

Exploring Magic Realism in Dallergut Dream Department Store by Miye Lee

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Exploring Magic Realism in *Dallergut Dream Department Store* by Miye Lee

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Abstract: Magic realism is a literary genre that blends the magical with the mundane to create a unique narrative style. This study explores the use of magic realism in Miye Lee's *DallerGut Dream Department Store*. The research employs the theoretical frameworks of Wendy B. Faris' characteristics of magic realism and Anne C. Heggfaldt's literary techniques. Utilizing an extrinsic approach focused on both theories, the study aims to identify and analyze the characteristics and literary techniques of magic realism in the novel. A qualitative method is used for this research. The analysis reveals that Miye Lee employs irreducible magical elements seamlessly blended with the realistic world of a dream department store, creating a narrative that challenges readers' perceptions of reality. Elements such as dream products, emotional payments, and mythical creatures like Leprechauns are presented as ordinary aspects of the characters' lives, exemplifying the characteristic merging of magical and real realms. Techniques like installment and subversion, as well as playing on the fantastic, are used to maintain a balance between the real and the magical, keeping the readers in a state of wonder and hesitation. The findings demonstrate that *DallerGut Dream Department Store* effectively uses magic realism to delve into complex human emotions and societal issues, providing a richer depiction of reality through its fantastical elements. This study contributes to the understanding of magic realism in contemporary literature, particularly within the context of Asian literature, and paves the way for further exploration of the genre's thematic and cultural implications.

Keywords: *characteristic, fantasy, literary techniques, magic realism*

INTRODUCTION

Fiction covers a broad range, including magical realism, where extraordinary elements seamlessly blend with realistic settings. Maggie Ann Bowers explains that magical realism combines realistic and magical aspects to create narratives that explore complex human experiences in unique ways. This genre pushes the boundaries of traditional fiction, offering a richer depiction of reality. Building on Bowers' analysis, Mario Siskind notes that magical realism acts as a bridge between realism and fantasy, thus enriching the literary landscape (Bowers in Siskind, 2022: 7). Originating from an artistic

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movement, magical realism gains significant attention in literary discourse when Latin American writers, including Angel Flores, introduce the term in her essay 'Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature' at the 1954 Modern Language Association Conference. Her definition of magical realism as a 'fusion of realism and fantasy' becomes widely accepted and frequently used in literary analysis.

(Warnes in Arisakti, 2021: 1) describes magical realism as a genre that uniquely combines two opposing concepts. "Magic" represents the extraordinary or fantastical elements, while "realism" refers to the ordinary, real world. By merging these conflicting aspects, magical realism creates a distinctive narrative style that blends the real and the fantastical seamlessly. By incorporating magical aspects into a realistic setting, magical realism transcends traditional genre limits and creates a universe that is both firmly based in reality yet runs on a different logic from our own. Unlike pure fantasy, which creates whole distinct worlds, magical realism is rooted in the everyday, giving the exceptional the appearance of being an intrinsic and acceptable aspect of existence. In their attempts to synthesize a description of the features of magical realism, many literary critics have sought to define magic realism, although they have frequently concentrated only on a small number of highly similar works. The term "magic realism" frequently veers between these two extremes of straightforward fantasy and postmodern surrealism. However, due in part to the fact that magic realist books are both entirely fantastical and utterly realistic, magic realism does not neatly fall into one of these categories. (Faris, 2004: 21)

Miye Lee's novel "Dallengut Dream Department Store" perfectly captures the enchanting essence of magical realism in a contemporary setting. Published in 2020, this novel transports readers to a fantastical future where dreams are bought and sold like everyday items. The story unfolds in a whimsical department store and follows various characters who embark on quests to achieve specific dreams, revealing deeper layers of their hopes, fears, and desires. Through magical realism, Miye Lee creates a narrative that transcends the ordinary, taking readers to a place where the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur. The dream department store becomes a symbolic setting where the lines between truth and imagination fade, showcasing the novel's use of magical realism. Much like the transformative journeys of protagonists in classic magical realism literature, ordinary people encounter extraordinary events in this surreal environment that challenge their perceptions of reality. These interconnected dream experiences highlight the universal human quest for fulfillment and meaning, demonstrating the genre's power to explore complex emotional and psychological landscapes.

This study will delve into the realm of magical realism within Miye Lee's "DallerGut Dream Department Store." The primary focus will be on identifying and describing the characteristics of magical realism employed in the novel. This will involve examining how the author weaves fantastical elements into the narrative and integrates them with a seemingly realistic setting. The analysis will explore how the line between dream and

reality blurs, and how magical occurrences are presented as commonplace by the characters.

Based on the background above, the purposes of this research are: (1) to describe the characteristics of magic realism in *DallerGut Dream Department Store*; (2) to describe the literary technique of magic realism utilized in *DallerGut Dream Department Store*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher uses two previous study, the first (Vany Rizkita Laily, 2020) using a data from novel. The second from (Arwan Arisakti, 2021) That also proposed Wendy B. Faris theory with an extrinsic approach.

The first previous study is a thesis from Universitas 17 Agustus 194 Surabaya written by (Laily, 2020) entitled *Magic Realism in John Bellairs' the House with A Clock in its Walls* This study focuses on a novel, examining how magical realism is used to develop the narrative and themes. Unlike the current research, which analyzes "Dallergoot Dream Department Store" by Miye Lee, Laily's study analyze a different novel, providing a unique perspective on the application of magical realism in a different context. Laily's research identifies specific elements of magical realism within the novel, such as the blending of fantasy and reality, and how these elements contribute to the overall message and impact of the story.

(Arisakti, A., 2021) in *Magic Realism Reflected in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* Also uses Wendy B. Faris's theory but approaches the text with an extrinsic perspective, examining external factors influencing the narrative. The extrinsic approach distinguishes this study from the current research. This research uncovers how external cultural, social, or historical contexts shape the narrative and magical realism elements in the text, providing a broader understanding of the genre's application.

By reviewing these previous studies, this research builds on establishing methodologies and findings to provide a detailed analysis of magical realism in "Dallergut Dream Department Store." The focus on a single novel allows for an in-depth exploration of how Miye Lee uses magical realism to enhance narrative complexity and thematic depth, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the genre's impact and significance.

METHOD/METODE

In this study, the researcher uses an extrinsic approach, which examines literary works using the theoretical framework of the characteristics of magical realism by Wendy B. Faris. (2004) This approach is used to analyze the magical elements present in the novel *DallerGut Dream Department Store* by Miye Lee. The extrinsic approach is particularly relevant as it allows the researcher to see how the magical elements in the novel are influenced by the wider social and cultural context.

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach by (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research delves into non-numerical phenomena, focusing on understanding

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the "why" and "how" behind human behavior, thoughts, and feelings in relation to a specific subject. The descriptive nature of this study lies in its use of words to depict the research subject and its characteristics. As (Creswell, 2014) highlights, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter, aiming to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This methodology is particularly suitable for this study, which seek to explore and describe the characteristics and underlying themes of a literary work.

This study also applied Anne C. Hegerfeldt (2005), which helps to understand how authors adapt other genres and modes and techniques such as pairing and subversion, and play with fantastic elements. These theories provide a clear framework for identifying and analyzing how magical elements are integrated in the narrative. By using an extrinsic approach supported by Faris and Hegerfeldt's theories, this study can provide a comprehensive analysis of how magical realism is used in DallerGut Dream Department Store and its impact on readers as well as the wider socio-cultural context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1.1 Characteristic of Magic Realism

Wendy B. Faris, in her book *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, she proposes a way to categorize literary works as magical realism based on five specific elements. Her approach helps to identify how magical and realistic parts are mixed together, creating stories that blend realistic descriptions with fantastical events. This theory provides a clear method for distinguishing between the magical and the real in a narrative, showing how the two can coexist within a single story.

1. Irreducible Elements

The first characteristic, the irreducible element, refers to occurrences in a novel that happen unexpectedly and cannot be explained by the natural laws of the universe. These events, which would never happen in the real world, are considered magical. While these elements might be accepted within the context of the story, they cannot be logically explained.

1 She pulls a prep question sheet toward her and re-reads the last question, which she has been struggling with.

Q. Which dream and dreammaker won the Grand Prix at the 1999 Dream of the Year Awards by a unanimous vote?

- 'Crossing the Pacific Ocean as a Killer Whale' by Kick Slumber
- 'Living as My Parents for a Week' by Yasnooz Otra
- 'Floating in Space Gazing Down on Earth' by Wawa Sleepland
- 'Teatime with a Historical Figure' by Doje

- 'An Infertile Couple's Dream Foretelling the Birth of Triplets' by Babynap Rockabye (Lee, 2023: 2)

In this passage, the concept of the "Dream of the Year Awards" and the listed dreams themselves present scenarios that are inherently fantastical and imaginative. The idea that dreams could be created and judged as part of an annual award ceremony is a fantastical element that cannot be explained by the normal laws of reality. The listed dreams, such as "Crossing the Pacific Ocean as a Killer Whale" and "Living as My Parents for a Week," further highlight the blending of magical and realistic elements. These dreams are imaginative and surreal, yet they are presented in a matter-of-fact manner, as if they are entirely plausible within the context of the story.

2. Unsettling Doubts

After encountering magical elements, readers often question whether these fantastical events could actually happen in real life. This skepticism is part of the experience of magical realism. Readers interpret the magical through their own experiences, which can cause them to waver between belief and doubt. This back-and-forth uncertainty is crucial to the third characteristic, known as unsettling doubts.

1 Many dream stores are springing up everywhere and selling provocative dreams. I remember something you said in the magazine, "Interpretations Better Than Dreams". You mentioned that some stores lure people in by offering sleep than they really need and for pleasure only. And I heard that your store is different. You only offer dreams that people need and always emphasise that reality is important. I think these were the boundaries the Time God wanted the Third Disciple to govern. Just the right amount of control without overstepping the realm of reality, that is why I applied here. (Lee, 2019: 20)

In this passage, Penny reflects on her decision to apply to the DallerGut Dream Department Store and mentions the store's unique philosophy of providing only necessary dreams while emphasizing the importance of reality. This juxtaposition between dreams and reality creates a subtle ambiguity. The store's approach to dreams as something that must be balanced with reality introduces a concept that challenges the reader's understanding of dreams and their role in life.

3. Phenomenal World

15 The third key feature of magical realism is the incorporation of the phenomenal world. This element provides the realistic foundation that makes the magical aspects of the story more credible. It involves the inclusion of objects, events, and settings that are realistic and relatable to the reader, effectively anchoring the fantastical elements in a recognizable reality. By doing so, the narrative seamlessly blends the extraordinary with the ordinary, making the magical elements feel natural within the context of the story.

1 'Nice to meet you, Penny. I was looking forward to meeting you'. DallerGut looks real. On closer inspection, his dark brown eyes exude youthful twinkles, more like the eyes of a boy. Penny feels she has stared at him too intently and looks away at the boxes strewn all over the office. All dream products. Some are damp from long days spent here, and some seem new with their wrapping still shiny.

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DallerGut pulls steel chair closer, drawing her attention back to him. (Lee, 2023: 15)

In this section, the environment described is grounded in a realistic setting. Penny's interaction with DallerGut and the detailed description of his appearance and the office environment are rooted in a realistic world. The mention of "dream products," which are tangible items in the office, blends the mundane with the magical. This seamless integration of the fantastic (dream products) into a realistic setting exemplifies how magical realism often incorporates elements of the phenomenal world, making the extraordinary seem ordinary and believable within the narrative.

4. Merging Realms

Merging realms is a key feature of magical realism where the boundary between the magical and the real becomes blurred. This phenomenon starts to be felt in everyday life, where signs of the magical begin to manifest. As these signs emerge, the experience of two nearly united worlds—one magical, one real—becomes evident.

'Oh, Motal, please. I know you sell dreams at the discount, but this is pushing it too far. The dreams would be undreamable, with chunks of scenes, smell and colour are gone. You should not sell these if you have any decency. DallerGut would be so furious if he learned of it. And if Babynap Rockabye finds out we are selling such low-quality work... I don't even want to imagine how she would react. She would never do business with us again.' (Lee, 2023: 75)

The passage blends the ordinary with the extraordinary by discussing the quality of dreams as if they are physical goods that can be sold, discounted, and affected by issues such as missing scenes, smells, and colors. This normalization of dream commerce in a realistic setting creates a seamless integration of the magical and the real, making the fantastical elements a natural part of everyday life. This merging of realms is a key aspect of magic realism.

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5. Disruption of Time, Space, Identity

In the final stage of merging realms in magical realism, the distinction between the magical and the real world dissolves entirely. Magical elements become an integral part of everyday life, influencing time, space, and identity. The magical is no longer separate; it actively shapes and interacts with the real world.

Feeling dizzy, the man winces and closes his eyes. He turns twenty-nine this year and was already discharged from the army seven years ago.

Re-enlistment? He opens his eyes again, trying to concentrate on the news, trying to process all this, but he is already in the next scene.

The man is at the Military Manpower Administration office in his loose-fitting T-shirt. Inside his dream, he doesn't find this quick scene transition strange. Instead, what fills his mind is the brutal reality of having to go through the military all over again. He is surrounded by many other men waiting for their physical check-ups. They are pushing him left and right, slowly leading him to the front. The other men seem buoyant for some reason. (Lee, 2023: 100)

This characteristic involves non-linear timelines or temporal shifts that disrupt the conventional flow of time. In the passage, the man is abruptly transported from one scene to another within his dream, reflecting a disjointed experience of time. The quick transition from being at home to the Military Manpower Administration office, without finding it strange within the dream, exemplifies this disruption.

B. Literary Techniques of Magic Realism

Anne C Hegerfeldt, outlines five fundamental literary techniques commonly employed in magical realist texts.

1. The Adaptation of Other Genre and Modes

The first literary technique to be discussed is the magical realist **adaptation of other genres and modes**. The uniqueness of magical realism comes from the adaptation of Western traditions, namely literary realism and literary fantastic. The techniques to be discussed under this topic include "installment-subversion" and "playing on the fantastic".

- a. Installment and Subversion

The first technique to be discussed under **the adaptation of other genres and modes** is the technique of installment and subversion. The installment technique relates to the use of objective truth to build realism in magical realist fiction, while subversion is applied to present magical events.

Customers are calmly shopping, and DallerGut is roaming around the lobby with a snack basket under his arm, handing out Deep Sleep Candy to those leaving empty-handed.

'Can I have more?' Says a female customer in a golden lace nightdress, teasingly sticking out her hand. (Lee, 2023: 121)

This data falls under the category of Installment. The story begins with a realistic setting, where customers are calmly shopping, and DallerGut is roaming around the lobby with a snack basket and also the golden lace nightdress that are used by customer. This situation gives the impression of an ordinary, everyday scenario, which is part of the installment technique. While the Subversion technique applied when DallerGut giving Deep Sleep Candy that which gives its users a deep sleep effect. This concept of writing disrupts the rules of realism and introducing fantastic element.

- b. Playing on Fantastic

To differentiate magical realist fiction from fantasy fiction, readers' hesitation plays an important role in determining the difference. This technique relates to one of the characteristics of magical realism, namely unsettling doubts.

'Penny, whose dream would you want to have the most?' DallerGut quietly asks.

'For me... It would have to be Sleepland's.'

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'Ah, Wawa Sleepland, wonderful choice! She makes such scenic dreams. I've dreamed of one of hers before, and it was incredible. I didn't want to wake up from it. It was set in the Middle Ages, and I was overlooking a city from fortress in the rain. The sky was twinkling above me, the moon and the stars coming closer the more I reached to touch them.' DallerGut seems lost in thought, his eyes distant. (Lee, 2023: 134)

The story describes a conversation between DallerGut and Penny about whose dream they would most like to have. When DallerGut describes his dream made by Wawa Sleepland, he takes the reader into a beautiful and fantastical dream world, such as being in the Middle Ages, overlooking a city from a fortress in the rain, with a twinkling sky and the moon and stars appearing closer as he reaches to touch them. This description creates a magical atmosphere and invites the reader to feel a sense of wonder about the boundary between reality and fantasy. This technique shows how these dreams are not just beautiful escapes but also evoke the feeling that reality cannot be entirely separated from elements that are irrational or empirical. This hesitation helps differentiate magical realism from pure fantasy fiction.

2. Magical Realist Focalizer

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In magical realism fiction, the story is told from the point of view of a character who is in a marginalized position.

'We lost fifteen per cent of the profit we were supposed to make. It was on our contract that we wouldn't be able to receive payments for the unsold dreams from no-shows,' the leader of the Leprechauns says, munching on a piece of cheese. Five of them are all feasting on the same slice.

'In fact, most of you famous dreammakers cannot relate to this issue. All the products on the first floor of the dream store sell out in a flash. We indie dreammakers are the ones that have to pay the price,' grumbles a Leprechaun in pink puffed blouse. (Lee, 2023: 139)

The story is told from the perspective of the Leprechauns, who are characters in a marginalized position. They complain about lost profits and the inability to receive payment for unsold dreams. Moreover, they feel that they, as indie dream makers, have to bear the consequences, while famous dream makers do not face the same problems. This perspective highlights the non-dominant worldview of the characters who feel disadvantaged by the existing system, and it challenges the dominant power and cultural center represented by the famous dream makers.

3. Paradigms of Knowledge

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This technique deals with the issues of knowledge and knowledge production presented in the novel.

'I've heard stories about the Beatles and Kekule's benzene ring, and that's why I'm here! They all said they drew their inspiration from a dream. Are you not allowed to sell to people like me? Is it because those kinds of dreams are too expensive?'

'I'm sorry, but I have no Idea what you're talking about - what is Beatles? And what is the benzene ring? Please don't get me wrong, all our payments are processed afterward, so the price will never be the reason to refuse selling our products, sir.'

Penny looks through all the store's brochures but cannot find any 'inspiration dreams'. Are there hidden dreams that Penny isn't aware of? She contemplates for a moment, then calls all the floor managers for help. (Lee, 2023: 184)

The story depicts a customer looking for an inspiration dream based on stories about the Beatles and Kekulé's benzene ring. However, Penny does not know about these things and does not find 'dream inspiration' in the store brochure. This reflects how magical realism fiction questions the difference between fact and fiction, and shakes up the norms of accepted knowledge. The customer believes in the myth about inspiration from dreams, while Penny operates within the logic of the store's sales system. The question of whether there are hidden dreams unknown to Penny re-evaluates the way humans understand and explain their world, using myth (inspiration stories) and logos (rational sales processes).

4. Strategies of Destabilization

Strategies of Destabilization is a technique in which the story portrays the real as fantastic and the fantastic as real. This technique uses two ways: naturalization and supernaturalization. Naturalization means that fantastic things are portrayed as ordinary, while supernaturalization means that ordinary things are presented as fantastic.

The couple is on the verge of tears, but their daughter's goofy face makes them laugh. 'Okay, we'll take it slow. But we'll definitely meet again.'

'Uh huh. I'll be a good girl until we meet again, I promise!'

The parents know this is all a dream, but they are overwhelmed with joy, as if they really are meeting their daughter. It is rare for them to dream while being aware that they are dreaming.

The couple woke up from the dream at the same time. It was one o'clock in the morning. Barely two hours had passed since they had gone to bed. They were tightly holding the tangled blanket between them. (Lee, 2023: 225)

The story depicts a couple who dreamt of being reunited with their daughter and felt very happy, even though they were aware that it was just a dream. They experience a realization in the dream that is rare. When they wake up, they realize that only two hours have passed. This illustrates the technique of supernaturalization, where an ordinary experience like dreaming is presented in a strange and extraordinary way. The dream is very real and evokes deep emotions, almost like reality, even though they know it is only a dream. This experience blurs the line between reality and fantasy, shaking up conventional norms of what is real and unreal.

5. Techniques of Literalization

In magical realism fiction, magical events are presented with figurative language. For the magical events to be accepted as real, the meaning of the figurative language must be taken literally.

Her response was extremely unexpected. How can she possibly remember everything that's happened here for a month? She, an outsider?

'How did you,,,?'

'Will you keep a secret? The girl looked around and then whispered in his ear. 'I'm a lucid dreamer. At a very high level, too.'

Vigo was shocked. 'You can come here at your own will through a lucid dream? I've never seen such a thing!'

'Yes, when I'm asleep, I can go anywhere I like. And I remember everything that happens there. Amazing right?' So, how can I help you with graduation project?' (Lee, 2023: 231)

The story depicts a girl who claims to be a highly skilled lucid dreamer, who can go anywhere in her sleep and remember everything that happens. The concept of lucid dreaming is usually thought of as a metaphor for awareness and control in dreams, but in this story, the ability is taken literally. The girl can actually enter certain places in her dreams and remember them vividly, making the usually figurative concept a literal reality in the world of the story.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the aspects of magical realism in the novel DallerGut Dream Department Store by Miye Lee, the researcher concludes several points. First, five characteristics of magical realism are found in this novel, namely: (a) irreducible magical elements, which appear in the form of other characters such as Assam the noctilucas, The Time God, The Customers, and also settings such as Dream of the Year Awards, traded dreams, dream payment system, and the currencies that used in the plot (b) unsettling doubts related to the existence of The Third Disciples, plot history and the realistic dreams concept, (c) a phenomenal world found in the subconscious setting, metropolitan atmosphere and city history, and other real objects, (d) the merging of realms occurs as there is a switch between when there is a switch in point of view between the subconscious character selling the dream and the real-world character who is the customer. Which has an impact on their interactions in each reality, and (e) the disruption of time/space/identity that is presented along with irreducible magical elements.

Second, how the literary techniques of magical realism are represented in DallerGut Dream Department Store. The first technique is the adaptation of other genres

and modes. This technique is represented in two ways. The first is installation and subversion. The novel seamlessly integrates elements from other genres, blending realism with the fantastical. The technique of installment and subversion is evident in scenes where realistic settings are suddenly disrupted by magical events, such as customers shopping calmly while DallerGut hands out Deep Sleep Candy, or tiny silver-winged Leprechauns appearing in a dining room. Also play on the fantastic that creates a sense of wonder and hesitation, distinguishing magical realism from pure fantasy. For instance, the description of a fairy-tale-like dining room with a snow landscape outside and the discussion about dream makers creating picturesque dreams blur the lines between reality and fantasy, evoking a sense of magical possibility.

The next technique is the magical realism focalizer which presents the story from the perspective of marginalized characters, such as the Leprechauns who face economic challenges and feel overlooked compared to famous dream makers.

The third technique, the knowledge paradigm, is represented by questions conventional knowledge and explores the production of knowledge through its narrative. Characters grapple with existential questions about success and failure, reflecting the interplay between mythos (existential questioning) and logos (rational search for answers).

The fourth is the destabilization strategy employs techniques that present the real as fantastical and the fantastical as real. Naturalization and supernaturalization are used to make the magical elements appear ordinary and the ordinary appear extraordinary. This technique is evident in the portrayal of dream products and emotional payments, which are treated as common aspects of the characters' world. Lastly, the literalization technique is represented by using figurative language, namely metaphors and hyperbole whose meaning is taken literally. For example, the concept of lucid dreaming is presented as a literal ability to control and remember dreams vividly, blending the immaterial with empirical reality.

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