

“The Evolution of White Voodoo in the Magical Realist Fiction of Alejo Carpentier, Lewis Nordan, and Sean Stewart”

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Abstract

*Native mythology and folklore is often linked to magical realist texts. Critics such as Wendy B. Faris and David Mikics both discuss the significant role these aspects play in the genre. They attribute many magical elements to indigenous or primitive peoples' belief systems and/or ideologies.¹ As David Danow notes, those who read magical realism are thus “rewarded with a perspective on the world that still includes much that has elsewhere been lost” (67). Three such magical realist texts, Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*, Lewis Nordan's *Wolf Whistle*, and Sean Stewart's *Mockingbird*, invite readers to explore such a lost belief system—that of Voodoo. What the texts uncover is not only past applications of Voodoo beliefs, but also working applications within present-day society. In fact, through the exploration of these three texts, a rarely touched on aspect of mythology and magical realism is evident—that of the effect of primitive religions on non-native characters. In all three texts, white characters embrace, to varying extents, the Voodoo religion. Chronologically, the three texts are set in radically different time frames, portraying an evolution in white Voodoo practices. Through this evolution, we see considerable differences in the way white characters acquire Voodoo beliefs and practices, as well as in the portrayal of racial characteristics among Voodooists.*

¹ Faris goes into further detail in her article “Scheherazade’s Children” on pages 182-183 and Mikics mentions this link on page 374 of his article “Derek Walcott and Alejo Carpentier: Nature, History, and the Caribbean Writer. Erik Camayd-Freixas, terming it primitivism, looks extensively at ancient ideologies, beliefs systems, myths, etc. in his article “Magical Realism as Primitivism: An Alternate Verisimilitude.” This link between magical realism and myth is also touched on in David Danow’s chapter “Magical Realism,” Tommaso Scarano’s article “Notes on Spanish-American Magical Realism,” Magdalena Delicka’s article “American Magical Realism: Crossing the Borders in Literatures of the Margins,” and James Irish’s article “Magical Realism: A Search for Caribbean and Latin American Roots.”