necessary for the study. It has also shown how our work is different from the works of critics who have written about the same topic. The next chapter will be concerned with the origin and development of supernatural fiction and a brief biography of the authors under study, stating how their life experiences affected their choice of writing.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO SUPERNATURAL FICTION AND BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHORS

This chapter examines the historical, political and socio-cultural factors that led to the rise of supernatural fiction. It also probes into the authors' life experiences that paved the way for their writings. The past and the authors' experiences, and their perceptions are indispensable in the study, given that a look at the background to supernatural fiction and the lives of the various authors will enable us to understand the context of production of the text under study. This backs the New Historists's view that, a writer cannot write out of his or her time and space.

The History of Supernatural Fiction

Supernatural fiction has its roots in ancient folklore and the legends, but it started to gain popularity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries with the rise of Gothic literature. The Gothic tradition reigned in the Romantic era (1770-1850) and was considered a counter reaction to the eighteenth century Age of Reason. Horace Walpole is considered the father of supernatural fiction and his novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) is described by Fred Botting in his book *Gothic* as "the origin of this new, popular and prodigious species of writing" (45). A number of elements influenced supernatural fiction: the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, Enlightenment and Romanticism, Elizabethan Revival or the Shakespearean influences and the American influences.

One of the key events that influenced the development of supernatural fiction was the French Revolution. The ten-year-long war (1789-1799) between France and the other European countries was a time of uncertainty in Europe. During the radical days of the French Revolution, a series of horrible events occurred, which brought terror in Europe.

The Reign of Terror was a period of extreme violence and political repression that lasted from 1793 to 1794. During this time, the guillotine executed thousands of people, and many more were imprisoned or exiled. The fear and uncertainty of this period found expression in literature, leading to the development of supernatural fiction, which often explored themes of terror and fear.

Another terrifying event that took place during the French Revolution was the rise of The Jacobins. The Jacobins were a radical political club that played a significant role in the French Revolution. They were known for their extreme views and their willingness to use violence to achieve their goals. They attacked the royal palace, slaughtered the king's guard, and killed about 1,200 prisoners. The Jacobins who controlled this convention, put Louis XVI on trial as a traitor to France and the king and his wife Marie Antoinette were beheaded.

The engine of this terror was yet again, another terrifying event that took place during the French Revolution called the guillotine. The guillotine was the primary method of execution during the French Revolution in which about 300,000 people were arrested and 17,000 thousand people executed. Its use had a profound impact on the culture of the time. The guillotine was a symbol of the violence and terror of the revolution, and its influence can be seen in the rise of supernatural fiction, which often featured gruesome descriptions of violence and death.

Another event that led to the rise of supernatural fiction is the Industrial Revolution. The United States' economy expanded tremendously after 1865, spurred on by the development of new technologies and by industrialisation. Between the Civil War and the end of the nineteenth century, the United States underwent one of the most profound economic revolution any country ever experienced. This phenomenon had an impact on the lives of almost all Americans in 1919. Millions of people left their farms and moved to the cities, where they landed low-paying factory jobs. Millions more immigrated to the United States from abroad. By the early 1900s, most of these urban workers had become wedded to the national market; they worked for companies run by others and purchased goods from stores instead of creating what they needed. Even those remaining in the rural parts of the country found themselves increasingly tied to the national economy because of things like the mechanisation of farm equipment and the extension by the Postal Service of mail delivery to farmers' homes in the late 1890s and early 1900s.

Daniel J. Boorstin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, provided an apt description of this process in his book, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*, he states that**:**

> *A New civilisation found new ways of holding men together—less and less by creed…more and more by common effort and common experience, by the apparatus of daily life, by their ways of thinking about themselves. Americans were held together by their wants, by what they made and what they bought, and by how they learned everything. They were held together by the new names they gave to the*

> *things they wanted, to the things they owned, and to themselves. These everywhere communities floated over time and space, they could include anyone without his effort, and sometimes without his knowing. Men were divided not by their regions or their roots, but by objects and notions that might be anywhere and could be everywhere. Americans lived now not merely in a half-explored continent of mountains and rivers and mines, but in a new continent of categories. These were the communities where they were told (and where they believed) that they belonged. (34)*

The Industrial Revolution contributed to the increased in popularity of the otherworldly. For one thing, the growth of consumption in communities provided large markets for a variety of goods, including books on ghosts, especially inexpensive dime novels. New, speedier forms of transportation and communication that came into their own after the Civil War allowed mediums and others interested in the spirit realm to disseminate their ideas to a wider audience than in previous generations. Traditional newspapers and magazines, which flooded homes and newsstands by 1905, carried thousands of stories dealing with ghosts, séances, and other aspects of the paranormal. These stories, regardless of their biases, brought ghosts to public attention. Corporations contributed to this trend by mass-producing games, such as the ouija board that had supernatural themes and others whose livelihoods were dependent on public enthusiasm for things that went bump in the night took advantage of the growing power of the print media by advertising in newspapers. These people also used relatively time-worn methods of spreading their otherworldly wares such as “pamphlets, tracts and handbills. They joined with spiritualists to found churches based on the idea that communication with the dead was possible, and they created periodicals which were dedicated solely to exploring supernatural themes. All of these practices helped to generate interest in paranormal phenomena among Americans living in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, some scholars have argued that the practice of cavorting with the dead, either vicariously through books or directly via the aid of a ouija board or a medium, became so widespread throughout the United States. Laurence Moore, in “Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture” states that "... it became a national pastime that transcended class, gender, and ethnic barriers" (2). This confirms our opinion that supernatural fiction was consumed/read in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Developments in technology, changes in the economy, and the marketing knowledge of mediums and spiritualists helped to spread ideas about the supernatural realm throughout the

United States after the Civil War. However, even the best promoter cannot sell a product unless his or her clients have a need for it. In the same way, Americans turned to the supernatural world packaged in séances, ghost stories, Halloween costumes, and other goods and services with otherworldly themes either because they hoped it would satisfy their emotional needs or because it served their particular spiritual or ideological goals. Many Americans turned to the spirit realm in the hopes that it could help them cope with the loss of loved ones; a sense of bereavement that was often aggravated by their worries about the afterlife. Others purchased ghost stories or attended séances because they wanted to be entertained, and these things provided them with thrills that they could not obtain from their mundane, everyday lives. Many Americans believed in the supernatural world because this faith helped buttress religious beliefs that were being challenged by the growth of materialism and by advances in technology. Others went further and attempted to prove the existence of ghosts using empirical processes; they were enthusiasts who believed that science could finally determine the existence (or non-existence) of the spiritual world. In an age that witnessed the invention of electricity and the airplane among other marvels, these men and women believed that it might be possible to provide hard evidence or lack thereof for the existence of an afterlife. One other group was also keenly interested in the paranormal. They were the skeptics who made a life's work out of debunking the claims of mediums and psychical researchers.

The Industrial Revolution greatly influence Angela Carter and Toni Morrison to write *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved* respectively, which are the novels under study. The effects of the Industrial Revolution pushed Carter to write about its struggles in her novel *Nights at the Circus.* One of the key ways in which the Industrial Revolution influenced the supernatural elements of *Nights at the Circus* was through the theme of mechanisation. The novel is set during a time of rapid industrialisation in Britain, as the country began to transform into a modern, urban society. This theme is reflected in the character of Walser, a journalist who represents the forces of progress and industrialisation. He is portrayed as cold and mechanical, a symbol of the dehumanising effects of modernity. His presence in the novel underscores the sense of displacement and alienation felt by the characters, particularly Fevvers, who is both fascinated and repelled by the world of industry.

The Industrial Revolution also influenced the style of the novel, particularly in its use of fragmentation and dislocation. The novel is written in a nonlinear style, with multiple narrators

and shifting perspectives. This style reflects the disorienting effects of industrialisation, as people were uprooted from their traditional ways of life and forced to adapt to a rapidly changing world. The use of supernatural elements, particularly the presence of Fevvers' wings, further underscores this sense of fragmentation and dislocation.

Another way in which the Industrial Revolution influenced the supernatural elements of *Nights at the Circus* is through the theme of transformation. The novel is a powerful exploration of the transformative effects of industrialisation, as people and societies were forced to adapt to new technologies and ways of life. Fevvers' wings are a symbol of this transformation, representing the possibility of change and growth in a world that is constantly evolving.

Toni Morrison wrote the novel *Beloved*, which is deeply rooted in the history of the United States, but it also draws on the themes and motifs of supernatural fiction. The Industrial Revolution had a profound impact on the novel, shaping both its themes and its style. One of the key ways in which the Industrial Revolution influenced the supernatural elements of *Beloved* was through the theme of mechanisation. The novel is set during a time of rapid industrialisation in America, as the country began to transform into a modern, urban society. This theme is reflected in the character of Mr. Bodwin, a white man who represents the forces of progress and industrialisation. He is portrayed as cold and mechanical, a symbol of the dehumanising effects of modernity. His presence in the novel underscores the sense of displacement and alienation felt by the characters, particularly Sethe, who is haunted by the ghosts of her past.

The Industrial Revolution also influenced the style of the novel, particularly in its use of fragmentation and dislocation. The novel is written in a nonlinear style, with multiple narrators and shifting perspectives. This style reflects the disorienting effects of industrialisation, as people were uprooted from their traditional ways of life and forced to adapt to a rapidly changing world. The use of supernatural elements, particularly the presence of the ghost of Sethe's daughter, further underscores this sense of fragmentation and dislocation. Another way in which the Industrial Revolution influenced the supernatural elements of *Beloved* was through the theme of loss. As society became more mechanised and industrialised, people began to lose touch with their traditional ways of life. This loss is reflected in the novel, particularly in the character of Sethe, who has lost her family and her sense of identity. The supernatural elements of the novel,

particularly the ghost of Sethe's daughter, represent the loss and trauma of Slavery, which has left a lasting mark on the characters and their world.

Enlightenment and Romanticism shaped the origins of supernatural fiction. The period of Enlightenment was characterised by philosophical, scientific and rational explanations to understand and improve the society. The unexplainable was highly condemned by such thinkers as Franscois-Marie Arouet known as Voltaire and William Godwin. Nevertheless, instead of eliminating people's desire for the unexplainable through the force of repression, the period of enlightenment rather triggered the desire for the long repressed and the hidden aspect of life. Thus, the readership of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries asked for the expression of human feelings, perceptions and dreams in works of literature. So Eberhard Kreutzer states in *Die Entstehug des Romans in England* (1988) that, "Books that treated man's repressed and rational dimensions, fate and sensational perception, the fear of death, a strong appetite for power, diabolicalness and perversion attracted readers" (232). In other words, the readers longed for literature that revealed the uncanny and the sublime: the supernatural romantic readers insisted upon aspiration, yearning, desire, mystery and wonder. J.A. Cuddon states in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* that:

> *After a long period of rationalism and apparent metal, spiritual and psychological stability, the rediscovery of "old World" and, more especially, the rediscovery of the world of supernatural or quasi-supernatural evil, had a strong disruptive and purgative effect. (359)*

According to Cuddon, the poets in *The Graveyard School of Poetry* were reaction against the "attitudes and codes of the Augustan Age" (357). They treated in their poetry themes such as graveyards, charnel houses, the crepuscular and the macabre (Cuddon, 357), which later became popular elements of the gothic tradition. Consequently, the Graveyard School of Poetry of the 1740s greatly influences the Gothic genre hence, supernatural fiction.

While Angela Carter did not personally experience the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism, she was greatly influenced by them and engaged with their ideas and themes in her writing. In her works, Carter often explored the darker aspects of the human psyche and critiqued societal norms and power structures. This can be seen as a departure from the rationalism and optimism of Enlightenment thought, as well as a rejection of the idealised views of nature and emotion found in Romanticism. However, she also incorporated elements of both movements into

her writing, such as the Gothic aesthetic and a fascination with the supernatural and mystical. Overall, Carter's engagement with the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism was complex and multifaceted, as she drew both inspiration and criticism from these movements.

Carter draws on this emphasis on individualism in her novel *Nights at the Circus*, particularly in her portrayal of the character of Fevvers. Fevvers is a strong-willed and an independent woman who defies traditional gender roles and expectations. Her desire for freedom and autonomy is a central theme of the novel and reflects the Enlightenment's emphasis on individualism and self-determination. However, Carter also uses the supernatural elements in *Nights at the Circus* to challenge the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality and reason. The novel's central character, Fevvers, is a winged woman who is both a circus performer and a feminist icon. Her wings are a supernatural element that defies rational explanation and challenges the Enlightenment's emphasis on science and reason.

In contrast to the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and rationality, the Romantic movement emphasised emotion, intuition, and the individual imagination. Romantic writers often explored supernatural themes and used them to express their own emotional and psychological experiences. Carter draws on this tradition in *Nights at the Circus*, using supernatural elements to explore the themes of gender, sexuality, and power. Fevvers' wings are a symbol of her sexual power and independence. They allow her to defy gravity and traditional gender roles, and they represent her rejection of the limitations placed on women in society. The novel's use of the supernatural in this way reflects the Romantic emphasis on exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of individuals. While Morrison draws on this tradition in *Beloved*, using supernatural elements to explore the emotional and psychological trauma of Slavery. Beloved's presence in the novel is a manifestation of the characters' repressed emotions and traumatic experiences. Her ghostly presence represents the haunting legacy of Slavery and the psychological scars that it has left on African American individuals and communities. Morrison's use of the supernatural in this way reflects the Romantic emphasis on exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of individuals. Therefore, while Morrison did not experience these historical periods firsthand, she has certainly been influenced by them and drawn upon their legacies in her writing.

Toni Morrison's works often explore themes and motifs that were central to the period of Enlightenment and Romanticism, such as the importance of reason, individualism, and the role of the natural world in human life. In her novel *Beloved*, for example, Morrison addresses issues of personal freedom, the value of the community, and the connection between human beings and the natural world, all of which were concerns of Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers. Morrison stresses this emphasis on individualism in *Beloved*, particularly in her portrayal of the character of Sethe. Sethe is a strong-willed and independent woman who is determined to protect her children from the horrors of Slavery. Her desire for freedom and autonomy is a central theme of the novel and reflects the Enlightenment's emphasis on individualism and self-determination. However, Morrison also uses the supernatural elements in *Beloved* to challenge the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality and reason. The novel's titular character, Beloved, is a ghost who haunts Sethe and her family. Beloved's presence is mysterious and unexplainable, defying rational explanation. This supernatural element of the novel challenges the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationality and reason, suggesting that there are experiences and emotions that cannot be explained through scientific inquiry alone.

The Elizabethan era and the Shakespearian era also has some bearing on supernatural fiction. Drama was a popular genre in the Elizabethan era and scholars, literary critics and dramatists demonstrated a deep interest in Shakespeare whom they considered a model. In Germany, between 1797 and 1810, Schlege translated seventeen plays by Shakespeare. Ludang Tieck and Dorothea Tieck would complete the edition many years later. In addition, there were a considerable number of criticisms on Shakespeare: Alexander Pope, William Warburton, Samuel Johnson and Richard Farmer wrote critical prefaces to the newly published Shakespeare editions. Shakespeare's plays were popular and staged in England, France and Germany. They dealt with the inner and outer nature of man: the rational, irrational, emotional, passionate, burlesque, grotesque, terrific and the supernatural. While Voltaire, an enlightened philosopher and writer, made bitter comments about Shakespeare's works, Victor Hugo in "Preface de Cromwell" took pleasure and praised Shakespeare's style. Works like *Romeo and Julie* (1591), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Hamlet* (1601), *Macbeth* (1606), *Richard III* (1591) offer elements of the gothic tradition such as madness, magic and supernatural apparitions.

Shakespeare was an immense inspiration to Horace Walpole, the father of the gothic fiction. Walpole in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* referred to

Shakespeare as a "higher authority" (4). In so doing, Walpole openly expressed his gratitude to William Shakespeare whose works had been a source of inspiration to him. For instance, Walpole actually borrowed many of the themes treated in Shakespeare's drama such as ambition, maintenance of power and ghostly apparitions rising from a guilty mind. In addition, he applied the rules of drama in his prose piece. His purpose is structured into five parts which stands for introduction, raising action, climax, falling action and denouement. In fact, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* drew in terms of theme and style from William Shakespeare.

Readers were highly in need of cheap and sensational literature by the turn of the eighteenth century. Therefore, publishers encouraged authors to write fast and to give resonant titles to their works, the purpose of which was, according to Cuddon, to cause a "thrilling shudder of apprehension in the sturdiest breasts" (Cuddon 357). There were such titles as *The Anaconda* by Monk Lews, *The Monk of Horror or the Conclave of Corpses* (anonymous). A number of these books, written by women, were popular among female readers. However, owing to the "melodramatic and wildly over-written" (ibid) nature of these pieces, many have been ignored.

In all, many European countries in the 1830s were discontented with their political systems, and the result was a revolution. The French overthrew their king in 1830, and so, quickly inspired Italy, Germany and Belgium to fight for their rights, thus, the French Revolution spread abroad. To this effect, Europeans, engulfed in fear and terror, longed for a distraction; something they could find in literature. In this respect, the supernatural theme was being explored in their work using supernatural elements and mysterious settings and characters, to create an atmosphere of terror and suspense. Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolfo* is a classic example of this genre, featuring a young heroine who is trapped in a sinister castle and menaced ghosts.

The dissent that occurred during the French Revolution was not only violent, it also led to women questioning their role in society and to a debate on the nature of women. This debate can be seen in one of the most famous gothic novels, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. In her novel she engages in a discussion of women's nature by having a man with the power to create new life instead of the woman, and its consequences. Angela carter and Toni Morrison in their novels *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved* respectively, talks on the struggles women go through in the society and the cruel treatments they receive from the men. They use female supernatural characters to throw more light on the struggles these female characters go though in their society.

In conclusion, this first section has handled the historical, political and sociocultural aspects that led to the rise of the supernatural, which are the French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Enlightenment and Romanticism, the Shakespearean eras. The next section of this chapter will talk on the biographies of the authors under study, highlighting the aspects that influenced their writing of supernatural fiction in their texts.

The Authors, their Times, and Works

This section of this chapter will highlight the biographies of Angela Carter and Toni Morrison. This section also focuses on the authors' life experiences that influenced them to write these novels under study and states their various works.

Angela Olive Stalker now known as Angela Carter was born in Eastbound, Sussex, the daughter of Olive (Farthing) Stalker and Hugh Alexander Stalker, who was a journalist. During the war years, she was removed by her grandmother to South Yorkshire. After the war, she went to school in Balham, South London. She discovered her love for cinema and film during her constant trips to the Granada Cinema in Tooting with her father, which features strongly throughout her work. After rejoining her parents, she suffered from anorexia. In 1960, she married Paul Carter at the age of 20, and moved with him to Bristol. Before starting her English studies at the University of Bristol, Carter worked for the Croydon Advertiser and wrote features and record reviews. After graduating, Carter began her literary career.

At Bristol University, Carter became familiar with the French Symbolists and Dadaists, and with Shakespeare and medieval literature. Though Bristol was never named as the city in which *Shadow Dance*, *Several Perceptions*, and *Love* (1971) were set, they have been labelled collectively "The Bristol Trilogy." In 1970, having separated from her husband Carter went to live in Japan for two years. During this period, she worked at many different jobs, among others as a bar hostess, and wrote essays for New Society. The experience of a different culture had a strong influence on her work and also inspired her collection of semi-autobiographical short stories like *Fireworks* (1974) where the influence of Edgar Allen Poe's Gothic fiction is also evident. She was especially appalled by the old-fashioned gender roles. Carter wrote to the novelist Andrea Newman, and this intensified her feminism and influenced her to write *The Sadeian Woman* in 1979

Whilst in Japan, Carter first came across the work of the Marquis de Sade in a second-hand bookshop. Carter's work represents a successful combination of postmodern literary theories and feminist politics. She held the view that the biological differences between men and women are themselves influenced by ideas about gender. In *The Sadeian Woman,* Carter argued that "pornography reinforces the false universals of sexual archetypes because it denies, or doesn't have time for ... the social context in which sexual activity takes place, that modifies the very nature of that activity" (30).

In the late 1980s Carter's writings occupied a central position within debates about feminist pluralism and postmodernism. Carter dramatised in her novels how the old orders of the Western world were breaking down. "I am the pure product of an advanced, industrialised, post-imperialist country in decline," she wrote. Her interest in changing gender roles formed the basis for her novels; *Heroes and Villains* (1969), set in the post-holocaust world, and *The Passions of New Eve* (1977).

Although Carter was renowned for her novels, her concern with sexual politics was central to her novel *Nights at the Circus* (1984). It first begins in a gaslight-romance version of London, moves for a period to Siberia, and returns home. In the mid-1970s, Carter settled in South London and got married to Mark Pearce, with whom she has a son, Alexander Pearce. During the late 70s and early 80s, Carter taught at a number of universities, Carter was a teacher and a writer-in-residence at universities in America and Australia. For 20 years she was a major contributor to New Society, the current affairs and culture weekly, which is now part of the New Statesman. During the period 1976-78, Carter served as Arts Council fellow at Sheffield University, England. She was also a visiting professor of creative writing at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA, taught in Australia and at East Anglia University, UK, and held writing residences at Austin, Texas; Iowa City, Iowa, and Albany, New York in America. Her novel, *Nights at the Circus* (1984) won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and in 2012, was declared the best book to have ever been awarded that prize. Her last novel *Wise Children* (1991) brings together high and low culture with elements of music hall and Shakespeare.

She died of cancer on February 16, 1992, in London. She was a short story writer, novelist, journalist, dramatist and critic. *Burning Your Boats,* a collection of the author's short stories, came out in 1996 with an introduction by Rushdie. Interest in Carter’s works suddenly increased after

her death and she became one of the most wildly taught and researched writers of British fiction. Her writing occupies a unique place in the 20th century fiction, a place where myths around gender and sexuality are debunked and where not even the deepest darkest recesses of human imagination are off-limits.

Some of Carter's other works include *Shadow Dance*, (1966), *The Magic Toyshop*, (1967), *Heroes & Villains*, (1969), *The Donkey Prince*, (1970), *Miss Z, the Dark Young Lady*, (1970), *Love: A Novel*, (1971), *Translations of Charles Perrault's fairy tales* (1979), *Bloody Chamber* (1979), *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990). Three collections of her work were also published posthumously: *Burning Your Boats: The Complete Short Stories* (1995), *The Curious Room: Plays, Film Scripts and an Opera* (1996), and *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings* (1997).

Angela Carter is well known for her feminist-like oriented fairy tales. She held to the opinion that there are dark elements in the fairy tales that authors from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries tried to "fix" by adding moral tags and editing them into versions more suitable for children. However, according to Angela Carter these elements of darkness and magical content were not erased at all.

Night at the Circus is a feminist novel set at the beginning of the twentieth century, specifically 1899. Carter, nevertheless, makes clear that 1899 and 1980 are not two worlds apart. From the first page, we can see the elements of sexual hierarchy or gender construction. The scene is set in strange places, like a circus, a museum for feminine monsters, a prostitute house, or Siberia and the whole novel takes places at three different locations, Petersburg, the above-mentioned Siberia and London. This movement to various foreign places signifies the movement from the reality and heading towards fantasy. The two main characters Lizzie and Fevvers, represent in the novel agents of feminism. The novel pursues to resolve the pressure that is in a difficult relationship between postmodernism and Marxist feminism. Angela Carter was influenced by many aspects to write on supernatural fiction, some of which are listed below

folklore and fairy tales had a significant influence on Angela Carter's exploration of supernatural fiction. Carter drew inspiration from these traditional storytelling forms, reimagining and subverting their narratives to create her own unique brand of supernatural fiction. Folklore and fairy tales often feature archetypal characters like witches, fairies, and monsters. Carter drew upon

these archetypes, transforming them into complex and multi-dimensional characters in her own works. By reimagining and subverting these traditional character types, she challenged and expanded the representation of women and other marginalised groups in literature.

Feminism and the exploration of gender roles had a profound influence on Angela Carter's approach to supernatural fiction. Her engagement with feminist ideas and the desire to challenge traditional gender norms shaped the themes, characters, and narratives in her work. Carter sought to subvert traditional gender stereotypes prevalent in literature and society. In her supernatural fiction, she created female characters that defied expectations and broke free from restrictive gender roles. By challenging and overturning these stereotypes, Carter offered alternative visions of femininity and explored the complexities of female identity. Carter's supernatural fiction often delved into themes of sexuality, desire, and sexual liberation. She approached these topics through a feminist lens, challenging societal taboos and questioning traditional notions of female sexuality. The supernatural provided a metaphorical and imaginative space for exploring these themes, allowing her to push boundaries and challenge repressive norms.

The cultural and historical context in which Angela Carter lived greatly influenced her engagement with and writing about supernatural fiction. Carter emerged as a writer during the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which challenged traditional values and norms. These movements, including the feminist movement and the sexual revolution, influenced Carter's exploration of supernatural fiction. She used the supernatural to challenge and subvert societal expectations, particularly regarding gender and sexuality. Carter's writing career also coincided with the rise of postmodernism, a literary and cultural movement that questioned the idea of fixed truths and embraced experimentation and intertextuality. The postmodernist influenced Carter's approach to supernatural fiction, allowing her to blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy, disrupt linear narratives, and engage with the multiplicity of perspectives and truths. The feminist movement had a profound impact on Carter's work. She was influenced by feminist ideas and sought to challenge patriarchal structures and gender inequalities in her writing. The supernatural provided her with a means to explore women's experiences, desire, and agency, highlighting the ways in which women navigate and resist societal expectations. The cultural and historical context of Carter's time saw a revival of interest in mythology and folklore, particularly in the context of feminism and the exploration of women's stories and experiences. Carter drew upon this revival, incorporating elements of mythology and folklore into her supernatural fiction.

She reimagined traditional tales and myths, infusing them with contemporary feminist perspectives. This next section of the chapter will focus on the biography of Toni Morrison and her life experiences that influenced writing and made her interested in writing about supernatural fiction.

Toni Morrison originally named Chloe Ardelia Wofford, was born on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio in the United States. Toni Morrison was the second of four children of Ramah and George Wofford who belonged to a working-class family.

Her father was from Georgia and her mother was from Alabama. George Wofford was a ship welder who spent his entire life working in order to support and to ensure the financial security of his family. Morrison describes her father as having a deep and unwavering suspicion of white people as result of witnessing many injustices due to how his father, Solomon John Willis, inherited eight-eight acres of land from his mother and lost it to unscrupulous white men who later turned him into a sharecropper. This made Morrison's father an extremist, as he considered every white man a monster. Ron David in his article "Toni Morrison Explained: A Reader's Road Map to the Novel", recounts an event whereby a white man was thrown down the stairs by Morrison's father as he suspected the white man was chasing Morrison and her elder sister. Morrison narrates this part of her family history in *Song of Solomon* (1977). Morrison's father and mother came from Georgia and Alabama respectively – two states known as slave states and quite famous for lynching and the use of iron collars and iron bits on slaves. Morrison's father actually witnessed three lynchings in Georgia before he left to settle in Ohio Carmen Gillespie in the article; "Toni Morrison: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work 4" affirms that, "The family's move may also have been motivated by three lynchings of African-American men that occurred in the town. Witnessing these injustices may have left a lifelong impression on George Wofford" (2). It is therefore possible that Morrison might have been informed of the acts of cruelty and violence suffered by her grandparents and father, which might have prompted her to write about it in some of her works such as *Beloved*.

In her works, Toni Morrison often employs supernatural elements to explore the traumatic effects of Slavery on the African American psyche. She uses these elements to depict the ways in which the past continues to haunt the present and how African Americans are still affected by the

legacy of Slavery. In her novel *Beloved*, she uses the ghost of Beloved to explore the psychological trauma of Slavery and its impact on the lives of African Americans.

Furthermore, Morrison's use of supernatural elements can be seen as a way of reclaiming African American history and culture. African Americans have a rich history and culture that was often erased or distorted by the dominant culture. By using supernatural elements, Morrison is able to draw on the African American cultural tradition of storytelling and folklore to create works that reflect the experiences of African Americans.

The stigma of Slavery made every minority group to think that they have an upper hand on the African American. The frustration Morrison felt as a black person will be a theme in most of her creative works in which she unveils the plight of the African-Americans in America. However, unlike her father, her judgement of whites would not be biased. Her father hated all whites and had no hope of change in them. Her mother, on the other hand, had a different view. She had hoped for the white race and believed that someday, the whites' attitude might change. Morrison sides with her mother, and as such, creates in her works a balanced or realistic world in which all whites are not presented as monsters and all blacks as heroes. For example, Sethe in *Beloved* is both loved and let down by the black and white communities.

In early ages, Morrison began to work in different jobs seeking to help her family and to improve their needs. Nevertheless, Morrison continued to be successful in her school career. In 1949 and after her graduation with honour degree from Lorain High School, Morrison attended different universities such as Howard University in Washington, D.C. as the first member of her family who entered college. Morrison was an excellent student in her major in Howard where she encountered racially segregated buses and restaurants. She completed her Bachelor's Degree in 1953. She preferred to change her first name to Anthony (Toni) due to the difficulty in pronouncing her name. In addition, Morrison was a member of Howard Repertory Theatre. After her graduation from Howard University in 1953, Morrison held on graduate studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1955, she finished her Master's Thesis on the works of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner; *Virginia Woolf's and William Faulkner's Treatment of the Alienated,* which addresses the issues of suicide in both modernist writers.

She became a teacher and was employed as an English instructor at Texas Southern University and later at Howard University, where she met her future husband the Jamaican

architect Harold, which ended shortly after leaving her with the responsibility of bringing up their two children Herold Ford and Kevin Slade. The task of bringing her children up was not an easy one for Morrison, which in some of her works, she presents female characters who go through the hardship of life with hardly any help from a man.

In 1967, Morrison promoted to be the first African American woman to hold the position of senior editor at Random House, where she was responsible on the writing careers of a generation of young African American writers, including Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Dumas, Michelle Cliff, and Angela Davis.

The emergence of The Civil Rights Movement in the mid 1950s-1960s was a kind of motivation that led Morrison writes and expresses her thoughts and feeling of experiencing racism through her words. She wrote for her community as any black citizens who suffered from segregation and discrimination.

The Civil Rights Movement also influenced Toni Morrison's supernatural work, such as *Beloved*, albeit in different ways than her other works. The Civil Rights Movement provided the historical context for Morrison's exploration of the trauma of Slavery and its aftermath, by inspiring her use of magic realism to challenge dominant narratives, and by providing the cultural and historical context for her use of African American folklore and mythology. Morrison's supernatural works are a testament to the power of literature to explore the complexities of history and culture and to challenge dominant narratives that have historically marginalised African Americans as it was a time of great upheaval and trauma for African Americans, the movement was a long and ongoing struggle for racial equality and social justice for African Americans that continues to this day.

One way that the Civil Rights Movement influenced Morrison's supernatural works were in her exploration of the trauma of Slavery and its aftermath. *Beloved*, for instance, is a novel that deals with the haunting legacy of Slavery, as the ghost of her daughter who died as an infant haunts the main character, Sethe. The novel explores the psychological toll of Slavery and the ways in which it continues to shape the lives of African Americans even after emancipation. Another way that the Civil Rights Movement influenced Morrison's supernatural works were in her use of magic realism. Magic realism is a literary technique that incorporates supernatural or magical elements into otherwise realistic stories. Morrison uses magic realism to explore the ways in which African

American culture and history are infused with a sense of the supernatural. Her use of magic realism is a way of acknowledging the complexity and richness of African American culture and history, and it is a way of challenging the dominant narratives that have historically marginalised African Americans.

In 1970, Toni Morrison published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, which was regarded as the entry of life of a skilful future well-known novelist. Morrison got many conflicted critics but failed to attract the readers nevertheless she got inspired to write more. This marked her first beginning as an author.

In 1971, Morrison began her teaching career while she was an editor in Random House. She was an associate professor of English who taught literature and creative writing at the State University of New York at Purchase. Morrison continued her successful emergence as a writer with the publication of her second novel, *Sula*, in 1973. This novel portrays the way Afro-American women battle against their own communities as well as white communities.

In 1976, Morrison offered a visiting at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, meanwhile she was producing her third novel *Song of Solomon*, which was published in 1977.This novel is an empowering piece of writing which based on African-American folktale because Morrison was inspired by her maternal grandfather John Solomon Willis's stories. The Woffords were great storytellers as well as believers in spiritual or mystical ways of knowing. In an interview with Terry Gross, Morrison states that grown-ups told horrible stories about ghosts in which "people's heads got chopped off and so on" and she emphasises that it is a common thing in the family. To this effect, Morrison's believe in mystical occurrences and folk tales will influence her greatly, such that the importance of African-American history and culture as well as the horrors of Slavery will be manifested in her writing.

By 1968, Morrison became the senior editor for trade publications at Random House in New York City. She had left her job as a teacher at Howard for lack of the Ph.D. required for tenure. In her capacity as senior editor in fiction department of Random House, she brought black literature into the mainstream. She worked on the groundbreaking *Contemporary African Literature* (1972), a collection that included works by Nigerian writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinue Achebe and the South African Athol Fugard. She discovered and promoted a new generation of African-American writers like Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis and Gayl Jones.

In 1980, the President Jimmy Carter hired Toni Morrison at the National Council of the Arts. Moreover, Toni Morrison continued lightening up and in 1981, she published her fourth novel, *Tar Baby*. In *Tar Baby* Morrison explores the quest of self-identity of the protagonist Jadine Childs. In *Tar Baby*, Morrison changes location from the geographical boundaries of the United States to the larger context of the Caribbean and Europe. In 1983 and after almost twenty years, Morrison decided to leave Random House where she worked as a senior editor in order to spend her time in writing and teaching. In the same year 1983, she published her only short story *Recitatif*. Morrison was named the Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at the State University of New York in Albany in 1984. She started writing her first play, "*Dreaming Emmett*." Which first performance opened on January 4, 1986, at the Marketplace Theater in Albany.

After all this incredible time, Morrison turned into history and she began to work on her fifth novel named *Beloved*, our point of focus and the most celebrated one, that was published in 1987. *Beloved* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988, and is known as one of Toni Morrison's most famous and critically acclaimed works. The 1980s was referred to as the "me decade", a period known in America as the era of consolidation, which began in the 70s after the Vietnam War. The condition African American found themselves during this period was deplorable. They suffered from poverty and racism. In "The Daily Mining Gazette", Chris Jaehnig states that blacks suffered unfair housing system, poor public transportation and the level of unemployment increased so that many blacks were forced to involve themselves in drugs in order to make ends meet (4). John Reid in "Opul Bull" asserts that infant mortality rate among African Americans doubled that of whites. Also, divorce and separation rose faster for blacks because of their socioeconomic disadvantages (20). Femi Lewis affirms that in May 1980, a riot erupted in Florida after police officers were acquitted of the murder of an unarmed African American (4). In all, although Slavery was abolished, the African Americans are yet to have their complete freedom. Morrison also wrote other novels like *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), *Love* (2002), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2011), and *God Help the Child* (2014).

The icon of African American literature Toni Morrison died at the age of 88 on August 5, 2019, after a brief illness. Her publisher Alfred A. Knopf announced her death on 6th August. She died at Montefiore Medical Center. Knopf in the announcement of her death used a quote from Morrison that said, "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may the

measure of our lives". Toni Morrison was also influenced by some factors to write about supernatural fiction in her text under study.

Morrison's African American heritage provided her with a deep appreciation for the oral storytelling traditions that are prevalent in many African cultures. These traditions often involve the inclusion of supernatural elements, such as spirits, mythical creatures, and ancestral connections. Morrison drew inspiration from these cultural roots, infusing her work with a sense of magic and mysticism. The vibrant tapestry of African folklore and mythology played a significant role in Morrison's literary imagination. She drew upon the rich array of African tales, legends, and spiritual beliefs, incorporating elements of these traditions into her narratives. By weaving African folklore into her stories, Morrison celebrated and preserved the cultural heritage of the African diaspora. Morrison's use of supernatural elements served as a metaphorical language through which she addressed historical and social issues. The inclusion of supernatural occurrences and entities allowed her to explore complex themes such as trauma, oppression, and the resilience of the African American community. These elements added layers of symbolism and allegory to her narratives, enhancing their emotional and thematic depth.

Morrison's engagement with the gothic tradition in literature, which often includes elements of the supernatural, had a notable impact on her work. Authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Bram Stoker, who employed gothic motifs and supernatural elements in their writing, influenced Morrison's understanding of how the supernatural can be effectively employed to convey deeper psychological and emotional truths. Morrison was also influenced by the works of authors associated with the magic realism movement, such as Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende. These writers seamlessly blended the ordinary with the extraordinary, incorporating supernatural elements into their narratives in a way that felt natural and integral to the story. This exposure to magic realism expanded Morrison's understanding of how the supernatural can serve as a compelling tool for exploring complex human experiences.

By engaging with the works of other writers, Toni Morrison gained insights into the ways in which the supernatural can be employed to enhance storytelling and delve into the depths of the human experience. This exposure broadened her creative horizons and provided her with the tools and inspiration to incorporate supernatural elements into her own narratives, shaping her interest in exploring supernatural fiction.

From the biographies of the authors, it is evident that their backgrounds established the context of production of the texts under study. These authors' lives reveals closeness to their societies and supernatural fiction which invariably influenced their artistic visions. Angela Carter gives a supernatural form to the characters in a bid to expose the different supernatural traits. Toni Morrison's projection of the character Beloved in her novel *Beloved* has affinities with the supernatural phenomenon witnessed in many West African societies, as well as the "ghost story" which is typical of the Gothic tradition.

Both authors are inspired by horror and the supernatural thanks to the stories they were told while growing and the books they had read. This chapter has probed into the origins and developments of supernatural fiction. It has also highlighted the live experiences of Angela carter and Toni Morrison that have exposed them to horror and the belief in supernatural fiction. Chapter Three will discuss the plight of the characters (gender discrimination and Slavery) in the novels under study.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE: GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND SLAVERY

According to The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, plight refers to a difficult and sad situation. This chapter focuses on the difficult and sad situations of the characters in *Nights at the Circus* and in *Beloved* go through. In *Nights at the Circus*, the women suffer a lot in the hands of the patriarchal male characters. The plight in *Beloved* is mostly in relation to the experience of Slavery. This chapter demonstrates that women, by their gender, and the slaves, by their race, go through many difficult and sad situations. We shall begin by looking at the fate of women in *Nights at the Circus*, followed by the angst of Slavery in *Beloved*.

Gender Discrimination in *Nights at the Circus*

Gender, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, is defined as the male sex or the female sex, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones, or one of a range of other identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female. While Discrimination, according to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* is defined as treating people or a particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their race, gender, sexuality.

Gender discrimination therefore, according to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, is defined as a situation in which someone is treated badly because of their sex, usually when a woman is treated worse than a man. Most societies are male-dominated where a woman is only supposed to be a mother, an ideal wife and a homemaker with multifarious roles attributed to her in the family. As a wife and mother, her service of sacrifice, tolerance and submissiveness are her required attributes. Furthermore, her admired qualities of adjustments make

her life faithful and obedient. However, this individual self of a woman has very little recognition in the patriarchal society and it leads to her self-effacement. Women form an inseparable part of human race, which not only acts in the vital process of nurturing the future generations of humanity, but also play very important roles in every lifestyle. In spite of playing very significant roles within as well as outside their homes, they are always regarded as "the weaker sex" who is inferior to their male counterparts. In every part of the world, women at times face a common problem that is of gender discrimination. No matter what their culture or background will be, they all are commonly referred to as "weak" and secondary to their male counterparts. In this dissertation, the researcher will make sincere efforts to explore this pain of gender discrimination, which is suffered by women across the globe. In numerous cases, a woman, irrespective of her race, religion or region, suffers the same pain of being discriminated.

Angela Carter's most ambitious novel, *Night at the Circus*, has received a lot of critical attention, the majority of it is feminist. This is hardly surprising considering that the novel features as its principal protagonist a woman with wings ushering in the twentieth century. Fevvers has all the features of the new era about to take off. Fevvers' ability to fly prefigures the new liberated woman of the twentieth century that just now is waiting in the wings, the new age in which no woman will be bound to the ground. Carter has set the novel in 1899, the year the British Parliament was debating a motion on the vote for women, a fact alluded into the novel. While many of the feminist interpreters of the book have focused on the narrative, most have allowed their allegiance to the women's movement to simplify Carter's complex and ambivalent handling of emancipated female subjectivity. This is a complex and multifaceted story told with irony. Thinking critically about the assumptions on which our lives are based, taking real and figurative journey of self-discovery, questioning patriarchal values and notions of commodity culture and determining who defines identity are just a few of its themes. The novel starts with one of many references to the legend of Helen of Troy, who is the first female figure revisited by Fevvers:

> *they could just as well have called me 'Helen of the High Wire,' due to the unusual circumstances in which I come ashore – for I never docked via what you might call the normal channels, sir, oh, dear me, no; but, just like Helen of Troy, was hatched" who "took after putative father, the swan, around the shoulder parts, she tells Walser. (1)*

As her argument goes, she, just like Helen of Troy, is not born but hatched and as a proof of that, she claims not to have a navel. Like Helen, for whom "a thousand ships were launched," Fevvers,

too, is an object of desire. This new, demythologised Helen, however, is not a breathtaking beauty. On the contrary, Fevvers, does not have "womanly" manners and female facial traits. Her voice is "raucous" (8); her gestures are "grand, vulgar" (9); her handshake is "strong, firm, masculine" (40).

Though Fevvers is the most important and most explored freak in the novel, Carter also presents other characters that are monsters or that are like them that go through gender discrimination and are used for the pleasure of men in the text. Among the freaks in Schreck's museum is Albert/Albertina, "who was bipartite, that is to say, half-and-half and neither of either" (59). The character is not much explored, but his/her name suggests that "s/he" shares two genders, a process of fusion. After the museum closes, Albert/Albertina can adapt to society as a ladies' maid, though s/he claims "s/he is much confined by female garments all the time" (86), indicating that she could work, but without full acceptance of her difference. Albert/Albertina is portrayed as a hermaphrodite or intersex person. The problems s/he faces stems from the society's rigid gender norms and expectations. His/her ambiguous gender identity challenges the binary understanding of male and female, which makes him/her a target for objectification, ridicule and exploration. S/he becomes a spectacle, a curiosity to be observed and judged by others.

Fanny, "where she should have had nipples, she had eyes" (69). Fanny is also created through a process of fusion, and Shildrick notes that the use of orifices or other parts that are related to the insides add grotesque aspects to a monster. Fanny's body may serve as a reversal of the male gaze, since breasts are often a point of focus. During Fanny's presentation, Madame Schreck demands, "Look at him, Fanny" (69) and after the character removes her blindfold, Schreck demands again, "I said, *look* at him, Fanny", which makes her reveal her breasts. In this scene, the observed object becomes that which observes. In the end, Fanny opens an orphanage to take care of "children of operatives killed in accidents on the looms" (86). She can participate in society and resolve one of the problems she faces as a freak: she did not want to be a mother because it was not possible to feed a baby with "salt tears" (69).

Cobwebs was named after the objects that covered her face. The character is also created through a process of fusion, and the association with cobwebs also contributes to her impurity. Walser, for instance, feels both revulsion and enchantment from merely thinking about her name, this paradoxical reaction being an effect caused by monsters, as Carroll explains. Fevvers describes

cobwebs as very silent and melancholic, and this seems not to have changed after she left the museum. But Cobwebs became a painter, and "though she had not come out of the shadows, all the same, she had made the shadows work for her" (86). Cobwebs remains a melancholic figure, but she is still able to create and live by her own means.

The Sleeping Beauty is not necessarily a monster, but she became a freak because of her unusual behaviour. After her period started, she progressively slept for more and more time, to the point that, when Fevvers met her, she would wake up only for a few minutes each day to eat. But if the character was not a monster due to bodily difference, she may well be one by association. Fevvers refers to her as a "living corpse," a fusion between the realms of the living and of the dead, the same that creates monsters like zombies. The way Fevvers describes Beauty at the museum points to death: "The Sleeping Beauty lay stark naked on a marble slab and I stood at her head, full spread. I am the tombstone angel, I am the Angel of Death" (70). Though customers could not have sex with the Sleeping Beauty, for "Madame Schreck loth to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs," (41) they could experience another temporary transgression, that of lying down beside a corpse. The Beauty's ending completely removes her from society. She remains with Fevvers, but each day she spends less time awake and Fevvers describes her awakenings as interruptions, for "her marvellous fate – a sleep more lifelike than the living, a dream which consumes the world" (86). Even though she is completely removed from the "real world", her exclusion is not a negative one. The Sleeping Beauty's fate is reminiscent of some western traditions, as the one found in Christianity that prioritises metaphysics over the body.

The Wonder is described as "diminutive" in size, and she seems smaller than a dwarf. When the character was a baby, "she [her mother] cradled me in half a walnut shell, covered me with a rose petal, packed my layette in a hazel nut and carried me off to London town where she exhibited herself for a shilling a time as 'The Fairy's Nursemaid', while I clung to her bosom like a burr" (65). The Wonder's size as an adult is not described, though her small size as a baby may indicate that she continued to be extremely small. The Wonder spent most of her life being exhibited as a freak, though as a child she was adopted by a family that treated her well. But being treated well did not make the Wonder happy, as she was aware of the irreducible difference between her and her family of "normal" size:

> *I turned, first fire, then ice, in our box as the scenes unfolded before me, for, dearly as I loved my family, there was always that unalterable difference between us. Not*

> *so much the clumsiness of their limbs, their lumpish movements, oppressed me; nor even the thunder of their voices, as never in all my life had I gone to bed without a headache. No. I had known all these things from birth and grown accustomed to the monstrous ugliness of mankind. Indeed, my life in that kind house could almost have made me forgive some, at least, of the beasts for their beastliness. (67)*

The Wonder recognizes the difference between her and her family, but there is an inversion of the discourse of what is considered normal. For her, humans are monsters and beasts, and she dreams "of a world in miniature, a small, perfect, heavenly place such as you might see reflected in the eye of a wise bird" (68). This inversion puts the Wonder at the centre of discourse, allowing her to have a voice. But throughout the novel, characters receive attention in other ways.

In the novel, characters who are different initially do not have many choices to survive in society beyond presenting themselves in places like freak shows and circuses. A great deal of the freaks reports the marginalisation and the irreducible difference they feel towards the British, but almost all individual stories have positive endings. Some freaks, for instance, find happiness in what was abandoned by society, such as Fanny, who opens an orphanage, while others learn to live with their personal problems, like Cobwebs, who expresses her melancholy through art. In most cases, the novel suggests there is a possibility of survival for these characters beyond being exhibited as freaks.

Following Ma Nelson's sudden death caused by an accident, her religious brother inherits the house and gives the women one day of notice to leave. Since Ma Nelson was prescient enough to make sure all of her girls are prepared for the future, they are not left on the street with nowhere to go. Rather, they all have their plans to start a new life of their own. Leaving their past behind, they burn the brothel down, and go their separate ways looking for opportunities either in business or schools or even marriage, even if it means the dispersal of the sisterhood they once had. But only after the prostitutes open the curtains for the first time since ever, do they realise "the luxury of that place had been nothing but an illusion" (*Nights* 54). They realise it has been that very sisterhood and solidarity among them, also the motherly presence of Ma Nelson that has kept the place running for them like a little community, almost entirely cut off from the brutality of the outside world.

Only after Fevvers is out in the world where she needs to earn money, does the novel begin to foreground women's exposure to the male gaze: first, in the Museum of Women Monsters run

by Madame Schreck, and, later at the circus where Fevvers narrates her life story. After burning the house down, Lizzie and Fevvers head to Battersea to stay with Lizzie's sister; however, things take a turn for the worse, leaving them financially destabilised with all the money they saved up back in the brothel gone. At that time, Fevvers is visited by a Madame Schreck, who proposes Fevvers a position in her Museum of Women Monsters, which Fevvers has to take against Lizzie's protests. Fevvers makes a striking comparison between Nelson's brothel and Madame Schreck's museum as follows: "Nelson's Academy accommodated those who were perturbed in their bodies and wished to verify that, however equivocal, however much they cost, the pleasures of the flesh were, at bottom, splendid. But as for Madame Schreck, she catered for those who were troubled in their... souls" (63). The museum was a house for wealthy men to satisfy their "perversions" by gazing at and/or having sex with a variety of women with strange physical oddities such as "Dear old Fanny the four eyed, the sleeping Beauty, and the Wiltshire Wonder, who was not three-foot-high, and Albert/Albertina, who was bipartite" (66). Every night, the girls are made to stand in stone niches covered with curtains so that what is inside can at once begin to excite the customers. In this museum, women "monsters" are displayed as objects.

They are dehumanised and treated as commodities for the pleasure of some perverted rich men. According to Magali Cornier Michael in "Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, an Engaged Feminism via Subversive Postmodern Strategies", Carter's novel makes a distinction between pornography and desire specifically through the account of the museum of women monsters, which reinforces the notion that pornography is a representation of male domination:

> *The male engages in sexual actions without the female in this pornographic situation and thus remains in control; she serves merely as a visual stimulus. The novel's depiction of pornography as a staged representation of sexuality rather than as sexuality itself supports Marie Françoise Hans and Gilles Lapouge's view of pornography as a "sexual spectacle, its reproduction or its representation, the discourse on sexuality and not sexuality". (510)*

In line, women are depicted merely as objects and images and they are coded for erotic impact that connotes "to-be-looked-at-ness," where the man enjoys the spectacle, what he sees, as the bearer and holder of the voyeuristic gaze. Therefore, male domination is seen in the individual stories of the women in the museum. For instance, Wiltshire Wonder, who is a less than three feet tall, dwarfish but "perfectly formed" (72) woman is passed around from one dwarf to another for

months because they are "brothers" and for they believe in "sharing," an idea which reduces Wonder to the state of a commodity. Wonder, like other women monsters in the museum, has a symbolic deformity. These women's abnormal looks seem to symbolise various patriarchal constructions of femininity. In addition to commodification as well as infantilisation, as in the case of Wonder, women monsters symbolise women's entrapment in the notion of motherhood as well as their silencing. For example, Fanny, the Four-Eyes, who is endowed with another pair of eyes where her nipples should be, believes she cannot feed a baby her salty tears, even though she yearns for one.

The women in the text are considered weak and objects to be used by the men whichever way they choose, in this case, there are two instances in the novel where Fevvers faces the threat of rape and murder and manages to escape narrowly. These instances, where Fevvers succeeds in running away with the help of her magical wings may serve to remind the reader of the violence in real life that women are exposed to, and can hardly escape from. Madame Schreck sells Fevvers to a rich man named Rosencreutz, who wants to sacrifice her, imagining that she is Azrael, the Angel of Death. His intention is to gain immortality. However, Fevvers fights him using the sword that Ma Nelson once gave her. The sword she carries with her all the time matches his phallic power, which, the novel underlines, does not mean his penis but something "more aggressive than his other weapon, poor thing, that bobbed about uncharged, unprimed, unsharpened" (*Nights* 95). To run away, Fevvers uses her wings and flies away from the grip of Rosencreutz. Her use of wings, "a weapon not phallic in nature," is obviously not a solution that every woman can relate to or apply; yet, this imagery here is suggestive of "the liberating quality of strategies of empowerment that are not phallic and violent" (Michael 513).

The second instance where Fevvers again almost "falls victim" to a man takes place in Siberia, where a Russian Grand Duke tries to make her a part of his collection of exotic toys. "'You must know. I am a great collector of all kinds of objets d'art and marvels. Of all things, I love best toys—marvellous and unnatural artefacts'" (*Nights* 220). This time, however, when faced with the Duke attempting to rape her, Fevvers cannot make her way out with her sword since the Duke breaks it. She distracts the Duke by masturbating him and running away at the moment he ejaculates. According to Michael, The novel does not jettison the conventions of realism, even if it does push towards the postmodern, since it ultimately grounds seemingly extraordinary incidents - such as her narrow escapes from the wealthy gentleman and the Russian grand duke - in the daily

victimisation of women and thus challenges accepted notions of women as naturally and inevitably passive objects. (502)

The novel's most explicit engagement with Foucault's notion of the Panopticon takes place through the story of an all-female Panopticon in which everyone, including Countess P., who runs the prison, the prisoners and guards, is a woman. This private Siberian asylum of women is managed by the Countess, who, "successfully" poisoned her husband and somehow "got away with it," (246) and thinks that other women who had committed similar crimes "with less success" should repent for their crimes. Ironically, "it was a sense of sisterhood that moved her" (246) to create "a machine designed to promote penitence" (248) for "charitable" reasons. From various Russian cities, she selects women found guilty of killing their husbands and makes them build the place.

> *It was a Panopticon she forced them to build, a hallow circle of cells shaped like a doughnut, the inward-facing wall of which was composed of grids of steel and, in the middle of the roofed, central courtyard, there was a round room surrounded by windows. In that room she'd sit all day and stare and stare at her murderesses and they, in turn, sat all day and stared at her. (Nights 247)*

The description of the doughnut-shaped prison of "the Countess' scientific establishment for the study of female criminals" (247), echoes that of Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, who highlights that, setting a central tower from which a permanent gaze has a controlling force makes it possible to hold the prisoner under constant visibility and surveillance (Foucault 248). Each of the inmates is fully visible to the Countess in the middle while they are invisible to one another. The paradox here is the fact that even though the Countess is there to guard the women, she is inevitably imprisoned by their gaze in return: "the price she paid for her hypothetical proxy repentance was her own incarceration, trapped as securely in her watchtower by the exercise of her power as its objects were in cells" (251). This seems to suggest that those women who internalise a patriarchal world view and as a consequence fail to stand by other women and entrapped and harm themselves, too.

As Joanne Gass argues in her article "Panopticism in *Nights at the Circus"*, although the textual space given to this all-female Panopticon in the novel is small, it is a dominant image and its treatment is in keeping with ways in which Fevvers acts because she functions as "the

instrument of destruction of panopticons" (Gass 57) throughout the novel. As discussed early on, Foucault defines the Panopticon as a method of discipline in which the corporeal punishment based on spectacle is replaced with one that targets to reform the "soul" with surveillance and self-discipline. Although Carter builds her Panopticon in the novel on the basis of Foucault's conceptualisation of it, there are also very remarkable differences between them. First of all, whereas Foucault disregards women in his discussion of the Panopticon as a disciplinary system, Carter builds hers entirely on women to point to the conditions of women in general in a patriarchal society. Toye Margaret in "Eating their way out of Patriachy: Consuming the female Panopticon in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*" states: "This female Panopticon reflects the conditions of the modern nuclear family, which cuts women off from one another, places them in different 'cells' and makes them work against each other. It requires their participation ... in order to function" (Toye 485). In other words, both the Countess's Panopticon and M. Schreck's museum function only because those in charge of these institutions, Schreck and Countess P. Despite being women, participate in the punishment of other women, and, therefore, contribute to the functioning of the patriarchal society. The Countess can be taken as an anonymous figure who stands for a specific type of woman; in other words, this is a critique of not one particular person but all women who hold on to power against other women and who control them (Toye 487-8). Just as Susan Bordo argues, patriarchy requires the participation of not only men but also women who participate in reproducing cultural norms and are awarded for doing so. As a consequence, the gaze is, although patriarchal, not necessarily male. Therefore, Carter's novel, too, suggests that patriarchy cannot function without the willing participation of women.

Unlike Foucault's envisioning of the Panopticon, in which the inmates having served his/her time are released, none of the women in the asylum's history has been released since letting go, according to the Countess, these women require their "repentance". Yet, the inmates feel no responsibility nor remorse, for they view their "crimes" as a freedom from the "tyranny of their husbands whose cruel act is justified and legitimised by the state ... each inmate is the victim of an observing and defining authority both inside and outside the prison, and it is this model of observation that controls the novel" (Gass 72). Whereas Foucault conceptualises the Panopticon as a disciplinary mode of power succeeding in reforming the souls of the inmates, Carter's Panopticon fails to discipline the women inmates' souls in that women prisoners find their way out eventually. This idea is in parallel with Fevvers's rejection of herself to be disciplined in

Foucauldian terms, even though she serves her body for the pleasure of the male gaze. Therefore, the women in the Panopticon, too, save their souls" by not accepting to repent for their "crimes" of killing their abusive husbands.

This section of the work analysed the difficult situations highlighted in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, which in this case, is gender discrimination. Angela Carter, through her female characters, portrays the issues these female characters faced due to their gender. The next section will highlight the effect of Slavery on the characters of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Slavery in *Beloved*

This next section deals with the dehumanising acts carried out on slaves by their masters. Morrison, through her ex-slave characters in her novel *Beloved*, presents the horror of Slavery and how their past as slaves still affects them.

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Slavery refers to a condition where individuals are owned by others, the owner called master owns them as a property and control them, however, they want. Generally, the term Slavery can be defined as a condition in which one human being is owned by another. This statement is supported by the Slavery Convention of 1926 which stated that, Slavery, means the status or condition of a person over whose any, or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised, and slave means a person in such condition or status. A slave is classed as property and is forced to work hard labour. They are considered as nothing more than just a possession of their owner (master) thus, they are treated based on the attitudes of their masters. However, most of them are treated by coercion and are stripped from their own identity as human beings. In addition, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998 define 'Enslavement' as the exercise of any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership over a person and includes the exercise of such power in the course of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children. Based on the statements mentioned above, Slavery by all means is an act of owning people as a property by law which resulted in revoking their rights as a human being.

In America, there has been a long history of Slavery starting from the arrival of the slaves from the African continent, until the struggle to gain independence. According to Willie Lee Rose in *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America*, slaves were first brought from the African Continent to Virginia, America in the Spanish West Indies by a Dutch privateer. The African

captives were brutally uprooted from their homes and forced to endure an inhuman voyage at sea. Half of the captives had died during the horrific journey to America. According to Paul E. Lovejoy in *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*,

> *Slavery was one form of exploitation. Its special characteristics included the area that slaves were property; that they were outsiders who were alien by origin or who had been denied their heritage through judicial or other sanctions; that coercion could be used at will; that their labour power was at the complete disposal of a master; that they did not have the right to their own sexuality and, by extension, to their own reproductive capacities; and that the slave status was inherited unless provision was made to ameliorate that status". (1)*

Slavery had a central position in the American society and economy during the 250 years from the arrival of the first African slaves to America until the Civil War ended in 1865. A system of forced labour is intimately associated with large-scale farming on plantations. To be able to increase production, plantation owners went from indentured servants from Europe to slaves shipped from Africa with the help from the Royal African Company. These slaves were more expensive but one of the advantages was that the slaves and their offspring became slaves for life (Ferro 137).

The trafficking of human beings across the Atlantic was forbidden in 1808, but by then approximately 600 000 Africans had been shipped to America. The number of born slaves was far more than those who died by the time the slave traffic was banned. One of the consequences of this ban was a spectacular rise of trading with slaves between the southern regions of the United States. Either the slaves followed their owners or they were sold to other plantation owners. Other aspects that made the situation for slaves unique in the United States compared to other countries that also imported slaves from Africa were better living conditions, a healthier diet, lack of certain diseases and the number of women was higher. By the time the United States of America became independent 80 percent of the slaves were born in North America.

The burden was hard on both women and men during Slavery to that extent that they could not make their own decisions or be in charge of their own lives. In addition to the burdens suffered by both men and women, the women were often victims of sexual oppression as well. The slave

owners demanded access to their bodies and they often became the object of brutal and perverse desires and black women were powerless more so than the men even though they too were kept in captivity. A slave's life was based on the idea of them being valuable economic units and not so many human beings, which shaped their image of themselves as less valuable in a human sense. Each slave endures damages on both their physical as well as psychological well-being.

Even if slave families remained a social unit in the aspect that they shared a home and sometimes were encouraged by the slave owners to enter marriages, historians have also found evidence that this too was a way of institutionalising Slavery. Women who produce many children are considered good livestock. Consequently, the women became chattel rather than mothers and the way mothering and motherhood was performed had to change. Instead of being the transmitter of the African heritage to their children, they became property of a white European-American patriarchy leaving families rootless. Being separated from their children is what makes it difficult for them to transmit their culture to their children.

Being a slave is a terrible fact that any human being encounter. In this vein, and in an interview with Bonnie Angelo in *Conversation with Toni Morrison*, Morrison talked about her novel *Beloved*, "I thought this has got to be the least read of all the books I'd written because it is about the character don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people don't want to remember" (257). This reveals that the trauma of slavery haunt both the slaves and the slavers who do not want to think about it because of the psychological repercussions.

The novel's settings are back to twelve years after the end of the American Civil War in Cincinnati, Ohio. In the Garner's home or what it called Sweet Home. Nine slaves work there. Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs and six other slaves. This story is adapted from a real-life story of a runaway slave called Margaret Garner who killed her daughter as well in order to not send back to Slavery due to the fugitive slave law. Sethe is the mother of four, a former slave and she has succeeded in creating a life for her family at 124, Bluestone Road together with her mother-in-law Baby Suggs. She manages to run away from the plantation Sweet Home where she has been brutally treated by the slave owner known as Schoolteacher and she sent her children on ahead to a life in freedom. She is pregnant with her fourth child and gives birth to a daughter on her way to freedom. A short while after she has settled in with her mother-in-law, Sethe sees a number of

white men riding along the road. She recognizes one of them to be her former slave owner and she is seized with panic. She gathers her children and brings them into a barn. Without hesitating she cuts the throat of her daughter and is about to kill her other children as well when she is stopped. K Sumana writes in *The Novels of Toni Morrison: A Study in Race, Gender and Class* "murder becomes Sethe's act of motherly love" (119). She sees death as a much better option than having her children enslaved and she makes her instant decision because she wants to protect her most valuable and precious assets – her children. It could be argued that if it was possible for Sethe to live with her family with dignity and self-respect the infanticide would not take place.

Sethe's killing of Beloved can be seen as relating to the id in Freudian psychoanalysis. The id represents the instinctual and primal drives within the human psyche, seeking immediate gratification without regard for social norms or consequences. Sethe's act of killing Beloved can be seen as a manifestation of her id driven instincts and desires. Sethe's deep rooted instinct is to protect her children from the horrors of Slavery, and in her mind, killing Beloved is an extreme act of love and protection. Her id driven impulse to preserve her children's wellbeing and shield them from suffering overrides rational thought or consideration for societal norms against taking a life. The id operates in the unconscious and on the pleasure principle, seeking to fulfil basic human needs and desires. In Sethe's case, her traumatic past as a slave, where her basic needs for safety, freedom, and the wellbeing of her children were constantly threatened. The killing of Beloved can be seen as an extreme response to these past traumas, driven by her id's relentless pursuit of self-preservation and protection to her loved ones. Furthermore, Sethe's act of killing Beloved can be interpreted as an expression of her most primal and uncontrollable emotions. The id operates on raw emotions, and Sethe's overwhelming love for her children, combined with the intense fear and anguish associated with her past experience, fuels her id driven action.

White supremacy originates primarily in the degradation of black bodies in order to have control over them, which is best done through persuasion that their black bodies are ugly. Therefore, using the device of dehumanising the body, Slavery aimed first and foremost at women. It was easier to enact cruelty upon women for, apart from being black, they were also most vulnerable in the black society because they were females. This fact encouraged white oppressors to abuse them sexually. In *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle*, Gurleen Grewal theorises that, Morrison's *Beloved* clearly portrays that there is more to the "equality of oppression" since under slavery, women were routinely the "subjects of rape, enforced childbirth, and natal alienation from

their children" (p. 100). The fact that they were "mothers," also enabled, even encouraged, white masters to dehumanise and deprive women on a higher level of degradation than it could be done to slave men.

Hence, the cruelty of dehumanisation that indirectly forced Sethe to commit infanticide can be best illustrated with examples from the novel. There are two crucial moments in Sethe's life when she is submitted to the dehumanising forces of the white oppressors. The first clearly distinguishable incident in Sethe's story that marks a turning point in her life and drastically changes her perception of the future is early in her life, when she is put on the animal side of the list of features according to schoolteacher's education. Sethe overhears the man's lesson, during which he teaches his nephews about the natural features of a human, drawing a thick line between a human being and an animal. He has given the precise exemplification of the difference between the human and animal world, he classifies Sethe as a representative of the animal realm. Not until she actually acknowledges that 'the feature means something naturally assigned to a thing', can she understand the humiliating classification. She begins to trust in the words of Baby Suggs that "there is no bad luck in the world but white folks," (89) seeing no other possibility than to draw a general conclusion about the racism of every single white person.

After she killed her kids, she began to isolate herself and her daughter from the outside world so that she wouldn't remember what she did. As Sethe continues to live in the present, she does not plan for the future. The future to Sethe is "a matter of keeping the past at bay" (Morrison, 21). This act is described by Freud as denial, which is described as a defence mechanism that operates at the unconscious level to protect an individual from expressing anxiety or distressing thoughts and emotions. Denial involves refusing to acknowledge the existence of reality in one's life which is a way for the ego, the conscious part of the mind, to maintain a sense of control and to protect the individual's self-esteem and psychological well-being. This defence mechanism helps Sethe to live without any burden of the tragic memories and the guilty feelings of killing her own child. She accepts the guilt that she left Beloved behind and asks her for her forgiveness.

Sethe's ability to bond with her children and her capability to exercise her motherhood is limited. By taking away the slaves' individuality and other human distinctions and thereby reducing the slaves into objects, the slave owners manage to create a docile and submissive labour force. The Foundation of Slavery is not constituted around family life but is exclusively a financial

business activity where the slaves' main purpose is to provide good work and give birth to more children hence increasing the economics of the plantation. Barbara H. Solomon in her book *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison's Beloved* writes: "the denial of one's status as a human subject has deep repercussions in the individual's internal world" (27), which is true about Sethe. She might be free from Slavery and prison but she is in a way a slave to her own past and she does not have the tools to deal with the oppression she has been a subject too. She does, however, love her children, so much that she will rather choose death before having them enslaved. The infanticide is the turning point and also the end of the family as it once was. In an attempt to save her family Sethe turns from a nurturing mother into a destroyer of family.

Sethe encounters dehumanising behaviour and treatment daily at Sweet Home but there are two occasions that are especially painful for her and crucial to her choice of action in the barn. She overhears the schoolteacher – the slave owner at Sweet Home – telling his students to "[...] put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right" (193) and even though Sethe does not know the word 'characteristics' it leaves her with a feeling of being stripped of the last remaining parts of her humanity. This explains why Sethe kills Beloved. She wants to stop schoolteacher because "[...] nobody would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper" (251). She is not willing to let her children become subject to this inhumane treatment and therefore she enters into, what Peach calls "the chaotic space of mother love and mother pain in which a mother kills her child in order to save it" (105). Mothering and motherhood is destroyed and devalued through Slavery which causes a chaotic environment for both mothers as well as their children. Sethe makes a decision, giving herself the divine right to choose what is right for her children. She sees death as a better option than a life in captivity. The chaotic environment continues when Beloved returns and demands retribution from her mother.

The other circumstance which is of great importance when it comes to the infanticide is the abuse, Sethe becomes a subject to abuse on the plantation. The same students that are to list her animal features rapes her and takes Sethe's milk as Schoolteacher enjoyed seeing her body exploited.

> *After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em.*

> *Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still. (Morrison 19-20)*

This shows the brutality the students inflicted upon Sethe even after raping her and finding out that she reported them to Mrs Garner, they beat her up and inflicted her with a wound on her back which left her with a treelike everlasting scare which she describes as her "chokecherry tree". The milk is a metaphor used by Morrison to describe Sethe's love being big enough for the people she cares about: "she had milk for all" (100). Milk is an important symbol in the novel because it constitutes a foundation for mother and child. The milk is nutrition but also a very important way of bonding with her child as she states, "took my milk" (Morrison 17). She was deprived of one thing that connected her to her children – her milk.

> "They used cowhide on you?"
>
> "And they took my milk!"
>
> "They beat you and you was pregnant?"
>
> "And they took my milk!". (Morrison 20)

Sethe does not care about the fact that they beat her, she only cares about her milk, which is meant for her children. On the one hand, this shows her love towards her children and the fact that they are of the utmost importance for her. On the other hand, she represents all enslaved mothers who struggled and were in enormous pains because they could not raise or nurse their children properly. Sethe would do anything to protect her children and her murdering of Beloved proves that. Baby Suggs is raped severally and had different men father her children. This affects her life greatly as she struggles to connect emotionally with her children. She is not able to be wife, mother or sister rather she restricts herself, which leads her to the ruin her family.

> *She had been prepared for that better than she had for his life. The last of her children, whom she barely glanced at when he was born because it wasn't worth the trouble to try to learn features you would never see change into adulthood anyway. Seven times she had done that: held a little foot; examined the fat fingertips with her own—fingers she never saw become the male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere. She didn't know to this day what their permanent teeth looked like; or how they held their heads when they walked. Did Patty lose her lisp? What colour did Famous' skin finally take? Was that a cleft in Johnny's chin or just a dimple that would disappear soon? Has his jawbone changed? Four girls, and the last time she saw them, there was no hair under their arms. Does Ardelia still love the burned bottom of bread? All seven were gone or dead. What would be the*

> *point of looking too hard at that youngest one? But for some reason they let her keep him. He was with her—everywhere. (163-164)*

This shows how sad Baby Suggs' life as a slave went, she gives birth to seven children but loses all of them to slavery. She never hears from nor see them again except for her last child, Hale, who isn't taken away after birth and stays with his mother till when he buys Baby Suggs' freedom by staying back in Slavery to work extra as payment. This situation is even more pitiful as Baby Suggs never gets to see her son again because he dies in Sweet Home.

Another character who goes through this despicable act is Ella, who does not want to nurse her child because it conceived through rape and, consequently, the child dies. These are only some of the examples of how Slavery sexualised and sexually abused women. Even after killing her own child, Sethe has to pay for Beloved's tombstone with her own body – ten minutes of sex gives her seven letters. White men had an absolute power over enslaved people and they could do whatever they wished to them, without facing consequences, which left many women with unforgettable traumas. Brewer A. Kathryn in *The empty pack of daughterhood: Mother-daughter relationships in the novels of Toni Morrison* writes: "The white patriarchy robs Sethe of her very function" (150), and that 'function' is being a mother. A mother supplies her children with milk – a mother gives life. This is a contradiction in the novel since she is also a mother who takes life. Morrison lets Sethe do the unspeakable – the one thing that is unthinkable for a mother – killing her own.

The second important character who is directly concerned with Slavery in *Beloved* is Paul D. He is a former slave from Sweet Home and is described as the kind man; a man that makes everyone feel as if they can show their emotions. In the novel there are descriptions of him portraying a man who has "the thing in him, the blessedness, which has made him the kind of man who can walk in a house and make the women cry" (272). He has this effect on Sethe and Denver as well when he enters their house. He says he comes to see Baby Suggs but mostly he comes to see Sethe. The woman he has been dreaming about since Sweet Home. He first meets Sethe when she is thirteen and all the men at Sweet Home decides to let her be so that she can choose a man on her own. When he arrives at 124, Sethe blossoms in his presence and they share a personal history which has been buried deep within the two of them. A history that is ominous and carries the memories of dead people.

He is sold to Mr. Garner – the slave owner at Sweet Home. Mr. Garner is considered to be the good owner and when he dies his brother-in-law takes over and the conditions harden. Paul D.

stays at Sweet Home for twenty years where he suffered from hurtful acts carried out on him and other slaves and like the wings of a bird, schoolteacher clips Paul D.

> *First his shotgun, then his thoughts, for schoolteacher didn't take advice from Negroes. The information they offered he called back talk and developed a variety of corrections (which he recorded in his notebook) to reeducate them. He complained they ate too much, rested too much, talked too much, which was certainly true compared to him, because schoolteacher ate little, spoke less and rested not at all. Once he saw them playing—a pitching game—and his look of deeply felt hurt was enough to make Paul D. blink. He was as hard on his pupils as he was on them—except for the corrections. (Morrison 259)*

Paul D. has been deeply humiliated during his transference off Sweet Home, when he is forced to wear a collar, chains and a leg irons. Bound like a beast, walking in front of the old rooster "Mister", who has more authority than he does. As evidence of his defeat, Paul D says, "schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub" (Morrison 86). Paul D faces many abuses as sleeping in ditches and being forced to perform oral sex on the white men, it is no wonder he could not feel like a man. In an unsuccessful attempted escape from Sweet Home, he threatens to kill Brandywine, the man who bought him from Schoolteacher, but is shackled with ten other slaves to a brutal prison for his crime;

> *Paul D began to tremble. Not all at once and not so anyone could tell. When he turned his head, aiming for a last look at Brother, turned it as much as the rope that connected his neck to the axle of a buckboard allowed, and, later on, when they fastened the iron around his ankles and clamped the wrists as well, there was no outward sign of trembling at all. Nor eighteen days after that when he saw the ditches; the one thousand feet of earth—five feet deep, five feet wide, into which wooden boxes had been fitted. A door of bars that you could lift on hinges like a cage opened into three walls and a roof of scrap lumber and red dirt. Two feet of it over his head; three feet of open trench in front of him with anything that crawled or scurried welcome to share that grave calling itself quarters. And there were forty-five more. (Morrison 125)*

After Paul D's attempt to escape from the schoolteacher, who later sells him to Brandywine, Paul D's torture gets worse to the point where he is being shackled like an animal. This shows how cruel slaves masters were to their slaves. Paul D. has become tired and depressed similarly like Baby Suggs. He is extremely broken from Slavery and self-defeated, which

sometimes makes him wish he could have died with Sixo because he believed that to allow himself to have feelings will kill him. This experience broke him in a way that Slavery never could.

> *After Alfred he had shut down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat, sleep, and sing. If he could do those things—with a little work and a little sex thrown in—he asked for no more, for more required him to dwell on Halle's face or Sixo laughing. To recall trembling in a box built into the ground. Grateful for the daylight spent doing mule work in a quarry because he did not tremble when he had a hammer in his hands. The box had done what Sweet Home had not, what working like an ass and living like a dog had not; drove him crazy so he would not lose his mind. (Morrison 49)*

As many other slaves in Sweet Home who suffered because of Sethe's actions, Paul D. is also one of the most significant characters affected by Beloved's vindictive. Beloved takes advantage of Paul D. and brings his horrible memories, which led him to open his "little tobacco tin" (Morrison 137).

One of six male slaves on the Sweet Home plantations, who suffers from dehumanisation and loss of self is Sixo. Even though Sixo is a wild, confident man and knew how to do certain things better than anyone, He is still a slave that has suffered in his life. His sufferance is travelling sixty miles in thirty- four hours, with only an hour of rest, to say hello to his Thirty Mile woman named Pasty. This brings him pain because he has to stab his pregnant wife in the leg and hurt her in order to use it as a reason. "Now it was too late for the rendezvous to happen at the Redmen's house, so they dropped where they were. Later be punctured her calf to simulate snakebite so she could use it in some way as an excuse for not being on time to shake worms from tobacco leaves" (Morrison 29).

Morrison reveals the horror of slavery in explicit detail, elaborating upon the physical and mental abuses suffered by Sethe, Paul D, and the other Sweet Home slaves. *Beloved* not only speaks for the slaves whose voices were silenced, but also contributes to Morrison's critique of the aesthetics that has dominated American culture and its canon of literature. *Beloved* is a contemporary novel with the appeal of a ghost story, a mystery, and a work of historical fiction. It is a complex literary work that also seeks to understand the impact of slavery, both on the psychology of individuals and on the larger patterns of culture and history. Morrison was drawn to the historical account, which brought up questions of what it meant to love and to be a mother

in a place and time where life was often devalued. *Beloved* is not just a story to tell for amusement; this is not a story to pass by; this is not a story to tell lightly because once you tell it, things will never be the same. But this is also not a story that you will ever fully comprehend. Morrison takes her turn to denounce Slavery and long for the freedom on behalf of all slaves.

This section has portrayed the traumatising acts received by slaves due to their race. Morrison, through the characters Sethe, Beloved, Paul D, Baby Suggs, Halle and Sixo, portray the evils of Slavery and the dehumanising treatments these slave received.

In this chapter, we looked at gender discrimination in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and the plight of the enslaved in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. This chapter set out to look at two things; gender discrimination and the evil of Slavery. Looking at gender discrimination, we found out that Carter's characters suffer marginalisation and objectification because of their gender. While in *Beloved*, the slaves suffer from dehumanising acts because of their race. Overall, being a woman and being black are problematic experiences as seen in the text *Nights at the Circus*, the female characters both are seen as objects to be used by the men. The "freaks" in Madan Schreck's museum of monsters are seen as objects for men's pleasure, they are either just looked at like the Sleeping Beauty, or have sex with like Wonder. The protagonist, Fevvers, is even regarded as a trophy by the Grand Duke who tries to make her part of his exotic toys, and as weak, which is seen in the scene where Mr Rosencreutz tries to kill her in order to escape death. The slaves in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* also go through dehumanising acts like rape, beatings, lynching and killing as seen in the characters Sethe, Paul D, Beloved and Hale. The female slaves such as Sethe, Baby Suggs and Ela, apart from these evil acts, also lose their children, which is a dreaded act any mother will like to experience. The next chapter next will discuss the authors' use of supernatural elements to resist gender discrimination and Slavery.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SUPERNATURAL AS RESISTANCE

To every rough beginning, there is always a yearning for a better ending. The painful and sad situations faced by Angela Carter's Characters in *Nights at the Circus* and that of Toni Morrison in *Beloved* left these characters wanting a society where they are considered and treated fairly. This need pushes the characters to resist the plights they face in their various societies.

This chapter focuses on highlighting the authors' usage of supernatural elements, through their characters, as a tool to challenge the plights mentioned in Chapter Three. Angela Carter and Toni Morrison utilise the same means to resist the plights they address in their texts. While Angela Carter utilises supernatural elements, through her female character Fevvers, to resist gender discrimination, Toni Morrison employs it through her character Beloved, in order to resist Slavery. The first section of this chapter will analyse Angela Carter's use of supernatural elements as a form of resistance to gender discrimination in *Nights at the Circus*, while the second section, will analyse Toni Morrison's use of the supernatural to resist the trauma from Slavery.

Fevvers, and Resistance to Gender Discrimination in Nights at the Circus

Angela Carter makes use of supernatural elements in her text, in order to resist gender discrimination. She introduces the supernatural character Sophie Fevvers, who is the protagonist of the text, to resist female subjugation in *Nights at the Circus*. This shows that, carter believes gender discrimination cannot be resisted by a normal human, therefore, she adopts a supernatural character to fight and possibly overcome gender discrimination. While posing as a Cupid and a prostitute in Madam Schreck's brothel, on the one hand, she fires toy arrows to men on the other. Fevvers even exaggerates her womanliness to the point that she imprisons the male protagonist of the novel, an American journalist named Jack Walser, into her world of performances.

Angela Carter, in her monumental novel *Nights at the Circus*, attempts to challenge the false assumptions that female roles in society are fixed to be responsive to that of the male. Carter

emancipates the female body from the previously imposed archaic ideological chains, by designing Fevvers' body to a mystical form. Carter creates a fantastic female body which is competent enough to escape the grip of patriarchal chains. Fevvers' gigantic body is severed from the traditional submissive female category which accepted wholeheartedly to be the home maker. Her newly acquired fanciful body is detached from any spatial location that might limit her progress and improvement. It is a gigantic female body, purposefully created to overcome geographical obstacles and surpass male abilities. Fevvers is presented to the reader as a supernatural circus aerialist capable of flying by means of her distinctive wings, which are the reason behind her fame.

With Fevvers' defiance of all the social impositions and shattering of all conventional expectations from a woman in the modern society, Carter turns the social and sexual binaries and hierarchies upside down and gives the womankind wings which symbolise her liberation from the patriarchal order. She gives a voice to the 'New Woman' in her novel, a voice that writes history from the female perspective, which the men, Walser in this case, cannot help but consent to. With her rhetorical narrative skills, Fevvers manages to suppress the male voice in the novel and to make Walser dependent on her story to come up with a rational explanation. Fevvers resists gender discrimination on so many instances, and majority of these instances are seen through her encounter with the journalist, Walser.

With her fearless subversion of female roles in the patriarchal society, Fevvers amazes Walser, the possessor of the pen, as the phallic symbol of power and the writer of his story, to the degree of a magical spell and enslaves him behind the bars of her imagination. Walser cannot set himself free, because he wants to learn the reasons and details behind her outstanding social stance. Yet, Fevvers' narration excludes the male point of view just as the entire Western history and rationalism did in opposition to female voice. Walser, the writer of stories and master of rationalisation, is now reduced to the position of a listener who ponders all the time: "How does she do that?" (4). As the whole male tradition has taught him, Walser tries to find reasonable explanations to what he sees in Fevvers' case, which proves futile until he gets rid of the male point of view at the end of the novel: "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!" (13).

Walser's obsession with the truth deepens his dependence on Fevvers' story or voice throughout the novel and, even after the interview, Walser makes his mind to join the circus at the end of the first chapter, as he is deliberately left enchanted and with unanswered questions of the truth about Fevvers, "Her voice. It was as if Walser had become as a prisoner of her voice, her cavernous, sombre voice, a voice made for shouting about the tempest, her voice of a celestial fishwife [...] Her dark, rusty, dipping, swooping voice, imperious as a siren's" (47). Fevvers deliberately creates an air of mystery during her narrations and during the interview, by which she prolongs her metaphorical death as the outstanding 'New Woman'. Walser's possible answers to Fevvers' mysteries will bring her to a kind of death if he manages to come up with a logical explanation in his interview. In other words, the more Walser manages to place Fevvers within the expected frameworks, the closer she will come to the end of her life as a New Woman. In this respect, Fevvers needs to keep up her stories which give the man a feeling of incompleteness, incapability and imperfection regarding her vision of life.

Similarly, Lizzie functions as a supplement to Fevvers' extraordinary story, which makes Walser feel "more and more like a kitten tangling up in a ball of wool it had never intended to unravel in the first place; or a sultan faced with not one but two Scheherazade, both intent on impacting a thousand stories into the single night" (43). With her enslavement of Walser to her narration, Fevvers proves that she is not to be toyed by anybody and she is in charge of her actions and life. Fevvers never makes clear to Walser whether she is 'fact or fiction' and by that, she gives the biggest response to a whole canon of works written on women. Fevvers deliberately steps out of the social expectations and makes the central discourse unable to define her being. Out of curiosity and hunger for a thorough knowledge of life, the male vision becomes possessed by what is unknown to him and the female voice guarantees its own survival.

Fevvers cleverly exploits the male power and uses it for her own survival; as Walser needs to keep her safe and sound to achieve a sense of completion and closure in his mind. "Fevvers lessons him with her narrative and drags him along with her before he'd had a chance to ask questions" (67). She achieves a thorough control over her male partner with her stories and manages to overpower him, subverting all predetermined gender roles. She manages to imprison Walser into her narration with her artful use of her femininity as a masquerade or her womanliness as a strategy. From the very early pages of the novel, Fevvers plays with the loopholes within human perception and centres her magic right between reality and fantasy. While she performs her

womanliness to the very extremes, on the one hand, she denies this womanliness with a witty exaggeration of it on the other. She makes use of every single detail, ranging from dressing and make up to feminine gestures and manners, in her presentation of herself drowse her audience, particularly Walser, off throughout the novel: "One lash off, one lash on, Fevvers leaned back a little to scan the asymmetric splendour reflected in her mirror with impersonal gratification" (4).

Fevvers intentionally overdoes what is generally associated with womanliness and exaggerates the expected symbols of femininity as a parody of the social norms, to show that all these realities are no more than social constructs. Carter's vivid description of Fevvers' physical appearance in the scene right before her aerobatics supports such a claim:

> *Bouquets pelt the stage. Since there is no second-hand market for flowers, she takes no notice of them. Her face, thickly coated with rouge and powder so that you can see how beautiful she is from the back row of the gallery, it wreathed in triumphant smiles; her white teeth are big and carnivorous as those of Red Riding Hood's grandmother. (16-17)*

Fevvers makes use of her physical appearance to both remain within, and step out of the prescribed roles for women in the patriarchal society by deliberate exaggeration. Fevvers mimics the expected female roles and appearances throughout the novel in order to hide her true intentions. In other words, she produces herself as an object in order to escape objectification. She openly confesses her true intentions to Walser during the interview with a realistic evaluation of her current situation, saying:

> *I existed only as an object in men's eyes after the night-time knocking on the door began. Such was my apprenticeship for life, since is it not to the mercies of the eyes of others that we commit ourselves on our voyage through the world? I was as if closed up in a shell, for the wet white would harden on my face and torso like a death mask that covered me all over, yet, inside this appearance of marble, nothing could have been more vibrant with potentiality than I. (42)*

By giving her protagonist such an awareness to the socially constructedness of the gender roles in the late 19th century setting, Carter evokes Judith Butler's ideas in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, regarding performativity of gender and that individuals live "within a complex network of ever-changing relationships, in which they are simultaneously created by others as they recreate themselves in relation to how they are seen and what they see" (45). In such a despotic patriarchal society, however, Carter's Fevvers makes use of this performative nature of

gender roles and manages to develop her own way out of the limits of the male gaze in the creation of her identity.

For Carter, performance and mobility are powerful enough to fight against gender inequality and to correct the socially interiorised female image. The heroine is designed to perform at the circus and to break the chains of patriarchy, though she cannot detain her male spectators from gazing at her female body. Fevvers' status of the postmodern new woman enables her to break free from the masculine spatial imprisonment, despite her entrapment by the male gaze. She undertakes a long spatial journey, accompanied by Kearney's circus, to end by achieving her new woman position. Each time she feels entrapped and endangered by a masculine threat, Fevvers resorts, successfully, to her female body as a weapon to set her free. Narrating her life circumstances to Walser, she recalls her experience at Madame Schrek's museum of monsters. Under the pressure of financial necessity, she joins the museum where she meets the masculine pervert visitors, who pay visits in order to fantasise at the grotesque characters without daring to touch them. Among these men, she reminisces the political figure:

> *Mr Rosencreuz, who purchases her in order to martyrize her and extort from her female body, a rejuvenating -substance. As it comes in the narrative, he reveals a secret to her; Artephius invented a cabbalistic magnet which secretly sucked out the bodies of young women their mysterious spirit of efflorescence. [...] By applying a concentration of these spirits to himself by his magic arts, and continually rejuvenating himself, it will be spring all year long with. (90)*

Fevvers' unbounded body allures Mr Rosencreutz and promises him to preserve his male rejuvenation. Fevvers' supernatural body helps her to soar overhead and to escape her planned death. Fevvers' mobility and ability to fly are the core reasons behind her survival and escape from Rosencrantz's clutch. "Quick as a flash, I was off and out of that casement like greased lightning [...] I took refuge in a nearby spinney, in the top branches of an elm" (95-96).

Another incident where Fevvers resorts, successfully, to her female body as a weapon to set her free is seen in the scene between her and the Grand Duke, who is a wealthy and influential man, infatuated with Fevvers and seeks to possess her. During their encounter, Fevvers finds herself in the Duke's mansion. The Duke, captivated by Fevvers' unique appearance and otherworldly charm, attempts to seduce her and make her his own. He is driven by desire, power and a sense of entitlement. The Grand Duke has tries to rape Fevvers and make her one of his

exotic toys "You must know. I am a great collector of all kinds of objets d'art and marvels. Of all things, I love best toys—marvellous and unnatural artefacts" (*Nights* 220). This time, however, when faced with the Duke attempting to rape her, Fevvers cannot make her way out with her sword since the Duke breaks it. She distracts the Duke by masturbating him and running away at the moment he ejaculates. "as, with a grunt and whistle of expelled breath, the Grand Duke ejaculated. In those few seconds of his lapse of consciousness, Fevvers ran helter-skelter down the platform, opened the door of the first class comportment and clambered abroad." (114) Fevvers, being a strong and independent character, refuses to be controlled or objectified. She resists the Duke's advances and asserts her autonomy. Fevvers stands her ground, highlighting her agency and refusing to become a mere object of desire.

This confrontation between Fevvers and the colonel represents a power struggle between the sexes and the challenges the traditional gender dynamics of the time. Fevvers' refusal to succumb to the Duke's advances demonstrates her strength, resilience. And willingness to be subjugated. This encounter between Fevvers and the Grand Duke can be related to the concept of the Id in Freudian Psychoanalysis. The Id represents the instinctual and pleasure-seeking part of the mind, driven by primitive desires and impulses. In this context, the Duke's infatuation with Fevvers and his attempt to possess her can be seen as expressions of his Id-driven desires. His actions are motivated by his own selfish wants and the pursuit of immediate gratification without considering the consequences or ethical considerations. The Duke's pursuit of Fevvers reflects a primal, instinctual desire for power and control. On the other hand, Fevvers' refusal to be objectified and her assertion of autonomy can be seen as resistance to the Duke's Id-driven advances. Fevvers, in this case, represents a more balanced psyche, where she exercises control over her own desires and refuses to be reduced to a mere object of the Duke's desires.

Besides her grotesque body and her unladylike behaviour Fevvers shows another quality that is important for the second type of femininity in Angela Carter's fiction, a quality, which gives this femininity-type its title: Fevvers considers herself a representative of the "New Woman". The first time this theme comes up is in Ma Nelson's exclamation after having seen Fevvers spreading her wings for the first time: "Oh, my little one, I think you must be the pure child of the century that just now is waiting in the wings, the New Age in which no women will be bound down to the ground." (25). The theme reappears later in the novel when Fevvers and Lizzie travel through Siberia, and Fevvers, in love with the reporter Walser, wonders which steps

to take next. Lizzie answers: “That’s another question, innit, she replies, unperturbed as ever. You never existed before. There’s nobody to say what you should do or how to do it. You are Year One. You haven’t any history and there are no expectations of you except the ones you yourself create.” (232)

Of course, Lizzie mainly alludes to Fevvers’ status as exceptional being caused by her wings. Nevertheless, her statement also implies the assumption that Fevvers belongs to a new kind of woman, one that has never existed before. She considers Fevvers as the starting point of a revolutionised femininity, as a beginning of changing relationships between men and women. Fevvers herself confidently believes that she can transform the way men and women live with each other, which becomes clear when she ponders how a relationship with Walser could look like

> *Oh, but Liz – think of his malleable look. As if a girl could mould him any way she wanted. Surely he’ll have the decency to give himself to me, when we meet again, not expect the vice versa! Let him hand himself over into my safekeeping, and I will transform him. You said yourself he was un-hatched, Lizzie; very well – I’ll sit on him, I’ll hatch him out, I’ll make a new man of him. I’ll make him into the New Man, in fact, fitting mate for the New Woman, and onward we’ll march hand in hand into the New Century. (334)*

Fevvers dreams of a relationship with Walser in which she will not be the downtrodden and helpless wife of a dominating husband. She expects to have equal rights in this relationship and she wants to influence Walser so that he accepts her as equal partner. She wants to play an active part in the relationship and design the partnership according to her wishes. Even more passionate and optimistic are her plans for the future in the following “proclamation”:

> *And once the old world has turned on its axle so that the new dawn can dawn, ah, then! All the women will have wings, the same as I. This young woman in my arms, whom we found tied hand and foot with the grisly bonds of ritual, will suffer no more of it; she will tear off her mind forg"d manacles, will rise up and fly away. The doll’s house doors will open, the brothels will spill forth their prisoners, the cages, gilded or otherwise, all over the world, in every land, will let forth their inmates singing together the dawn chorus of the new, the transformed. (338-339)*

In her vision of the future, Fevvers imagines all women with wings, in this context a powerful symbol of freedom and self-determination. She imagines all women “flying away” from their imprisonment, their oppression and their discrimination, freeing themselves from male supremacy.

However, Fevvers' vision of the future seems slightly too optimistic and cheerful, which is expressed through Lizzie's immediate response "It's going to be more complicated than that" (339). Lizzie realises that such an abrupt change might be unrealistic and that it might still be a long way to go for women to become independent. Nevertheless, it is important that Fevvers sees the chance for herself as a woman to change her life and to create new ways how men and women will live together in the future.

Not only her wings is a revolt against the typical female appearance as it is accepted by men, also her face is described in a manner quite untypically for a woman: "Her face, broad and oval as a meat dish, had been thrown on a common wheel out of coarse clay" (9). In another passage it is described that her face "might have been hacked from wood and brightly painted up by those artists who build carnival ladies for fairgrounds or figureheads for sailing ships" (37). These descriptions do not have anything in common with the usual portrayal of women as angel-like, tender, beautiful and well proportioned. The way Fevvers' appearance is described is shocking; readers have the subconscious feeling that this is not the way you should describe a "lady", the coarseness of Fevvers' appearance is a symbol of her denial of male expectations of what women should look like. Through her seemingly "unwomanly" physical appearance, and through the fact that she is proud of her body and loves to attract men with it, the traditional norms of what women should look like are undermined and destabilised.

Fevvers' endless and "shameless" appetite for food plays an important part in the novel. Her so-called appetite is in stark contrast to that of the "anorexic", whom Susan Bordo describes in her article "Feminism, Western Culture and the Body" as follows "the anorexic, by controlling her appetite whether it is for public power, independence or sexual gratification," (171) is contained in a little space given to her. Even though the food is not the only issue at all, "femininity" demands female hunger as something to be controlled. In the construction of models of femininity, especially, from the nineteenth century onwards, women's eating habits have come to be a topic related to women's place in society. Men's eating habits, on the other hand, have not received as much attention. Fevvers, however, is drawn as a character whose relationship with food is not disciplined by idealised notions of the female body. She is a woman of appetite and is not ashamed of it. As Abigail Dennis puts it in "Freak Show Feminism: Intersectional Spectacles in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus"* that:

> *Fevvers is, the antithesis of the pathetic woman and of the delicate and sickly Victorian ideal ... Rather than attempting to downplay her desires as social norms demand, Fevvers consciously even ostentatiously, performs them. She intends her displays of appetite to be witnessed, just like one of her circus performances as an aerialist extraordinaire: she is an artist of appetite. (120)*

This shows that her resistance to patriarchy can not only be achieved through her body, but also through her "disgraceful" behaviour. Another revealing example is the following passage:

> *Free and easy as his American manners were, they met their match in those of the aerialist, who now shifted from one buttock to the other and – „better out than in, sir" – let a ripping fart ring around the room. She peered across her shoulder, again, to see how he took that. (8)*

With a clearly provocative intention, Fevvers emphasises all physical phenomena which elegant and honourable women usually tend to hide:

> *but her mouth was too full for a riposte as 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 and table manners of the Elizabethan variety. Impressed, Walser waited with the stubborn docility of his profession until at last her enormous appetite was satisfied; she wiped her lips on her sleeve and belched. (21)*

Fevvers gulps down gigantic quantities of food, she produces such blatant physical utterances as belching and farting and undermines in every possible way the typical ladylike behaviour people would expect from a woman of her status:

> *She yawned. But not as a tired girl yawns. Fevvers yawned with prodigious energy, opening up a crimson maw the size of that of a basking shark, taking in enough air to lift a Montgolfier, and then she stretched herself suddenly and hugely, extending every muscle as a cat does, until it seemed she intended to fill up all the mirrors, all the room with her bulk. (57)*

Interestingly, all these examples of Fevvers' behaviour seem to be regarded in our culture as illustrations of typical male behaviour. When dealing with men, this kind of behaviour is normally accepted and even interpreted as sign of their manliness. When transferring this behaviour to women, however, it is quickly regarded as disgusting and appalling. Once again, it becomes clear that Fevvers deliberately provokes people – mainly men – with her behaviour. With consciously

behaving unladylike, she calls attention to the existing norms for women constructed by a male-centred society. She makes people aware that these traditional norms "choke" women and repress their nature and, silently, she poses the question why women should not belch and fart in public with the same

Fevvers' rejection to be minimalized to the portion of the "ideal" female body is in keeping with her ideas about marriage and family. Fevvers sees the institutions of marriage and motherhood as restrictions to her freedom. It seems that her notion of marriage has been shaped under the influence of her suffrage activist, Marxist-feminist, surrogate mother Lizzie, who early in the novel asserts, "Marriage? Pah! Out of the frying pan into the fire! What is marriage but prostitution to one man instead of many? No different!" (21). Through Lizzie's voice, marriage and prostitution are placed in a more common ground than one may think. Michael Cornier in "Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus:* An Engaged Feminism via Subversive Postmodern Strategies" states that, "*Nights at the Circus* reduces marriage into a false ideology of happiness" (Michael 504) with Lizzie asserting, "The name of this custom is a 'happy ending'" (281). Lizzie's critique of marriage highlights "the economic exploitation of women within the institution of marriage that is covered by fictions of romance" (Michael 504), for it only means, according to Lizzie, a woman giving herself and also her bank account to a man willingly. The only difference Lizzie makes between a prostitute and a wife is that the former is aware of the contract she has made or of what she is in for. Carter, too, in her book, *The Sadeian Woman*, argues in a similar way: "Prostitutes are at least decently paid on the nail and boast fewer illusions about a hireling status that has no veneer of social acceptability" (9). Unlike prostitutes, wives, on the other hand, get nothing in return for their commitment to one man; except perhaps the "veneer of social acceptability" and, while both the prostitute and the wife engage in sex as part of an economic exchange, only the prostitute is aware of the contract she has made. Hence, the prostitute "comes ahead in the novel, precisely because she is depicted as more aware of her position within an economic system in which all women necessarily participate" (Michael 505).

Another woman monster, the Sleeping Beauty, remains asleep since her adolescence, with the exception to wake up once a day to eat and urinate. Her sleep is associated with death, for every day she grows less and less reluctant to wake up. This certain "deformity" of hers is associated with the femininity of the Victorian period, the women were mostly applauded as the "angel of the house," a symbolic angel who is supposed to perform the "womanly" duties, which most

importantly includes the silence she has to assume while performing those duties. The original Sleeping Beauty is a representation of a young woman whose fate is controlled by her father, first, then her husband. Carter's Sleeping Beauty, on the other hand, resorts to sleeping as a way of escape from being defined and given away by her possible controllers, father and husband figures, and sleeping seems her only way of escape from this possibility despite the fact that it is very much like being dead while still alive. It could also be related to her refusal to be woken up by a prince. Therefore, she, too, in her own way escapes from her predetermined fate, by rewriting and subverting the role imposed on her traditionally. The women in the Museum of Women Monsters, who are constructed as the "commodified other" by the male gaze, are freed only after Fevvers causes Madame Schreck's death.

In the brothel, Fevvers's childhood is spent posing in tableau vivant as Cupid in the main room during the day. Yet, in time, when her wings develop, she begins to play the part of the Winged Victory, which is another female figure Fevvers impersonates. Fevvers describes it as "a perfect, active beauty that has been, as it were, mutilated by history" (*Nights* 40). The Winged Victory is a marble statue missing the parts where the head and the arms are supposed to be. Fevvers acts as a living statue and she is also armed with "a ceremonial sword that comes with Nelson's Admiral Uniform," "as if a virgin with a weapon was the fittest guardian angel for a houseful of whores" (40). Fevvers's performance as the Winged Victory, as in her performance as the Helen of Troy, is significant in terms of Fevvers's rewriting patriarchal history. By appropriating the figure, that is, by giving the sculpture the arms in the form of wings, and also a sword, Fevvers fills the missing parts; she rewrites the way official history represents women as headless and armless figures both metaphorically and literally. Fevvers's description of the statue as "mutilated by history," emphasises history's treatment of women in general. So, by putting a head to a headless figure, Fevvers becomes, like Aidan Day puts it in his book *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass,* "a metaphor that comes to life" (Day 178). Therefore, "Fevvers is a reappropriation on behalf of women of what had been appropriated – the figure of a woman – on behalf of men. With the reappropriation come a re-historicisation and re-humanisation of what men simply dehistoricised, transcendentalist and dehumanised" (Day 178).

Thinking that women commit their "voyage through the world" to the "mercies of the eyes of others" (42), Fevvers willingly confronts the male gaze, by presenting herself as an aerialist with actual wings, instead of hiding in the shadows for fear of being labelled as a freak. Abigail

Dannis describes this situation in "The Spectacle of Her Gluttony: the Performance of Female Appetite and the Bakhtinian Grotesque in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus"* as:

> *As a winged woman, Fevvers is unashamedly aberrant, freakish. However, she is also a desiring subject, and a self-creation who chooses the ways in which her unnaturalness, and her appetites, are performed, thus rejecting the victimisation that normally attends freakishness. Eroticism, rather than monstrosity, defines her identity as a performer and celebrity; as Sally Robinson and Magali Cornier Michael suggest, Fevvers creates herself as a spectacle. Her performance always engenders a new centre of attention – she evades marginalisation to occupy the centre stage. (Dennis 117)*

Instead of letting herself be victimised due to her aberrant body, Fevvers emerges, as Kerchy argues, as a "self-parodic and self-made woman" (Kerchy 101). Fevvers has "six inches of false lash," (3) she is "blonde of blondes" (345) "hair made up with the help of peroxide, hidden away under the dyed plumes that added a good eighteen inches to her already immense height" (12). Fevvers reveals the constructedness of femininity by performing it in exaggerated terms. In this respect, the novel anticipates arguments of Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985) and of Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) in its treatment of femininity (or gender in general) as a performance. According to Butler, "acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express, are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and discursive means" (173). This approach to gender problematises understandings that assume an essential relationship between gender and body. The understanding of gender as performative, or, as a performance we can see on and through the body, paves the way for the possibility of revision and subversion of gender. As Irigaray puts it, by "playing with mimesis," that is, by "deliberately assuming the feminine style and posture assigned to her", a woman can "uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her" (220). Deliberately overdoing "the feminine style" assigned on women, Fevvers discloses its constructedness.

Dennis Abigail holds that, "Fevvers chooses to sell the spectacle of herself; she consciously performed freakish sexuality, because she is aware that as a woman – and a bird woman at that – she has no choice but to be the focus of the masculine gaze" (123). This, however, gives her the power to determine the terms of her service as a commodity, which at the end enables her to appropriate the gaze to herself while at the same time gain control of her narrative. The ultimate seductress Fevvers, defies the male gaze by taking advantage of her "to be looked-at-ness," to put

it in Mulvey's words, with her catchy slogan of "LOOK AT ME!": "Look, not touch... Look! Hands off" (*Nights* 13). She presents herself as an object intended "to be seen, not handled", exhibiting herself before the eyes of the audience during her performances at the circus, "as if she were a marvellous present too good to be played with" (13). Fevvers escapes the gaze by using it to her advantage, by controlling how much she will allow the audience to consume her. Actually, Mulvey argues that femininity is defined as passive, since "to-be-looked-at", grants to the one doing the looking an active position, while being looked at is a passive position. According to this argument, women are rendered passive while men hold on to power. Fevvers, on the other hand, disrupts this binary opposition of the active man/passive woman and positions herself under that gaze willingly: "I served my apprenticeship in being looked at - being the object of the eye of the beholder" (*Nights* 23). Later, she shares with Lizzie, "To sell the use of myself for the enjoyment of another is one thing. I might even offer freely, out of gratitude or in the expectation of pleasure ... But the essence of myself may not be given or taken" (333). This passage is an indication of Carter's critical engagement both with Foucault's and Mulvey's conceptualisation of the male gaze. Fevvers protects "the essence of herself" and by performing gender, Fevvers manages to escape the male gaze.

This section shows how Angela Carter utilises supernatural fiction to subvert patriarchy by challenging traditional gender roles and expectation. The next section will focus on the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison showing how supernatural fiction is used in to resist Slavery.

Beloved, and Resistance to Trauma of Slavery in Beloved

Toni Morrison is considered the most important and representative of contemporary African-American female novelists. She published her first novel in 1970 and her most famous novel, *Beloved*, in 1987. She has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. This section of this chapter will examine, by means of a close textual analysis, the dominant role that the supernatural element plays in pushing the characters to face and resist their traumatic pasts which tells the story of Slavery. The supernatural element in this section, will be seen through the supernatural character Beloved, where her returning to the text will enable the characters to confront their buried traumatic past and walk through it in order to finally be at peace with themselves physically and emotionally, to build up a new life thereby, resisting Slavery and its effects. In order to analyse the novel's general attitude towards the past, it will be important to find out how the characters escape the haunting if at all they do.

The characters are suspended in time, in a meaningless present, their only goal being to fight back the past. However, the past cannot just be forgotten but must be confronted, for it returns literally and materially to haunt and oppress the central characters of the novel in the form of Sethe's resurrected supernatural daughter, Beloved. David Lawrence summarises this problem in "Fleshly Ghosts and Ghostly Flesh: The Word and the Body in *Beloved*" saying that, in portraying the capacity of the past to haunt individual and community life in the present, Toni Morrison, through the supernatural character Beloved, brings into daylight the "ghosts" that are "harboured by memory and that holds their 'hosts' in thrall, tyrannically dictating thought, emotion, and action" (Lawrence 231). This is a typical response to trauma, as psychologist Judith Lewis Herman explains in her book *Trauma and Recovery* that "the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma (Herman 01).

Supernatural events are abundant in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and the use of these conventional supernatural elements aims at conveying a clear message: The past is always present, and if this past is hurtful and traumatic, it is necessary to work through it in order to hope for a better future; otherwise, it will always come back to impede any prospect of happiness. So, Toni Morrison employs supernatural elements as a tool to fight traumatic memories of Slavery. As Allan Lloyd-Smith in his book *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* puts it, "supernatural... is about the return of the past, of the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare to tell itself" (1). The past will continually haunt those who do not dare to confront it. *Beloved* is the story of Sethe, a woman who has been able to escape from Slavery, but is still a prisoner of her memories. Sethe, like many other members of her community, carry the burden of the terrifying past of Slavery and white oppression. Sethe's daughter Denver has never lived under the slave system, however, she has inherited the trauma of the system because she has seen how much it affected those who surround her, especially her mother, her grandmother, Baby Suggs, and later on Paul D. Therefore, the haunting memory of Slavery also has a traumatic effect on her, even though she is not a direct witness of its cruelties. This section therefore, will analyse Morrison's use of supernatural elements as a tool to confront and resist the characters' memories of Slavery, giving the enslaved a voice.

The ghost in *Beloved* not only suggest that death can actually function as a relief from a terrible life, it also suggests that only if the ghosts of the past are confronted, can Sethe have a

future. One of the most important examples of the supernatural in *Beloved* is 124 Bluestone Road, the haunted house where Sethe and her family live. This house is located in the outskirts of the city of Cincinnati, a desolate place where not even the mail is delivered. 124 Bluestone Road in *Beloved* mirrors the condition of its dwellers, who are like the house, desolate, detached from their community and haunted, in their case, by painful memories. As Andrew Hock Soon Ng in "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Space, Architecture Trauma" argues, "124 Bluestone is unmistakably an architecture that reifies pastiness and entrapment. Here, Sethe and Denver are locked in a persistent memory that refuses to set them free" (231). Therefore, far from being a place of security and comfort for those who inhabit it, 124 is, as Baby Suggs puts it, "packed with Negro's grief" (6). In this particular case, the ghost of an angry baby is responsible for the supernatural events which take place at 124, such as a mirror being shattered by only looking at it, two tiny hand prints appearing on the cake, crumbled crackers strewn in line on the floor, and so on. Sethe is certain of whom this angry baby is, "for they understood the source of the outrage as well as they knew the source of light" (4), but she is not willing or able to confront it yet. Even the numeration of the house −124− hints at the source of this ghostly presence, since the number 3 is absent just as Sethe's third daughter is no longer alive. Thus, this haunting presence, which seems to give life to the house, since it can be "spiteful," "loud", or "quiet", produces different reactions in those who share its space within 124.

When the baby ghost is finally exorcized by Paul D., a new supernatural character makes its entrance, and its actions prove to have a deeper influence than that of the baby ghost on those who cohabit with it. Paul D's words while confronting the ghost make it move out. Feeling his legs shaken by the ghost, he exclaims: "Leave the place alone! Get the hell out! ... She [Sethe] got enough!" (22). The ghost's departure and the interest that Paul D. manifests in Sethe generate in Sethe the illusion that a promising future is possible for her, that perhaps she can love and be loved again and that she had succeeded in resisting her painful past and it can finally be buried, forgotten and left behind: "To Sethe, the future was a matter of keeping the past at bay. The 'better life' she believed she and Denver were living was simply not that other one. The fact that Paul D. had come out of 'that other one' into her bed was better too; and the notion of a future with him, or for that matter without him, was beginning to stroke her mind" (51). However, Beloved is about to enter their lives, and she will turn things in a different direction. When returning from the summer carnival, they find her outside 124. She is sleepy, thirsty, and looks like a baby with "new skin,

lineless and smooth, including the knuckles of her hand" (61). The only thing she can remember is her name: Beloved. Denver immediately adopts her as a sister and takes care of her. Sethe decides to let her stay because she knows it is too dangerous for a girl to be roaming the roads alone. Paul D., on the other hand, feels suspicious about the girl and "wants her out", but even he recognizes that it is too dangerous to "throw a helpless coloured girl out in a territory infected by the Klan. Desperately thirsty for black blood" (79). However, after some time the three of them discover that Beloved's presence exerts a power on them that is beyond their control.

Despite her human form, Beloved is clearly, as Denver later realises, "something more" (314), and this otherworldly nature grants her the power to influence those around her to confront and resist the trauma of Slavery. As Carol Schmudde in *Morrison's Beloved* argues, "*Beloved* knows things no human being could know. She has supernatural strength and the ability to change shape and to appear and disappear at will. She puts a spell on Paul D. which moves him out of the house, and she is finally exorcised by a ritual act of prayers and chanting" (409). All these characteristics are common to "phantoms in human form" (Schmudde 409) and reveal Beloved's true nature, which is a supernatural being. Just a few days after Beloved's arrival, Paul D. starts noticing that there is something peculiar about her, he notes that "'Beloved acts sick, sounds sick, but she don't look sick. Good skin, bright eyes and strong as a bull... She can't walk but I've seen her pick up the rocker with one hand'" (67). As Denver contradicts his words, and he is not the owner of the house, Paul D has no other option than accepting Beloved's stay in Sethe's home. But his distrustful feelings about Beloved do not vanish so easily, and they prove to be right, since little by little Beloved moves Paul D. out of 124.

At first he does not realise that it is an external force which convinces him to sleep each night further away from Sethe, "whom he loved a little bit more every day" (136). It is only after he finds himself sleeping in a cold shed outside the house that he realises that "he was moving involuntarily" (136). He knows that Beloved is responsible for his detachment, and decides to wait and confront her. However, he underestimates her power, and he soon discovers that the tobacco tin inside his chest which could not be "pried open by anything in this world" (133) is easily exposed by Beloved, who evidently has come from outside this world. This tobacco tin stands for his heart and he had locked there all the memories of shame and humiliation that he had suffered in his slave days. Beloved seduces him and "unable to resist, he has sex with her during which the tobacco tin pried open.

> *She moved closer with a footfall he didn't hear and he didn't hear the whisper that the flakes of rust made either as they fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin. So when the lid gave he didn't know it. What he knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying, "Red heart. Red heart," over and over again. Softly and then so loud it woke Denver, then Paul D. himself. "Red heart. Red heart. Red heart." (117)*

He feels deeply ashamed, because Beloved has made him relive what for him was the most bitter part of Slavery, the loss of his manhood in powerless obedience to the commands of others. He moves out of 124 in defeat. In this way, Beloved gets rid of what was interfering with her relationship with Sethe. Now, Beloved has Sethe all for herself, and Sethe will have to confront and fight her past all by herself, without Paul D's help.

Beloved's desire of her mother is another clue for us that she is in the mirror stage which Lacan refers to a phase of development in the beginning of which the baby is dependent on its mother and thinks that they are one. Then, the baby experiences a loss upon understanding that its mother is a separate human nature. The desire of the mother reveals itself when it is observed that Beloved wants to be the sole object of her mother's affections. For example, she is intolerant about sharing these affections with Paul D. If we have a look at the novel, it is seen that she is disturbed about her mother's love for Paul D. and she takes action. "She moved him. Not the way he had beat off the baby's ghost (...) But she moved him nonetheless, and Paul D. didn't know how to stop it (...) Imperceptibly, downright reasonably, he was moving out of 124" (1987:114). In this way, Beloved causes Paul D. to live in the cold house, separated from the main part of the house. She aims to feel her mother's entire interest on herself.

Beloved having sex with Paul D. is also an instance of Electra Complex. The Electra complex, which is defined as an instance when the child transfers the love from the nurturing breast to the parent of the opposite sex. The child also takes up hostile feelings for the parent of the same sex. In the novel, Paul D. is considered the father figure of 124 due to him and Sethe's love relationship. Although Beloved does not like Paul D., she shows amorous attitude towards him. The main reason of this attitude is that she is furious with her mother because she has love for somebody other than herself and she tries to steal Paul D. from her mother.

It is obvious that the Electra complex of Beloved stems from her rage towards her mother. She makes love with the parent of the opposite sex because she has a red, furious heart for her

mother. Sethe does not save all her love for Beloved and gives some part of it to Paul D. and this creates Beloved's rage. It is, of course, needless to say that the hostile and furious attitude towards the parent of the same sex is one of the most important characteristics of the Electra complex. Yet, the reason of Beloved's hostile feelings towards Sethe is not restricted to her unwillingness for sharing her love with the father figure. She is also angry with her because she could not forgive her mother for the murder and leaving her alone.

Only after Paul D. has left 124 does Paul D. feel the full impact of Beloved's unlocking of his traumatic repressed memories proving that Paul D. cannot overcome the traumatic experience he had while still a slave: "His tobacco tin, blown open, spilled contents that floated freely and made him their play and prey" (218). He cannot bear to confront these painful memories. Lonely and with "nothing else to hold on to" than a bottle of liquor (218), he is "plagued by the contents of the tobacco tin" (220), that is, haunted by the memories of Sweet Home. He realises that he has merely repressed the past but not yet faced it: " Just when doubt, regret and every single unasked question was packed away, long after he believed he had willed himself into being, at the very time and place he wanted to take root – Beloved moved him" (221).

Not until the end of the novel, when "Beloved is truly gone" (263), does Paul D. feel ready to work through his past and return to 124. He is able to leave his memories of Beloved behind, too: "Sifting daylight dissolves the memory of Beloved and him in the cold house, turns it into dust motes floating in light. Paul D. shuts the door" and closes this chapter of his life (264), this signifies his success in resisting Slavery and it effects. Even though Sethe immediately accepts Beloved in her house, she only realises that this mysterious young woman is the reincarnation of her dead daughter after Paul D. leaves 124; and this recognition triggers Sethe's revision of her past, which means confronting her own traumas. Sethe's way of keeping some control over her present and some hope for the future is by "keeping the past at bay" (51). Since her "rememory" (43) is full of traumatic images that continually haunt her thoughts, she engages in mechanical tasks which prevent her mind from going into those dark places:

> *Sethe walked over to a chair, lifted a sheet and stretched it as wide as her arms would go. Then she folded, refolded and double-folded it. She took another. Neither was completely dry but the folding felt too fine to stop. She had to do something with her hands because she was remembering*

> *something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind right behind the slap on her face and the circled cross. (73)*

As this passage suggests, house chores divert Sethe's mind from those places that she does not dare to revisit, which is a clear example of Morrison's use of the supernatural, to force Sethe to confront her past in order to resist her fears and trauma from the past. Morrison uses supernatural being to encourage Sethe to express her painful experiences while a slave. Since Beloved seems to be "hungry for Sethe's narrations", and she wants to know more and more about her past: "It became a way to feed her. ... Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. ... Perhaps it was Beloved's distance from the events itself, or her thirst for hearing−in any case it was an unexpected pleasure" (69). Sethe begins to put into words memories that she thought she had forgotten, and one of her most painful recollections is that of her own mother. As Deborah Horvitz in her article, Nameless Ghost: Possession and Dispossession in *Beloved*," argues that, "her memories of Ma'am are buried not only because those recollections are inextricably woven with feelings of painful abandonment. If Sethe remembers her mother, she must also remember that she believes her mother deserted her" (Horvitz 159). When Sethe realises that Beloved is her dead daughter she feels an urge to make up for what she has done, and in order to find a justification for her terrible act – cutting her baby's throat− she needs to go over all the traumatic experiences of her past, since these are the experiences that she does not want her children to go through; she would rather kill them than see them enslaved. But nothing seems to be enough for Beloved.

Sethe quits her job and devotes all her attention and resources to make Beloved happy, but she always demands more. Beloved becomes a supernatural monster which will not stop demanding until it has drained all of Sethe's energy. In David Lawrence's words in "Freshly Ghosts and Ghostly flesh: The Word and the Body in *Beloved"*, says, "like a vampire, she sucks out Sethe's vitality, fattening on her mother's attempts to 'make her understand,' to explain and justify the necessity of murdering her own child to save her from Slavery" (195). Denver describes their connection in the following way: "Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it. But there would never be an end to that, and seeing her mother diminished shamed and infuriated her" (295).

This demanding and impulsive behaviour of Beloved can be related to the id. Beloved, as a character, embodies these id driven impulses. Her demanding nature and impulsive behaviour reflects the id's relentless pursuit of gratification and fulfilment of desires. Beloved's demands for attention, love, and satisfaction are driven by her instinctual needs and desires. She seeks immediate gratification without considering the consequences nor its impact on others. Her impulsive behaviour, such as throwing tantrums or making sudden demands, reflects the id's lack of impulse control and its focus on fulfilling desires in the present moment. Furthermore, Beloved's behaviour can be interpreted as an expression of repressed emotions and desires. As a character who represents both Sethe's long-lost daughter and the embodiment of post trauma, Beloved symbolises the unresolved and suppressed aspects of Sethe's psyche.

Despite her constant efforts to resist the painful past, Sethe does not succeed, because according to psychologist Judith Lewis Herman, in *Trauma and Recovery* "atrocities refuse to be buried" (Herman 1). Because Sethe does not talk about her experience, the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as symptoms, such as feeling numb and reliving the event. Her memories are constantly there and the past is as real and immediate as the present. Naomi Morgenstern states in her book *Mother's Milk and Sister's Blood: Trauma and the Neo-Slave Narrative* that, "The traumatic past in *Beloved* has not been forgotten, nor is it accessible only indirectly. It is strangely concrete, forcefully present, literally there, not past at all" (Morgenstern 103). One fatal result of remembering too clearly the atrocities of Slavery is Sethe's rash reaction when Schoolteacher tracks her down to return her to Sweet Home: she tries to kill her children. In her eyes, it is an act of love and resistance. Sethe attempts to kill her children to prevent them from a life of Slavery that would be "far worse than death" (251). This most terrifying protection of her children does not free Sethe from the past but leads to even memories that are more traumatic. She cannot forget because "the hurt is always there" (58).

As a victim of trauma, Sethe is unable to discern the past from the present, and the memory of the day she killed her baby is so real and overwhelming that she believes it is happening again when Mr. Bodwin arrives at her house to pick up Denver for work. Sethe experiences a traumatic repetition, a reliving of the day schoolteacher came to bring her back to Sweet Home: "He is coming into her yard and he is coming for her best thing. In addition, if she thinks anything, it is no. No, no. Nonono. She flies. The ice pick is not in her hand; it is her hand" (262). This time, however, Sethe decides to kill the source of evil instead of its targets. In view of this incident, one

can argue that Sethe is traumatised not only by her experiences but also by having survived them. Cathy Caruth maintains in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* that the story of trauma is "between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth 7).

Finally, Sethe is freed from this vicious circle of demanding and apologising when, due to Denver's call for help, the women of the community intercede in her aid and exorcise Beloved out of 124. It seems that, by opening up the realm of feelings, these characters have to face their fears, which will put them through pain and grief. This process is, significantly enough, portrayed through Denver's eyes, because she is the only character who does not get carried away by the past completely. She describes this as follows "The job she started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved ... Denver knew it was on her" (243). She is not too overwhelmed by her feelings so that she can still realise what is happening, how frightful and destructive the violent relationship between Beloved and her mother can be for them all.

Therefore, Denver makes a decision that would overturn the path of the events and of their own lives: she reaches the conclusion that they need external help and she is brave enough to go and ask for it from the outside community that has been rejected by each of the characters in turn. Sethe is very explicit about it "Paul D. convinced me there was a world out there and that I could live in it. Should have known better. Did know better. Whatever is going on outside my door ain't for me. The world is in this room. This here's all there is and all there needs to be" (183). So Sethe rejects the outside world in favour of the more intimate one created by Beloved's presence, which becomes the only world worth living in. Denver, in this novel, can be understood in relation to the ego. The ego represents the rational and reality-oriented part of the personality that mediates between the demands of the id and the superego. Denver assert her independence and develops a sense of self as she confronts the reality of her family's history and the haunting presence of Beloved, her ghost sister. In so doing, Denver demonstrates an ego-driven behaviour by seeking personal growth and making rational choices such as reaching out to the community and seek employment, which reflects her ego's capacity for rational decision-making and adaptation of external realities.

In this sense, the figure of Beloved would embody a clear dichotomy between the "inside" and the "outside" at several layers of analysis. In the first place, at a more individual level, the

“inside” has been related to the past and the “outside” to the present in opposition. This means that Beloved, by taking the characters in a journey back to their experiences, functions as a representative of their past that makes them face it in order to, first, make them feel it and, then, liberate them from its ghosts. This process has been defined above as a very painful but fruitful one, due to the fact that the characters lose their fears and are capable of expressing their true feelings.

Secondly, at a more social level, the characters associate the “inside” with themselves, that is, the family living at 124 Bluestone Road and, consequently, the “outside” with everything that lies outside. Denver's awareness of this dichotomy is very telling, when talking about the reasons that lead her mother to kill her sister: “Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it can come right on in the yard if it wants to. So I never leave this house and I watch over the yard” (205). Here Denver is referring back to Slavery days and the way in which the slaveholders came in their yard to capture her family, which was the cause of her mother's killing. However, this sort of threat that lurked in the air in Slavery days is already gone, but it has been internalised and generalised to the “outside” world, including the black community.

What is then surprising is the fact that it is this same character who finally steps out into the outside world to bring some help in. Denver's transformation is undoubtedly affected by Beloved's influence over her mother which proves to be tragically destructive. She is clearly conscious of the urgent need to find a prompt solution to this problem, “Somebody had to be saved, but unless Denver got some work, there would be no one to save, no one to come home to and no Denver either. It was a new thought, having a self to look out for and preserve” (252). Therefore, the precariousness of their lives leads her back to the community as the only possibility of survival for them. So in a sense Beloved can be also interpreted as a sort of collective voice or memory by means of which the characters can return safely to their beginnings.

This image of the community as a sheltering place is constantly foregrounded in the novel as related, firstly, to their enslaved past. Referring to Sweet Home, it is said “It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home ... But it's where we were ... All together. Comes back whether we want it or not” (14). Therefore, the community acted in those days as their support and their only joy because they really cared about each other. It would serve the function of a family due to the fact that the

familiar unity was under extreme and constant threat. They always had somebody to turn to, despite their apparent solitude.

However, it becomes even clearer in the portrayal of the community life in Baby Suggs' time, after Slavery. All the references to this period of time seem idyllic with a clear nostalgic tone that informs every description of it. The message coming from the community is voiced in Baby Sugg's words in the Clearing, the epitome of the community sense of living and caring. Here, she said, "in this place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard ... more than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize" (89). Therefore, this message brings back the idea of loving as the only way to deal with life, to make up for all the loss and the suffering they have been through.

This idea determines Beloved's role in the novel because it is only through her actions that the characters allow themselves to feel once more, to trust and love each other in order to come to terms with their community and the world around them. The development of the characters can be then seen as following different stages: from searching in the "inside" part of their history to the "outside" flow of their feelings and, afterwards, from the "inside" of their family life to the "Outside" of their community, a community that claims them back. Their individual and familiar processes also become a community process, in which the exorcization of the past is finally completed in a sort of community purification:

> *For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods of chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptised in its wash. (261)*

It is in this scene that the community unites itself to defeat the evil that has trapped them: loaded with their past, unable to either deal with it or to forget it; they were stuck in a present which had witnessed the loss of their ancestral values based on loving and caring and had found no replacement for them.

After Beloved's departure, Sethe lies in bed, weakened by the exercise of digging into her memories. However, Paul D's visit to her once Beloved has gone suggests the possibility of a peaceful future for them. As Paul D. tells Sethe, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow" (322). Despite their heavily loaded pasts, Paul D. still believes in the possibility of a future at Sethe's side.

This section has shown how Toni Morrison, through the character Beloved, employs supernatural elements to resist Slavery. The characters, Sethe and Paul D. try to leave their traumatic experiences as slaves behind by simply not talking about them, which makes them miserable. With the return of the supernatural character, Beloved, these memories are reopened and refreshed. These characters, after the pains of their "rememory", confronted their past and properly walked through those traumatic memories and at the end of the text, after Beloved leaves, live a peaceful life. This proves that, supernatural elements were used by Toni Morrison, as a push factor to make the characters resist Slavery.

In conclusion, this chapter discussed Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* as a powerful subversion of patriarchy that challenges traditional gender roles and expectations. Through the character Fevvers, the novel rejects the constraints of gender inequality and embraces equality, advocating for women's empowerment and self-determination. By using humour and irony, Carter analyses patriarchal power structures and shows how women who embrace their own agency and reject societal expectations can overcome them. Ultimately, *Nights at the Circus* is a groundbreaking work of feminist literature that continues to inspire and empower readers to this day. This chapter also explains supernatural elements in Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* as a powerful testament to the fight against Slavery and its enduring legacy. Through the character of Sethe, the novel shows the brutal realities of Slavery and the ways in which it dehumanises and destroys individuals and communities. However, the novel also offers a message of hope through the power of community and resistance. By demonstrating the ways in which Sethe and other characters fight against Slavery, whether through escape or rebellion, the novel emphasises the importance of standing up against oppression and fighting for freedom. Ultimately, *Beloved* is a deeply moving and inspiring work that highlights the ongoing struggle for justice and equality in the face of systemic oppression.

CONCLUSION

The study entitled "The Supernatural in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved"* set out to examine the plight in these texts which are gender discrimination and Slavery and how both authors employ supernatural elements at a tool to resist these plights. This work is divided into an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion.

The introductory part of this work presented the research problem, research questions, hypothesis, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of study, definition of key terms, motivation and structure of the work and also a brief history of supernatural fiction.

The first chapter, "Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature", examined the theories Magic Realism and Psychoanalysis as critical tools for the study. Magic Realism was used to analyse supernatural fiction and its role in the struggle of females in male-dominated societies and to analyse the role of supernatural fiction in the slave narrative. Magic Realism helped to highlight themes such as ghosts, inhumanity and disabilities. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, was used in this chapter to probe into the minds of the characters to show their struggles as marginalised females and as slaves. The psychoanalytic theory also helped to highlight themes such as trauma, neurosis, rape, lynching, murder, brutality, Slavery and migration. The chapter also reviewed some critical works related to the topic and text in a bid to show the contribution of this work. Many critics viewed the works of both authors as reflective of the problems faced by subjected females and by black American. Our work has contributed to showing the link between supernatural fiction and gender discrimination and Slavery.

The second chapter entitled "Historical and Biographical Background", focused on the origins and development of supernatural fiction and the historical, economic, political and cultural background of both texts as well as the author's life experiences. From the analysis, we concluded that the novels under study are historical and have a past movement that interrogate the present. Both works written in 1994 and 1987 respectively revisit supernatural fiction to discuss the

political and economic forces that led to its rise. This chapter also stressed the life experiences of Angela Carter and Toni Morrison, demonstrating how both writers were exposed to supernatural fiction owing to the stories they were told and books they had read.

The third chapter captioned "The Plight of the people: Gender Discrimination and Slavery*"*, treated the problems or difficulties faced by females in male dominated society in the text *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter, showing how female characters are used for pleasure and entertainment by men which led them to fight against these treatments in the next chapter. This chapter also treated the brutalities faced by Black American slaves by their slave masters in the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, it shows how they were being raped, flogged, killed, beaten and sold, which left them with both physical and psychological scars.

The fourth chapter, "The Supernatural as Resistance'', portrays the use of supernatural fiction as resistance to gender discrimination and Slavery. Angela Carter shows how her female characters subvert patriarchy through supernatural means. Supernatural fiction was used in this chapter in order to fight against gender discrimination and install gender equality in the society. Toni Morrison also makes use of supernatural fiction in order to bring back memories of the traumatic past of the ex-slaves in the novel and prompt them to take another chance at letting go of their traumatic past and embracing a new life free from the traumatic memories of Slavery.

From my analysis, it is possible that Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* can be read as supernatural fiction. These authors represented supernatural fiction in their texts to portray the pertinent issues faced in their various societies. This work connects gender discrimination and Slavery to supernatural fiction by employing supernatural fiction to resist these issues. Although Carter and Morrison handle supernatural fiction in their novels in a similar manner, which is to fight against the unjust acts carried out on their characters in their novels, they differ in the type of plights they endure. While Carter focuses on gender discrimination and the treatments females endure in the male donated societies they live in, Morrison focuses on Slavery and the dehumanising treatments the slaves receive such as rape, racism, lynching, killing and beating. From all these acts being carried out on these characters, they develop hatred for gender discrimination and Slavery to the point where they fight against them.

Our findings have proven that Angela Carter and Toni Morrison have effectively utilised the supernatural elements to challenge and resist gender discrimination and Slavery in their respective works, *Nights at the Circus* and *Beloved*. Through their masterful storytelling and incorporation of supernatural elements, both authors have woven narratives that expose the oppressive systems in their societies while empowering marginalised individuals. By employing supernatural elements, Carter and Morrison transcend social ills, enabling their characters to confront societal norms. In *Nights at the Circus*, Carter employs magic to explore the complexities of gender and sexuality, challenging traditional expectations and empowering her female protagonist. Meanwhile, in *Beloved*, Morrison uses the supernatural to resist the enduring trauma of Slavery, giving voice to the silenced and highlighting the strength and resilience of slaves. In both works, the authors employ the supernatural as a tool of resistance, ultimately revealing the transformative power of metaphysics in dismantling oppressive structures and advocating for social justice. Through their exceptional works, Angela Carter and Toni Morrison have demonstrated that the genre of supernatural fiction can serve as a powerful means to resist and challenge social injustices.

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