



Magical Realism in *La Sorcière* by Marie NDiaye*

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MAGICAL realism, which is one of the narrative styles most adopted by post-modern authors, examines the breakdown of the recognized order and the eruption of the inadmissible into everyday reality. Amaryll Chanady, in *Magical realism and the fantastic: Resolved versus unresolved antinomy* (1985), asserts that magical realism is a way of undermining the established truths by the imaginary and by presenting another picture of the world in which we live. Magical realism is the art of manifesting dreaminess and strangeness within a realistic context or in a familiar and recognizable universe. It presents a particular and unique world in which the coexistence of the natural and the supernatural is constant, and supernatural events are integrated into the reality of daily life. In other words, magical realism presents a fictitious but daily reality, interspersed with extraordinary or unreal events. In this regard, by creating every day and habitual situations, the authors present the supernatural and the imaginary as acceptable and plausible. Although the phenomenon is not very recent, magical realism is a narrative style most adopted by contemporary authors.

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Magical realism is brilliantly illustrated by the fiction of Marie NDiaye in its sense of remoteness and strangeness; her books are distinguished by their hybrid character and co-presence of realism and fantasy. Her tales include sorcery, metamorphoses, doubles, and ghosts. NDiaye usually tells her stories from the viewpoint of an individual, generally, a woman whose story is a tale of identity, and who is called upon to pass a series of difficult trials. In particular, her heroines travel through different places, each in search of something (family, home, community, self, belonging); more, the protagonists struggle with the feeling of marginalization due to an implicit and obscure failure. Exclusion and wandering are integral parts of NDiaye's fantastic tales. The most recurring theme in which the fantastic is applied by NDiaye's in her texts is that of the contemporary family: the familiar physical atmosphere has become strange and the spaces between the members have become worrying. NDiaye's fictions tend to portray fantastic and unspeakable characters who find no place in their families or the social, cultural, or political environment because they turn out to be undesirable and fundamentally unintelligible to everyone.

This supernatural ambiance and the fusion of fantasy and real elements are present in most of NDiaye's novels. This is the case with *La Sorcière* (1996), her sixth novel, where the writer takes advantage of her technique to stage the issue of alienation and the problems faced by an individual who finds himself marginalized in society for reasons that are far beyond his understanding and control. In *La Sorcière* NDiaye has managed to portray the life of a witch of modern times, a woman, still young, commonplace, and without ambition who would be satisfied with a daily life without surprise or relief. NDiaye recounts the dreary and monotonous life of Lucie, a witch of a long lineage but with very limited powers. The author describes a series of magical feats ranging from the weak visionary powers of Lucie, the protagonist, who is only able to keep up with the presence of other family members in other places, to the startling powers of her daughters who can turn into a crow and her mother who turns her ex-husband into a snail.

Using fantastic elements, this novel takes us to a soulless and callous world, where monotony and absurdity reign. Through her heroine, the author paints a pessimistic portrait of the living conditions of a certain social class in France. Thus, under a supernatural exterior, *La Sorcière* is a very realistic and contemporary novel and makes us fall into a disturbing and uncertain world. Paradoxically, the sorcery draws the story into the fantastic, to better reflect everyday life and to address deeper issues such as family, abandonment, and loneliness. *La Sorcière* NDiaye features a feminine fantasy and this fantastic effect is a way to show problems and emotions that often cannot be distinguished by the ordinary language. In

fact, magical realism here does not solve these problems but serves to amplify them and exaggerate their importance.

La Sorcière uses fantastic elements, both in the gift of sorcery passed on by female members of Lucie's family as well in the plot structure, which also conforms to dreamlike logic and includes sudden appearances, transformations, and sorcery. Yet the novel presents a supernatural imagination within a realistic main frame of reference. The novel's fantastic universe is rooted in brutal realism, notably in the staging of betrayals and the insipidity of everyday life in contemporary French provinces. Therefore, the sorcery in the novel works more as a metaphor and a means to explore recurring themes in NDiaye's work: women's issues in the family and society, abandonment, cruelty, family relationships, heritage and life in the French provinces.

In this paper, we try to understand how NDiaye uses magical realism in her novel, to portray the ambiguity of relationships within the family, which is supposed to be the most intimate place for an individual. To do this, we use what Amaryll Chanady offers in her contribution to the analysis of magical realism; that is in magical realism, it is a question of two codes, either the real (the natural) or the supernatural. Any strange or extraordinary event or anything that does not participate in the logical order of the reader's reality is classified as supernatural. The real underlies the second code. These are the events that participate in the reader's reality, where the similarity of the external world is metonymically taken up by the text. Of course, this notion requires further explanation, especially since it is composed of two opposite terms: realism and magic. However, to explain it, we rely on the analytical method of Amaryll Chanady, and we try to discover and analyze the elements that are essential in the design of magical realistic work, namely "The presence of two levels of reality - the natural and the supernatural in the text; the unresolved antinomy between these two levels in the narrative; authorial reluctance" (Chanady, 1985, 95).

The coexistence of elements from traditionally incompatible codes, in other words, the fusion of realism and fantasy, is probably the most remarkable characteristic of magical realism fiction. In addition, wonderful events are presented as normal and accustomed things that every day happen to ordinary people. These are stories of people like us taking care of what we do every day, but with a little bit of magic added to it. Though initially, it may sound like other genres, like fantasy, what makes magical realism so different is that these magical elements are presented as normal for the characters in these stories. And finally, authorial reluctance is one of the fundamental principles of magical realism which refers to the silence of the writer or narrator in the explanation of magic or the description of

supernatural events. The characters, especially the narrator, might not know what is going on, and neither could the reader. There is authorial reluctance when an author withholds information from the reader to make the circumstances deliberately vague and to reinforce the sense of the fantastic in the story. The characters - and therefore the readers - are kept in the dark, so that there is an ever-present sense of mystery as events unfold.

Based on these theoretical data, in this paper, we attempt to verify how two realistic and magical frames of reference coexist in *La Sorcière* thanks to this narrative mode and the objectives, which the author aims by choosing this mode of writing. Combining realism and fantasy elements, the novelist uses magical realism as an important and useful tool for expressing her thoughts and telling her stories.

Keywords— Magical Realism, Supernatural, Every day, NDiaye, *La Sorcière*.

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