

THE MAGICAL REALISM IN THE *NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS* NOVEL BY ANGELA CARTER



A THESIS

*Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Hasanuddin University in a partial
Fulfillment of Requirements to Obtain a Sarjana Degree in English Literature
Study Program*

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MAKASSAR
2023**

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AGREEMENT

Today, Friday 18th August 2023, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by ASMIRAH RAHMAT (F041171029) entitled, **THE MAGICAL REALISM IN ANGELA CARTER'S "NIGHT AT THE CIRCUS"**, submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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The thesis by **ASMIRAH RAHMAT** (F041171029) entitled, **THE MAGICAL REALISM IN ANGELA CARTER'S "NIGHT AT THE CIRCUS"**, has been revised as advised during the examination on Friday, August 18th 2023 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by herself. This thesis does not contain any materials have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except the quotations and references.

Makassar, 20th January 2023



Asmirah Rahmat

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah praises to Allah SWT for the blessings, mercy and permit that the writer can finish the thesis. Shalawat and Salam to Prophet Muhammad SAW may be abundance of God effused to him, family, friends and us as the followers. For this chance the writer would like to express many thanks to all people who have helped to complete this thesis.

First, the embrace love and unlimited thanks goes to both of my parents Basuki Rahmat, S.Sos and Hj. Suheria Abd Razak, my sister Isbadriah Rahmat, S.Kom and Alya Rahmat, who have patiently given their moral and financial, advice, support, love and prayers for me so that I can finish my study at the university. I love you so much.

Second, I would like to expresses her deepest gratitude to **Dra. Herawaty, M.Hum., M.A., Ph.D.**, as the first consultant and **Prof. Dr. M. Amir P., M.Hum.**, as the second consultant for all their guidance, ideas, advices, corrections, suggestions, and always be patient in guide me from beginning until finishing the whole composition of my thesis.

Third, a big hug and a lot of thanks to all my close friends Khofifah Awalia Ramadani, S.Geo, Irmayanti, S.Biotek, Eva Yanti, S.S, Tita Puspita Sukirman, S.S, Risky Khaerunisa, S.S, Al Madyah Chaerunnisa, who has given support, love and prayers for me. Fourth, for my boyfriend Imam Azhari Rusly, who has given a lot of support. Fifth, for the class of 2017, thank you for the help and time we have together in our learning. I love you all. Sixth, thank you very much for all parties who cannot be mentioned one by one who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. Finally, the writer hopes that it will be useful and become an additional reference for readers.

Makassar 20th January 2023

The Researcher

Asmirah Rahmat

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ABSTRACT

Asmirah Rahmat. 2023. *The Magical Realism in the Night at the Circus Novel by Angela Carter.* (Supervised by **Herawaty** and **M. Amir P.**)

This study aims to describe the magical realism of the novel *Night at the Circus* by Angela Carter. The objectives of this study are: (1) to provide the description of magical realism in the *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter, and (2) to reveal of the characters bringing magical realism in the *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.

This study uses the theory of magical realism by Wendy B. Faris to analyze the four characteristics of magical realism and expressive approach using to know the relationship between expression and magical realism. Then, the research method used by the researcher is qualitative and descriptive analysis to identify the magical realism in the novel.

The results of this study indicates that the analysis of the novel *Night at the Circus* by Angela Carter found that the four characteristics of magical realism are related to each other in realizing the aesthetic of magical realism in the novels studied.

Keyword: Magical realism theory, Expressive approach and *Night at the Circus*.

ABSTRAK

Asmirah Rahmat. 2023. *Realisme Magis pada novel Night at the Circus oleh Angela Carter.* (Dibimbing oleh **Herawaty** dan **M. Amir P.**)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan realisme magis dalam novel *Night at the Circus* karya Angela Carter. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) untuk memberikan gambaran realisme magis dalam *Nights at the Circus* karya Angela Carter, dan (2) untuk mengungkap karakter-karakter yang membawakan realisme magis dalam *Nights at the Circus* karya Angela Carter.

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori realisme magis Wendy B. Faris untuk menganalisis empat karakteristik realisme magis dan menggunakan pendekatan ekspresif untuk mengetahui hubungan antara ekspresi dan realisme magis. Kemudian, metode penelitian yang digunakan peneliti adalah analisis kualitatif dan deskriptif untuk mengidentifikasi realisme magis dalam novel tersebut.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa analisis novel *Night at the Circus* karya Angela Carter ditemukan bahwa keempat ciri realisme magis saling terkait satu sama lain dalam mewujudkan estetika realisme magis dalam novel-novel yang diteliti.

Kata Kunci: Teori realisme magis, Pendekatan ekspresif dan *Night at the Circu*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses about introduction, which consists of background, identification of study, scope of problem, statement of problem, objective of the study and sequence of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literary work is something that is produced by humans or created by humans by using language to produce aesthetic value. In this case, the author creates literary works not merely to carve aesthetic values but also to produce a message or good values to be conveyed by the author. Literary works are divided into two syllables, namely works and literature. Work is something that produced by humans in the form of fiction or non-fiction works, while literature is something that produced by humans by using language as a medium of delivery either in writing or in writing that is imaginative, aesthetically valuable and logically containing messages and values of kindness.

According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in *Theory of Literature* (1989: 94), literature represents life which is a social reality even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been object of the literary imitation. It means that literature expresses life reality without ignoring the environment which influences the writing. Besides using is imagination or the ability of writing, a writer will always be connected to the real life or what he sees in real life.

In literature, the activity of heeding, appreciating and evaluating a literary work is a manifestation of literary appreciation. Literary appreciation assessment of a literary work, whether the assessment is positive or negative, and appreciation can be in the form of criticism, praise and suggestions. One of the literary works taken in this study to be analyzed is novel.

Novel is a fictional story in the form of writing or words, and it contains intrinsic and extrinsic elements. In the novel, the author describes the reality of human life which is neatly wrapped using language that can make the reader feel and experience for themselves, as described by the author. In addition, the novel can also be a means of changing human behavior, able to convey noble values, and become a means of conveying customs and culture through the creative hands of an author.

The events contained in the novel are accommodated in a series of ordinary human events and the circumstances of modern society. Although there are many historical prototypes, the modern prose form appeared late in cultural history sometime during the eighteenth century such as poem, drama, satire, and novel. Initially the target of much criticism, the novel has acquired a dominant position among literary forms, both popular and critical. Therefore many of literary works could be called as criticism of that real life when a writer is experiencing.

In the novel there are incidents that make the characters in the story to be wise or take the appropriate attitude in dealing with conflicts that will change their fate. Novel as part of literary works and as cultural products display the cultural treasures that exist in society. The author not only conveys the events that occur in

the community but also the wisdom that is presented from deep reflection. In the novel there are also various kinds of events or events that contain supernatural powers from the experience of an author. One of the novels containing supernatural and magic power is *Night at the Circus*.

The Night at the Circus novel tells the story of the rivalry between two different forms of magic the old and the new and the competition and love affair between two young magicians who are destined to face each other in a magical duel to the death. *A Night at the Circus* by Angela Carter's is 50 Pages "Comprehensive Study Guide Chapter-by-Chapter Summary and Multiple Sections of Expert Analysis Featured in Our View of Truth and Lies". *Nights at the Circus* is an adult fantasy novel by British author Angela Carter, first published in 1998.

The novel focuses on the life and exploits of Sophie Fevvers, a woman who is or so she would have people believe a Cockney 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 exploits had not prepared him to encounter. *Nights at the Circus* incorporates multiple categories of fiction, including post-modernism, magical realism, and post feminism. As in her previous works, Carter plays with many literary aspects and dissects the traditional fairy tale structure.

It is set in 1899 and follows protagonist Jack Walser, a journalist investigating the mystery of Sophie Fevvers, a half woman, half swan who looks

like an aerial acrobat in the popular Colonel Kearney Circus. The book received critical acclaim upon publication and won the James Tait Black Memorial Award for Fiction in 1984 and was nominated for the 1985 British Fantasy Award for Best Novel. Carter was a famous English writer of the 20th century, she is known for her magical realist works including short stories and other novels. According to the novel, the researcher analyzes the structure of the story based on the theory of *Magical Realism* by Wendy B. Faris.

Magical Realism is defined as an aesthetic style or fashion in which these magical elements are blended into a relational setting to access a deeper understanding or reality (Faris, 2004: 2). These magical elements are described as normal, straightforward and unembellished occurrences which allow 'willing' and 'fantasy' to be accepted into the same school of thought. It has been widely used in connection with literature, art and film. In her book entitled *Ordinary Enchantments Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, Faris (2004: 1) defined magical realism as *the term magical realism, coined in the early twentieth century to describe a fiction, now designates perhaps the most important contemporary trend in international fiction*. Faris (2004: 1) added that magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them.

According to Faris (2004: 1) there are several characteristics in magical realism. The first is the irreducible element, namely narratives or magical events that cannot be accepted by logic but are described as realistic events. The second is the phenomenal world, which describes in detail the daily real world presence.

The third is merging realism, which combines the realist and the magical world. The last is unsettling doubts, which is taking the reader's point of view, which is magical realism show doubts about the events in the story.

Talking about the author Angela Olive Pearce (formerly Carter, 7 May 1940 – 16 February 1992), who published under the name Angela Carter, was an English novelist, short story writer, poet, and journalist, known for her feminist, magical realism, and picaresque works. She is the well-known for her book entitled *The Bloody Chamber*, which is published in 1979. In 2008, *The Times* ranked Carter tenth in their list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945". In 2012, *Nights at the Circus* was selected as the best ever winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize.

The reason why the researcher is interested in studying the novel because this novel combines three categories of fiction at once, namely postmodernism, magical realism, and post-feminism. Not only that, social class issues are also seen in the novel. Meanwhile, this novel is divided into three plots, namely the London section, the Petersburg section, the Siberia section. Each section uses a different kind of narrative technique.

This novel is very important to study because it describes the characteristics of magical realism according to the approach used by Wendy B. Faris are irreducible elements, phenomenal worlds, unresolved doubts, mixed nature, and the disruption of time, space, and identity. Then, the readers find the gradation of magical realism by sorting the stories by complete to incomplete characteristics.

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested to analyze this novel by using the magical realism theory by Wendy B. Faris. The researcher wants to know how the end of the influence of the characters in the life of the novel. This can be known by analyzing the elements of magical realism described in the *Nights at the Circus* novel by Angela Carter.

1.2 Identification of Problems

After reading *Nights at the Circus Novel*, the researcher will identify some problems that can be analyzed:

1. The Magical Realism portrayed in the *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.
2. The characters bring the Magical Realism in *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.

1.3 Scope of Problem

Based on the title of this thesis, the object of this research is a novel by Angela Carter entitled *Nights at the Circus*. The scope of this research focuses on the description of Magical Realism by Wendy B. Faris theory. The Researcher tries to provide an analysis of how is magical realism described in the novel *nights at the circus*, uses Wendy B. Faris theory, there are irreducible element, the phenomenal world, merging realism, the unsettling doubts.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

In order to describe the magical realism contained in the novel, the problem statement is further discussed by researcher into the following research question;

1. How is the magical realism described in the *Nights at the Circus* novel by Angela Carter?
2. How the characters are bring the concept of magical realism in the *Nights at the Circus* novel by Angela Carter?

1.5 Objective the Study

Based on the formulation of the problem, the researcher direct this research towards the following objectives:

1. To provide the description of magical realism in the *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.
2. To reveal of the characters bringing magical realism in the *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.

1.6 Sequence of Writing

This research contains five chapters. First, chapter one is an introduction. It covers the outlook of the whole writing which includes, namely background of the study, identification of problem, scope of problem, statement of problem, objective of the study and sequence of writing. Second, Chapter two explains the literature review which provides review of some previous studies and applies some theories to support this analysis. Third, Chapter three consists of the kind of methods the writer uses in analyzing data. Fourth, Chapter four is the analysis of the magical realism in the novel *Nights At The Circus*. Fifth, Chapter five is the conclusion and suggestion for the readers is involved in this chapter of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher explains previous related studies, theoretical background, namely expressive approach and magical realism theory and the relationship between expression and magical realism in literary works.

2.1 Previous Related Studies

This previous related studies which has been written theory and yet same object or the novel. Additionally, there are also previous studies which has been written in same theory however different object or novel. So, the writer presents some previous related studies that can be used as references to support this research, namely Zainab Abdullah Al-Jibory (2013), Sarah Gamble (2014) and Tatjana Milosavljevic (2017).

First, the thesis entitled *Magic Realism in Angela Carter's Novel "Nights At The Circus"* is written by Al-Jibory (2013) student of Tikrit University. This study aims to explain the characteristics features of the genre is introduced at the beginning of the study in order to define magic realism as a genre independent of fantasy or science fiction. A comparison between the characteristic components of the magic realism novel and their equivalents in Carter's text is also a significant part of the analysis.

Meanwhile, another thesis comes from Gamble (2014), the student of Swansea University who wrote her thesis entitled *Gender Vertigo: Queer Gothic and Angela Carter's Nights at the Circus*. She describes Angela Carter's penultimate novel, which generally thought to represent a change in style and

approach on the part of the author, replacing the dark, violent and pornographic narratives with which she has become identified with something more optimistic, airy, humorous, and in the end friendlier. This study uses feminist theory.

The last is study from Milosavljevic (2017) student of Educons University under the title *The body does matter: Women as embodied social subjects in Angela Carter's Night at the Circus*. This study aims to explain the postfeminist text due to its narrative commitment to transcending gender binaries, essentially uses the strategies of postmodern storytelling and characterization in order to explore women's embodied potentialities of agency that is their construction of subjectivity through body. In the study, the main female character in the novel is a social subject being studied, and focuses on discussing the female body and feminism.

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that the similarities and differences between the previous studies and the research of the researcher are found in research object, approach focus and theory used in the analysis. Meanwhile, the similarities that exist in previous related studies are discussing the analysis of the magical realism that occur in literary works, and all of the previous related studies has the same object with the researcher.

While the differences in research can be seen in terms of the method analysis. In this study, the researcher focuses on the magical realism in the novel *Nights at the Circus* by using an expressive approach and magical realism theory. The difference that distinguishes previous related study is the different approach and theory. Therefore, the results of this study are absolutely different from the

analysis in previous related studies because the researcher chose to analyze about *The Magical Realism in the Nights at the Circus Novel by Angela Carter*.

2.2 Theoretical of Background

2.2.1 Expressive Approach

The expressive approach is an approach that considers literary works as expressions, overflows, thoughts, and feelings as the result of the author's imagination. This orientation tends to weigh current works by their authenticity, authenticity, or compatibility with the vision or state of mind with the author's psyche.

The expressive approach is a theory that focuses primarily on the author's creative process in creating literary works. The main reason for the creation of literary works is the creator himself. That is why the explanation of the author's personality and life is the oldest and most established method of literary study (Wellek, 1989: 89).

The analysis of Abrams' expressive approach to literature requires the following steps. Recognition and understanding of the object analyzed by reading carefully the literary work that will be analyzed to find important problems in the work. Collection of literature that might support the process of analyzing literary works to make it more accurate and accountable.

This expressive criticism approach emphasizes the poet in expressing or pouring out all the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the author when carrying out the process of creating literary works. The author creates it based on subjectivity alone. Expressive critics believe that writers (authors) of literary

works are the main elements that give birth to thoughts, perceptions and feelings that are combined in literary works. Critics tend to draw literary works based on their sincerity, authenticity, compatibility with the author's inner eye vision / state of mind.

Expressive approach also referred to as a theory that views work primarily as a statement or expression of the author's inner world. Literary work is seen as a means of expressing ideas, dreams, aspirations, thoughts and experiences of the author. In another expression literature is an imaginative process that organizes and synthesizes the author's imaginations, thoughts, and feelings (Abrams, 1978: 20). Literary study in this model seeks to reveal the background of the author's personality and life (biography) which is considered to help provide an explanation for the creation of literary works. Therefore, this theory is also often called the biographical approach. The expressive range lies in the matter of examining the author's emotions, ideas, imagination and so on associated with the work created by the author. In the process of interpretation, the author determines what meaning can be concretized. The direction of interpretation and meaning like this in hermeneutics is more following the methods that are done in traditional hermeneutics. So, external factors outside the text, namely the author, determine the meaning of the text being studied.

2.2.2 Magical Realism Theory

The term magical realism in literature was first created by Cuban author Alejo Carpentier in the 1940s. He found characteristics of magical realism in the works of Latin American writers and formulated them into one genre.

Magical realism is a part of literary that use a realist approach with a combination of magical elements in it. Wendy B. Faris defined magical realism as the term magical realism, coined in the early twentieth century to describe a fiction, now designates perhaps the most important contemporary trend in international fiction (Faris, 2004: 1).

More detail, Faris added that magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them.

As a basis for investigating the nature and cultural work of magical realism, Faris (2004: 14-24) suggested five primary characteristics of the mode. First, the text contains an *irreducible element* of magic; second, the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of *the phenomenal world*; third, the reader may experience some *unsettling doubts* in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; fourth, the *narrative merges* different realms; and, finally, magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity.

1. Irreducible Elements

The irreducible element in the novel that is magical elements as elements that are not normal which is considered not according to logic western empiricism so far. An irreducible element is something that is not can be explained logically and cannot received by sense perception.

2. Phenomenal World

The phenomenal world aims to keep the magic from leaving the real world intact. Magic that is present in the real world is not just a fantasy whose origins are not clear, but is a mysterious element that moves behind the phenomenal world.

3. Unsettling Doubt

The unsettling doubt is the doubt that will arise from the reader, when reading the work of magical realism because the reader will feel some contradictory things. This also arises because the culture of the reader, if they are familiar with magical things, they will not feel awkward with the reading, but it is very different if the culture of the empirical reader will definitely feel the oddity in a work of magical realism.

4. Merging Realism

The merging realism is the merging of two realms, namely the real realm and the supernatural realm. The merging process that fuses the boundaries between fact and fiction by eliminating mediation between different realities. There is no difference between the fictional and real worlds.

5. Disruption of time, space and identity

The disruption of time, space, and identity is the last element Faris theory. In her book, Faris cites the theory of Jameson (1985) which says that the emergence of new spaces and temporals can occur because spatial realism will eliminate the old forms of sacred places.

2.3 The Relationship Between Expression and Magical Realism in Literary Works

Literature is a medium used by authors to convey ideas and opinions to express their views on life. Through literary works, they can overcome the conditions that occur around the communities where they live. In the world of literature, there are many literary movements and schools that develop in it. Either as a result of the essence extracted from the characteristics of a developing work or as a character that is deliberately displayed in a literary work as a reinforcement for the existence of a certain literary movement or genre. Magical realism is defined as an aesthetic style or fashion in which these magical elements are blended into a relational setting to access a deeper understanding of reality. These magical elements are described as normal, straightforward and unembellished occurrences that allow "will" and "fantasy" to be accepted into the same school of thought. It has been widely used in connection with literature, art and film. Magical realism also claims reality. However, magical realism proposes a magical world, a world full of wonders incomprehensible to common sense that predates everyday human experience. Humans missed seeing it. Magical realism tries to bring out the magical thing or see reality magically or magically. This magical world is inseparable from reality and is reflected in everyday reality. That is why, in the works of writers, magical realism often reveals magical and magical events, creatures, locations and situations. All these miracles happen in reality, not mystics who deny reality. In terms of literary beauty, sometimes words through their narrative community can present a miracle and a new meaning of

impossibility, sometimes they are mystical, but still move to represent reality even in everyday discourse. Typing in the realm of concrete literature is commonly referred to as magical realism or magical-realist.