

Narrative Mode and Fiction
Prof. Sarbani Banerjee
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

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Lecture No # 53
Magical Realism I

Good morning and welcome to the lecture series on narrative modern fiction so today we are going to start with a new topic magical realism. Let us try to look at the provenance the historical background of magical realism where from did magical realism churn out what led to the magical realism.

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MAGICAL REALISM

- In 1925 German Art critic **Franz Roh** coined the term '**magical realism**' in reference to a new post-modern artistic tendency that he saw appearing in European painting, which replaced the Expressionist movement. In the term, Roh intended to use **magic** as opposed to **mystic**, suggesting that mystery does not manifest clearly to the represented world, but hides from it.
- Moreover, Roh chooses the term magical realism instead of post-expressionism because he believes post-expressionism shows a chronological relationship with the Expressionist movement.
- Irene Guenther located magical realism as first coming from the German Romantic philosopher **Novalis**, who described an **idealized philosophical protagonist** as capable of **integrating ordinary phenomena** and **magical meanings**. For Novalis, **absolute** has both a subjective and objective aspect that **unites idealism and realism**. Magical idealism requires a complete control over the body and soul (external and internal senses).

And after understanding the historical background what preceded and what kind of provoked this new movement in art in literature. We are going to, also describe we are also going to discuss in detail what magical realism is. So in 1925 German Art critic Franz Roh coined this term magical realism for the first time in reference to a new post-modern artistic tendency. And he saw his tendency appearing first in European painting which replaced the expressionist movement.

So we have to understand that magical realism was preceded by expressionism, in art in the European milieu in the European scenario. So in the term magical realism Franc Roh is intending to use magic as opposed to mystic or abstract and he suggests here that mystery does not manifest clarity to the represented world. But in fact hides the reality from the represented

world so moreover we see that row chooses the term magical realism instead of post-expressionism.

Because, when we say pre or post to a certain movement we in a way say that there is a disjunction but also certain overlaps. He wanted to signify in fact that there is a conscious departure from expressionism and hence not post expressionism. He believes that post-expressionism kind of shows like I said a chronological relationship with the expressionist movement. I would like to give an example here let us, say modernism and postmodernism there is a disjunction there is a breakaway in postmodernism.

But we also see a like plenty of overlaps between the 2 movements and so chronological continuum which France rule of consciously wanted to avoid in this case. And hence not post expressionism but magical realism right. Now Irene Guenther located magical realism as first coming from the German romantic, philosopher novelist. A novelist describes an ideal philosophical protagonist as capable of integrating the magical meanings with the ordinary phenomena the everyday phenomena.

So the magic like I said is not a takeoff from the ordinary but is interspersed with the ordinary and the mundane. So 4 novelist's absolute has both a subjective and an objective aspect which unites realism with idealism. So, in this convergence in this unity of realism and idealism magical realism is born. So magical idealism requires a complete control over the body and the soul in other words external and internal senses this is something that novelists had to say.

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MAGICAL REALISM

- It is through **poetry** that a magical idealist learns how to attain a magical change of the sensible world. In his doctrine of **syncriticism (transforming conflict into spiritual, playful forms that enables an understanding of correlation/comparison)**, Novalis states that a magical idealist should have the power "to make thoughts into things and things into thoughts". The soul externalizes itself in nature in the same way as the nature internalizes itself in the mind.
- According to Roh, MR **occupied the middle ground**: The magical realist was neither the practical "Machiavellian politician nor the apolitical man who listens only to the voice of an ethical ideal, but a man **at once political and ethical.**"
- Chris Warnes associates both Novalis and Roz's conceptualisations of magical realism with the **limits of mimesis** and a **reliance on dialectics of inwardness and outwardness.**

So we see that in magical realism it is through poetry that a magical idealist understands how to attain a magical change of the sensible world. We see, novelists using the term syncretism for the first time and according to novelist's doctrine syncretism transforms conflict into spiritual playful forms which enables an understanding of a correlation and comparison. So when we have opposed categories traditionally diadic dualistic categories.

We are not looking at binarism we are not looking at a clash or a kind of difference but rather the, magical that can emerge as a result of their interfacing. Novelist states that a magical red idealist should have the power to quote him to make thoughts into things and things into thoughts unquote. In other words the soul externalizes itself in nature in the same way as the nature internalizes itself in the mind.

So the human nature and the outer nature interface and the magic is burned sparked out, of this interface. According to Franc Roh magical realism occupied this middle ground where the magical realist was neither the practical machiavellian politician nor the a political man that listens only to the voice of an ethical A magical realist should typically be at once political and yet ethical.

Chris wants associates both novelists and rose conceptualizations of magical realism with the, limits of my missus how much can we imitate the world onto world? And the world the discursive world with its you know arbitrary happenings infinite meanings cannot be exactly transcribed brought into the page of an artwork of a book or into performance. There has to be a reliance on dialectics between the inwardness and the outwardness.

The outer is interspersous interwoven into our inner and that, is where the real becomes a magical real.

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Expressionism

- Meyer Howard Abrams understood Expressionism as depicting “powerful emotional states of mind” (Abrams 1993, p. 61). Art critic Frederick S. Levine also echoed Roh in writing that Expressionism sought the personification of “inner reality” and wanted “to project emotional needs, psychological pressures, and private obsessions” (Levine 1979, p. 2). Expressionists reacted against Realism by using “highly structured schematics” and “exalted idealism.” According to Roh, magical realism was a reaction to Expressionism by producing a space where “our real world re-emerges before our eyes”.
- Rather than seeking the indefinite that underlay the definite frame, MR is interested in cracking open the definite and examining its effect on the humanity.

Meyer Howard Abrams understands expressionism as depicting I quote powerful emotional states of mind. So we also need to understand the expressionist movement which preceded the magical realism. So Art critic Frederick S. Levine also equals row in writing that expressionism sought the personification of inner reality. So reality not a detour of the outer, happenings but something that reflects that personifies are in a reality the psychic reality too.

And something that wanted to project emotional needs psychological pressures and private obsessions unquote. So expressionists are essentially reacting against realism by using highly structured schematics and exalted idealism right. So according to Franc Roh magical realism was a reaction a takeoff, from expressionism through producing a space where our real world reimages before our eyes.

So coming back to the ordinary through the non-geated vision so rather than seeking the infinite, the indefinite and the transcendental remote meanings which underlay the definite frame magical realism is more interested in cracking open in dismantling unpacking the definite and thereby examining its effect, on the humanity.

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New Objectivity

- Roh refers to **German artist George Schrimpf's** painting to explain the double-sided art that strives between contraries, which is at the heart of Magical Realism – where the ordinary and the familiar can also refer to the spirit; they are not diametrically opposed.
- **Gustav Hartlaub** coined the term '**New Objectivity**' to define this art movement. The term suggests objectivism as spiritual creation. It offers a return to unsentimental reality and a focus on the objective world, as opposed to the more abstract, romantic, or idealistic tendencies of Expressionism. In painting, **New Objectivity** is most often associated with **portraiture**, and its leading practitioners included Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, and George Grosz. **New Objectivity** has since formed a part of Latin American literature, post-colonial studies, and criticism related to the non-Western part of the world. The interest lay in the magic that inhabits the ordinary.

So Roh refers to German artist George Schrimpf's painting in order to explain the double-sided art that strives between contraries which is at the heart of magical realism. Here we see that the ordinary and the familiar can also refer to the spirit so we are looking at the capabilities the capacities of the ordinary and it can also speak to the question of the spiritual. The fact that we are not dealing with binaries anymore so ordinary is not a binary opposite to the spiritual they can actually meet and a magic and spark.

As a result so they are not diametrically opposed now Gustav Hartlaub coined the term new objectivity in relation to magical realism as a way of defining and this art movement. The term new objectivity suggests objectivism has a kind of spiritual creation, it offers a return to unsentimental reality and a focus on the objective world as opposed to the more abstract more romantic and a more idealistic tendency that expressionism harbors.

So in painting new objectivity is most often associated with poor fisher and it is leading practitioners. So in painting we see some of the leading practitioners of new objectivity include Max Beckmann Otto Dix, and George Grosz. So new objectivity has since the time of these artists formed a part of Latin American literature postcolonial studies and criticisms related to non-western way of the world the non-western existence.

So the interest of new objectivity once again lies in the magic that inhabits the which is inbuilt in the ordinary.

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New Objectivity

- As opposed to **Expressionism** which was invested with a **sense of exoticism** and **emphasized the fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects**; the **new objectivity** is a **re-emergence from dreamscape to reality**, celebrates the mundane away from transcendental and religious themes- Roh calls it a movement of **decantation and clarification**. Roh distinguishes **expressionism, futurism, and post-expressionism** through **objectivity**
- In Germany, New Objectivity frequently **portrayed Weimar society** in a satirical manner → the Weimar culture refers to arts and sciences produced in Germany during the interwar period (defeat in WW1 and rise of Hitler), and centres the 1920s Berlin. New Objectivity/MR represented the contemporary realities, the horrors of Germany: urban life, dirty cities, machines, factories, drawing concentration on the **individual lost in a world he could neither understand nor control**.

So as opposed to expressionism which was deeply invested with a sense, of exoticism and which emphasized the fantastic extraterrestrial and objects that are far away from our familiar world remote objects that was something that interested in expressionism. Apart from this we see in new objectivity re-emergence from that dreamscape coming back to this worldly to the reality.

So re-emergence from dreamscape to the reality and celebrating the mundane as a way of you, know moving away from the transcendental and even the religious themes. Roh calls this as a movement of decantation and clarification and distinguishes expressionism, futurism and post-expressionism through the lens of objectivity. So in Germany we see an interesting phenomenon where new objectivity frequently portrayed Weimar society in a satirical manner how new objectivity treats the post-world war, one German society.

So the Weimar culture refers to arts and sciences produced in Germany during the interwar period. This is the period when we are talking about the defeat in world war one and the rise of Hitler and this you know the Weimar culture, Weimar society centers the nineteen twenties Berlin. New objectivity in other words magical realism represents the contemporary realities at that time in Germany the, horrors of Germany reflecting or representing the urban life the dirty cities machines factories and it drew concentration on the individual.

The individual that is lost in a world which he can no longer understand and he cannot control it is representing the external and determinants diminishing human possibilities diminishing the human existence.

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Expressionism

- The Weimar culture as captured in New Objectivity portrays a Germany suffering the depression of **defeat in World War I**, the **economic inflation**, and the **seething anger, cynicism, and social division** which would eventually lead to the Second World War → it was celebrating a return to reality after Expressionism's exaggeration and distortion of reality.
 - Expressionism was an existential flight which touched the real world from a mystical perspective, while magical realism was a return to the real world.
 - According to **Massimo Bontempelli** (Italian poet, dramatist, and critic and a significant figure in the development of magical realism in Europe), World War I created a "tabula rasa" from which a new era began → As humanity was starting again, one ought to "feel elementary" and rebuild from nothing, and create one's own myths which would help bind people together.
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Now the Weimar culture is captured in new, objectivity portrays in Germany that is suffering from depression of defeat in world war one. It is talking about the economic inflation and the seething anger cynicism and social division all of which would eventually lead to the Second World War. It was celebrating a return to reality after expressionisms you know distortion of reality and all sorts of exaggerations that expressionism indulged in.

So expressionism was an existential flight like we have already discussed by now which touched the real world from a mystical perspective a remote perspective whereas magical realism makes a return to the real world. According to Massimo Bontempelli who is an Italian poet dramatist and critic also; a significant figure in the development of magical realism in Europe.

So according to Bomtempelli world war, one created a tabula rasa from which a new era began. Bomtempelli would go on to say that as humanity was starting a fresh starting anew with almost you know it bargained a new lease of life after world war one and one ought to feel elementary once again with this new start new lease of life one ought to feel elementary again and revealed from this state of nothingness. Create one's own myths which would, help bind the people together.

So apart from novelist Andrew Bomtempelli 's a magical realism reflects a desire a desire for a new mythography a new way of looking at the map or a new sense of geography that take into consideration the connections between the past and the present.

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Expressionism

- Independent from **Novalis** and **Roh**, **Bontempelli's MR** reflected a desire for a **new mythography** that took into consideration the connections between past and present
- While the development of **Expressionist** painting was marked by a **moving away from the nature** towards **rejecting its representative, imitative meaning**; in **Futurism**, the objective world **appeared in an abrupt and dislocated form** (p. 18). On the other hand, **post-expressionism** aims at **reintegrating reality into the heart of visibility** → recognizing and re-entering real things → "the ground in which the most diverse ideas in the world can take root has been reconquered – albeit in new ways"

So while the development of expressionist painting was marked by a moving away from the nature to us rejecting its, representative imitative meaning that informed the realist tradition. In futurism the objective world appeared in an abrupt and dislocated form. And in post-expressionism we see there is this desire the aim to reintegrate reality into the hurt of what is visible what is tactile and tangible around us.

So recognizing and re-entering the real things the ground in which the most diverse ideas in the, world can take root has been re-conquered albeit in new ways right.

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MAGICAL REALISM

- Franz Roh argues that the deeper meaning and mysticism of Expressionist artwork disturbs the secure tranquility, and is fraught with '**vulgar bourgeoisification**', whereas the labour class can appreciate art that is sans grandeur, loftiness, and appeals to the civil by reflecting restraint, prudence, and discretion, and incorporating the experience of the monotony of hard labour → **a way of reconciling art with the people**
- **MR** believes in sobriety as a way of **radiating magicity and spirituality**→ this is possible through unlikely combinations of events producing marvelous results.

Franz Roh argues that the deeper meaning and mysticism of expressionist artwork disturbs the secure tranquility. So there is there are certain class assumptions class associations with expressionist artwork we see. So expressionism as Roh sees it is fraught with vulgar

bourgeoisification whereas the labor class can appreciate an art, that is Sanskrander sense loftiness and something that appeals to the civil.

By reflecting a sense of restraint prudence and discretion and something that; incorporates the experience of the monotony of hard labor. So hard labor being represented in our reconciles the common people with the artistic process the creation of art. So magical realism believes in sovereignty as a way of radiating, magicality and spirituality this is what Franz Roh has to say this you know magicality emanating from the ordinary is possible through unlikely combinations of evens that lead to the marvel marvelous results right.

So we see that modern and postmodern going back to our earlier discussions they are really interested in these unlikely combinations and the staccato effect right where the harmony or, and the familiar you know reading the familiar perception is I mean kind of unnerved, dismantled, cracked open and unsettled. So he is shocked and we are forced to think afresh.

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Expressionism

- As a departure from the artistic tradition of **realism** that values empiricism and aims at creating art that is as true to the human experience as possible, (effectively establishing the literary equivalent to anthropology, ethnography and linguistics), Expressionism sought to present what Roh calls a “**fantastic dreamscape.**”
- On the other hand, the ‘Real’ in **MR** does not “reproduce” like a photo to its finest detail, but “recreates” through a reconstruction of what Irene Guenther calls “**Spiritual reconstruction**” → it refers to mankind’s constant oscillation between “devotion to the world of dreams and adherence to the world of reality.” In the words of Franz Roh, “the marvel by which a **variable commotion** crystallizes into a **clear set of constants.**”

As a departure from the artistic tradition of realism which values empiricism, experimentation, observation and transcribing that observation through descriptions on page something that aims at creating art that is as true to, the human experience as possible. So effectively establishing the literary equivalent to anthropology ethnography and linguistics on the other hand expressionism sought to present what row calls as the fantastic dreamscape.

Now the real and magical realism does not reproduce like a photo not a photograph to; its finest detail. But it is recreating the ordinary through a reconstruction of what Irene, winter would call spiritual reconstruction. So this refers to mankind's constant oscillation between I

would quote to enter here devotion to the world of dreams and adherence to the world of reality.

So our attachment to both the worlds leads to a syncretism which is the magical effect the effect of the marvelous. In the words of Franz Roh I quote the marvel by which a variable commotion, crystallizes into a clear set of constants.

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MAGICAL REALISM

- MR delves into the impossible for a better exploration of the mundane, not in an attempt to destroy it.
- Magic and realism → suggests an oxymoron that describes the new art. Magical realism is essentially **constituted of these two parts**: the expression of magic, or the impossible, within the conventions of literary realism.
- Thus, magical realism was a return to reality, but carried the baggage of Expressionism's existential voyage, **a mix of wild flights and anchored reality** → Roh defines it as the treatment of the quotidian as a product of the astonishingly inexplicable.

Magical realism delves into the impossible for a better exploration of the mundane and not in an attempt to destroy the mundane. So approaching the mundane through alternative meanings magical and realism when we juxtapose them bring them together within the same term we it suggests. It suggests an oxymoron that describes the new art so we are dealing with, oppositions as the term itself suggests the movement is about what happens when to opposed categories meet not always a conflict but something really interesting.

New meanings can emerge so a magical realism is essentially constituted of these 2 parts the expression of the magic or the impossible the improbable within the conventions of literary realism. This magical realism was a return to, reality but it carried the baggage of expressionism's existential voyage to a certain extent a mix of wild flights and anchored realities. Roh defines it as the treatment of the quotidian the ordinary as a product of the astonishingly inexplicable.

Here we would like to stop our lecture and we will meet again with another round of discussions on the same topic thank you.