

Magic Realism and Every Day

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Magic realism in literary genre is defined as "a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the 'reliable' tone of objective realistic report, designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folktale, and myth while maintaining a strong contemporary social relevance. The fantastic attributes given to characters in such novels-levitation, flight, telepathy, telekinesis-are among the means that magic realism adopts in order to encompass the often phantasmagorical realities of the 20th century", According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms).

Magic realism term or magical realism was coined by German art critic Franz Roh in 1925. In his book *Nach Expressionism*, he used it to describe a style of painting which was also referred to as *Neue Sachlichkeit*. During the 1940s and 1950s, it was used by Roh to describe art in which "the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather it hides and palpitates behind it". This term was used for the type of painting that was also called 'new' or 'ideal' realism. It is not a mere imitation of the real but a representation of what the real might be. Magic realism, according to Roh, is a point where the real and the ideal mingle.

In 1948, Arturo Uslar-Pietri of Venezuela introduced the term in his collection of essays *Letras y hombres de Venezuela* (Literature and Famous Figures of Venezuela). He used it to describe a certain type of Hispano-American narrative prose. He described: "man as a mystery surrounded by realistic facts. A poetic prediction or a poetic denial of reality. What for lack of another name could be called a magical realism." He termed it as a continuation of the *Vanguardia* or Avant-garde modernist experimental writings of Latin America. Professor Angelo Flores's study titled *Magical Realism in Spanish American fiction* was published in 1955 and it indicated the broad spread of the term in Latin America. Why did magical realism originate in Latin America though apparently, it was an outcome of a blend of influences from a variety of sources? The answer is that Latin American writers frequently visited Europe where they were exposed to the contemporary art movement. European artistic movements like Surrealism had its impact on Carpentiere and Uslar-Pietri. Then the publication of Roh's book took place in 1927 giving a new impetus to the authors in Buenos Aires. Jorge Luis Borges's *Historia universal de la literatura* in 1935 motivated the Latin American writers to employ magic realism in their writings. In the decade of 1940s in Latin America, magic realism became a way of expressing the realistic American mentality and creates an autonomous style of literature. The magic realist writer confronts reality and tries to reveal it by looking for what can be mysterious in life, objects and even human actions.

American painters Irvan Albright, Paul Cadmus, and George Tooker, used this term to describe the unusual realism. They described it as 'uncanny realism'. The magical realist art did not include visibly fantastic or mystic content but integrates the everyday life. Initially, the term in visual art was not at all related to anything fantastic or magical but it was associated with the realistic and the mundane.

Another important contribution to the development of this term was Luis Leal. Mexican critic Luis Leal summed up the difficulty of defining magical realism by writing, "If you can explain it, then it's not magical realism." He offers his own definition by writing, "Without thinking of the concept of magical realism, each writer gives expression to a reality he observes in the people. To me, magical realism is an attitude on the part of the characters in the novel toward the world, or toward nature."

Magic realism appeared in the English literature in the early 1970s in Canada, West Africa, and the United States and spread to other parts of the world. The eminent writer of magical realism in the English language is the British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie. He allows the influence of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the German novelist Gunter Grass, and the Russian novelist Mikhail Bulgakov. Angela Carter, the most popular English feminist practiced it in her novels *Like a Night at the Circus* and *Wise Children*. The writers in the United States, such as Native American, Chicano, and African American, also employed magic realism in order to oppose dominant American culture. Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy are Indian writers of magic realism. Magic realism considered to be a 'sub-genre' in Canadian literature. Robert Kroetsch and Jack Hodgins are popular magical realist writers in Canada. Robert Kroetsch's novel *what the Crow Said* and Jack Hodgins' novel *The Invention of the World* are the famous works in this genre. The Colombian writer Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the finest example of magic realism. In India this technique is utilized by Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small things* and Salman Rushdie in well known work *Midnight's Children*. Ben Okri (*The Famished Road*) and Amos Tutuola are important African magical realist writers. South Africa also saw the emergence of magical realist writing in the novels of Andre Brink. His novels *Imaginations in Sand* and *Devil's Valley* show the plight of Afrikaners in the new post-apartheid political situation. Magic realism novels are produced in the U.S.A. where the writers used magic realism to highlight the issues of gender and the marginalization of cultures. Toni Morrison's novels *Song Solomon*, *Beloved* and *Jazz* have magic realist situations. Women writers like Maxine Hong Kingston employed magic realism in her novel *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. Leslie Marmon

Silko, the Native American writer, wrote her novel *The Almanac of the Dead* in a magic realist mode.

Magic realism is also utilized as a technique in cinema to modify the obvious and familiar way of expression. An inspiration has also taken from its successful use in literature. The device started appearing most significantly around the late 1980s and early 1990s in film, the tradition still tracing back to its Latin American roots with films such as Alfonso Arau's *Like Water for Chocolate*, based on the novel by Laura Esquivel. It was Mexico's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 65th Academy Awards and became the highest-grossing Spanish language film in the United States at the time. Other Latin American filmmakers have continued to incorporate this device in film, one of the most prominent being writer-directors **Guillermo del Toro**. His 2006 film *Pan's Labyrinth* is exemplary of this. The most recent example of magic realism as a technique in cinema is del Toro's *The Shape of Water*. It has bagged Oscar in 2018 The Best Picture Award. Another well-known example is Mexican director Alejandro G. Iñárritu and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Amélie*. The next film in this category that marks a clever usage of magical realism is the cult classic *Donnie Darko* from director Richard Kelly, which is used in combination with elements of science fiction. Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris' *Ruby Sparks*, Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Life of Pi* based on the novel by Yan Martel are the recent examples of deployment magic realism in movies.

In movies, the magic realism technique makes a difference with the practice of depicting ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. These ordinary people go through humdrum activities of daily life. Everything is presented normal - except for one or two elements that go beyond the territory of possibility, whether it be magic or fate or a physical connection with the earth and the creatures that inhabit it, but always in a way that celebrates the mundane. In magic realism, a touch of magic is added to plot, setting, and character to reach the actual climax. The common trait of this narrative style is that it mingles the elements of imagination, stargaze, fantasy and mythology with the reality to reflect envision of the author.

The paper in hand is a critical study of *Everyday* (2018) American movie based on David Levithan's New York Bestselling YA novels *Every Day* (2012) and *Another Day* (2015). Being a romantic fantasy drama, this movie is categorized as Young Adult fiction and makes it stand by another hit of the same category named *The Twilight Saga* (2008) film series. The actress leading the star cast is Angourie Rice accompanied by Justice Smith, Debby Ryan, and Maria Bello. The movie is directed by Michael Sucsy and screenplay is written by Jesse Andrews.

"Every Day" feels like a YA movie — wholesome and benign, told in televisual medium shots, with a message tailored to be an antidote to toxic teenage cynicism. A. takes steps to save a depressed teen from suicide and also helps to heal, a little too easily, the relationship between Rhiannon's mother (Maria Bello) and her

saintly dysfunctional portrait-painting father (Michael Cram). More than that, A. fulfills the YA fantasy of endless self-attention: He/she becomes dozens of people, each of them blissfully focused on our heroine: by Owen Gleiberman, Chief Film Critic.

The story travels around a school going girl Rhiannon (Angourie Rice) and a gender-less and body-less spirit 'A' (as named in the movie). In further course, it develops into a teenage romantic plot. Like all other Young Adult fiction, it focuses on teenage love, the problems faced by them while going through emotional ups and downs, and precisely depicts their interaction with society. In its sub-plot, the story resolves a married life's conflict (of Rhiannon's parents) with the help of main characters ('A' and Rhiannon) and make them live happily together again.

The movie starts with 'A' getting up in Justin's body. 'A' is a spirit who doesn't have any identity so he keeps on changing bodies. Why that spirit does so is not particularly explained in the movie. The spirit named 'A' has possessed certain powers, out of those powers the first is that it changes the body. Though he can't decide in which body he resides but it is certain that he will enter into the body of same age person. There are two signs that indicate that 'A' has possessed someone's body. First, he checks his hands when he gets up and secondly, he always sets two alarms one at 11 PM second and 11:55 PM. These are the only clues given by the narrator to show the exchange of bodies. He stays only for 24 hours in one body. He also accesses all the information about the person after getting into his body. In the beginning, he stays there only for twenty-four hours and also access the host body's memories, personal stuff and even to their social media accounts.

Rhiannon is a teenage girl living with her parents and an elder sister. She is in her high school and in a relationship with boyfriend Justin. Her mother is a working woman and father stays at home after he is fired from his insurance company (Rhiannon disclose it to 'A' when he is on a date with her in Justin's body) and do paintings which he explains as his passion. As a growing up teenager, she is going through emotional ups and downs. She is also worried about conflict in her parent's relationship.

The story, being categorized in young adult fiction portrays the main theme of emotions, self-awareness and in the end, sort out all problems in the life of the main character (Rhiannon). 'A' the body-less and gender-less spirit works as *deus ex machina* and helps Rhiannon to get self-realization about her relationships with family and friends. He makes her find the perfect man of her dreams to spend his life with. He also makes her realize what kind of relationship she needs being a grown up. During this course, he helps her to understand the true meaning of life as a teenager and makes her realize the importance of relationships in one's life and also helps her to sort out the conflict in her parent's relationship.

The very first frame depicts the spirit 'A' waking up from his bed in Justin's body. However, it is not disclosed to the viewers at the beginning of the story. This suspense is

revealed later after half an hour by the spirit as other character named Megan. 'A' as Megan exposes the truth about his existence. He explains,

"Today I am Megan. The day that you met Nathan, I was Nathan. All right? And the day that Amy shadowed you at school, I was Amy. And the day you went to the beach with Justin. I was Justin. Because I am someone who wakes up in a different body every day. Always someone of my age, never too far from the last, never the same person twice and I have absolutely no control over any of it...I don't know why it happens, I don't know how. I mean this is... No one ever tried to explain it to me and this first time I have ever actually told anyone about it."

At first, Rhiannon doesn't believe him and thinks Justin and Megan might be playing some joke on her. But when 'A' (as Megan) gives her clue about her relationship with Justin and the secret about her family she shared when she was on the first date with him, makes her think over it again. She asks Justin about Megan to make things clear. Her meeting with Megan makes her think about the spirit 'A' and about the importance of relationship in one's life. In order to make things more clear she asks Nathan about the time they spent together in a birthday party at friend's house but like Justin, his memory was completely washed away. Instead, Nathan tells her that it was Satan who possessed his body that night and is now living under priest's custody to escape Satan. Next day 'A' as the guy in coffee shop explains that how he gets to know about the person's past and present after entering in his body. He can nothing so doesn't hinder in anybody's life and can't decide in whose body he will enter next. All these things make Rhiannon more confused

Next day when 'A' comes in the body of his fellow student at the school, she asks him why he is chasing her every day. 'A' residing in school boy's body explains: "The day we met, I felt something I have never felt before and I don't want that go... I am asking you to give me a chance." That incident makes Rhiannon think about her relationship with Justin. Next day at his home, she asks Justin about their relationship. After getting an unfavorable response, her attention diverts from Justin to 'A'. She breaks her friendship and starts spending time with 'A' in different bodies. The more she comes to know about him, the more she is coming close to him. 'A' as a boy in bookshop discloses how he has come to know about his existence. After knowing all about him, she develops an intimate relationship with him and she starts taking relationships more seriously. She goes to her father's compartment and tries to talk to him about his paintings.

The plot reaches to climax when 'A' possesses Rhiannon's body. After entering her body, he changes her

family life. He brings all family members closer with the help of Rhiannon's body. He makes Rhiannon spend time with her mother and father and tries to bring them closer to each other. Later he becomes successful in making their family happier than ever. At last, he leaves a note for her saying:

"So I was you yesterday and I tried to leave you every memory. I tried to change things for you as little as possible. Although I did do a week of your homework. I am amazing at homework. No need to thank me. Okay, fine, you're welcome. I need you to know that I didn't choose to be you. I wouldn't choose that even if I could. In all of my years I've never woken up in the body of someone I care so much about. It was the best and the most terrifying day of my life so far. You are the only reason why. Yours, A."

It was the end of her every isolating relationship with the spirit 'A' and the beginning of the true, real and everlasting relationship when 'A' enters in the body of a boy named Alexander. Alexander is studying in the same school in which Rhiannon is studying. Alexander is the most curious and the most enthusiastic about the life of all the teenagers that 'A' possessed. He is also kind and handsome, so 'A' finds his perfect match for Rhiannon. At that time, 'A' had already tried staying in one body for more than twenty-four hours when he with the help of Rhiannon helps a girl who was under depression by making her father understand her. Now Rhiannon again convinces 'A' to stay in Alexander's body for more than one day.

At last when she falls in love with 'A' and finds herself enjoying his company, 'A' reveals the reality about their relationship. 'A' discusses that he can't continue with her by being in a different body every day because it will make things difficult for her. He explains that she after being married and having kids, she can't spend time with him in a new body. He asks what she would tell her to her parents and kids about him. He convinces her to choose Alexander as her life partner. In the last frame the next day, Rhiannon meets Alexander at school and starts spending time together in the future. 'A' is revealed continuing his journey in the body of a woman waking up in the morning and going to her work.

Hence the movie ends in Rhiannon getting her partner for life. 'A' after spending many days with her breaks his relationship with her and moves on for his future journey as usual. He also mends her father and mother's relationship and makes her adjust her adjust with her family. At last, he gives her some precious lessons of life by teaching her importance of dear ones in life and makes her live her life fully with the perfect match she wants to spend her life with. All his efforts were the result of his affection with her and he does his best to return that by changing her life.

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