

MAGICAL REALISM IN LESLYE WALTON'S *THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL SORROWS OF AVA LAVENDER*

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Abstract: *This article focuses on the description of magical realism in Leslye Walton's debut novel *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*. This study applies Wendy B. Faris' characteristic of magical realism in order to uncover the magical realism within the novel. The result of this study confirms that this novel portrays all of Faris' characteristics of magical realism. They are: the irreducible elements represented by Ava's wings as well as Viviane and Emilienne's magical talents, the phenomenal world seen through the three women's normal life, the unsettling doubt coming from the doubts on Ava's wings and Emilienne's strangeness, the merging realms portrayed by the transformation and apparition, the disruptions of time and space through the existence of odd plant and seasons.*

Keywords: *irreducible elements; phenomenal world; unsettling doubts; merging realms; disruption of time.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In literature, magical realism is a term used to describe a situation or an event that is a combination between everyday realities and supernatural elements that are woven seamlessly into one single story (Barton & Hudson, 1999:31). The term 'magic' in magical realism itself refers to the sense of newness in which the reality is exaggerated as well as endowed with something rather entirely different from what it usually is. Thus it made something entirely new from the different basic concept of this reality because of the clarity and clinical details enticed to it. Franz Roh (in Hegerfeldt, 2005:13) further gives addition to his explanation that this concept of magic which is designated to oppose 'realistic'.

The key to interweave the magical elements that are used to be the opposite of realistic into the reality itself lies on the scheming of the narrative on how the author represents the life of his or her characters when they experience the magic in their lives, treat it like any other events that happen to them. Just like normal people dealing with their everyday matters, characters in magical realism story deal with magical events and situation as if it is what the creator of the world will it to be. They demonstrate that those magical elements

are just part of their reality (Hegerfeldt, 2005:14). Therefore, magical realist stories seem so normal yet so strange, but the readers can still relate to them due to the realities that are still being the prominent aspect of the story itself.

The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender, penned by an American debut author Leslye Walton, tells a story of titular character Ava Lavender who was born with a pair of white and brown speckled wings sprouting out of her shoulder blades. Ava lives with her mother and grandmother, both are single mothers, in a fictional neighborhood called Pinnacle Lane in modern day Seattle, Washington. This novel is written in a unique narrative style, in which the narrator, Ava Lavender has not even born during the first half of the novel. Ava narrates the life of her grandmother and her considered strange family as well as the life of her mother by using third person point of view. Until the moment Ava Lavender was born, she starts narrating the story using the first person point of view. She narrates her own upbringings along with the continuity of the lives of the other main characters of this novel which are full of magical events.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Characteristics of Magical Realism

Wendy B. Faris in her book *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and Remystification of Narrative*, proposes that magical realist fiction has five characteristics in it. Those are “the irreducible elements”, the phenomenal world, the unsettling doubts, merging realms, and also disruptions of time, space and identity (Faris, 2004:7).

a. The Irreducible Elements

The irreducible element is an occurrence that is unexplainable by “logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief,” which has been formulated in western empirically based discourse (Young & Hollaman quoted in Faris, 2004:7). Being that the extraordinary and magical events are recounted just as casually as the ordinary ones, the readers sometimes finding difficulties in straightening them out. Adding it that they are written in such a vivid description unlike the mysteriously transmitted traditional narratives such as myth and folklore. Tzvetan Todorov explains that this irreducible element "goes beyond the uncanny as it exists as an incidental element in various kinds of narrative" (in Faris, 2004:7).

Readers find themselves accepting the story to be the narrators or characters' projections due to the fact that these irreducible elements are seamlessly assimilated into the realistic textual environment of the story. The outrageousness of the reality is often underrated by the ordinary people's casual reaction over it. The magic grows almost

unnoticeably out of the real, and the narrator registers no surprise, with the result that the element of surprise is redirected onto the history we are about to witness within the story (Faris, 2004:8-14).

b. The Phenomenal World

The second characteristic of magical realism is the phenomenal world. This is the realistic side of the oxymoron. Magical events are usually grounded textually in a traditionally realistic, even an explicitly factual manner. As Cooper has stated that “the mysterious, sensuous, unknown, and unknowable are not in the subtext, as in realist writing, but rather share the fictional space with history” (Cooper, 1998:36). Within the fiction, the author will often do a historical anchoring in which they put some elements from history that will persist even when the fantastical element shows its colors ever so slightly (Faris, 2004:15-16).

c. The Unsettling Doubts

While reading the magical realist fiction, the readers may experience hesitation before acknowledging the irreducible element. Hence, they experience some unsettling doubts. It frequently stems from the implicit clash of cultural systems within the narrative. Because belief systems differ, some readers in some cultures will hesitate less than others, depending on their beliefs and narrative traditions. Hesitation may obscure the irreducible element, which consequently is not always so easily perceived as such. The contemporary Western reader’s primary doubt is most often between understanding an event as a character’s dream or hallucination and, alternatively, understanding it as a miracle (Todorov in Faris, 2004:17- 18).

d. Merging Realms

This particular characteristic enables the reader to feel the closeness or near merging of two realms or two worlds. In terms of cultural history, magical realism often merges ancient or traditional and modern worlds. It combines realism and the fantastic element in literature. Perhaps the magical realist narrative line is analogous to the axis of the world that in many systems of thought is imagined to join the realms of the underworld, the earth, and the heavens. The magical realist vision thus exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions. Ghosts and texts, or people and words that seem ghostly, inhabit these two-sided mirrors, many times situated between the two worlds of life and death; they enlarge that space of intersection where a number of magically real fictions exist (Faris, 2004:21-22).

e. **Disruption of Time and Space**

In addition to merging different worlds, magical realist fictions disturb common ideas about time and space. With the example of year-long occurrences, our usual sense of time is shaken. And later our sense of space is disrupted when tropical plants grow over a strange place (Faris, 2004:23).

3. **DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEMES**

3.1 **Characteristics of Magical Realism Found in the Novel**

a. **The Irreducible Elements**

The “irreducible element” in this novel can be seen in Ava Lavender’s very own pair of wings. It is perhaps the only one that is widely accepted as the irreducible element since it is physically visible. Its status as being something logically unbelievable is even textually described as the only case science failed medical field (Walton, 2014:5). The confusion of logically unbelievable winged girl is further expressed through various exchanges of the medical people who discuss about the devout religious masses as being jealous rather than pity and disdain because the religious belief that perceives winged creature as divine is questioned here because the wings are possessed by a girl, not an angel (p. 5-6).

The next irreducible element is Viviane’s magical talent to smell things such as body odor. She is even able to distinguish her lover scent as soap and turtle wax (p. 42). Viviane, self-raised in a bakery shop, can whip up a batch of *profiteroles* and even calmly fill each *choux* with cream all by herself when she was still a toddler. At that very young age, her uncanny smelling ability is even capable to distinguish slight variation of any bakery recipes (p. 37). This extraordinary talent is pretty much illogical to be performed by an experienced baker just by a slight smelling, let alone a toddler. Even so, Viviane’s ability stretches further to an ability to smell feeling such as happiness, which according to her, smells like the sourest lime or lemon, also surprisingly sweet smelled broken hearts, and salty, sea-like redolence of sadness and death (p. 43). She also has the ability to find out the pregnancy of woman just by smelling a combination of brown sugar and stargazer lilies (p. 42-43). Viviane’s magical talents will later come to the point where she is able to differ seasons according to its rain smell (p. 90), except in that one rain when her daughter’s attack took place. This particular rain smells differently, like what she describes as “bad omen and fear” (p. 137).

Emilienne, being the strangest of the Roux, also happens to have odd talent that

granted her a nickname 'witch' by her fearful neighbor. It was all started by simply helping her insomniac neighbor with peonies garland to wear (Faris, 2004:27). The talent later developed into the strange-messages-filled dreams and reading birdcall according to the direction they are chirping, and not to forget what younger Viviane theorize as "communicate with the dead" despite being dismissed with mere "ghosts don't exist" answer (65). It was not without proof that Viviane said so. From the moment she sets her footstep on Seattle soil, the ghost of Fatima Inês who has been plaguing her former house for years prior to Lavender family's purchase was showing herself ever so slightly. And not to forget her deceased siblings who seem to never cease from existence following her around when she was pregnant and alone in the house (p. 29). Her siblings' unfading into the afterlife is not exactly without purpose. Later in the novel, René, the only spirit capable to communicate despite his face being destroyed in his former life, was determinedly sending her a warning through her grandson Henry who apparently is the only one beside her that is capable to communicate with the deceased about the attack that is going to happen after the *rain* falls (p. 101).

That being said, those magical talents and oddness are recounted as simple as to how she would possess a mole in her skin. Viviane's exceptional talent is just as common as someone who has the gene of bakers running through her veins. Emilienne's ability to communicate with the dead made their appearances quite normal to a woman who is still mourning since she has been through all of the loss and tragedies that her heart could not let go of her dead siblings. This casual depiction will eventually lead to the difficulties for the readers, just as Faris predicted, regarding the status of the events (p. 7) whether they are true to their irreducible element characteristic or not.

Even so, it can be seen when Ava Lavender first goes out with her best friend Cardigan Cooper and her brother to the reservoir, Ava has to face all of the suspicious teenagers whether she really possesses wings thus forcing her to show off her cloaked wings to them. And not to forget the 'witch' whisper that has been following Emilienne around and literally floating through the window also creates a description to the culture within the society inside the novel on how they regard supernatural phenomenon just as much as reservoir kids with their signature teenagers inquisitive uncertainties over Ava's wings. By bringing out the doubts and regards as such, the author creates the illusion that those are just the reality of the story. And it truly is happened, because if it is not, they will not get a reaction from other characters in the novel.

With Ava still living her teenage life normally a strict parented teenager would

(Walton, 2014:123) and still getting through pregnancy without her capable of smelling it herself (p. 65-67) and not to forget Emilienne's desperation that brings her to perform Wilhelmina Dovewolf's air cleaning ritual despite being called 'witch' herself all the time (p. 35-36), the irreducible elements are seamlessly assimilated within the novel that the readers find themselves accepting the story to be as Ava projects. As the magic grows almost unnoticeably out of real (Faris, 2004:8), Ava registers no surprise when she recounted the story of her ancestors' lives before her. Even when her great aunt was suspiciously turning herself into an avian being just as much as her having to be born with its body parts.

b. The Phenomenal World

Faris' second characteristic that she defines as "the realism of magical realism" (2004: 14) can be seen from Ava's education that Viviane modeled after their neighbor Cardigan Cooper's school books. Ava, with wings and all, worries Viviane so much that she cannot let Ava goes out the house, not even for school, so Viviane had to give her home-school lessons herself with Cardigan's "messy composition books" (Walton 98). This concern for education is a genuine depiction of real life in which sometimes with some reasons from the children themselves or the circumstances that force parents to home-school their kids, even though in this case, Ava's wing plays the role of the drawback. Being not allowed to go outside, Ava's nighttime wandering to the reservoir with Cardigan that stretched to the point where she went out on the night of her attack that took place after the solstice celebration she attended with her newly bleached blonde hair matched with Cardigan (p. 136) is another depiction of authentic teenage life that the stricter the parent's rules are, the more they are trying to break it.

Another genuine depiction of real life is the story of the inseparable Viviane and Jack. Neighboring kids first met at the lawn, they both quickly become best friends that later grow into a romantic relationship. Viviane, being a curious little girl that she always is, was curious with Jack's digging works at his father's lawn that somehow showed Jack something he never gets from his father: attention and approval. Being bullied by the neighborhood boys for befriending Viviane, she once again proves to be someone he can be with to get those boys approval by being able to "outrun and *outspit* any of them" (Walton 39). In return, Viviane, whose childhood is basically raised herself at the bakery shop was somehow finding Jack to be the one that gives her 'her life' that after the time Jack enrolls at Whitman College in Walla Walla, she became lifeless that "she spent her days trying to forget the sound of his voice, and her nights trying to remember. She spent

hours standing by the mailbox waiting for letters that did not come, sitting by a telephone that would not ring.”(51)

The realistic tale of the Roux family is another one. When we see the family at first when they are still living in the small village of Trouville-sur-Mer, we see a family with four children, which can be considered a lot, desire to move somewhere grander or in this case the patriarch dream city *Manhatine* New York. The immigrants who move into the United States along with their American dreams often find themselves to be not in their what the so-called dream city due to the fact that the skill they acquire from the previous job at their homeland could not afford those U.S. cities. In this case, Beaugard’s skilled phrenologist talent that became his only job in France could not afford the city known as the most expensive in the world. In Manhattan, an expensive city where they can barely afford low-quality meat and limp carrots to eat, they live in a small tenement that according to Maman smells "distinctly of cat urine" with only two rooms wherein Beaugard and Maman sleep in one and the elder girls, Emilienne and Margaux, in the other one. The only boy in the family René sleeps under the kitchen table and the youngest Pierette is in a bureau drawer (p. 12). Their misery of living in the big city as an immigrant family does not end there because surely as it has been explained in the previous section that tragedies keep happening to the Roux family that at the end of the first chapter, what’s left of the family were Maman’s blue ashes, yellow canary formed Pierette and the brokenhearted Emilienne (p. 23).

Those vividly detailed representations of the world as real people live in is definitely what set the distinction of magical realism from fantasy literature (Faris, 2004:14). In fantasy, the world is built entirely different from what we live in along with magical creatures and all. In magical realism, or in this case, *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*, we see all of the main characters are living the life as we do. The details of magical events that are endowed within those realistic life depictions such as Ava’s wings as the drawback of her restricted social life, Viviane’s odd talent to distinguish Jack from others by his turtle wax and soap scent, and also magically strange tragedies happened to Emilienne’s whole family are what makes this particular literary work as magical realism instead of just realism (p. 14-15).

In magical realist fiction, readers often found the historical anchoring done by the author to enforce the realistic elements when the fantastic ever so slightly push through (Faris, 2004: 15-16). Here, Walton also did this particular technique on her work that can be seen when she puts the story of the SS France in which the Roux family was aboard,

was on its maiden voyage a week after the sinking of the *Titanic* (Walton, 2014:9) which was accurately in real life happened at April 14, 1912 and SS France maiden voyage itself at April 20, 1912. Another one is the Second Great War that Jack was so eagerly trying to enlist, but to Viviane's delight, he was rejected due to his flat feet and poor eyesight (p. 48).

Aside from those histories, following Faris' statement (2004) that said sometimes magical realist author made "a distinctive recreation of historical events, often alternate versions of widely known historical events" (p. 15), Walton also includes it in her book. That is the summer solstice celebration that somehow written as a celebration for magical child inhabiting the house at the end of Pinnacle Lane, Fatima Inês de Dores per her own brother, the Captain's only request for his pioneered patronage to continue (Walton, 2014: 22). This alternate version of the history of the pagan holiday once pointed out by a character, a strict Catholic parishioner with such disgust saying "That they would put such effort into celebrating a pagan holiday seems only appropriate! Monsters" (p. 140). Even so, Walton still provides a lengthy explanation of the origin of the solstice celebration from the mythology as well as different ways people around the world celebrate the summer solstice, and of course the essence of the celebration at Pinnacle Lane itself.

In ancient Gaul, the midsummer celebration was called the Feast of Epona, named after the goddess of abundance, sovereignty, and the harvest. She was portrayed as a woman riding a mare. The pagans celebrated the solstice with bonfires believed to possess a form of earthly magic, granting maidens insight on their future husbands and banishing spirits and demons. The men of the Hopi tribe dressed in traditional masks to honor the kachinas, the dancing spirits of rain and fertility who were believed to leave the villages at midsummer to visit the dead underground and hold ceremonies on their behalf. In Russia young girls floated their flower garlands down rivers, reading one another's fortunes by the movement of the flowers on the water. In Sweden, neighbors gathered to raise and dance around a huge maypole draped in greenery and flowers. They call it Litha or Vestalia in Rome, Gathering Day in Wales, All Couples' Day in Greece. It's Sonnwend, Feill-Sheathain, Thing-Tide, the feast day of John the Baptist.

For the people of Pinnacle Lane, the solstice celebration was a chance to shed their cloaks of modesty and decorum and replace them with wildflowers woven in their hair. Only during the summer solstice did the old Moss sisters remove their crosses from between their low-hanging breasts and drink themselves silly on great pints of malt liquor. Only during solstice could Pastor Graves forgive himself for his favorite sweet, the Nipples of Venus, feasting on white chocolate from the truffle's teat. And only during solstice could Rowe Cooper arrive at the festival to find two identical winged girls waiting for him. (Walton, 2014:136-137)

This combination done by Walton about the historical events of and myths of this particular pagan holiday of summer solstice celebration implies that those are both essential aspects of our collective memory (Faris, 2004:16). It is further giving us the impression that the novel is, in fact, is in a realism side, since the characters within are celebrating the same thing as other people around the world, i.e. us the readers that can relate to.

c. **The Unsettling Doubts**

This particular characteristic that Faris describes as the hesitation of categorizing the irreducible elements as it is due to our background culture (2004:17) can be seen from how other characters perceive Ava's pair of white and brown speckled wings. It starts from those medical people who cannot place if the wings are something grander than merely "*a slight physical abnormality*" (Walton, 2014:5). Next is Cardigan Cooper's inquisitively asking Ava to fly despite her insistence that she is not an angel because angels have white wings and that eventually, she cannot prove that the wings are useful for her (81). Here the readers are subtly made to think that Ava's wings are somehow not some body parts that made her possess magical ability showcasing through physical wings thus doubting the wings itself are magical.

In the previous section, it has been explained that Emilienne is able to communicate with the dead, which throughout the novel has been seen numerous times when her siblings are trying to communicate with her. Even though she is able to block them from trying to communicate with her, she realized that "the more she ignored him, the louder the ghost of René tried to speak." (Walton, 2014:100). From this depiction of the sibling communication, it somehow crosses our minds as the readers that perhaps it was just Emilienne's hallucination when she is alone at the house that presumably is haunted by the previous inhabitant that she herself is described as "the young girl restless spirit" (p. 29).

Being sensitive and all, Viviane also theorizes around her mother's ability to communicate with the dead, for which it was being dismissed by Emilienne's mere "ghosts don't exist" answer (Walton, 2014:65). This further indicates that we, as the readers are being instructed to hesitate (Faris, 2004:20). Perhaps with those siblings of Emilienne's still following her around even when she has already moved on with her life to a different city is somewhat an allegorical metaphor of *the ghost of the past* that is following her no matter how much she tries to ignore it and let go of it. This perception is somehow obscuring the element of ghost that exists within the magical realist fiction. Because as the

readers move on to the next pages later on, the readers see that Henry, Emilienne's grandson, is finally the one that the ghost of René succeeds in communicating with (p. 101), and as the narrator of the story, Ava is narrating the exchange as if the Sad Man, or René, is a warning from beyond to warn them about the attack that is going to happen to Ava that ironically, is unexpected by those Henry tries to warn.

Another one the readers see from Emilienne is that when she is being called 'witch' by the neighborhood. At the first time the Lavender family set foot in Pinnacle Lane, or a particular time when Connor first opens his bakery in Pinnacle Lane, the author makes her seen as if it is one of her what so-called 'natural' talent to be able to decorate the bakery when her "choosing the butter-yellow paint for the bakery walls and the white lace valances for the windows" and the way she "arranged wrought-iron tables and chairs across the black-white- tiled floor" somehow make the customers feel this is the perfect place to enjoy their breakfast, in which further give a huge impact of the success of the bakery (Walton, 2014:27-28). By way of saying that it is her 'natural' talent just as much as peony garland for insomnia, hearing birdcall as an omen, is an implication that yet again it is somehow a magical talent of hers that somehow helps the success of the bakery. Still, the author once again makes us doubting it is her magical talent by saying that her having impeccable taste is, of course simply because "she was French" (p. 28).

This commentary about her background culture as a French woman leads to other talents of hers being doubted. It is because Emilienne's father, Beauregard, was a skillful phrenologist in his lifetime, someone who read the future by reading people's head and made money out of it. Perhaps all Emilienne's supernatural talents that give her nickname 'witch' by the neighborhood in the first place is just her being the daughter of phrenologist and get the sensitivity to read things (other than skulls of course) just like her father before her. Yet again, this is a solid proof that unsettling doubt is *no doubt* found in the novel by Emilienne Roux's 'natural' talents.

d. Merging Realms

Dealing with merging realms as one of the characteristics of magical realist fiction, this particular novel has provided us with what Catherine Rogers calls a space of uncertainty with the intermittent and uncertain nature of the metamorphosis of Pierette Roux, Emilienne's sister, and Ava's great aunt, into a bird, or a yellow canary to be exact (Walton, 2014:15). Here, Pierette is a captive between two worlds, which are, according to Rogers, "captive between two worlds, the human and the animal, not belonging really to one or the other." (Faris, 2004:21). It can be seen from the beginning of the transformation

itself. When Pierette was attempting to turn herself into that particular yellow canary, her intention was to get the attention of “an older gentleman with a fondness for bird watching.” So when she was finally in her bird form, she was not exactly being a bird with its free life and wings to bring it everywhere it wants. Pierette was still burdened by her desire to get the ornithologist’s attention, despite the end result being that “the bird-watcher never noticed Pierette’s drastic at gaining his affection and instead moved to Louisiana, drawn by its large population of *Pelecanus occidentalis*” (Walton, 2014:15) thus failing her humanly feeling while still trapped in animal world.

Being still in the bird form, Pierette does not belong to the human world either, since her transformation can only make her communicate with her family by chirping, which can be seen the day Margaux giving birth to Emilienne’s fiancée, Satin Lush’s yet another son with mismatched blue and green eyes (Walton, 2014:19). At this particular time, Emilienne is just arriving at the family apartment when Pierette is waiting for her outside with “such a twitter that Emilienne has to stuff her poor sister-bird into the pocket of her jacket” (p. 15). It indicates that Pierette is in humanly excitement or panic that she cannot show it as how a human (in a human form) will do. Eventually, her family "became accustomed to Pierette's cheery morning songs and to the tiny yellow feathers that gathered in the corners of the rooms and stuck to their clothes" (p. 15).

Upon Emilienne's moving from Manhattan to Seattle with her newlywed husband, Pierette, still in her yellow canary form, is one of the only remains of the family along with Maman’s blue ashes. So when Emilienne decides to move, she has to bring Pierette along with her (Walton, 2014:25), although as it turns out that “Pierette, who’d never been emotionally stable even in human form, hadn’t survived the weary cross-country train ride” from New York state to Washington state. Pierette, who is brought to Seattle inside a shoe box, at last, is buried along with their mother’s blue ashes “in the empty garden bed behind the new house marked only by a large river stone” (p. 26). The burial marks the end of her captivity in both animal and human worlds because after she becomes a ghost she is eventually able to transform herself once again from her canary form to the girl she was even as a ghost (p. 161).

The ghost of Pierette, along with both of her deceased siblings Margaux and René, in which they are playing pivotal role in the development of Emilienne supernatural talent, also provides us a vivid representation of the magical realist vision that particularly exists at the intersection of two worlds, or as Faris defined as the “double-sided mirror that reflects in both direction” in which she said is inhabited by “ghosts and texts, or people and

words that seem ghostly” (p. 21-22).

Emilienne, with her strange talents and all, sometimes finds herself in a daydream that she is “back in that dilapidated tenement in Beauregard’s Manhatine — when the high notes of Pierette’s effervescent laugh still echoed through the hallways, when René’s beauty still rivaled her own, before Margaux had betrayed her” (p. 29). This daydreaming somehow gets more intense when she grows older that she was within her contemplation of whether she never married Connor and never left *Manhatine*.

She reached up and touched the belled lip of her old cloche hat — the one painted with red poppies — and the house on Pinnacle Lane fell away, replaced by the crumbling plaster walls of that derelict apartment: the kitchen sink, with its cracked porcelain and lines of rust circling the drain; the old-fashioned icebox, with its metal hinges and the square block of ice that made them feel rich even when the cupboards were bare; the bureau with the drawer where Pierette slept and the corners where her feathers gathered; the sofa René balanced on his forearms.

And though she still wouldn’t converse with her ghostly siblings, Emilienne could, in a fashion, communicate with them as they might have been. She started with an inquiry after Margaux’s child. When Margaux showed off her infant, Emilienne at first smiled, then turned away when she saw his eyes — one green, the other blue. Margaux held her son protectively against the hole where her heart used to be. She was exceedingly proud of her offspring; he was the greatest thing she’d accomplished in her life. And in her death.

Where was Maman? Beauregard? They didn’t know. There was only ever the three of them and the baby — and sometimes a young black-eyed girl. What was death like? she wondered. They did not seem able to answer, nor could they tell her why, in the afterlife, they would continue to carry the evidence of their sins in such a gruesome way.

“Maybe you are in purgatory,” Emilienne offered. René shrugged. Maybe.

Sometimes Margaux would motion to the harpsichord in the corner of the parlor, a request for Emilienne to play. That’s when the walls of the Manhatine apartment would melt away — along with the warbling voices of her siblings — and the walls of the house at the end of Pinnacle Lane would spring back up around her, the harpsichord unused, yellowing in the corner. (Walton, 2014:127-128)

This is the double-sided mirror that Faris described before. Emilienne is temporarily inhabiting that of ghost and human worlds intersection in which she was able to feel the way she felt back in *Manhatine* but with everything in their state of being at the time, Margaux with her infant son and heartless hollow chest, René with his face in a gruesome shape, and of course the canary Pierette.

According to Faris, fluid boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead are traced only to be crossed (2004:22) which also happens in *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows* when Emilienne’s siblings are trying to communicate with her. Earlier of Emilienne’s settlement in Pinnacle Lane, the ghost of her siblings are described as “always

there” even on the day she married Connor Lavender and those spent in a cramped sleeper car while traveling cross-country, “him with his urge to speak despite his face having been shot off, and her with a cavern in the place where her heart once beat, sometimes with that child on her hip — that phantom child with mismatched eyes” always following her around and later were joined by the ghost of Pierette, or in this case she was still the “canary” (Walton, 2014:28).

Somehow their presence in Emilienne's life after their respective deaths were the resemblance of Faris description of contiguous one that continues life beyond the grave (p. 22). Their behavior as ghosts where they determinedly trying to make Emilienne listen to them that goes as far as making “frantic gestures” that unfortunately, Emilienne, who was trying so hard to move on from her past life was “never stopped long enough to make sense of the silent words that poured from their lips.” And “no matter how desperately they tried, she was determined not to listen.” (Walton, 2014:28-29). This particular manner of them implies that they are still feeling the need to live along with Emilienne that as long as she was still being the only surviving Roux in the world, the rest will stick together with her even in the ghost forms.

e. Disruption of Time and Space

The example of disruption of time within magical realist fictions is some kind of year-long occurrences that make our usual sense of time is shaken (Faris, 2004:23). For this particular example in Walton’s *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender* can be seen when the spring came early at the time of Viviane’s pregnancy, in which she would only eat cherries all the time, which oddly enough was picked from their cherry tree along the side of their house that “had bloomed a season earlier than any other on the block.” These strange cherry trees at the end of Pinnacle lane started to spring their blossoms at winter that caused “the pink blooms scatter across the snow-covered lawn.” And by the time of that aforementioned early-coming spring, those cherry trees were literally “bursting with cherries so red they were purple, and so large and ripe their skins were cracked, the juice leaking down the tree’s branches and soaking into the ground.” Those seemingly magical fruits were surely growing out of hand that “all the jars of cherry jam Emilienne made, all the cherry pie they sold at the bakery, barely made a dent in the amount of fruit falling from the tree.” (Walton, 2014: 68)

This particular example can also serve as the example of the disruption of space, because as it has been known, the soil of winter season would not be suitable for a tree to continue growing or *living* with their leaves still intact on their branches, they will hibernate

and shed every single leave at the fall and keep their bald form through the winter season. Thus here, our sense of space is also shaken by the impossibility of tree growing their leaves, let alone blossoming in January.

Disruption of space is also presented at the very end of the rain disappearance that led to the infamous Ava's attack once again. At that time, Viviane was able to smell the rain hours before the water began to fall as if the rain was somehow in mere distant of the sky even though that particular day had been "a beautiful day, all clear blue skies and warm sunshine" and that "there had been no indication that it would be anything but a picturesque midsummer's night, except for the smell" (p. 138) indicating that the cumulonimbus responsible for that night's rain was not near enough that is able to be seen hours before.

4. CONCLUSION

The researcher found that this novel lives up to Wendy B. Faris' (2004) characterization of magical realism. In fact, all of the characteristics can be found in the novel. The first characteristic is the irreducible elements, those are Ava's wings, Viviane's magical talent to smell things, and also Emilienne's strangeness. The second one is the phenomenal world, that is, Ava's teenage struggle for having a strict parent, Viviane's earlier years spent with Jack, and also the depiction of the Roux family, including Emilienne, while they were immigrants in Manhattan. The phenomenal world that often uses historical anchoring can also be found in this novel by the story of SS France and the pagan holiday, Summer Solstice.

The third one, the unsettling doubts are apparent at how other character perceives and questions Ava's wings and Emilienne's ability to communicate with her deceased siblings and her other natural talents. These doubts shape the readers' thinking and categorization of the irreducible elements. The fourth one is merging realms. It can be clearly seen in Pierette Roux's transformation into a yellow canary that merges the realms of human and animal. Other than that, the apparition of Emilienne's deceased siblings is somehow invading the realm as if in a double-sided mirror that can also be accessed by Emilienne through her daydreams.

The fifth characteristic is the disruption of time and space. The disruption of time can be seen by the early coming seasons. The disruption of space can be seen in the growing of the strange cherry tree that started blossoming in winter. Also, Pierette's drawer bedroom is also an example of that. Another one can be seen from the seemingly nonexistent distance

of the cumulonimbus cloud and the smell of the upcoming rain.

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