

Narrative Mode and Fiction
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Module No # 11
Lecture No # 54
Magical Realism II

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative mode and fiction we are discussing magical realism. So talking about magical realism we have to understand the process of defamiliarization the art of magical realism entails presenting the object in such a way that the normal becomes unfamiliar.

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Defamiliarization

- The art of MR entails presenting the object in such a way that the normal becomes unfamiliar→ it draws on Russian Formalist **Victor Shklovsky's idea of the literary technique "defamiliarization"** (as Shklovsky defines in his work *Art as Technique*), which sought to present an object in an unfamiliar way.
- The idea behind defamiliarization is to use language in such a manner that the reader/spectator does not become adapted to the presence of the object and cease experiencing its artfulness. Defamiliarization distinguishes ordinary usage of language from poetic usage, such that language has the power to play on the reader's perceptions. It is a literary technique of presenting common things in an unfamiliar way, through which the reader could gain new perspectives and see the world differently.

It draws much on Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky's ideas of the literary technique, de-familiarization. So the term de-familiarization was first used by Victor Shklovsky's work art as technique that is/has where he had defined different de-familiarization for the first time it is a process that present an object in an unfamiliar way. The idea behind different familiarization is to use language in such a manner that the reader or the spectator does not become an adapted to the presence, of the object and ceases to experience its artfulness.

So in other words de-familiarization is letting the reader or the audience remembers that the art is an art it is not real right there is a difference between the fiction and the fact out there. This is also a way of understanding the artfulness the art the stylistics the drama that has gone into the making of an artwork it is not merely, transcription of the world as we see it. So

de-familiarization distinguishes ordinary uses of language from poetic usage right poetic language renders a work of literature it is literariness right.

As a result the language has the power to play on the reader's perceptions so we come we bring our ordinary perceptions to the artwork and these perceptions are altered through the power of the art right. And that; is the poetic usage of language therein lies the artfulness defender realization is therefore a literary technique of presenting common things in an unfamiliar fashion through which the reader can gain new perspectives and see the world from a different angle.

So Russian formalism and magical realism share a very close relationship Russian formalism predates the Christian concept of, alienation effect or something that breast calls us *verfremdung*.

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Russian Formalism and Magical Realism

- Russian Formalism pre-dates the Brechtian concept of 'alienation effect' or *verfremdung* (in his *Epic Theatre*), whereby the object of art is seen as the revolutionary goal of making the audience aware that the institutions and social formulae which they inherit are not eternal and 'natural' but historical and man-made, and so capable of change through human action. Alienation aims at disrupting the passive complacency of the audience and forcing them into a critical analysis of art as well as the world.
- In a much similar way, Shklovsky has earlier understood the aim of poetry as defamiliarizing that with which we are overly familiar, to 'creatively deform' the usual, the normal, and so to inculcate a new, childlike, non-jaded vision in us.
- The main aim of literature, both according to Formalism and Magical Realism, is to disrupt the ordinary linguistic discourse and cause estrangement.

Verfremdung is a term he uses in his epic theater right through *Verfremdung* or the alienation effect the object of art is seen as the revolutionary goal of making the audience rare of the institutions and social formulas which are not in inherent not natural. So through art we are making the audience aware that the social, institutions and the social formulas that braces a society together.

I have nothing natural about it they are not eternal they are not inherent but they are historical and they are artifacts they are man-made and so to that end they are capable of change through human intervention, through human action. Alienation aims at disrupting the passive

complacency of the audience and forcing them into a, critical analysis of art as well as that of the world.

Now in a very similar way to that of alienation effect of Brecht Shklovsky had already earlier understood the aim of poetry this is coming even before Brecht coin system alienation effect. So Shklovsky is looking at the aim of poetry what does poetry strive to do it defamiliarizes that with which we are overly familiar and so it creatively deforms the usual, the normal as a way of inculcating a new child like a non-jaded vision in us.

So the main aim of literature both according to formalism and according to magical realism is disrupting the ordinary linguistic discourse and causing some estrangement.

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Russian Formalism and Magical Realism

- The poet aims at disrupting 'stock responses', and generating a heightened awareness: to restructure our ordinary perception of 'reality', so that we see the world instead of numbly recognizing it.
- Formalism requires that poetic discourse be seen as **fundamentally different in its modus operandi** from discourse of any other kind.
- Poetry's aim is not simply practical or cognitive, concerned to transmit information or to formulate knowledge that lies beyond itself. Poetic language is **deliberately self-conscious**. It emphasizes itself as a 'medium' over and above the 'message' it contains: **it characteristically draws attention to itself and systematically emphasizes its own linguistic qualities**. As a result, words in poetry are not simply vehicles for thoughts, but of objects in their own right.
- 'Making strange' ranks as a central preoccupation of formalism, and a good deal of formalist analyses of literature consist of an account of the different conditions in which ostranenie takes place.
- These are also the conditions in which 'literariness' may be recognized and distinguished from other modes and manners of linguistic communication – (literary language not only 'makes' strange, it is strange)

Now the point aims at disrupting stock responses the way we almost we are pre-programmed to respond to our immediate society. The immediate occurrences, around us the poet wants to balk that and revisit that habit and generate a heightened awareness to re-structure our ordinary perception of reality. s a way of seeing the world instead of numbly recognizing it. Now formalism requires that poetic discourse be seen as fundamentally different in its modus operandi from discourse of any other kind.

And this is where we are getting the term literariness, for the first time poetry's aim not being practical or cognitive like ordinary usage of language. But it is not concerned with transmitting information or formulating knowledge that is not poetry's aim. Poetic language is deliberately self-conscious and the meaning is embedded in the form itself it emphasizes itself as a medium over and above the message it contains.

So it characteristically draws, attention to itself and systematically emphasizes its own linguistic qualities. Consequently words in poetry are not simply vehicles of thoughts right but objects in their own right. So in a poem according to Ferdinand this azure the words cease to become signifier or signified right. Because they are not being used in the traditional sense but they can have a number of significations associated, with them depending on the interpreter.

So the word being interpreted in a context by someone who has his or her own cultural baggage and thereby a perception formed from there. So a poem the self-same poem could be read in 10 different ways and all these analysis could be equally correct. So making strange ranks as a central preoccupation or formalism and a good dealer formalist analysis of, literature consists of this account of different conditions different ways in which ostranenie or de-familiarization can take place.

So these are conditions of literariness a term that is used for the first time by roman Jacobson and literalliness can be recognized and distinguished from other modes and manners of linguistic communication. So literary language not only makes strange it does not only, engenders strangeness it is strange in itself.

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Derealization

- **Derealization, defamiliarization and fabulation** form the basic skeleton of MR → **Derealization** is the ability of language to create a sensory experience through mimesis, **wherein the world is ultimately represented as an altered place** from the reality the reader knows before beginning the reading. It causes **a state of detachment from the surroundings**, and results in corrupting/destabilizing previous understandings of the world by making the people and objects around seem unreal.

So de-realization, de-familiarization and fabulation all of these; form the basic skeleton of magical realism. De-realization is the ability of language to create a sensory experience through minuses where in the world is ultimately represented as an altered please from the reality that the reader knows the reality that the reader is coming from even before, reading the work or experiencing the artwork.

So de-realization causes a state of detachment from the surroundings and results in corrupting or destabilizing previous understandings of the world by making the people and objects around seem unreal.

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Defamiliarization

- Through derealization, a more deeply-seated truth, which was hindered by the superficial appearance of a perceived reality, is manifested.
- **Defamiliarization** is the artistic expression of alienation, of making the reader feel apart from the world. Often, in magical realism, this is done by **introducing something mystical** and **revealing the world as something unexpectedly unfamiliar**. The magical realist constructs a setting that mirrors an unorthodox world view. To be able to accept the new setting, the reader must be displaced and broken of habit.

Through the realization a more deeply seated truth which was either to hindered by the superficial appearance of a perceived reality is revealed unfurled, manifested. So de-familiarization is the artistic expression of alienation of making the reader feels apart from the world. Very often in magical realism this is done through introducing something mystical and revealing the world as something unexpectedly unfamiliar.

So the magical realist constructs a setting that mirrors and unorthodox worldview to be able to accept this new setting the reader must, be displeased and broken of habit. So this is also something that (()) (10:53) is saying the resilience of the reader right how far are we ready to travel with fantasy with the fantastic writing fantastic meanings? If we are too much rooted to our ordinariness with our jaded vision then that would not be possible.

The alternate world and our believability are our ability to believe that, is kind of frustrated when we are too much rooted in our ordinariness.

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Defamiliarization

- **Defamiliarization** - Involves the textual poetics of Surrealism, and in exploiting the magic of metaphor, ignores reason and logic. However, while Surrealism categorically resists interpretation, the magical realist images, albeit their initial magical aura and madness, tend to reveal psychological, social, political motivations after some scrutiny. E.g., **Witold Gombrowicz's *Pornografia*** depicts the grotesque story of a man who becomes a child because other people treat him thus.
- E.g., **Nikolai Gogol's** short story, "**The Nose**" (1842), in which a minor Czarist bureaucrat's nose takes off to pursue its own career in St. Petersburg.

De-familiarization involves the textual poetics of surrealism and it exploits the magic of metaphor ignoring reason and logic. However while surrealism categorically resists any sort of interpretation the magical realist images albeit their initial magical or wondrous aura and madness associated with them tend to reveal, psychological social political motivations after some degree of scrutiny.

So we have here an example of Witold Gombrowicz's *Pornografia* so in *Pornografia* Gombrowicz's depicts the grotesque story of a man that has become a child because the other people constantly treat him thus. So here we also have the example of Nikolai Gogol's short story *The Nose* where a minor tsarist bureaucrats knows takes off, to pursue its own career in St.Petersburg.

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Fabulation

- Jorge Luis Borges' works have an effect of defamiliarization and conscious polyscenic texture, as there are **different viewpoints of a thing at any given point**.
- **Fabulation** is the practice of telling fables, chiefly understood as stories that involve talking animals. However, unlike the familiar, formulaic **fables** that are used more often as tools for moral instruction than as art, **fabulation** through magical realism attempts at expressing the complexities of the world, of its politics and history.
- Kafka's *Metamorphosis* incorporates all these three aspects - **Derealization**, **defamiliarization** and **fabulation**, where Gregor Samsa metamorphoses into a bug. **Fabulation** causes Samsa to transform into a non-human creature. **Defamiliarization** makes the reader unaware of his surroundings, uncertain who or what might get transformed next. **Derealization** happens through with the reader becoming convinced that Gregor Samsa has in fact become a bug, that he is no longer a human.

Now Jorge Luis Borges works this effect of de-familiarization and a conscious polycinic texture where different viewpoints of any given thing at any given point are available. We are also interested in fabulation in the context of our discussion on magical realism. So what is fabulation? Fabulation is this practice of telling fables which are chiefly, understood a story is involving talking animals.

However unlike the familiar formulaic fables that; are used more often as tools for moral instruction rather than as art. Fabulation in magical realism attempts at expressing the complexities of the world the layeredness of the world as well as a glimpse at its politics and history.

If we look at Kafka's metamorphosis it incorporates all the 3 aspects the aspects of de-realization, de-familiarization and fabulation where Gregor Samsa metamorphosis into an insect into a bug. So fabulation causes some sort of transform into this non-human creature de-familiarization makes the reader unaware of his surroundings and uncertain of who or what might get transformed the next moment.

And with de-realization the reader becomes convinced that Gregor Samsa has in fact become a bug and that he is no longer a human.

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Magical Realism

- There is a separate genre called Canadian Magical Realism – **Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Robert Kroetch's *What the Crow Said*, Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John*, Sheila Watson's *Double Hook***
- MR is also close to Tzvetan **Todorov's** idea of the fantastic, as existing during a reader's hesitation **between the uncanny events** that are explicable by the natural laws of the universe, and the **marvelous** that requires some alteration in these laws.
- The textual project of MR involves a linguistically bound attempt to increase the capabilities of reality—yet the desire is to go beyond the commonplace unity of a realist text.

So in this context we need to discuss that there is a separate genre called Canadian magical realism. We have a lot of Canadian magical realist writers such as Timothy Findley's who is writing not wanted on the Voyage Robert Kroetch what the crow said Howard O'Hagan's Tay John Sheila Watson's Double Hook and so forth. So magical realism is, also close to this event

and Todorov's idea of the fantastic as existing during reader's hesitation between the uncanny events which are unexplicable by; the natural laws of the tactile universe.

And so the marvelous that requires some alteration some extrapolation some you know revisiting of some of these laws. The textual project of magical realism involves a linguistically bound attempt at, increasing the capabilities the resilience of reality and the reader's believability. And yet the desire is to go beyond the unity of a realist text.

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Magical Realism

- In 1927 magical realism had made a turn away from German painting into Spanish literature and Latin America, by being translated in Jose' Ortega y Gasset's *Revista de Occidente*.
- Authors like **Jorge Luis Borges** and **Gabriel Garcia Marquez** adopted Roh's writings and re-appropriated magical realism into literary art, and from there a new genre proliferated through the Latin American Boom
- Whereas **Angel Flores** insists a Latin American exclusivity to the genre of Magical Realism and associates it with the artworks produced during the Latin American Boom, **Matthew C. Strecher** argues that magical realism is a Post-Modern commodity, and its influence, progression and utilization are adopted through translation and practice by both contemporary Latin American and non-Latin American writers.

So in 1927 magical realism had made a turn away from German painting into Spanish literature and Latin America by being translated in Jose Ortega Y Gasset's *Revista de Occidente*. So authors like Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez adopt Roh's writings and they re-appropriate magical realism into literary art. And from there on a new genre proliferates through the Latin American boom. So we have someone like Angel Flores who insists a Latin American exclusivity to the genre of magical realism.

And associates it with artworks produced during the Latin American boom and Matthew C. Strecher argues that magical realism is a post-modern commodity. So it does not, belong only to Latin America per se but it is a postmodern community that belongs to the world and its influence progression and utilization are adopted through translation and practice is by both Latin American as well as non-Latin American writers.

So the influences and effects of magical realism are available are visible in artworks both Latin American as well as non-Latin American writers from, the world over are using this artistic technique to refer to the new world phenomena.

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Magical Realism

- **Ray Verzasconi** also argues that magical realism was a particularly Latin American literary movement (in “Magical Realism and the Literary World of Miguel Angel Asturias”), which combined European reality and the anthropological aspects of America.
- **Uslar Pietri** and **Alejo Carpentier** recognize that Latin American literature had made a departure from its European influences and had begun to document the flora and fauna of the American continent. Carpentier believed the fantastic was not to be discovered by undermining or surpassing reality with theoretical structures, or through manufactured images (such as in Surrealism). Instead, it churned out of Latin America’s history, geography, people, literature, myth and politics

Now Ray Verzasconi also argues that magical realism was a particularly Latin American literary movement. So Verzasconi says that magical realism actually combines European reality with the anthropological aspects of America. So similarly Uslar Pietri and Alejo Carpentier recognize that a Latin American literature had made a departure from its European influences and had begun to document the flora and the fauna of the American continent.

So Carpentier for example believes that the fantastic was not to be discovered by undermining or surpassing a reality with theoretical structures or through manufactured images that do not belong to Latin America originally such as in surrealism. Instead the magical churn, out of the Latin America and the Latin American history geography, people, habits, literature, myth and politics.

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Magical Realism

- Cuban author Alejo Carpentier's 1949 novel *The Kingdom of This World* (*El reino de este mundo*) in 1957 → provides an account of Haitian revolution, the novel emphasizes the role that Afro-Caribbean beliefs and cultural practices – including Voodoo spiritualism – played in motivating the initial slave revolt. The novel **foregrounds elements of the fantastic against an otherwise realist narrative**, articulating a uniquely **Afro-Caribbean cultural consciousness** that does not share Western culture's normative rationality → the **fantastic** and the **'magically real'** plays a role in **highlighting** and exploring **cultural difference** and **evincing cultural disjunction** (the fantastic and the magically-real appear most prominently at those moments, where the two cultures clash over the interpretation of particular events).

Cuban author Alejo Carpentier's and 1949 novel the king of this world *El reino de este mundo* in 1957 provides an account of Haitian revolution. So the novel emphasizes the role that Afro-Caribbean beliefs and cultural practices played in motivating the initial slave revolt. So he is here he is talking about, different very specific practices such as even the voodoo spiritualism. The novel foregrounds elements of the fantastic against and otherwise realist narrative.

And it articulates uniquely Afro-Caribbean cultural consciousness that does not share the western world's, western cultures normative rationality the fantastic and the magically real plays a role in highlighting and exploring cultural, differences and in evicting cultural disjunction. So the fantastic and the magically real appear most prominently at those moments where the 2 different world views do different possibilities the western and the Latin American meat clash over the interpretation of particular events.

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Magical Realism

- E.g., The **Western culture's utilitarian, wealth-yielding imperative** is opposed to the **human-animal contact and sympathy** – boundaries not so sharply drawn
- Carpentier's essay "**On the Marvelous Real in America**" - human reality of the New World (postcolonial world) is intrinsically marvelous and cannot be adequately represented by either **modern Western literature's realist narrative mode**, or the **literary strategies adopted by Surrealism**. The marvelous real is the authentic expressive idiom of the peoples and cultures of the New World.
- For Carpentier, the fantastic in the Americas is a very real presence in individuals' everyday lives: "The marvelous real is found at every stage in the lives of men who inscribed dates in the history of the continent and who left the names that we still carry..."

For example the Western cultures utilitarian wealth yielding imperative is opposed to the human animal contact and, the sympathy that informs these relationships. So boundaries are not so sharply drawn in the case of the Latin American culture. So the ethos are very different the way of treating the world outside or the way of treating the non-human world is very different in Latin America from the western values right.

It is not necessarily a homocentric society so the value systems are quite apart from one, another. Carpentier's essay *On the Marvelous Real in America* talks about this human reality of the new world referring to the post-colonial world which is intrinsically marvelous and cannot adequately be represented by either modern western literatures realist narrative mode or the literary strategies adopted by surrealism.

The Marvelous Real is the authentic expressive idiom of the peoples and, cultures of the new world. So they are using this marvelous real that can carry their ethos their culture cultural values better. So for Carpentier the fantastic in the Americas is a very real presence and it informs an individual's everyday lives. In the words of carpenter the marvelous reel is found at every stage in the lives of men who inscribed deeds in the history of the continent and who left, the names that we still carry unquote.

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Magical Realism

- In *The Kingdom of This World*, his depiction of the French colony of Saint-Domingue, and later the state of Haiti – includes fantastic elements like **witchcraft, animal metamorphoses, and ghastly apparitions** – each of which the novel's characters accept as factual → these magical intrusions into the narrative are **markers of the “marvelous reality” of Afro-Caribbean life**
- The fantastic elements primarily appear when the narrative adopts the perspective of its black characters, and highlights the rupture between the novel's **European and Afro-Caribbean** modes of perception.

See *The Kingdom of This World* depicts the French colony of Saint Domingue and later the state of Haiti. It includes fantastic elements such as witchcraft, animal metamorphosis and even ghastly apparitions. And each of these elements you know are accepted as factual by the novel's characters these are part and parcel of their everyday life not really something that takes off from the real they live in a different real actually.

So these magical intrusions into the narrative are markers of the marvelous reality of Afro-Caribbean life. The fantastic elements primarily appear when the narrative adopts the perspective of its black characters and highlights the rupture between the novel's European and Afro-Caribbean modes of thinking and existing.

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Magical Realism

- **Fredric Jameson**: the possibility of magic realism as a formal mode is constitutively dependent on a **type of historical material in which disjunction is structurally present**. Magic realism depends on a context, which betrays the overlap or the coexistence of **precapitalist** with **nascent capitalist** or **technological features**. Magical realism is a formal effect that results from a text's **juxtaposition of two ways of knowing**.
 - Magical realist features emerge in the narrative depiction of specific historical circumstances in which **two distinct modes of production** – and therefore **two fundamentally different worldviews** – exist simultaneously in the same physical and temporal space. The magical realist narrative mode's exposition of this socio-historical dichotomy can therefore be instrumental in **exploring cultural difference** and **postcolonial themes**.
 - The fantastic elements in *The Kingdom of the World* function as a literary device that deals with the **problematization of the coexistence of two orders/worldviews/realities**.
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Frederick, Jameson would note that the possibility of magical realism as a formal mode is constitutively dependent on a type of historical material in which disjunction is structurally present. So magical realism inhabits in a design function between; 2 world systems at the level of works and artworks form and content. So magical realism depends on a context that; betrays the overlap or the coexistence of a, pre-capitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features.

Magical realism is a formal effect that results from a text juxtaposition and interfacing so juxtaposing and interfacing of 2 ways of knowing and being. Magical realist features emerge in the narrative depiction of specific historical circumstances in 2 distinct modes of production. And therefore 2 fundamentally different world, views we have 2 world systems simultaneously existing in the same physical and temporal space.

So the magical realist narrative modes exposition of the social historical dichotomy is instrumental in exploring cultural differences and postcolonial themes it speaks to the topics of racism the topics of you know feminism. So what; happens when 2 worldviews clash what happens to the categories such, as the gender, the race, ethnicity, different religions, different languages, different habits and habitat.

So the fantastic elements in the kingdom of the world function as a literary device that deals with the problematization of this coexistence of 2 different orders to different world views and thereby 2 different realities. Here I would like to stop today and I will meet you again with, another round of discussions thank you.