

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Subversion of Patriarchy in Angela Carter's *Night at the Circus***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.**

**in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Master of Arts in English**

**By**

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**September 2012**

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## **Acknowledgements**

This research could never come into its present form without the scholarly and invaluable guidance and encouragement of my supervisor, Associate Prof. Dr. BirendraPandey of Central Department of English, Kiritipur, Katmandu. I am very grateful to his advice and suggestion to explore and organize the ideas. I express my sincere gratitude to him.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Associate Prof. Dr. Ammaraj Joshi, Head of the Department, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, for giving me permission to write this thesis.

I would like to thank all the friends and relatives for their notable supports.

Lastly, my gratitude goes to those authors and researchers whose works have been consulted in preparation of this thesis. I would like to thank the staffs of Central Department of English T.U., Kirtipur.

Aamod Kumar Thakur

September 2012

## **Abstract**

This study analyzes Angela Carter's novel *Night at the Circus* from the perspective of feminism. Female characters of the novel like Fevvers, Lizzie, Madame Schreck and Christian Rosencreutz resist patriarchy by revolting against socio- economic, cultural and political discourses and try to establish liberty and equality for women. Carter allegorically presents prison which was broken by females at midnight that refers to the male dominated society which subverts by females with female right movement. By using various narrative events she induces the urgency of subversion of patriarchy and her characters finally ready to subvert the patriarchy by breaking the prison.

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## I. Angela Carter and Feminist Voice

This study analyzes Angela Carter's novel *Night at the Circus* from the perspective of feminism. The novel promotes feminist voices and subverts patriarchy by resisting male values of the society. Angela Carter is one of the famous feminist writers of Yorkshire subverts male values by revising and reinterpreting fairy tales and folk narratives. Carter expresses her views of feminism through her various novels, fairytales, and re-writes the fairytales. Her female protagonists often take on empowered roles where they rise up against oppression and fight for both sexual and political equality. The actions of these women are direct reflections of the feminist movement that took place in the 1970's.

*Night at the Circus* by Angela Carter tells the story of a female circus aerialist and a male reporter following her. In one section of the book, Carter describes a prison full of women who plan to escape. The author suggests that the prison represents the exploitation of women in patriarchal society and that their escape attempt represents subversion of patriarchy.

*Night at the Circus* represents woman can use their own imprisonment both to see the prison of representation in which they find themselves and to establish a place from which they being to speak and create their own space.

Angela Carter was born on May 7, 1940 in Eastbourne. Her father was a journalist, who would later inspire Angela Carter. Because of the impending German aerial attacks of World War II, Carter was moved to stay with her grandmother in Yorkshire. Throughout her teens, Angela Carter struggled with the eating disorder anorexia. She was ranked number ten in *The Times* list of, the 50 greatest British Writers since 1945. Carter was a fiction writer and journalist whose writings embody a commitment to feminism and magical realism. Angela Carter studied English literature at the University of Bristol. Angela Carter became fluent in German and

French. Throughout 1970s and 1980s, Angela Carter would hold residencies at many institutions for higher education including the University of Adelaide, Brown University, the University of East Anglia and the University of Sheffield. In 1960, she married her first husband Paul Carter. Nine years later, Angela Carter won the Somerset Maugham Award. She used the awards purse to travel to Japan and distanced herself from her husband.

Carter applied the main beliefs and goals of radical-libertarian feminism to her earliest works and from there further expanded her work upon the same feminist ideals. The only difference that can be noted is that while the ideas of empowering women, rising against oppression and the other radical-libertarian feminist views uphold, Carter became more radical in promoting these feminist ideas. Her writing style is effective to raise feminist voice because it was unlike anything the people had ever read. She exposes the dirty truths that everyone knew but never spoke about. She was blunt, forceful, dramatic, and horrific in the tales, but she helps empower women. Through her heroines in her tales and their experiences, she gave women examples to follow to help lead them through their journey to equality with men.

Angela Carter expresses feminist voices through her various novels, fairy tales, and re-writes the fairy tales. Her female protagonists often take on empowered roles where they rise up against oppression and fight for both sexual and political equality. The actions of these women are direct reflections of the feminist movement that took place in 1970s.

Angela Carter's most ambitious novel, *Night at the Circus* (1984), took her almost ten years to write. It has received a lot of critical attention, the majority of it is feminist. This is hardly surprising considering that the novel features as its principal protagonist a woman with wings ushering in the twentieth century. Fevvers has all the éclat of new era about to take off. Fevvers' ability to fly prefigures the new liberated woman of the twentieth century that just now



is waiting in the wings, the new age in which no woman will be bound to the ground. Carter has set the novel in 1899, the year the British Parliament was debating a motion on vote for women, a fact alluded into the novel. While many of the feminist interpreters of the book have focused on the narrative, most have allowed their allegiance to the women's movement to simplify Carter's complex and ambivalent handling of emancipated female subjectivity.

This is a complex and multifaceted story told with irony. Thinking critically about the assumptions on which our lives are based, taking real and figurative journey of self-discovery, questioning patriarchal values and notions of commodity culture and determining who defines identity are just a few of its themes.

The novel explores the voice of women against patriarchy and emphasizes on subversion of male domination. Fevvers' wings might be a symbol of liberation, enabling her to escape from an oppressive patriarchal society and progress into a twentieth century of feminist freedom. Fevvers, Lizzie and the rest of the female characters represent the idea of the new women and a new way of thinking entirely. Even the innocent and vulnerable Mignon is able to escape her abusive husband and past life of oppression for an empowering existence outside the social norms.

The turn-of-the-century setting dictates much of the novel's content and its personas. The female characters, in particular, encompass a transition between one century and the next and from one time period to another. Specifically, Lizzie's character is not only a protector of the aerialiste, Fevvers, but of women's right. She considers marriage as a personal and social impediment and takes it upon herself to ensure that Fevvers does not fall into the trap of a patriarchal society. Lizzie herself is a symbol of the nineteenth century's suffrage movement. The women of Ma Nelson's brothel similarly defy the female mold of previous centuries as

Lizzie refers to them as suffragists. The duality of prostitutes and suffragists is an interesting image and again depicts the females as forward thinking women.

Jack Walser's character also encompasses nineteenth century thought in his pragmatic approach to life, while the many members of the circus represent a transition towards a new century with different ideals as they struggle to find themselves, leaving their dark circus pasts behind

The novel focuses on the life and exploitation of Fevvers, a woman who is believed as cookney virgin, hatched from an egg laid by unknown parents and ready to develop fully fledged wings. At the time of the story, she has become a celebrated aerialiste, and she captivates the young journalist, Jack Walser, who runs away with the circus and falls into a world that his journalistic exploitation had not prepared him to encounter.

*Nights at the Circus* incorporates multiple categories of fiction though it raises females voice and subverts the traditional concept of patriarchy. As in her previous works, Angela Carter plays with many literary aspects and dissects the traditional fairy tale structure.

The story opens with a third person narrative set in 1899 London. However, this narrator is biased and deceives the reader. The narrator has an omniscient perspective towards Walser but, as regards Fevvers and Lizzie, the narrator can only give hard facts that could have been picked up from any newspaper at the time. The narrator only talks about Walser's perspective; however, the reader is also given a very biased autobiography from Fevvers in a first person past narrative using dialogue. Even though it is obvious that the main narrator is not Fevvers, she nonetheless controls the pace and direction of the entire section; she steals the power of narration from the narrator and uses it to focus on herself while the narrator is left to merely comment on the information she presents. The second section of the novel is the narration of the Petersburg which is very similar to the narration of the London section that is

a third person narrative; omniscient towards Walser. However, in this section the characters of the circus are introduced as well. Whereas in the London section, all past information is constructed by Fevvers and is contained within her story, in Petersburg the reader is given information about the characters from the actual narrator. Thus, the narration is used to show that even though Fevvers is present throughout the Petersburg section, she is not the focus. The narrator concentrates on the circus and the characters that make it up exact the style of narration in Petersburg is also used in Siberia with one exception: the first person perspective of Fevvers is also presented. Fevvers' internal dialogue is used to remove much, though not all, of the mystique surrounding her. Fevvers' perspective not only reveals her inner human confusions, but also shifts the readers focus from what she says to what she thinks.

This study shows how Carter subverts patriarchy in the periphery of socio economic condition of 1970s. It notifies the autobiographies, inverted norms, carnivalization, and fantasy. Even as she appropriates extraordinary and fantastic elements, Carter retains certain conventions of realism and a firm connection to the historical material situation as means of securing her novel's feminist political edge and ensuring that her novel remains accessible to the most readers.

To accomplish its aims, the novel engages and attempts to resolve the tensions that have characterized the uneasy gender relationship. In contrast, feminism emphasizes the material world in which women are daily oppressed as women and situate their analyses of women's oppression within specific political, cultural, historical, economic and ideological contexts.

In a rather peevish review of a number of books on Angela Carter published between 1997-8, Carol McGuirk despairs at the 'cluelessness', she finds in the body of criticism on Carter with which she has been confronted, none of which has furnished with satisfactory answers to her questions:

Is she best approached through her ideas or her images-i.e., her by turns gothic and festive representation of the body? Is she a philosopher or a gadfly? Is she tragic or comic, postmodern or surreal or realistic? Are we being invited to a lustily transgressive carnival or a grim and decadent masquerade? Did Carter write fantasy, historical fiction, feminist polemic, or anti-feminist polemic? The answer is yes(15).

With the exception of the question about science fiction, all of these questions would be relevant to ask of *Night at the Circus* and most are represented in various ways within the summary and assessment of critical approaches to the novel covered in the following pages. Yet McGuirk's review also throws up an important contradiction. On the one hand, she expresses a natural frustration about a critical cluelessness that produces such an array of apparently contradictory questions but fails to spell out how they might work to provide a coherent overall understanding of the novel. On the other, she is horrified by a criticism of Carter's work that simply boiled down her complex weave of ideas and allusions into an orthodox litany of themes suitable for the classroom. Makinen further describes Carters' views on feminism and says:

Carter's work has consistently dealt with representations of the physical abuse of women in phallogentric cultures, of women alienated from themselves within the male gaze, and conversely of women who grab their sexuality and fight back, of women troubled by and even powered by their own violence(21).

When people read Angela Carter's fiction their attention will, without doubt, be drawn to one particular aspect of her writing: her depiction of femininity. Carter's women protagonists stand out and they provoke, they shock, they surprise. They also stir pity and open the readers eyes to

problems they may never have conceived before. They can make the readers laugh or cry, they can provoke sympathy or con-tempt, but one thing is sure: No reader will ever stay “untouched” by Carter’s women characters. In this regard, Ellen Moers says:

Fevvers continues her story, although doubt is cast on the veracity of her narrative voice throughout. She and Lizzie, she tells Walser, next move in with Lizzie's sister and helps run the family ice cream parlour. However, when the family falls on hard times Fevvers accepts an invitation from the fearsome Madame Schreck. This lady puts Fevvers on display in her exclusive combination of freak show and brothel, along with several other women with unique appearances(63).

The novel give importance in gender equality and strongly raises feminist voices than her previous work, *Night at the Circus* was relatively well and widely reviewed. As Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton point out, “The novel is rich in narratives and engaged with its narrative challenges and others that felt it suffered from an over-extended ambition in both these respects” (22). The novel urges to enhance socio- economic and political upliftment of the women.

By analyzing above reviews of the study it is sure that it has not been studied the novel from the perspective of feminism so it will be key foundation for those who want to study the novel from the perspective of feminist reading.

To analyze the issue of subversion of patriarchy, this study has been divided into four chapters. All the four chapters concentrate on proving the hypothesis of the study. The characters in the novel reveal against male domination by resisting male dominated socio economic and political values of the society. The first chapter presents the general introduction of this research

including the background to the present study, views of the critics on the author, and his writing and an introductory outline of the present research. It gives us a bird's-eye view of the entire thesis. A theoretical guideline of the analysis has been mentioned in second chapter. In the same way, presentation and analysis mentioned in the third chapter and conclusion has been mentioned in the fourth chapter.

## II. Feminism and Patriarchal Ideology

### Feminism and Female Desire

Feminism is the belief and principle that stresses women should have the same rights and opportunities as men in the society. Although women have been playing very crucial role in the development of whole human society, they have remained confined in our patriarchal boundary. It was obviously so in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Victorian society. Women were longing to break themselves from the authority of male dominated society, abandoning the male-made space and identity that had limited them only within the family in connection to their husbands and children. They were being muted both in marriage and social life as well as in the higher masculine authority. The search for self- identity and places in the male subjugated society was the important female issue in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Feminism, generally is a theoretical discourse advocating women's rights based on belief in the equality of the sexes and quest for independence. It is a doctrine redefining women's activities and goals from women-centered point of view and refusing to accept the cult of male chauvinism and superiority that reduce women to a sex object, a second sex, and a submissive to other (Jeremy's *A glossary of Contemporary Theory*-431). It seeks to eliminate the subordinations, repression, inequalities, cruelties, and injustices women suffer because of their sex, and preserve equal rights for women in a political, economic, psychological, personal and aesthetic sense.

Women were subjugated to numerous trails as the era was marked by male chauvinism. But, they lay a strong desire to be free. The female freedoms, womanhood, oppression to woman, both in sexual context as well as their emotional needs were the subjects that were not permitted

to be spoken to women. The nineteenth century was a time of great change not only in America but also in many places around the world. The industrial revolution influenced the daily life for better or worse of all Americans.

Gradually, they became aware for their rights and opportunities. Woman, at the beginning of the century by the handful and at the turn of the century millions, left their assigned domestic walls for civic sphere that changed women's lives ultimately. Although poor and working class women long aspired to be free from narrow domesticity and household work, this desire was still inactive. In the early part of the century, before the industrial revolution really took place, women were still valued in the home for their ability to prepare herbal remedies for nursing the sick, to rear the animals, to satisfy their husbands' needs, to care for the aged and to raise their children, to grow wholesome crops and vegetables in their fields and kitchen garden. Moreover, their main responsibilities were to tend the animals in the barnyard and perform various household tasks, which were required to turn a house into a home.

During the same time, many middle class women began to enter the public sphere as reformers to demolish the evils of slavery, prostitutions, violence to women and poverty with their free time to devote to a cause under the impetus of their new-found religious faith. Time and again, these women found that before they could be successful in the public domain, they would first have to create a climate in which women were welcomed into the public sphere. So, the nineteenth century women's movement arose along with the other social reform movements, initially as a way of making female reformers more effective activists for their chosen grounds. Only by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a significant number of women begin to work for woman's rights as their primary issue and there was a lot of work to be done to attain women's equal status in the society. A number of feminists have concentrated, not on the woman as the reader, but on



what Elaine Showalter calls gynocriticism- that is, a criticism which concerns with developing exclusively female framework, for dealing with works written by women. Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) is a prominent masterpiece of the theoretical work of feminism. It describes the female literary tradition in the English novel from the Brontes' onward as a development of subculture by arguing that since women in general constitute a kind of subculture within the framework of a larger society, their work would demonstrate a unity of values, conventions, experience and behaviors, encroaching on each individual.

### **Feminity, the Feminists and the Female**

Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct modes. The first is ideological which she terms 'feminist critique'. It is concerned with the feminist reading of texts which considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the exclusion and misconceptions about women in criticism, and women-assign in semiotic system. The second mode of feminist criticism, according to Showalter, is the study of women as writers. She calls it 'gynocritics' which provides the subjects, the history, styles, themes, genres, and structure of writing by women which is the psychodynamics of female creativity and the route of the individual or collective female career; the devolution and laws of a female literary tradition.

Showalter, likewise, in her analysis of historical development of feminist, presents three stages of women writings: Feminine, Feminist, and Female. First is the female imitation of mainstream, male literary tradition dated from 1840 to 1880 and includes the writers like George Eliot and Bronte Sisters. The second is the protest against the standard of this dominant tradition concerning social values and rights. It is dated from 1880 to 1920 and it includes the writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, Frances Trollope and Schweiner. The third stage is self-discovery which aims

at search for independent identity. It is dated from 1920 onward, and it includes the writers like Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwomen in the Attic* (1979) is another brilliantly written substantial book on historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar in this book, according to M.H. Abrams:

Proposes that the anxiety of authorship that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effected in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine ...; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage(91).

Gilbert and Gubar's main argument is that artistic creativity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition which is perceived basically as a male quality is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writers who are imprisoned within it. In the image of 'Divine Creator' the male author fathers his text. But taking the same masculine cosmic author as their model, women end up copying or identifying with the dominant literary images of femininity which comes out of the phallogentric myth of creativity. They advised the female writers first to struggle against the effect of socialization that becomes struggle against men's oppressive reading of women. But they further argue that the women can begin such struggle only be actively seeking a female pioneer who can revolt to patriarchy, representing a threatening force to be denied or killed to the tyrannical ruling of male chauvinism.

The women of the first wave of American feminism broke many barriers, opening doors of opportunity for women of future generations, and opportunities which those later women could use to accumulate greater challenges to the system which expelled women. In the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, married women could not enter into any treaties without their husband's permission; women lost all title, property or future earnings upon marriage. And children were legally controlled by husbands and other male relatives. From time to time, it has been the custom of woman to sacrifice herself whenever she got a chance. The 1890s in America was a decade of social change and social tension. The depression of 1893-96 accentuated class division; urbanization and industrialization continued to challenge traditional ways of life. Darwinism and higher criticism of the Bible threatened established ways of thinking about human origin and destiny. It is not surprising that in decade of such social and intellectual ferment, reaction and resistance to change took the form of a particular Puritan- American brand of Victorian moralism. By 1890 the women had been a matter of public discussion in America for over fifty years. In that year, the two national suffrage organizations merged for the final push for the vote to women. However, it was not practiced for another thirty years. They formed innumerable women's organizations; social, intellectual political and philanthropic to practice women rights and women identity. Lower middle class white women came together to work long hours for low wages, and the organization they did was to combat working conditions in the textile mills and sweetshops where they were employed. African-American women, who continued to work overwhelmingly in agriculture and as domestic organized, started to combat among the social problems in the society. Women, black and white, southern and northern, were active in attempting to attain better position.

American women were legal property of their husbands who were married to them. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Napoleonic code was still the basis of state law governing the marriage contract. Though she might retain control over any inheritances she had received prior to her marriage, all of the wife's accumulations after marriage were the property of her husband. The husband was the legal guardian of the children in the events of divorce in between them. The wife was bound to live with her husband and follow him wherever he chose to reside. A wife could not sign any legal contract without the permission of the husband, nor could she lodge a lawsuit, appear in court, hold public office or make domination to a living person. They were trying to get release from these domestic and social chains. So, Women's independence became central issue during this period. Upper class white women, raised with a particular sense of women's place derived from some mythic age of courtesy and then strained by Civil war into arenas of activity formerly unknown and prohibited to them, came relatively late to the women's movement.

Women's right stirred a hot debate within abolitionist movement, which ended slavery in America. The strongest advocate of women's rights was the libertarian William Lloyd Garrison (1807-1879), editor of the *Liberator*, who insisted that anti-slavery was a battle for human right, not male rights. Many abolitionists were opposed by Garrison that women were self-owners but resisted mixing women's rights with anti-slavery for fear it would hurt the latter causes. In this sense, the feminists attempt to function politically in the reform movement of their days.

Change was far and wide and the population was struggling to come to the terms with those developments. Middle and upper class women were still estimated to stay at home as inoperative, decorative symbols of their husbands' wealth. According to Virginia Woolf, women were being pregnant frequently, they cared their home, husband and children, played music, sang

or drew to enhance their charms and reflect well on their husbands. Wives were controlled, cared for and displayed, who often brought a dowry or inherited wealth to marriage. They were expected to subordinate their needs to their husbands' wishes. She says in her celebrated essay *A Room of One's Own* aptly depicts the condition of the women in that era:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel: they need exercise for their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and, embroidering bags(822).

The women were for the enjoyment, pleasure and assistance of men; their role was harmonizing to that of men, and they should fulfill their natural feminine functions along with conducting the family. It considered them poles apart from men and warned not to struggle with them but to depend on them for everything, especially for their identities, the social definition of who they were. It had pleased them for the inadequate role of wife, mother and mistress all of which were pleasing and beneficial to men.

Gilman believed the domestic environment oppressed women. She said that male aggressiveness and maternal roles for women were artificial and no longer necessary for survival "There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. As well speak of a female liver" (Women and Economics, 1898). Gilman believed economic independence is the only thing that could really bring freedom for women, and make them equal to men. She became a feminist when she was asked to join the women's suffrage movement. She declared that motherhood does not disqualify a woman to work outside the home. It called for a creation of professional housekeepers, cooks, and child care services so that the mother may work outside of her home.

“The ideal woman was not only assigned a social role that locked her into her home, but she was also expected to like it, to be cheerful and gay, smiling and good-humored.”

### **Patriarchal Imagery: Women Imprisonment in the Social Periphery**

The fundamental view is that western civilization is pervasively patriarchal- that is, it is male centered and controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way to subordinate women to men in cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic. From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy to the present, the female tenets are defined by negative reference of the males. Women are facing the lack of their own identities in the society. They are defined as the part of male organs and male coordinative agent for conducting the household task but not in social activities. Male powers and male character traits that are presumed in the patriarchal vision, is playing very crucial role to dominate women to have achieved the most important invention and works of civilization and culture. Women themselves are taught in the process of their being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology.

Patriarchy can be defined as the social organization marked by the incomparability of the father in the tribe or family. The legal dependence of wives and children can be seen on males. And the approximation of birthright is in the male line. The society is normally controlled by men of an excessively large share of power; a society or association organized according to this principle. Patriarchy can be defined in another way as the hypothetical social system based on the absolute authority of the father or an elderly male over the family group. Inspired by the classical social Darwinism of the 19th century, the pioneering anthropologists Lewis Henry

Morgan and Henry Maine envisioned culture as having developed through evolutionary stages, one of which was patriarchy.

The additional claim is that this patriarchal ideology pervades those writings which have been considered the great literature. The great literature has been written by men for men typically, the most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonists-Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Captain Ahab, Huck Finn-who embody the masculine traits and ways of feeling and pursue masculine interests in masculine field of action. To these males, the characters, when they play any role, women are treated as marginal and subordinate and they are represented either as complementary to or in opposition to masculine desires and enterprises. In such works, lacking autonomous female role models, and perfectly addressed to the male readers, either leave the women readers an alien outsiders or solicit her to identify against herself by taking up the position of the subject and assuming the male values and ways of perceiving, feeling and acting. Patriarchy describes the structure of society on the basis of family units, in which fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of these units. In some cultures slaves were included as part of such households. The concept of patriarchy is often used, by extension, to refer to the expectation that men take primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole, acting as representatives Britannica says it is a 'hypothetical social system'(7). The Britannica article goes on to note, "The view of patriarchy as constituting a stage of cultural development is now generally discredited. Furthermore, the consensus among modern anthropologists and sociologists is that a strictly patriarchal society never existed(8). The anthropologist Margaret Mead said,

All the claims so glibly made about societies ruled by women are nonsense. We have no reason to believe that they ever existed. ... men everywhere have been in charge of

running the show. ... men have been the leaders in public affairs and the final authorities at home(37).

Recent writings have not had much good to say about men. A title like *Men Are Not Cost Effective* Roy F. Baumeister speaks for themselves. Maureen Dowd's book was called *Are Men Necessary?* and although she never gave an explicit answer, anyone reading the book knows her answer was no. Brizendine's book *The Female Brain* introduces itself by saying, 'Men, get ready to experience brain envy', and shows women will soon be envying the superior male brain!

A few lucky men are at the top of society and enjoy the culture's best rewards. Others, less fortunate, have their lives chewed up by it. Culture uses both men and women, but most cultures use them in somewhat different ways. Most cultures see individual men as more unessential than individual women and this difference is probably based on nature, in whose reproductive competition some men are the big losers and other men are the biggest winners. Hence, it uses men for the many risky jobs it has. Men go to extremes more than women, and this fits in well with culture using them to try out lots of different things, rewarding the winners and crushing the losers.

The essence of how culture uses men depends on a basic social insecurity. This insecurity is in fact social, existential, and biological differences. Built into the male role is the danger of not being good enough to be accepted and respected and even the danger of not being able to do well enough to create offspring. The basic social insecurity of manhood is stressful for the men, and it is hardly surprising that so many men crack up or do evil or heroic things or die younger than women.



While women concentrated on the close relationship that enabled the species to survive, men created the bigger networks of shallow relationship, less necessary for survival but eventually enabling culture to flourish. The gradual creation of wealth, knowledge, and power in the men's sphere was the source of gender inequality. Men created the big social structures that comprise society, and men still are mainly responsible for this, even though we now see that women can perform perfectly well in these large systems. What seems to have worked best for cultures is to play off the men against each other, competing for respect and other rewards that end up distributed very unequally. Men have to prove themselves by producing things the society values. They have to prevail over rivals and enemies in cultural competitions, which is probably why they aren't as lovable as women. In overall sense, women are confined into the narrow patriarchal social imprisonment that men assigned and defined women's role as well as they determined women's behaviors and place in the society. Men perpetrated an ideological prison that subjected and silenced women.

Society and religion, as the forms of patriarchy, blind women to the restrictions of their gendered identities and promote the angel-in –the house image of perfections as their happiest role. Contemporary women were beginning to realize their position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize their relations as individuals in the world. People in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American society were caged by custom which often seemed comfortably protective. Thus protesting against such a cage of illusory custom and conventions, in most of their works, feminists authors portrayed many people who will not or cannot leave the cage and others who remain within but yearn to be without, and still others who dare, sometimes only for a moment, to break beyond the bars.

Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir contributed greatly for the worldwide emergence of in the first half of the twentieth century. Woolf focuses on situation of women authors throughout the history and their cultural, economic, and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society which had prevented them from realizing their creative possibilities. The feminist trend of her time was concerned for absolute equality and the erasure of differences between the sexes. But Woolf voiced for radical changes as women's freedom and for their suppressed values affecting the concept of power, family and social life that shaped by men in the past. Beauvoir on the other hand, insists against the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or other to man as the defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general.

Feminism itself draws and shares a great deal from schools of thought such as Marxism, Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction: the theories that tend to destabilize the center and subvert the hierarchy. Feminism thus, has never been a well-concerted movement, in that feminist voices range widely from utter denial of male voices to reconciliation between the two sexes.

The contemporary society believed that women were for the pleasure and assistance of men; their role was balancing to that of men, and they should accomplish their natural feminine functions. It considered them different from men and warned not to participate with them but to depend on them for everything, especially for their place in the society, personality, identities, and the social definition of who they were. It had satisfied them for the incomplete role of wife, mother and mistress all of which were pleasing and beneficial to men. One who did not seek her identity through man was a threat to social value.

One of the most important feminist precursors is Charlotte Perkins Gilman whose short fiction *The Yellow Wallpaper* is also important landmark in the field of feministic criticism. Using her extraordinary life experiences as a female within a patriarchal system, Gilman redefined womanhood, declaring women the equal of men in all spheres of life. This "new woman" was to be an intelligent, well-informed, and well-educated free thinker, the creator and expresser of her own ideas. She was to be economically self-sufficient, socially independent, and politically active. She would share the opportunities, duties, and responsibilities of the workplace with men, and together they would share the solitude of the hearth. Finally, the new woman was to be as informed, self-assured, confident, and influential as she was compassionate, nurturing, loving, sensitive-a woman of the world as well as of the home. Gilman's vision of an autonomous female challenged not only the traditional "cult of true womanhood" but also the concepts and values of family, home, religion, community, capitalism, and democracy.

Gilman's ultimate goal was to develop autonomous individuals, for rational behavior was possible only if self-governing women could connect knowledge with action and judge others' opinions in relation to their own. Judgment and will were the crucial ingredients of citizenship in nurturing respect for others, in developing critical thinking skills. Therefore, education must emphasize imagination as well as truth and reason, self-discipline as well as self-restraint. Moreover, education must combine all these skills to develop the faculties of reason so essential to rational and judicious-acting individuals.

Moreover, Gilman's writings about these tensions and struggles between marriage and career, social expectations, and personal goals continue to impact women's decisions to that day, while illuminating her arguments for narrowing them has greatly heightened our understanding of the power of social norms on the individual. Gilman's feminist ideas clearly have a place

within educational history and the long tradition of female authors who wrote in order to transform society by educating other women. Like her great aunt Catharine Beecher, Gilman illustrated the need to systematize instruction in the domestic realm and to develop institutions for teacher education. Like M. Carey Thomas, she emphasized the need to offer an intellectually challenging higher education for women that was on balance with the collegiate liberal arts education, one that would train women in critical and analytical thought.

### **Feminism and Marxist Point of View**

Socialist Feminists, among others criticized this viewpoint. Other forms of Feminism more accurately hold men and more specifically patriarchy as the primary causes of women's oppression. Marxist Feminists conclusion that capitalism is almost exclusively the cause of women's oppression is overly simplistic, but not surprising given the fact that they are approaching the problem from only an economic standpoint. Friedrich Engel, one of the fathers of Marxism, and to some extent Marxist Feminism wrote at length about gender inequality under capitalism. He came up with an indefensible theory as to the origins of patriarchy titled *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Marxist feminism is a sub-type of feminist theory which focuses on the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women. Marxist feminism states that private property, which gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political confusion, and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women, is the root of women's oppression in the current social context. According to Marxist theory, the individual is heavily influenced by the structure of society, which in all modern societies means a class structure; that is, people's opportunities, wants, and interests are seen to be shaped by the mode of production that characterizes the

society they inhabit. Marxist feminists see contemporary gender inequality as determined ultimately by the capitalist mode of production. Gender oppression is class oppression and the relationship between man and woman in society is similar to the relations between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression, which is maintained because it serves the interests of capital and the ruling. Marxist feminists have extended traditional Marxist analysis by looking at domestic labour as well as wage work.

Feminism generally a theoretical discourse advances women's rights based on belief in the equality of the sexes. It is a doctrine redefining women's activities and goal from a woman center point of view and refusing to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to a sex object, a second sex , a submissive other. It seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression: inequalities and injustice. Women suffer because of their sex and defend equal right for women in a political social, psychological personal and aesthetic sense.

Feminism is a school of thought which tries to dismantle the patriarchal social norms and values, that is against the natural law of equality, to liberate women. It, as a movement, declares that women are also human beings equal to men. It is a voice against the inadequacy, the distortion as well as ideologies of the males. It is a massive complaint against patriarchal monopoly. It is a commitment to eradicate the ideology of domination to establish a healthy and equal society for both male and female. Feminism, the movement for women's liberation, is a part of the creation of a new society in which there are not any forms of discrimination. This society cannot be separated from the process of its making" (Rowbothamqtd. in Bryson 257). Feminism focuses on physical, economic, political, and psychological, religious etc equality and opposes gender roles, stereotypes and discrimination against women based on the assumption that women are passive, weak and physically helpless.

The term 'feminism' was first used by the French dramatist Alexander Dumas in 1872 in a pamphlet "L" to designate the emerging movement for women's rights. It gradually emerged to be a world-wide cultural movement to secure a complete equality of women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights-moral, social, religious, political, educational, legal, economic and many others. It studies the domination of women in many fields, from different perspectives. Therefore, Rosemarie Tong states, feminism:

Is not one, but many, theories or perspectives and that each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to describe strategies for women's liberation. The more skillful a feminist theory can combine description explanation, and perspective the better that theory is(1).

Feminism is not only a study of problems but also it seeks its solution and its impact as well. It is a theory based on reason. That is why; some critics call it 'feminist science'.

Feminism is an expression or resentment at the unjust treatment imposed upon women. It voices the women's objection to be treated as a door-mat or a piece of furniture meant for the convenience of men. Women refuse to be shifted under oppression and restriction and intend to rebel against the hostile environment in which they live. It is a struggle against the hardship and neglect imposed upon women, "Patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally and therefore correctly, self-effacing and submissive"(Tyson 85). Feminism struggles against this kind of false creation for the establishment of patriarchal regime. Thus, it is not against the males of society but against their monopoly and dictatorship. It raises question

against the long standard dominant, phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male interpretation on literature, social science, economics, politics, religion etc. There is a strong affiliation between Marxism and feminism. Both of them attack the social injustice and discrimination.

Moreover, all feminist activities including feminist theory and literary criticism have its ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality. Thus, all feminist activities can be seen as a form of activism. This activism campaigns on issue such as reproductive right, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. The themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, especially sexual objectification, oppression etc.

The basis of feminist ideology is that rights privilege, status and obligations should not be determined by gender. Feminism, however, is a grass root movement which crosses the class and race boundaries. As culturally specific, it addresses the issues relevant to women of the corresponding society. It focuses on physical equality and opposes the gender roles stereotypes and discrimination against women based on assumption that women are passive, weak and physically helpless. It rejects the idea that certain characteristics or interests are inherently masculine, which are positive and superior and that certain characteristics or interests are inherently feminine, which are negative and inferior.

Feminism as a movement started only after Second World War especially in the decade of 1960s when the voices of minorities like African-American, Jewish etc emerged as movements. In this period, suppressed voices got chance to revolt. So, 1960s was the beginning decade of its institutional development. Earlier also feminist felt that females are in fact made

inferior not by nature but by social mechanism. In ancient period, women were taken as puppet to amuse males. They said that females lack certain qualities which males possess.

Aristotle said, "The female is female by virtue of certain lack of qualities" (qtd. In Indreni 90). Similarly, in middle age St. Thomas Aquinas thought that a woman is "an imperfect man" (90).

In the novel, *Night at the Circus* Carter urges to subvert patriarchy through reinterpreting and revising myth, fairytale and narratives which are based on male language and ideology. For creating women space in this world it is necessary to enhance women and make ready them for the subversion of patriarchy in term of culture, socio-economic situation language and political discourses. For that feminism or various right movement of gender is essential to elaborate the immense power of women for subversion of patriarchy.



### III. Subversion of Patriarchy in Angela Carter's *Night at the Circus*

Angela Carter's *Night at the Circus* subverts the patriarchy by reinterpreting the story of women on the periphery of contemporary values of life. Female characters of the novel Fevvers, Lizzie, Ma Nelson etc resist patriarchal values and search equal right between men and women. In this regard Fevvers says:

Then she spun round on her swiveling dressing-stool it was a plush-topped, backless piano stool, lifted from the rehearsal room and confronted herself with a grin in the mirror as she ripped six inches of false lash from her left eyelid with an incisive gesture and a small, explosive, rasping sound(2).

Carter points out their myths belonging to a system of discourses, the purpose of which is to console women by convincing them that their place in society belongs to natural order. Carter rejects the views which are guided by male politics and desire of controlling power over female. Fevvers further clarifies the situation and speaks, "She'd told him, jerking her head at that favorite poster which, she'd remarked off-handedly, had been scrawled on the stone by "some Frog dwarf who asked me to piddle on his thingy before he'd get his crayons so much as out sparing your blushes"(2). It snubs male center discourse of power and compares the tradition with circus. By comparing society with a big prison and circus she satirizes male dominated world and demands equal right and opportunity for women. Fevvers denies male domination and is ready to subvert traditional male values of society. In this context, it is relevant to quote following lines:

Fevvers' garters, stockings, fans, cigars, shaving soap... She even lent it to a brand of baking powder; if you added a spoonful of the stuff, up in the air went your sponge cake, just as she did. Heroine of the hour, subject of learned

discussion and profane surprise Helen launched a thousand quips, mostly on the lewd side(2).

Overall paraphernalia and activities mock the male values of the society and proved that all are unnecessary for the justices for women. These practices could not enhance the overall development of society as well as women so the question comes in mind what for the paraphernalia and ritual? Fevver describes the situation in this way:

A large pair of frilly drawers, evidently fallen where they had light-heartedly been tossed, draped some subject, clock or marble bust or funerary urn, anything was possible since it was obscured completely. A redoubtable corset of the kind called an iron Maiden poked out of the empty coalscuttle like the pink husk of a giant prawn emerging from its den, trailing long laces like several sets of legs(3).

The description shows the complexity of tale which is different from the simple male dominated description. The descriptions create a space for women to rethink about myth and male image and hierarchy of the society. It is against the traditional comp of male virility and female mildness and presents the situation in complex manner. The lines of the novel describe as, “She peered across her shoulder, again to see how he took *that*. Under the screen of her bonhomeriebonnefemmerie?He noted she was wary. He cracked her white grin. He relished *this* commission!” (4). The situation of Fevvers makes it further clear, “She stepped though the gap with elaborate and uncharacteristic daintiness. The gilded cage whisked up into the flies, tangling for a moment with the trapeze” (6). Their dominated image is a panopticon which implementing disorderingfor controlling the women. Carter presents the situation in disorder and challenges

the patriarchal value of order and harmony. By using disjunctive plot and narratives she subverts patriarchy.

In the novel, she brings the images of panopticon and compares male dominated world as prison. She creates the prison as place of isolation and contemplation where women may confront their responsibility and forgiven. By twisting the images of fairy tale she search's the equal position of women. In this regard Fevvers describes, "So, if this lovely lady is indeed, as her publicity alleges, a fabulous bird-women, then she, by all the laws of evolution and human reason, ought to possess no arms at all, for it's her arms that ought to be her wings! (7). Carter presents women situation as circus and ironies the contemporary situation of the society. Her emphasis goes on power and its controlling nature and creates romance on it. In this regard, Lizzie says, "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" (7-8). The descriptions induce mode of fairy tale and valorizes freedom in human life. By using tales setting, she satirizes male dominated society which is based on power and domination. In this regard, Fevvers says:

When the hack *aerialist*, the everyday, wingless variety, performs the triple somersault, she travels though her air at a cool sixty miles an hour; Fevvers, however, contrived a contemplative and leisurely twenty-five, so that the packed theatre could enjoy the spectacle, as in slow motion, of every tense muscle straining in her Rubenesque from(8).

The narratives show the pictorial images of circus which describes romance and genus of fairy world. The world which she describes is different from the male dominated real world where women hold power and enjoy in freedom. In this regard Fevvers point out the situation as:

She kisses her free hand to all. She folds up her quivering wings with a number of shivers, moue and grimaces as if she were putting away a naughty book. Some chorus boy or other trips on and hands her into her feather cloak that is as frail and vivid as those the natives of Florida used to make(9).

Vividness in narratives show the freedom of women which is only possible in absence of domination of patriarchy. As child Fevvers responds the situation and says, “Lizzie peered in the toilet jug and tripped the melted contents into the bath-water. “No more ice,” she said to Walser accusingly, as if it were his fault” (10). She is confused on the location. She expresses the situation as, “Perhaps, perhaps [ . . . ] my brain is tuening to bubbles already, thought Walser, but I could almost swear I saw a fish, a little one, a herring, a sprat, a minnow, but wriggling, alive-oh, go into the bath when she tipped the jug” (10). Socio economic and cultural bond of the society creates a kind of legacy and trapped women in a chamber like marriage. In this regard, she says, “Marriage? Pah!” snapped Lizzie in a pet. “Out of the frying pan into the fire! What is marriage but prostitution to one man instead of many? No different! D’ you think a decent whore’d be proud to marry you, young man? Eh?” (11). Economic domination of men binds women in marriage and exploit there in the periphery of patriarchal values. Carter presents the fact in term of the descriptions of circus and fairy tale. In this regard, Fevvers says:

She gave him a quarter look, as if she suspected he were teasing and, sooner or later, she would remember to pay him back for it, but her mouth was too full for a

riposte as she tucked into his earthiest, coarsest cabbies' fare with gramantuan enthusiasm. She gorged, she stuffed herself, she spilled gravy on herself, she sucked up peas from the knife; she had a gullet to match her size and table manners of the Elizabethan variety(11).

Fevvers inhabits those margins of the society of the whorehouse, the freak show and the circus that safely contain those elements that threaten to disrupt the orderly and legitimate exercise of power. In each of the institution, the inhabitants are on display, objects to be bought for the pleasure of the viewing and consuming public safely enclosed behind wall. Fevvers allegorically presents the situation and says:

For, as my tittles swelled before, so these feathered appendages of mine swelled behind until, one morning in my fourteenth year, rising from my truckle bed in the attic as the friendly sound of Bow Bells came in through the window while the winter sun shone coolly down on that great city outside, which, had I but known it, would one day be at my feet...(12).

Carter artistically projects the situation of women in contemporary society and identifies that how the situation of women is fallen under the encroachment of male domination in the name of traditional beliefs and practices. Fevvers makes the situation further clear:

Our Liz, all this will never do! You'll make our poor girls redundant if you go on so!" She took me off regular duties and set me to work as housekeeper, which suited me very well, for the girl saw to it I got my share of the gratuities. And, every evening, as dusk came on, I lit the fire and tended it, until, by eight or nine in the evening, the drawing-room was snug as a groin...(14).

Carter presents the situation of girl by comparing the setting of fairy tales which enhance the equality of women and urges to subvert the ongoing patriarchy. She abandons the character and turns instead to allegorical substitutes for Fevvers and her trope in her dramatization of community of women in Siberia who are incarcerated in and then escape from all female panopticon. In this regard, Fevvers says, “It was about the early afternoon and all quite in the house, each woman in her own room busy with the various pastime with which they occupied themselves before their labour began. I threw off that cashmere shawl and, spreading my new-fledged wings; I jumped into the air, hup” (14). The following lines make the situation further clear:

She was a proper lady, said Lizzie. Nelson was a good ‘un, she was. She was concurred Fevvers. She had the one peculiarity, sir; due to her soubriquet, or nickname, she always dressed in the full dress uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet. Not that she ever missed a trick, her one eye sharp as a needle, and always used to say. I keep a tight little ship(17-18).

Their physical appearance generalizes situation and identifies her as female though she is not from another planets. The behavior of male dominated society categorizes a woman not only different but also inferior of man and objectifies her. Fevvers highlights the situation and says:

She fell silent. Some object within the room, perhaps the hot-water pipes gave out a metallic tinkle. Lizzie, on her creaking handbag, shifted from one buttock to the other and coughed. Fevers remained sunk in introspection for a while and the wind blew Big Ben, striking midnight, so lost, so lonely a sound it seemed to

Walsler the clock might be striking in a deserted city and they inhabitants left alive(20).

Above descriptions satire the male dominated society and its value by comparing with night circus where human creativity and genius is paralyzed by the burden of patriarchy. In the mid night women try to resist the rule and regulation made by men and subverts the patriarchal norms of society. In this regard, Fevvers argues, “She thrust her right leg through the flap of her dressing-gown. Its foot wore a down-at-heel pink velvet slipper trimmed with grubby swansdown. The leg itself, perfectly bare, was admirably long and lean” (23). When women escape from the prison the magic situation is created which is similar to the real circus as, “She crossed her arms on her massive bust and the bulge in the back of her satin dressing-gown began to heave and bubble. Cracks appeared in the old satin. Everything appeared to be about to burst out and take off” (23).The situation is alike with fairy tale and night circus when characters protest on the basis of plot. The message of the fairy tale is guided by romance and freedom alike of circus performance which celebrates freedom and equality. Fevversdescribes the situation as, “Her geniality evaporated; she squinted at him beneath her thick pale lashes with almost hostility, seemed ill-at-ease, reached out to toy with her bunch of violets in a bored fashion. Something, somewhere, perhaps the tin lid of the tin kettled and clanged. She cocked her head” (24).

In the novel, Carter creatively presents the ongoing feminist movement of Europe and America and projects with giving the references of night circus and fairy tales. Plot of this novel is diverse and creative that can successfully induce the issue of feminism in term of various aspects of life such as socio economic, cultural and political background. In this regard, it is relevant to quote the following lines:

So dying intestate as she did, all her estate went by due process of the law to this, her surviving kin. To oh, the irony of fate!--that very stern and stony-hearted elder brother who cast her from his hearth when as a girl first she slipped, and so ensured her ruin, in one sense, although her fortune in another(25).

Above lines show fatal of irony that creates by patriarchy for the domination of women. She manifests female voice through creating various images and conflict. These images and conflict are straight forward to maintain freedom and equality. The following narratives make it further clear:

She stretched one long arm across the room and twitched the voluminous drawers away from the very pretty, old-fashioned clock of her description, with Father Time on top and hands stuck at twelve for all eternity. Then dropped the drawers in a lacy heap on Walser's lap. The women chuckled a little as he removed them with tactful thumb and fingertips and laid them on the sofa behind him(27).

Female body is dual associations with consumption they are both the consumers and the consumed women's deconstruction of economics consumption must take place by inhabiting both of these roles, and then both consuming and being consumed differently. The situation further clarifies as, "She thrust her hand into the bosom of her dressing-gown and brought forth a gilt sword, which then she flourished above her head. Although it was only the little toy sword of a full-dress Admiral, it flashed and glittered in the exhausted light so sharply that Walser Jumped" (28). It is significant that the prison, the women's consumption is horizontal in orientation rather than vertical, it is based on in the parameter made by male persona which is



against the freedom and equality of women. The following lines clear the situation with giving the references of circus as:

So he humbly stepped behind the screen to direct the brown arc of the excess of her champagne, as bidden, into the white china pot. The act of engaging in this most human of activities brought him down to earth again, for there is no element of the metaphysical about pissing, not, at least, in our culture(30).

Carter manifests feminist voice by creating contrast with patriarchy. Fevvers describes the situation and says, “She subjected Walser to a blue bombardment from her eyes, challenge and stack at once before she took up the narrative again” (31). She further clarifies, “So there we were, in Battersea; happy days! But a fearful cold winter came on with very little call for ice-cream and Gianni” (31). Carter projects feministic world by comparing with various event and circumstances which is related to male dominated socio economic political and cultural background of the contemporary world. Lizzie describes the situation and says:

She went on earnestly, spinning on her stool towards him. “You must understand this: Nelson’s Academy accommodated those who were perturbed in their bodies and wished to verify that, however equivocal, however much they cost, the pleasure of the flesh were, at bottom, splendid. But, as for Madame Schreck, she Cartered for those who were troubled in their...souls(32).

The issues of freedom and equality rise in term of ongoing right movement of Europe and America which is unable to justify the equality to women in socio-economic and cultural platform. Fevvers point outs the situation as, “Afterwards, when I was free again, Esmeralda’s old man, the Human Eel, told me how this Madame Schreck, as she called herself, had indeed

started out in life as a Living Skeleton, touring the sideshows, and always was a bony woman”(33). Personal experiences play vital role to identify people who he/she is that play vital role than scientific verification which Carter refers to identify women and says:

She gave him this scientific verification of Toussaint’s existence with a dazzling smile; it was true that Fevvers had won the friendship of many men of science. Walser recalled how the young woman had entertained the curiosity of the entire Royal College of Surgeons for three hours without so much as unbuttoning her bodice for them, and discussed navigation in birds with a full meeting of the of the Royal Society with such infernal assurance and so great wealth of scientific terminology that not one single professor had dared be rude enough to question her on the extent of her personal experience(34).

To subvert the patriarchy, personal experiences of women play vital role than socio economic and cultural factors though she is unable to secure position of women. She projects the scene of circus where the role of female characters is similar to the real world. She describes the situation in this way:

She’d stop at random in front of one niche or another and she’d say: ‘Shall I open the curtain? Who knows what spectacle of the freakish and unnatural lies behind it!’ and they’d say, ‘yes’, or, ‘no’, depending on whether they’d been before, for if they’d been before, they’d got their fancies picked out and if it was, ‘yes’, she’d pull back the curtain while Toussaint wheezen out a shocking discord on the old harmonium(35).

The novel induces hazy circumstances that make the plot controversial and creates conflict on the idea what she tries to project. This controversy sets the situation which is against patriarchy, so called harmony of the society. Fevvers presents the situation as, “She was loaded on a stretcher into the guard’s van of the London train and so to Kensington, where her life went on as it had done before. She always works at sunset, like night-scented stock; she ate, she filled a bedpan, and then she slept again” (36). While she was working she forgets her situation and being confused on the situation and says, “So I says to her; ‘Wonder, why do you degrade yourself by working in this house, which is truly a house of shame, when you could earn a good living on the boards?’” ah, Fevvers,’ she replies, ‘I’d rather show myself to one man at a time than to an entire theatre-full” (37). The scene of circus manifests the condition of women. They sacrifice liberty and equality in the circus though they try to resist the situation. Fevvers presents the situation by giving the references of a young lady and her activities as:

She carried me off to the nursery and her nanny put soothing ointment on my burns and dressed me up in a silk frock that the young lady’s own doll sacrificed for me, although I was perfectly able to dress myself. But I was to find that rich women as well as dolls cannot put on their own clothes unaided(38).

In night circus, they perform the role which is similar to the real world and performance of real women. In some scene of night circus women subvert patriarchy according to the demand of story though in real world it is not easy for that. She projects her in the issues as, “Nothing I could say would make her feel she was worth more than a farthing in the world’s exchange. She would say: ‘how I envy that poor being--’ pointing to the Sleeping Beauty ‘--except for one thing: she dreams” (39). Fighting with patriarchy is not easy for female so she satirizes the situation by comparing various events of the society such as circus and fairy tales.

Fevvers highlights the situation by giving the references to the payment system and says, “Well, pull the other!’ think I to myself for I don’t believe that for one moment, but: ‘Madame Bloody Schreck,’ I insist, ‘you’ll not take one penny commission, either, since you’ve paid me nothing since those five bright shiners six months ago and kept me here a prisoner since!’” (41). The situation of women is not so good in the society as rulers claims. She further clarifies condition as:

She goes and roots under her pillow and fetches the key. Very reluctant she is to do it. She scuffles over the floor in her black rags and evil with a sideways, scurrying motion and her hand turns from side as if she were looking for a rat hole to slip down but I’m the avenging angel now, and she can’t escape me (42).

In the novel, Carter induces the world which is not related to single plot and narration it covers wide range of plot to justify the situation of women in this universe and what are the main causes of happening that. The following lines she gives references of flora and says:

Flora!’ he cries. ‘Quick spirit of the awakening world! Winged, and aspiring upwards! Flora; Azrael; Venus Pandemos! These are but a few of the many names with which I might honour my goddess, but, tonight, I shall call you “Flora”, very often, for do you not know what night it is, Flora?(45).

She compares each and every events of the world for patriarchy and analyzes the systems which create problems in overall development. Fevvers expresses her idea about the situations as regard, “Wondering, I stretch out face down on the coffee table. He approaches with a purposeful stride. I’d have clenched my teeth and thought of England had not o glimpsed, peering over my shoulder, a shining something lying along his hairy old, gnarled old thing as his robe swung

loose” (48). She further clarifies the situation by giving references of distress scene of the circus as:

After the man came and kidnapped Sophia, I was much distressed and would have followed them but the carriage vanished too quickly from my sight. I returned to the house and went to Madame Schreck’s room. But, though the widow’s weeds still hung from the curtain rod, now they were quite still. She did not move(49).

Above lines show the domination of patriarchy which neglect freedom of women and their right of equality. The scene of the circus allegorically illustrates the situation women in the world who have no right to go beyond the male desire. The following line further clarifies the situation as:

I know I had been the dump witness to infamy but would the police believe that I, the last to have seen Madame Schreck living, had been the first to find her not dead, for who can say, now, when she had died, or if she had ever lived, but... passed away? And who better that I to know what powerful friends the old procuress had in the force, since, every Friday since I entered her service, to me had fallen the task of taking by hand a heavy envelope to Kensington Police Station with orders to wait for no receipt?(49).

By presenting the situation of circus, Carter encourages women to resist patriarchy and ironize the situation of contemporary world where the situations of females are equal to sleeping prisoner. Fevvers further describes the situation and says, “She sleeps. And now she wakes each day a little less, and, each day, takes less and less nourishment, as if grudging the least moment of wakefulness, for, from the movements under her eyelids, and the somnolent gestures of her

hands and feet, it seems as if her dreams”(50). The condition of women is pitiable and passive which describes as:

She closed her eyes and let out a long exhalation of breath. The colour left her cheeks and she looked haggards and very much aged in the colourless light of morning that gave the mauve glow of the gas mantles a lifeless and unnatural look. It was left to Lizzie to conclude the story, which she did with dispatch (51).

Above lines show pathetic situation of women which satirizes the feminist movement of America and Europe and suggest them to think the root cause what makes women as slave of patriarchy. Fevvers portrays the situation as, “She spoke so flatly he could not tell whether she spoke ironically. She said nothing else. Walser was intrigued by such silence after such loquacity. It was as though she had taken him as far as she could go on the brazen trajectory of her voice, tale him knots, and then stopped short. Dropped him” (52). In the same way, Walser argues on the situation of women and states:

The women set out for the smoky south over Westminster Bridge against the clattering traffic that now streamed into town. Because of the difference in their heights, they could not walk arm in arm, so they held hands and, from a distance, looked like a blonde, heroic mother taking her little daughter home from some ill-fated expedition up west, their ages obscured, their relationship involved. Their feet dragged slow as poverty yet that, too, was an illusion; pelted with diamonds, assaulted by pearls, she was too mean to take a cab (52).

Carter induces male values and tries to artistically resist these male attributes through mocking, ongoing feminist movement and urges feminists to find out the root cause of patriarchy. Her

characters are always ready to subvert patriarchy by resisting males' values and domination of the society. Fevvers explains this situation in this way:

And more than this, her work suggested a kind of *infinite* incompleteness that a women's work is never done; how the work of all the Marthas, and all the Marys, too, all the work, both temporal and spiritual, in this world, and in preparation for the next, will never be over always some conflicting demand will occur to postpone indefinitely any and every task(54).

The situation of women is making worse due to the cause of patriarchy. Patriarchy never allows a woman feels pride on femininity without subverting male domination. It is almost impossible to create equality between male and female. Male dominated society portrays women as lazy creature and describes in this way:

Sleeping Beauty of a city, stirs and murmurs, longing yet fearing the rough and bloody kiss that will awaken her tugging at her morning in the past, striving, yearning to burst through the present into the violence of that authentic history to which this narrative as must by now be obvious! Does not belong(55).

The value of femininity is always undermining by patriarchy and compares women as an object makes for male support. Carter satirizes this bitter reality by using various narratives. Situation of female is depended on the desire of male which is similar to the role of actors of the circus which further controlled by the directors. The following narratives make the male female relationship further clear:

Years ago, years, down on my daddy's farm in Lexington, Kentucky, I was just a kind, then, knee-high to a ham-hock, weren't I, Sybil, when I first made the

acquaintance of the grandest little lady that ever drank pigswill, present company excepted. Yessir! That was Miss Sybil here's very own great-grandma, yes sir!

First in the great dynasty of my porcine assistants!(57).

Traditional values of society encroaches the role of women and compel them to follow male domination for existence of male as the supporter without feeling pride of female entities. Fevvers asserts the situation as, "She put her head on one side for a moment, scrutinising Walser's face; then she let out a curious, gruff little squeak and nodded, ears jiggling" (57). There are extreme practices of patriarchy which erases female voices and tries her to collapses on patriarchy. Sybil describes the situation as, "So, young man," he said, "Now you are a first-of-May. Don't ask me how the cognomen arose it's what we all us calls the neophytes, the virgins in the ring, the green beginners in the art of playing. Just a couple questions. First: is it squeamish about *bedbugs*? (58). He further clarifies the situation and says, "Her orizens concluded, the babushka lay down on top of the stove and soon began snoring. Walser typed: "end" to his report for fear the rattle of his machine disturbed her ancient sleep" (59). Physical description of women objectified her and compares her as an object and make female voice weak and think as like the physical poster of female. In this regard, it is relevant to quote the following lines:

She was a slim thing with dreadlocks to her waist. In the ring, she looked like a child as she sat at the white Bechstein grand, big enough for two of her, and played for her roaring familiars, but, close to, her face, though neither lined nor wrinkled, was ancient as granite, with the blunt, introspective features of Gauguin's women, and a soft, matter, bitter brown in colour(60).



It explains the negative attitude in general that men had concerning women and their potential. Furthermore, it also illustrates how men regarded women in relation to their roles as readers of fiction. As they were denied access to higher education, it was almost impossible for them to participate in discourses concerning fields like philosophy, politics or science. As regard, lines, “When the Professor pointed his cue at her; she performed a sequence of gestures that reminded Walser of the movements of the hands of Balinese dancers. The Professor considered, nodded and chalked in another arabesque on the diagram” (61). It shows the tremendous domination of male figure to the women and compares them as silent figure of the society. In this regard, Jack Walser says, “Then the female who’d asked that salient question Walser recognized her by the green bow in her hair--started him badly, she jumped right up in his arms and, clutching his torso with her hairy things, reached up and behind, found the stud at the back of his neck that released his entire shirt-front” (62). Patriarchy creates problem for the enhancement of women which Carter portrays by giving the references of circus’s women as, “When the tiger heard the women scream, it knew the something better than pork was on the menu. It arched its back. Its tail stood to attention. It raised its heavy head. Its yellow eyes went round and round the ring like searchlights, seeking the source of the scream” (63). Her references are meaningful in the senses of female pride and ugly exploitation of patriarchy. Fevvers, further clarifies the situation as:

A female chimp (wearing a green hair-ribbon) delivered a pile of neatly folded clothes, and wig and school cap, too and they dressed him up again before they sent him back to Clown Alley. Fevvers even slapped a hasty coat of wet white over his features, to preserve his disguise for him, since his right arm hurt far too much for him to do it for himself(65).

The desire of the women in the prison is portrayed in terms of its break from the economy of the gaze through an alternate economy of the bodies, fluid and touch which is moderate by patriarchal socio economic, cultural and political system. A Fevvers narrator of the novel asserts her idea in this way:

She gazed with a joyous awe, almost a gratitude that luxury should exist; she never expected the door-keeper might relent and let them in, why should he? She knew, better than the foolish clown, such treats were not for the likes of them, but, all the same, just the sight of that forbidden sweaty shop of a hotel foyer was sufficient in itself to compensate her for a day in which she had been abandoned to the mercies of a hungry tiger(72).

When women revolt against patriarchy they appear like hungry tiger and ready to breakout all the norms and values made by patriarchy in the name of culture and tradition. Carter presents the situation how women revolt against patriarchy. The manner of revolt is as, “She sighed, softened and addressed Mignon in a clatter of languages, Italian, French, German, all barbarously pronounced and grammatically askew but rapid as machine-gun fire”(73). She subverts patriarchy by breaking out the barrier made by male dominated society and practices. She disobeys the rules and sleeps in the passage of prison. Fevvers, induces the situation in this way:

She slept where she could, in passages, under bridges, in shop doorways, and it was all right as long as it was warm. She soon made a large acquaintance among the other street arabs, the accidental children of the city, and when the cold weather came she pooled resources with an entire gang of young creatures who made their headquarters in a disused warehouse(74-75).

Carter artistically presents the plot and characters in the novel which presents the situation of women and their resistance as similar to the picture and says, “She possessed a sweet, artless soprano, so far so good; to that extent, her voice matched her immature body. But it was as though the scarcely-to-be-imagined tragedy of her life, the sea of misery and disaster in which she swam in her precarious state of innocent” (75). However, her projection is not so clear and fix to understand what she wants to tell the readers in the novel. The allegorical presentation of the plot strongly hurt the patriarchy. In this regard, Fevvers, says, “She doesn’t understand the words,” repeated Fevvers. Her face was wet with tears. When he saw that, Walser felt an extraordinary sensation within his breast: his heart dissolved” (81). In the same way, the following lines further clear the situation as:

Just for that moment, while she knew they wondered what on earth they were doing there, when her vulnerable back was turned towards them and her speaking eyes away from them, the Princess felt a little scared, and, perhaps, more fully human than she was used to feeling(85).

Fevvers inhabits those marginal institutions of society whose house, the freak show and the circus that safely contain those elements that threaten to disrupt the orderly legitimate exercise of power. In this regard, she further says, “She said, “You walked out on Death-warmed-up, last night, after all that. Seems like I got it wrong, love. Seems like you weren’t knocking her off, after all. Walser hid his face, polishing away the last of the egg-stains with his sleeve” (90).

In the novel female voice appears in various manners with different narratives and subverts patriarchy. In this regard, Fevvers says, “Mama remonstrates naughty, naughty!” but she and Papa exchanged thoughtful looks. When Fevvers turned the children’s stomachs which

her gift of poisoned pies, it was the last straw” (91). In the same way Fevvers further says, “Bastared!” cried Lizzie and repeated and augmented her abuse in several dialects of Italian. The Charivaris energetically fired back. The Colonel lit a fresh cigar and appeared to be imploring his pig for advice. Aloft, Fevvers hunched in a pet” (92). Female characters of the novel subvert patriarchy in term of language and culture. They neglect the code of language and speak whatever comes in mouth. This is a revolt against patriarchal norms and values of the society. The following lines further clear that how subversion appears in the novel as form of revolt as:

She shook out a last few drops in a disturbingly masculine fashion and laid it aside. Mignon looked out of the cat-house at the sound of the commotion. When she saw Samson, the Strong Man, reduced to such pathetic, liquefying misery, her face took on an April hue of sympathetic showers. She had too short a memory to hold a grudge(95).

Carter projects female voices in the novel as form of resistance against patriarchy. She widely discusses the various perspectives of women including social, economic, cultural as well as power discourses. As Fevvers regards, “Ape-Man’s woman, he never thought much about her, except that she was easy, but, as soon as she went off with the clown--or so he thought and took a bath, had her hair done, put on a pretty dress, turned into a star, his heart turned over like a pancake” (96). It is showed that patriarchy always imposed power toward female and femininity always tries to create mutual understanding between each other. When male domination reached in extreme point female revolts against patriarchy that Carter projects in this novel by using various references.

Carter projects female activities against patriarchy and their freedom. Fevvers describes the situation as, “She hugged the sable rug about her as she climbed the skidding steps to his front door under an umbrella the coachmen held above her head. A couple of capripede caryatids looked after the door and there was a coat of arms above it, a unicorn goring a knight” (106). This is a nuance of femininity which always leads women toward virtue and freedom. In the same line she further says, “The gong agitated itself and gave out a sweet thunder. The golden shoulder of the female harp moved, and, in moving, set in motion a complex hidden mechanism of wheels and pulleys that drew up her elbows and brought the hands against the heart-strings” (109). By enhancing capacity of women they create certain legacy and use that legacy against patriarchy which has been practiced since long time. In this regard, Fevvers speaks, “She gathered together her scattered wits as well as she could and moved resolutely on to next case, continuing to manipulation him as she did so, as if her life depended on it. He dragged his feet, growing so blissful he scarcely noticed her open the case with her free hand” (111). Male behaves female as an object and always undermined women. Due to the suppression women are compelled to revolt against patriarchy. In the same line Fevvers also revolt against patriarchy and speaks:

She said goodbye to the diamond necklace down below and contemplated life as a toy. With oriental inscrutability, the automatic orchestra laid down the geometries of the implausible and, by the thickening of his member, the movements that now came of their own accord, by his panting breath and glazed eye, Fevversjuged the Grand Duke’s time was night(111).

Above lines show that how a woman subverts patriarchy in the final stage. By making a bold decision females resist patriarchy and liberate from socio economic and cultural bond of the

society. In this regard, Fevvers says, “She knows how to hurt, Find the sore point, and then probe it--that’s Liz’s style. “Broke your mascot and could have broken you. He nearly did for you once and for all, and then, no future, no year. Two nor any more years. Nix, naught, nothing” (113).

The novel not only subverts the patriarchy but also enhance women to fit in the contemporary world as bold citizen. In this regard she says:

She was a woman of considerable intelligence, which the phrenologist had classified as “low peasant cunning.” She had quickly learned to mark the passage of the days by making a scratch with her fingernail on the plaster surrounding the bars through which she and the Countess did their reciprocal observing; this was the only area of her cell which could not be seen from outside(122).

Above lines show the genius of female which play vital role to resist male value and create new orders in the society. After subverting patriarchy a new foundation may be established which is different from old one? Carter allegorically presents the situation as, “He whinnied with terror, jerking his grasshopper limbs in all directions, producing a cornucopia of atonal effects, and then he scrambled up on top of the thing, waving his arms as if either he’d protect it with his life or else dive into its innards to hide” (141). There may some discursive situation that creates problem in subverting patriarchy though Carter is sure on subverting patriarchy.

In short, the novel raises feminist voice through various narratives and events and persuade her characters to subvert patriarchy in term of socio economic, cultural and political situation of the contemporary time.

## IV. Conclusion

### Urgency of Subversion of Patriarchy in *Night at the Circus*

The novel highlights the urgency of subversion of patriarchy and urges to establish equality and freedom for women. From the beginning to end the novel portrays various events and consequences and shows the fault of patriarchy. It compares male dominated society with night circus where there is no freedom and equality for women. Male plays as the role of director and females play as actors. More than that the novel allegorically shows the event of breaking prison by women at night time and liberate from the jail. By showing various allegorical events and consequences Carter gives references to myth and fairy tale. Carter shows how patriarchy overpower to women and create problem in harmony and equality.

The novel appropriates and rewrites certain traditional views of male and categorizes male as subject and female as an object which have become models of behaviour for women throughout history and criticizes this traditional view by using various symbols, myths and allegories. It explores subversion of these representations through the use of inter-textuality and parody, giving voice to women who had been silenced for hundreds of years. The study focuses on those of Carter's rewritings who contribute the most to the subversion of a certain traditional patriarchal male representation of women, namely the revision of the mythical character Helen of Troy, of popular fairy tales and, finally, of Goethe's character. Furthermore, Carter does not only subverts the "language of the oppressor" but also that which this language has spoken about for thousands of years. This is, in fact, another consequence of the appropriation of all those intertextual elements in her novel and their subversion. Carter installs those elements, so that she can immediately subvert them, by rewriting through the use of parody, foregrounding their status of constructed fictions. It tells the story of *Nights at the Circus* that opens with a clear reference to

Helen of Troy, as Fevvers refers to herself as “Helen of the High Wire”, since, like Helen, she claims to have not been born from a woman, but hatched from an egg. To prove that she was never born, but hatched, Fevvers affirms that she does not become noble one. In Greek mythology, Helen is generally considered the daughter of Leda, queen of female circus aerialist and a male reporter following her. In the next section of the book, Carter describes a prison full of women who plan to escape. The author suggests the prison represents the exploitation of women in patriarchal society and that their escape attempt represents subversion of patriarchy so that the novel represents woman who can use their own imprisonment both to see the prison of representation in which they find themselves and to establish a place from which they being to speak and create their own space.

The narratives challenge a traditional representation of women in fairy tales is when she appropriates the story of sleeping beauty. As the brothel where Fevvers grew up is shut down, she goes to work at Madame Schreck’s Museum of Woman monsters. There she poses as another living statue, this time representing the Angel of Death, who guards one of the museum’s attractions, the sleeping beauty. In the traditional fairy tale, whose most famous version was published by Charles Perrault in 1697, Sleeping Beauty is a young princess on whom a spell is cast by a wicked fairy. According to the spell, Sleeping Beauty would prick her finger on a spindle and die as soon as she reached adulthood. However, the spell is later reversed by a good fairy, but not totally. The narratives represent the young woman ignorant of her fate, which is first controlled by her father and later her future husband, the prince. By illustrating fairy tales Carter shows that it is urgency to revise and rewrite all the myths and fairy tales for establishing equality between male and female. Fairy tales, myths and grand narratives all are based on the patriarchy so it needs to subvert for establishment new one.



In Carter's version of the fairy tale, female characters present as a character with immense power rather than fragile vulnerability, who does what is in her reach to escape the submissive role imposed on women, even if this means withdrawing from the living. By showing immense power of women in narratives she enhances women for subversion of patriarchy.

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