

MAGICAL REALISM IN JOANNE HARRIS'S "CHOCOLAT"

*Bozorova Mashxura Otabek qizi**O'zDJTU, magistr**E-mail: mashxura.bozorova@icloud.com**+998-884932505*

Abstract: *This article examines the manifestation of magical realism in Joanne Harris's novel *Chocolat* (1999), focusing on how Harris blends the ordinary with the extraordinary to challenge moral rigidity, religious orthodoxy, and gendered social expectations. The narrative's subtle integration of magical elements—such as intuition, transformation, and the symbolic power of food—redefines the boundaries between the rational and the mystical. Through its feminist perspective, Harris's *Chocolat* demonstrates that magic realism can be an ethical and aesthetic strategy for re-enchanting everyday life and revealing the liberating potential of human imagination.*

Keywords: *magic realism, Joanne Harris, *Chocolat*, feminist narrative, symbolism, transformation, morality*

Introduction

Joanne Harris's novel *Chocolat* (1999) represents one of the most vivid examples of contemporary English fiction that employs the techniques of magical realism to articulate complex social and psychological themes. Set in a small, conservative French village, the story centers on Vianne Rocher, a mysterious woman whose arrival during Lent—and her opening of a chocolate shop—disrupts the rigid moral and religious order upheld by the local priest, Francis Reynaud. Harris's narrative is not overtly fantastic; instead, it subtly incorporates the magical into daily life, inviting readers to reconsider the nature of faith, freedom, and pleasure. In this sense, Harris adapts the Latin American roots of magic realism to a European context, using it as a mode of social and cultural critique.

Magic Realism and Theoretical Framework

Magic realism in Harris's *Chocolat* functions as a bridge between the visible and the invisible worlds. It combines rationality with intuition and sensory experience, refusing to separate emotion from intellect. Scholars of magic realism have often noted that its purpose lies not in escapism but in exposing the hidden dimensions of reality. In *Chocolat*, Harris transforms this tradition into an exploration of moral and emotional liberation. Her characters live within a world that appears ordinary, yet is permeated by subtle enchantments—omens, dreams, gusts of wind, and the mysterious allure of chocolate itself, which becomes a metaphor for spiritual awakening and resistance.

(8th international scientific and practical conference)

Magical Elements and Their Symbolism

Harris's use of magical realism manifests through motifs of transformation, intuition, and the sensual power of food. Vianne's intuitive knowledge of her customers' desires and fears—expressed through her ability to craft perfect chocolates for each individual—suggests a supernatural empathy, yet it is never presented as miraculous. Instead, the narrative normalizes her gift, treating it as an extension of human warmth and imagination. This seamless coexistence of the magical and the mundane is central to Harris's style of magic realism.

Chocolate itself functions as both literal and symbolic nourishment. It becomes a catalyst for personal transformation, rekindling forgotten desires, kindness, and compassion among the villagers. Through the ritual of sharing chocolate, Harris opposes the repressive religious moralism embodied by Father Reynaud. Thus, food, pleasure, and generosity become sacred acts that challenge hypocrisy and fear.

Conflict Between Tradition and Change

At the heart of *Chocolat* lies the conflict between the forces of tradition, embodied by the Church, and the forces of change, embodied by Vianne and her shop. Father Reynaud represents rigid morality, control, and denial of bodily pleasures, while Vianne symbolizes openness, intuition, and acceptance of diversity. The novel portrays how the arrival of the extraordinary into an ordinary space unsettles social hierarchies and reveals suppressed emotions. Harris's subtle magic realism destabilizes binary oppositions such as good versus evil, sacred versus profane, and moral versus sensual, replacing them with a vision of fluidity and coexistence.

Feminist Dimensions of Magical Realism

Harris's narrative also reclaims the traditionally feminine domains of care, intuition, and domestic ritual as sources of strength. Vianne's character exemplifies a woman who lives according to her own moral compass, rather than conforming to patriarchal expectations. Her acts of kindness and resistance are expressed not through rebellion or aggression but through nurturing, empathy, and creation. In this sense, magic realism becomes a feminist tool for articulating agency and individuality within an oppressive social order.

Furthermore, Harris redefines motherhood and womanhood through the relationship between Vianne and her daughter Anouk. Their bond, marked by wandering and freedom, contrasts sharply with the town's stagnation and moral rigidity. The wind that constantly follows them acts as a recurring magical motif, representing both restlessness and renewal—a reminder that transformation is an essential aspect of life.

Conclusion

Joanne Harris's *Chocolat* stands as a prime example of how magic realism can be used to challenge moral dogmatism and promote a more inclusive, compassionate

(8th international scientific and practical conference)

worldview. By integrating the marvelous into the everyday, Harris reawakens the reader's sense of wonder and affirms the value of individual choice, empathy, and imagination. Her subtle use of magical realism transforms ordinary gestures—sharing food, telling stories, offering kindness—into acts of quiet revolution. The novel thus reveals that the true magic lies not in supernatural power, but in the human capacity for love, change, and acceptance.

Works Cited

1. Bozorova, M. O. (2025). Magic realism in modern English literature [Master's dissertation, Uzbekistan State World Languages University].
2. Faris, W. B. (2004). Ordinary enchantments: Magical realism and the remystification of narrative. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
3. Harris, J. (1999). *Chocolat*. London, England: Doubleday.
4. Hegerfeldt, A. C. (2005). Lies that tell the truth: Magic realism seen through contemporary fiction from Britain. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi.
5. Slethaug, G. E. (2014). Adaptations of magic realism in contemporary literature. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
6. Warnes, C. (2009). Magical realism and the postcolonial novel: Between faith and irreverence. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.