Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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