

## Chapter – I

### **Magic Realism in Film: Definition, Features and History**

Magic realism has a broadly descriptive definition rather than critical or rigorous one. This wide definition; generally used to categorise literature which portrays magical, fantastical and seemingly unreal elements in a realistic and conventional environment. Academics and critics have failed to seek out a proper definition for the term. They recognised the term being a mode which is more powerful and precise than they originally thought. Zamora and Wendy Faris claim it's a mode which can explore and "transgress ontological, geographical, political, generic and many other boundaries, such a unique coexistence of separate worlds, spaces, theories and system is rarely possible in any other mode" (Zamora and Faris 5). Critics have completely stopped trying to set a specific boundary and definition for magic realism. Yet most viewers/readers accept Auturo Uslar Pietri's definition. This proves that the term has a wide range of features and contexts and its own unique usage. The term has strong academic and cultural usage. It is not supposed to function according to the academia's techniques, perceptions and terminology.

Western world's confusion about the definition of magic realism comes from their 'conception of the real'. In a magic realist work reality is created "in which the relation between the incidents, characters and setting could not be based upon or justified by their normal acceptance by bourgeoisie mentality" (Angel Flores 191). Louis Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris explain that western readers are unable to link with the superstitions, fables, folklore and myths which form the roots of the magic realism. Magic realism relies upon realism, the imagined or magical elements are depicted as if they were real, stretching the real to its limits and sometimes

beyond it, propose Maggie Ann Bowers. A magic realist work highlights the complexity inherent in the reality and nature by creating illusionary spaces that recedes into the background. The viewers must interpret these mysterious and hidden parts of an image in order to achieve a complete, in depth understanding of the work. Though she suggests this regarding magic realist paintings but this can also be applied to other magic realist works.

The definition of magic realism is problematic asserts critic J.S. Hurley as it encompasses range of definitions and is used to refer to a variety of works of Art which belong to various cultures and various forms of Art like visual art, literature and audio visual art which includes cinema. Critic Jean Pierre Durix observes people have started to label “so many different kinds of artistic productions as magic realist that the term has lost its ability to distinguish between genres” (Durix, 116).

Critic Edwin Williamson concludes that most critics generally agree that magic realism is a narrative style which “blurs lines between the traditional realism and fantasy” (Edwin Williamson 5). Critic Wendy B. Faris “suspension between two different discursive systems” (Zamora and Faris, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* 9) presents the post-colonial situation. Hence magic realism is an effective decolonialism tool as it presents new cultural voices and an alternative to the European realism. Thereby questioning dominant discourses and propagating a liberating feel. Magic realist narrative is imbued with symbolism and visual imagery, implying the inadequacy of the dominant Realism to describe the non-western way of life and viewpoints appropriately. Hence it contains subversive, revolutionary essence which opposes socially dominant forces. Kaushik Trivedi says that magic realism fuses external factors and the interval factors of human existence such as combining science fiction/ physical reality with the psychological reality. He claims that magic realism is “an intimate affair between the readers”

(Kaushik Trivedi 392) and the work. Discussions of magic realism over the last few decades have opened debates regarding the relationship between reality, fiction and the reader/viewer. Magical realism, Wendy B. Faris observes contributes to a kind of international literary diaspora and cosmopolitanism open for wide application. The elements of magic realism are irreducible and hybrid, which questions the basis of realism, leading to an” alternative ways of being” and “new forms of discourse” (Wendy B. Faris 13).

Magic realism uses various narrative modes which are complex and ambiguous thereby attracting multiple viewpoints. Magic realism’s definition and application is problematic and ambiguous in certain works hence academics have enough space to question and bring out multiple opinions about it. Zamora and Wendy B. Faris claim that magic realism has an important presence in the contemporary world of Art, especially literature because it creates “comparative connections, avoiding separatism while at the same time respecting cultural diversity” (Maggie Ann Bowers 64). Critic Wendy B. Faris claims that magic realism’s internal contradictions of including magical elements within rational reality, presenting the confusion of the colonized man who has no control of his destiny and the political system engenders this confusion and helplessness. Its unconventional modes of narration and internal contradiction challenges the conventional realism and the western world view, destabilising social and gender ideologies and transgressing boundaries making it perfect to represent the Decolonialisation discourse. It explores the margins and offers alternate perceptions of the world, identity and gender thereby giving voice to cultural minorities. Magic realism portrays the hidden and silenced voices of such spaces and histories even if it does not aim itself to address such issues of decolonialization and pre-colonial histories. Maggie Bowers suggests that this gives magic realism a political nature, the users of this mode tend to be anti- imperialist, feminist and Marxists, who engage in issues related to post

colonialism, cross culturalism, trans culturalism and debates on the clashes between the western, empirical and the non-western mythical and oral cultures.

In magic realism 'magic' does not mean a magical act which gives the illusion of something extraordinary happening rather it's the 'mystery of life' as scholar Kaushik Trivedi purposes, here something extraordinary actually happens. Magic realism uses real life, historical settings as well as fantastical elements, the imaginative features are meant to be allegorical of the different states of consciousness and symbolic of the multifaceted reality we live in. Its narratives are like a puzzle which the audience needs to solve yet are unable to solve, unlike the mystery genre questions are left unanswered.

Scholar Maggie Ann Bowers tries to categorise and delimit the mode of magic realism by examining and exploring its relationship with other genres like realism, surrealism, fantasy or supernaturalism, science fiction and post modernism which have common features. Understanding the relationship, it shares with these genres is the key to understand the mode itself. Critic Amaryll Beatrice Chanady gives an overview of the traits of magic realism. Most critics agree that the supernatural or anything outside the conventional as being a trait of magic realism. Generally magic realism is seen as another name for fantasy fiction, author Terry "[magic realism] ... a polite way of saying you write fantasy" (Terry Patchet interview with Linda Richards). Disagreeing critic A. B. Chanady says that in fantasy the presence of the supernatural is seen as problematic, attention is drawn to it and the authorial reticence creates a disturbing effect on the readers/viewers. Whereas in magic realism the supernatural is explored in a way that is valid, natural and there is no hierarchy between the real and the unreal. Magic realism observes critic A. B. Chanady does not create completely different, fictional or fantastical world nor follows conventional reality completely

rather it transforms reality by creating a world which cannot be understood using conventional codes of perception.

Fantasy in literature and film is an extensive genre which uses magical elements as a major part of the plot creating an alternative world based on supernatural elements, whose basis can be rationally explained. This fantastical world has its own elaborate, extensive details and its own rules that explain the magical happenings such as in the book and the movie series of *Harry Potter*. Fantasy does not demand critical attention since it's deemed as for mere entertainment of its readers or viewers, an attempt to escape the real world reality. Whereas magic realism incorporates magic within reality but these fantastical elements are never really explained yet they are accepted by the audience as a normal part of reality without drawing any special attention. In fantasy a great deal of suspension of disbelief is demanded from its audiences which can only be managed by creating a new world and its appeal comes from the freedom achieved in that new world. In contrast, magic realism the suspension of disbelief demanded is little or none, making it more difficult to achieve as it needs to be achieved within the constraints of reality and be linked to the world we live in. According to critic A.B. Chanady the supernatural in magic realism does not disconcert the readers because of its antinomies hence its readers and characters do not try to find a natural explanation for it. Fantasy films appeal directly to the imagination rather than appropriating the truth or plausibility of the truth behind the myth.

*Surrealism* is generally confused with magic realism both in literature and cinema, since both of them explore irrational and unrealistic aspects of humanity and its existence. Surrealism and magic realism has a prior historical connection coming from Franz Roh's *Magischer Realismus* and its influence on Alejo Carpentier's *Marvellous Real*. It was influenced and inspired by the surrealist movement in 1920's Europe and the European literary Avant Garde. One major

difference between them is that *Surrealism* explores the link between the imagination, the mind, the inner life and human psychology through different forms of Art. It attempts to express the subconscious, unconscious, the repressed and inexpressible. In contrast magic realism is grounded in reality and rarely presents the extraordinary in form a dream or a psychological experience. Maggie Ann Bowers proposes it takes the magic of a recognisable material reality and places it into the mysterious world of imagination. The ordinariness of magic realism depends on its acceptable and unquestioned position in the conventional physical world. Surrealism focuses on the psychological and cerebral reality rather than the everyday reality.

Surrealism and magic realism both tend to explore the unusual, mysterious and magical through art which point towards the raising of socio political concerns and explore them through an imaginary world. This can be abstract or through subtle shifts in consciousness that portrays the objective world on the screen. Magic realism and surrealism are similar in their emphasis on objectifying human perception and the human subconsciousness, though Art. For instance, filmmaker Guillermo de Toro and Tim Burton are called magic realist as their films present a synthesis of reality and fantasy. The 2006 film *Pan's Labyrinth* is considered as a great example of magic realist cinema. The reworking and representation of the Spanish civil war through the fantastical, depicting it through the eyes of a young girl is able to use a variety of “conventions from folklore, horror, science fiction, legends and myths.” (Felicity Gee 19). The film sits on the border of a variety of genres which is often confused with magic realism like Surrealism and Fantasy. Surrealist Raphealle Moine talks about Surrealism as a film genre and states that keeping tabs on the definition and the limits of a ‘surrealist film’ is essential but in case of a magic realist film it is not.

Science fiction is often confused with magic realism, mostly in films. Science fiction like magic realism blends the real with that of the imaginary and is often categorised as a form of the fantastical but Maggie Bowers suggests they are different. Recent magic realism has gone beyond mere Fantasy and Surrealism to depict a reality is magical yet has roots in the everyday life.

The science fiction narrative is distinct from magic realism as it is set in a world different from any known reality and its realism resides in the fact that we can recognise it as a possibility for our future. Unlike magic realism it does not have a realist setting that is recognisable in relation to any past or present reality (Maggie Bowers 109).

Currently no book length critical study of cinematic magic realism exists which can handle questions of its intermediary, multigeneric conception and its application as a visual style. In 2011, Ph. D candidate Ljudmila Popovich self-published her yet incomplete thesis entitled *Cinemagic: Magic Realism in International Cinema*. The book traces the history of magic realism in cinema, analysing the film, Tom Tyker's *Run Lola Run* 1998, Spike Jonze's *Being John Malkovich* 1999, Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* 1988; yet it's unable to handle critical issues of it being an official genre of Hollywood. To get a clearer definition of magic realism in cinema, it's essential to recognise the main criticism against magic realism in cinema. According to critic Felicity Gee magic realist films can be separated into two categories one in which an understated folkloric content, an imaginary arena or where a regression through childhood memory or a juxtaposition with the contemporary reality; is present. The second category includes films which are adaptations of magic realist novels.

The educated viewer claims critic A.B. Chanady is well aware of the contradiction between rational and irrational as distinct and opposing worldviews yet in a magic realist film the viewer does not react to the supernatural on the screen as it were paradoxical with respect to conventional

reality, since it's the perception of the narrator and characters in the fictional world. Maggie Bowers identifies some core aspects of magic realism in Wim Wenders film *Wings of Desire* 1987, the interpretation of the real and the celestial worlds and the narrative corresponding to the colour on the screen [i.e. the angel's perspective shot in monochrome and the human's world is in colour] are key aspects of its magic realism. The film disrupts reality by its magical content, here Maggie Bowers sees magic as a means of initiating philosophical questions about life after death, the essence of soul, the meaning of life etc. Art historian Georgina Colville observes that cinematic magic realism focuses on its "narrative structure and the symbolic object placement whereas a surrealist film is connected to oneiric and automated inner worlds." (Felicity Gee 24). She feels that antithetical realms of magic i.e. surrealism and realism which magic realism has, should be "separated so that its differences could be clearly presented" (Georgina Colville 128), in order to view Delvaux's film as he desired it to be viewed; one needs to fuse the marginal and the real, the unconscious and the conscious, in a symbiosis. She concludes that "surrealist antimonies and magic realist, double layered, intersecting worlds are closely linked [even in cinema]." (Georgina Colville 128).

Critic Theo D'Haen compiles a list of traits which can be attributed to the mode of magic realism which describes magic realism having self-reflexivity, meta-fiction, complex, multifaceted, intertextual, paradoxical eclectic, redundant and contains the dissolution of characters and narrative instances, the erasure of boundaries and the destabilization of the audience. These traits reveal the instinctive nature of language and its fluidity which thereby leading to a revision of cultural ideologies proposed scholar R. Singh, this makes magic realism perfect for post-colonial and postmodern discourses. Hence magic realism and post modernism share features and themes of post colonialism which encompasses metafiction, multiple



viewpoints, textualisation of the reader, intertextuality, time jumps and themes which can only be explained via magical assessment rather than a scientific one.

With the foundations and characteristics of magic realist art and literature one can identify a magic realist film proposes scholar Nishant Komar. The magic realist works have certain common features which are retained across arts and across cultures. Some features of magic realism are common in magic realist literature/ cinema / paintings. These features are-:

**Magical Elements** – Magic realist works of presents fantastical/ magical elements in matter of fact way. It brings magic, folktales, cultural myths and superstitions into reality events which imply a social relevance. Characters generally have magical traits like telepathy, telekinesis and levitation; these woven into the narrative point to political realities that may seem fantastical but are actually real. The fantastical blends with the real in such a way that it results in a two dimensional reality unlike the one dimensional reality presented by other discourses. Magic realist films present the impossible as unremarkable yet the magic in it is able to attract the attention of the audience since it does not rely on the maintenance of the willing suspension of disbelief as the way these extraordinary elements are presented helps the audience form a kind of explanation without being directly explained in the film. Since the uncommon elements are perfectly plausible and do not draw doubts or surprise from the characters or its audience, in a magic realist film.

**Realistic Setting** - Magic realist works grounded in the real, conventional and everyday world and life. Magical elements are interwoven into this reality but the areas that the plots are based in are historically and geographically recognizable by the audience. There are no new worlds which no one has ever seen or heard of before. The supernatural blends with the natural world.

**Authorial Reticence** – A. B. Chanady describes this trait as the deliberate withholding of information and explanation about the disconcerting events in the magic realist film. The narrator

is indifferent and the events are extraordinary yet they proceed in a logical way as if nothing extraordinary happened. Angel Flores magical occurrences are presented and accepted as ordinary happenings in the culturally rich countries. Mexican critic Gracias Luis Leal famously claims that if you can explain it, it's not magical realism.

**Abundance** - Magic realist works have a lack of emptiness along with a departure from structures or rules and the abundance details is almost disorienting for the audience. Alejo Carpentier asserts that such a layering of elements and its richness forms a reality which is beautiful as well as extraordinary.

**Hybridity** - Magic realist works include and employ multiple and mixed layers of reality for example the individual experience and the collective or/and conventional experiences are presented simultaneously or one experiences two different time periods at the same time. Critic Lee A. Daniel asserts that it employs methods linking oppositional states in order to depict a deeper and truer reality. Maggie Ann Bowers analyses a few films as magic realist by their feature of "collision of two different and coexisting worlds" (Maggie Bowers 111), but it is a broad category. She follows the criteria set for magic realism literature as a guide to magic realism in cinema. Magic realism demands the suspension of disbelief on the diegetic level. According to her, in the film *Being John Malkovich* by Spike Jonze, where the only extra ordinary element is the existence of the 7 ½ floor and a magic portal whose existence is accepted as real by the characters. This feature prevents this film to slip into fantasy genre; this idea was conceived by critic Amaryll Beatrice Chanady. Magic realist films present dialectic between the universal and the local, the self and the other. Although Hollywood is dominated by Americanism yet magic realism preserves the native cultural amalgamation. It forms its unique culture where it seeks to recover the lost traditional values while intermingling with urban and modern trends. This regenerates the society

in a harmonious way, the global and the native gradually crystalizes in the presence of magic realism says Noelia Fernández.

**Metafiction** – Magic realist works focus on the role of the audience in and with the magic realist work. They are complex and multifaceted presenting its audience with multiple realities, exploring the impact fiction has on reality and vice versa. Critic Jon Thiem explains that the role of the reader/viewer can be of two types one where the fictions reader/viewer enters the story within story while reading it making us self-aware of our position as readers/ viewers and the second where the textual world enters the readers (our) world. Magic is the flexible tool that enables such a relationship.

**Heightened Awareness** – Magic realist works generally have an intense theme. Its audience must discard their expectations of a conventional plot progression, exposition, linear time line and scientific or logical reasoning. The narratives lead to the point of the extreme says Luis Leal in order to realise all levels of the reality which presents the mysterious within the conventional. There is a heightened sense of mystery due to the transformation of reality within the story giving it a patched up quality hence it's often seen as post modernism.

**Political Critique**- Theo D'Haen asserts that magic realist works are transgressive, multifaceted and break down the boundaries dominant discourses set. It cannot be fit into a definite categorisation, making it subversive of pre-established systems and revolutionary against socially dominant forces. It deals with the marginalized communities and cultures giving voice to the silenced, offering multiple possibilities and viewpoints. Magic realism helps form a collective consciousness as opposed to the individual consciousness favoured by the dominant European discourses. Art critic Frederic Jameson focuses on the political nature of magic realist films, taking up examples from the selection of films he considers as magic realist. Magic realism is often

criticised of primitivizing the cultures and communities it depicts. But the global presence of magic realism in which magic realist films have a major role [as cinema can reach and be understood by a greater number of people than a book or a painting] in homogenising the different manifestations and cultural differences that magic realism represents. This recovers and re-presents post-colonial history.

**Close Focus** - Magic realist works include ultra-sharp focus on certain objects and have a lot of detailing, an inheritance from magic realist paintings. Frederic Jameson claims of magic realist films possessing this feature in his article. Jameson asserts that focus on certain specific objects are historically and culturally symbolic like the bomb in the film *Gorączka* by Agnieszka Holland.

**Objectivity**- Magic realist works are objective as they eliminate the presence of its creator in the larger outlook and focusing on the materiality of the object in the real world. Making transplantation of this mode possible to most cultures and enables it to describe various objects and events without being specifically tied up to certain particular objects, areas or events. Earlier transplanting it into western cultures was difficult but due to globalisation, the West has become culturally rich.

**Centripetal View**- Seymon Menton proposes that a magic realist work provokes intellectual responses as the viewer's attention is deliberately divided. This is because the work is fragmented yet whole and the viewer views one part of it simultaneously viewing the whole. It steers its audience to contemplate on the issue the narrative focuses on. Angel Flores asserts that Postmodernism and magic realism have the same attitude towards their audiences, since they do not aim to satisfy the popular mass rather cater to a sophisticated section of the population who are attuned to notice 'Textual subtleties'.

**Representational-** Magic realist works are representational of a variety of issues, cultures and most importantly of magic within the reality of our lives. They represent what is possible, what could and may happen instead of what we would wish for to happen, which occurs in fantasy. Most fantastical, unreal scenes and objects in a magic realist film are allegorical or symbolic like the auroch's in the film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* represent the spirit of survival against adversities of life, natural or man-made. Plots and events in magic realist films are generally manifestations which highlight the localism and cultural past of the country it's based on without negating the effect of the dominant foreign culture which is equally powerful suggests critic Noelia Fernandez.

**Defamiliarisation-** Magic realist films defamiliarizes recognisable events, objects and scenes for its audience and learn that they do not completely understand the situation that they thought they knew is strange, yet it has something to teach its audience what they never anticipated, explains critic Maggie Ann Bowers. Scholar Edmund Haeng states that magic realism is essentially a defamiliarization device, magic realist narrative defamiliarizes the familiar (objects, events and elements) in order to show the dislocations and disjunctions in the country's political, social and cultural discourses which may be seen as a resistance to the conventional, dominant western discourse. Magic realist film proceeds a point of conflict which manifests in the real and from which a doubling of the real and the imaginary develops, the reoccurrence of symbolic objects act as the anchor for the audience to navigate from reality to the imaginary without the suspension of disbelief. The background music echoes the themes of the plot and influences the viewers so that their perception of reality is transformed.

**First Person Narration-** Magic realist films generally are shown from the narrator's point of view who is experiencing the events. What the protagonist knows, sees and hears is what the audience know, see and hears. This subverts the authority of the camera, true to the subversive nature of

magic realism. Magic realist works may narrate the story from a child's point of view. For example, *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), directed by Guillermo del Toro.

**No Explanation or Justification** – Explanation is not a part of the magic realist mode even in its cinematic form, it is neither an alternate reality nor a series of irrational point of views which are later explained in the film as someone's dream or insanity. Critic David Isaak asserts that magic realist films in some unexplained way interweaves or intersects another order of reality with our everyday reality. It is not the mere exchange of one set of rules with another which happens in fantasy or science fiction nor is it the mere existence of the unexplained or uncanny which occurs in horror films. The sense of magic realism arises in a film where the extraordinary is an imminently present in the backdrop of ordinary, everyday events or where a compilation of realistic events offer a counterpart to the conscious reality. Magic realist films do not have a clear cut resolution and some core events are left unexplained leading to it being questioned by the audience this will lead to different people arriving at different conclusions. This maintains the nature of magic realism being a multifaceted mode offering multiple possibilities.

**Ambiguous End**- Magic realist movies may depict ambiguous or peculiar stories yet preserve a sense of logical and a meaning which is deeper than the surface meaning of the pictures on screen. *Tvtropes.org* argues that a film can be considered magic realist if the audience at the end of it are left with thought to ponder and create hypotheses on and create alternative explanations, which can be naturalistic or supernatural or both. But the narrative of the film is the most important, it will be magic realist only if it's done in a satisfying yet intriguing way and not merely led to an open ending. It is generally done by showing an event which could have happened but it's not established by the film that it happened, making the narrative ambiguous. This does not happen in a fantasy film where it is established that everything magical that has happened has happened,

although only in that alternative magical world. Magic realist films generally give some characters a form of non-magical special powers like the grandmother has in the film *Time of the Gypsies* or the protagonist of the film, who can communicate with his rooster, this allows multiple possibilities of the mundane fantastical. The director does not confirm or deny a solution or explanation to these phenomena's if they do then it results in the 'it's a dream' or 'it was destiny' trope, negating the magic realist narrative, elements and purpose of the film. The audience see the events anticipating or conceiving of a weird explanation but are unsure of its reality and reliability. Magic realist films the mystery of the fantastical element or event is preserved. Critic David Isaak concludes that magic realist films core feature is an acceptance of ambiguity without a doubt, which can range from a powerful unexplained undercurrent of meaning depicted by events which are ordinary with an intersection of another, alternate order of reality.

Angel Flores agrees that magic realism has become an international commodity, and adding to this Zamora and Wendy B. Faris says that it's a product of the postmodern world. Magic realism is a cross cultural, cross art phenomenon and its latest form has become popular in cinema. Magic realism is traced to have roots in a variety of art forms starting from visual arts, leading to literature and presently popular in cinema. The different usage of the term across time periods has made its definition difficult, which becomes more problematic when it's applied to cinema. In the case of movie adaptations of magic realist novels, the features, links and aim of the movie was clear but later when it started to be used for films which were not adaptations, the term was used in a broader sense. Yet some scholars still try to grasp the concept of magic realism in cinema, the filmic genre is still in emergence. It being a clear cut, concrete filmic genre in cinema is not yet established. Since the viewers, filmmakers and critics have not arrived at an agreement about its

stylistic features. The medium of film facilitates the working of the mind along with imagination and magic, a key feature of magic realism; making it suitable for the big screen.

In cinema and literature, the mode is open for contestations & debates and the debate doubles its force when the label is applied to films. One major problem in magic realist films is lifting the literary label and applying it to the cinematic genre says critic David Isaak. Maggie Ann Bowers claims “film is not often considered as magic(al) realist in criticism and neither is magic realism...recognised categories of film. However, it is possible to recognise features of magic realism ...in many films” (Maggie Bowers 104). Critics do not investigate this subject and the research around is little as well. If one has to start research on magic realism in film then one must start from Frederic Jameson’s article “On Magic Realism in Film” 1986 and his later article “Soviet Magic Realism” 1992. Maggie Bowers discusses magic realism in cinema by analysing movie adaptations of magic realist novels and movies like *Being John Malkovich*, 1999 directed by Spike Jonze which are considered magic realist yet are not adaptations. These films have magic realist features out of which the constant feature is that in the film depicts the real world with some extraordinary elements which all the characters seem to accept. She states that the magic realist aspects of these films acts as a means of posing philosophical questions like the existence of god, role of fate and destiny, the idea of self, etc. These questions are posed at the ambiguous end of the movie and extend beyond the film’s purpose to simply divert one’s attention and entertain.

People assert that many films are magic realist which have few common features, most importantly all these films are “kind of weird” (David Isaak n.p). Generally, filmmakers want to preserve the authority of the camera, hence most films are shown from an omniscient point of view, rarely showing the subjective point of view and if it does then it’s usually a dream sequence or a brief eyes of the beholder moments where the vision gets wobbly due to effect of being hit or



drugged. A film shot through the point of view of one character, where its audience only knows what that character knows, is rare. The authority and objectivity of the camera is problematic, in case of magic realism, its audience is accustomed to *border skipping* [ a term used by critic A.B Chanady to describe the blurring of genres or categories in a magic realist work]; they are able to move to and fro between two systems, periods or discourses, viewing a synthesis of both. This hinders the objective, documentary like quality when it's confronted with the unconventional, the uncanny or strange.

A film may portray alternate realities but it generally tries to explain those realities, which we see on screen. Since we saw it they do not want its audience to question the pictures on screen. A film can show a reality having a different set of rules that will be an alternate or parallel world like in *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *Harry Potter*, which is the premise of a fantasy film. *Star Wars* would be a science fiction film or it all could be a dreamlike in the film *The Nutcracker*. But in magic realist films the audience has faith in what they are seeing and understand and accept it without any surprise or doubt. The acceptance of the uncanny but surprise and fear at its appearance is the premise of the Horror film, which generally explains the logic and justification of the uncanny presence like in *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005) or *Haunting in Connecticut* (2009).

Critic David Isaak compares the feeling a magic realist film gives out to psychiatrist Stanislaw's description of the boundaries of the states of consciousness being like a beaches surf zone where the two worlds of the shore where everything is stable and the world of the sea where the rise and fall of the waves has its own stability. This a fluctuating, indescribable arena does not follow the rules of one particular discourse. The magic realist works are comfortable here, not cinema as objectiveness of the camera is unable to function efficiently.

Magic realism, claims Mary Hurd, is “officially not recognised as a cinema genre but features of magic realist literature are retained in magic realist films.” (Mary Hurd 73). According to Wikipedia a list of 44 films are categorised as magic realist which includes Woody Allen’s *Alice* 1990, *Purple Rose of Cairo* 1985 and *To Rome with love* 2012 and Emir Kusturica’s *Time of the Gypsies* 1988, are fine examples of magic realist movies. Maggie Bowers asserts that magic realist films are cultural productions like magic realist literature and paintings. She views the employment of magic realism in films as a narrative art. Very few critics consider films as magic realist like Frederic Jameson. Generally, those films are labelled and analysed as magic realist which are adapted from magic realist novels like *Como Agua Para Choco* (Like Water for Chocolates), Laura Esquivel’s 1989, magic realist novel; adapted into a movie in 1992 directed by Alfonso Arau. Maggie Bowers asserts that magic realism which enables us to explore the world through our imagination without losing connection to the real world. Magic realist films explores disruptions in the real world, recognising that extraordinariness can also be contained in the world we live in. Critic Robert Stam mentions that magic realist movies which are not adaptations but does not elaborate on them. Despite there is a list of movies which are not adaptations of magic realist novels yet they are labelled as magic realist. Critic J.S Hurley asks “Who labels them magic realist? And why? The scholars? The critics? Is magic realism misunderstood?” (J.S. Hurley 13).

The list of magic realist films is long as well as diverse. The more we analyse a film on the lines of magic realism we come to realise that we are unable to explain it; it frustrates us not knowing how to explain it corresponding to the nuances of reality which we follow but are unable to explain its logic. The best way to employ magic realism in films is to hint at the logic, since explaining it will negate the awe of the mode and the audience will lose interest. Maggie Ann Bowers claims that the audience tend to accept magic realism of the things that we see and question

[on screen] like we used to believe in things when we were children. Recently more magic realist films have been produced but earlier films like *It's a Wonderful Life* 1946 and *Stairway to Heaven* 1946 also contain magic realist elements and can be considered proto magic realist movies. Many directors have used the mode or elements from this mode for many different and radical purposes. Maggie Bowers adds films are places where one generally turns to, to see our internal struggles played out externally on the screen, consciously or unconsciously. Generally, the viewer identifies with the issues, events or problems depicted by the film and ultimately gains a better awareness and sometimes solution of the same.

Film critic may arbitrarily or hastily tag a particular type of film as magic realist which to them seems magic realist which misappropriates the term, adding to the confusion and ambiguity. The odd and distinct list of films that different writers, critics or armatures classify as magic realist range from Francis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* 1979 to David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* 1986. They do not provide a criteria based on which they recognised these films as being magic realist. If analysed properly it maybe be found that some of them fit better in the fantasy, science fiction or surrealist film category.

Looking at the current production and interest in the magic realist movies, there is an unofficial recognition of the category of magic realist movies but critic do not want to fall into the trap of magic realism as a movie genre as the boundary and basic features of the category or genre are still not put down as concrete. Presently this category's features are fluid and fluctuating and its specific features is yet to be universally accepted and approved. But there is no doubt of its presence in the world wide cinema stage and its presence has been acknowledged universally and by the dominant movie market of Hollywood. Even though it is officially not a genre it's certainly on the path of being one. Any genre comes into acceptance and usage only when recognised by

audience worldwide for example the genre of romantic comedy did not exist earlier but since films of that type are being produced and seen, the audience started to recognise key features of such films, grouped them together and formed a new genre. Magic realism does not show any preference towards any particular filmic genre and can be combined with any filmic genre like intimate drama in the movie *Wings of Desire* by Wim Wenders, *Field of Dreams* by Phil A. Robinson, or war epic like *Red Sorghum* or gentle comedies like *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. This is one of the hindrances of magic realism being a cinematic genre and hence to avoid complications film critics and filmmakers regard it as a cinema style or technique.

As far as the viewership of these movies is concerned, the term ‘magic realist movies’ is searched on the internet and numerous lists of magic realist movies pop up, including a list by Wikipedia, a universally acknowledged site for reliable information. Hence Magic realism in film is indeed a universally acknowledged and employed category though it has its own internal problematics and workings. The popular film site *IMDB.com* presents a list of 586 films because the website uses the term ‘magic’ ‘realism’ not as a genre but as a key words which has a connection to the movies in any way explains critic J.S. Hurley. Though Wikipedia does the same but its focus is more concise and it does recognise some key features of magic realist movies within the movies listed, some of the movies mentioned are truly magic realist excluding the ones which are magic realist novel adaptations. A film is labelled as magic realist by amateur film critics and mostly in movie reviews and reactions to movies presented during film festivals. Most magic realist movies produced in the last few decades have won and been nominated for international film festivals. Some amateur critics have their facts clear about magic realism like Genevieve Valentine’s article, “Top 10 Magical Realism Films” by is well researched.

Scholar asks J.S Hurley asks if the producers and critics are too willing to label films as magic realist. On the internet there are various listings of the top ten, top twenty list of magic realist films, which are mostly formed by amateur critics but some like Genevieve Valentine's do make good sense and have some argumentations added to i.e. variety of professional and nonprofessional sources pop up when searching for magic realist cinema for instance the website *Tvtropes.org* states

. . . one of the easiest way to distinguish magic realism from other genres the use of the omniscient narrator is the story told by first person narration or not... another feature is that the magic that affects reality comes either from a plurality of sources like god, black magic, spirits all at the same time or from no source at all ... usually there is a strong correlation between magic realism and surrealism (*Magical Realism, Tvtropes.org* n.p.).

“Hollywood’s Magic Realism” list on *Listal.com* lacks validation of its claims and lists movies based on the broad definition of magic realism being the interweaving of fantastical elements with reality. Hence the list ranges from *George of the Jungle* 1997 to *Sucker punch* 2011. Some lists are based on the assumption that magic realism as a sub-genre of fantasy without valid sources to support the claim, making it difficult to recognise magic realism as an official film genre or category. The debate on magic realism in cinema emerged with the release and popularity of the film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* 2012 directed by Benh Zeitlin. Tom Shone a former film critic claimed it being the rise of magic realism in America and traced the turn of American audiences towards magic realist techniques of narration and presentation in films.

There is a large portion of the population who do not know what magic realism is exactly but in the present scenario where majority of movie goes are literate and are familiar with the pre-existing movie genres, one can at least decipher after watching a magic realist film that what they

watch does not fit any of the pre-existing film categories. Very few professional and amateur film critics endeavour to explore the category of magic realist film rigorously. Producers do not indulge in officially recognising magic realism as film category or genre and only label those films magic realist which are adaptations of magic realist novels, since that is a safe categorisation. Films like *Beasts of the Southern Wild* 2012 are marketed as magic realist to gain audience's attention and create interest. Generally, the public views a genre linked a particular type of film, in this respect magic realism in cinema is a challenged category. The concept of a genres and its function is a wide, it involves various factors. The classification of works of art into a genre has various functions, most importantly it's a guideline that helps determine which film to watch. Secondly genre categorisation helps in writing film history and finally the economic motive behind the classification into different genres is that it's seen as a rational system for producing and exploiting cinema, describing what it is? Where it is used and for what? According to Robert Stam, a genre only exists if it is recognisable as such by a community. "Genre comes into being when it organises a set of semantic features into a stable syntax – that is when a film is formula is put in place that is recognisable to a public audience, and to which film attached themselves, through different levels of generosity" ([Raphaëlle Moine](#), Hillary Rader, Alistair Fox 60).

According to these authors this happens when the filmmakers (the producer, screen writers, director, etc.) are able to conceive the film as relating to the genre while the audience is able to receive and react to the film as such. A genre must be recognisable in a film, since the magic realist film is not a clear category for the audience. So the filmmakers play it safe by avoiding making any statements about the category film falls under like in case of *Beasts of the Southern Wild* where Benh Zeitlin does not label it as magic realist but a film depicting a fusion of genres and having a unique way of depiction. They feel it's safer to let the audience categorise films as magic realist

which share features with its literary counterpart. It's interesting that the films which are put under one list as magic realist are different from each other in many aspects and its features are quite shallow in some of these. Therefore, it would be too risky to assert that magic realism in cinema is an established genre.

Recent films like *Big Fish*, *Amelie*, *Chocolate* and *American Beauty* are difficult to understand and Hollywood labelled them simply as visually stylised rather than magic realist which is a complex arena. 'Visually Stylised' and magic realist films are different in the way details of the plot are focussed on via which the ordinary is seems to become the extraordinary, which transforms the viewer into a child who views the world anew. Visually stylised implies the unique visual treatment of a film whereas the in magic realism the film contains layered, complex elements and techniques which can be traced back to developments in art and literature. Hence when the label of magic realism was transferred from literature to cinema its features and techniques were retained.

A film festival is an international platform for cultural exchange in which films aim to entice political, social and cultural discourses and proliferate this dialectic among the global audience. Films at a film festival must be universal enough to be able to transgress cultural boundaries. Magic realist films often bring to light cultural and indigenous beliefs, myths, legends as well as cultural practices, in a way which depicts their subjective experience and cultural realities, conveying realities other than the dominant one. Therefore, magic realist films often presented and appreciated at film festivals asserts Bruce H. Rogers. Characters consciousness in such films is reflected in via magical elements, events and objects which in turn shows the cultural values the film wants to be recognised.

Films mean different things to different people whereas majority of the population see it as a form of entertainment, some people consider it's as the expression of one's world view and perspective. The contemporary world is multicultural and multiracial and open to the influence of various traditions, a world ideally attuned to magic realist narrativization. Since magic realism focuses on marginal voices hence by default it presents a resistance to dominant system's influence and ability to assimilate marginal systems or discourses within them. Cinema is an efficient and effective tool of modernisation and globalisation. It the world recognise marginalised cultures/communities and their histories and traditions. Magic realist films have a uniform authorial vision and style behind their making since they arouse similar responses from the industry professionals and international audiences at film festivals. They are also uploaded on the internet in order to gain recognition, reactions and acknowledgements from viewers all over the world.

Magic realism has not been much explored in cinema. Films are considered magic realist by very few critics like Frederic Jameson, Maggie Bowers, Robert Stam and Frederic Luis Aldama. Films have not been critically analysed as magic realist except as film adaptations of magic realist novels like *The House of Spirits* 1993 by Isabel Allende. In 1950's magic realist novels started getting film adaptations, recognising that magic realism is suited for the medium of cinema. Features of magic realist literature and magic realist films are similar.

Ernesto Sabato's novel *El Tunel* or The Tunel was the first magic realist literary text to be adapted into a film. But scholar Lulú Panbehchi assets that cinematic magic realism really originated from the movie *Talpa* 1956 based on Juan Rulfo's text of the same name. Frederic Jameson's in his article titled "On Magic Realism in Film" 1986, analyses images of selected films which he sees as magic realist using the techniques of a visual art critic. Whereas Maggie Bowers



examines the visual elements of the film and how they affect the narrative of a magic realist film which ultimately leads to questions about philosophical issues which extends from being just being a means of entertainment. The analysis of adaptations of magic realist novels into magic realist films offers us an understanding of how essential the placing and aim of a visual element is in a magic realist film. There are many adaptations of magic realist novels into films which were quite popular such as *Like Water for Chocolates* was the highest grossing foreign movie in the box office that year. The viewers feel a sense of increased sense of reality as actual events unfold on the screen and the realism of the film is controlled by the director's choice of lightening, depiction and symbolisation. Like a golden lightening shows a romantic, celebratory mood whereas everyday scenes are portrayed in a less bright light. There has always been a close relationship between literature and cinema as films are from an early period been adapted from or inspired by texts. Ronald Perrier states "study of literature will cast light on the meaning the film presents and a study of films will illuminate the full value of the text" (Edmund Haeng 5).

Scholar Frederick Luis Aldama explores the diasporic culture of cinematic magic realism, especially Indian and African cultures and their conception of magic realism aims to revitalize their representations of Art, including cinema. Frederic Jameson in his article says that magic realism embodies not a realism that can be transfigured by having a magical perspective but a reality which is already in itself magical. Noelia Fernández claims that magic realist filmmakers aspire to gain recognition in the mainstream Anglo institutions without giving up their heritage thereby enhancing these films syncretic nature. The magic realist films bring together divergent cinematic realities of the mainstream Hollywood and independent local cinema. Magic realist filmmakers portray a syncretic discourse that combines features of both cultures. National and international filmmakers have begun to represent ethnicity without the complexities of the past,

many magic realist films deal with issues of the border region, immigration and identity in transition, yet rooted in cultural power shifts. A common aspect of magic realist films is that its magical aspects initiate philosophical questions like the existence of god, the role of fate and the conception of the self which is well beyond the assumed function of the film being for entertaining and a means of escape from the real world problems.

Scholar Felicity Gee asserts that between 1925 and 1949, five significant texts were published which challenged the function and effectiveness of realism in works of Art through the exploration of the magical or marvellous. These texts were French surrealist André Breton's 1924, first manifesto of Surrealism, in which he explained his concept of *Le Merveilleux* where the unexpected suddenly erupts into the everyday life, second is Franz Roh's 1925, book *Nach Expressionismus* where he identified a new trend in painting which he terms as *Magischer Realismus* which identifies the weird qualities of the exterior reality of an object. Third is Jorge Luis Borges 1932, article "Narrative Art and Magic". Fourth is the Surrealist Pierre Mabille's 1940, *Le Miroir De Merveilleux* or *The Mirror of the Marvellous*. The last is the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier 1949, article "lo real maravilloso" or the marvellous real in the preface of his book *The Kingdom of the World*, addressing the ontological magic in the reality and existence in Latin America. For cinematic magic realism the magic realism referred to by André Breton, Franz Roh and Alejo Carpentier's texts are important as their understanding of magic realism directly influenced the conceptualisation of magic realist films and helped magic realism being acknowledged and understood in the postmodern era, having gone through the influence of European Avant Garde.

Franz Roh in his 1925 book *Nach Expressionismus* asserted *Magischer Realismus* as being a form of painting in which visible objects express invisible meanings. Similarly, the images

presented in the magic realist film link to our perception of world that the images become metaphors of philosophical and psychological questions arousing interest in them. Critic Franz Roh's conception of magic realism was based on the materiality of the object and how that inspires internal perceptions and emotions in its viewer, ultimately it links to the concept of defamiliarizing the familiar. Frederic Jameson claims that magic realist films renew its audience's appreciation of the real. Robert Stam traces the new wave cinema and its link to Marquezian magic realism.

Robert Stam asserts that literature and film are a part of a long, Trans-textual process, giving the cinema culture a good basis especially to cinematic magic realism. He agrees that magic realism in literature and cinema is a problematic category since it functions as an open and diverse space for transgressive and alternative forms of art which is rooted in multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. The emergence of cinema as an artistic mode in 1920's and its development in the cultural realm increased magic realism's significance even more. The cinematic apparatus is essential to magic realism being a visual mode, especially after the emergence and popularity of magic realist films internationally asserts scholar Felicity Gee. Films are able to capture our physical as well as our mental life. In literary narrative the switch from a first person narrative to a third person narrative symbolises a flashback or dream but in cinema the mode is able to create a seamless illusion of the transition between the internal, imaginary and the waking real world. In magic realist films these worlds are generally indistinguishable from a multi-perspective version of reality.

Magic realist films emerged in an era of photography and cinema and the debates surrounding them are linked to discussions of 'New Art' and modernity. These debates are essential to understand contemporary magic realist films and its relation to early films and with the objects that Franz Roh and Alejo Carpentier discuss. We must remember that the early writings

on cinema like Antonin Artaud's "Sorcery and Cinema" 1928, [André Breton](#)'s discussion of magical space of the movie theatre in "As in A Wood" 1951, saw the experience movie going as a psychological journey of identifying dreamlike images on screen as magical. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Modern Art was driven by anti-rationalist, anti-enlightenment tendencies, leading towards a secular type of magic. A new realism and secular magic is the core of Franz Roh's magic realism which believes in approaching the magical within reality via a visual narrative rather than a religious or divine experience. Felicity Gee points that Art historian Christian Green argues that secular magic ties modern artists to modern media.

Frederic Jameson theories on cinematic magic realism explores a peculiar visual pleasure linked to the magic realist film. The magic realist film, according to Jameson has a combination three major aspects of historical raw material, colour and the focus of the narrative on violence and on a lesser degree on sex, which creates a visual spell for its audience. The historical sources used in magic realist films contradicts the aspects of an older mode while foreshadowing traces of a new, future mode. They do not present a slice of the past rather displays a history with holes, showing the developing cultures which were previously not acknowledged by the dominant, western discourses. Frederic Jameson takes a formalist approach and tries to determine the features of a magic realist film. On the other hand, Robert Stam takes the help of cultural and film studies, traces the developments in cinematic magic realism from the art movements in Latin America. Both Jameson and Stam discuss the under development of Latin American cinema production linking it to magic realism's aim to emphasize on realities of the Third World. They discuss the rise, development and aims of third cinema or third world's cinema which includes concepts like the *Aesthetics of Hunger*, *Aesthetics of Garbage*, and *Cine Imperfect* by Julio Espinoza which explore reality in the magic realist films produced by Latin America.

Frederic Jameson argues that the First World individuals view the political, economic world as separate from their private or community world whereas in contrast the Third World individual's stream of consciousness narrative projects a view which is politically inclined and the individual's destiny, especially of the protagonist of the movie becomes an allegory of the public realm, in a Third World culture and society. Fernando Solana's, filmmaker, argues that revolutionary filmmaking to resist the nominal objectivity of the first world cinema and mass media, creating films which challenge conventional reality. Such aspects are a part of a magic realist film. The feel of such films is not limited to the textual narrative but extended beyond it, giving it an imperfect look. The strategies like having a degraded raw material for a film, a delicate variation of ratio or frame per second are decreed by Hollywood, which Hollywood filmmakers designed to dominate film culture around the world.

Frederic Jameson views magic realist films to be set against nostalgia films as magic realism politicises the past history rather than turning it into a postmodern simulacrum for example the past violence is not glamourized in magic realist films like it is done in contemporary American film like Old West movies of Clint Eastwood. In magic realist films, images of historical sufferings are converged with the diegetic present and presented through certain key objects which emerge from the familiar surroundings but made to appear strange to the viewers. He adds that the effect of these images on its viewers is not worn away as the retelling or re-imagining of the violence, interrupts the narrative creating a gap or excess of meaning and this diverts the viewer's attention. In magic realist films nostalgia is replaced by a more subjective, interactive history that requires a more intense participation from its viewers. Critic Barbra Klonowska states that magic realist film's supernatural elements defamiliarizes the known history and re-imagines it on the screen. Jameson's theories of cinematic magic realism are complicated and difficult apply on

contemporary films. But it's one of the first critical writings on the topic and lays down the basic features of magic realist films.

According to him magic realist cinema has bases its structure on a type historical raw material which has disjunction present in it. Cinematic colour heightens the presence of magical tools in the film and the narrative has historical gaps or holes. These features of a magic realist film are "not realism to be transfigured by supplement of magical perspective but a reality which is already in and itself magical or fantastic" (Frederic Jameson, 311). The films he selects to analyse are Francisco Norden's *Condors No Eutieran Todes Los D'ias* (A Man of Principle, Columbia 1984), Jorge Eliecer Giatan Ayala and Jacobo Penzo's *La Casa Agua* (The House of Water, Venezuela 1983) and Agnieszka Holland's *Gorqczka* (Fever, 1981). Jameson was struck by these films shared features of narrative, manipulation of colour and political historical background. John King in his 1990 book, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* observes that these films embody the ideology of Cinema Novo or New Cinema or Third Cinema; they have a unique technical quality and work out their plots aesthetically revealing a deeper understanding of the reality we live. The directors of these films use realism to portray the vivid reality in such a way that it made to seem strange.

"Affect", "Intensities" and "Vital Events" key terms used by Frederic Jameson to describe the scenes and mood of magic realist films which create uncertainties and contradictions in the plot. Jameson describes "Affect" as the cognitive as well as the instinctual response to the objects portrayed on the screen. Carl Plantinga asserts "Affect is temporal like moods created through manipulation of the colour pallet, eruption of vital episodes and condensed images into the diegetic world...and are easily transfer to the audience" (Carl Plantinga n.p). Jameson's history with holes in a magic realist film is one where the real history is disrupted by the magical vital episodes which

link to a more subjective internal reality of the people experiencing that history. By the political unconscious in magic realist films means the visual collage of images presented on the screen is a synthesis of images of historical sufferings and the divergent, presented through significant natural objects in the surroundings which make the familiar seen strange. Jameson describes cinematic magic realism as a two-way process where social realism is imbued with human fantasies of the characters and an incomplete version of reality is questioned by a reality which is made, artificially. The tension created the opposing categories within magic realist narratives and its symbiosis gives magic realist films their spectacular and seductive quality.

The films Jameson selected are 1980's films which have a cold, detailed and closed focus view which Franz Roh points out in magic realist paintings. Jameson says that these films have a close focus on an object, which indicates the magic realist quality of that object, by making it even more objective or could be presented as a part of a montage shots combined to create a story. He accepts the fact that the social reality in itself is magical in Third World countries. Jameson discusses the colour outlook of magic realist films. He states that magic realist films do not have a glossiness or gleam of an idealised past, which is a feature of nostalgia films and links it to Lacan's concept of "the gaze" based on "deceiving the eye". Hence he asserts that glossiness engenders the images for consumption rather than being a simple representation. In magic realist films colour is a "libidinal apparatus" which observes the "discontinuous intensities" (Frederic Jameson 318) that involves drama and links to Freud's "uncanny". Jameson relates the colour of these films to the economic situation they are produced in, i.e. the economic situation of the Third World countries. It portrays their underdevelopment, poverty, oppression and remnants of colonial influence, hence magic realist films exemplify political concerns.

The last aspects of magic realist cinema he discusses is its narrative which are a “kind of bas-relief history” (Frederic Jameson 321), in which only bodily manifestations are retained such that we are inserted into it without even minimal distance” (321) asserts that magic realist narrative in a film mobilises resources which were never before exploited [pornography] and violence as raw materials for the plot and the possibilities it presents. Magic realist films wanes the affect of historical narratives and perspectives, focusing on an older, temporal form of narrative which gives out uncodified intensities into a hallucinatory contemplation. Unlike postmodern films, magic realist films do not create an experience of being under influence of drugs rather the “experience is reconquered by the other, internally constructed means” (321). The theoretical framework of a magic realist film is more applicable and significant to the aims of the Imperfect Cinema or Third Cinema of the 1970’s and 1980’s. Latin America films have transformed in look and nature now due to the effect of globalisation hence Jameson’s theories difficult to apply on more recent films. Louis Parkinson Zamora asserts that the magical objects of magic realist narratives contradict sight and insight, to collapse the difference between them making the visible object as the medium of one’s insight, making them meaningful.

The magic of magic realist films, is for global audiences and secular in nature. Magic realism’s ability seems unlimited and is universal in its application, it can be applied to any national cinema and used to explore different themes and specific national perspectives says Barbara Klonowska. Jameson asserts that these films work on political discourse and social issues implicitly, expressing possible solutions through imaginary means or supernatural events or; ensuring synthesis of the real realm and the realm of wish fulfilment. He tries to understand alternative modes of realism. Modern or contemporary magic realist films suggest scholar Edmund Haeng has features which Frederic Jameson implied to but did not focus on. These features are



their transgressive nature, these films cross national and cultural boundaries, bridging history and time and are transcultural which allows them to take up cultural phenomenon's and transplant them into other cultures in a way which does not transform the host culture into something which it is not.

Critic David Curtis says that in the 1920s-30s film directors use the literary motifs and was discussing his theory of magic realism; attention was drawn to the medium, the mechanisation of culture and capitalism. Critic Mariam Hansen indicates that cinema was an integral part of the modern chaos; Avant-garde filmmaking was influenced by the different manifestos and film journals & magazines of that period, whose publishers were experimental filmmakers themselves. Franz Roh was aware of these debates and developments in films and filmmaking during his time nonetheless his primary focus was on magic realism in painting and photography. Cinema being a kind of technical magic was publically recognised by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Photographic studies of movement especially by Edward Muybridge shows the magical effects of technology and technology being manipulated represent magic. Critic Tom Gunning says that events from daily life and the form theatre was represented in cinema and it being a technological mode of representation is its initial fascination. The magic realism's ability to enforce the suspension of disbelief as it makes the diegetic world and the events to be unfolded in temporal plane may seem magical.

Magic realism is largely developed in literature and little work is done in its manifestations in other Art forms. Magic realism has become an elastic term which has gained global importance and is not confined to Latin American culture any more. During the last few decades it's been used in postcolonial contexts since it is able to articulate non-western worldview where reality cannot

be rationally explained, presently it has been increasingly applied to cinema. Film studies on this category have not been done properly and thus film critics mostly misappropriate the term.

Globalisation is changing the world's taste and shaping lifestyles speciality in metropolitan cities which are more exposed to different ethnic cultures. In the contemporary culture it's fashionable to celebrate differences and be open to enjoy the richness of various cultures. These changes are generally progressive and humanitarian in nature, claims critic David Neo. Author Ella Shohat and Robert Stam states that Hollywood has a hegemonic, regardless of the percentage of movies it produces annually. The huge stock of Non-American film produced worldwide is not easily available in the west, they are rarely put up for show in cinema halls and not easily available in video stores or even analysed in academic film courses. When they are put up for preview it is generally granted some space in the foreign category section of the arrogant labelling of them in film ceremonies as the Oscars. Critic John Tomlinson suggests that globalisation creates a new cultural space which is constantly influenced and used by the mass media. He argues that cultural processes and transfers are not unilineal where one culture is a transmitter and the other a receiver, cultural exchange is a two-way process, which involves interpretations, translations, mutation, adaptation and indigestion. Hence no imported object is safe from creolisation which shapes that culture though these objects may have begun as western, once within the foreign culture they can no longer remain purely western. He global mass culture is no longer replacing the local culture rather it is providing a cultural lingua franca, the imported mass culture is indigenised. The multicultural corporations that disperse blockbusters now also spread afro- diasporic music like rap around the world states Shohat and Stam.

The contemporary magic realist films were influenced by early films and film criticism and Surrealism but it has diverged and became more non-political which Franz Roh asserted magic

realism to be. Felicity Gee asserts that magic realist films range from non-linear abstract films known as pure or absolute cinema where the plots are unconventional and the only objects in it are light and shadow in varying intensities to a cinema which has sutured illusionary realism like a classic Hollywood narrative. Since magic realism emerged in an era of photography and cinema hence critical debates regarding them are an essential part of modernist magic realism and linked to the framework and workings of early magic realist films. Contemporary magic realist films combine the commercial stylized visuals of the Hollywood type narrative and the ideological elements of the mainstream with European Avant Grade cinema. Felicity Gee asserts that there is a distinction between the pure anthropological magic realism which interweaves the post-colonial struggle of colonized countries within the indigenous magical traditions and a magic realism like Franz Roh asserts which relies on the mysterious effects and transformation of perception of the real world.

The magic in cinematic magic realism asserts Franz Roh is neither religious nor spiritual and is grounded in social and historical reality, illuminating the fractures within that reality. His essay does not define the magic or how it works in magic realist films rather it identifies the material conditions of the realist part of magic realism. This includes a radicalisation of the narrative and the history which is mediated through the visual imagery foregrounding the mysterious and uncanny signifying the spaces beyond human understanding which are actually a part of the reality itself. Frederic Jameson defines magic realism as an enduring mode as the criticism it receives from other pre-established discourses like ethnography, Freudianism, surrealism, postmodernism, post colonialism and lacanianism which aims to delimit it, are encompassed and assimilated within it, giving it multiple angles of perspectives and possible solutions to the issues it highlights. This gives it a strange seductiveness and appeal. Since

cinematic magic realism shares features with different film genres therefore its narrative is ambiguously socio-historical and leads the audience to wonder at the power and potential magic realist films. Jameson focuses on the transformative power of magic realism and the result of a transformed reality rather than just its supernatural aspects.

The New Latin American Cinema was a national and international project which included diasporic and exile experiences. Lulú Panehchi asserts that these filmmakers made films which depicted their economic and cultural conditions. Filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getoni usher in a type of cinema which is mysterious, subversive and unfinished cinema which can challenge the hegemonic Hollywood and European production and distribution system. The issues and struggles of the ordinary people was the source of its plots while rejection of Hollywood and European cinema's technical perfection made it radical. Magic realist cinema aimed to redefine nationality and nationhood in cinema's, creating an alternative and revolutionary cinema. Third World Cinema/Third Cinema has three distinguishing features: the dual impact of colonial & neo-colonial on contemporary process, the presence of the influence of the West and the influence capitalism on the global economy. The concepts and aspects of Third Cinema were aimed at the domestic audience as well as the Hollywood and European audience. Julio García Espinosa states that Third Cinema wanted to create genuine, impartial art which had no concept of elitism. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam assert that there are two circles of cinema the one consisting of third world films meant for third world audiences which follow the conventions of Third Cinema and another consisting of the First and Second World people in support of the cinema belonging to the first category.

Magic realism is a mode of narration employed by Third Cinema that legitimizes the existence of a reality which cannot be interpreted by Realism so magic must be used to retell their

pasts reconnecting them to the present. Earlier magic realist films, a part of the third cinema were generally state funded hence were not marketed, thus many films remained obscure. Presently these films have become available, though some may take more time to find. Globalisation is changing the national and global taste and shaping lifestyles especially in metropolises which are more exposed to different ethnicities and cultures. The unstable, polyvalent, problematic and hidden aspects of the reality of the postmodern, postcolonial world can be critically understood by magic realism hence it's appropriated by range of artists regardless of their cultural and historical background claims Felicity Gee.

Robert Stam's explains that cinema, a medium of audio- visual representation, is ideal for magic realism. Cinema is a form of modern technology which is able to bring to life the linguistic images which magic realism forms in a narrative and allows representation of multiple spaces and time periods simultaneously which is rarely possible in any other mode. It is done in cinema via the use of multiple windows in the screen, sometimes this technique is enmeshed together to show two characters of different time periods or geographical locations interact with each other in a unique way. Magic realist narratives have a fusion of extraordinary elements which almost seems delusional but cinema is able to depict them beautifully. The huge difference between literature and cinema is bridged by the use of magic realism. Magic realist films focus on shot compositions, mise-en-scenes, art designs, strategies of editing and sound effects instead of the maintenance of the willing suspension of disbelief. The way the story is presented, the sound accompanying the scenes and the message, makes the film magic realist.

Cinema is an international medium of entertainment and knowledge, which transgresses the boundaries of culture, nation, community and language yet it has its roots deeply set in the social space. International cinema trends have changed due to the filmmakers, critics and

audience's interests. Edmund Haeng claims that it is inherent in cinema's nature to transgress cultural, national and linguistic boundaries, forming heterogeneous social and linguistic formations. Cultural exchange is a fundamental feature of cinema despite the perception of it being merely for entertainment. Cinema's international production, reception and consumption make it perfect for cultural exchange. Regardless of its intention, of entertainment or escapism from reality or for profit; audiences of different cultural backgrounds watch it and perceive it in a certain way. Magic realist films bring out similar reactions from its audience regardless of their cultural and geographical situation. Edmund Haeng proposes that film festivals provide films an international platform for focusing on emotional truths, political and social issues and generate communication between different cultures and communities via the medium of films. These facilitate the relationship between the films, its audience and the filmmakers which is not possible in the cinema hall. Most magic realist films are sent to, nominated and even win at international film festivals which reinforces that magic realist films are not for mere amusement and are worthy of being analysed as a global phenomenon having international effect.

The relation between cinema and literature is a close and deep one. Texts are adapted into movies or movies are loosely inspired by some text or an original movie plot is created based on a character of a story which happens rarely for example the 2007 movie *Enchanted* directed by Julie Andrews, where an original story is formed for the screen around the literary character of Snow White. Critic Roland Perrie claims that studying films can illuminate us of the full value of literature. Cinema enhances our cultural awareness especially magic realist films which are capable of international cultural exchange. Magic realism transferred to a film retains its capability of shaping audience's sensibilities and creativity and reflect emotional truths and human nature. Filmic magic realism is a collaborative effort, taking in a variety of discourses and trends within it to form an amalgamation

similarly the filmmakers take in various trends and discourses from their environment, upbringing and education to finally produce the end product: a film. Hence a film has immense work done on it along with has potential of presenting multiple possibilities to its audiences. The effectiveness of films as a visual medium for magic realist storytelling is questioned. David Isaak reminds us that film is a superficial, surface medium. It can only show what people are doing or saying and is unable to penetrate their thoughts and emotions, except by implication or voice overs.

Magic realism as a mode of narration in cinema becomes a redemptive force, a counter narrative that embodies the spectacular which belongs to the past as well as the present simultaneously. Critic Hayden White asserts that in the postmodern era it's difficult to conceive of a historical reality without the use of fictional techniques to represent. Magic realism is perfect to present the contemporary, indefinable reality and legitimizes the use of fiction and imagination to depict reality and history. Cinema stereotypes and tropes like sex, violence, culture and history are reworked and their Hollywood representations are rejected. Magic realism is not an official category but it is recognisable in films. Magic realism has proved itself to be an intermediate category, spanning over Literature, Painting, Photography, Cinema, Gender Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Postmodern Studies, Feminism, Marxism, Authors etc. Stephen Hart and Wen chin Ouyang recognises the diversity and applicability of magic realism and its use in contemporary film to depict modern realities as tied to past realities. They propose that magic realism needs to be understood in the global sense while considering its postcolonial inclinations and definition from Franz Roh and Surrealist roots.

Edmund Haeng claims that humanity's desire to remain in history, in memory has led to the want of capturing fleeting moments of life, leading to the creation of cinema which is able to capture fleeting moments. Mundane moments may seem insignificant but when remembered and

viewed through a new perspective can be artistic and magical. Magic realism recognises the magical in the mundane through defamiliarization. Positive reviews and responses to magic realist films, across the world reinforces the belief that cinema is the ideal mode for visual representation of magic realism and breaks through cultural barriers. Film festivals eliminate the barriers and distance between the audiences and filmmakers. A magic realist film encompasses a socio-cultural experience enlightening and educating its audiences. Cinema medium is perfect for magic realism as the visual images which a reader is not able to visualize properly in the literary narrative are clearly portrayed on the screen. Hence the viewer is able to absorb the image without hesitation though its meaning is to be self-interpreted. Anna M. Lopez argues that the knowledge cinema was expected to provide or invoke transformed, the real has become relative by including fantastical realities. Cinema's ability to represent and reproduce is used as a method to explain and analyse reality, by revealing its hidden aspects and discovering the material matrix which determine its workings, rather than a simple replication or recording of the lived reality, offering alternative modes of representation and unconventional techniques, working with realities of societies from the grassroots level to the top. Hence it's seen as being counter hegemonic and postmodern. In magic realist films, the interweaving of a personal experience with the contemporary technology (camera apparatus) into our lives internally is a conscious act, allowing audience psychological interpretations.



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