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**Intertextuality and the Winged Version of New Women in Angela
Carter's *Nights at the Circus***

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work

To my beloved, enduring, protective and the only kind-hearted family, my parents, Abd Elaziz and Dalila, who have always made sure to enhance my studies and help me financially and morally. To my dearest parents who have always been proud of my educational career and most important they being proud of me to be an English student.

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To every empowering and joyful person who helped me and felt happiness for me, who remove my pain and make me laugh.

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To that incredible woman who has reached this milestone through her prayers, may God heal you and keep you for us. My dear mother Sabrina.

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and may we continue to accomplish great things together.

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Abstract

The dissertation shows how postmodern British writer Angela Carter constructs a new image of female identity using intertextuality in her novel *Nights at the Circus* (1984). Carter's novel won the esteemed James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction in 1984. The aim of the study is twofold. First, it sheds light on how the novel discusses women's deprivation and marginalization during the era of its publication, and how feminist postmodernist writers defended women's rights and their values. Second, it shows how Angela Carter uses intertextuality as a powerful tool to create a new image of female identity, and symbolize 'the new winged woman', that is powerful, independent, and rebellious. In her novel, Carter challenges and undermines conventional ideas of womanhood by presenting a different perspective that transcends the subject-object distinction by utilizing intertextuality. To reach its aim, the study relies on feminist postmodernist approaches, as well as theories on intertextuality. The dissertation is structured into three chapters, each serving a distinct purpose. The first chapter serves as a theoretical framework for the entire dissertation, while the second and third chapters are analytical. The study analyzes the perspective of a new woman through the protagonist, Sophie Fevvers, a woman who breaks all boundaries of patriarchy and redefines female empowerment. Therefore, it endeavors to shed light on women's freedom and how they liberate themselves from male dominated society.

Keywords: Feminism, intertextuality, postmodernism, female identity, postmodern feminism, Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus*.

Table of contents

Dedication.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of contents	v
Introduction	1
Chapter one: Definitions and Theoretical Framework.....	5
I.1. Postmodernism: An overview	5
I.2. Feminism: An overview	9
I.2.1 Postmodern Feminism: An Overview	13
I.3. Overview of Intertextuality as a Literary Theory	18
I.4. Angela Carter as a Postmodern Feminist writer	21
Chapter Two: An Intertextual Analysis of Angela Carter’s <i>Nights at the Circus</i>.....	26
II.1. The Novel’s Synopsis.....	26
II.2. Exploring Intertextuality in <i>Nights at the Circus</i>	29
II.2.1. Mythical Intertextuality.....	29
II.2.2 References to Fairy Tales.....	36
II.2.3 Allusion to Other Prominent Figures and Literary Works.....	39
Chapter Three: The New Winged Woman in Angela Carter’s Novel	45

III.1.	Sophie Fevvers as an Enigmatic Winged Heroine.....	45
III.2.	Symbolism and Significance of Fevvers' Wings.....	49
III.3.	Flight as Liberation: Fevvers' Journey to self-discovery.....	54
	Conclusion	61
	Work Cited	64

Arabic / French Abstracts

Introduction

Postmodern literature emerged in the late twentieth century, directly after the end of the Second World War. It represents a departure from traditional literary forms and embraces a range of styles and techniques. Through these modern techniques and approaches, postmodern literature invites readers to engage in a world of imagination and challenge established norms and conventions.

Postmodernism started as a fringe movement in the 1970s but became more influential in the 1980s. Postmodern literature of the late twentieth century often uses techniques like metafiction and intertextuality to explore themes of fiction, narration, and identity. Within postmodernism, there is a perspective called postmodern feminism that examines the causes of gender inequality in society. Additionally, Writers who identify themselves as postmodern feminists take on the responsibility of presenting the history of women's fight for equality, while also acknowledging the persistent efforts made by women to demand fair treatment in the face of male dominance. One of these postmodern feminist writers is the British novelist Angela Carter. Her masterpiece work *Nights at the Circus* reveals a feminist perspective and creates a new ideas and about female identity.

Angela Carter is a highly acclaimed British novelist known for her distinctive and imaginative literary style. She employs her novel *Nights at the Circus* as a powerful tool to confront established patriarchal structures and challenge the universal patterns of oppression that have lasted throughout history. Besides, Carter writes in a style that combines elements of magical realism, fiction, and fairy tales and her stories frequently include strong female heroines who defy social norms and claim their independence.

The story revolves around Sophie Fevvers, a remarkable character who claims to be part- woman, part-bird that is why she becomes the star attraction of Colonel Kearney's

circus. Fevvers' magnificent wings and attractive appearance captivate the public's interest, earning her recognition and celebrity status. The novel challenges traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and identity, exploring the struggles and victories of a woman navigating a patriarchal society. Fevvers, as a strong and independent character, defies societal expectations and refuses to conform to conventional roles assigned to women.

Most postmodern feminist writers use intertextuality as a creative and critical tool to deconstruct and reconstruct meaning and to challenge established norms and structures. Accordingly, the aim of the study is twofold. First, it aims at exploring women's deprivation and marginalization during the era when the novel was written, and revealing how feminist postmodernists defended women's rights. Second, it sheds light on how Angela Carter uses intertextuality as a powerful tool to create a new image of female identity, the new winged woman that is powerful, independent and rebellious. Thus, in this dissertation, the focus is on intertextuality, specifically examining the presence of intertextual references and influences in Angela Carter's novel, *Nights at the Circus*, with a particular emphasis on the portrayal of the new winged woman character.

The quest of identity in the feminist theory plays a major role in portraying women's self-discovery and their progress of identity awareness under male domination. In that case, Angela Carter employs intertextuality in her writing to redefine female identity by utilizing literary and cultural references to subvert traditional gender norms. She challenges the preconceived notions surrounding women's identities and their struggle for liberation from male-dominated societies. Correspondingly, she challenges the presumption notions surrounding women's identities and their fight for freedom from patriarchal society.

From the aim of the study, several questions are raised: How do postmodern feminist writers use intertextuality as a powerful tool to create a new image of female identity? How does intertextuality contribute to the deconstruction and reimagining of female prototypes and

gender roles in Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*, particularly through the character of the new winged woman? How does the interplay between intertextuality and the portrayal of the new winged woman challenge or subvert traditional narratives of female identity, power, and agency? How does Fevvers's sense of not belonging contribute to her transformative journey of self-discovery?

To answer the above questions, this study adopts an analytical approach to examine the themes of deprivation, marginalization, transformation and female power that Angela Carter aims to deal with in her novel. The research also relies on postmodern feminism to facilitate the reimagining of female identity, highlighting the agency, empowerment, and resilience of women within the narrative. Additionally, it employs intertextuality to delve the intertextual dialogue and conversation between different literary sources within the novel (myth, fairy tales ...), that contribute to the richness and depth of the narrative. Through use of the analytical approach, intertextuality and postmodern feminism, the study intends to uncover the underlying themes and messages conveyed by Angela Carter through the interplay of intertextuality and female representation in her novel.

Angela Carter's work is so rich to be explored from different angles as a literary product. That is why feminists and philosophers have often explored Angela Carter's engagement with feminist theories. They delve into her use of magical realism and deconstruct her imagery to uncover social and political meanings embedded within her narratives. In this context, the feminist scholar Patricia Waugh has commended Angela Carter for her skillful use of various literary techniques and her ability to simultaneously address both theoretical and material aspects of women's lives. According to Waugh, Carter "has managed to employ metafictionality, illusionism, ironic parody, and deconstruction of gender binaries while sustaining a serious engagement with women's material conditions of existence" (Milosavljević 41). These techniques allow Carter to challenge and subvert

established norms surrounding gender. Moreover, Judith Butler, in her influential 1990 work *Gender Trouble*, argues that femininity and masculinity are deeply interconnected and cannot be easily separated. She challenges traditional notions of fixed and binary gender roles, highlighting the fluidity and instability of gender categories. Her ideas have had a significant impact on feminist and gender studies, encouraging critical examinations of the ways in which gender is formed and understood in society.

This modest work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter serves as a theoretical framework for the entire dissertation. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section one provides an overview of postmodernism as a new cultural phenomenon and its focuses on representing reality through language. However, the second section introduces feminism and postmodern feminism as two main theories that help in advocating for gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms throughout history. The third section sheds light on intertextuality as a literary theory provided by different scholars. The last section gives an insight into Angela Carter as a writer and her postmodern feminist approach.

The second chapter is an intertextual analysis of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*. The first section delves into the novel's Synopsis, providing a comprehensive analysis of its central themes and narrative structure. Moving forward, the subsequent section focuses on exploring intertextuality in the novel, examining its mythical references, drawing upon fairy tales, and alluding to other prominent figures and literary works.

The third chapter discusses the character of Fevvers, who is presented as the new winged woman in the novel. It is divided into three sections. The first section introduces Fevvers as an enigmatic winged heroine, as well as her origins and her passive experiences. However, the second section uncovers the symbolism and significance of Fevvers' wings. Hence, the third section explores her transformative journey of self-discovery and her profound sense of empowerment.

Chapter one: Definitions and Theoretical Framework

The first chapter provides a historical background for the whole dissertation. It presents the main approaches and key concepts that will be discussed in the analytical chapters. Since the case study is a postmodern and feminist work, the chapter first provides an overview of two literary theories such as postmodernism and feminism. It also sheds light on the most important theory, postmodern feminism, which fits better with the analysis of Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*. It also sheds light on how intertextuality is embraced by postmodern feminist writers as a means for subverting pre-existing texts, shedding light on women's marginalized voices and experiences, and challenging male-dominated social interactions. Finally, the chapter ends by giving an insight into Angela Carter and her postmodern feminist approach.

I.1. Postmodernism: An overview

Modernist literature was a major literary movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, after World War II, a new body of literature began to emerge, known as postmodernism, using metafiction, unreliable narrative, self-reflexivity, and intertextuality. Postmodernism takes on a variety of characteristics and often addresses both historical and political issues. The term is sometimes used to refer to a wide range of topics including architecture, historical theory, philosophy, and cinema.

The late twentieth century coincided with postmodernism, which supported the idea that reality is not mirrored in human understanding, but rather constructed as individuals find their own reality, it denied the application of logical thinking. An outstanding contributor to postmodern theory is Linda Hutcheon's book *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988). In this book, Hutcheon asserts in the late twentieth century, "Postmodernism has not replaced the liberal humanism of earlier centuries, but has seriously challenged it" (3-4). In this sense, postmodernism, as a philosophical and cultural movement has not totally supplanted the

dominant ideology of liberal humanism that reigned in previous centuries. Instead, it has provided it with an immense issue. Individualism, reason, and universal truths are all valued in liberal humanism. It believes in human beings' innate goodness and rationality and strives to explain the world through objective and universal principles. However, postmodernism has posed a severe challenge to previous centuries dominant beliefs. It has put the objectivity and universality of knowledge into question, underlining the social and cultural factors that form the perspective of the universe. Postmodernism has questioned the concept of a permanent and stable identity, emphasizing the fluid and changing nature of individual and societal identities, as well, it has additionally challenged the power systems that incorporated in language, discourse, and representation.

Definitions of postmodernism come to differ according to the principles of inclusion or exclusion, affirmation or resistance, mainstream or opposition. Originally, a reaction to modernism, referring to the lack of artistic, intellectual, or cultural thought or organized principle. Julie Lindas points out, "postmodernism did not emerge as a cohesive movement in the same manner Modernism did, but rather an umbrella term to denote the various and diverse modes of engaging in with the changing conditions" (04). Moreover, postmodernism is flourished as a movement in philosophy and literary theory, as it is stated by Gerhard Hoffmann: "postmodernism more rigorously as an overall cultural, social, and political phenomenon" (36). It relates to numerous developments in philosophy, film, architecture, art, literature, and culture. However, it can be defined as a collection of existence, identity, historical progress, intellectual attitude, or discourse.

Postmodernism is one of the most divisive movements in the history of art and design. Between the years of 1970 and 1990. The term postmodern, considered separate from 'modern,' appears to have originated in 1917 by the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz to describe the 'nihilism' of twentieth-century Western civilization, a concept he borrowed from

Friedrich Nietzsche. It reappeared in 1934 in the work of the Spanish literary critic Federico de Onis to refer to the reaction to literary modernism. It was originally used in English in 1939, by the theologian Bernard Iddings Bell to indicate the failure of secular modernism and a return to religion, and by the historian Arnold Toynbee to refer to the references of the post-World War II era. Gehard Hofferma asserts, "Postmodernism is a complex phenomenon. It is a product of the sixties." (13). According to the quotation, postmodernism's foundations were found in the 1960s. Significant social, cultural, and political changes occurred during this decade, such as the civil rights movement, anti-war demonstrations, feminist movements, and the creation of cultural movements. These changes in society and difficulties in establishing frameworks and norms had an impact on the emergence of postmodernist thought. The term postmodernism has become the most widespread and has sparked the most intense debate. Several attempts have been made to understand the implications and expressions of postmodernism for literature, many of which have descended into problems of historical or formal definition. Postmodernism dated back to a variety of intellectual and cultural movements that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is crucial to understand that postmodernism is a complex and varied movement with no single creator. Rather, it arose because of the confluence of numerous intellectual, artistic, and cultural developments that contradicted modernist principles and opened up new possibilities of thinking about reality, meaning, and identity (Mondal).

Postmodernism characterized by uniqueness of meaning, skepticism and focus on the image or symbol behind the object, as it is pointed out by Hoffmann "postmodernism is said to be characterized by irrationality, immanence, discontinuity or difference, and surface" (36). Hutcheon affirms, "the center of liberal humanism, the totalizing or homogenizing system once fundamental to our thought processes, no longer completely holds, and, from the decentered perspective, the marginal or the ex-centric, such as women and minorities, take on

new significance” (12). Postmodernism criticizes the assumption that there is a single, universal viewpoint that can fully encompass human experiences and identities. Individuals and groups those were previously deemed on the margins or ex-centric, such as women and minorities, gain greater relevance and acceptance from a decentered stance.

Postmodernism underlines the necessity of many perceptions and the importance of including a diverse range of voices in order to have a more complete picture of society and culture. It matters the centers power and emphasizes the importance of marginalized perspectives in creating the comprehension of the world. In his book *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale describes postmodernism as “an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural” (37). In the context of postmodernism, the existence of the idea of a solitary, unified world or reality becomes unstable. Postmodernism, on the other hand, gives a vision of numerous universes or truths flourishing in an anarchic landscape. The concentration is on the variety of concurrent views, narratives, and interpretations, it rejects the concept of a single, objective truth and recognizes that the world experience is impacted by a variety of individual viewpoints and cultural settings. It recognizes knowledge’s fragmentation, and it emphasizes the diversity of experiences and opinions within society. Postmodernism, rather than pursuing a single great narrative, welcomes the idea of several narratives, each with its own validity and relevance.

Postmodern literature refers to works of literature published after World War II. The main objective of postmodern literature is to escape from conventional traditions by experimenting with new literary devices, forms, genres, styles, pure context, fragmentation, metafiction and intertextuality. Lindas states, “postmodern literature recognizes and reveals its inner workings” (15). Postmodern writers mainly use sarcasm and humor in their writings such as Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon and Joseph Heller, etc... It has inspired many writers, including Lyn Bernstein, Charles Hejinian, and Bob Perelman, who found

inspiration in various postmodern techniques, including cynicism, pastiche, metafiction, and magical realism. These techniques influenced and shaped their work, allowing them to explore new and unconventional approaches to poetry.

Postmodernism focuses on representing reality through language. It works as a reconstructor of new worlds out of old ones, it participates in deconstruction and reconstruction. It opposes the idea of a linear progression in artistic and cultural development in preference for an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates many styles, ideas, and motivations from various periods. “Postmodernism indulges in a volatile mix of the old with new” (Den Abbeele 17). Postmodernism frequently combines parts of past artistic movements or historical references with creative and typical techniques, which creates a dynamic and unexpected aesthetic landscape. The combination of old and new demonstrates a postmodern attitude that seeks to question and disrupt established patterns and beliefs.

I.2. Feminism: An overview

From long a time ago, women were always treated as objects rather than human beings. They lived in a patriarchal society in which all advantages belonged to men. A woman’s main job was only to be a mother, to raise children, and to obey her husband. She was susceptible to marginalization and deprivation throughout her life. Accordingly, in the twentieth century, a group of intellectual warrior women stand to fight for their rights through writings, they led to the emergence to what is called “feminism”, which is seen as a protector for any woman.

At its core, feminism advocates that women should believe in their full social, political, and economic rights and illustrates how men dominate social relationships and restrict women’s opportunities. As a term, feminism can be defined, according to the *Online Cambridge Dictionary*, as “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to

achieve this state". Women are human beings just like men, and the rights readily available to men should be equal to women, and have equal opportunities in the social, political, and economic realms. In this context, Stephanie Hodgson-wright states, "Most of women sought to challenge the prevailing idea that women were an inferior branch of the human race" (04). In the same vein, Delaney affirms, "women should share equality in society's opportunities and scarce resources" (qtd in Mohajan 11).

Feminism is the method utilized to categorize and reframe masculinity and femininity, as well as arguing for the accession of women's financing in social classes. It seeks to clarify the circumstances of gender inequality, and it was one of the primeval movements in world history. Feminist movement throughout history on a global scale is beyond the scope that women have always faced subordination and secondary class status. Feminist thinking in western societies has religious roots. In Catholic belief, women are the originators of sin, as Eve seduced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, and caused the fall of humankind from the Garden of Eden. They believe that women are inferior race as God created Eve after Adam by referring to Judeo-Christian mythology (Günalan 02). Catholics believe that women are a sin that caused in disruption of the world. Women have been around since the world began facing all kinds of rejection from start to finish. The educated female opponents afraid of her, and they work hard to restrict women's rights out of dread of losing their capacity to dominate them. Accordingly, in his book *Education of a Christian Woman*, the humanist Juan Luis Vives writes:

[I]t neither become a woman to rule a school, nor to live among men, or speak abroad, and shake off her demureness and honesty, either altogether or else a great part: which if she be good, it were better to be at home within and unknown to other folks. And in company to hold her tongue demurely. And let few see her, and

none at all hear her.... For Adam was the first made, and after Eve, and Adam was not betrayed, the woman was betrayed into the breach of the commandment. Therefore because a woman is a frail thing, and of weak discretion, and that may lightly be deceived: which thing our first mother Eve sheweth, whom the devil caught with a light argument. Therefore a woman should not teach, lest when she hath taken a false opinion and believe of anything, she spread it into the hearers. (qtd in Stephanie Hodgson-wrigh 5)

Despite facing repeated rejection from man, she refused to surrender her autonomy and allowing herself to be controlled by any man. To earn her place, she has delivered her voice to the furthest and deepest corners of the world, fighting insults of every kind, protecting herself from oppression, marginalization, and exploitation in patriarchal society. A woman may never have said ‘no’ to anyone before. Accordingly, the feminist movement seeks to bring back justice wherever it exists. It strongly opposes all forms of discrimination and aims to provide equal chances for women to participate actively in public life.

Feminists and scholars have branched the history of this movement into three “waves”. The opening wave is primarily concerned with property rights and the right to vote, the following wave is feminism, focusing on equality and anti-discrimination, and the third wave is feminism, which started in the 1990s as a backlash to the second wave’s perceived privileging of white, straight women. (“Feminism’s Long History”). Feminism is an ideology that promotes equal rights between sexes, it first emerged as a movement to fight for women’s liberties that used the power of the pen to explore more about women’s rights and treatment. Feminism and literature can be used interchangeably to help each other. Feminist writers gave enough effort to write and express the female’s power and explore her identity to the world, as

they used words as a weapon and a tool of resistance. Accordingly, Lisa Maria views feminism as “a kind of literacy, a way of reading both texts and everyday life from a particular stance” (01). Until the 1980s, there was not much interest in women’s literary work in the field of English Literature, which was predominantly taught at British universities. Male-authored works overly dominated it, and female works were either neglected or eclipsed. Writing was often regarded as inappropriate for women in contrast to men’s literary pursuits.

Women writers faced an enormous obstacle during the nineteenth century since they were not seen as artists but were regarded mostly for their gender. As a consequence, some female novelists took on male identities. Regardless of their subjects and capacities, women writers were frequently judged on their femininity. However, women working under male authority or patriarchal institutions founded a feminist-oriented group to make those who oppose them believe that women were capable of producing art that was equal to that of men. They began to change feminist critics perceptions of the portrayal of women in literature by reimagining classic works that were predominantly authored by men. They have studied anything from Chaucer and Shakespeare right up to contemporary works, looking principally for victimized or stereotypically passive representations to criticize, or else searching for radical breaks from the mold to celebrate. The literary works written by female authors have evolved into a domain dominated by women, allowing them the freedom to write about any topic and express their thoughts, feelings, and identities. At this instant, women writers are able to create the appropriate image of women which is powerful, independent, self-reliant and free of all prejudices. They also write books and novels embossed with their names and gave all the credits (Lebihan 104).

Virginia Woolf, in her extended essay *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), addresses the issue of the rarity of female writers and their lack of confidence in signing their works as her

main concern. She argues that the woman writer “has to encourage herself to write by supposing that what she writes will never be published” (50). Moreover, Woolf claims that “here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one” (38). With these lines, Virginia affirms her annoyance with the patriarchal culture in which women are marginalized and silenced. A feminist is someone who advocates for equal rights for women and contributes to the feminist movement. Feminists struggle to strengthen the female voice, reconstruct women’s identities, and promote the idea that women are equal to men in all aspects of life. Angela Carter is one of the boldest feminist writers, known for the power of language and discourse and remarkable techniques in her writing to demonstrate the strength and capacity of women, as well as the subjectivity of women in her writing. In all her novels, she chooses a female character as a protagonist to shed light on the problems and struggles that women face. In each novel, Carter used certain procedures to reach out with her message.

Feminism, as a literary, cultural, and political movement, has played an essential role in challenging and transforming gender inequalities throughout history. It has long been a powerful and influential movement that advocates for gender equality, challenges patriarchal structures, and seeks to destroy oppressive systems. Over the years, feminist theories and perspectives have evolved and diversified, covering a range of ideologies and approaches. Among these subgenres are cultural feminism, Marxist feminism, postmodern feminism and many others.

I.2.1 Postmodern Feminism: An Overview

Women continue to be oppressed in Western societies, but the nature of this oppression differs over time and across cultures. Women’s resistance has also evolved to reflect these changes in the ways that is dominance exercised over them. Additionally, the

dominance of men in cultural norms, religious beliefs, and scientific knowledge has kept women in the minority in western societies. However, with the continuous rise of the feminist movement, feminist theories have multiplied, flourished, and gained popularity.

Postmodern feminism is a branch of feminist theory that emerged in the late 20th century within the broader context of postmodernism. It critiques and builds upon the ideas of second-wave feminism, which focused on gender equality and women's rights. Postmodern feminism is a particular type of postmodernism and a specific kind of feminist theory that has emerged over the past few decades. It is a subgenre that combines the critical insights of postmodernism with the feminist project. In this context, Sands and Nuccio states, "although postmodern feminism is related to poststructuralist theory, postmodern philosophy, and French feminist theory, it bears an uneasy relationship to both feminism and postmodernism" (492). Postmodern feminism has progressively increased women's voices and emphasized the equality of women and men, raising the acceptance of the idea of gender equality among people. "If society can learn to value "feminine" traits as much as "masculine" traits, women's oppression will be a bad memory" (Tong 3). Postmodern feminism examines and analyzes gender inequality in society. Additionally, it emphasizes the subject of gender equality, demonstrates the tenacity of women, and examines how male dominance oppresses women (Sands and Nuccio 492).

Theorists and scholars like Judith Butler, Helen Cixous, and Julia Kristiva have contributed to postmodern feminist discourses by examining the intersections of gender, race, and power. For instance, Julia Kristiva is a psychoanalyst inspired by Lacan's work. She adopts Lacan's idea of Oedipal and post-Oedipal stages with the Symbolic order and takes them further. She disagrees with the concepts of "feminine", which is associated with female biology, and the "masculine", which is associated with male biology. She claims that once a

child enters Symbolic order, he or she begins to identify himself / herself with their mother or father, depending on their decision, they become either masculine or feminine (Tong 158).

In her book *Feminist Thought*, Rosemarie Tong has discussed how Cixous criticizes the patriarchal system for creating oppositional binary thinking and how women were always given an inferior position. Thus, the existence of women in a man's world depends only on his terms. She is either the other for man, she does not exist, or she is unthought of. As it is seen, a man is considered the "self" whereas a woman is considered the "other". Rosemarie Tong draws attention to the existence of women within a world that is predominantly shaped and defined by men. In this context, she notes, "after man is done thinking about woman, what is left for her is unthinkable" (276). Tong's words underscore the urgent need for a feminist perspective that challenges the existing systems and seeks to recognize and validate women's different opinions, power, and independence. Further, Tong discusses Helen Cixous ideas and dichotomies, which have given women a position below men in authority. Moreover, Cixous mentions various dichotomous pairs in her essay "Sorties," to identify both genders, man and woman, for example: active versus passive, sun versus moon, day versus night, writing versus speaking, parole versus écriture, high versus low, etc... (276). In this regard, women are related to anything that is passive, natural, dark, low, or highly negative, while man is associated with everything that is active, cultural, light, high or generally positive (276).

A number of women made the decision to put their feelings and ideas into words in order to convey how much they were suffering because of social injustices. Many women turned to writing as a way to express their thoughts and emotions because they saw it as a way to escape a society that marginalized them and considered them property, not human beings. In Cixous's opinion, one way to act is to write: "I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. The woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to

writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies... The woman must put herself into... by her own movement” (“Sorties” 875).

“The Laugh of the Medousa” is an essay written by Helene Cixous in which she states, “the future must no longer be determined by the past” (875). Cixous refuses to repeat what happened before. For her, “ it’s time to liberate the new woman from the old by listening to her, knowing what she went through, and being able to accept and love her as she is” (878). Although she could not reject the effects of the past on all women, she considered the traces of the past as a secret of their strength. That is why she insisted that women must write themselves. In this regard, Cixous insists on women writers to decisively use their pens: “why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it” (876). She also adds: “write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man” (877).

Female writers gain advantages from postmodern feminism’s rejection of rigid thinking as it allows them to surpass the mindset of traditional and patriarchal ideas. Postmodern feminists seek to remove the conceptual grids and reduce the distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine, sex and gender. All these boundaries have kept women under the terms of men rather than relying on their own (Tong 9). Judith Butler relies on Simone de Beauvoir’s work to examine the intricate relationship between genders and how cultural norms affect how we see femininity and masculinity. Accordingly, Butler writes: “I read Beauvoir who explained that to be a woman within the terms of a masculinist culture is to be a source of mystery and unknowability for men” (Butler vii). According to Beauvoir, men view women as mysterious and unknowable beings. Evidently, this idea asserts that women are frequently objectified and seen as enigmatic individuals in patriarchal societies, which reinforces the power imbalances and gender inequities existing across these communities.

Judith Butler is a philosopher and gender theorist who developed the concept of gender performativity. According to her, gender is a set of actions that comply with societal norms. Butler's most famous work is *Gender Trouble* (1999), in which she examines the relationship between sex and gender. In addition, she rejects the idea that men and women are innately different. Therefore, she advocates Simone de Beauvoir's suggestion that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one (Tong 281). Moreover, for her, there is no essential link between a person's gender and sex. In addition, gender was always reproduced and reinforced by people via their words and acts, not just by society as a whole. This means that, what is considered an essential masculine or feminine, identity is formed through every day's behaviors, speeches, gestures, dress standards, habits, etc. In other words, people perform their gender, rather than being born with it.

Mary Joe Frug was a professor at Harvard Law School and New York University School of Law. She is an American lawyer and legal scholar. Frug is regarded as a pioneer of legal postmodern feminist theory because she is the first to introduce postmodernism into the field of law. Most of her work is collected in the *Postmodern Legal Feminism* book. She explains why postmodernism offers more hope for women in law by identifying strands of legal feminism. Her life and work are dedicated to ending violence against women (9). According to Frug, "*Postmodern Legal Feminism* is a careful study of the ways in which legal discourses construct the various meanings of 'women', simultaneously, it uncovers the ways in which these discourses are, in turn, constructed by gender" (11). Moreover, she declares, "feminists on 'the sameness' side of the sameness/difference position strive to create formal legal equality" (11). In their opinion, women's rights should be equal to that of men. Additionally, she criticizes how the legal system favors men over women, why only women are likely supposed to be wives and mothers, and how they treat her as property rather than an independent individual.

Finally, postmodern feminism aims to destroy the patriarchal norms that have dominated society and contributed to gender inequity. Once inequality is identified, postmodern feminists seek to confront these oppressive patriarchal practices by creating new ways of being, expressing oneself, and acting that go against patriarchal gender standards. Prominent postmodern female figures include authors such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, and Margaret Atwood, whose works often subvert traditional gender roles and challenge dominant narratives. They often challenge traditional notions of gender, identity, and narrative structure. They experiment with fragmented narratives, intertextuality, and metafiction, creating works that reflect the complexities and multiplicities of women's experiences.

I.3. Overview of Intertextuality as a Literary Theory

When we delve into a work of literature, it is widely acknowledged that we are seeking to uncover its inherent meaning. In essence, the reader extracts meaning from various literary pieces, and this intricate process of deriving meaning from different works is commonly referred to as interpretation. Simply, reading allows the reader to find a network of textual relations. Graham Allen, an associate professor of modern English, argues in his book of *Intertextuality*, “meaning becomes something that exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations”(1). Reading then turns into a process of moving between texts.

The term intertextuality was initially presented by the French semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s. She adopted this term from the Latin word “Intertexto” which means to intermingle while weaving. According to her, no text is self-created or self-born, and no work of literature is the product of a single author, however, each work is related to other works in some way. Therefore, any literary text cannot be regarded as a production of one author but as a connection and incorporation between other texts. Kristeva defines

intertextuality, in her essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” as “A mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (37). In other words, it is clear that text producers cannot be the sole source of inspiration for the creation of any piece, since they frequently quote from pre-existent sources. Thus, intertextuality occurs when one text alludes to another by using recognizable or common elements from the referenced texts. Additionally, According to Kristeva, the majority of words and phrases we employ have already been encountered or read before, and each literary work contributes to the evolution of another piece. To this extent, “each word (text) is an inter section of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read” (37).

By combining the Soussurian and the Bakhtinian theories, Kristeva produced the first articulation of the intertextual theory (Allen 3). On the one hand, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure played a significant role in understanding intertextuality by identifying the systematic features of language, he demonstrated the relational nature of meaning and texts. According to him, a sign can be seen as a two-sided coin combining a signified, which indicates the concept, with a sound-image represented as a signifier (Allen 8). On the other hand, the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, takes a very different approach to language, which is more concerned with the word’s existence within specific social sites, registers, and moments of utterance and reception (11). This means that the meaning of every word or utterance is affected by the speaker’s relationship to other people in a certain culture during a particular period of time.

Graham Allen’s observation about intertextuality highlights its significance and relevance in contemporary cultural contexts. In this regard, he writes, “intertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life” (5). Intertextuality then recognizes the extensive web of connections that exists within our cultural environment by placing an emphasis on the

principles of relationality, and interdependence. Moreover, the French literary theorist Roland Barthes, in his famous essay “The Death of the Author”, argues, “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader” (148). In other words, there is a multiplicity of meaning contained in one text, and the author is not the only inventor of meaning; rather, the reader forms and indicates it from his/her personal background. Barthes also states, “the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture” (146). So, the reader’s own previous readings, experiences, and position within the culture serve as a connection and provide new ways for intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a concept that applies to all texts, not just literature or specific genres. It means that texts are created, exist, and make sense through their connections to other utterances, existing texts, and even different systems of signs and codes. These connections can be in the form of referencing, quoting, paraphrasing, or transforming ideas from past or contemporary sources. Further, intertextuality creates a dynamic interaction between different texts and time periods. It allows us to draw connections, gain insights, and experience the ongoing conversation between past and present. Hutcheon, in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, defines intertextuality as “A formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context” (Hutcheon 118). The quote emphasizes the perspective that intertextuality bridges the gap between the past and the present by allowing readers to connect with earlier texts. Thus, this connection with the past enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the present.

Authors use intertextuality in their writing for different reasons. Some of them use it to connect their work to a specific tradition or highlight the influence of other writers. In some

cases, intertextuality helps readers understand a new work by comparing it to something familiar. Indeed, by employing intertextuality, authors connect diverse narratives, allowing readers to make connections and understand how various concepts and topics relate to each other. It adds the work more richness and encourages readers to explore the larger literary world where texts influence and interact with one another. Ultimately, intertextuality opens up a universe of shared ideas, influences, and interpretations, enhancing the reading experience and showcasing the interconnected nature of literature.

To make things a little more concrete, the tale of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is implicitly adopted by William Golding in his novel *Lord of the Flies*. Yet, Golding has used the idea of a group of adventurers getting stranded on a lonely island. Similarly, Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling is another excellent example of intertextuality. It has many resemblances to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, in which Lewis Carroll utilized the looking glass as a passage into a magical world, and J.K. Rowling did the same. Finally, the *Lion King* by Disney is based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in terms of its main plot.

I.4. Angela Carter as a Postmodern Feminist writer

Angela Carter was born in May 7th, 1940 in Eastbourne, Sussex, and grew up in a quiet, middle-class family in suburb of London. Angela Carter is known as a radical-libertarian feminist and is considered one of the most original, daring, and stylish British writers of the twentieth century. Angela Carter is widely regarded as a postmodern feminist writer, as her works incorporate key elements and themes of both postmodernism and feminism. Carter's writing engages with postmodernist techniques, such as intertextuality, fragmentation, metafiction, and self-reflexivity, while simultaneously exploring feminist concerns and challenging traditional gender roles ("Angela Carter: Biography, Bloody Chamber, Books").

Carter's work primarily focused on her criticism of certain types of feminism, radical liberation feminism, and the patriarchal role that women have long held. Female protagonists often defy oppression, fight for sexual and political equality, and assume empowered roles. Her subversion of traditional narratives, use of intertextuality, and exploration of fluid identities position her as a significant figure within the realm of postmodern feminism. Her works included a wide range of postmodern strategies and feminist themes and influences, from magic realism and gothic fantasy to traditional fairy tales. Angela Carter wrote novels, short stories, poems, and journalistic articles.

As a dedicated feminist writer, Angela Carter has been both celebrated and criticized for her outstanding writing on gender performance and sexual politics. Her writing challenged by individuals who disagree with her on two grounds, her anti-essentialist behavior and her obvious reproduction and complicity with the oppressive patriarchal system. Angela Carter is a controversial feminist writer in the current literary surroundings since her work addresses different gender and cultural themes in a subversive and assertive manner. Carter's approach to postmodern feminism is distinguished by her investigation of controversial, imaginative, and transformative narratives that challenge traditional gender stereotypes and power systems. Thus, her writings are seen as constructive and positive to women and feminists. As a postmodern feminist writer, she believes that gender is created by culture and society rather than men. She believes that women have been oppressed not because they are innately inferior to males, but because they have been socially and politically suppressed. The postmodern feminist supposes that the modernist view of feminism emphasizes gender inequalities between men and women while neglecting gender differences within each gender. In simple words, postmodern feminists, as Carter, also believe that gender is not something that people born with, but rather something that they perform (Nickerson).

In her works, Carter challenges binary classifications by presenting female characters as strong individuals who defy cultural norms with desires, ambitions, and the ability to shape their own destinies. Additionally, she exposes different aspects on how cultural and social standards support gender inequity and restrict women's liberty and self-determination. Through her narratives, she uncovers the oppressive processes that control and subjugate women, and fight for an end of these forms of abuse. Moreover, Carter combines magical realism and intertextuality, relying on a variety of sources to challenge and destroy conventional ideas. Besides, language and storytelling play crucial roles in Carter's postmodern feminist approach, as she explores how they can be used to resist and change established ideas. Therefore, she proves how language can challenge and change dominant stories, giving a voice to those who are often ignored (Bryndová 18).

Angela Carter's famous works include: *Shadow Dance* (1965), which gained public attention, *The Magic Toy Shop* (1967), which was awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, *Several Perceptions* (1968), *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and *Love* (1971). The novels she wrote during her stay in Japan are: *The Inferior Desire of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). In fact, Carter did not gain the reader and viewer's attention till 1980s by her collection of short stories, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Her eighth novel *Nights at the Circus* (1984) gain international success and won the esteemed James Tait Black memorial Prize for fiction. Her last novel *Wise Children* (1991), due to her illness and suffering, it was surrounded by grievous atmosphere.

In her novel *Nights at the Circus*, Carter uses magical realism and fiction to convey her feminist concerns. By this, she employs narrative experimentation, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction to reveal the power of female sexuality and desire. Roberts adeptly describes Carter's use of sex as a dominant motif in her text as follows: "since Carter didn't hide her sex, her gender, but used it as a springboard for her writing. I

think she was seen as a kind of literary monster. Eventually, a space was made for her, her greatness was recognized” (qtd in Abdelgawad Mahmoud 11). Carter’s primary concern is not justice. She does not like the idea that women have to endure and suffer, she wants what women need, power, freedom and sex. In addition, she finds that there are no fundamental differences between men and women that could prevent this.

After Angela Carter’s death in 1992 at the age of 51 from lung cancer, her literary works experienced surge in popularity and rapid sales in Britain and internationally. Although Carter is British writer, her works strongly reflect what women of the American feminist movement have been fighting for.

To sum up, feminism and postmodernism intersect and intertwine to challenge and reshape societal norms, and gender inequity. On one hand, feminism advocates for gender equality, challenges traditional rules, and empowers marginalized voices. on the other hand, postmodernism rejects unchanging beliefs and embraces multiple perspectives. Furthermore, the merging of these perspectives has given rise to postmodern feminism, which celebrates flexibility and individual autonomy in defining identity. It also promotes for modern society where everyone has the right for freedom and equality. Hence, the postmodern feminist approach encourages us to think outside the box and break from the norms that hold us back, and it enables us to live in a world where everyone can be themselves and have the same opportunities, regardless of their gender. Similarly, intertextuality serves as a powerful tool that bridges the past and present, allowing for transformation. It encourages readers to actively interact with literature by making connections between various works. Together, feminism, postmodernism, and intertextuality offer pathways for critical thinking, resistance, and the reimagining of cultural narratives, pushing us toward a more equitable and enlightened future.

Consequently, female writers have embraced feminism from a diverse perspective, breaking the chains of suffering and silence imposed on women due to male domination and gender inequality. Female authors performed a significant role in opposing and subverting traditional rules, giving voice to the experiences of women that were previously marginalized and ignored. Correspondingly, these writers have contributed to the evolution of the feminist theory by increasing its interest and addressing the intersectionality of multiple forms of discrimination. In addition to carrying about societal change, their combined efforts have given women the capacity to recover their identities and achieve a future of equality and liberty. Thus, all of these historical endeavors have eventually been successful in providing all women with the equality and the good life conditions that they have already deserved from a long time.

Chapter Two: An Intertextual Analysis of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*

The novel *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter is a great example of a work that embraces intertextuality as well as it skillfully combines myths, fairy tales, and allusions to construct a complex storytelling. The novel is a richly intertextual work that draws upon a variety of literary and cultural references. Accordingly, the second chapter analyzes intertextual references and influences present in Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* to contribute in understanding the author's creative process, insightful intentions and her feminist perspective. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to highlight how Carter uses Myths, traditional fairy tales and allusion to outstanding figures and literary sources for the purpose of subverting them to create her own unique narrative.

II.1. The Novel's Synopsis

The British writer Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* (1984) is a feminist postmodern literary work that combined fictional and historical events. It explores the condition of British women in the late 19th century, as it offers a critique of patriarchal ideology and women's roles in society. The novel's story revolves around the extraordinary Sophie Fevvers, a circus performer who claims to be half- woman and half-bird. The novel addresses themes of identity, gender roles, and the fight for freedom. The book is divided into three stages, the first of which is set in London, where Walser encounters Fevvers. Many stories about the enigmatic protagonist Fevvers are presented in this part, in addition to how she becomes a world-renowned star. The novel opens in London in 1899 on the cusp of the new century. *Nights at the Circus* begins with Jack Walser, a young American journalist, interviewing Fevvers to discover the truth behind her myth. Walser is trying to replace Fevvers' fake story with a sincere equivalent of his own in which he reveals the winged lady tale as a fraud. The novel's first act occurs in Fevvers' dressing room after

one of her circus performances. Even before Walser asks, she quickly and carelessly grabs control of the conversation and she begins to explain how she was born. Fevvers shouts and immediately begins detailing her birth circumstances. She asserts she was found in a basket at a brothel's doorstep and that she was not born but hatched. Lizzie discovered the infant nestled within the laundry basket, left there by an unknown person. The baby was carefully swaddled in fresh straw, peacefully slumbering amidst a scattering of broken eggshells. Lizzie stumbled over this poor, abandoned creature, grasped her that moment in her arms out of the plentiful goodness of her heart and took her in. Fevvers gets through everyday life like any other children of her age, except for the raised bump on her shoulders, further more things began to change as she entered adolescence. The feathery appendages began to rise, at fourteen she gained wings and her nickname changed to the winged creature. Under Lizzie's guidance, she learned to fly. The present part of Fevvers' existence, however, comes to an unexpected end with the death of Ma Nelson, the brothel's owner. Because Ma Nelson did not leave a will, as a result, Fevvers and Lizzie become homeless, forced to relocate to Lizzie's sister but the family runs into financial difficulties.

Fevvers moves out to Madame Schreck's home, and then she shows her as an exhibit with other women with unique appearances in her uncommon freak show. Madame Schreck sells her to a wealthy customer, Christian Rosencreutz, who intends to sacrifice her for his own gain. The aerialist refuses her destiny as a sacrifice angel and uses her wings to fly away from the enchantment set for her. Another crucial part of her wings is her ability to avoid the many traps created for her, most of which are set by sadistic men. After a few days, Lizzie courageously volunteered to become an aerialist in Colonel Kearney's circus, thereby embarking on a remarkable journey that would unfold as a captivating and mythical tale. This extraordinary narrative transcended the confines of possibility, stretching the limits of

Walser's imagination and leaving him in a state of awe and fascination. The first encounter between Fevvers and Walser is aggressive and combative because he is suspicious and mystified, and he struggles to believe the winged aerialist and her fantastical tales. His main goal is to expose Fevvers as a forgery, but he is fascinated, charmed, and mystified by a magical event that occurred. The novel's first section ends Fevvers' story late at night.

The second section is set in St. Petersburg and depicts the lives of the Circus's inhabitants, including Fevvers the star of the circus. Colonel Kearney's Circus is getting prepared for their Grand Imperial Tour of Russia and Japan, and Walser joins the circus as a clown in order to be nearer to Fevvers and continue his exploration. The circus is a configuration for extraordinary, weird, and remarkable events. Colonel Kearney and his pig Sybil, who has the gift of prophecy, run the circus. Many new characters are introduced, including the Ape-Man and his team of intelligent apes, as well as the mute princess of Abyssinia and her dancing tigers. Walser frequently finds himself in dangerous situations, from which he is always rescued by Fevvers. While she is still lauded as a star and the main attraction of the show, Walser has transformed from a journalist to a clown. Following the disorienting success of the Grand Gala opening, Fevvers obtains valuable invitations, only accepting the Grand Duke's. Fevvers nearly dies during a visit to Rosencreutz (Grand Duke), who wants to enslave her. Luckily, she is able to run away thanks to some mysterious magical trick, and board a train leaving St. Petersburg and transporting the entire circus to Siberia.

The final section takes a handful cast of characters out of Russia and into Siberia, where more characters are pushed into the action and weaved back to earlier parts of the story to make everything fit together. However, the journey comes to an end when the train is blown up by bandits and all circus members except Walser are taken hostage. Many circus animals are killed, the crew disperses, and Fevvers and Walser are separated for the first time. He tragically loses his memory and sense of self, wandering aimlessly through the forest.

After spending several days in the forest, he meets a Shaman who accepts him as his assistant and serves as his spiritual guide. Over time, he rediscovers a bit of his memory and language and progressively merges into the village's life. While Fevvers and Lizzie leave the Maestro's school to look for Walser, whom they eventually find, and the story comes to the conclusion with them together at the dawn of the new century. Their encounter, the union of "New Man" and "New Woman", represents a better world for women in the future, in which men no longer hold a superior position and women do not exist purely as men's property (Fouzia and Brella 33-35)

II.2. Exploring Intertextuality in *Nights at the Circus*

Intertextuality is a literary concept that indicates the relationship between texts when one work alludes to or borrows elements from another text. In addition, authors frequently employ this approach to add greater significance to their works. Intertextuality is an important part of understanding Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* development and significance, since her use of intertextuality permits her to examine a variety of topics, including the interrelation between power and identity as well as how gender and sexuality are constructed. Overall, the novel's use of intertextuality is a useful tool for analyzing complex topics and concepts.

II.2.1. Mythical Intertextuality:

The central character of the novel is a winged woman named Sophie Fevvers who performs in a circus. She embodies a complicated combination of traditional myths and narratives about women who possess the power of flying. The concept of flying women is an important motif in the novel, and it is an idea that is deeply intertextual. Moreover, in many cultures, flying women are represented as symbols of freedom, independence, and power. In this context, the novel offers a new vision of female freedom and authority that is not constrained by patriarchal norms. In this way, intertextuality serves as a powerful tool for

analyzing and questioning dominant perspectives about gender and power in literature and culture (Aster).

Women Who Fly by Serinity Young is a book that examines the historical and cultural relevance of female figures that are associated with flying. In this book, the author covers the mythology of goddesses, witches, and other female characters from numerous cultures that have been represented as flying or carrying the power to fly. The book is divided into two main sections; each one contains twelve sections that are committed to a different type of winged female creature. On the one hand, the first part of the book explores the fantastic and mythical representations of flying women, including ancient flying goddesses, swan maidens, Valkyries, and Apsaras. However, on the other hand, the second part of the book focuses on real-life human women, such as witches, flying mystics, and historical or inspirational airborne women (Gilbert 231). Young, in her book, explores the concept of the heroic female and challenges traditional notions of female heroism found in myth, folklore, and literature. She emphasizes the importance of flying women in raising questions about these established notions of female heroism. In this context, she emphasizes, “flying women raise important questions about what exactly constitutes the heroic female. Traditionally in myth, folklore, and literature, the heroine is a good, one who knows her place in the patriarchal scheme of things and does well in the traditional female roles of passive maiden, self-sacrificing mother, or obedient and dutiful wife.” (4) The quote highlights, how traditionally female heroes in myth and literature, are depicted as relating to patriarchal expectations. These heroines are frequently portrayed in passive and submissive positions, and their value relies on how well they can perform their responsibilities as mothers and wives. In this sense, the existence of flying women contradicts conventional gender norms, expectations and poses significant concerns regarding the presence of women in society.

Women Who Fly and *Nights at the Circus* explore the cultural and mythological significance of women who are associated with flight. Both works examines the ways in which flight has been used as a means of resistance and liberation for women who are oppressed or marginalized in patriarchal societies. In *Women Who Fly*, the author discusses the legends of goddesses, mystics, and other female individuals who are represented as flying or who are related with birds and other flying creatures. Likewise, in *Nights at the Circus*, Fevvers who claims to be a winged woman with the ability to fly, provides a contemporary perspective on these historical and mythical female figures. Therefore, many of the concepts discussed in *Women Who Fly* are illustrated through Fevvers persona, especially the use of flight as a sign of female empowerment and liberation (Young 231). For instance, she uses her wings and her performance as a circus act to show her identity and struggle with the limits imposed by society.

In the first chapter, Fevvers narrates to the journalist Jack Walser the moment when her wings first opened up and she quotes Ma Nelson words, who gave her wings a symbolic meaning: “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” (Carter 12). According to Ma Nelson, Fevvers, who has the ability to fly, symbolizes the opportunity for women to overcome all their limitations and reach new heights. Furthermore, he expects a new era in which women will no longer be “bound down to the ground” by traditional norms. This might be seen as a call for women to come out against the patriarchal society and gender norms that have traditionally limited their capabilities and choices. Overall, this quote embraces the idea of female liberation and serves as a hopeful message for a future where women are free to pursue their passions and achieve greatness.

Nights at the Circus is a novel that heavily draws on mythical intertextuality. By using mythology from ancient myths, such as the tales of *Icarus* and *Leda and the Swan*, Carter

creates a network of connections between the past and the present. The fable of *Leda and the Swan* serves as one of the most important mythological intertexts in the novel, and it is considered a representation of masculine power and female oppression. Meanwhile, the myth of *Icarus* is particularly relevant to the novel's exploration of power and identity, besides it highlights the dangers and limitations of human ambition. Together, these legendary intertexts create a rich and complicated context for Carter's investigation of the human situation, inviting readers to pose the ways in which ancient myths continue to reflect in our modern world (Moreira 85).

The myth of *Icarus* is a famous story from Greek mythology that is referenced throughout *Nights at the Circus*. The plot centers around a father named Daedalus, who is imprisoned on the island of Crete with his son Icarus. In order to escape, Daedalus creates wings made of feather and wax for both of them to fly away from the island. But Icarus overestimates his abilities and rises too close to the sun, which led to the melting of the wax on his wings and leads him to fall into the water and die (Tolentino). Likewise, Fevvers rapid growth and physical development makes Lizzie worried about her extraordinary abilities and desire for freedom, which may encourages her to soar forward great heights without considering the consequences. As it is relevant in the novel:

In those quiet hours of the afternoon, while the friends and sisters that we lived with bent over their books, Lizzie constructed a graph on squared paper in order to account for the great difference in weight between a well-formed human female in her fourteenth year and a tiny pigeonlet, so that we should know to what height I might soar without tempting the fate of Icarus. All this while, as the months passed, I grew bigger and stronger, stronger and bigger, until Liz was forced to put aside her mathematics in order

to make me an entire new set of dresses to accommodate the remarkable development of my upper body (Carter 17).

This quote illustrates the protagonist Fevvers' ambition to overcome the limitations of her physical body and fly freely like a bird. In addition, In order to avoid facing the same fate as Icarus, who flew too close to the sun and caused his death, Lizzie calculates the difference in weight and attempts to determine the highest point that she can. The reference to Icarus is significant, as it shows Lizzie's awareness of the dangers of flying too high and the tragic consequences that can result. This quotation also highlights Fevvers' physical growth and transformation as she becomes bigger and stronger, which eventually requires a new collection of clothes to fit her new shape.

The story of *Icarus* can be regarded as a warning about the dangers of ambition and the results of disobeying one's limitations. In addition, Fevvers, the main character, could potentially be interpreted as a reference to this tale. Like Icarus, Fevvers is a figure who defies conventional limits and boundaries. She is a winged woman who has risen from the lower classes to become a celebrated performer in the circus. Furthermore, Sophie compares herself to Icarus as a symbol for what can happen when one breaks traditional bounds and restrictions, she also sees herself as an example for those who wish to challenge societal norms and expectations. However, her wings always put her in danger since they make her a target or an object of attention and desire of others. In this sense, the myth of *Icarus* serves as a metaphor for the dangers of human desire and the possible consequences that come with challenging conventional ideas of identity and power. Consequently, in *Nights at the Circus*, Carter uses this myth to explore themes of ambition, risk-taking, and the dangers of overreaching.

Another significant intertextual reference in the novel is Yeats' poem *Leda and the Swan*, which is a sonnet that reflects the Greek tale of Zeus, who turned into a swan to seduce

and impregnate Leda, the queen of Sparta, who eventually gave birth to Helen of Troy, a person of great beauty and strength. She was considered one of the most beautiful women in the world. Yeats connects Helen's beauty to the beginning of the Trojan War, claiming that this incident caused the collapse of Greek civilization. Similarly, Dr. Oliver Tearle states in his Analysis of W.B. Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan' that Helen is supposed to be the cause of the Trojan War as Paris, the prince of Troy, kidnapped her from her husband Menelaus, which led him to seek revenge and starts the war on Troy (Tearle). Therefore, the myth serves as a powerful metaphor for the novel's exploration of gender and sexuality. Thus, through the use of this myth, Carter examines traditional patriarchal constructs of femininity and subverts them to produce a powerful new image of woman.

Fevvers, the protagonist, is compared to Helen of Troy, a figure from Greek mythology, who was renowned for her beauty. Furthermore, Sophie with her extraordinary physical and her stunning appearance attracts the attention of those around her especially men. She is also a winged woman, who sets her apart from others and makes her unique, like Helen her natural beauty is often the subject of discussion and admiration. This comparison highlights the idea that Fevvers challenges conventional gender norms and patriarchal structures. Additionally, Helen of Troy and Fevvers share some similar circumstances, this is evidenced when Sophie at the beginning of the novel said "The 'Cockney Venus', for nothing, sir, though they could just as well 'ave 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" (Carter 1). Fevvers claims that she was hatched from an egg or born in a non-traditional way just like Helen of Troy. In this quote, she relates herself to Helen by claiming that they both have unusual circumstances surrounding their birth. Hence, by subverting traditional notions of

heroism and femininity, Fevvers represents a new type of heroic female figure who redefine what it means to be a winged woman in the patriarchal society.

The figure of Helen symbolizes a charming but submissive lady who is admired for her beauty yet is powerless and voiceless. In contrast, Fevvers is an independent and confident woman who breaks all the traditional boundaries. Angela Carter gives the world a new Helen by challenging the idea that women are treated as objects, determined and desired by men, rather than treating them as equal individuals with thoughts, feelings and entities. Fevvers is the most desired woman of her era a strong and self-reliant woman who can control her own life and does not rely on any man for support. Carter describes Fevver in her novel as a “heroine of the hour, object of learned discussion and profane surmise (...). Her name was on the lips of all, from duchess to costermonger: ‘Have you seen Fevvers?’ And then: ‘How does she do it?’ And then: ‘Do you think she's real?’” (Carter 2). In this way, Angela Carter redefines the concept of the desirable woman by creating a character that is not conventionally beautiful but is still powerful.

Moreover, as it is stated in the novel’s first paragraph, Fevvers is well known as “the Cockney Venus” referring to the Roman goddess of sex, love, beauty, and fertility. Additionally, *Nights at the Circus* describes Fevvers as Helen of the High Wire, like Helen of Troy, stating, “This Helen launched a thousand quips, mostly on the lewd side” (2). In this case, despite Helen, who was believed to have launched a thousand ships with her beauty, Fevvers is claimed to have launched a thousand quips, and this statement is a play on words, indicating that Fevvers’ unusual and striking appearance caused many remarks and jokes. The fact that these quips are mostly on the lewd side indicates that Fevvers’ beauty and sexuality are prominent aspects of her identity, which might be interpreted as a statement on the objectification of women and how society frequently limits them to their appearance and sexual desirability (Moreira 81,82).

The Cockney Venus, Helen of the High Wire, and the bird woman are some nicknames adopted by Fevvers, the fascinating protagonist. Carter represents her as “the Cockney Venus! she thought bitterly. Now she looks more like one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit. Helen, formerly of the High-wire, now permanently grounded. Pity the New Woman if she turns out to be as easily demolished as me” (Carter 161). This quote shows the harsh reality of being a woman in a patriarchal culture as well as the continuing obstacles that they experience. As a whole, the author demonstrates through Fevvers the struggles experienced by women who violate all patriarchal standards and expectations. Additionally, it is important to take into account Fevvers’ fear about the new woman who might face similar issues, which means that these problems are not specific to her but are systemic and deeply rooted in social attitudes towards women.

In light of this, Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* uses intertextuality to draw connections between the myth of *Leda and the Swan*, Helen of Troy, and the character of Fevvers. Both Helen and Fevvers are beautiful, attractive, and interesting women who oppose patriarchal hierarchies and conventional gender norms. Finally, by referencing these powerful female figures Carter explores the complexities of female power, identity, and liberation as she presents an alternate vision of what it means to be a powerful woman.

II.2.2 References to Fairy Tales

The twentieth century renowned as an era of transformation, provided imaginative writers to fertile ground for rebellion, where traditional fairy tales became a realm of liberation and artistic freedom. Fairy tales have been an integral part of literary culture for centuries and it is possible to find examples of works throughout the canon that utilized fairy tales intertexts. A certain group of writers, whose works were typically called ‘postmodern’, have used fairytales as intertexts in interesting ways for various purposes. According to *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, a fairy tales is “a made up story usually designed to mislead.”

One example of a modern work that incorporates fairy tales is Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*. Carter uses intertextuality, specifically classic fairy tales, to create a fantastical world that is both familiar and strange. Carter is also fascinated with female impersonation in literature, not only as means of social disruption but also as an erotic provocation. She created a multifaceted and satirical dualism resulting in complex and multi-layered narrative that is both entertaining and thought provoking.

Nights at the Circus is widely considered the most accessible of Angela Carter's novels and stories, belonged to the genre of magic realism and the literary movement of postmodernism. Fairy tales have been used for centuries as a way of conveying moral lessons to readers. In *Nights at the Circus*, Carter uses fairy tales' motifs and themes to explore issues of gender, power, and identity. Fevers, the novel's main character and circus performer are a winged aerialist who is reminiscent of the fairy tale figure of the bird woman. Angela Carter shows a transformative moment in which the protagonist unveils her extraordinary wings to fascinate the audience, and to prove herself as strong and liberated women. Carter describes her as:

She rose up on tiptoe and slowly twirled round, giving the spectators a comprehensive view of her back: seeing is believing. Then she spread out her superb, heavy arms in a backwards gesture of benediction and, as she did so, her wings spread, too, a polychromatic unfolding fully six feet across, spread of an eagle, a condor, an albatross fed to excess on the same diet that makes flamingoes pink. (Carter 06).

From the quote, it is evident that Fevvers's wings are a clear sign of the fairy tales elements in the novel, as they represented the magical and imaginary beings that were often found in traditional fairy tales, they are a sign of her unique nature and her resistance to societal norms,

making her a symbol of freedom and empowerment. They represent the possibility of breaking free from the constraints of society and soaring to new heights, both literally and figuratively. Through Fevvers character, Carter challenged traditional gender roles and stereotypes. She is a strong and independent woman who is not afraid to assert herself, despite the societal expectations of women at the time. This subversion of traditional gender roles is another example of how fairy tales can be used to convey moral lessons.

Carter also used intertextuality to draw connections between her novel and the classic fairy tale of *Cinderella*. For instance, the story of Fevvers is reminiscent of the classic fairy tale of *Cinderella*, in which a poor girl transformed into a princess with the help of a magical being. Carter's version of *Cinderella* portrayed through the character of Fevvers, a circus performer with wings. Similar to the original *Cinderella* story, the protagonist is an orphan, who rises from rags to riches. In Fevvers's case, her transformation unlike Cinderella is not due to magic, but rather her own strength and sufficiency. Moreover, both Cinderella and Fevvers are raised by different mothers. Unlike Cinderella's evil stepmother, Lizzie is a good woman who takes care of her daughter and loves her till the end of the story. Additionally, Fevvers journey can be seen as a feminist reworking of the *Cinderella* story, in which the heroine takes control of her own destiny rather than relying on a man to save her as what Cinderella did. (Moreira83). In her novel, Carter portrays her protagonist the same way Cinderella is represented:

When I was a baby, you could have distinguished me in a crowd of foundlings only by just this little bit of down, of yellow fluff, on my back, on top of both my shoulderblades. Just like the fluff on a chick, it was. And she who found me on the steps at Wapping, me in the laundry basket in which persons unknown left me, a little babe most lovingly packed up in new straw sweetly

sleeping among a litter of broken eggshells, she who stumbled over this poor, abandoned creature clasped me at that moment in her arms out of the abundant goodness of her heart and took me in. (Carter 04)

Carter's version of *Cinderella* is portrayed through the character of Fevvers, a circus performer with wings. Similar to the original *Cinderella* story, the protagonist is an orphan who rises from rags to riches.

The story of *Little Red Riding Hood* is alluded to when Fevvers encountered a wolf in the Russian forest "the silence of the forest was interrupted only by the howling of the wolves, a sound that chills to the bone by virtue of its distance from humanity, and told me only how lonely I was and how the night around us contained nothing to assuage the infinite melancholy of these empty spaces" (Carter 133). This quote reveals that Fevvers goes on a journey through the Russian forest, and at one point she encounters a large wolf, which is a symbol of danger and temptation. The encounter serves to highlight the vulnerability of the protagonist. By alluding to the well-known fairy tale, the author is able to evoke certain associations and expectations in the reader while also adding another tone of meaning to Fevvers's journey.

II.2.3 Allusion to Other Prominent Figures and Literary Works

Allusion is a literary device that refers to a person, place, thing, religion, mythology, or idea outside the text being discussed or written. Allusions are used to add depth and meaning to a piece of writing by drawing on the reader's knowledge of other works, historical events, or cultural symbols. An allusion is a tool that writers use in order to help readers access ideas without stating them outright. They are often used by writers to enhance their work with layers of meaning and to connect their writing to larger literary and cultural

traditions (Schuartz). Allusions can also serve to create a sense of shared culture and knowledge between the writer and reader, as the reader is able to recognize and appreciate the reference. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, allusion is “a statement in which you refer to someone or something, but not directly.” Intertextuality is a broader concept that encompasses all kinds of textual references including allusion, which refers to text in different ways to procedure and shape meaning (Dang).

Angela Carter is a master of using allusions in her work, which helps her create a rich and layered tapestry of references to add decorative meaning to her writing. In her novel *Nights at the Circus*, she uses allusions to create a world that is both fantastical and familiar, resulting in a unique and forceful narrative. Danielle M. Roemer states, “reader-activated allusion operates in the context of an appreciation of curiosity. A sensed comfortableness with the status quo mixed with a desire for associations that extend beyond the given, curiosity motivates the allusive” (95). The quote highlights the importance of curiosity in motivating reader to actively explore and appreciate the allusive nature of a text. It emphasize that allusion relies on the reader active engagement to question for conventional understanding.

In Carter’s novel, the use of allusions to other works of literature also adds richness to the narration. For instance, Walser’s interest in Fevvers leads him to change his stereotypes about fictional characters and the magic world. Carter depicts him in the novel as an observer of Fevvers’ performance by showing his satisfaction and appreciation of her.

Walser sat back with a pleased smile on his lips; the greasy, inescapable whiff of stage magic which pervaded Fevvers’ act manifested itself abundantly in her choice of music. She gathered herself together, rose up on tiptoe and gave a mighty shrug, in order to raise her shoulders. Then she brought down her elbows,

so that the tips of the pin feathers of each wing met in the air above her headdress. At the first crescendo, she jumped (Carter 07).

For instance, in this quote the character of Walser, a journalist who is investigating Fevvers's story, can be seen as an allusion to Walter Benjamin, a German philosopher and critic, who is known for his interest in fairy tales and folklore. Initially, he refuses to believe Fevvers story, but after acquainted with her and her enchanting story and upon witnessing her reality, he becomes increasingly captivated by the world of fairy tales.

In the novel, there are few references to Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*. One of these references is Angela Carter's description of Jack Walser as Ishmael.

Retaining the privileged irresponsibility of the journalist, the professional necessity to see all and believe nothing which cheerfully combined, in Walser's personality, with a characteristically American generosity towards the brazen lie. His avocation suited him right down to the ground on which he took good care to keep his feet. Call him Ishmael; but Ishmael with an expense account, and, besides, a thatch of unruly flaxen hair, a ruddy, pleasant, square-jawed face and eyes the cool grey of skepticism (Carter 03).

In *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael is the narrator and protagonist of the story. Like Ishmael, Jack Walser is an outsider who launches on a journey into the unknown. He is also a sharp-eyed observer of the world around him, and like Ishmael, he becomes a witness to the strange and fantastical events that unfold during his journey with Fevvers. By describing Walser as Ishmael, Carter

establishes him as a central figure in the novel and also hints at the epic nature of the journey that he is about to undertake (Hendricks).

The character Walser is also described as a "flâneur", a term coined by French poet Charles Baudelaire to describe someone who strolls through city streets, observing and contemplating modern life (Seal). The character of Walser plays a significant role as an observer of the protagonist after he became enchanted with her and her magical world, Walser's observation of Fevvers is marked by mix of curiosity and fascination.

Yet, apart from this disconcerting pact with gravity, which surely she made in the same way the Nepali fakir had made his, Walser observed that the girl went no further than any other trapeze artiste. She neither attempted nor achieved anything a wingless biped could not have performed, although she did it in a different way, and, as the valkyries at last approached Valhalla, he was astonished to discover that it was the limitations of her act in themselves that made him briefly contemplate the unimaginable – that is, the absolute suspension of disbelief. For, in order to earn a living, might not a genuine bird-woman – in the implausible event that such a thing existed -- have to pretend she was an artificial one? (Carter 7-8).

This quote indicates that Walser is an allusion to Baudelaire's term "flâneur" because of his wonders and his character as keen observer of the world around him. As "flâneur", Walser is portrayed by Angela Carter as a curious character who is continually interested by the world around him. He's always questioning and investigating, looking for new experiences and ideas. His inquisitiveness is especially visible in his encounters with Fevvers due to her wings.

Finally, there is an allusion to the French writer Gustave Flaubert when Fevvers compares Walser to the character of Frederic Moreau from Flaubert's novel *Sentimental Education*. Fevvers describes Walser as "yet it was almost as if he himself were an *objet trouvé*, for, subjectively, himself he never found, since it was not his self which he sought" (Carter 03). This quote alludes that Walser, like Moreau, is a romantic and idealistic figure who is searching for meaning and purpose in life. Fevvers' comparison of Walser to Moreau suggests that he is too struggling with questions of identity and purpose and that he may ultimately find himself disillusioned by the realities of the world around him (Flaubert). Attracted by Fevvers's unique charm, "Jack, ever an adventurous boy, ran away with the circus for the sake of a bottle blonde in whose hands he was putty since the first moment he saw her. He got himself into scrape upon scrape, danced with a tigress, posed as a roast chicken" (Carter 175). Walser falls deeply in love with her from their first encounter. As their relationship blossomed, their romance grows stronger and they eventually tie the knot. By incorporating these references, Carter is able to connect her novel to a broader literary tradition and offer commentary on the role of storytelling in society.

In conclusion, intertextuality is a powerful literary technique that is used by postmodern writers to create multiple layers of meaning. It refers to other texts implicitly or explicitly, so that it allows authors to create meaningful connections between different works and enhance the reader's comprehension of the text. Through intertextual references to other literary works and historical events, or cultural icons, authors like Angela Carter in *Nights at the Circus* can evoke a range of emotions and ideas associated with those references, enriching their own work with layers of meaning and complexity. By skillfully weaving together a tapestry of allusions and fairy tales, Carter explores profound themes of identity and, transformation and female empowerment, inviting readers to engage deeply with the text and uncover the intricate connections between various aspects of human experience.

Intertextual

references serve as a dynamic tool among the arsenal available to authors, offering endless opportunities for exploration, interpretation, and the expansion of literary aspects.

Chapter Three: The New Winged Woman in Angela Carter's Novel

The third chapter focuses on the representations of female identity in Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* through the character of Sophie Fevvers, the winged woman. The chapter sheds light on how Carter's heroine defies the restrictions imposed on women in Victorian society, because she is represented as strong, independent woman with a great belief of self. Fevvers represents a break from established gender norms and expectations, challenging the concept of femininity being powerless and subservient. Fevvers' journey reflects the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. The chapter explores the transformation of Carter's new winged woman from a passive object to a powerful figure who creates her own path in a society that actively attempts to limit and confine her.

III.1. Sophie Fevvers as an Enigmatic Winged Heroine

Nights at the Circus, is a postmodern novel by Carter that combines fantasy to discourse truth. Feminists explore historical events by combining fantasy and historiographical metafiction, which seeks to construct and re-write history from a Feminist perspective. The novel traces back the history of 1890's. Fevvers, the enigmatic winged heroine, is a captivating character who takes center stage in Angela Carter's novel, *Nights at the Circus*. Fevvers' origins are far from ordinary, since she claims that she was hatched from an egg. Her unusual origin sets her apart from conventional human existence and adds a touch of mystery to her character. According to Fevvers' captivating narrative, her origin takes an even more fantastical turn. She claims to have been abandoned on the steps of a brothel, enclosed within the shells of an egg from which she hatched. As a baby, she had a raised lump on each shoulder. However, it was during her puberty, at the age of fourteen, that she underwent a remarkable transformation, her wings began to sprout from her shoulders (Caliskan 369).

Fevvers begins the storytelling with the information about her birth, or to be more accurate, about her hatching, as she states, “hatched out of a bloody great egg while Bow Bells rang, as ever is!” (Carter 1). She was born as an orphan, and there is no idea about who exactly could be her biological parents. Additionally, Fevvers unique position in the brothel is further emphasized by the fact that she was never allowed to work as a prostitute: “I was Ma Nelson’s flagship but always kept out of the battle, that Nelson never brought me to the block” (Carter 31). That is why she is known as the “Virgin Whore,” or “The Virgyn of the House”. In that case, Ma Nelson constructed a particular role for Fevvers, presenting her as an innocent figure resembling Cupid, filled with a toy bow and arrow. This role was carefully constructed to present Fevvers as a symbol of love and desire, but in a more innocent manner.

Ma Nelson’s presence in Fevver’ early life holds a profound influence on her and the other women that she employs because she fosters on them a sense of courage and strength. However, Ma Nelson’s death marks a turning point for both Fevvers and all the women she had guided. After her death, they rebel against her brother and burn down the brothel. Therefore, the family faces very difficult times, as a result; it becomes necessary for Fevvers to look for some other place (Krifa 342).

Following the death of Ma Nelson, Fevvers finds herself at a crossroads, looking for new opportunities to use her extraordinary talents. She receives an invitation from the formidable Madame Schreck, a figure renowned for her intimidating presence and influential position. She keeps Fevvers on display there, along with many other women who have their own unique appearances. However, after a brief period under Madame Schreck’s ownership, Fevvers finds herself being sold to a customer named Christian Rosencreutz, who is driven by a desire for personal immortality. Rosencreutz wants to sacrifice a winged “virgo intacta” which means a virgin untouched. Rosencreutz is portrayed as The Grand Duke, who strongly

opposes the idea of women's rights and equality. He symbolizes those who reject the notion that women should have the same rights as men (Krifa 340).

During the interview, Fevvers describes to Walser the terrifying incident that she had with Rosencreutz. She describes how she managed to escape from his clutches, defying the fate he had planned for her. Moreover, Grand Duke thinks that he is the one who has control, until she decides to defend herself with her sword: "Quick as a flash, out with my own! How I blessed my little gilded sword! He fell back, babbling, unfair, unfair . . . He'd not thought the angel would come armed" (Carter 49). Evidently, he breaks her sword and tries to kill her. However, she demonstrates her alternative source of power, instead of relying on a traditionally masculine symbol of strength. She taps into her own unique feminine power, which is the opportunity to escape by taking flight through the window. This act of liberation suggests that women possess their own inherent strength and abilities, distinct from the violent and oppressive application of traditional male power (Michael 502).

Through Fevvers' successful escape, Carter highlights the progress made by women in their struggle for equal rights. It serves as a reminder that women have overcome many obstacles and challenges in their quest for equality, and that their voices and contributions are valuable and deserving of recognition. Overall, Fevvers' revelation about her past adds depth and complexity to her character. It raises questions about her origins, her true nature, and the forces that have shaped her life.

In the third chapter of the book, Sophie and Walser are separated after a train accident. During this time apart, Fevvers goes through a period of uncertainty and loses confidence in herself, partly because of her feelings for Walser: "Although, from a distance, she could still pass for a blonde, there was a good inch of brown at the roots of Fevvers' hair and brown was showing in her feathers, too, because she was molting" (Carter 159). Moreover, this quote describes Fevvers' physical appearance and the changes she is experiencing during that

period. Although she seems to have blonde hair from a distance, there is a distinct inch of brown at the roots, indicating her real hair color. As she begins the process of molting, her feathers, which play a key role in her identity, are also showing signs of change. Consequently, this visual transformation reflects Fevvers' internal journey and the challenges that she faces. It means that although she could still seem a certain way on the outside, there are deeper changes and complexity happening inside her (Baxter 105).

Fevvers' lack of a traditional home and parental ties allows her to navigate the world on her own terms. Her quest for self-discovery and the desire for a place, where she can truly belong, are also influenced by her unusual childhood and lack of a secure family. Thus, her youth and adulthood are shaped by her ongoing state of instability and the experiences she has had along the way. She develops a deep awareness of the objectification and ugly behavior that characterize human interactions, which affects the way she sees the world. Fevvers' experiences have strengthened her and made her resilient and adaptable, but they have also left a deep impression on her. She expresses how her existence has been reduced to being an object in the eyes of men:

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! (Carter 22).

The quoted passage emphasizes Fevvers' experience of being objectified and reduced to nothing more than a simple spectacle in the eyes of men. As she is reduced to a passive object

to be viewed and desired, her statement highlights the devalued implications of being frequently subjected to male dominance.

Consequently, Fevvers the enigmatic winged heroine in Angela Carter's novel, undergoes a series of struggles and experiences that shape her character and ultimately lead to her empowerment. From her passive origins as a baby left on the doorstep of a brothel to being displayed in Madame Schreck's freak show and facing the threat of being sacrificed by the Grand Duke, Fevvers is subjected to objectification, manipulation, and efforts to reduce her sense of independence. Her forced passivity, which was imposed on her at first, is changed into an active force of resistance. Accordingly, she rejects social expectations and celebrates her individuality, refusing to be defined only by a masculine perspective.

III.2. Symbolism and Significance of Fevvers' Wings

Fevvers, who is first presented as a mystery woman, turns into a figure who defies social preconceptions and challenges the boundaries of Victorian-era. Her wings, which emerge during puberty, become a powerful symbol of liberation, self-protection, and resistance against male domination.

During Fevvers' stay at Madame Schreck's museum, she undergoes a period of confinement and oppression. Her experience with Madame Schreck's is her lowest moment, and Carter uses this low point to further explore the effect of place on human identity. Carter places Fevvers in a physical environment, which challenges traditional assumptions, in order for her to eventually break free from her restrictive surroundings. However, this experience makes her wonder how does one define the human form, and how social constraints can limit individual freedom. Thus, Fevvers internal reflection becomes a motivating force in her quest to escape the oppressive surroundings and break free from conventional confines (Hatfield 16).

Fevvers turns her wings as a means of escape. She recalls the moment when she soared high above and away from the wretched place she was trapped in. She says “I soared up and away from that vile place” (Carter 49). Her ability to fly becomes a powerful symbol of her defiance and independence. While her physical body may have marginalized her in society and led her to Madame Schreck’s museum, her wings grant her the freedom to break free from the clutches of Mr Rosencreutz and his oppressive intentions. Fevvers escapes from the Grand Duke not only represents her personal liberation but also embodies the larger theme of female empowerment in *Nights at the Circus*. Besides, her wings serve as a powerful symbol of freedom, highlighting the idea

women can save themselves and find empowerment by embracing their own bodies. In *Nights at the Circus*, Fevvers character defies the conventional notion of the environment shaping an individual’s future, instead she takes agency and actively shapes her surroundings. In this context Carter writes that “now all London lies beneath her flying feet” and that “everywhere she went, rivers parted for her, wars were threatened, suns eclipsed” (4). Through this portrayal, Carter emphasizes Fevvers’ agency and her ability to shape and influence her environment. Fevvers becomes a symbol of strength and liberation, challenging traditional power dynamics and offering a new perspective on the relationship between individuals and their surroundings (Hatfield 18-19).

Fevvers ability to fly becomes a powerful metaphor for the liberation that women hoped to achieve in the new era. Her wings represent the breaking of societal constraints and the ability to transcend traditional gender roles. In addition, her capacity to fly represents her independence, autonomy, and breaking of boundaries. Evidence, it represents her departure from the repressive structures of the past and her entry into a new era where women can assert their agency and challenge patriarchal norms. Furthermore, Fevvers’ development as the iconic New Woman represents changing attitudes regarding women’s rights and their increased prominence in society. Moreover, at the beginning of the story, it is believed that

the new century will bring freedom to women and change their lives. Fevvers, with her ability to fly, expresses this hope for liberation. Indeed, Angela Carter connects the ideas of the new era with Fevvers, the new woman. She states, “for we are at the fag-end, the smouldering cigar-butt, of a nineteenth century which is just about to be ground out in the ashtray of history. It is the final, waning, season of the year of Our Lord, eighteen hundred and ninety nine. And Fevvers has all the *éclat* of a new era about to take” (Carter 4). The description of being at the “fag-end” of the nineteenth century suggests that the old century is nearing its end and about to be extinguished, making way for a new era. With her wings and enigmatic qualities, Fevvers embodies the *éclat*, or brilliance, of the forthcoming era, suggesting that she is at the forefront of the changing times (ÖzyurtKılıç).

When Ma Nelson looks at Fevvers and her wings, she sees her as a child: “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” (Carter 12-13). This means that the New Woman, represented by Fevvers in the novel, has optimistic goals for the approaching new century, she stands for a new era in which limitations on women are removed. This suggests that the novel resonates with the New woman’s vision of a society where women are not compelled to sacrifice themselves for financial stability or success (ÖzyurtKılıç).

Fevvers wings, in *Nights at the Circus*, serve as a constant source of public display, drawing attention and fascination from those around her. Her wings depict the objectification of female sexuality and its effect on her sense of femininity. When her wings sprout during her first menstrual cycle, they become intrinsically linked to her physical and sexual maturity. In the brothel, Fevvers stands like a statue while men look at her body and wings. Also, when she performs as an aerialist, people pay to see her body and wings (Subapriya 216). She captivates audiences and becomes well-known in the circus world due to her ability to fly.

Fevvers wings become a distinctive characteristic of her personality, signifying her exceptional nature and leading others to admire and be attracted to her.

Look at me! With a grand, proud, ironic grace, she exhibited herself before the eyes of the audience as if she were a marvellous present too good to be played with. Look, not touch. She was twice as large as life and as succinctly finite as any object that is intended to be seen, not handled. Look! Hands off! (Carter 06).

This quote highlights Fevvers' powerful presence and the way she presents herself to the audience and how she puts barriers to them. Carter's presentation of Fevvers' wings and her body, as something to be viewed rather than handled, is a double-edged sword. In one hand, it stands for her capacity to surpass patriarchal constraints and claim for female independence. On the other hand, it suggests that the masculine gaze is abusing the female body. Additionally, it shows that Fevvers demands respect and recognition as a spectacle not as an object to be possessed or controlled.

In Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*, Fevvers' wings are not only a symbol of empowerment and emancipation, but they are also subjected to criticism and inspection. One source of criticism for Fevvers' wings is their fantasy nature. The presence of wings on a human character pushes the boundaries of realism and calls into question Fevvers' identity. It's important to note that these criticisms are subjective and represent alternative interpretations rather than a consensus among scholars and critics. One writer who has offered a critical perspective is Mary Russo, a professor of literature and critical theorist at Hampshire College in Massachusetts. The enigmatic nature of Fevvers body may see as a sign for power but in the same time seen as a limitation on her life. Russo examines her unique body and suggest that it is not lacking anything, her trajectory in relation to her performance deviates from conventional notion of human development.

Fevvers anomalous body, with its absent belly button and present wings is 'not lacking', Russo believes, 'but her trajectory . . . in relation to her act, is out of sync with the conventions of what is called human development. She starts and stops in the intervals between points, hovering on the brink of possibility, instead of going forward. In this sense, Fevvers is an embodiment of possibility, of becoming without ever coming into being, which for Russo places a limitation on, or sus-pension of, her status as a utopian figure who defies or escapes patriarchy because she cannot move towards progress at the end. (qtd in Stoddart 53).

According to Russo, Fevvers' unusual form, which missing a belly button and has wings, contradicts normal concepts of human development and advancement.

Another criticism introduced by Mary Russo in her book *The Female Grotesque*, where she believes that Angela Carter novel is constructed in grotesque manner. She argues, "Carter's novel actually 'grotesquely de-forms the female body as a cultural construction', but does so in order to show how it can be differently and surprisingly articulated, but not necessarily in original or forward-looking ways (qtd in Stoddart 52). Russo investigates the cultural production of the feminine body in Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus*. She claims that Carter's novel uses the female grotesque to analyze and reimagine the female body rather than simply celebrating or idealizing it. Carter opens up possibilities for new understandings and narratives about women's lives by distorting and modifying traditional standards linked with the female body. In general, Russo's critique emphasizes Carter's representation of the feminine body as revolutionary.

III.3. Flight as Liberation: Fevvers' Journey to self-discovery

Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* is a rich and complex literary work where established gender norms are challenged. Carter digs into the lives of bright and unique female characters who defy traditional norms, presenting a fascinating exploration of what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal society. By looking at these women's difficulties and achievements through the eyes of the protagonist, Fevvers a figure with wings. The portrayal of female characters is crucial in addressing the nuances of feminine agency. Other female characters in the novel also make essential contributions to the investigation of female empowerment, each demonstrating a distinctive perspective and challenging conventional stereotypes in independent aspects.

Fevvers, the protagonist of *Nights at the Circus*, acts as a symbol of a 'New Woman', who aims to break down patriarchal identity with her stunning wings. She dramatizes the view that history is not true and is a personal perception of society. Carter attempts to challenge the erroneous belief that the role and status of women is unchangeable. She asserts Sophie Fevvers as a woman who pushes barriers and expands female empowerment. She gives Fevvers the wings that help her gain financial freedom and liberate her from male dominated society. They also help her to escape the reality of how women should be. Carter tries to claim that history is something that is constructed and not that what exists (Devasena).

Fevvers is a remarkable character, who takes on an exhaustive quest to discover the mysteries of her own existence and determine her true self. Her path begins with appreciating her uniqueness. She is special and different from others since she is a winged woman. Initially, she may feel alienated or unsure of her identity, but as the story progresses, she learns to appreciate her distinctiveness and see it as a source of strength. Fevvers criticizes society's presumptions and expectations of her. She rejects conventional ideas of femininity and rejects to assume prescribed roles. She attempts to construct her own destiny and

determine her identity on her own terms by questioning societal standards. Fevvers encounters her past throughout her journey, addressing the enigmas and doubts regarding her origins. Furthermore, she is interested in finding the truth about herself and where she belongs in the world. This self-discovery process encompasses inner introspection and interaction with other personalities from her history. Fevvers investigates multiple connections and encounters that aid in her self-discovery. These relationships include her encounters with other characters such as Walser and Lizzie. Every interaction brings new insights and challenges her perceptions, allowing her to gain a greater understanding of herself and her aspirations (Kristiansen 07).

Fevvers at the outset comes across challenges and obstacles in defending herself and her autonomy, as she indicates how women have limitations to a male-dominated environment yet; she unravels the patriarchal image imposed on her. At the beginning of the story, she is portrayed as a larger-than-life figure, attracting audiences with her spectacular aerial performances. However, she is burdened by the skepticism and doubts of others who doubt the truthfulness of her wings and her persona. This mistrust becomes the trigger for Fevvers' journey to uncover her own truth (Finney 161).

Fevvers meets a variety of people that challenge her assumptions of herself. She deals with a world of deception, exploitation, and gender expectations. She struggles with her own worries and questions her own origins along the journey, unsure whether she is actually a divine creature or only a creation of human imagination. Jack Walser, who has resolved to provide evidence that Fevvers is a compulsive liar, which he also plans to prove on the grounds of biological criteria (Paulíčková).

Walser accompanies Fevvers in her journey in the circus, but he has a different motive as well to expose Fevvers as fraud, as it is portrayed in the novel: "Walser is here, ostensibly, to 'puff' her; and, if it is humanly possible, to explode her, either as well as, or instead of.

Though do not think the revelation she is a hoax will finish her on the halls; far from it. If she isn't suspect, where's the controversy? What's the news?" (Angela Carter 04). When Walser joins the circus to follow Fevvers, because he doubts the reality of her story and her realness, he wonders how a human can hatch and not born or have natural wings. Walser enters the circus for the intention of following Fevvers, to realize her actual identity and fade the idea that she appreciated for being unique.

In the beginning, she was portrayed as a young woman with a mystery and dubious past, and her physical appearance as a winged figure piques people's interest and distrust. This early fragility is crucial to understand her transition and ultimate empowerment. Fevvers is exploited, mainly by males who desire to benefit from her distinctiveness or impose control over her. Despite these obstacles, she gains the ability to express herself and resist the roles of victim and passive object. She refuses to be converted to a passive show instead asserting her autonomy. Fevvers comes to power by adopting independence and self-sufficiency. She learns to trust her own abilities and instincts, freeing herself from cultural expectations and male dominance. This newly acquired independence enables her to navigate the world on her own terms and to express her own interests and ambitions. Through her defiance and refusal to conform she challenges traditional gender roles and societal norms. Fevvers empowers herself by defying expectations and forging her own path. Through her adventure, she realizes her inner power and resilience. She learns to overcome her own fears and insecurities by embracing her distinct characteristics as sources of power. Her adaptability, perseverance, and ability to rise above adversity all lead to her eventual empowerment. Fevvers adores her individuality, both her human and bird-like features, and rejects to be restricted by society standards. She thus frees herself from the authority of others and imposes her own power (ÖzyurtKılıç 02).

From her depiction as a hatched lady from an egg to her transition into a powerful and autonomous woman who breaks society constraints. Fevvers furthermore, turns into a symbol of opposition to the patriarchal principles of her culture. Sophie symbolizes what it means to be able of escaping the obligations of a gendered society, promoting women's sense of self-worth, strength and right to influence social change for themselves and others. (Keating 23) Fevvers indicates that women will no longer be mistreated and she has that hopeful vision for the future, as she announces:

Once the old world has turned on its axle so that the new dawn can dawn, then, 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 dolls' 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 (Carter 168).

It is a powerful and visionary quote made by Fevvers, the central character in *Nights at the Circus*. It conveys Fevvers' belief in the possibility of women's liberation and empowerment, as portrayed by the idea of women having wings. Fevvers imagines that in this new world, all women will have wings like her. The wings represent freedom, liberty, and the power to overcome societal constraints. The young woman in Fevvers' arms, mentioned in the quote, represents the countless women who have been tied by the oppressive bonds of tradition, practices, and societal expectations. Fevvers anticipates a future in which these women will no longer suffer or be restricted by these restrictions. Fevvers believes that in this liberated world, women will rise up and break free from the metaphorical chains that have held them

back. They will retrieve their power, voice, and agency, and they will no longer be constrained by the limitations that have been placed on them.

Fevvers route to self-discovery and empowerment demonstrate the value of accepting one's true nature, breaking society standards, and finding the bravery to identify oneself on one's own terms. It is a story about uniqueness, authenticity, and the transformational power of self-exploration. Carter digs into the lives of bright and unique female characters who defy traditional norms, presenting a fascinating exploration of what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal society. The portrayal of female characters in *Nights at the Circus*, makes essential contributions to the investigation of female identity, each demonstrating a distinctive perspective and challenging conventional stereotypes in independent aspects.

As Fevvers, Lizzie is a wonderful representation of female strength and rebellion in Angela Carter's novel. She is described as: "a tiny, wizened, gnome-like apparition who might have been any age between thirty and fifty; snapping, black eyes, sallow skin, an incipient moustache on the upper lip, and a close-cropped frizzle of tri-colored hair -- bright grey at the roots, stark grey in between, burnt with henna at the tips" (Carter 05). Lizzie emerges as an illustration of female strength and an empowering person, refuses society's oppressive assumptions and rejects traditional conventions. She refuses to submit to the restrictions placed on women in patriarchal society, motivating other women to stand up to restrictive structures that limit their abilities and silence their voices. Lizzie's denial of discrimination and the traditional idea of marriage, which originates in her desire for liberation and self-determination, seem visible in her disapproval of the responsibilities and requirements imposed on her (Aishu 11).

Lizzie additionally challenges women's degradation and exploitation by recovering her own choice and sexual liberty. She opposes being limited to a passive object of desire, insisting on recognized as an interesting person with her unique wants, needs, and boundaries.

Lizzie questions men's beliefs and emphasizes her equal standing in her relationships with them. She engages in intellectual disputes and refuses to be suppressed or weakened by men: “ ‘Only a whore,’ opined Lizzie with sudden force, ‘could hope for so much from marriage’ ” (Carter 26). Lizzie's strength lies in her rebellion and refusal of marriage. Her refusal to conform to societal expectations demonstrates her inner strength and determination to live life on her own terms, challenging patriarchal norms and asserting her agency. Her actions are seen as an act of empowerment and a display of her resilience in the face of societal pressure.

Akin to Fevvers, Madame Schreck is a formidable female character within the novel, who plays a vital role as a strong woman overseeing what she describes as a museum dedicated to women monsters. Madame Schreck's character carries considerable weight, offering a compelling portrayal of a woman who commands authority and influence in her domain. Her role in managing the museum underscores her agency and highlights the exploration of diverse female identities within the narrative. Madame Schreck's Museum is a space where women who diverge from societal expectations are celebrated rather than shamed. She challenges traditional notions of femininity and confronts patriarchal standards that often brutalize and marginalize women. She is identified with strength, power, and embracing one's differences. She exudes a particular attraction and charm, getting viewers to experience the beauty of the showcased women. Driven by an insatiable quest for the extraordinary, Madame Schreck is perpetually motivated to uncover the stories of women who possess physical deformities, peculiar talents, or exceptional abilities that defy societal norms (Aishu 13). Madame Schreck has the role as a caretaker and healer for those who are burdened by inner chaos and distress, as it is described by Carter: “as for Madame Schreck, she catered for those who were troubled in their. . . souls” (32). Madame Schreck is a complicated discovery of power structures and the commodification of female bodies. She questions societal standards of beauty, normalcy, norms and expectations, and femininity, offering a strong contrast to

women's traditional norms and expectations. In this way, Madam Schreck, thus, becomes a symbol of empowerment and resistance.

In conclusion, Fevvers' origins and initial passivity contribute to the intrigue surrounding her character. Born with wings, she is a mysterious figure whose existence challenges conventional understanding. Her early life is marked by a sense of vulnerability and dependency, as she is initially presented as a spectacle to be exploited. Her wings serve as a powerful symbol, representing both her uniqueness and her potential for growth. As she navigates her journey, flight becomes a metaphorical expression of liberation, reflecting her quest for freedom from societal constraints and patriarchal norms. Fevvers embarks on a captivating journey of self-discovery, empowerment, and transformation. She evolves from an enigmatic and passive character into a symbol of liberation and personal agency. However, it is precisely her passivity and uncertain past that propel her journey toward self-discovery and empowerment. The characters in Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* illustrate a multifaceted picture of female identity. Each character presents their own point of view and opposes society's standards in their own way. These women negotiate difficult environments of gender, power, and independence. Carter's writings tackle ideas of liberation, self-discovery, and resistance to unfairness.

Conclusion

The matter of women's oppression has been a longstanding problem, with women facing marginalization and subjugation in different societies and cultures. This problem encompasses a wide range of inequalities in social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. Simply, it limits women's rights, as they have been victims of discrimination based on their gender. However, this limitation did not continue because of the emergence of a new movement, known as feminism, during the postmodernism era. Feminism is viewed as a weapon for women to maintain their rights and stand against the patriarchal norms of society. However, women in patriarchal postmodern society often find themselves in the confrontation of second-class status, silenced, and denied equal opportunities.

In contemporary postmodern society, patriarchal power dynamics continue to exist, resulting in women's oppression and marginalization. Despite its destructive nature, postmodernism has been unable to completely deconstruct established structures that disadvantage women. Their roles and behaviors continued to be governed by sexist norms and expectations, limiting their options and self-expression. These societal expectations frequently put pressure on women to live according to traditional feminine requirements, restricting their sense of autonomy and preventing their ambitions for personal independence. Furthermore, women continue to face persistent inequality in different areas such as education, employment, positions of leadership, and decision-making processes. Within a patriarchal postmodern system, these gender inequalities maintain a sense of inferiority and limit women's financial advancement. Moreover, these limitations have been challenged by the emergence of postmodern female writers who create miscellaneous works that aim to free away from the masculine dimension. Thus, Angela Carter is one of those writers who frequently employ metafiction and intertextuality, which give those characters more empowered roles and allow them to rise up and fight against male-dominated societies.

Angela Carter is a postmodern feminist figure who defends women's rights via her writing and by utilizing fictional characters to convey female identity. She uses intertextuality to create a new image of female identity by reinterpreting existing texts, narratives, and cultural symbols. In addition, she relies on a variety of literary, mythical, and folkloric sources, bending and changing them to question traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms. Furthermore, Carter's works frequently contradict traditional fairy tales, fiction and mythologies in their underlying themes and power dynamics. She rewrites these stories from a feminist perspective, giving female characters power and dimension.

Angela Carter skillfully uses the power of fiction to construct and build a new type of free woman, commonly pictured as a "winged woman". In her novel *Nights at the Circus*, Carter means to interfere with developed gender roles and patriarchal conventions through her use of intertextuality by providing different tales and possibilities for women. Additionally, she redefines female heroes as strong, independent, and empowered individuals who challenge society's conventions and expectations. These characters often navigate fantastical or magical realms where they can transcend the limitations imposed by patriarchal society. Hence, through the character of Fevvers, women are portrayed as winged creatures, symbolizing freedom, autonomy, and transcendence. However, before finding her path to power, Fevvers faces rejection from a male-dominated society, where she is considered as a freak and an unbelievable creature.

In *Nights at the Circus*, the sensitivity of alienation in Sophie's life serves as a catalyst for her exploration of finding oneself and the search for a new identity. Her sense of estrangement pushes her to challenge conventional notions of womanhood and societal expectations. She resists the predefined roles and stereotypes that have been assigned to her and wants to create her own unique path. However, the disregard for cultural rules allows her

to think about different options for her identity. Ultimately, *Nights at the Circus*, digs into the complexities of femininity and the struggles that faced by women in patriarchal society.

Nights at the Circus is a significant work of fiction that employs intertextuality to challenge and subvert traditional gender norms and expectations. It also highlights the voices of marginalized women, who despite facing difficult circumstances, manage to overcome their constraints and assert themselves as strong, independent individuals with a newfound sense of identity.

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ملخص:

تناقش الأطروحة كيف تقوم الكاتبة البريطانية ما بعد الحداثة أنجيلا كارتر ببناء صورة جديدة للهوية الأنثوية من خلال استخدام التناسخ في روايتها *'اليالي في السيرك'* (1984). ولقد فازت رواية كارتر بجائزة جيمس تايت بلاك التذكارية المرموقة للأدب في عام 1984. و تهدف الى تسليط الضوء على منحيين. أولاً، يلقي الضوء على كيفية مناقشة الرواية لحرمان المرأة وتهميشها في عصر نشرها، و ايضا تبين هذه الرواية كيف دافع كَتَّاب ما بعد الحداثة النسويون عن حقوق المرأة وقيمها. ثانياً، توضح كيف أنجيلا كارتر استخدمت التناسخ كأداة قوية لخلق صورة جديدة للهوية الأنثوية، و ظهور المرأة المجنحة الجديدة التي تمتاز بالقوة، الاستقلالية و بشخصية متمردة في روايتها، و من خلال الاستفادة من التناسخ ، تتحدى كارتر الأفكار التقليدية للأنثوية من خلال تقديم منظور مختلف يتجاوز التمييز بين الإنسان و اللإنسان . و من أجل الوصول إلى هدفها، تعتمد الدراسة على مناهج ما بعد الحداثة النسوية ، بالإضافة إلى نظريات التناسخ، من خلال تقسيم الأطروحة إلى ثلاثة فصول، يخدم كل منها غرضاً مميزاً، حيث يعمل الفصل الأول كإطار نظري للأطروحة بأكملها ، بينما يعتبر الفصلان الثاني والثالث تحليلياً. تعتمد الدراسة على منظور تحليلي للمرأة الجديدة من خلال البطلة صوفي فيفر، التي تمثل المرأة التي تكسر كل حدود النظام الأبوي و تسعى إلى تسليط الضوء على كيفية تحرير نفسها من المجتمع الذي يهيمن عليه الذكور.

Résumé

Notre thèse montre comment l'écrivaine britannique postmoderniste Angela Carter construit une nouvelle vision de l'identité féminine, dans son roman *Nights at the Circus* (1984) en faisant recours à l'intertextualité. Le roman de Carter a remporté le prix à la mémoire de James Tait Black en 1984. Notre étude vise un double objectif. D'une part, elle met en relief la manière dont le roman traite de la privation et de la marginalisation des femmes durant l'époque de sa publication, et la façon dont les écrivains féministes postmodernistes ont défendu les droits des femmes et leurs valeurs. D'autre part, elle montre comment l'écrivaine Angela Carter utilise l'intertextualité comme un outil puissant pour créer une nouvelle image de l'identité féminine, la nouvelle femme alliée, qui est puissante, indépendante et rebelle. Dans son roman et en employant l'intertextualité, Carter remet en question les idées conventionnelles sur la féminité en présentant une perspective différente qui transcende la distinction sujet-objet. Afin d'atteindre son objectif, l'étude s'appuie sur des approches féministes qui incorporent la théorie postmoderne ainsi que des théories sur l'intertextualité. Pour mener à bien notre travail, nous avons établi un plan qui contient en tout et pour tout trois chapitres cohérent et complémentaires. Le premier chapitre sert de cadre théorique à l'ensemble de la thèse. Les deuxième et troisième chapitres sont analytiques. L'étude analyse la perspectives d'une nouvelle femme à travers la protagoniste, Sophie Fevvers, une femme qui brise toutes les frontières du patriarcat et redéfinit l'automatisation des femmes. Elle s'efforce donc de mettre en lumière la liberté des femmes et la manière dont elles se libèrent de la société dominée par les hommes.