MAGIC REALISM / MARVELLOUS REALITY

Magic Realism is a literary movement born in Latin America in 20th century that portrays magical or unreal elements as a natural part in an otherwise realistic or mundane environment, that is, myths are respectfully inserted in a realist context as well as supernatural, mythical elements and popular beliefs. It is not "magic as a real thing" but "reality as magic". Ángel Flores does not deny that magical realism is an international commodity but articulates that it has a Hispanic birthplace, writing that, "Magical realism is a continuation of the romantic realist tradition of Spanish language literature and its European counterparts".

The terms are broadly descriptive rather than critically rigorous. Matthew Strecher defines Magic Realism as "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe. As a literary movement, Magic Realism embraces this irrational dimension of life. However, many writers are categorized as "magical realists," which confuses what the term really means and how wide its definition is. Magical realism is often associated with Latin American Literature mainly authors such as Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende.

History

The German critic Franz Roh used this term for first time in 1925 to refer a peculiar style in paintings like those which belong to American painters Paul Cadmus, Ivan Albright and George Tooker during the 1940s and 1950s.

On the contrary of the literature, Visual Arts refer to real elements, no magical ones. They are sometimes mundane. Ángel Flores was the first one in naming Magic Realism to that rich literary Latin style. However, at the end of the 60s, this term included writers of other continents. In the same way, Magic Realism became more and more popular to the point that Vanguardism hardly was priority because Magic Realism removes cultural differences using a global and standard interpretation of what human beings are able to. Thus, in Postmodernist period Magic Realism grew up in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s due to two factors: differences between Technological culture and Culture based on superstitions. Besides, Latin American dictatorships helped it because of the use of words as tools of denounce.
Characteristics/ Features:

1. **Fantastic elements**: Magical realism portrays fantastical events in an, otherwise, realistic tone. Thus, Magic elements can be foreseen but not explained. Features that come from magic: clarividence, levitation, long lives like those of the Bible, miracles, no-real and exaggerated deceases, faith; and from reality: narration as it would be realistic and magic things are added as non-relevant elements in the plot.

2. **Real-world setting**: The existence of fantasy elements in the real world provides the basis for magical realism. Writers don't invent new worlds but reveal the magical in this world. So, characters think that magic elements are common in life/reality and they can revive. Scenery is mostly American.

3. **Authorial reticence**: The narrator is indifferent (there are many narrators in first, second or third voices). The story proceeds with "logical precision" as if nothing extraordinary took place. Magical events are presented as ordinary occurrences; therefore, the reader accepts the marvellous as normal and common.

4. **Themes**: a wide variety depending on historical periods, racially mixed culture/ethnicities and pre-Hispanic mythological elements. In the essay "The Baroque and the Marvellous Real", the writer Alejo Carpentier defined the baroque as a lack of emptiness, a departure from structure or rules, and an "extraordinary" abundance (plenitude) of disorienting detail (Marvellous: not meaning beautiful and pleasant, but extraordinary, strange, and excellent.

5. **Hybridity**: Real narration is mixed with fantastic and imaginary elements in order to exaggerate their evident difference; a tendency of merging the real and the fantastic one, the mundane with the extraordinary.

6. **Time**, in Magic Realist literature, can be distorted, that is, time may be circular instead of linear, or jump around and go back and forth from past to future, or just stand permanently still.

7. **Awareness of mystery and Incorporation of the myths**: Myths are ancient stories handed down from one generation to the next. They often tell of the origins of a group of people, or they give meaning to things like birth and death. Magic Realist writers often turn to myths for inspiration and make use of the fantastic elements of myths in their own works. Consequently, magic realist literature tends to read at an intensified level.

8. **Political critique**: Magic Realism contains an implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite and politics. He also looks down on History.

9. **Magic Realism versus Marvellous Reality**: Alejo Carentier originated the term lo real maravilloso (the "marvellous reality") in the prologue to his novel *The Kingdom of this World* (1949). Although both of them introduce supernatural events
without surprising the implied author and these magical events are expected and accepted as everyday occurrences, the marvellous world is a unidimensional world, that is, anything can be happened there because entire world is filled with supernatural beings and situations. The Marvellous is a one-dimensional world different from the two-dimensional world of Magic Realism.

Differences between Marvellous Reality (lo real mágico) and Magic Realism.

Magic Realism is an international tendency which popped up in 1918 in both Literature and Painting. It means a real life with something odd/inversomil which happens at the bolt/ unexpectedly. However, the marvellous reality is neither an international tendency nor chronological limits. In fact, It came from the cultural roots of American Latin areas, native and African roots which are in colonial literature. While Magic Realism uses a clear, precise and sometimes stereoscopic prose, Marvellous Reality is baroque with an extra-ornate prose. The world is a labyrinth where the most unexpected things, the most incredible ones can be possible, but without dramatist. Those writers are native or black people coming from Guatemala, Cuba or Brasil, those who believe in mythological or spiritual aspects of their own culture.

The most important writers of this movement are Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Carlos Fuentes Macías, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Jorge Luis Borges, Juan Rulfo.

1. Gabriel García Márquez
He is the most famous writer of this movement; in fact, he won the Nobel Prize in 1982 because of his role in the development of Magic Realism. His well-known novel is One Hundred Years of Solitude. In his works, anything can happen: people fly when they drink hot chocolate, an old man with enormous wings lands in someone's backyard, a baby is born with a pig's tail...His narrative style is also notable. He treats magical events like regular, everyday occurrences.

2. José Luis Borges, famous for his short stories, experienced with Surrealism and popularized Magic Realism. In his works such as The Library of Babel, existential questions are raised.

3. Isabel Allende takes her emphasis on women characters, telling the stories of South American women and their fight against the status quo. Her famous novel The house of Spirits was published in 1982. Another female writer of Magic Realism is Laura Esquivel and her Like Water for Chocolate.

In cinema Woody Allen shotted some stories related to Magic Realism “Zelig”, “The Purple Rose of Cairo”, “Alice”, “Shadows and Fog” and “The Curse of the Jade Scorpi,
**Other important remarks** to be taken into account in order to understand this literary movement:

- It was widespread all over the world due to a group of Latin American writers from the 1960s to the 1980s.
- Surrealism was an avant-garde movement in the visual arts and literature that developed in the 1920s in Europe.
- Realism sorted out of the narrative prose style of the novel and short story.

**Chronological lay-out**

- 1915 Kafka publishes *Metamorphosis*.
- 1925 F. Roh uses the term **Magic Realism** to describe a trendy visual art.
- 1948 A. Uslar Pietri uses the term **Magic Realism** in his book *The Literature and Men of Venezuela*.
- 1949 José Luis Borges publishes *The Aleph* (fantastic stories).
- 1949 Alejo Carpentier uses the term **Marvellous Reality** in his essay “On the Marvellous Real in America”.
- 1955 Ángel Flores publishes *Magic Realism in Spanish American Fiction*. This term was widespread in order to name this South American growing movement.
- 1967 Gabriel García Márquez publishes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, probably the most famous novel of Magic Realism.
- 1980 S. Rushdie publishes *Midnight's Children* about India’s past.
- 1982 Isabel Allende, a female writer, publishes *The House of the Spirits*.
- 1982 Gabriel García Márquez is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.