
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Magic Realism and Fantastic in Contemporary Literature

Gulrahman Rahmani¹ ✉ and Sayed Mojtaba Nayel²

^{1,2}Department of Pashto Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Literature, Baghlan University, Afghanistan

Corresponding Author: Gulrahman Rahmani, **E-mail:** g.rahmani_rahmani@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

Magical Realism and Fantastic are two widely used concepts in contemporary literature. Fantastic is such fiction that blends the realities of our physical world with the supernatural in an indistinguishable manner, with the aim of leading minds of varying abilities on different trails. Both are used in combination to complete the novel. The reader is amazed by the inability to differentiate between real life and the world of fantasy. In Magical Realism, as the name implies, magic, history, fiction and myths are employed. The characters often possess supernatural abilities. It is often mistaken for imaginary realism. The main difference between the two is that in Fantastic, the characters feel shocked and horrified by the happenings, as in Harry Potter's series, where the sudden disappearance of 'the mirror' causes shock. By contrast, in magical realism, the characters tend to react to the occurrence of magic. Another important point is the relation of both to scientific fiction, where events are analyzed on the basis of facts and scientific development in order to enable humans to face life intelligently.

| KEYWORDS

Magical Realism, Supernatural, Fantasy, Romance, Science Fiction, Unnatural, Fear.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

1.1 Prologue

In many respects, the nineteenth century was of special significance in the history of mankind due to the Industrial Revolution. The invention of new machines, ways of production, and socio-economic realities made humans subservient to machines. Human labour gradually gave way to mechanization. As production and trade increased, capitalists and traders gained salience at the cost of traditional khans and maliks.

Investment banking spread in the developed world, leading to colonization and exploitation of other societies. At the same time as the means of production changed, so did the social thought, habits, culture and ways of communication. It attracted the attention of the enlightened, the skilled and the writers of the middle class, leading to the movements against social injustice and in support of humanism, ethics and freedom of speech.

Materialism is the only end of life for the people. Famous realist writer Balzac alluded to the fact that materialism destroyed the bonds of family, turning the institution of marriage into a sort of commercial contract, friendship into hollow selfishness and loss of filial affection.

In such circumstances, artists become disgusted with society and the passage of time. Some tend to run away from reality and take refuge in imagination. Others dwell in ivory palaces and create an ideal world of their own, artfully employing art and romancing with the beautiful faces and hairs of imaginary sculptures. Some become nostalgic. The point is that in a bid to find new means of conveying the message, they employ symbols and myths as well as metaphysical and supernatural happenings. In short, magical realism and fantastic art are two artistic tools for the resuscitation of feelings and rebuilding of dream palaces. The

tools give the writer the ability to express his mental pain and his hidden thoughts without fear by employing symbolism and allusions.

2. Research Method

Comparative and Descriptive methods have been used in writing the contents of this thesis.

Main: The terms Magical Realism and Fantastic are widely used in contemporary world literature. There are abundant examples. However, in Pashto literature, the concepts are less known and less used. Magical Realism was first used following the heydays of the realist school of thought, as dry phrases caused writers' and readers' fatigue. Fantasy was the hallmark of Romanticism. A need was felt for something in between fantasy and reality. This need gave birth to magical realism, which tends to amaze the reader in a magical way.

Columbian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez is considered the father of magical realism. He extensively used this tool in his famous novel 'One Hundred Years of Solitude'. In this novel, the realities are complemented by supernatural events and characters. Dead characters are resurrected with changed faces and ages, recognizable only by family connections and linguistic signs. The forefathers, after decades and generations of their deaths, suddenly enter a room and tell stories about their times, deaths and graves. Like the living, they also appear to know everything about the present. In addition to humans, other beings also talk, uttering truths and facts. Their presence is a manifestation of magic. They also talk about scientific phenomena, chemistry and future developments, similar to science fiction. The book is now considered just magic and sorcery, but his effort gave the reader joy, information, and entertainment. Its lack of information became less noticeable. Magical Realism was accepted and nurtured for such reasons.

The school of Magical Realism combines the spheres of metaphysical and physical worlds. Real-life events are blended so beautifully with the supernatural that the reader, like the characters of the novel, loses sight of reality and is immersed in imagination. This style became popular in story-writing in the third decade of the nineteenth century. The writers blended historical and social events with fiction to describe and expound national narratives.

Ajmal Khkwali describes Marquez's style of writing: Realism portrays only the outward aspect of life, the outward manifestation that science declares as truth. It tries to reconcile life with scientific realities, as in realists' opinion, man has been blinded to the realities of civilization by unscientific imaginations. (3, P77)

One of the differences between realism and magical realism is that in magical realism, myths, dreams, and other such events can be introduced, which are considered post-modern and unreal in realism. If Realism may cover such metaphysical issues, it will face scientific criticism of why modern man accepts such superstitions.

The other concept is that of fantastic, mostly used in fiction. Fantastic stories blend natural and supernatural events in such a manner that it is not easy to distinguish between them. The beauty lies in the fact that the writer can guide his readers in various ways. Professor Najib Manali and Aimal Psarlai consider Fantastic a separate literary genre and term the stories of French Novelist Guy De Maupassant, 'Was it a Dream', as an example of Fantastic. The genre comprises literature that combines possible events in the real world with extraordinary events in such a way that the reader forgets the difference between the real and the imaginary.

'Was it a Dream' is a story of intense love, affection and secret betrayal. A woman deeply loved by a man leaves her house on a cold rainy day. On the way, she dies of cold and hunger. The tragedy deeply hurts the lover, leaving him deeply saddened and mad. The man often goes to her grave. One dark night, while he is in the graveyard, nostalgic and overwhelmed by the memories of love, the graves suddenly open up, and all the dead come out as corpses. They start cleansing the writings on their tombstones and rewriting them. A resurrected corpse wipes his tombstone from the words, "Here lies Jacques Olivant. He had a dear family, was a kind and respectable man who died by God's will at the age of fifty-one," and rewrites it as "Here lies Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty. He hastened his father's death by his cruelty because he wanted his fortune. He tortured his wife, beat-up his children as well as neighbors, robbed anyone he could and died in disgrace." The lover proceeds to the grave of his beloved, wherein the words "she loved, was loved, and died" were wiped and rewritten as, "one day she got out of home, betraying her lover and died on the way in the rain, of cold and hunger." In a similar way, all the dead came out of their coffins and wiped out the lies written on their identities and replaced them with truths, i.e. the voices of their conscience. In this story, these strange events in which the human conscience speaks and portrays the realities of human life. The reader is astonished in between fantasy and reality but believes in it logically. This is, in fact, 'Fantastic'. There are a few other plots in the story that keep the reader's mind involved.

American author and critic Davidson Lale says if we read something about snakes, it will most probably be 'Fantastic', but writings on the body and beauty of heavenly maidens will likely be 'Magical Realism'.

The most common definition of fantastic literature is: the literature about the occurrence of magical events or the literature in which one's own imaginary world can be created. Of course, magical events occur in both Fantastic and Magical Realism. The difference between the two, therefore, is that the characters in Fantastic are astonished and frightened by magical events, as in Harry Potter's Zoo, all screaming at the sudden disappearance of 'the mirror'. Conversely, in Magical Realism, the characters tend to react to the wizardry and are not frightened. In Fantastic, magic is neither organized nor predictable. However, certain rules are applied, which shows that Fantastic is also imaginary realism. (6, P2)

King of the world of Magical Realism, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, says: "Fantastic has nothing to do with the world we live in. It is a super-natural, metaphysical and surely deviant invention, conceived by evil art". Mrs. Davidson Lale says the best way to distinguish between Fantastic and Realism is to consider how it affects the reader. Famous literary theorist Tustan Todorov says that because of supernatural behaviors, magical realism twists the reader's sense of reality, and he fantasizes about a whole new situation.

As said before, the literary scholars' view of magical realism is that the characters and events, as they occur in both natural and imaginary worlds, are not afraid of the excitement of transition from the natural to the unnatural world. In Magical Realism, we cannot draw the line between the real and imaginary worlds, but the goal is to blend the natural and the unnatural in a way that the reader appreciates as a reality.

Both in magical realism and in fantastic, the nature of events often appears similar to in Science fiction, and the reader thinks he is reading magical fiction. But here, the difference is time, whether it concerns the past or the future. In magical realism, the events of the present time have a mythical and fictional basis, but in science fiction, there is the reality of scientific knowledge. Afghan critic and Professor of literature Najibullah Manali explains the nature of science fiction in his book 'The World of Literature'. Science fiction has dozens of genres, including travel to other planets and the invention of new technologies on Earth itself, continuously changing human life. Similarly, travel in time is an important genre of science fiction, which is also important from a philosophical point of view.

Travel in time has given rise to a very important philosophical question, which has been keeping philosophical and scientific communities engaged for the past fifty-sixty years. Someone makes a time machine, goes to the past and meets his grandfather, develops differences and kills him. Now, when his grandfather is being killed, how will his father be born; who will give birth to him and who will invent the machine and travel back in time and kill the grandfather? Conversely, if the grandfather is not killed, all these events become a possibility, giving rise to a paradox. A major portion of science fiction comprises such paradoxes.

3. Conclusion

It can safely be said that magical realism and the fantastic are closely related. Due to their common characteristics, the reader is often unable to distinguish between the two. The most important and common constituent is the mixing of supernatural and metaphysical events, which are logically sequenced and can keep the reader's attention. The events can be real or fantasy and dreams but should be able to amaze and charm the reader. Another important point is that the subject and contents of both portray human conscience as well as social and political realities. Science fiction can be mingled with both, also called scientific imagination, which is closer to reality.

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