

Magical Realism and the Enchantment of Reality in *The Night Circus*

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Abstract

*This paper examines magical realism and the enchantment of reality in *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern. The novel tells the story of a mysterious circus that appears only at night and serves as the stage for a magical competition between Celia Bowen and Marco Alisdair. Although the narrative includes supernatural elements, it is set within a realistic nineteenth-century environment. This blending of the magical and the ordinary creates a unique atmosphere where fantasy feels natural and believable. The study focuses on how Morgenstern presents magic in a calm and detailed manner, allowing readers to accept extraordinary events as part of everyday life. The circus becomes a powerful symbol of imagination, creativity, and emotional freedom. At the same time, the competition between the two magicians represents control, tradition, and limitation. Through themes of love, destiny, and personal choice, the novel shows that human emotions can challenge rigid systems and predetermined paths. *The Night Circus* demonstrates that magical realism does not separate fantasy from reality but combines them to deepen the reader's understanding of life. The novel suggests that enchantment exists within reality itself, encouraging readers to see wonder in the ordinary world.*

Keywords: Extraordinary, Feels Natural, Imagination, Fantasy, Predetermined Paths.

Their physical selves perform amid oblivious crowds. The *Wishing Tree*, inspired by Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus*, published in 2011, is a bright example of magical realism. This genre mixes the supernatural with everyday life, making the impossible seem ordinary. In this novel, the circus, *Le Cirque des Rêves*, appears mysteriously at night. Its black-and-white tents hold wonders that blur the line between illusion and real magic, pushing readers to question reality itself. Critics like Alejo Carpentier and Franz Roh define magical realism as a style that mixes marvelous elements with realistic stories, where characters accept magic without surprise. This creates a richer ordinary world where magic uncovers deeper truths about human experience. Morgenstern uses this technique skillfully, adding enchantment to the mundane Victorian world with magical features like frozen gardens that bloom forever and clocks that tell living stories. These details blend into the circus's nightly charm.

The story unfolds non-linearly over decades, starting in the late 19th century, and focuses on two young prodigies, Celia Copeland and Marco Alisdair. They are unwillingly bound by their mentors, Prospero the Enchanter and the mysterious Mr. A.H., to compete in a magic contest with unclear rules. The circus is their stage, opening only after dark and disappearing by dawn. It travels unpredictably to cities around the world, attracting followers known as Réveurs, who pursue its magic like a dream. Celia's illusions take physical form, like gowns made of air or bonfires that burn without heat. Marco builds the circus's structures using spells in a notebook, creating tents like the Ice Garden, where crystal trees glisten in a constant chill, or the Cloud Maze, where visitors drift along misty paths.

These elements are not fantastical escapes but extensions of reality. Visitors move through them casually, sipping warm cider that appears out of nowhere. Their amazement softens into quiet wonder, capturing the essence of magical realism's subtle approach. This enchantment of reality peaks in moments where magic meets human feelings and daily life. For example, the Midnight Dinner tent features a silent feast, with courses arriving through sensory spells that bring Joy, sadness, and nostalgia are personalized into every guest's individual experience, changing an ordinary meal into a sacred ceremony. Celia and Marco's developing romance creates a sense of shared dreams filling physical distance as they are able to connect with each other from different parts of the world as they create newness for their lives - whether mundane actions of a contortionist Tsukiko contorts herself into impossible shapes and is only considered talented in some way, while the Hall of Mirrors captures their infinite selves whispering with forgotten memories, but the performers at the Hall maintain it as any other exhibition; the carousel carries its riders not over the painted horses, but across fantasy land, including Parisian rooftops and starry space, and when the riders have finished their trip they are in a state of intoxication and delight, but all of their experience is considered unique and incredible; this relationship between Celia and Marco questions perception; what is the distinction between "real" magic and illusion; Celia's father believes her ability to perform magic is a form of deception, but Celia performs magic by changing materials, while the magic that Marco performs through his spells sustains entire civilizations, and therefore loses reality in a way that reflects the post-colonial roots of magical realism in Latin American writing, where the reality of existence has lost perspective of colonial "reality."

The dichotomy of competition versus creation forces the aforementioned dichotomy to blur further; Prospero is seeking pure power by teaching Celia to manipulate the laws of nature, while Mr. A. H. teaches Marco to weave physical spaces out of imagination using narrative spells. According to *The Guardian*, this novel employs magical realism's use of queer and fluid identities contrasting with rigid structures by way of colour saturation.

With more than four million copies sold and numerous adaptations planned (most notably a rumoured musical), it continues to reverberate throughout culture, demonstrating magical realism's ability to revive contemporary adults jaded by the rational world through enchantment. The novel develops this theme within the framework of wonder as a form of salvation; as the circus loses its creators, it will also diminish without Réveurs, suggesting that the power of imagination allows us to remain as entities despite experiencing the ravages of entropy. At the story's conclusion, Celia preserves her own form eternally through an enchanted act, freezing herself within the glass as a sign of love's lasting power, leaving the reader with a challenge to embark upon an interior journey to discover the extraordinary nature of the ordinary. In fulfilling the promise of magical realism, Morgenstern provides the reader with a means by which to discern wonder within their own lives through his transformational storytelling, mapping a connection between the circus and the hidden aspects of the reader's own experience while allowing the reader an opportunity to see their own world from a different perspective. This blending of experience and perception lingers, much like

a dream at dawn, revealing the greatest magic in literature lies in transforming our perceptions forever.

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