

Review of *Marie NDiaye: Inhospitable Fictions*. By Shirley Jordan. (Research Monographs in French Studies, 38.) Cambridge: Legenda. 2017. 131 pp. £75 (pbk £9.99). ISBN: 978-1-907975-85-1 (pbk 978-1-781883-81-5; ebk 978-1-781883-82-2).

In this monograph Shirley Jordan undertakes a consummate examination of the theme of inhospitality which permeates the oeuvre of the critically acclaimed French author Marie NDiaye. She adopts an insightful theoretical approach which builds on Jacques Derrida's concept of 'hostipitality' and Luce Irigaray's 'hospitality of difference' in order to demonstrate that inhospitality is crucial to understanding Marie NDiaye's writing. Jordan applies this approach skilfully in a thematic analysis of a wide range of texts with chapters on human-animal relationships, eating and wounds, and maternity, and finally in an examination of the reception of the author and her works, and an account of the experience of the reader.

Building upon previous critical work examining the social exclusion experienced by many of NDiaye's characters, Jordan's engagement with Derrida's concept of 'hostipitalité', which simultaneously suggests the potential of hostility or opening out to one another in any encounter, allows her to explore how NDiaye does not portray inhospitality as inevitable. In her analysis of human-animal relationships she argues that, while some characters refer to animals to justify the exclusion of others as non-human, the fantastic transformation of characters in *Ladivine* (2013) and *Trois Femmes Puissantes* (2009) into animals imbues them with an enhanced ability to welcome others. In this way, Jordan demonstrates that NDiaye breaks down the boundaries between the human and the animal to make the reader 'think outside inhospitality' (p. 55) rather than reproduce it.

Jordan's novel approach also highlights the political pertinence of NDiaye's fictional and theatrical works as she reveals the postcolonial nature of the inhospitality depicted. Of particular note is her exploration, drawing on intertextual ties to the *Odyssey*, of how eating and hospitality are closely linked to a fear of cannibalism and incorporation. NDiaye's characters must often accept a form of symbolic cannibalism or face exclusion. Jordan draws parallels between this vulnerability and the assimilation to French culture of immigrants who must either face the loss of their culture and identity or be excluded.

Another important insight into the novels is gained through Jordan's use of Irigaray's 'hospitality of difference', a notion predicated on the self-affection of both subjects. Jordan's examination of the characters' 'self-hospitality' reveals the vicious cycle in which their internalisation of the discourses excluding them, often linked to racism, sexism or class division, leads to a self-loathing which makes it impossible to treat others hospitably. She therefore builds upon previous psychoanalytical analyses by exploring how the traumatic experience of exclusion makes the characters incapable of engaging meaningfully with others.

Jordan's thematic approach sheds light on the challenges and complexities of NDiaye's oeuvre, particularly the contradiction between NDiaye's portrayal of maternal inhospitality and theories of motherhood as unconditional hospitality. Her examination of how inhospitality does occasionally and fantastically transform into hospitality in NDiaye's oeuvre allows her to conclude, however, that NDiaye's works call for a new ethics of reading in which readers hospitably opens themselves up to these characters. This approach is expertly demonstrated throughout this monograph.

Jordan's exceptional work makes a vital contribution to NDiayean scholarship by revealing how inhospitality, inflected by issues of race, gender, and class, is central to her oeuvre. Her innovative framework and exploration of themes such as food, maternity and the animal/human relationship in relation to hospitality and their particular French context will be of interest not only to scholars of NDiaye's corpus but also to those engaged in French literature and postcolonial studies more generally. Ultimately, Jordan's examination of inhospitality encourages the reader to consider the relevance of this concept not just in relationships with strangers but in all relationships, including that between the text and the reader.

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