



MAGICAL REALISM IN MARQUEZ'S *EYES OF A BLUE DOG* : AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Awais Shafiq

awaisshafiq345@gmail.com

PhD English Scholar

NCBA&E Alhamra University Sub Campus Multan

Dr. Abdul Ghaffar

Associate Professor, Division of Arts & Social

Sciences, University of Education Lahore, Multan

Abstract

Witnessing its boom in Latin American literature, magical realism has become a significant literary mode - especially through the works of a literary titan, Gabriel García Márquez. The study aims to explore the salient characteristics of magical realism in Márquez's short story *Eyes of a Blue Dog*. In order to obtain this goal, the study employs a coherent framework propounded by Faris (2004) and Chanady (1985). The major characteristics of the framework include: irreducible element, phenomenal world, merging realism, creating unsettling doubts in the readers' minds, temporal, spatial and identity disruptions, and authorial reticence. Following a qualitative design, the study uses an interpretive model and a close reading procedure. The selected extracts in the short story are analyzed minutely. The study maintains that Márquez uses magical realism in his short fiction with his distinct approach. As for the phenomenal world, Márquez employs concrete phenomena. Márquez is concerned with merging realism in order to create doubts in the minds of the readers. He deals with human perceptions and feelings. His short fiction is steeped in fluidity of time, space and identity. Márquez remains reticent - grounded in phenomenology. The study ends with suggestions for future research in the domain of magical realism.

Key Words: Latin American literature, Gabriel García Márquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, Magical realism, Irreducible element, The Phenomenal world, Merging realism, Creating unsettling doubts in the readers' minds, Disruptions of time, space and identity, Authorial reticence.

Introduction

The oxymoronic term 'magical realism' was first employed in 1920s by a school of Surrealist German painters. Magical realism deals with a realistic way of writing with fantastical or marvelous events treated as perfectly ordinary occurrences. It was Cuban writer Alejo Carpenter who gave the notion of "Lo real maravilloso" (marvelous reality). This term was coined in the prologue to *EL Reino de este Mundo* (1949), translated as *The Kingdom of this World* (1957). The objective was the description of reality in which the magical is part of everyday life, not an extraordinary dimension. Faris (2004:29) has indicated that magical realism "partially reverses the process of cultural colonization".

Bowers (2004) has observed three sources of Marquez's magical realism. First type includes characters, living for years more than normal span of life. Second type deals with the birth of a child with a pig's tail. It is thought that this happened due to incest. The whole town suffers insomnia. The third type deals with the scientist's inventions e.g. ice and telescope. Marquez's work has been intentionally focused on atmosphere of nostalgia, and magical incidents. For instance, a child is born with a tail; it is accepted as a routine reality. For Marquez, magical realism becomes a means of his cultural context. He employed magical realism with the art of the oral story-telling methods of his own grandmother. In his childhood he lived in the supposedly haunted house of his grandparents. It was filled with

superstitions. The house provided Marquez with a complete physical setting for magical realism reflected in his work later on.

Statement of the problem

Magical realism witnessed its boom in Latin American literature (Bowers, 2004). Marquez presents historical memories (Bell-Vilada, 2010). Readers and scholars often struggle to understand the deeper narrative and thematic concerns of magical realism. There is a pressing need to explore how Marquez uses magical realism in his short fiction.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the major objectives of the study:

1. To analyse how Márquez synthesizes irreducible magical elements with depictions of the phenomenal world in his short story *Eyes of a Blue Dog*?
2. To find out how the merging of realism and magical elements in Márquez's short story creates epistemological uncertainty and unsettling doubts in the readers' minds?
3. To explore the relationship between ontological disruptions of time, space, and identity and authorial reticence in the short story?

Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

1. In what ways does Márquez synthesize irreducible magical elements with depictions of the phenomenal world in his short story *Eyes of a Blue Dog*?
2. To what extent does the merging of realism and magical elements in Márquez's short story creates epistemological uncertainty and unsettling doubts in the reader's mind?
3. What is the relationship between ontological disruptions of time, space, and identity, and authorial reticence in the short story?

Literature Review

Hamid's novel *The Last White Man* (2022) presents a strange phenomenon when people wake up and find their skin changed into black. Amir et al. (2024) employ the basic tenets of magical realism in *The Last White Man*. Using this approach enables them to find out the issues related to social tradition and customs.

Jose (2005) has pointed out that Carey, Australian writer, has used magical realism in his novels *Bliss*, *The Tax Inspector*, and *Ilywhacker*. Being a prodigious storyteller, Carey decorates his stories with fantastic designs. The places described in Carey's novels do not exist on the earth. Even the dreams of the protagonists are difficult to get. In his works characters and incidents (re)combine as the tumble of a poker machine does. In a magical realist design Carey introduces myths and cultural contexts. These are the grotesqueries of Carey's intricate plots, which give extra charm to his novels (Gaille, 2005).

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) presents magical happenings, accepted without raising a questions on its reality. The protagonist Gregor Samsa finds himself changed into a big cockroach. This incident is accepted like a child's acceptance of such events in stories. It is Kafka who co - mingles unrealistic situation into a realistic situation (Holland, 1958).

While describing an interesting story, Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1972) compresses the decades of cause and effect. In this masterpiece Marquez introduced magically real images. Such technique endows the things to move. To Melquide, things enjoy a life of their own. This idea is actualized with flying carpets and a pot moving across a table. Swanson (1995) finds out that Marquez's magical realism must be a political question of reinterpretation of reality method of Marquez's grandmother's storytelling.

Morison's *Beloved* (1987) focuses magic only on one character. It is *beloved's* magical presence, which is felt in *Beloved*. For Sethe, it is the ghost of infanticide, haunting the text of the novel. (Lifson, 2024). For Chittiphalangrsi (2005), the novel *Beloved* is undoubtedly an authentic African-American narrative that is magical realism.

Shahab-ud-Din et al. (2023) have traced out the basic characteristics of magical proposed by Faris 2004. It has been found out that five characteristics of magical realism have interwoven into the narrative of the immortal, including the irreducible element, the phenomenal world, merging realism, unsettling doubts, and the disruption of time, space and identity. Borges has successfully mingled the realms of realism and magic in the description of events in the superb short story. His philosophical arena has invited the physical as well as the mental labyrinths in the narrative.

Warnes and Sasser (2020) have claimed that magical realism has been acknowledged as one of the most recognizable genres of prose writing. These magical realists successfully combine the resources of narrative realism with the presentation of beliefs, traditions, folklore and fantasy.

Research Methodology

The research employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative content analysis is conducted for the short story of *Eyes of a Blue Dog* Marquez in order to explore the interplay of magic and reality. The study employs two models of magical realism propounded by Faris (2004) and Chanady (1985), making it a coherent framework. It includes irreducible element, the phenomenal world, merging realism, creating unsettling doubts in the readers' minds, disruptions of time, space and identity, and authorial reticence.

- 1) **Irreducible element:** The irreducible element cannot be explained logically.
- 2) **The Phenomenal world:** The second characteristic of magical realist's work is the phenomenal world - described with realistic details.
- 3) **Merging Realism:** Two worlds co-exist side by side - the world of magic and the world of reality.
- 4) **Creating Unsettling Doubts in the Readers' Minds:** Magical realism has the characteristic of unsettling doubts, coming in their minds of the readers when they read about the things - unaccepted by the minds.
- 5) **Disruptions of Time, Space and Identity:** Faris (2004) opines that magical realism disturbs our conventional notions of time, space and identity.
- 6) **Authorial Reticence:** The author willingly withholds judgment or explanation of magical events (Chanady, 1985).

Text

Eyes of a Blue Dog is an early Márquez's story about two people who meet repeatedly in shared dreaming, but cannot find each other after awaking up. The woman writes 'Eyes of a blue dog' everywhere as a message to help them recognize each other in real world. Unfortunately, they always forget the crucial details when awake. It is about impossible love and the frustrating gap between the real world and the dream world.

Data Analysis

I. Irreducible Element

Marquez's *Eyes of a Blue Dog* is pregnant with irreducible elements. Two people meeting repeatedly in a shared dream,

- I. Recognize each other

- II. Remember previous meeting and
III. Experience real intimacy.

All this blurs the boundary between sleeping consciousness and waking consciousness. They have never met in waking life. They are unable to meet each other in real life though they leave signs and messages in order to remember their dream meetings. Actually, dreams are private activities of mind only watched by the dreamer. How is it possible that two dreamers share the same dream location? The impossibility of such occurring disrupts the boundary between the separate minds. The dreaming woman particularly has a detailed memory. Contradictorily, even the perfect memory fails to support them in finding each other in real life. Despite remembering everything happening in their shared dreams, they fail in bridging the gap between the real world and the dream world. Thus, the memory paradox remains unresolved.

The impossibility content reaches its climax via the specificity and consistency of the shared dreams. Everything is described in a detailed manner, feeling real. The dreaming man remembers the dress of the woman, her hair, her presence with smell and her blue eyes. Her eyes are blue like the eyes of a blue dog - the phrase they use over and over again to recognize him in real life. The woman fully remembers his voice and his gestures. All these specific details appear a genuine shared experience rather than meetings in dreams by chance. Fundamentally, Marquez successfully creates a world where the boundary between reality and dream blur. Both the man and the woman do their utmost to remember what cannot be remembered. Especially, the woman writes 'Eyes of a blue dog' on the mirror, walls, everywhere, hoping he will see it when he is awake and recognize her. In the similar vein, the man tries his best to retain each and everything about the woman. All this is presented in such a way that it needs justification, which is never provided.

Then comes another irreducible element with a boom in the shape of a one-way barrier between the dream world and the real world. Both the persons meet each other regularly in their shared dreams, talk frankly and leave signs for remembering their dream meetings in the real world. The woman

would write on the napkins and scratch on the varnish of the tables with a knife. 'Eyes of a blue dog'. And on the steamed-up windows of hotels, stations, and all public buildings, and she would write with her forefinger: 'Eyes of a blue dog'. (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.43)

But does it work? No! In the real world he never reads the messages, never finds her and she never meets him in the waking world. Their connection is possible only in the dream world, not in the real world. Though they enjoy the deep intimacy with each other. But nothing helps them recognize each other in the waking world. They face an invisible wall between dream and reality; they fail to cross the wall. There is one passage moving in one and only one direction (they can dream), but not the other (they can't bring the dream into reality). This partial barrier is another form of the torture takes. Though they love each other in their dream, they are strangers in the real world. They share intimacy:

And no sooner had she said it then she almost completely undressed, with the flame licking her long upper skin. (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.42)

Alas! Even such intimacy completely fades after coming in real life.

2. The Phenomenal world

So, what matters "Eyes of a blue Dog" is the minute descriptions of the phenomenal world in both worlds—dream and real. Marquez never differentiates between what happens in the

dream and what happens in the real world regarding the phenomenal world. Usually, it happens that the dream world is vague, not concrete, and not even symbolic. The specific sensory details are provided in the dreams both the persons share.

Again she began to move toward the mirror and I turned again in the chair keeping my back to her. (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.42)

In the extract the dream meeting is vividly described with movements the dreamers make - realistic concrete things e.g. mirror, chair. What a real world in the dream world! Especially, the room they meet in - how the light looks, the texture of her hair and body, the smell of her nearness — all is described as we meet each other in the real world. The richness of the sensory depiction makes the dreams feel genuine rather than imagery or symbols. All this bestows the story its weird power. In the Marquezian world, the dreams are not just "dreams", they are another kind of real experience, happening to occur in a totally different world.

Then comes the magical reality of the magical text reappearance. Regarding the characters of the story, a specific type of reality is created. The phenomenal world expands into both waking life and dreams in the narratives. The subjective experience of both characters is as valid and real as the experience of their real waking life. The man and the woman do have actual presence in their dreams. The spaces they possess feel inhabited, reliable, and genuine. Then comes the excellent catch. Though their dream experiences are normally material and real, nothing translates into their waking life. It is described painfully by the woman:

And she, with a sad smile which was already a smile of surrender to the impossible, the unreachable — said: 'Yet you won't remember anything during the day.' (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.47)

What tortures him is the forgetfulness about everything seen in the dreams. Though they have found each other, their two halves become one only - but only in their dreams. In the real world, they remain lost. Both are insiders in the dreams, but outsiders for each other in the real world. Both enjoy each other's company to the full in the dreams, but are poles apart actually in the real world. The narratives treat the dream realm with some ontological intensity as waking reality. Undoubtedly, it is another dimension of reality existence, which is equally concrete, but disappointingly without reach from another angle.

The narrative successfully presents how dreams become reality and reality becomes dreams. For instance, the woman's obsession in writing 'Eyes of a blue dog' everywhere looks illogical, dreamlike and magical. Thus, reality becomes too dreamlike and dreams become too real. There is no implied suggestion that experiencing something in dreams leaks into real life and changes how people experience everything. Waking life is haunted by dreams and dreams are overburdened by reality. Nothing is purely pure. The story leaves the characters facing this in-between space where nothing is thoroughly one thing or the other. Such is the phenomenal world presented in the story *Eyes of a Blue Dog*.

3- Merging Realism

Extraordinary events are narrated in the story with a deadpan matter-of-fact narrative way. This style Marquez got from his grandmother's storytelling. She used to describe extraordinary events as if they were even routine-life matters. The story begins in a direct way without mentioning a dream.

Then she looked at me. I thought that she was looking at me for the first time. But then she turned around behind the lamp... I understood that it was I who was looking at her for the first time. (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.41)

No wonder is expressed by the narrator at the shared dreaming. Instead, he focuses on the minute physical details of the meeting. That is the subjective perceptual reality, which can be mastered. The magic does not live in the flying characters or talking animals; the fantastic is normalized through realistic description. Thus, the boundary between "real" and "unreal" starts blurring. It is just like a mundane evening at home when two people meet. There is no magic, but law — the fundamental grammar of a dream world. Then comes the law of oblivion. Even the phrase 'Eyes of a blue dog' may be the token of love and a damned artifact. Within the closed system of the dream, the meaning of the message is reiterated. The woman tries her best to hack this law. She wants to use it in order to bridge the eternal gap between the real world and the magic world. The merger of the magic and real is total. The physics of the story is the magical tale; the reality of the characters is given by their separate, desperate efforts against it.

The lovers do not just have dream bodies; they own bodies, and challenge the very category of the algorithm.

...and she said: 'Sometimes I think I'm made of metal...I said: 'Sometimes in other dreams I've thought you were only a little bronze statue in the corner of some museum' (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.43)

A metallic body has the implication that it can generate. Here the self is not only crafted, but also alienated. The dream man connects directly to his own way of imagination, envisioning her a little bronze statue in the corner of a museum. A brilliant alchemy is performed via this mutual vision. The living (blood, skin) are merged with the manufactured (bronze, plate).

Throughout the story, there remains the unbridged gap as language has the failed sanctuary. It is an open mourning about the very medium it uses: language. The central magical object is the phrase 'Eyes of a blue dog'. However, it proves to be a failed object — the very source of the tragedy. As for its meaning, it has its complete world - shared symbol within the realm of a dream. However, it turns to be a nonsensical phrase in the waking world - graffiti on a wall, a baffling remark to a drugstore clerk, as she said:

I always dream about a man who says to me, "eyes of a blue dog". And she said. The clerk had looked at her eyes and told her: 'As a matter of fact, miss, you do have eyes like that'...And the clerk started to laugh and moved to other corner of the counter. (Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.43).

Both lovers successfully merge their realities of the dream-space. They are able to merge the concepts of selfhood into metallic form. Nevertheless, in reality, they thoroughly fail to merge the semantic truth of the dream world with the lexicon of the waking world. On the other hand, the merging of the realm of magic and the realm of real is perfect. No subordination. Both magic and real co-exist without hurting each other.

4- Creating unsettling doubts in readers' minds

The most profound doubt — the most destabilizing doubt — is the ontological status of the meetings between the woman and the man. Various doubts in form of the questions appear:

- (i) Do both characters really meet in shared dreams, violating the limits of individual consciousness?
- (ii) Does only one of them - the narrator - dream, believing mistakenly a shared dream?
- (iii) Is no character real in the conventional sense, representing human desire of intimacy?

Marquez intentionally structured the plot of his story to make these unanswerable questions. Another twist comes in the story when we are informed about everything in the man's perspective who is both the character and the narrator. The readers experience his feelings,

emotions, observations and experiences. He never allows up entering the woman's consciousness. We do not get her independent account of what these dream meetings mean. Thus, a fundamental uncertainty is created in the reader's mind.

Does she really experience the dream meetings the same way as he does? OR

Is she just a construct of his consciousness—something his mind generates?

The apparent reality reciprocity - the sense that she likes him as he likes her - may be a desire on his part. The phrase 'Eyes of a blue dog' acts as an identifier, implicating that it is genuinely shared. On the other hand, it may be a projection because everything the reader knows about the woman is filtered through the man's needs and desires. For example, it is usually a man's desire to see a woman naked. So does the man when he presents her with all nakedness. All this raises the unanswered questions:

(i) Do they dream impossible but genuine shared dreaming?

(ii) Is it an individual delusion, looking reciprocal via projection?

The story never resolves these issues created in the minds of the readers. Then comes the major structural problem: 'How can two persons even prove they share dreams? Though they use the same identifying phrases, that proof remains circumstantial. We can hear someone's dream and unconsciously incorporate it in our own dreams later. There is no specific proof possible via any waking meeting where we recognize each other.

The man's waking life and dream life never intersect. The woman writes 'Eyes of a blue dog' everywhere with her lipstick with her forefinger, hoping he will recognize her when he reads the phrase. Though written everywhere these messages remain unseen for the man. Her waking presence and his waking presence do not line up socially or geographically. The doubts are raised:

Is his waking existence just another level of dream? OR

Does she not exist actually outside his dreaming consciousness?

E.M. Forster (1951) remarked that he did not believe in beliefs But as we can say that that is also a belief. Thus, believing in no belief is also a belief. Probably, dreaming a woman and not finding her in the real world may be a real dream. The senses of the readers are disrupted:

Is dream the real world? Or

Is the real world a dream?

Dream and reality become one, blurring the boundaries between them.

5. Disruptions of time, space and identity

Regarding temporal disruption, there is the eternal return of the same dream meetings over and again. What surprises the readers is the time loop in which the woman and the man are entrapped. The same thing happens repeatedly. In dreams both the dreamers meet, experience their shared dream connection, promise to meet in the real world .They are separated when they wake up. Thus, their meetings have repetitive and circular qualities. Nothing progresses, it just loops. It is not a linear time where events lead to some goal: it is an eternal, everlasting return - the same moment is repeated without any end. Some basic elements remain the same - meeting, experiencing, then departing and then losing everything upon waking! Though specific details vary, it is suggested that both dreamers are thoroughly trapped in the cycle, failing to get out of the time loop — as if they were damned to replay without any progression. They are imprisoned forever via time loop. No progress in their relationship as they cannot bridge their dream life and their real life. In the same vein, the narrative cannot move because it loops circling back to the same eternal situation.

As for the spatial fluidity in the story, the dream room exists nowhere. No connection with any real geography. Specific physical details are given about the room — furniture, lighting, dimensions. Yet is not located in any real place. Though it feels like somewhere, it is nowhere. As time circles without any progress, space exists without any location. It is a space without any material location — another manifestation of the barrier as it becomes a space occupied only in dreams — not in reality. What follows is an extract, showing spatial disruption.

'Don't open the door,' she said ' the hallway is full of difficult dreams'. I asked her: 'How do you know? And she told me: "Because I was there a moment ago...I was sleeping on my heart.'(Marquez, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*, 1999, p.46)

The sentence "the hallway is full of difficult dreams" implies that space is a container for a psychological state. The hallway - connector of rooms - becomes 'full' of dreams. The hall is not full metaphysically or atmospherically but with dreams, which occupy space, have volume with density, able to obstruct the passage. Then the woman sleeps on her heart. The heart is an inside organ, containing within sides and tissues. Internal turns into external when the woman sleeps "on" it. No sense is made, but the sentence moves forward confidently.

Then comes identity fluidity. The narrative never informs — who are these people? What are their names? The relationship established in their dreams replaces their waking identities. The knowledge of their identities lives in their connection to each other. It is the connection, which does not exist in the normal social world. Usually, reality is constructed through the name, progression of relationships and biographical accounts. None of these characteristics matters. The man's identity is defined by his relationship with the woman he meets in the dreams. Complicated, multifaceted identity is minimized to a single defining thing.

As for the woman, we know her only as she appears in dreams only through the man's angle and only as through as the center of his desires. Regarding her own identity, nothing is told. What is her name - origin, life, circumstances? The story gives no answer. As a separate person, her identity is either non - existent or irrelevant. She exists purely as a charming figure in dream, as a presence, which has been meaningful regarding the man's needs, urges, and desires.

6. Authorial reticence

The big structural move of the story is Marquez's absolute refusal to give external verification — omniscient confirmation in order to resolve the ambiguities about the certainty of shared dreaming of both the man and the woman. The story never steps outside the man's consciousness. No objective angle, no confirmation whether the woman exists independently or not. We do not know about any verification whether the shared dreaming is genuine or the product of single consciousness. Traditionally, objective perspective is provided in the stories. The readers may find the omniscient voice saying that "the narrator believes something false but the truth is ..." It is the omniscient voice, which gives interpretations implicitly or explicitly. Instead, Marquez systematically refuses such omniscient authority. He restricts the readers completely to the narrator's limited or perhaps unreliable mediums. No external vantage point is provided to assess the truth of what the narrator says. All this leaves the readers to decide on their own to accept or reject the narrator's claims. Such authorial reticence embodies formally the philosophical content of the story.

The authorial withholding of information works in the minimization of context - no social world, no background, no biographies of the characters. The readers never get the usual stuff, grounding the characters in reality. Who are these people? Where do they live? What do they

do? What is the story of their history? Even the whole story becomes his story as history is often regarded as 'his story'. - Often told by men. Outside their dream encounters, the narrative does not give confirmation about the lives of both characters. With minimal grounding in any social world, they exist almost completely in relation to each other. Moreover, the systematic silence from the author's side focuses the readers completely on the impossible relation itself. Stripping away context, the narrative gives no explanation, no rationalization, no domestication of strangeness. Instead of giving biographical details and social circumstances, the author keeps it floating in the unallocated, unmapped room where the dream relationship becomes the only mattered reality. From beginning to end, the refusal of explanation and justification creates ambiguities — unanswered by the authors. The writer gives no answers to the following questions.

- (i) Is the shared dreaming real or an illusion?
- (ii) Why are the man and the woman unable to find each other in the real world?
- (iii) Why does the man become forgetful of the dream meetings though the woman tries her utmost to remind him of everything through the eternal message?
- (iv) Why are they constantly separated though both of them enjoy intimacy in dreams?
- (v) Does their connection strengthen or not?
- (vi) Is there any hope or disappointment about the condition of desire without fulfillment?

Marquez intentionally remains silent, and never answers these questions. Why? The answer of 'why' remains unanswered. It is not a flaw—it is the truth of experience.

Conclusion

The exploration of magical realism in the short story *Eyes of a Blue Dog* written provides a rich tapestry of thematic and narrative techniques employed by the writer. With his unique approach, the Márquez incorporates the worlds of magic and realism in his short fiction. He willingly mingles the magical with the ordinary. He explores complexities of identity and existence. The traditional notions of time are challenged. In order to engage his readers, the Latin American writer uses innovative narrative studies. His narratives are sensory and emotional; the characters have emotional depth. Cultural stories are found in his works. He focuses on the magical in the ordinary. Societal norms are focused in Marquez's short stories. Márquez uses magical realism in his short fiction with his distinct approach. As for phenomenal world, he prefers concrete phenomena. He is concerned with merging realism in order to create doubts in the minds of the readers. He deals with human perceptions and feelings. His short fiction is steeped in fluidity of time, space and identity. The author remains reticent - grounded in phenomenology.

Research Implications

The study develops an analytical framework for examining magical realism through ontological disruption and narrative ambiguity. The findings deepen understanding of magical realism by analyzing a singular authorial approach. This research shows how ontological uncertainty shapes reader responses to magical realist texts. The study provides useful tools for teaching magical realism in literature courses.

Future Research

Future studies can examine how magical realist short stories are translated into film and visual media. Research can explore magical realism in African, Asian, or Indigenous literatures beyond Latin American contexts. Investigation of magical realism in 21st-century writers would reveal how the genre evolves in modern contexts. Future research may analyze



how magical realism functions differently in novels versus short stories and other literary forms.

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