

**The daily life and its disturbing strangeness in
Marie NDiaye's *Self-portrait in green***

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Marie NDiaye is one of the most eminent writer-storytellers in France today. She is the author of around twenty books, novels, short stories and plays and has received international acclaim and won several awards. In her works, NDiaye talks about women's issues, their common concerns, feelings, worries and fears. She has created one of the most original novelistic universes of the contemporary French novel. Literary critics appreciated not only the virtuosity of her style but also the very distinctive way she manages to disrupt the monotony of everyday life by introducing fantastic and supernatural elements into her stories. In her books, there is a mix of fantasy and *reality of everyday life* which causes a strange feeling in the reader. *Self-Portrait in Green* is one of her novels that, with a complex structure and perfect writing, evokes that strange feeling in the mind, a feeling that Freud called "uncanny" and explained it in an article of the same name published in ۱۹۱۹. Freud defines the uncanny as « that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar » (۱۹۸۸:۲). The uncanny is, therefore, the experience of something strange, but which refers to something familiar or inseparable from oneself.

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NDiaye uses uncanny elements in *Self-Portrait in Green* to create a sustained feeling of unease and confusion and to draw attention to the extraordinary nature of everyday phenomena. Elle situates her story mainly in the field of everyday life and explores the relationship of her characters with familiar and domestic environments. The fictional world created by the writer is remarkably familiar at first, the reader identifies a recreation of his own everyday world and recognizes the banal landscape of contemporary France. However, in spite of its familiarity and its ordinary character, daily life, as represented in the story of NDiaye, presents a certain strangeness. It is the shift from the most ordinary everyday life to the frightening and terrifying situations that gives a strangely disturbing impression to the novel.

Self-portrait in green differs from Marie NDiaye's other texts by its hybridity, mixing prose narration and photographic illustrations. It is a fantastic "self-portrait" whose narrator appears to be the author herself. The book is composed of a series of vignettes and anecdotes in which the narrator describes a series of women she names the "femmes en vert," among whom she comes to identify herself. The novel takes the reader to the south-west of France, on the banks of the Garonne River, in a world where realism, marvel and mysticism blend together. Although the book's introduction suggests a classic storytelling structure, the narrative itself is unclear and vague. The novel begins and ends in December 2003 when the Garonne threatens to overflow and flood the village where the narrator lives. Against this backdrop of rising and threatening waters, the narrator recounts the events of her last years. What brings all these anecdotes together is the presence of a variety of women in green, dead or missing for several years, who haunt the story. Just as the Garonne rise, these women in green invade the memories of the narrator and overflow her soul. At different times, the women in green - always dressed in green, sometimes with green eyes - appear in the text as a teacher, a neighbor, a mother or a family member. We do not always know if the women in green really exist; one of them seems to have returned from the world of the dead. As the title of the book indicates, it may be best to see these women in green as aspects of the narrator's psyche. The narrator (who may or may not be NDiaye herself) gives us an overview of her concerns and worries about identity by projecting them onto these mysterious women in green. The main question that the reader asks himself while reading the book is the following: who are the "women in green" who populate the book? They are mysterious characters, cold, menacing and fascinating. NDiaye uses the concept

of uncanny to portray the strange femininity of female characters and show how gender structures and social norms, initially considered familiar and natural, gradually become an unpleasant problem and create a sense of strangeness.

According to most critics, the uncanny is the fundamental concept by which we can access the writing of NDiaye. In *Self-Portrait in Green*, NDiaye represents the concept of the uncanny through the figure of the ghost who is a fantastic figure, as well as through the tone and physical space in which the events unfold. In this paper, we try to verify the notion of uncanny in the novel *Self-Portrait in Green* and analyze the elements of NDiaye's narrative writing that are in harmony with this concept. By approaching society, self, and literature from the theoretical lens of the uncanny, NDiaye manages to convey to readers the feeling of discomfort that women can feel when they realize the social role imposed on them by the norms of femininity. The paper will also illustrate how NDiaye generates a unique representation of familiar spaces characterized by a perpetual tension between strange and familiar. Through the representation of everyday spaces as places of strangeness, NDiaye expresses some strange realities of subjective experience. By reading this story the reader enters the depths of the spirit of characters where coexist reason and madness, fear and desire, reality and fantasies, the living and the dead, doubts and certainties.

Key words: Uncanny, Daily Life, Femininity, Home, Strange Familiar.