



LITERARY QUEST

An International, Peer-Reviewed, Open Access, Monthly, Online Journal of English Language and Literature

Magical Realism: A Genre Interlocking Two Opposing Worlds

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Abstract

Magical realism is a genre of fiction which entwines the magical elements with reality. It has been identified as a viable contemporary literary mode from the mid twentieth century. Many contemporary fiction writers accustom this form in their master piece. This paper aims to explain the crusade of magical realism from German art to Latin American Fiction and to the other parts of the world literature. It also throws light on the growth and the impact of Magical realism in contemporary literature and the future of Magical realism.

Keywords

Magical Realism; Latin America; Contemporary Literature.



Magical Realism is a widespread but often contradictory narrative mode in 1980's. The evolution of this complicated genre comprises of three periods with

crucial turning points. The first period was started in Germany in 1920s, the second in 1940 in Central America and third period was in 1955 in Latin America and continues globally till this era. The growth of the Magical Realism has been closely associated with post-expressionistic German paintings, modernist and post-modernist art of Europe and Latin America and other parts of the English-Speaking countries in mid 1920s. Though the term 'Magical Realism' gained its name and fame in Latin America, the glimpses of the same have also been visible in the European literature, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The term 'Magical Realism' was coined by the German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 in order to refer to a new post-expressionistic art form. He named this new art form as 'Magical Realism' as it carries some mystical elements to represent the reality. Gradually, the form has been adopted throughout the world literature by many renowned writers. Understanding, the meaning of the term Magical Realism creates great confusions among a few readers. It is due to the tendency to conflate magical realism fiction and magical realist art. Although, they possess some similar features, a subtle difference can also be identified. The following passage assists the readers to comprehend the meaning of the narrative mode 'Magical Realism' intelligibly:

There is a group of people who are walking on the side walk of the main road. Unexpectedly, one of the tallest persons from the group screams aloud by eyeing at the filthy pool found on the other side of the passerby. Hey! See! See! The other persons in the group are astonished by the behavior of the tall man. It appears to be a usual or ordinary filthy pool of water for them. But the tall man shouts at the group by asking...Do you see? Uhhhh...Now the tall man has taken up his turn by himself. He starts to describe his views excitingly. He stares at the pool and tells 'look the vehicles are moving, the road is moving and the whole world is moving. No one waits for others. They are in a hurry to earn money', after looking at

the images fall on the surface of the filthy water. At last, he finishes his description by saying 'How selfish and materialistic are they?' (n.a)

The aforementioned passage is a striking example for the clear understanding of the term 'Magical Realism'. Where does the Magical realism employ in the given passage? The visibility of the tall man in the group alone possesses some extraordinary power to perceive unusual scenes in usual scenes. This power of vision is a magical element. With the help of the magical element (vision), the real - selfish and materialistic attitude of the modern people is showcased through the image reflected on the water surface of the filthy pond. It seems to be an ordinary scene for the other people in the group. The Magical element; vision and the real image blends together to enhance meaning of the text. This is known as the 'Magical Realism'.

Magical realist narrative mode acts as an exact vehicle for the readers to bring out the contrast between the sociopath and the ordinary behavior. At times, the narrator, by applying the magical realist technique skillfully, provides the distorted view of the reality. For instance, any ordinary murder scene adds horror to the novel only by the representation of the magical elements. Most of the magical realist writings are influenced by myths, fairy tales and elements of surprise and shock like ghosts, monsters etc., Common themes such as family histories, different culture, relationships, terror, tortures, political upheavals, life and death also plays a vital role in those writings. As the magical realistic mode travels from the number of places and not belonging to a particular era acquires flexibility. The flexibility and the inherent transgressive nature of this narrative mode attracts many native and cross-cultural writers to express their perceptions through this genre. It is evident from the oxymoron "Magical Realism". 'Magic' refers to 'Mystery of Life' whereas 'Real' refers to 'Truth, Reality'. Though few writers have antipathy for magical realism, some writers wholeheartedly utilizes the style throughout their oeuvres.

According to Faris, 'Magical Realism' characterizes prominent five features.

First, the text contains an "irreducible element" of magic; second, the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world; third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understanding of events; fourth, the narrative merges different realms; and, finally, magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space and identity. (7)

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, Isabel Allendale, Angela Carter, Ben Okri, Salman Rushdie and so on are the pioneers of Magical Realism. They prefer this narrative mode in their writings as to explore and transgress boundaries and to subvert the existing social orders. The boundaries may be either social, political, geographical or generic. English feminist writer Angela Carter subverts the English ruling class. Salman Rushdie depicts the Indian colonial and Post-colonial history vividly. Toni Morrison brings back the forgotten past. She also depicts the memories and the trauma of the black women being oppressed by the white community as well as by their fathers and husbands in her novels. Her novel *Beloved* has been called as a symbol for all the enslaved black women. She builds a history for all those enslaved women by using magical realism to express the reality which is away from the language in writings. All these writers apply magical realism in their novels in order to disclose the unrepresentable through an ambiguous discourse.

At present, it is not only used in fiction, but also dominates poetry, painting and particularly, in cinema. It gives a special appeal for the critics to do their job. Critics define that on one hand magical realism identifies the life secrets and on the other used as a commodity. Many emerging writers started using fantasy in their oeuvres to attract the readers or audience. Fantasy differs from magical realism. Magical realism sets in a real, ordinary human society but

fantasy deals only with supernatural elements. Writers employ magical realism in order to sustain seriousness, whereas fantasy entertains. Magical realism combines both realism and fantasy. In children literature too, the writers employ the magical realism because it overlaps different cultures and uses different natural elements irrespective of boundaries.

On the whole, magical realism is simply the realization of fantasy to seize the reality. The readers may experience a kind of magic feel which closes the gap between the two worlds i.e the real and the fantasy world. It is obvious that the magical realism flourishes, whatever may the style be, it ties the reader with magic spell. It also opens the third eye of the readers to see the world differently.

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MLA (7th Edition) Citation:

Thilagavathi V, and Chandrasekar R. "Magical Realism: A Genre Interlocking Two Opposing Worlds." *Literary Quest* 1.8 (2015): 38-43. Web. DoA.

DoA – Date of Access

Eg. 23 Aug. 2015. ; 05 April 2017.