

THE COEXISTENCE OF MAGIC AND REALITY IN *LADY MIDNIGHT*: A POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This research looks into how the magical and real worlds exist side by side in *Lady Midnight* by Cassandra Clare, using a postmodern perspective. It shows how both worlds interact and function within the same space and time. Drawing on Marcel Mauss's theory of magic and postmodern ideas, the study reveals that magic in the novel isn't shown as the opposite of reality, but rather as a parallel system that reflects similar structures and social patterns. The analysis suggests that postmodern stories often blur the lines between reality and fantasy, questioning fixed boundaries and supporting more flexible ways of understanding the world.

Keywords: *Magic, Reality, Postmodernism, Lady Midnight, Marcel Mauss*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas bagaimana dunia magis dan dunia nyata hidup berdampingan dalam novel *Lady Midnight* karya Cassandra Clare, dengan menggunakan sudut pandang postmodernisme. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa kedua dunia tersebut saling berinteraksi dan berfungsi dalam ruang dan waktu yang sama. Dengan merujuk pada teori sihir dari Marcel Mauss serta gagasan-gagasan postmodern, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa dunia magis dalam novel tidak digambarkan sebagai lawan dari realitas, melainkan sebagai sistem paralel yang memiliki struktur dan pola sosial yang serupa dengan dunia nyata. Analisis ini menyimpulkan bahwa narasi-narasi postmodern cenderung mengaburkan batas antara kenyataan dan fantasi, mempertanyakan batas-batas yang kaku, serta mendukung cara pandang yang lebih lentur dalam memahami dunia.

Kata kunci: *Sihir, Realitas, Postmodernisme, Lady Midnight, Marcel Mauss*

Introduction

The coexistence of magical and real worlds has been a central theme in literature, especially within the fantasy genre. In contemporary works, such as Cassandra Clare's *Lady Midnight*, the blending of these realms presents an intriguing narrative where the supernatural and the mundane are intricately woven together. The novel portrays a world in which magic exists alongside everyday reality, with characters who navigate both realms through their relationships, actions, and experiences. This blending of the magical with the real offers a complex reflection on how both worlds can cohere, rather than being oppositional

or separate. Recent scholarship has increasingly looked at these intersections, particularly through postmodernism, to explore how narratives subvert traditional boundaries of reality and fantasy. By embracing a pluralistic approach, postmodern works challenge fixed understandings of what is real and imagined, making them fertile ground for examining the interaction between magical and real worlds.

The blending of magic and reality is not a new concept in literature. It can be traced back to earlier literary theorists such as Tzvetan Todorov (1975), who explored the relationship between the supernatural and the real. Todorov's work on the *fantastic* genre focuses on how the appearance of the supernatural disrupts ordinary reality, creating ambiguity and uncertainty in the reader's mind. This exploration of ambiguity continues in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), who emphasized the dialogic nature of literature and its ability to challenge the conventions of time and space. More recent studies, including those by Brian Attebery (2014) and Julian Wolfreys (2019), have expanded on these ideas, particularly within the context of postmodern literature. These scholars argue that postmodern works often subvert traditional genre boundaries, using fantastical elements to question readers' expectations of reality. They examine how such works not only blur but also destabilize the boundaries between the real and the imagined.

Despite these insightful analyses, there remains a gap in the literature, particularly when it comes to the way magic functions as a parallel system to reality rather than an outright opposition. Many studies on fantasy literature have focused on the idea of magic as an escape from reality or a disruption of the natural order. However, Clare's *Lady Midnight* offers a nuanced portrayal of magic as a system that exists alongside reality, intertwined with it rather than existing outside of it. This perspective is particularly important as it provides a more complex understanding of how magic works in the story and how it reflects the structures and dynamics of the real world. This gap in the scholarship highlights the need for a more detailed exploration of how magic and reality are presented as interconnected, rather than opposed.

This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the relationship between the magical and real worlds in *Lady Midnight* using a postmodern lens. By drawing on the theory of magic proposed by Marcel Mauss (1972), this study will examine how the boundaries between the two realms are fluid, allowing for a more dynamic and pluralistic view of reality. Mauss's concept of magic as a socially embedded practice, one that parallels religious and ritual behavior, provides a helpful framework for understanding how magic in Clare's novel reflects real-world societal structures. Magic in *Lady Midnight* is not merely a fantastical element that provides an escape from reality; it is a parallel system that interacts with, influences, and mirrors the structures of the real world.

This research also aims to contribute to a broader understanding of postmodern literature's engagement with issues of belief, perception, and identity. Postmodern works like *Lady Midnight* often challenge conventional genre expectations by questioning the nature of reality itself. By presenting magic as a parallel world that exists within the same space as the real world, Clare complicates traditional narratives that treat the supernatural as a mere escape. Instead, magic becomes a space of possibility, transformation, and reflection of the self. In this way, the novel explores how individuals navigate their identities within both magical and real worlds, suggesting that the two are not mutually exclusive but are instead inextricably linked.

This analysis of *Lady Midnight* will examine how these dual realities inform the characters' experiences and contribute to a broader understanding of how postmodern literature deals with contemporary issues of belief and perception. It will demonstrate that the coexistence of magic and reality in the novel provides a lens through which to explore not just the nature of fantasy literature but also the ongoing negotiation between the real and the imagined in postmodern society.

By focusing on the relationship between magic and reality, this research seeks to offer new insights into the way *Lady Midnight* functions as a postmodern text. It will also contribute to ongoing discussions

about the role of fantasy literature in examining contemporary cultural and philosophical questions, particularly those related to belief, perception, and the nature of existence.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate how *Lady Midnight* by Cassandra Clare portrays the coexistence and contrast between the magical and real worlds. The primary aim was to uncover how the narrative constructs these two realities through its use of character dialogue, setting, and storytelling techniques, guided by postmodern literary theory and Marcel Mauss's conceptualization of magic.

As the research was interpretive and non-experimental, the process centered on in-depth textual analysis, particularly close reading, as the main method for data gathering (Silverman, 2013). The novel was read thoroughly to pinpoint passages and dialogues that illustrate the interplay between the ordinary and the supernatural. Particular focus was given to character experiences, magical phenomena, enchanted objects, and structured institutions like the Clave and the Los Angeles Institute, which serve as key markers of each world.

The analysis began with multiple readings of the text to grasp both the narrative flow and its symbolic implications. Relevant excerpts were then grouped according to thematic concerns, such as altered perceptions of time, spatial shifts, expressions of magical power, and societal structures. These thematic clusters were analyzed using postmodern theory and Mauss's notion that magic functions as a socially embedded practice that parallels religious and ritual behavior (Mauss, 1972).

Through this method, the research aimed to offer a descriptive and critical perspective on how the novel challenges the boundaries between reality and fantasy. This lens also illuminated larger postmodern concerns, including hybridity, ambiguity, and the enduring presence of belief systems in an otherwise rational framework.

Result and Discussion

A. The Differences between Magic World and Real World

In *Lady Midnight* by Cassandra Clare, the contrast between the magical world and the real world emphasizes the tension between belief in the supernatural and reliance on empirical reasoning. Magic in the novel operates as a force outside the boundaries of logic, enabling transformative events without any adherence to causality or scientific explanation. It is presented as something intangible, often dismissed or regarded with skepticism by those who base their understanding of the world on rational, scientific thought. On the other hand, the real world within the framework of postmodernism is shaped by technological advancement and scientific principles, where every event is expected to have a verifiable cause and logical explanation. This juxtaposition highlights the coexistence of two vastly different systems: one that relies on the magical and the other on the empirical.

The magical world is portrayed as an elusive realm, where mystical occurrences take place and characters operate with powers beyond ordinary human understanding. The real world, in contrast, functions within the confines of observable reality, where tangible phenomena and cause-effect relationships reign. This distinction creates a stark contrast between the two realms, but also points to their potential interconnection. In *Lady Midnight*, magic is not merely an escape from reality but operates as a parallel force that interacts with and influences the mundane world.

This dynamic illustrates the broader postmodern concern with the ambiguity and fluidity of boundaries, particularly those between fantasy and reality. By exploring this tension, the novel

encourages readers to question fixed distinctions and embrace the coexistence of multiple realities, where magic and the real world shape one another, offering a more complex understanding of belief, perception, and identity.

"He's been in Faerie all these years," Julian said. "And time works differently there". (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.142)

The quotation reveals that Mark, after spending what he thought were only a few days in Faerie, returned to the real world to discover that five years had passed. His siblings had aged, but he remained unchanged, leaving him confused and unable to comprehend the discrepancy in time. This situation reflects how time in Faerie operates differently from the real world, creating a disorienting effect on those who travel between the two realms. Marcel Mauss (1972, p. 208) discusses this concept, explaining that the magical world follows a unique temporal structure, where time is perceived differently. In Faerie, the passage of time can be distorted, making a long duration feel like mere moments. This contrast highlights a fundamental difference between the two realms: the real world, governed by scientific logic, operates on a fixed understanding of time, while the magical world, inhabited by supernatural beings, exists beyond the constraints of normal reality. Access to the magical world is restricted to those with special abilities, further emphasizing the divide between the two realms. This distinction between the temporalities of the two worlds reinforces the fantastical elements of the story and underscores the tension between the rational, science-based real world and the fluid, mystical nature of the magical world.

Another difference between the magical and real worlds can be observed in the following quotation:

Julian looked ashen "we live in the world of demons and monsters, and the thing that scares me the most is the idea that mark might decide he belong with the Wild Hunt and Leave even if we solve the mystery and satisfy the Fair Folk. He might still go. And he'll smash their hearts to pieces. They'll never recover." (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.385)

The quotation describes how Julian explains to Emma the nature of their current world, emphasizing that it is a frightening place, particularly because his brother, Mark, may choose to stay in the Wild Hunt forever, a thought that terrifies him. In the real world, monsters are not encountered, but in the magical realm, demons and other creatures are prevalent, existing within a metaphysical context. This contrast highlights differences in both the physical forms and societal structures of the two worlds. While the real world contains humans with familiar forms, the magical world is inhabited by beings with strange, often frightening appearances, such as demons and monsters, which may be considered evil or unnatural.

This distinction aligns with Marcel Mauss's perspective, as he suggests that despite the external differences between worlds, they share common underlying characteristics. He argues that the various worlds, though seemingly disparate in appearance, are interconnected and share fundamental features (Mauss, 1972, p.75).

In the magical world, monsters, much like humans in the real world, engage in daily routines. They work, attend school, eat, sleep, and partake in activities that mirror those of humans. This parallel emphasizes the underlying similarities between the two worlds, despite the apparent differences in their inhabitants.

The distinction between the magic and real world can be further explored through the following quotation:

The Clave had a motto: The Law is hard, but it is the Law. Every Shadowhunter knew what it meant. The rules of the Law of the Clave had to be obeyed, no matter how hard or painful. (Clare, 2017. Pp.21)

The quotation illustrates Emma's explanation of the Clave, the governing body of Shadowhunters, and its strict motto that must be followed. Emma's fear of this law highlights the significant power the Clave holds within the magical world. The Clave can be understood as the governing body for the magicians, known as "Nephilim" in the novel. Comprised of active Shadowhunters over the age of eighteen, it serves as the regulatory force that ensures order within the magical world. Just as people in the real world follow the laws of their government, those in the magical world are expected to adhere to the regulations set by the Clave.

This structure draws a parallel between the magical world and the real world, where governance plays a central role in maintaining societal order. The laws in the magical realm are presented as an impersonal force, governing behavior just as laws in other fields, such as alchemy or medicine, frame their respective practices, as noted by Marcel Mauss (1972, p. 78). In both worlds, laws are not just rules but are symbolic representations of larger societal structures that ensure compliance and functionality.

The presence of laws governing behavior in both realms reinforces the structured nature of society, regardless of whether one exists in the real world or within the fantastical confines of the magical world. By reflecting the same governing principles found in the real world, the magical realm in *Lady Midnight* reveals how both realms are bound by systems of control that define and guide their respective societies. This connection emphasizes the role of laws in shaping identity and social structures, bridging the divide between the seemingly distinct realms of magic and reality.

Another important distinction between the magic world and the real world can be seen in the following quotation:

Cristina's runes were careful, precise, and beautiful. Emma could feel the power of a strength rune jolt through her a kick of caffeine (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.440)

The quotation highlights the connection between Cristina's rune and its power, suggesting that the beauty of the rune directly correlates with its strength. The more aesthetically pleasing the rune, the more potent its abilities become. This relationship between the rune and its power mirrors the bond between Emma and her rune, where both elements reinforce each other's significance and influence.

In the magical world of *Lady Midnight*, runes serve as a form of magical power, akin to mana, which directly affects the abilities of the user. These runes are depicted as symbols with the capacity to channel immense power, influencing the user's capabilities and their connection to the magical realm. However, in contrast, the real world operates differently. There are no mystical objects that automatically bestow power or influence over the natural world, as is the case in the magical realm.

Marcel Mauss (1972, p. 136) explains that objects in the magical realm, like fertility stones or rain-bringing plants, carry symbolic significance, representing forces believed to control nature. These objects are not inherently powerful in the real world but are infused with meaning and belief that enhance their perceived value. They serve as symbolic representations of control over natural forces rather than actual physical power.

In the real world, power is not achieved through mystical objects, but rather through effort, training, and discipline. Unlike the magical realm, where power can be immediately channeled through an object like a rune, the real world requires consistent work and effort to achieve strength. The idea that power can be obtained instantly through objects is an illusion; real-world strength is gained through determination, persistence, and personal development. This contrast between the two worlds further underscores the divide between the magical and real worlds in *Lady Midnight*.

B. Magic World versus Real World in Postmodernism Movement

It is commonly understood that people tend to believe in things they can see, touch, and logically explain. However, there are also those who believe in the existence of magic, even though it cannot be physically perceived. For instance, many individuals follow a religion and believe in the existence of God. Although God cannot be seen or touched, believers maintain their faith. They trust in divine help, even when they do not fully understand how that help is given.

This is quite similar to how magicians place their trust in spell books; just as believers value sacred texts, magicians rely on magical objects or symbols. The faith placed in miracles by religious individuals mirrors the belief in magical elements by those who practice magic. In the context of postmodernism, this comparison highlights that belief systems whether religious or magical are deeply rooted in human culture and are not easily erased. Just as religion continues to persist throughout time, so too does the belief in magic.

The Los Angeles Shadow Market come out when the night was warm, and it both existed and didn't exist. Kit knew that when he stepped in among the lines of brightly decorated stalls, he was walking in a space that would vanish when the sun rose in the morning. (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.1)

The quotation illustrates that Los Angeles, a city grounded in the real world, can host a hidden "Shadow Market" that belongs to the realm of magic. Despite the city's modern and technological landscape, Kit a human with supernatural abilities can access this magical world at night. Unlike ordinary people, who cannot perceive the magical realm, Kit has the capacity to enter and experience it. This situation highlights an important point: even though most people cannot physically see or touch the magical world, some still believe in its existence.

The pure magical world is often perceived as a domain reserved for magicians or individuals who possess and believe in supernatural powers. In Indonesia, these individuals are commonly referred to as "Indigo" a term used to describe people who are believed to have the ability to perceive things beyond the ordinary senses, including interactions with the magical or spiritual world. This notion is reflected in the following quotation:

In the center of the room were the faeries. There were only two of them, the one in white robes and the one in black armor. (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.123)

The quotation from the novel reveals that Julian Blackthorn explained to Emma how a single room in the real world can serve as a gateway to multiple magical realms. At the center of that room, for instance, two opposing factions of Faeries are present one group dressed in white robes, the other clad in black armor. Although they belong to the same race, these Faeries are divided into distinct sides, much like how different regions or cities in Indonesia can reflect cultural or ideological divisions.

From this passage, it becomes clear that the magical world is not entirely separate from the real world, but rather, the two coexist and can overlap. The quote suggests that within a physical space in the real world, multiple magical dimensions can exist simultaneously. Julian is able to perceive these realms due to his supernatural abilities similar to what is popularly known in Indonesia as the "Indigo" trait, referring to individuals believed to have heightened spiritual or psychic awareness.

This concept aligns with Marcel Mauss's idea that "everything has something in common with everything else, and everything is connected with everything else" (Mauss, 1972, p. 91). The

interconnectedness of the magical and real worlds reinforces the postmodern notion that reality is layered and multifaceted, shaped by perception and belief.

In all of Southern California, there was no more important Shadowhunter than the head of the Los Angeles Institute. And the safest place to meet him was the Sanctuary, when the vampire did not need to fear hallowed ground, and downworlders were protected by oaths. (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.122)

The quotation illustrates that the Los Angeles Institute is portrayed as the largest and most prestigious institution for Shadowhunters, with no other institute surpassing its significance. Emma, one of the central characters, is recognized as not only a member but also one of the most skilled Shadowhunters within the Institute. In the context of the novel, the Los Angeles Institute is part of the magical world, yet it physically exists within the real-world city of Los Angeles. However, only those with supernatural abilities—such as Shadowhunters, Faeries, Angels, or other magical beings—are capable of perceiving its presence. In Indonesian popular belief, such individuals might be referred to as "Indigo," or those believed to possess extrasensory perception.

This situation highlights the idea that elements of the magical world can coexist within the real world without disrupting it. The existence of the Institute in a real-world city underscores the seamless integration of magical structures into everyday reality. For ordinary humans, the Institute remains invisible, much like an illusion, only accessible or visible to those with magical abilities. This concept aligns with Marcel Mauss's theory, in which he states that "the expectations and illusions which are produced [are] the primary phenomena of magic" (Mauss, 1972, p. 160). The illusionary nature of magical constructs within the real world reinforces postmodern ideas of layered realities and the power of perception in defining what is real.

Magic in the real world may seem impossible to some, yet others firmly believe in its existence. For those with supernatural abilities, magic becomes a tangible part of their reality, even though it cannot be proven in a conventional sense. In the postmodern era, people are more inclined to believe in things that can be visibly proven, yet magic remains an exception for those who possess certain powers. This idea is reflected in the following quotation:

The Partygoers continued to flee from the courtyard through the gates that led into the parking lot. None of them saw Emma, though their instincts kicked in anyway, making them pass around her like water around the pilings of a bridge. (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.26)

The quotation above indicates that normal humans cannot see Emma due to the crowd at the party. People pass by her without noticing, and she remains unnoticed, despite being present in the same space. From this, the writer concludes that magic powers allow individuals to hide from ordinary humans in the real world. One can carry out magical activities without fear of being seen or touched by others, as those without supernatural abilities remain unaware. This illustrates how magic functions in the real world.

Julian was already out of the car, opening the trunk. He rummaged through the weapons and steles, reaching out to Cristina with a pair of slim throwing knives. "Need these?" (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.377)

The passage describes a moment in *Lady Midnight* when Julian hands Cristina both weapons and steles. The writer interprets this scene by examining two key elements: the knife and the stele. The knife is a tangible, real-world weapon, while the stele is a magical tool used in the magic world, believed to be a source of power similar to a fetish or mana. This distinction suggests that both weapons and runes are

employed by magicians, specifically shadowhunters, within the novel's world. These tools are effective in both the real and magic worlds, emphasizing a connection between the two realms. The writer expands on this observation by referencing Marcel Mauss's theory that, despite the different outcomes produced by various rituals, the rituals themselves share common characteristics when actively performed (Mauss, 1972, p. 75).

The writer's interpretation highlights how the magic world and the real world are not separate or opposed, but rather, they are intertwined, with magical tools like the stele operating seamlessly alongside real-world elements like the knife. This connection implies that the boundaries between the two realms are fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed or rigid. By using this duality, *Lady Midnight* illustrates the coexistence of the magical and real worlds, reinforcing the idea that they can exist in parallel, with their respective elements and tools functioning across both realities. This further underscores the postmodern perspective of blending fantasy and reality, which is a key theme in the novel.

"It does sound like a spell", Julian said, wrenching his mind back to the present moment. He revved the engine, the wind rushing in through Emma's window as they gathered speed. (Cassandra Clare, 2017. Pp.168)

The quotation on page 168 describes Julian hearing something resembling a spell, a magical phrase that reminds him of his past. Meanwhile, in another location, a wind rushes through Emma's window, connecting something as parabatai. This situation helps the writer understand that spells in the magic world are powerful words that originate from what is spoken. One does not need a rune to gain power; in the magic world, there are various ways to harness power, and spells are one of them. In the real world, similar forms of power can be seen in practices like prayer or hymns. Marcel Mauss states that many forms of spoken rituals found in religion, oaths, wishes, prayers, hymns, interjections, and simple formulas are similar to one another (Mauss, 1972, p. 67).

Conclusion

In the analysis of the differences between the magic world and the real world, particularly through the lens of *Lady Midnight* by Cassandra Clare, it is evident that the two realms coexist with both parallel and contrasting characteristics. Magic and reality, though seemingly opposites, intertwine in a way that challenges the boundaries between them, offering insights into how postmodernism allows for the blending of the real with the imaginary. The depiction of magical elements within the real world, as presented in the novel, is a key feature of this relationship, revealing how magic is integrated into everyday life yet remains largely invisible to those without supernatural abilities.

The characters in *Lady Midnight*, such as Julian and Emma, demonstrate the distinct separation between the two worlds, while also showing how one can seamlessly transition between them. Magic, represented in the form of supernatural powers, spells, and creatures, is hidden from ordinary humans, suggesting that belief in such things is not dependent on empirical evidence, but rather on one's ability to perceive beyond the material. This concept resonates with the idea of *Indigo* in Indonesian culture, where individuals possess the power to see and understand the magic world. In this context, magic does not operate within the constraints of logic or reason but is instead a matter of perception, belief, and trust, much like religious faith. For instance, just as people believe in their faith or in a higher power that cannot be seen or touched, those with supernatural abilities believe in and interact with the magic world, despite its intangible nature.

Through the theoretical framework provided by Marcel Mauss, the connection between the magic world and the real world can be understood as a dynamic interaction of forces that transcend physical boundaries. Mauss' ideas on the common characteristics of rituals and the impersonal nature of magic highlight the similarities between the functioning of both realms. Just as religious practices, prayers, or hymns are rituals in the real world, magic too operates through similar rituals—be it spells, runes, or incantations. These practices, though seemingly separate from the ordinary world, serve as tools to access hidden power, further blurring the lines between what is real and what is magical.

Moreover, the presence of the Los Angeles Institute, which functions as a central hub of the shadowhunter community, exemplifies the integration of the magic world into the real world. The Institute exists invisibly to most people, accessible only to those with the ability to perceive it, further illustrating the divide between those who are part of the magical realm and those who are not. The ability of certain individuals to navigate both worlds reinforces the notion that magic, while invisible to the ordinary eye, has a tangible effect on the lives of those who possess the power to engage with it.

In conclusion, *Lady Midnight* explores the fluidity between the magic and real worlds, highlighting how magic functions as both a literal and metaphorical force that shapes the experiences of those involved. The coexistence of these worlds challenges the postmodern view that reality is shaped solely by what is visible and provable, suggesting that belief, perception, and supernatural power hold equal importance in understanding the world around us. By drawing parallels between the ritualistic practices of religion and the magical rites in the novel, the story illustrates that magic, like faith, is a powerful force that transcends the boundaries of the physical world and continues to shape the lives of those who believe in it.

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