Chapter 6
Surrealism

Surrealism is a movement in the visual arts and literature that flourished in Europe between World Wars I and II. The movement was founded in 1924 by Andre Breton in France as a means of joining dream and fantasy to everyday reality to form an absolute reality, surreality. The purpose of this art is an approach to find methods of uniting the conscious and the subconscious realms of experience. Drawing on the theories of Sigmund Freud, Breton concludes that the unconscious was the wellspring of the imagination.

Surrealism seeks a reality above or within the surface reality, usually through efforts to suspend the discipline of conscious or logical reason, aesthetics, or morality in order to allow for the expression of subconscious thought and feeling. Surrealism is an artistic, cultural and intellectual movement oriented toward the liberation of the mind by emphasizing the critical and imaginative faculties of the "unconscious mind" and the attainment of a dream-like state different from, "more than", and ultimately "truer" than everyday reality: the "sur-real", or "more than real".

For many surrealists, this orientation toward transcending everyday reality toward one that incorporates the imaginative and the unconscious has manifested itself in the intent to bring about personal, cultural, political and social revolution, sometimes conceived or described as a complete transformation of life by freedom, poetry, love, and sexuality.
The surrealists engage in spirited and unharmonious discussions as to how to tap the subconscious mind and manifest it in their works. Some of them are interested in abnormal behaviors and sexuality. They are also politically oriented toward socialism, with the exception of Salvador Dali. In contrast, the artists of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) generally do not have political affiliations. Although some of them are socially critical or very candid about sexuality, they act more often as observers than as explorers of the subconscious mind.

Both Surrealism and Magical Realism use a mixture of realism and fantastic elements. The main differences lie in the content itself. The objective of the Magical Realist is to effect a fresh presentation of the everyday world. The artist may choose unusual points of view, mysterious juxtapositions or uncommon objects in creating an uncanny presentation. However, everything is seen within the realm of the possible, although sometimes unlikely. Surrealism transports the audience to another world, one which is unreal and exists only in the mind. It presents the impossible, using both traditional and experimental artistic techniques, to enchant people into temporarily suspending their disbelief.

The difficulty for many art historians in distinguishing Magic Realism from Surrealism is that a number of artists tend to cross back and forth between the two approaches. As a compromise, it could be mentioned that both Magical Realism and Surrealism are basically the same; may be the level of exterior sophistication differs.
In *Midnight’s Children*, Tai is an ‘ageless’ character who is too much with ‘nature’. He defines mutation thus:

Tai chose to stink. For three years now, he had neither bathed nor washed himself after answering calls of nature. [...] The little basket of hot coals that he carried inside the chugha, [...] only animated and accentuated his evil odours. He took to drifting slowly past the Aziz household, releasing the dreadful fumes of his body across the small garden and into the house. Flowers died, birds fled from the ledge outside old Father Aziz’s window.

(MC 29)

This experience narrated here is highly exaggerated and hence verges on Surrealism. The way the boat man Tai resists change is presented thus. Tai is to be seen as an obstinate unchanging concept in the ever shifting world of changes.

Mian Abdullah’s hum rises and falls in direct relationship to his work rate. “It was a hum that could fall low enough to give you toothache, and when it rose to its highest, most feverish pitch, it had the ability of inducing erections in anyone within its vicinity” (MC 46). It is because of the same hum that “one of the killers eyes cracked and fell out of its socket” [MC 48). Mian Abdullah’s hum is not ordinary but it has a surrealistic touch and hence it can reach abnormal zenith and nadir.

Reverend Mother has the ability to get into the dreams of her daughter and spies love lurking there:
But then, one night, she entered the dreams of her
daughter Mumtaz, the blackie whom she had never been
able to love because of her skin of a South Indian
fisherwoman, and realized the trouble would not stop
there; because Mumtaz Aziz--like her admirer under the
carpets--was also falling in love. (MC 56)

Surrealism crosses the narrow boundaries imposed by mundane
realism; it can penetrate into the minds and read what goes on there.

The trio, Adam Aziz, Mustafa Kemal and S.P.Butt, wait for the
member of the Ravana gang to come and collect the ransom money for
‘protecting’ their properties. They go and wait near the old fort and
find the ‘collector’ approaching. He is “a ragged-pajama’d creature in
the head-dress of a demon, a papier-mache devil-top which has faces
grinning on every side of it … the appointed representative of the
Ravana gang” (MC 85). But before the agent can reach and collect the
bag that contains money, ‘Hanuman’ has done the damage;

Hanuman the monkey dances with rage. Pounces on the
grey things. Yes, they are loose enough, won’t take much
rocking and pulling, pulling and rocking... watch
Hanuman now, dragging the soft grey stones to the edge
of the long drop of the outside wall of the Fort. See him
tear at them: rip! rap! rop!... Look how deftly he scoops
paper from the insides of the grey things, sending it down
like floating rain to bathe the fallen stones in the ditch!...

(MC 85)
The money is lost in a macabre fashion. The monkey, without knowing what the bag contains, rips it open and throws the money into the ditch.

Amina dreams of being glued to brown paper like a fly. Her pregnancy has a stifling effect on her.

But she is asleep. And in these days of her boulder-like pregnancy, an enigmatic dream of flypaper has been plaguing her sleeping hours ... in which she wanders now, as before, in a crystal sphere filled with dangling strips of the sticky brown material, which adhere to her clothing and rip it off as she stumbles through the impenetrable papery forest; and now she struggles, tears at paper, but it grabs at her, until she is naked, with the baby kicking inside her, and long tendrils of flypaper stream out to seize her by her undulating womb, paper glues itself to her hair nose teeth breasts thighs, and as she opens her mouth to shout a brown adhesive gag falls across her parting lips....(MC 109-10)

The experience in the dream is certainly in the surrealistic tradition that exposes the hidden reality, the fear of the mind. This dream is replaced by a dream of an unnamable husband, a dream of such overwhelming reality that it stays with her throughout her waking hours. “In it, Nadir Khan came to her bed and impregnated her; such was the mischievous perversity of the dream that it confused Amina about the parentage of her child” (MC 127).
Rumours and omens are sure in the tradition of surrealism

That January, Chowpatty Beach, and Juhu and Trombay, too, were littered with the ominous corpses of dead pomfret, which floated, without the ghost of an explanation, belly-side-up, like scaly fingers in to shore.

[...] And other omens: comets were seen exploding above the Back Bay; it was reported that flowers had been seen bleeding real blood. (MC 136)

These happenings indicate the impending doom.

A Tubriwallah [snake charmer] has been working in Krishna fashion liberating snakes out of snake farms “while the rumours added that the Tubriwallah was seven feet tall, with bright blue skin. He was Krishna come to chastise his people; he was the sky-hued Jesus of the missionaries” (MC 136). Religious leaders describe the escape of snakes as a warning. “They intoned, the god Naga has been unleashed, they intoned, as a punishment for the nation’s official renunciation of its deities” (MC 137).

After the bankruptcy of Aadam Aziz, Amina has to act smart and revamp the income of the family. She fixes her eyes on the races “and won, and won, and won. [...] You ask: how it is possible? How could a housewife, however assiduous, however determined, win fortunes on the horses, day after racing day, month after month?” (MC 140). Anything is possible, though not at the realistic level, at the surrealistic terrain.
Saleem’s sister has strong animal instincts. It is observed that the Brass Monkey was as much animal as human; and, as all the servants and children on Methwold’s Estate knew, she had the gift of talking to birds, and to cats. Dogs, too; [...] From birds she learned how to sing; from cats she learned a form of dangerous independence. (MC 151)

Her interest in animals and close observation of their sounds help her develop her musical instinct as well and establish herself as Jamila singer later in Pakistan.

After ‘the washing-chest’ incident, Saleem develops the capacity to discover the world. He observes: “I was no more than a tourist, a child peeping through the miraculous peepholes of a private ‘Dilli-dekho’ machine” (MC 173). Through his minds eye he glimpses the Taj Mahal, hops down to Madurai’s Meenakshi Temple, tours Connaught Place in the guise of an auto-rickshaw driver, sleeps in Calcutta in a section of drainpipe. As Saleem is “now thoroughly bitten by the travel bug” (MC 173), he zips down to Cape Comorin, flirts with Dravidian beach combers, moves up into the Himalayas, samples the inner life of a woman at the golden fortress of Jaisalmer, feels embarrassed by the eroticity at Khajuraho. This tour of the mind is an excellent example of surrealism creating Magical Realism.

Dr.Narlikar’s death, in an unfortunate manner under his own tetra pod, ends with his ashes getting sprinkled on the holy waters of the Ganga at Manikarnika-ghat but “they did not sink, but floated on
the surface of the water like tiny glowing firebugs, and were washed out to sea where their strange luminosity must have frightened the captains of ships” (MC 178).

Parvati, the witch, has interesting neighbours. She lives in a ghetto of magicians, who can do just anything. There are great fakirs and prestidigitators and illusionists. Their unbelievable powers are expressed thus:

Parvati’s father had once been the greatest conjurer in Oudh; she had grown up amid ventriloquists who could make stones tell jokes and contortionists who could swallow their own legs and fire-eaters who exhaled flames from their arseholes and tragic clowns who could extract glass tears from the corners of their eyes; she had stood mildly amid gasping crowds while her father drove spikes through her neck. (MC 199)

Sundari is a Delhi beggar girl born in a street behind the General Post Office, with beauty “so intense that within moments of her birth it succeeded in blinding her mother and the neighbouring women who had been assisting at her delivery” (MC 197). It makes her father partially blind and he is unable to distinguish between Indians and foreign tourists. As a result he can not beg better. Her ruthless aunt “took her into her bony arms and slashed her face nine times with a kitchen knife” (MC 197) so that, with the cruelly disfigured face, Sundari can beg better.
The narrator Saleem gets a vision in which the widow appears. She is seated on a black chair with green mixed. She kills children in a grotesque manner. She lifts up the children and tears them apart. The blood bubbles out green and black. “And children torn in two in Widow hands which rolling halves of children roll them into little balls the balls are green the night is black. And little balls fly into night between the walls the children shriek as one by one the Widow’s hand” (MC 208). Saleem’s fever pushes him into delirium and he gets this nightmarish vision. The Widow is none other than Indira Gandhi who stifled many midnight’s children, who symbolize the hopes of India, from growing.

On his night haunts in Karachi, Saleem comes across a whore. Her name was Tai Bibi and she claimed to be five hundred and twelve.

But her smell! The richest spoor he, Saleem, had ever sniffed: he felt bewitched by something in it, some air of historic majesty ... he found himself saying to the toothless creature: ‘I don’t care about your age; the smell’s the thing.’ (MC 319)

She makes herself irresistible because she possesses a mastery over her glands so total that she can alter her bodily odours to match those of any one on earth. She encourages Saleem to describe the person he has in mind so that she can take on that person’s particular smell. She is the one who finds out that it is Jamila, his sister that he has in mind.
The Pakistani soldiers, when fighting in the marshy terrain of Rann, have to encounter
demonic sea-beasts with glowing eyes, of fish-women who
lay with their fishy heads underwater, breathing, while
their perfectly-formed and naked human lower halves lay
on the shore, tempting the unwary into fatal sexual acts,
because it is well known that nobody may love a fish-
woman and live. (MC 335)

Ayooba, one of the three that accompany the ‘mandog’ is
infuriated by the Buddha’s act of smooching with the urchin girl who
comes to clean the latrine. He sees to it that electricity is passed into
the metal footplates of the urinals so that when the Buddha eases
himself the electricity will pass through his ‘pipe’. But “the Buddha
urinating away with an expression of foggy pleasure, emptying a
bladder which must have been filling up […] with electricity and there
was a blue crackle playing around the end of his gargantuan nose”
(MC 353).

The terrible phantasms of the forest overpower the man-dog and
his team. They learn the art of survival in the jungle, eating the
available nipa fruits and learning to kill dangerous animals. Ayooba in
particular suffers more and has horrible nightmares.

But one night Ayooba awoke in the dark to find the
translucent figure of a peasant with a bullet- hole in his
heart and a scythe in his hand staring mournfully down
at him, and as he struggled to get out the boat (which
they had pulled in, under the cover of their primitive
shelter) the peasant leaked a colorless fluid which flowed
out of the hole in his heart and on to Ayooba’s gun arm.
The next morning Ayooba’s right arm refused to move; it
hung rigidly by his side as if it had been set in plaster.
Although Farooq Rashid offered help and sympathy, it
was no use; the arm was held immovably in the invisible
fluid of the ghost. (MC 363)
The jungle punishes the trio and the man dog for their invasion.
Ayooba in his dream sees his mother treating him like a baby and
offering him laddoos “but at the same moment as he reached out for
the laddoos, she scurried away, and he saw her climb a giant sundari-
tree to sit swinging from a high branch by her tail: a white wraithlike
monkey with the face of his mother visited Ayooba night after night”
(MC 363).

The team reaches the middle of the forest. There stands a
monumental Hindu temple with, “Kali, fecund and awful, with the
remnants of gold paint on her teeth” (MC 366). The four travellers seek
refugee from the incessant rain at her feet. In the rain-free sleep they
awake simultaneously and find four young girls of extraordinary
beauty. Their experience is described thus:

Now as eight eyes stared into eight, saris were unwound
and placed, neatly folded, on the ground; after which the
naked and identical daughters of the forest came to them,
eight arms were twined with eight, eight legs were linked
with eight legs more; below the statue of multi-limbed
Kali, the travellers abandoned themselves to caresses
which felt real enough, to kisses and love-bites which
were soft and painful, to scratches which left marks. (MC
366-67)

This experience continues for none of them knows how long. But at last
the day came when they looked at each other and realized they were becoming transparent [...] that by giving them their heart’s desire it was fooling them into using up their dreams, so that as their dream-life seeped out of them they became as hollow and translucent as glass. (MC 367)

When Saleem regains his speech, he pours out his past and his mind to the trio. Ayooba is so moved that he forgets his rancour for ‘the Buddha’, and comforts him, wraps his one good arm around his neck; “but then there was a bee, buzzing towards us [...] and while other bees, the bees of deafness, buzzed in his ears, something stung him in the neck” (MC 370). It is a bullet from a sniper. The bee has transformed itself into a bullet.

Saleem’s aunt Sonia has heard about “a rishi from Hardwar who was reputedly three hundred ninety-five years old and had memorized the genealogies of every single Brahmin clan in the country” (MC 391-92). Such exaggerations are beyond scientific realism and hence surrealistic.
Saleem leaves his uncle's house. He returns at last to the true inheritance of poverty and destitution. Parvati is waiting for him on the pavement. When he kisses her in the dark of the illicit midnight he “had seen her face changing, becoming the face of a forbidden love; the ghostly features of Jamila Singer replaced those of the witch-girl;” (MC 396). This puzzles, upsets and unnerves Saleem and makes him say, “the rancid flowers of incest blossomed on my sister’s phantasmal features, and I couldn’t do it, couldn’t kiss touch look upon that intolerable spectral face” (MC 396).

Unlike Saleem who is morally conscious, Shiva is known for his promiscuity. He claims the wives of many officers. “While these unfortunates were away the Major visited their homes to steal their most prized possessions: [...] at the height of his philanderings there were no less than ten thousand women in love with him” (MC 409). Shiva is a kind of modern ‘Dhasaratha’ with innumerable women.

All the midnight’s children are collected and imprisoned in the widow’s hostel, which was, once upon a time, a Maharaja’s palace. Ironically it has become a home for bereaved women who are no longer permitted to seek the release of sati.

In the palace of the widows lives a tribe of women whose chests are irremediably bruised by the power of their continual pummellings, whose hair is torn beyond repair, and whose voices are shredded by the constant, keening expressions of their grief. (MC 433)
Hundreds of such widows staying together in one place with continuous lamentation is nightmarish.

Saleem’s son Ahmed Sinai is wet nursed by a washer woman Durga, who is described thus:

[She] was a woman whose biceps bulged; whose preternatural breasts unleashed a torrent of milk capable of nourishing regiments; and who it was rumoured darkly (although I suspect the rumour of being started by herself) had two wombs. She was as full of gossip and tittle-tattle as she was of milk. (MC 445)

As there can be only one ‘Most Charming Man in the World’ there is a fierce battle between the snake charmer Pictureji and his opponent the Maharaja of Cooch Naheen in the underground of the inky negritude of the ‘Midnite-Confidential Club’ over the supremacy:

How long, in the sunless cavern, did they struggle? Months, years, centuries? I cannot say: I watched, mesmerized, as they strove to outdo one another, charming every kind of snake imaginable, asking for rare varieties to be sent from the Bombay snake-farm [...] and the Maharaja matched Picture Singh snake for snake [...] and finally, through a piece of sleight-of-hand so fast that I did not see what happened, Picture Singh managed to knot a king cobra around the Maharaja’s neck [...] that was the end of the contest. (MC 455)
Rushdie’s description of the happenings in the den is purely surrealistic.

In *Shame*, the pregnancy is shared by all the three--Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny. The sisters “displayed the uniquely passionate solidarity that was their most remarkable characteristic by feigning—in the case of two of them—the entire range of symptoms that the third was obliged to display” (19). The delivery occurs; empty balloons subside and “the three sisters were all wearing the flushed expression of dilated joy that is the mothers true prerogative; and the baby was passed from breast to breast, and none of the six was dry” (S 21). The pregnancy, delivery and its aftermath are beyond the realm of realism.

Omar Khayyam, with his hypnotic skills, facilitates the passing away of Hashmat Bibi. “The old lady, having been given glimpses of non-being through the mediating powers of the young hypnotist’s voice, had finally relaxed the iron will with which she had clung to life for what she had claimed was more than one hundred and twenty years” (S 34).

Omar’s coming of age is beautifully described. Shortly before his twelfth birthday, inspired by the beauty of Farah Zoroaster, he felt his voice break in his throat, while below his belt other things slid downwards too, to take their appointed places, somewhat ahead of schedule, in hitherto-empty sacs. His longing for the outside was immediately transformed into a dull ache in the groin, a tearing in his loins. (S 35)
Omar’s experience is evocative and hence surrealistic.

Omar is breast-fed for six years. The greatest of pleasures are renounced when he reaches the age of six. It is strange and surprising that he “drank from half a dozen, one for each year” (S 36). A breast lactating after five years is beyond the normal.

When Mahmoud the Woman, Bilquis’s father, decides to end his career and life, she senses it. ‘Something’ tells Bilquis of the impending danger and she runs out of the house to save her life, “terrified by a sound like the beating wings of an angel, a sound for which she could afterwards find no good explanation but which pounded in her ears until her head ached, she ran out of her house” (S 62-63). She stands in the street only with the ‘dupatta’ of modesty, while,

The walls of her father’s Empire puffed outwards like a hot puri while that wind like the cough of a sick giant burned away her eyebrows (which never grew again), and tore the clothes off her body until she stood infant-naked in the street; but she failed to notice her nudity because the universe was ending, and in the echoing alienness of the deadly wind her burning eyes saw everything come flying out, seats, ticket books, fans, and then pieces of her father’s shattered corpse and the charred shards of the future. ‘Suicide!’ she cursed Mahmoud the Woman at the top of a voice made shrieky by the bomb. (S 63)
The narration creates a dream-like effect that adds to Magical Realism.

The concept of ‘master bedroom’ in Bariamma’s house is not only funny but also grotesque. All women are “lying wide awake in the dark of a cavernous bedroom” (S 72) and wait for the arrival of “the forty thieves” (S 73), their husbands. There is a mass orgy encouraged by Bariamma’s lusty snore. Rushdie describes the orgy thus:

And now there are tiny noises in the dark: charpoy ropes yielding fractionally beneath the extra weight of a second body, the rustle of clothing, the heavier exhalations of the invading husbands. Gradually the darkness acquires a kind of rhythm, which accelerates, peaks, subsides. (S 73)

Raza, on suspicion that his wife Bilquis has ‘something’ to do with Sindbad Mengal of Mengal Mahal, arranges to ‘silence’ him. The way Sindbad Mengal is disposed of defies human imagination. Sindbad goes back home from the theatre, whistling a tune; he is intercepted and knifed to death; and the murderer continues to whistle his tune. His murder does not come out in the open

Until several moviegoers had complained about the deterioration in the cinema’s stereophonic sound quality that an engineer inspected the loudspeakers behind the screen and discovered segments of Sindbad Mengal’s white shirt and duck pants concealed within them, as well as black Oxford shoes. The knife-sliced garments still contained the appropriate pieces of the cinema manager’s
body. The genitals had been severed and inserted into the rectum. (S 103)

Sufiya emitting heat through her blush is exaggerated. When an “ancient lady bent to kiss the girls and was alarmed to find that her lips had been mildly burned by a sudden rush of heat to Sufiya Zinobia’s cheek; the burn was bad enough to necessitate twice-daily applications of lip salve for a week” (S 121). The Parsi Ayah Shahbanou also is subjected to the burn; “when she gave Sufiya Zinobia a bath the water had scalded her hands” (S 121).

Babar, Omar Khayyam’s brother, leaves the world when Raza Hyder traps him and fires eighteen bullets. Babar is portrayed as an angel, a demi God.

[He was] an easy target because it glowed yellow through his clothing in the night, it was easy for him to skip out of his skin and soar lucent and winged into the eternity of the mountains, where a great cloud of seraphs rose up as the world shook and roared, and where to the music of heavenly reed-flutes and celestial seven-stringed sarandas and three stringed dumbirs he was received into the elysian bosom of the earth. (S 132)

When the loo makes everything around hot and drives Bilquis into hiding, Sufia sleepwalks into Pinkie Aurangzeb’s Turkey-yard. There she “had torn off their heads and then reached down into their bodies to draw their guts up through their necks with her tiny and weaponless hands” (S 138). Sufiya is her “family’s shame made flesh”
(S 139) and she converts shame into violence. She is a “beast inside the beauty” (S 139).

The ‘eighteen shawls’ of Rani Harappa completed in six years lays locked up in a black metal trunk (this reminds one of Aurora’s palimpsests) titled ‘The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great’ (S 191). These shawls, in a macabre way, bring to light the unscrupulous atrocities of Iskandar. Of all the eighteen shawls, the “alegorical shawl” (S 194) is outstanding. Here one finds

Iskander and the Death of Democracy, his hands around her throat, squeezing Democracy’s gullet, while her eyes bulged, her face turned blue, her tongue protruded, she shat in her pajamas, her hands became hooks trying to grab the wind and Iskander with his eyes shut squeezed and squeezed, while in the background the Generals watched. (S 194)

The low morale of the Pakistani army after its defeat in the former East wing is brought out well through sports. In the legendary inter services cricket game “the Army XI lost all ten first-innings wickets without scoring a single run off the bat” (S 201). In the hockey match “the Navy boys scored forty times in eighty minutes” (S 201). In actuality, there is no record of such dismal performances. But these exaggerations are permissible in surrealism.

Talvar Ulhaq, “owing to his clairvoyant talents [...] knew which nights were best for conception” (S 207). He plants the seed at the
right time of the year and harvests twenty seven children within six years. Such things are possible only with Magical Realism.

Sufiya’s insomnia turns into somnambulism. The monster in her rises, bewitches the guards and the sentries are turned into stones. She walks the streets in the night and picks up four youths from the slum who get transfixed by her appalling eyes. Then follows an instance of cruel killing and obliteration of identity since the heads are thrown into the sky and they never come back.

They follow her to the rubbish-dump of doom, rats to her piper, automata dancing in the all-consuming light from the blackveiled eyes. Down she lies; and what Shahbanou took upon herself is finally done to Sufiya. Four husbands come and go. Four of them in and out, and then her hands reach for the first boy’s neck. The others stand still and wait their turn. And heads hurled high, sinking into the scattered clouds; nobody saw them fall. She rises, goes home. And sleeps; the Beast subsides. (S 219)

The dead do not really part after death. They continue to present themselves in the lives of others in some form or other.

Maulana Dawood, who had apparently gone on ageing after death and was more decrepit looking than ever, added unkindly that if it was any help he could assure Hyder that Sufiya Zinobia’s antics would get worse rather than better, and in the end they would certainly terminate Raza’s career. (S 232)
The hanged Iskandar Harappa continues to harangue Raza Hyder.

The monologue of the hanged man buzzed in his skull, and it seemed that Isky had decided to give his successor some useful tips, because the disembodied voice had started quoting liberally and in an irritatingly sing-song accent from what it took Raza a long time to work out were the writings of the notorious infidel and foreigner Niccolo Machiavelli. (S 246)

Sindbad Mengal also appears in Raza’s dream and harasses him. He rather foretells Raza’s end:

At the very instant Raza Hyder awoke from a sick dream in which the several pieces of the late Sindbad Mengal had appeared to him, all joined up in the wrong way, so that the dead man’s head was in the middle of his stomach and his feet stuck out, soles upward, like asses’ ears from his neck. Mengal had not recriminated at all, but had warned Raza that the way things were going the General sahib would be sliced up himself in a few days. (S 272-73)

Both Maulana Dawood and Iskandar appear as monkeys on the shoulders of Raza:

He shut his eyes, but eyelids were no defence any more, they were just doors into other places, and there was Raza Hyder in uniform with a monkey on each shoulder. The monkey on the right had the face of Maulana Dawood and
its hands were clasped over its mouth; on the left
shoulder sat Iskander Harappa scratching his langoor’s
armpit. Hyder’s hands went to his ears, Isky’s, after
scratching, covered his eyes, but he was peeping through
the fingers. ‘Stories end, worlds end’, Isky the monkey
said, ‘and then it’s judgment day’. Fire, and the dead,
rising up, dancing in the flames. (S 276)

In The Moor’s Last Sigh, the missing of elephant dolls is
construed to be the work of Belle. Camoens strongly believes that it is
his wife who has come in the form of an angel; “It is my belief [...] that
your darling mummy has come back to us [...]. And, daughter mine,
just look what – what items are missing! Only those she always hated,
don’t you see? Aires’s elephant gods, she used to say” (MLS 10). Death
does not put an end to life; it goes on.

Aurora, even as a child, was solitary and was “left to her own
devices in her surreally cloven home, turned upon that inward eye
which is the bliss of solitude” (MLS 45). She was never a child. She
started drawing like an adult even at an early age. This resulted in her
early ‘marriage’ (Aurora never got married in a formal way) at the age
of fifteen.

Wishes are easily fulfilled in the surreal world. On Aurora’s
tenth birthday, a northern fellow, a kind of magician, who arrived in
Cabral Island, asks her, “What do you want most in the world?--and
before she answered he had granted her wish” (MLS 47-48). Her father
Camoens and uncle Aires are back from prison with the uneasy smile of those who are just released.

Even after her death, Belle continues to visit her husband and family. There were mysterious scratches of love making on his neck and back. “Belle started coming to him in his dreams, naked and demanding, so that he would wake up weeping, because even as he made love to her dream-image he knew it wasn’t real. But the scratches were real enough” (MLS 57).

From the tiles of antique Chinese blue in the synagogue floor, Abraham found out about his decamped father, Salomon Castile. First he saw him “in a little blue rowing-boat with blue-skinned-foreign looking types by his side, heading off towards on equally blue horizon” (MLS 76). Next he saw him “in a cerulean scene of Dionysiac willow-pattern merrymaking amid slain dragons and grumbling volcanoes. Solomon was dancing in an open hexagonal pavilion with a carefree joy” (MLS 76). Over the years he finds his father growing wealthy and fat, indulging with eunuchs and dancing girls; then he grows skinny and becomes a mendicant; as an adolescent, he saw his father appearing in semi pornographic tableaux with individuals of both sexes. When Abraham reaches the age of maturity Solomon Castile vanishes again for the second time. The past is brought in in a surrealistic manner and the antique tiles of the synagogue floor reveal the past in a cinematic manner.

In *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Aurora and Abraham start their life in a magical setting. They rush into life at once:
In that foetid atmosphere heavy with the odours of cardamom and cumin, so intimately had they conjoined, not only with each other but with what-hung-on-the-air, yes, and with the spice-sacks themselves – some of which, it must be said, were torn, so that peppercorns and elaichees poured out and were crushed between legs and bellies and thighs – that, for ever after, they sweated pepper’n’spices sweat, and their bodily fluids, too, smelled and even tasted of what had been crushed into their skins, what had mingled with their love-waters, what had been breathed in from the air during that transcendent fuck. (MLS 90)

The atmosphere seeps into their skin and stays forever.

Oliver D’Aeth in The Moor’s Last Sigh also gets surreal dreams which bring out his obsession and fear:

- his dreams were either erotic fantasies of nude teas with the Widow Elphinstone on prickly brown lawns of coir matting, or else torture-nightmares in which he found himself in a place in which he was invariably beaten [...] also kicked. Men with hats [...] pummelled him but did not speak. He, however cried out loudly, giving up his pride. (MLS 94)

Rushdie narrates Flora Zogoiby’s visions about the atom bomb that she got from the blue Chinese tiles on the synagogue floor in The Moor’s Last Sigh. She gathers “that very soon a country not far from
China would be eaten up by giant, cannibal mushrooms” (MLS 118). This comes true towards the end of the Second World War; “A few days later a giant mushroom cloud ate the Japanese city of Hiroshima” (MLS 119).

The Moor is pre-occupied with breaking away from his mother and the conventional world. This ends in his dreams where in he goes forth thus:

peeling off my skin plantain-fashion, of going forth naked into the world, like an anatomy illustration from Encyclopaedia Britannica, all ganglions, ligaments, nervous pathways and veins, set free from the otherwise inescapable jails of colour, race and clan. (In another version of the dream I would be able to peel away more than skin, I would float free of flesh, skin and bones, having become simply an intelligence or a feeling set loose in the world, at play in its fields, like a science-fiction glow which needed no physical form.) (MLS 136)

Abraham goes on an outing with his wife and children. Age catches up with him and makes him exhausted. When he climbs up the steep stairway of the Buddish Cave temples at Lonavla, the breath rattles in his throat and his eyes blur. Before he falls, Aurora catches him. “An old mushroom selling crone had appeared beside them and help Aurora sit Abraham down” (MLS 141). Aurora commands her husband to stay alive and he obeys. After Abraham gets better Aurora asks her children for the mushroom woman. But she is nowhere to be
seen. The next morning the hotel desk clerk informs that mushrooms have never to his knowledge been grown sold in the region of Lonavla caves. But from where did the mushroom woman come? Magical Realism does not entertain such questions since people can appear and disappear at their own will and it is implicitly accepted.

The birth of the Moor is described differently. He is not pre-mature but a ‘post-mature’ baby.

Passing from lost waters towards necessary air, jammed solid in Aurora’s lower passages by my soo-soo’s rather military decision to salute the moment by standing at attention, I decided to let people know about the urgent nature of my problem, and unleashed a mighty bovine groan [...]. From Moo to Moor, from first groan to last sigh: on such hooks hang my tales. (MLS 144-45)

Vasco Miranda introduces the pleasure of the surreal, dreamy world to the Moor thus:

Vasco Miranda would creep into my bedroom while I slept and change the pictures on the walls. Certain window would shut, others would open; mouse or duck or cat or rabbit would change position, would move from one wall, and one adventure, to the next. For a long time I believed that I did indeed inhabit a magic room, that the fantasy-creatures on the walls came to life after I fell asleep. (MLS 154)
When asked, Miranda says that the Moor changes things with his third hand, the invisible hand with invisible figures which could be seen only in dreams.

The death of Carmen, the wife of Aires is described dreamily. “and one night she dreamed that she was standing by a lake surrounded by forested hills, and Prince Henry was beckoning to her from the back of the wild elephant” (MLS 201). When Carmen tells about this to her husband the next morning as they sit for tea and Aires understands. He “perceived the meaning of the vision, and did not look up until he heard his wife’s China teacup fall from her lifeless hands” (MLS 201). Here is death foretold.

Aurora casts herself in an Abrahamic role that makes her sacrifice her son. This is presented in the form of a dream that she has:

Aurora told me about a dream. She had been standing on the ‘back verandah’ of a rattletrap train in a Spanish night, holding my sleeping body in her arms. Suddenly she knew - knew in the way of dreams, without being told, but with absolute certainty--that if she were to toss me away, if she were to sacrifice me to the night, then she would be safe, invulnerable, for the rest of her life. (MLS 225)

Sister Floreas (Minnie) gets an apocalyptic vision. [In it] she was visited by a genderless elephant-headed angel who issued a strongly worded critique of the loose
moral of the citizens of Bombay [...] threatened with floods, droughts, explosions and fires [...] and by a talking black rat who prophesied that the Plague itself would return as the last plague of all. (MLS 239)

Though this is taken to be the symptoms of imbalance of mind, these scenes present the forthcoming events where in Bombay would be destroyed with bombs and explosions.

Vasco does a funny painting and places it in the guest toilet at Elephenta. This mural depicts himself and Kekoo Modi in bowler hats and nothing else. Kekoo is thin and tall but Vasco is plump and short.

The interest of the painting lay in the obvious fact that the two men seemed to have exchanged penises. The cock on Vasco was astoundingly long and thin, like a pale pepperoni sausage, whereas tall Kekoo sported a squat dark organ of impressive diameter and circumference.

However, both men swore that there had been no switch. (MLS 245)

This clearly explains their sexual appetites in an unusual way. Uma’s comment on this is funny and apt: “looks like Laurel and Hardon” (MLS 245).

The Moor’s predicament of getting caught between two mighty forces is described in a dream-like fashion.

He was black and white. He was the living proof of the possibility of the union of opposites. But Ayxa the Black pulled one way, and Chimene the White, the other. They
began to tear him in half [...] He tore himself away from his mother, clung to Chimene. (MLS 259)

As shown here, the Moor ditches his mother Aurora and gets hooked up with Uma.

Moor tries to stay away from Uma but there are withdrawal symptoms. At night, he feels her phantom body moving under his broken hand. As he is falling asleep he sees before his mind’s eye a person using his hands to trace out the outline of a curvaceous female form since he doesn’t know the English word for woman.

I was the other man in the dream. ‘Ah’, I nodded. ‘A bottle of Coke?’

Uma walked past us, swinging her hips. Fernandel leered and jabbed a thumb in the direction of her departing posterior.

‘My bottle of Coke,’ he said, with understandable pride.

(MLS 271)

Uma’s posterior is seen as a bottle of Coke. This is a form of an innuendo where the physical form is described with gestures.

The entry into prison is always nightmarish. People present themselves in all phantasmagoric shapes. Moor finds his way blocked by a man with “the head of a bearded elephant, who held in his hand an iron crescent dripping with keys. Rats scurried respectfully around his feet” (MLS 286). People are humiliated in fashions of which one would not have even been able to dream. Moor is asked to denude himself and is locked up in a cell left in darkness. In solitary
confinement, he finds cockroaches swarming over his head and down his back. He jerks like a marionette, hitting at himself, screaming. The Bombay Central lock up is a real surreal world.

Aurora has cast off her son, the Moor. Unable to bear the pangs of separation, the Moor suffers. In *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, Rushdie presents Moor’s sufferings.

> O, how he howls! The very moon is darkened by his cries. But you are relentless, inexhaustible. And when he is flayed, when he is a shape without frontiers, a self without walls, then your hands close about his neck, and squash, and squish; air rushes out from his body through all available orifices, he is farting out his life, just as once you, his mother, farted him into it ... and now he has just one breath left in him, one last shuddering bubble of hope. (MLS 288)

A diptych entitled *The Death of Chimene* is a surreal painting whose the central figure—a female corpse tied to a wooden broom—was borne aloft, in the left hand panel by a mighty, happy throng [...] the right hand panel the crowd had dispersed, and the composition concerned itself only with a section of beach and water, in which among broken effigies and empty bottles and soggy newspapers, lay the dead woman, lashed to her broomstick. (MLS 302)

This portrays the end and death of Uma, who is hated by Aurora right from the beginning.
The Moor is constantly pursued by Uma even after her death; “Uma pursued me through my dreams [...] Uma wild haired, white eyed, fork-tongued, Uma metamorphosed into an angel of revenge, playing a hellbat Dis-demon to my Moor” (MLS 309). He, in the dream, flees from her, runs into his mighty fortress and slams the door shut. But Uma floats above him and behind him with her vampire fangs the size of elephant tusks. She condemns him to the exteriors of the world and says; “For you there are no safe palaces any more; and in these gardens I will wait for you. Across these infinite outides I will hunt you down.’ Then she came down to me, and opened her awful mouth” (MLS 310). The Moor feels haunted by the memories of Uma even after her death.

Aurora, like her mother, continues to live even after death. Abraham continues to experience the presence of Aurora in his Cashondeliveri Tower. He says, “She walks around here. I’ve seen her” (MLS 328). Her ghost continues to walk, hover over him.

After the Moor smashes the face of Mainduck with the phone receiver and leaves him half-dead, Sammy’s bomb explodes and scatters Mainduck to pieces. Moor, who has just quit Mainduck’s residence, hears the blast. He imagines, “I heard the barking of hungry dogs who had unexpectedly been thrown large chunks of meat, mostly still on the bone. That, and the flapping of vultures” (MLS 370). It is really macabre to think of dog and vultures feeding on the bomb-scattered pieces of flesh of Mainduck.
In the novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the bomb blast makes:

the Cashondelivery Tower burst like a firework in the sky
and rain of glass knifes began to fall, stabbing the
running workers through the neck the back the thigh,
spearing their dreams, their loves, their hope. [...] Finally,
Abraham’s garden rained down like a benediction.
Imported soil, English lawn-grass and foreign flowers--
crocuses, daffodils, roses, hollyhocks, forget-me-nots--fell
towards the Backbay Reclamation; also alien fruits. Whole
trees rose gracefully into the heavens before floating down
to earth, like giant spores. The feathers of un-Indian birds
went on drifting through the air for days. (MLS 375)

The Arial garden of Abraham is brought down to dust at last.

Moor goes to Spain, Benengali, in search of Vasco Miranda,
whom he has not met for fourteen years. He is supposed to have the
best part of what remains of Aurora’s painting. Moreover, the Moor is
made to believe by his father that Vasco is responsible for Aurora’s
death. But later he understands that Vasco is not the real killer. On
his way by flight, he dozes off and wakes with a sense of confusion. A
young woman offers him food and drink. She identifies herself as
Eduvigis Refugio, as a student of psychology major from the
Complutense University of Madrid. She appreciates the stuffed
Jawahar and makes an offer of her body. She takes him to a small
toilet and they have sex very briefly. Later he asks for her and is
answered that there is no one by that name. When he insists, people
mistake him to be a trouble maker and he is dealt with severely. “No doubt such houris did float up here, above the clouds. They could pass through the aircraft’s walls whenever they chose” (MLS 383). Eduvigis recalls Maria of The Ground beneath Her Feet, who tries to seduce Ormus on his trip to England.

Vasco’s house in Benengali presents a surreal picture.

They say that everything inside that house has grown stagnant; everything. They wind up the clocks but time doesn’t move. The great tower has been locked up for years. Nobody goes up there except, probably, the old madman himself. They say the dust in the tower rooms comes up to your knees because he won’t let the servants in to clean up” (MLS 393-94).

This is clearly a den of a mad man who has severed his connections with life long back.

Vasco’s end is unusual and pathetic. As an addict to needles, he bursts due to overdose. It is described thus:

An overdose, you say. -- One needle too many in the arm, causing the insulted body to spring a dozen leaks. --No, this was something older, an older needle, the needle of retribution that had been planted in him before he had even committed a crime; or, and, it was a needle of fable, it was the splinter of ice left in his veins by his encounter with the Snow Queen, my mother, who he had loved, and who had made him mad. (MLS 432)
It is his unconsummated love for Aurora that drives him to drugs, madness and ultimately to death.

In *The Ground beneath Her Feet*, Vina gets a dream in which she gets sacrificed to appease the Gods of nature.

the legendary popular singer Vina Apsara woke sobbing from a dream of human sacrifice in which she had been the intended victim. Bare-torsoed men resembling the actor Christopher Plummer had been gripping her by the wrists and ankles. Her body was splayed out, naked and writhing, over a polished stone bearing the graven image of the snakebird Quetzalcoatl. The open mouth of the plumed serpent surrounded a dark hollow scooped out of the stone, and although her own mouth was stretched wide by her screams the only noise she could hear was the popping of flashbulbs; but before they could slit her throat, before her lifeblood could bubble into that terrible cup, she awoke at noon in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico. (GHF 1)

The surrealistic dream opening sets the tone for the novel *The Ground beneath Her Feet*.

An earthquake hits people without giving people time or opportunity to grasp what is happening: “the earth began to shake [...] and dance in Disney fashion, inanimate objects animated by the little sorcerer’s apprentice, that overweening mouse; [...] cracks scurried like lizard along the walls” (GHF 11-12).
Ormus Cama is a born musician. Right from his birth his hands move as if he is playing a guitar. When his baby photo is analyzed in digitally magnified close ups, “the pudgy hands of baby Ormus incontestably playing air guitar, moving soundlessly through a complex series of monster riffs and dizzy licks with a speed, and feeling, of which the instrument’s greatest practitioners would have been proud” (GHF 23).

Lady Spenta Cama, being a God fearing soul, is believed to be on “speaking terms with two of the Parsi Angels, The Amesha Spentas for whom she was named; the Angel Good Thoughts [...] and the Angel Orderly Righteousness [...]. Of the various supernatural spentas this was the duo with whom Lady Spenta Cama felt the most affinity” (GHF 24). Human beings and supernatural elements are found to coexist in the surrealistic terrain.

When Ormus sings in his sleep “so sweetly that birds had woken thinking the dawn had come, and gathered on his windowsill to listen” (GHF 49). The song contained such joy in life, such optimism and hope that it infuriated Cyrus. Clutching his pillow in hand he goes to Ormus’s bed to asphyxiate him to death. But for the intervention of the Aya he would have killed Ormus. Cyrus Cama develops into a full blooded psychopath after this incident.

Ormus hears Gayomart singing through his telepathy. When he sings Jessy Garon Parker’s “Heartbreak Hotel” people think he is a thief. Even before the song has been released, it reaches him: “he
always claimed that his dead twin Gayomart was his only style guru--Gayomart, who apparently came to him in dreams” (GHF 99).

Ormus gets into a reverie. “This is the fabled “Cama obscura”, his stricken family’s curse of inwardness, which he and he alone has learned how to harness, to transform into a gift” (GHF 105). He can play a trick on his mind. He can make the room turn upside down and look at the fan which is growing like a metal flower from the floor. The purple birthmark on his left eyelid seems to pulse and throb. This helps him get visions. By dint of deeper dreaming, he populates that desert-ceiling with airplanes and all the raucous medley of a magical metropolis with taxicabs, policemen, gangsters, pianists and whores (GHF 105).

Vina’s [Nissy Poe’s] mother gives vent to her pent up feelings and resorts to a gruesome act. When Vina gets back from the woods where she finds a solacing loneliness, she finds that the children had been murdered in their beds, stabbed in their hearts with a large kitchen knife. They died without waking up. But John Poe had had his throat cut, and from the wreckage in the room it was plain he had staggered around for long moments before crashing down [...] Helen was hanging by her neck from one of the crossbeams. In the dirt below her dangling feet was a large kitchen knife coated thickly with dark, congealing blood. (GHF 117)
Philoo Doodwala finds his goats no more useful as people don’t drink goat’s milk any more. He also finds the maintenance of the little beasts costly. So he decides to slaughter them according to Vina’s suggestion: “Meat phor the interior, owercoat for exterior” (GHF 127-28). So he orders a royal massacre: “the gutters near the abattoirs bubbled over with blood, flooding the streets, which grew sticky and stank. Flies crowded so thickly that in places it became inadvisable, for reasons of low visibility, to drive” (GHF 128). The meat is tasty and plenty of people like it. This improves his political prospects. The royal massacre and its consequences are more than realistic.

Ardaviraf, who has been very silent after he was hit by the cricket ball

played his flute-instinctively, with a few inevitable hesitations, but on the whole with a fluency that bordered on the magical—said much about the pain of melody’s long absence from his life. The haunting, ghostly notes of the evening raga stopped the promenaders in their tracks. Children squatted down at his feet; the birds forbore to sing. The flute’s sound was like the weeping of the soul.

(GHF 152)

This cosmic harmony removes the blanket from the mind of Ormus also. He breaks his father’s nineteen-year-old embargo on music and unplugs it from Ormus too. Such is the power of his music that it can penetrate at the surrealistic level.
Ormus has taken a vow not to touch Vina till she reaches the age of sixteen. His desires find an outlet in his dreams:

In his dreams, and in waking visions, he sees her body growing, sees her breast begin to bud and flower, the coming of bodily hair and the red blood staining her thighs. He feels her move beneath his hand, feels himself tense and grow at her rough and tender touch. In the privacy of his thoughts he is a voluptuary, feral, criminal, but in the real world, which feels daily more unreal, he plays, for the first time in his life, the perfect gentlemen.

(GHF 160)

Sir Darius Xerxex Cama gets disillusioned with his much longed for trip to England. Methwold whom he longs to meet turns a cold shoulder since he has comes to know of his fake law degree. When the truth hits Darius, he gets mentally deranged.

Sir Darius moaned loudly in his sleep, the moan of a soul caught in the burning pincers of a demon. In his dream Sir Darius was surrendering to Scandal’s embrace. He felt his body catch fire as he was consumed by his disgrace and shame, and screamed out at the top of his voice. (GHF 167)

The truth hits him hard and makes him cry aloud. Heartbroken, he gets back to India and dies.

Rai goes into the bowels of India to unearth the ‘goat–ghost’ scam of Piloo. This is a region very much like the Sunderbans in
Midnight’s Children. After traveling for two days he reaches the river called “Wain Ganga.” He enters seeonee jungles. The jungle presents a picture of a nightmare:

In their jungles I might chance upon legendary beasts, talking animals who never were, created by a writer who put them in his faraway wilderness without ever seeing it with his own eyes: a panther and a bear and a tiger and a jackal and an elephant and monkeys and a snake. And on the hills’ high ridges I might at any moment glimpse mythic figure of a human boy, a Non-Existent Boy, a figment, a man-cub dancing with wolves. (GHF 261)

After the car accident, when Ormus is canvalesing, Maria gets into his conscience. She comes from his secret world. Mull Standish tries to identify and detain her:

Who are you, Standish demands, blinking. He is heavy with sleep, and he’s also wearing his reading glasses, so that everything more than nine inches away looks blurry and unreal.

As he tries to focus on her, she disappears. A crack seems to open in the air itself, and she steps through it and is gone. (GHF 348)

Nature plays tricks with normal day-to-day life. Surprising things occur with no notice or whatsoever. This is an apocalyptic vision very much like what is presented in the movie The Day After Tommorrow.
A hole has appeared in downtown Mexico City, a chasm thirty metres across. It has swallowed buses, kiosks, children. For years water has been sucked out of the swampy sub-soil to sate the thirsty city, and this is the underworld’s revenge. The fabric of the surface is being unwoven from below. Right here in Manhattan the buildings themselves are beginning to stagger. Just a few blocks north of my brass bed, there’s a brownstone that’s started shedding bricks. A net has been erected to protect pedestrians. People have always jumped off buildings in New York, but this is something new. This building is jumping off itself. (GHF 355)

Vina brings Ormus back to life. It is a resurrection in Christ fashion.

He [Ormus] in fact died that day [...] in the middle of 1980’s in New York. [...] For one hundred and fifty seconds he genuinely checked out kicked the bucket, bought the farm [...] He went down the tunnel towards the light. Then he turned right round and came on back [...] he is alive, it’s a blessing a miracle [...] Dead for two minutes but in the third minute he rose again from the dead. (GHF 353–54)

In Rai’s photos, from time to time, a ghost image emerges. The photo ‘phantom’ wants to communicate something. It asks for help—but help for whom is not clear. Rai mistakes it to be Maria trying to
communicate. But it asks to help Ormus (GHF 561). Extra-terrestrial, phantom elements also throw in their lot to help Ormus.

Ormus, in his last musical performance, projects as if he is withdrawing, retreating from this world into the other world. “Voluntarily imprisoning himself within the private continuum of rock ‘n’ roll, Ormus Cama, too, became a floating entity, more otherworldly alien than human being, more show than O” (GHF 616).

Scenes of death and violence like Mian Abdullah’s murder, actions of the Ravana gang at the old fort, Sufiya killing turkeys and Omar Khayyam, the Moor’s murders, Tai whore’s imitation of smells, boatman Tai’s agelessness and stink, the triple pregnancy, the happenings in Benengeli, frequent earthquakes, the serial killings, and Rai’s India— all get portrayed in a surrealistic fashion in Rushdie’s novels to effect Magical Realism.
Neorealism or *neorealismo* is an Italian aesthetic movement that flourished especially after World War II. It sought to deal realistically with the events leading up to the wars and with their resulting social problems. Rooted in the 1920s, it was similar to the *verismo* ("realism") movement, from which it originated, but differed in its upsurge resulting from the intense feelings inspired by fascist repression, the resistance, and the war. Now the movement represents any sort of oppression and the consequent pathos. Magical Realist texts take an anti-bureaucratic stand, and so they often use their magic to unearth the horrors of the established social order.

For many critics, neorealism has concerned itself with fascism and wars; it is first and foremost a moral statement, whose purpose is to promote a true objectivity—one that will force viewers to abandon the limitations of a strictly personal perspective and to embrace the reality of ‘the others’ with all the ethical responsibility that such a vision entails. In literature and cinema, neorealism is defined by its contact with everyman’s reality.

Neorealism is a literary movement deriving from Italian influences, but also including a number of features from Brazilian literature, particularly the denunciation of social injustice as found in the *romance nordestino* (North-Eastern novel). Both in terms of poetry and prose, neo-realism has acquired a dimension of social intervention, made more acute by post-war events and by the
seductive appeal of the socialist systems and the social climate in Portugal caused by the political dictatorship.

With regard to the novel, the movement was begun by Soeiro Pereira Gomes, with Esteiros, and Alves Redol, with Gaibéus, published in 1940. They both brought an extensive and representative body of work into the area of fiction.

The neo-realist novel reactivated the mechanisms of narrative representation, being inspired by the Marxist categories of class consciousness and class struggle and centering upon the social conflicts between peasants, workers, bosses, landlords and estate owners. It offers a keen and incisive analysis of the different facets of these diverse social groupings.

Ontology is a twentieth century movement in philosophy. It is the study of being or existence. It seeks to describe or posit the basic categories and relationships of being or existence. Ontology can be said to study conceptions of reality. "What exists", "What is", "What am I", "What is describing this to me"--all exemplify questions about being, and highlight the most basic problems in Ontology: finding a subject, a relationship, and an object to talk about. Ontology is defined by Maggie Ann Bowers as “the philosophical study of those things related to belief” (132).

All existentialists are concerned with Ontology. The point of departure is human consciousness and mental processes. In contrast to most previous philosophical systems, which maintain that an a priori essence precedes or transcends the individual existence of
people or of objects, the existentialists maintain that existence precedes essence. The significance of this for human beings is that the concept that one has an essential self is shown to be an illusion. A man’s self is nothing except what he has become; at any given moment, it is the sum of the life he has shaped until then.

Ontological disruption serves the purpose of indicating political and cultural disruption. Magic is often provided as cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality and motivation. Politics, especially bad politics, has become an expected ingredient of Magical Realism. Thus it gains special significance as regards the third world countries where politics is full of macabre events that defy civilization. Hyperbole and exaggeration are quite normal with Magical Realism since the happenings in the postcolonial world cross the boundaries of reality, of what is possible, and often redefine the essence of ‘being’. It is the feeling of dread and angst that brings one into a confrontation with the ultimate meaninglessness of life. The awareness of the truth that only in this confrontation can an authentic sense of ‘being’ and of ‘freedom’ be attained is necessary for life. It is this understanding that forces one to adopt a neorealistic perspective to expose and in turn find an answer to the question ‘What is it, to be?’--the essence of Heidegger’s existential phenomenology.

Magical Realism combines these two--neorealism and ontology--to show how hard people fight oppression from pathetic, gruesome, horrible situations and circumstances to stay alive, to exist and to find
meaning for existence. In the third world countries life exists at
different terrains and mostly at the neorealist one for the poor and
the downtrodden.

India’s filth and squalour get well exposed in Rushdie’s
Midnight’s Children. People, in spite of the hardships, put up a brave
fight for survival, to make their ‘being’ meaningful.

People in India use ‘dung cakes’ for a variety of purposes. The
popular notion is that it is all bovine. But the truth is otherwise.
Rushdie says: “Nor was it all bovine. It issued from the rumps of the
horses between the shafts of the city’s many tongas, ikkas and
gharries; and mules and men and dogs attended nature’s calls,
mixing in a brotherhood of shit” (MC 32). Flies are carriers of
disease spreading germs. And the open toilets in India facilitate their
growth and multiplication: “And flies, Public Enemy Number One,
buzzing gaily from turd to steaming turd, celebrated and cross-
pollinated these freely-given offerings” (MC 32).

The overcrowded trains in India make life precarious. The way
the trains pregnant with illicit passengers (fare dodgers) move is not
within the realistic grasp of the western readers for whom the train
journey is orderly, relatively safe.

And always, in all the trains in this story, there were
these voices and these fists banging and pleading; in the
Frontier Mail to Bombay and in all the expresses of the
years; and it was always frightening, until at last I was
the one on the outside, hanging on for dear life, and
begging, ‘Hey, maharaj! Let me in, great sir.’ (MC 67)

This particular scene is not specific to the ‘Frontier Mail’ alone. It is quite common with all the trains in India.

‘Civilization’ is mostly at the cost of displacing the aborigines. When the city expands and swells with money and comforts, the very existence of ‘the sons of the soil’ is at threat. ‘Bombay’ that grew speedily is not an exception: “Of all the first inhabitants, the Koli fishermen have come off worst of all. Squashed now into a tiny village in the thumb of the handlike peninsula, they have admittedly given their name to a district--Colaba” (MC 93-94). The Koli fishermen of Bombay have been made to sacrifice for the ever expanding city.

Extremists, the kinds of Joesph D’Costa, do not have faith in Independence: “This independence is for the rich only; the poor are being made to kill each other like flies. In Punjab, in Bengal. Riots riots, poor against poor. It's in the wind” (MC 104). The carnal clashes that followed Independence claimed the lives of many people. These unchecked incidents made people lose faith in the government, Independence and its consequent democracy. The rich were mostly unaffected by the riots but the poor were the worst hit.

Shiva, “whom Mary’s crime had doomed to poverty and accordions” (MC 129), started throwing/hurling pebbles, dangerously as he grew, into the surrounding emptiness. When teased by Eyeslice, Leela Sabarmati’s elder son, about his unkempt appearance and knobbly knees, he hurls a sharp stone and blinds his tormentor in the
right eye. This act is an illustration of the underdog’s anger at his pathetic, uncared for existence. Shiva grows to be more violent and it is the society that makes him so. The apathy of the government and the rich towards the poor make them develop a kind of ennui that turns them into violent criminals. And it is ironical that many such become uniformed guardians of authority, as Shiva himself becomes a major in the army in the later part of the novel *Midnight’s Children*.

When the ‘tetra pod’ business becomes successful and Ahmed Sinai gets very rich, the government sends him a letter informing him that his assets are frozen. As Narlikar, the realtor rightly observes:

> ‘These are bad times, Sinai Bhai freeze a Muslim’s assets, they say, and you make him run to Pakistan, leaving all his wealth behind him. Catch the lizard’s tail and he’ll snap it off! This so-called secular state gets some damn clever ideas.’ [MC 135]

Every nation has got its own cheap tricks to drive out the minority. Secularism is used only as a façade, a false front, to hide the inner agenda.

Terrorism and Extremism are despicable and they claim the lives of many innocent victims turning them into martyrs without their preference or knowledge. The recent bomb blasts in India and the world over have made life precarious and unsafe. Joseph D’Costa has stocked lots of explosive: “the walls inside the clock tower! Shelves’ filled from floor to ceiling with home made bombs. Enough
explosive power to blow this hill into the sea!” (MC 148). The world will become better only if such menace can be ended.

Saleem’s efforts to convene a conference of the midnight’s children turn utterly futile. He sees it as a “sort of loose federation of equals” (MC 220). Shiva is opposed to this idea of ‘feigned equality’. He sees the exercise devoid of any purpose. He speaks out his anger and frustration thus:

‘Rich kid,’ Shiva yelled, ‘You don’t know one damn thing! What purpose, man? What thing in the whole sister sleeping world got reason, yara? For what reason you’re rich and I’m poor? Where’s the reason in starving, man? God knows how many millions of damn fools living in this country, man, and you think there’s a purpose! Man, I’ll tell you – you got to get what you can, do what you can with it, and then you got to die. That’s reason, rich boy. Everything else is only mother-sleeping wind!’ (MC 220-21)

Rushdie is much critical of what exactly our assemblies and parliament do. They discuss issues but the lot of the poor remains the same. Shiva lays bare the pitiable state of the country in neorealist terms.

‘No, little rich boy; there is no third principle; there is only money-and-poverty, and have-and-lack, and right-and-left; there is only me-against-the-world! The world is not ideas, rich boy; the world is no place for dreamers or their
dreams; the world, little Snotnose, is things. Things and their makers rule the world: look at Birla, and Tata, and all the powerful. They make things. For things, the country is run. Not for people. For things, America and Russia send aid; but five hundred million stay hungry. When you have things, then there is time to dream; when you don’t, you fight.’ (MC 255)

Shiva stresses the need of the poor to be engaged in ontological struggle to stay alive. For the likes of Shiva “history could only be explained as the continuing struggle of oneself—against—the crowd” (MC 282).

War is another horrible affair like poverty and terrorism. It turns men into beasts and makes them prey on the vulnerable sections of the society, especially the women folk. The horrors of war witnessed in Bangladesh are depicted in neorealist terms.

And while we drove through city streets, Shaheed looked out of windows and saw things that weren’t – couldn’t have- been true: soldiers entering women’s hostels without knocking; women, dragged into the street, were also entered, and again nobody troubled to knock. And newspaper offices, burning with the dirty yellowblack smoke of cheap gutter newsprint, and the offices of trade unions, smashed to the ground, and roadside ditches filling up with people who were not merely asleep- bare
chests were seen, and the hollow pimples of bullet-holes.

(MC 356)

The slum clearance and beautification of the city only ends up uprooting and dislocating many a poor. ‘Beautification’ can not be carried out at the cost of the survival of the poor person. The struggle for survival, the ontological struggle, to keep alive itself is a problem for many poor people in India. “Then the tear-gas came and we had to flee, coughing spluttering blind, for riot police, like criminals, crying falsely as we ran” (MC, 413). The poor are driven away like stray dogs.

The concept of the ‘moving slum’ brings out the pathetic plight of the poor.

By the end of the day, the slum which clustered in the shadow of the Friday Mosque had vanished from the face of the earth [...] a new slum was reported in the heart of the city, hard by the New Delhi railway station[...]It was reported at Mehruali; [...] in the gardens of the Jantar Mantar, Jai Singh’s Mughal observatory; [...]Only after the end of the Emergency did the moving slum come to a standstill. (MC 431)

When the slum is cleared in one place, it does not disappear from the face of the earth but reappears, erupts; elsewhere. This deep rooted issue has to be viewed seriously and a permanent solution has to be arrived at.

Sanjay Gandhi’s efforts to keep the Indian population under check ended in a fiasco. The special drive that aimed at sterilization
went away--even those who were not married were subjected to some
‘ectomy’ or other. Their sole aim was to reach the target, unmindful of
on whom it was performed. Thus people ended up getting castrated
like stray dogs. Under the Emergency, rules were flouted and the
government was given the ultimate authority to run the show as it san
fit.

People were caught, taken in and sterilized; magicians
and old beggars, people were being dragged towards the
vans, and now a rumour spread through the colony of
magicians: ‘They are doing nasbandi--sterilization is being
performed!’ And a second cry: ‘Save your women and
children!’ (MC 429)

This scene is reminiscent of Rohinton Mistry’s A Fine Balance where
the atrocity of the emergency is etched in detail.

In Shame, Rushdie picturizes the agony of the rich who have
become poor. The triple mothers--Chhunni, Munnee, and Bunny have
to face the materialistic world after the demise of their father
Mr.Shakil. They are forced to part with the majority of things at their
palace to settle accounts with the money lenders. They are left with
lots of useless things but with no money. They put up a brave fight to
exist, to reassert themselves as important identities in the world
again.

The ‘Defence’ quarters, the Pakistani Defence Services Officers
Co-operative Housing Society, has no connection with the defence
personnel. Plots and houses are transferred to other parties through a complex contract and it is explained thus:

It was an elegant procedure. The vendor got rich, the intermediary got his fee, you got your house, and nobody broke any laws. So nobody ever questioned how it came about that the city’s most highly desirable development zone had been allotted to the defence services in this way [...] Diplomats, international businessmen, the sons of former dictators, singing stars, textile moguls, Test cricketers come and go.  (S 26-27)

Thus it comes to represent a symbol of status and has nothing to do with ‘Defence’. This is a clear instance of the government manipulating the laws to appease the greed of the rich.

The Customs’ Office in the third world countries is one of the main sources of revenue for the government exchequer. But, unfortunately, it belongs to the Customs Officer, in the sense that it becomes his money spinning private property. Customs officials get rich but the government continues to be poor and at the mercy of the IMF and the World Bank.

A customs officer depends, for a decent income, on traffic. Goods pass through, he not unreasonably impounds them, their owners see reason, an accommodation is reached, the customs man’s family gets new clothes. Nobody minds this arrangement; everyone knows how
little public officials are paid. Negotiations are 
honourably conducted on both sides. (S 51)

The tongue--in-cheek language brings out the pathetic and corrupt life of the officials.

The unexpected bomb blasts unsettle the lives of many an innocent victim. Bilquis’s father wants to show two movies together in his theatre: the local Gai-Wallah and a ‘Western’ featuring Randolph Scott. This infuriates the religious fanatics and they blow up his theatre “Excelsior”. This claims his life and Bilquis’s future. The scene clearly illustrates the plight of many bomb blast victims who are unsettled by the incident:

Terrified by a sound like the beating wings of an angel, a sound for which she could afterwards find no good explanation but which pounded in her ears until her head ached, she ran out of her house, pausing only to wrap around her shoulders the green dupatta of modesty; which was how she came to be standing, catching her breath, in front of the heavy doors of the cinema behind which her father sat grimly amidst vacant seats watching the show, when the hot firewind of apocalypse began to blow. (S 63)

Rushdie presents the horrors of life: the Deputy Speaker was killed in the national assembly when the furniture was flung at him by elected representatives; Time magazine never got into the country because it carried an article about President Ayub Khan; State
scholarships were given to members of the fanatical Jamaat Party; Street urchins being stolen in broad day light, smuggling, the boom in heroin exports, corrupt civil servants, bought Judges--all these portray a bleak picture of life in Pakistan. (S 69-70)

Rani Harappa’s ‘eighteen shawls’ represent the neorealist picture of life in Pakistan. There is the ‘torture shawl’ that shows how prisoners are tortured. There are blind folded prisoners tied to chairs while jailers hurled buckets of water, now boiling hot (the thread-steam rose), now freezing cold, until the bodies of their victims grew confused and cold water raised hot burns upon their skins:. (S 193)

There is the election shawl that depicts how elections are conducted in Pakistan. There are figures breaking seals, stuffing of ballot boxes, smashing heads, figures swaggering into polling booths to watch the peasants vote, stick-waving rifle-toting figures, fire-raisers, mobs, and on the shawl of the second election there were three times as many figures as on the first. (S 193)

Pakistan is a country where the values of democracy and freedom are not upheld. Rigging and booth capturing are quite common there.

The Moor’s Last Sigh, considered a sequel to Midnight’s Children, also depicts the bleak side of India. The western countries have been exploiting India to take away the riches from it. “From the
beginning, what the world wanted from bloody mother India was daylight clear’ [...] ‘They came for the hot stuff, just like any man calling on a tart’” (MLS 5). India is irresistible and very much alluring, with its grandeur and potential. The ‘looting’ still continues with neo-colonialism.

There have been innumerable wars within and without India on God and Religion:

In the city we are for secular India but the village is for Ram. And they say Ishwar and Allah is your name but they don’t mean it, they mean only Ram himself, King of Raghu Clan, purifier of sinners along with Sita. In the end I am afraid the villagers will march on the cities and people like us will have to lock our doors and there will come a Battering Ram. (MLS 55-56)

The religious, fanatic-leaders exploit the Godliness and religiosity of the gullible people who do not have any rational understanding of these concepts. They are emotionally aroused in the name of Gods and are made to indulge in atrocious activities in the guise of protecting and propagating the religion. They ram in to the other religious establishments and indulge in vandalism. The ‘Best Bakery’ incident in Gujarat is a case in point.

India is a country where Godmen, women too, survive successfully. All one needs to do is to mix a bit of yoga and meditation with religion and this is an ever successful formula. Lord Khusro Khusrovan Bhagwan of Midnight’s Children and his mother
Mrs. Dubash, staying aboard a luxury yacht anchored in Bombay Harbour, exploit people. Khusro offers suggestions like “Embrace your fate,” […] ‘Rejoice in what gives you grief. That which you would flee, turn and run towards it with all your heart. Only by becoming your misfortune will you transcend it” (MLS 163). It is not necessary that this idea has to be received for a hefty ‘dhakshana’ since every one knows it.

Rushdie exposes out the fakery of Godmen very well.

When the elite of Bombay (Aurora’s group) are celebrating the arrival of Independence, Vasco is highly critical of it. He says, “Panditji sold you that stuff like a cheap watch salesman and you all bought one and now you wonder why it doesn’t work. Bleddy Congress party full of bleddy fake Rolex salesman” (MLS 166). He further adds, “Only one power in this damn country is strong enough to stand up against those god’s […] Corruption. You get me? Bribery.” (MLS 166). These two ills continue to sap the vital growth of the nation.

Money and wealth are not distributed equally in the country. Fifteen years after Independence, the economic situation of the country remains thus:

- Official sources revealed that just one and a half per cent of the country's companies owned over half of all private capital, and that even within this elite one and a half percent, just twenty companies dominated the rest, and that within these twenty companies there were four super
groups who controlled, between them, one quarter of all the share capital in India. (MLS 180)

Rushdie’s observation is true even now. It is an open secret that India is not governed by democracy but only by the dictates of these four [the number may vary now] super groups.

What is seen on the surface is not real; the India that hides behind palpitates more vigourously. “The city itself, perhaps the whole country, was a palimpsest, Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white;” (MLS 184). India glitters only on the surface level; but the one under and hidden rots with disease and poverty.

The unemployment problem is created artificially to employ people for meager wages. People are made to starve and then given a little to eat and this makes the gullible happy. Sometimes such acts are called philanthropy. Instead of enabling people to earn what they want, the government reduces them to the level of beggars with subsidies and free gifts. Abraham Zogoiby expresses this thus:

‘But naturally we accepted no responsibility in case of ill-health or injury. It would have been, if you follow my line, illogical. After all, these persons were not just invisible, but actually, according to official pronouncements, simply not at all there.’ (MLS 187)

Most of the construction workers in metropolitan cities are not citizens of those places. They come from the remote villages that are poverty ridden and, if they happen to perish in the cities, there is nobody to take notice of it. They are not living entities but spooks.
The emergency brought with it riots, communal clashes and religious intolerance. “After the Emergency people started seeing through different eyes. Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were Christian Jews.” (MLS 235) Most of the matters are viewed through religious eyes but Indians are proud to be conscious of ‘secularism’. Hindus are very proud of having a Musalman as the first citizen of India. This was primarily done, by the BJP government, to uphold their secular façade in spite of their deep rooted Hindutva agenda.

Aurora gets honoured and Raman Fielding, who opposed her, applauds her after she signs a ‘pact’ with him.

‘Is it a Hindu who is given this honour? Is it one of our great Hindu artists? No matter. In India every community must have its place, […]. We accept this. This too is part of ideology of Ram Rajya, […]. Only when other communities are usurping our Hindu places, when minority seeks to dictate to majority, then we say that the small also must accept to bend and move before the big. (MLS 260)

Rushdie makes it clear that the minorities can enjoy freedom and equality only when they accept the might of the majority. It is indeed paradoxical.

The condition of Indian prisons is sketched with all its gruesome details: the dim corridors stinking of excrement, the physical- assaults like blows and pushes, stench of ordure, mosquitoes, straw, pools of
fluid and cockroaches everywhere (MLS 286). The Indian prison is not at all a place for human beings to be in. There is utter human degradation and violation of human rights. More Kiran Bedis are definitely required.

‘Police encounters’ are the safest method of eliminating problems, not only for the society but also for the police. It is an easy way to close the case. When the Moor refuses to swallow the pill that closes Uma’s life, the police assault him:

Hands grasped me by the arms the legs the hair. In a moment I was lying on the floor [...]. I had heard about people dying in what were euphemistically called ‘police encounters.’ The inspectors hand grasped my nose and squeezed... Airlessness demanded my full attention. And when I yielded to the inevitable, pop! In went the fatal pill. (MLS 292)

Here the police are trying to finish off the Moor so that the can could be closed as a “sad story of love gone wrong” (MLS 292).

The Shiv Sena was very particular about breaking textile mill strikes where communists played an active roll. MA’s [Mainduck’s] crack team, with masks, would chase victims and kill them. They posed as mythological adventurers. They helped the ‘modernization’ process thus: “At the end of the strike there were sixty thousand fewer jobs in the mills than there had been at the beginning and industrialists were at last able to modernise their plant. We skimmed off the filth, and left a sparkling, up-to-date power loom industry
behind” (MLS 307). This is a typical anti-people rationale. The harassed victims are so mortally shocked that they never again re-enter, and invitation to join any union and related activities is instantly rebuffed.

In The Moor’s Last Sigh, corruption is referred to time and again. Drug lords like Abraham Zogoiby can thrive only because corruption exists. The officers are easily tempted as their salary is low compared to the big money that the business people, industrialists and the smugglers have.

‘Of course our people can slip out and in whenever they may so choose. And drugs squad officers also are only human. On their low pay it is hard to make ends meet. What to tell you? It is the duty of the well-off to be generous. Philanthropy is our necessary role. Noblesse oblige.’ (MLS 333)

The concept of Ramrajya can only create confusion in a secular country like India. Rushdie rightly asks:

In a religion with thousand and one Gods they suddenly decide only one chap matters. Then what about Calcutta, for example, when they don’t go for Ram? And Shiva-temples are no longer suitable places for worship? […] Where are all the puranas? […] A single marital deity, a single book, and mob rule: that is what they have made of Hindu culture, its many headed beauty, its peace. (MLS 338)
The race riots, the religious riots and the region/language riots split the country asunder and spoil its peace and progress. In Punjab, Assam, Kashmir, Meerut—in Delhi, in Calcutta—from time to time they slit their neighbours’ throats and took warm showers, or red bubble-baths, in all that spurning blood. They killed you for being circumcised and they killed you because your foreskins had been left on. Long hair got you murdered and haircuts too; light skin flayed dark skin and if you spoke the wrong language you could lose your twisted tongue.

(MLS 350)

The multi culturalism of the country—the ‘unity-in-diversity’ aspect—has to be understood and preserved.

The bomb culture has seeped into the system. There are ever so many ‘cottage units’ that make country bombs. Sammy Hazare, the tin man and his zany, dwarf Dhirendra, make bombs at night in their ‘den-residence’.

Fire-bombs, time-bombs, rocket-triggers and tilt-bombs: the whole house—its cupboards, its nooks and crannies, and even several special holes which the two men had dug beneath the floor of their residence’s single room and then boarded over for secrecy—had become a private arsenal.

(MLS 356)

Such varieties of bombs and such hideouts have become quite common. These bombs are used to paralyse life and societal activities.
They are planted and made to go off at all vital points, claiming many lives. Abraham Zogoiby’s empire is brought down by Sammy and Dhiren with the help of their bombs.

In The Ground beneath Her Feet, Rushdie is always very much worried about the religious fundamentalists.

It is the men with heavy weaponry who worry me (And they are men, almost always, all those arnolds carrying terminators, all those zealous suicidists with their toilet-brush beards and no hair on their baby-naked upper lips; but when women do such work, they’re often worse). (GHF 13)

Here is a dig at the Muslim fundamentalists who sacrifice their lives for the cause of upholding their religion.

Honesty always does not pay. V.V. Merchant is of the opinion, “Better to show your hand than hide it” (GHF 83). He is the most honourable of men, the least corruptible but he fails to make money. Rai rightly asks, “In that case [...] why aren’t all the matchsticks piled up in front of you” (GHF 83). Earning money through honest means has become a remote possibility.

“Pain and loss are ‘normal’ too. Heart break is what there is” (GHF 92). Life is such and one has to overcome problems and invent happiness. This idea of Rushdie sums up his vision of neorealist ontologicality.

Indians are very fuss about the Western influence corroding their values. They are very careful to see to it that their people are not ‘Westernized’ and hence try to avoid Western movies, music and
lifestyle. But Rushdie asks, “Why then offer up paeans to culture traitors like Ormus Cama, who betrayed his roots and spent his pathetic lifetime pouring the trash of America into our children’s ears?” (GHF 103). The more one resists, the more it is welcome. The success of Coke and Pepsi in India vouch for this paradox.

The dream of every average Indian is to get a green card and settle in America. Ormus and Rai want to leave India for America. Rai wants it more. “America! America! It pulled him; it would have him; as it pulls so many of us, and like Pinocchio on Pleasure Island, like all the little donkeys, we laugh (as it devours us) for joy. Hee-haw!” (GHF 108). The lure of the U.S. is irresistible and many desert their motherland for migrating to the U.S.

When Piloo’s goat business faces the threat of extinction, his goat herds are distressed. Piloo tours the countryside and alleviates their fears. He explains his future plans.

They will be top-quality goats, and you will all grow phat and lazy, because you will still get all your pay, though the goats will not require any maintenance, and also, they will not cost one single rupee to pheed. “Phrom now on”, he concluded cryptically, “we will raise not simply goats but ghosts”. (GHF 128)

In India it is possible ‘to have and not to have’ the same goats. Piloo is the goat specialist as Lalu is the cattle specialist.

India always has some political, religious or social problems that challenge peaceful existence. “National sensitivities are on permanent
alert” (GHF 131). The political majority, the religious minority, the militancy of religious organizations like the Shiv Sena, separatist forces like the ULFA of Assam, the PWG of Telungana, and the LeT of Kashmir and communal forces of various states-are all problems that the Indians are learning to live with.

Vina and Rai go on a tour to Kashmir and they reach the high hamlet of Aru. The discriminatory attitude of the villagers is shocking. The villagers pretended they had no food to sell us, because they heard me call her “Vina” and assumed we were Hindus, and I also remember the equally intense disgust on her face when, having heard we were Muslims, these same villagers brought us a feast of shirmal and meatballs and refused to let us pay. (GHF 138-39)

Rushdie exemplifies religious fanaticism well in the above episode. Human beings are no more seen as such, but only as members of a particular religion or other.

Drinking water has become a major problem in the country. It is a pity that water, the prime gift of God and every one’s basic need, has to be paid for nowadays. Even then it is not safe. Vina, the American brought up, aptly comments that the trouble with Indians “is that you never drink the water unless it’s been boiled for a fucking year” (GHF 142). As they are affected by water borne diseases time and again, Indians have become ‘self-conscious’ about it.

It is easy to forge and cheat people in India. Fake degrees are quite common and there are many organizations and parallel
universities that supply degrees for a song. Darius does not complete his law course in England. But in India he passes for a big lawyer. Methwold unearths the truth and writes to Lady Spenta about this:

that your husband’s papers were forgeries, forgeries of the highest quality, may I say; that he simply decided to brazen it out, on the assumption that nobody in India would bother to check; and if they did, it is not impossible, as you must know, nor indeed overly expensive, to buy a fellow’s silence in that great country of yours, for which I have never ceased to feel the keenest nostalgia. (GHF 144)

Methwold has correctly understood of India and Indian ways.

Indian hospitals, especially government and charity hospitals, present a real neorealist picture. Lady Spenta is very much affected by what she sees in the hospital; “the many cases of malnutrition, and polio, and tuberculosis, and other poverty-related illnesses, including the self-inflicted injuries of unsuccessful suicides” (GHF, 146). In a country where crores after crores of rupees are spent for ever so many things, it is a pity that the most important aspect of health and hygiene is neglected and overlooked.

The police, the so called custodians of the upkeep of the law and the champion of the downtrodden are corrupt in a systematic manner. Indian C.I.Ds would efficiently work to a pre-charted course. Piloo with his money and political clout makes “these officers announce that they had ‘conclusively eliminated’ him from their investigations”
(GHF 187). The case is concluded that Thrasia Villa burnt because of ‘electrical leakage’, though everyone knows that Piloo and company orchestrated the gutting for getting the land to construct apartments.

The problem of the migrants who go in search of better pastures is well spelt out. Rushdie is concerned with this issue of the migrants very much in all his novels.

Suppose you’ve got to go through the feeling of being lost, into the chaos and beyond; you’ve got to accept the loneliness, the wild panic of losing your moorings, the vertiginous terror of the horizon spinning round and round like the edge of a coin tossed in the air. (GHF 193)

People do not comprehend the enormity of the “fodder fraud” (GHF 255). It seems that there is not much scope for money in fodder. But existent goats breed; non-existent goats breed faster. Piloo’s magical creatures, one hundred million wholly fictitious goats, top quality Cashmere goats, are reared in the heart of Central India. Money is spent to silence thousands of villagers, government inspectors and other officials. But it is only a paltry sum compared to the one and a half million crores of rupees the goast-goats bring. For this great fraud the government arrests Piloo. But, in India, any one who goes into the prison for such a great financial offence emerges as a big politician who will rule the fate of India. As this offence, Piloo is exonerated; but, for exposing this scam, Anitha Dharkar is beaten and raped in her own home. Money and political power can buy anything and silence truth.
But Pilooism won the day, Pilooism and Sanjayism, its Delhi twin. Delhi and Bombay used to hate each other. Bombay wallahs sneered at the way Delhi people licked the arse of power, then turned it round and sucked its indifferent cock: Delhi-ites derided Bombay’s money-grubbing glitzy materialism. This new alliance united the dark side of both. The corruptin of money and the corruption of power, united in a super-corruption that no opponent could withstand. (GHF 271)

Mr. John Mullens Standish XII thrived as the radio pirate. Now it is the time of video pirates. Video piracy is a big menace that the government is not able to do anything about. ‘Mulstandishes’ are present dozen a street today. Mull is prepared for any compromise to survive--an early broken marriage, Chinese teacher, truck driver, teamster and then a working male in Las Vegas prostitution, a homosexual partner and a radio pirate at last. He has really come a long way in life. This is a typical neorealist survival.

The order of the day is a destructive tendency. Children are fond of destructive games. Rai comes across a child who is symptomatic of the present.

The child begins to play. Boom! Boom! The robot annihilates the seat in front, the armrests, many passengers. In a while the boy falls asleep, cradling the monster in his arms, not at all alarmed by the idea that the commonplace machinery of the present contains the
secrets of such apocalyptic tomorrows, that we could transform our quotidian roadsters, our unassuming station wagons, our bourgeois sedans, into fearsome war machines if we could but learn the trick.

Boom! Boom! The boy dreams of destroying the world.

(GHF 380-81)

Artists are always in the limelight and hence subject to threats and risks. What one group appreciates, the other is not prepared to. Ormus’s ‘ballads’ sell by the wagon load. But “the albums anti-war message causes a few subterranean rumbles” (GHF 419). The national watchdogs find the songs anti-American, all the more so because the song writer is not a U.S.citizen. Narrow minded nationalism is a noose that descends on an immigrant writer/artist. Ormus is gunned down by an unidentified person.

Vina and Ormus go political and organize “the Rock the World charity concerts” (GHF 468). They pressurize the world leaders to demand action on global famine, the cynicism of international oil companies in Africa, third world debt relief, health hazards at nuclear processing plants, growing invasion of personal privacy by the spreading tentacles of the secret state and abuse of human rights in China. These are a few of the issues that they take up. The problems mentioned above highlight the neorealist state of the world and the ontological struggle an individual has to put up amidst these ills to exist and make life meaningful.
In the material dominated scenario, people are constantly on the search for spiritual gurus. Amirdhananda Mayi, Ravisankarji, Saibaba, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the likes are seen as the only saviours of the globe and its people. Ormus also starts visiting the guru Goddess-Ma. But it is quite unfortunate that only a few such Godmen/women are genuinely spiritual and can be the Christ figure that can redeem the world. Many are fake and they end up exploiting the helplessness of people who seek some anchorage.

The pathetic life of people in slums, innocents being murdered for political reasons, genocide, political rivalry, communal clashes, bomb blasts, war atrocities, terrorism, economic inequality, superstition, the onslaughts of nature and mass culture that affect the life of the poor--all that afflict mainly the third world countries get well exposed.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

How would things look like when viewed through Lord Shiva’s ‘third eye’ that penetrates into the essential being of things and presents them in their true light in disregard of time—the disjointed present, past or the future and, space? Magical Realism endeavours to answer such questions in its attempt to unearth “hidden realities.” There is the picture in realism, but there is always more to the picture in Magical Realism.

Rushdie, in Haroun and the Sea of Stories observes, “The real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real” (50). Though this sounds like “A=B and so B=A”, this assumption serves as the basis of Magical Realism.

The term “Magical Realism”, originally applied in the 1920s to a school of painters, is used to describe the prose fiction of Jorge Luis Borges in Argentina, as well as the work of writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Colombia, Guenter Grass in Germany, John Fowels in England and Salman Rushdie in India. These writers interweave, in an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched realism in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy tales.

The world could be divided into two parts--The Northern Hemisphere that is intellectually, economically and scientifically advanced, and the Southern Hemisphere that depends much on
emotion, myths and beliefs. Magical Realism is much distanced from Empirical science; it thrives much on mutual faith and belief, not on empirical and scientific proofs. Likewise, there are two types of Magical Realism; the scholarly type which is mainly the province of European writers and the mythic or folkloric type found mainly in Latin America. Rushdie seems to maintain a judicious balance between both.

Magical Realism is not a recent phenomenon. It has been rather discovered, not invented. It has a long history beginning with the masterful interweaving of the magical and the real in the epic and chivalric traditions and continuing through Decameron and Don Quijote. Panchatantra also employs the form to its advantage.

The difference between “the literature of fantasy” and “fantastic literature,” clarifies the term “Magical Realism”. Unlike the literature of fantasy, in which the world itself—Narnia or Middle Earth—is unreal, fantastic literature finds its bearings in our own landscapes, our cities, our living-rooms, our beds, where suddenly something happens that demands not so much our belief as our lack of disbelief. Stephen Speilberg’s E.T. (movie title) is so very realistic that we accept E.T., the titular character, and feel for it when it leaves earth. ‘Realistic’ is a term of praise and, in spite of centuries of ghost stories and tales of wonder, fantastic literature is regarded inferior since fantastic literature is never explicit, and readers are made uneasy by the misty mirror it holds up to them. The power of fantastic literature
lies not in the answers it dutifully provides, but in the questions and in its capacity to trigger the readers’ thought process.

Magical Realism often shifts the focus from the text to the reader, engaging the reader’s consciousness of the act of reading. The writing holds up a mirror to the reader caught in the act of reading and makes him feel that he is reading a story about a ‘man’, something real and which can happen. Magical Realism is inherently political, for it challenges assumptions of order. It thrives on the soil of corruption, with irony and satire.

Indigenous cultures are another strong influence, not just because they still exist but because of their spiritual traditions. Human beings change form at will, becoming alligators, birds, and jaguars, as needed. Metamorphosis is quite common as culture and individuals are subjected to change, depending on political and economic vagaries in the developing countries.

Maggie Ann Bowers, in *Magical Realism*, attempts to differentiate ‘Magic realism’ and ‘Magical Realism’: ‘Magic realism’ is “a term introduced in 1925 referring to an art that attempts to produce a clear depiction of reality that includes a presentation of the mysterious elements of everyday life” (131). Magical Realism is “a term introduced in the 1940’s referring to narrative art that presents extraordinary occurrences as an ordinary part of everyday reality” (131).

The question of whether it is “Magic Realism” or “Magical Realism” is asked very often. Bowers, as a middle path, seeks refuge
in “magic (al) realism”. But she tries to differentiate between the two in her critical study Magic(al) Realism.

The term “Magic Realism” was coined by Franz Roh in Germany in the 1920s. Roh’s work was translated by Fernando Vela and published in Madrid in Revista de Occidente.

Alejo Carpentier (1904-80) is widely acknowledged as the originator of Latin American Magical Realism. He coined the term ‘lo realismo maravilloso’ (marvelous realism) highlighting the difference between the European and the Latin American contexts.

Magical Realism emerged in criticism following the 1955 essay ‘Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction’ by Angel Flores. Flores feels that Magical Realism is a continuation of the Romantic realist tradition of Spanish language and literature and its European counterparts – Spanish writer Miguel De Saavedra Cervantes’s Don Quixote and the Czech–Austrian writer Franz Kafka’s famous tale “Metamorphosis”.

The various versions of Magic(al) Realism have differing meanings for the term ‘magic’; in Magic Realism, ‘magic’ refers to the mystery of life: in Marvelous and Magical Realism, ‘magic’ refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science. The variety of magical occurrences in Magic(al) Realist writing includes ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents and strange atmosphere but does not include magic as it is found in a magic show. Conjuring ‘magic’ is brought about by tricks that give the illusion that something extraordinary has
happened, whereas in Magical Realism, it is assumed that something extraordinary has really happened. Borges’s influence of ‘Ultraismo’ Movement, the main form of modernist experimentation in Spain, also contributed to Magical Realism.

Kafka is not considered a Magical Realist for he concentrated more on allegory. Though his idea of metamorphosis is of seminal value to Magical Realism, he is not a Magical Realist in the sense that Rushdie is. Gregor Samsa wakes up and finds himself to be an insect and does not demand an explanation for what has happened to him. He expresses his condition in the matter of fact Magical Realist manner. But he does not fit in as a Magical Realist as he considers it fate and not as a part of everyday reality. His family also refuses to accept it and he is distanced. But in Rushdie, Saleem cracks to break into dust, Zufiya slowly changes into a monticore, Saladin changes into a goat--all are accepted as everyday reality and people treat them with no ‘strangeness’. They all move around as normal beings, even get married.

Magical Realism is more suited to the screen than to the page. As it is basically an art movement with evocative images and pictures, it lends itself to the screen. Movies like Dream Scape, Nightmare on Elm Street, Harry Potter and Stuart Little do not makes one suspect but we ‘believe’, may be with ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. There seems to be much scope for research studies in this field.

As in metaphysical poetry, in Magical Realism also “the most heterogeneous elements are yoked by violence”. The oxymoronic
nature of the term adds to its charm. Bowers observes, “What the
narrative mode offers is a way to discuss alternative approaches to
reality to that of Western Philosophy, expressed in many post colonial
and non-Western works of contemporary fiction” (1).

Bowers is skeptical of the continuity of the term’s fame and
currency. She says, ‘Its future as a particular and identifiable mode is
vulnerable” (128). Bowers doubts the prominence of the term “Magical
Realism” in the future because it is fashionable now and any fashion
is susceptible to change; it is connected with ‘colonial’ and
‘colonisation’ and ‘magical’ and ‘real’ and these terms are fast
disappearing. Brenda Cooper in Magical Realism in West African
Fiction: Seeing with the Third Eye says, “It provides the exotic escape
from reality desired by some of their Western readership” (32). The
exotic nature of the ‘new’ may not last for ever

Life is lived in reality and not in a dream world. But questions
like What defines reality?”, “ Does something have to be tangible to the
senses of sight, taste, smell, sound, or touch to be categorized as real?
persist. On the other hand, how does one determine when something
is not real or when something is magical? When writers and visual
artists decided to explore the line between what is perceived as reality,
and what is perceived as dreams, magic, or the fantastic, the
movement came to be known as Magical Realism in literature and
Surrealism in art.

The artistic form of Surrealism contributes to Magical Realism
in its mission deliberate, sometimes calculated; incongruity within the
work of art itself ought to be jarring to the audience, at least initially; like Magical Realism, it should strike the audience with its unorthodoxy and unexpectedness. It forces the audience to tease its meaning out of the text, or to arrive at their own meaning of it. The most important aspect about a Surrealist work is, whether it provides answers or not, it always provides the questions.

Much analysis has been carried out to show that Surrealism and Magical Realism are different and confused with each other; Surrealism deals with the psychological and unreal, whereas Magical Realism does so with the physical and the real; Surrealism has been defined by a manifesto but Magical Realism by practice. The present thesis considers both relative since, according to Bowers, “Both surrealist and magic(al) realist writing and art could be called revolutionary in their attitudes since surrealists attempted to write against realist literature that reflected and reinforced what they considered to be bourgeois’ society’s idea of itself, and magic(al) realism holds immense political possibilities in its disruption of categories” (23). She strongly feels that “There are similarities between the two moments, and it is important to note that at a later date, magic(al) realist writers, particularly Alejo Carpentier, were influenced by both Roh and the surrealists” [13].

Magical Realism and Surrealism are excellent choices for the socially-minded artist looking to electrocute the public intellect back into regular use. By deliberately dislocating everyday object relationships, by alienating the individual’s own world from him/her,
it is possible to force a sort of scrambling for sensibility that makes the fullest possible use of the individual’s mind. Surrealism or Magical Realism continues to guide it. In the modern world, it is certainly a blessing to have found a form that makes people think at all. In a world full of certain types of television shows, movies, video games, drugs, and the incessant stream of advertisements which hammer away at the average individual’s brain, knocking the brain out of this deadening stream is nothing short of the cultural responsibility of the writers. It is time the world is ‘re-visioned’.

Rushdie’s fiction understands and incorporates this view. It aims to shock and unsettle the atrophied readers in order to whip them up to a critical perception of ‘reality’. “Forget those damn fool realists! The real is always hidden – isn’t it? – Inside a miraculously burning bush! Life is fantastic! Paint that” (MLS 174). This sums up the attitude of the Magical Realists. Rushdie asks his readers to “kindly desist from this Iffing and Butting and be happy with the stories you enjoy” (HSS 12). Since “reality can have metaphorical content; that does not make it less real” (MC 200).

This is an age where people are willing to look to anyone but themselves for advice on what they should think. Rather than figure out what their own opinions are, they trust the thinly-veiled slant of the television newscasters, the politics-masquerading-as-reporting of magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*. There are fashion shows and magazines that tell one what is stylish. Children are actually discouraged from thinking differently from their peers or from their
teachers. This attitude drives people into a culture of zombies; it seems important somehow to stop this disturbing trend. There is an urgent need to combat this kind of apathy. The brain-dead needs to be activated and it can not be allowed to atrophy and the best way to cure such mental apathy is to attack it. By presenting the individual with an apparent reality which contradicts or prevents what one is familiar or comfortable with, that would force him/her to spend the necessary cognitive effort to correct or reconcile the discrepancy, or risk existing in an utterly absurd, impossible, and nonsensical world. Purposely inducing cognitive dissonance may be the best or the only way to elicit any sort of cognitive activity at all.

This, then, is Magical Realism: a sort of extreme form of symbolism, an exaggeration to the point of impossibility for the sake of driving home a metaphor, a vivid illustration of what the audience ought already to have noticed, though they have not. It is an art form which hopes to let one see what he/she has not yet seen, though it has been right before the eyes all along. Magical Realism is necessary for its relentless pursuit of this worthy goal, and in addition for its beautiful and poetic execution of it.

The present study has opened up new vistas that demand detailed study. Possible topics for further research could be:

i. The Theme of Migration and Alienation.

ii. Rushdie’s Women Characters.

iii. Rushdie’s Narrative Techniques.
iv. Rushdie’s influence on the present writers in India known as ‘Rushdie’s Children’.

v. Rushdie and Religion.

vi. Society and Politics in Rushdie’s Fiction.

Chapter I introduced and explored various aspects of Magical Realism that presents a vision of enhance reality. A review of works on Rushdie was carried out to establish that this present study is the first detailed one of its kind. His life and works were also presented as a way of preparing the readers to grasp Magical Realism in Rushdie’s novels better.

Chapter II, “Metafiction”, showed that Magical Realism and metafiction are linked in many ways. Both favour candidness, open discussion and always take the readers into confidence. Generally it adopts the oral tradition of story telling, which involves self reflexivity and authorial intervention. Time cannot be homogenized as milk--it is not chronological but mostly psychological in Magical Realism.

Chapter III highlighted the aspects of Carnivalesque and presented it as an important social aspect used to keep it controlled, sane and evolving. Celebration, protest, procession, songs and music, dance, verbal excess, exaggeration and pulsating life which are the various aspects of the carnivalesque, were illustrated with examples.

Chapter IV linked History and Magical Realism. As Magical Realism is not a literature of fantasy, it has to be rooted in reality, needs to have an historical anchoring. ‘New historicity’ and ‘re-visioning of history’ are the basis of Magical Mealism. Nations,
national histories and national leaders were critically viewed and presented in an altogether new light. Myths and folklore were also used to explain intricate social aspects.

Chapter V showed metamorphosis as an important aspect of Magical Realism. Characters were shown to be changing as they progressed. They changed in form, shape, attitude and status; these were various factors that facilitated metamorphosis. Psychosomatic changes are highlighted. Metamorphosis brings out the ‘sub-normal’ existence of people to light. The concept of ‘Dasavathara’ in Hindu Vaisnavite mythology shows that Lord Vishnu takes up or undergoes ten different metamorphoses according to the requirements of the cosmic situation.

Chapter VI established that Surrealism and Magical Realism have many things in common. The European tradition favours Surrealism and the Latin American tradition Magical Realism. Magical Realism suits the local needs of the third world countries. Surrealism is the scholarly version whereas Magical Realism is that of the folk variety. Maggie Ann Bowers brings out the similarities between both terms.

Chapter VII brought out Magical Realism’s commitment to the society. In uncompromising terms, it exposes the evils that corrode the system. The affliction of the poor and the underprivileged were well brought out. In the tradition of naturalism neo-realistic ontologicality shows that life is not a bed of roses but one of thorns too. The struggle of the underdogs for existence was brought out well.
Rushdie, as a socially committed writer, was seen at the best in this chapter.

J.Krishnamurti’s observation of the essential philosophy of life, published in The Hindu goes thus:

I am going to point out to you what is; and not translate it according to my fancy; nor should you translate it or interpret it according to your background or training. Is it not possible, then, to be aware of everything as it is? Starting from there, surely, there can be an understanding. (Magazine 5)

This is the basic principle of Magical Realism--seeing, perceiving things as they are, understanding and accepting. No interpretation or explanation finds place with Magical Realism.

Rani Dharker presents in The Hindu an interesting anecdote:

The soldier in white, for example, is constructed entirely of gauze, plaster and a thermometer. “A jar is connected to his elbow from which he is fed fluid; another jar is connected to his groin into which drips waste from his kidneys. When the two jars are full they are switched so that “the stuff could drip back into him.” The artillery captain’s remark is like the punch line from a comic, “Why can’t they hook the two jars up to each other and eliminate the middleman?” (Literary Review 1)

Here the middleman is the novelist who sucks in reality and spits it out. Why can’t it come straight to the audience? When real life
is so fabulated, writers can not use straight-forward realism. The only way they can deal with this surreal life is to produce fiction that is also way out in its portrayal. Comic book techniques, characters, situations and hysterical humour serve the purpose perfectly as do the elements of the fairy tale and the fable. In Rushdie and Marquez, for instance, characters have magical powers such as the ability to communicate without phones and to travel on flying carpets. Remedios the beauty in One Hundred Years of Solitude rises into the sky and flies away one day as she is folding the sheets in the garden. All this is done without fanfare as though it is the most ordinary of happenings because, in our world, the out-of-the ordinary has become part of everyday reality.

In the interview published in The Hindu with Mukund Padmanaban, Umberto Eco observes;

We have a lot of empty spaces in our lives. I call them interstices. Say you are coming over to my place. You are in an elevator and while you are coming up, I am waiting for you. This is an interstice, an empty space. I work in empty spaces. (10).

Magical Realists also do the same and Eco himself is a Magical Realist.

Because information must always sound plausible, the novel was thought to oppose the inclination of the storyteller to borrow from the miraculous, which the wholesale success of so-called ‘magical realism’ [not only in Latin America] has shown to be wrong. The fact is
that ‘news’, precisely because it has become the nemesis of national fiction by originating in the imperial centres which largely control the images projected to and about the Third World, is thematically and formally incorporated into the postwar novel. A large body of postwar fiction is, in this sense, ‘neo-colonial’, composed of various novels of ‘information’, voices form the Third World seeking to project themselves into a European setting.

The novel is essentially a social form. It explores the human condition through the use of narrative fiction. In this, it is distinct from mythology, epics and religious texts, for it records mankind’s struggle with itself, rather than in a theological context. The new millennium also marks a thousand years of the novel. It is almost one thousand years ago that Lady Murasaki Shikubu wrote *The Tale of Genji*, considered by many critics to be the first novel. *Genji* is a work of historical fiction, a form of intimate recollection popular in feudal Japan. This combination of diary jottings, confessional with imagaintive license, was usually penned by high-born noble-women, and was often intelligent and perceptive musings about contemporary society. What distinguishes *The Tale of Genji* is the authenticity and universality of its characterization and the enduring quality of its narrative.

These profound and enduring insights that can penetrate the barriers of time, culture-specificity and language, these stories that survive, come to constitute literature.
The novel tends to document what is known in German as *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age. Some of the greatest contemporary fiction in the world has been coming out of Latin America, where the glorious tradition of the magnificent corpus of Spanish literature finds a new voice. Writers like Borges, Marquez, Llosa and Isabel Allende exemplify the intermeshing of creative, literary and cultural strands in their fiction. The energies of revolution and social change, the cynicism of colonial and post-colonial posturing, all fuel the intense Magical Realism of their novels. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Marquez is perhaps the definitive text amongst these novels. And in India, it is Rushdie who has demonstrated that the genre Magical Realism could be effectively employed to present Indian reality in all its myriad aspects.