Chapter 1

Introduction

“Magical Realism” is a term coined by the art historian Franz Roh in 1925 to describe a visual arts movement emerging throughout Europe. He presented Magical Realism as a reaction to Expressionism’s more abstract style and to mark a return to Realism. By the 1920s, leading art critics had determined that Expressionism, which seeks to convey personal inner experience through the distortion of natural images, had run its course. Several artists were beginning to experiment with a new form, labeled \textit{Magischer Realismus} (Magic Realism) by Roh, and \textit{Neue Sachlichkeit} (New Objectivity) by German museum director Gustav Hartlaub.

After a famous exhibition in 1925 entitled \textit{Neue Sachlichkeit}, Hartlaub’s term prevailed, temporarily, over Roh’s; \textit{Magischer Realismus} did not reappear until the 1960s, during which time increased attention to German art generated many exhibitions and publications. For Roh, the key was a “re-engagement” with the real, the represented surface behind which magic, in his words, “hides and palpitates” (Magical Realism, Post-Expressionism 15). Roh expanded the essay in which he first used the term “Magic Realism” into a book, \textit{Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus} (Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism). The essay was quickly translated into Spanish and published, in part, in José Ortega y Gasset’s widely read journal, \textit{Revista de Occidente}, in Madrid in 1927. The book, too, was translated into Spanish. In Spanish, the book’s title was \textit{Realismo Mágico, Post
Expresionismo, a positioning which gave the new term “Magic Realism” additional prominence. Both the book and the essay were distributed not only in Spain but in Latin America as well. Within a year, the term “Magical Realism” was being applied to the prose of European writers in the literary circles of Buenos Aires.

The term’s currency was shortly reinforced by emigrants from Europe to the Latin Americas in the 1930s and 1940s. It was adopted during the 1940s by Latin American authors who combined the theories of Roh with French Surrealist concepts of the ‘marvelous’, and incorporated indigenous mythologies within traditional mimetic conventions in their quest for the original Latin American novel. More than one-fifth of the half million persons who fled Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria between 1933 and 1941, including many noted artists and art historians, settled in Central and South America. Influential essays by Alejo Carpentier, “On the Marvelous Real in America” in 1949, and Angel Flores’s “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction” in 1955, further defined both the genre’s characteristics and its pertinence to contemporary Latin American literature. Although Zamora and Faris point out that Magical Realism is, indeed, an “international commodity,” (2) with important antecedents in such European modes as pastoral, epic, and romance, it was certainly in Latin America that the term was first applied to a literary genre. The international success of such Magical Realist writers as Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez has only
confirmed the association of the genre primarily with literature from that continent.

From the 1960s to the present, Magical Realism exists as a continuous presence in twentieth-century literature. The critical anthology, Magical Realism: Theory, History and Community, the first of its kind, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, shows Magical Realism to be an international movement and examines it as a worldwide phenomenon.

The Oxford Companion to English Literature sees the term “Magical Realism” as hereunder:

Magic realist novels and stories have, typically, a strong narrative drive, in which the recognisably realistic merges with the unexpected and the inexplicable and in which elements of dreams, fairy story, or mythology combine with the everyday, often in a mosaic of kaleidoscopic pattern of refraction and recurrence.

American Heritage Dictionary defines the term as a “chiefly literary style or genre originating in Latin America that combines fantastic or dreamlike elements with reality.”

Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century defines the term as hereunder:

Magic realism--the result of a unique fusion of the beliefs and superstitions of different cultural groups that included the Hispanic conqueror, his (Creole) descendants, the native peoples and the African slaves.
Magic realism, like myth, also provides an essentially synthetic or totalizing way of depicting reality. It was firmly grounded in daily reality and expressed man’s astonishment before the wonders of the real world, (and) convey(s) a vision of the fantastic features of reality.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines the term thus:

Magic realism--a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the ‘reliable’ one of objective realistic report. Designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth while maintaining a strong contemporary social relevance. The fantastic attributes give to character in such novels-levitation, flight, telepathy, telekinesis- are among the means that magic realism adopts in order to encompass the often phantasmagoric political realities of the 20th century.

Magical Realism is a development out of Surrealism that expresses a genuinely "Third World" consciousness. It deals with "half-made" societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingy new, in which public corruptions and private anguishes are somehow more garish and extreme than they ever get in the so-called "North," where centuries of wealth and power have formed thick layers over the surface of what is really going on. As Zamora and
Faris rightly observe, “Almost as a return on capitalism’s hegemonic investment in its colonies, Magical Realism is especially alive and well in post colonial contexts and is now achieving a compensatory extension of its market worldwide” (2). The basis spreads and extends its horizon.

Magical Realism is seen as the point where daily life intersects with the surreal to enlighten and extend a metaphor in a way simple realism cannot. When the real and surreal intersect, all of the standard notions about a story are called into question, and the reader is forced to keep an open mind. Magical Realism is what happens when there is an interface between our world and that part of the universe, which remains blessedly unexplained.

“Magic” in Magical Realism is not magic in the sense of casting spells or manipulating reality--it is magic in the sense that it exceeds the boundaries of purely realistic setting, becoming a part of a new setting. It is about the real world, of realistic characters and tries to lay bare the murky morality concentrating on personal and interpersonal conflicts. In Magical Realism, “the supernatural is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence--admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism” (Zamora and Faris 3).

Magical Realism performs the function of a social critic. Hence it suits and grows rich in postcolonial soils of Latin America, Africa and India. It is grounded in social reality as it draws upon the energies of fable, folktale and history while maintaining a strong contemporary
social relevance. It digs deep into the surface to embrace dreams and hallucinations and hence gets surrealistic. It reveals the mysterious side of the ordinary. Prominent practitioners include Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jorge Amado, Jorge Luis Borges, Miguel Angel Asturias, Julio Cortazar, Isabel Allende, Carlos Fuentes and Salman Rushdie.

Magical Realism relates more to psychology because it relates to the state of mind of the narrator and the characters. It wills a transformation of the object of representation rather than the means of representation. The characters are often portrayed with some ‘extra normality’ and they are often subjected to ‘metamorphoses’. Magical Realism presents a view of life that exudes a sense of energy and vitality in a world that not only promises joy but also a fair share of misery. The neorealist perspective of the ontological struggle the world undertakes to keep going is well presented through Magical Realism. It tries to bring to light the often-phantasmagoric political reality of the present world. Magical Realism, in short, is an outlook on what life has to give one if one is willing to look further into it.

Magical Realism is at the crossroads of the real and the imagined, invoking imagination almost unconsciously, as dreams do, with real effects that permeate our consciousness—also like dreams. As Roh observes; “Humanity seems distained to oscillate forever between devotion to the world of dreams and adherence to the world of reality” (17). It is distinguishable from fantasy because it relies on the real world of experience and mundaneity as its basis but offers a spectrum of infiltrations from a magical world; it is distinguishable
from science fiction because it does not rely on gadgetry, future
worlds, or space/time travel to identify itself. At its finest, Magical
Realism involves tiny perturbations in an otherwise 'normal' setting
that produce increasingly 'abnormal' (magical) effects.

Magical Realism is the literary form that invites readers to
suspend conventional definitions of 'reality' and to enter a world where
a boundary-less imagination weaves its story. It is the medium that
speaks the language of the subconscious, where symbols, mythology,
and folk tales hold their greatest influence. It allows the magic of the
everyday to unfurl and be focused beyond pragmatic or realist notions
of story. Ultimately, Magical Realism allows both writers and readers
to suspend pre-conditioned expectations to discover a realm where
poetry and story spawn creative discovery.

The historical occurrences margin between the imaginary and
the real and challenge propinquity. In Magical Realism, history is no
more chronological but clairvoyant. History is often inscribed; often in
detail, but in such a way that actual events and existing institutions
are not always privileged and are certainly not limiting: Time
sequence is disrupted since time, in the underprivileged society looses
significance. There is a rift from psychological to social and political
concerns in Magical Realism as regards Post Colonialism.

Magical Realism, that formed the basis of literature of the past
has long history and dates back to the very beginning of literature.
The Italian Decameron, the Arabian Thousand and One Nights, the
Spanish Don Quixote and the Indian Ramayana and Mahabaratha are
full of Magical Realism. But it is quite unfortunate that the form was temporarily eclipsed by the mimetic constraints of nineteenth and twentieth century realism ushered in by the Utilitarian philosophy of the Industrial Revolution.

Magical realists draw upon cultural systems that are less real than those upon which traditional literary realism draws, often non-western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, and tradition over innovation. Their primary narrative may be in myths, legends, and rituals—in collective practices that bind communities together. In such cases magical realist works remind the readers that the novel began as a popular form with communal imperatives. These cultural and communal imperatives are revitalized in Magical realist fiction. Magical realist texts, Stephen Slemen observes, “recapitulate a post-colonial account of the social and historical relations of the culture in which they are set” (409).

Magical Realism’s assault on the basic structures of rationalism and realism encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures. Thus the mode becomes particularly useful to writers in post colonial cultures. Hallucinatory scenes and events, fantastic / phantasmagoric characters are used to indict recent political and cultural perversions.

Wendy B. Faris considers Magical Realism “an important component of post modernism” (163). It combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of
the reality portrayed. Magical realists are replenished postmodern narrators, born out of the death charged atmosphere of high modernist fiction. They somehow have passed beyond it. Magical realist fictions seem more youthful and popular than their modernist predecessors. They often cater with unidirectional story lines to our basic desire to hear what happens next thus they are more clearly designed for the entertainment of the readers. The genre has extended via novels into films--*Ghost, Matrix, Mummy, Dream Scape, Harry Potter, Water World* and *The Willow* provide excellent examples.

Magical Realism has contributed significantly to post modernism as it is ontological, concerned with questions of being. Magical realist fiction, with John Barth, has moved from exhausted to replenished fiction. This moment of invention, the realization of an imaginary realm, can also be seen to distinguish Magical Realism from realism.

Magical Realism is an important presence in contemporary world literature. Because they treat texts from many countries and cultures, they create a complex of comparative connections, avoiding separation while at the same time respecting cultural diversity. (Zamora 4)

The universal presence of Magical Realism makes the concept all the more significant and a detailed study of the same become imperative to the very understanding of post modern literature.

The primary characteristics of Magical realist fiction could be summed up thus:
i. Magical realist fiction contains an irreducible element of magic that cannot be explained according to the laws of the universe; descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world--realistic description creates a fictional world that resembles the mundane. Material world is present in all its detailed and concrete variety as it is in realism--but with several differences, one of them being that objects may take on lives of their own and become magical in that way. The magic seems to grow almost imperceptibly out of the real, and there is a dense commingling of the improbable and the mundane. The magic blooms gently out of reality.

ii. In Magical realist fictions, there is an idiosyncratic recreation of historical events, but events are grounded firmly in historical realities--often alternate versions of officially sanctioned accounts. Historical anchoring is well demonstrated in felt history, whereby a character experiences historical forces bodily. In Magical realist narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie the text. Magical Realism has a tendency to concentrate on rural setting and to rely on rural inspiration--almost a kind of post modern pastoralism. In the urban setting, it functions well to satirize the corruption and anarchy prevalent.

iii. The reader is made to hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events--hence experiences some unsettling
doubts as Magical realist fictions question received ideas about
time, space and identity.

iv. Metafictional dimensions are common in contemporary Magical
Realism--the text provides commentary on themselves, often
complete with textual self-portraits. Repetition is seen as a
narrative principle that helps readers have better grasp of the
narration.

v. The reader may experience a particular kind of verbal magic or a
demonstration of the linguistic nature of experience. The
narrative appears to the modern reader as fresh, child like, even
primitive. The oral tradition of story telling is preferred and this
establishes a quick rapport with the readers.

vi. Metamorphosis is a relatively common event into Magical
Realism. People change to become better or worse; exhibit
excellent adoptability. There is abnormality or extra-normality
and the characters are made to appear distinct from the
common humdrum. They are presented to be symptomatic of
certain social traits.

vii. Magical realist texts take an anti bureaucratic stand, and so
they often use their magic against the established social order.
Thus it serves well for postcolonial purposes. The element of
neorealistic ontologicality lays bare the evils of the society and
stresses the need for the fight the individual has to put up to
make existence meaningful.
viii. It is Jungian rather than Freudian in perspective; the magic may be attributed to a mysterious sense of collective relatedness rather than to individual memories or dreams or visions.

ix. A Carnivalesque spirit is common in Magical Realist fiction. There is an all pervading spirit of celebration. Life is, in Magical Realism, always active and full of events. There is more action--both verbal and physical--than contemplation.

Magical Realism is of two types. i. The spare, programmatic, scholarly, controlled variety of the north and the west, and ii. The lush, pervasive, uncontrolled, mythic or folkloric variety of the south and east. The first variety is known for its sophistication and system whereas the second variety is vulgar and spontaneous. Though Rushdie balances between the two, he is more oriented towards the second variety. In Magical Realism there is non-problematic fusion of fantasy and reality. Fantastic elements are considered normal by the characters and readers. With Magical Realism, ordinary subjects seem extraordinary. It alters the familiar using a technique called defamiliarisation. It reveals the mysterious side of the ordinary. The technique of supplementation is used to add magical dimension to reality.

Magical Realism is not related to or limited to one period of time. There is a quality of timeless fluidity. It is unlimited in what can be accomplished. The scope of Magical Realism is vast.

Magic Realism found its way into literature in diversified forms. Pictorial in origin, the term eventually became a widely used literary
concept. In Roh’s 1925 publication Post-Expressionism, Magic Realism: Problems of the Newest European Painting, the term was used in an artistic context. Magic realism seemed preferable to ideal realism, verism, and neoclassicism since each of those designated only a part of the whole. Roh’s magic realism insists on a “cold cerebral approach” by the artist and on the intellectual statism of the work. The term ‘magic’ as opposed to mystic is meant to imply that the secret should not enter into the realistically depicted world, but should hold itself back behind this world. Objects depicted in their minutiae appeared as strange shadows or phantoms. The juxtaposition of magic and realism reflected far more the monstrous and marvelous within human beings and inherent in their modern technological surroundings. Magic realism is to be seen as a mode of art that had come into being with the demise of expressionism and the aftermath of World War I.

The Austrian Alfred Kubin was in certain ways an important precursor of traits found in Magical Realism. Kubin’s novel The Other Side, illustrated with fifty two drawings was published in 1909. In it, Kubin set out to explore the “other side” of the visible world--the corruption, the evil, the rot, as well as the power and mystery. The border between reality and dream remains consistently nebulous. Kubin’s binary concept--the invisible and visible, the interior and the exterior in the existence of things, and the fusion of the two is clearly in the vein of Magical Realism.
Magical Realism is not exclusively a postcolonial phenomenon but a much older one. It could be found in Gothic fantasy, regional and mythic novels--at the crossroads between novel and romance that depart from ordinary realism-like psychic, mythic and grotesque realism. Jeanne Delbaere-Garrant makes a study of these aspects in her essay “Psychic Realism, Mythic Realism, Grotesque Realism: Variations on Magic Realism in Contemporary Literature in English.”

Magical Realism is to be seen as a shocking alternative to bourgeois realism. In English fiction, the war against reason was waged in the Gothic novels and later in the “fantastic” reaction against canonical realism with such writers as Edgar Allen Poe in America or Lewis Carroll in England. Magical realist texts reintegrate into the realistic mode fantastic elements that have been excluded from the main stream. They usually center on an individual whose fissured self renders him or her particularly sensitive to the manifestations of an otherwise invisible reality and whose visionary power can be induced by drugs, love, religious faith or, erotic desire. The “magic” is almost always a reification of the hero’s inner conflicts, hence the vagueness of the spatial setting.

Alejo Carpentier coined the term “the marvelous American reality” to describe a magical reality not created by the imagination or projected from the sub conscious but inherent in the myths and superstitions of non-European populations and in the very topography of the America’s. Here, the landscape is no longer passive but active--invading, trapping and dragging away.
Jungian psychology has the potential to inspire fresh psychological perspectives on Magical Realism. Archetypal criticism and Magical Realism are made for each other. Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is a masterful evocation of a male midlife crisis in magical realist symbolic terms.

Magical Realism can be defined as a preoccupation or interest in showing something common or daily into something unreal or strange. In Magical Realism, time flows without the restriction of “time” and what can be unreal appears as real. The writer confronts reality and tries to reveal it by looking for what can be mysterious in life, objects, and even human actions. A Magical realist narrator creates the illusion of “unreality,” faking the escape from the natural, and tells an action that even if it appears as explainable, it is presented as strange. In the strange narrations, the writer instead of presenting something as real, the reality becomes magical. The strategy the writer employs is suggesting a supernatural atmosphere without denying the natural, and the tactic is deforming the reality. Characters, things, and events are recognizable and reasonable, but because the narrator’s intentions are to provoke strange feelings, the explanations are neither clear nor logical. Also there is no ambiguity or psychological analysis of the characters, instead they are well defined almost in opposition, and they never appear confused or surprised about the supernatural.

Magical Realism moves back and forth, between the disparate worlds of the historical and the imaginary. Propinquity is a central structuring principle of magical realist narration. Contradictions and
oxymorons are found together. Politics collides with fantasy. Magical Realism exaggerates things for excess is a hallmark of the mode. In Magical Realism, there is a shift in the emphasis from psychological to social and political concerns.

In the magical realist texts, the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence, admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism. Magic is not longer quixotic madness, but normative and normalizing.

Realism functions as an objective, universal representation of natural and social realities. It functions ideologically and hegemonically. Magical Realism also functions ideologically but less hegemonically for its program is not centralizing but ec-centric. It creates space for interaction of diversity.

As readers of literature know, Magical Realism is not a Latin American monopoly. It is true that Latin Americanists have been prime movers in developing the critical concept of Magical Realism and are still primary voices in its discussions. Contemporary Magical realist writers self consciously depart from the convention of narrative realism to enter and amplify other currents of western literature that flow from the medieval dream vision and the romance and gothic fictions of the past category.

Magical Realism could be seen as a significant international, contemporary literary mode. It is an important presence in contemporary world. Unlike mythical realism favoured by the west, it
draws upon cultural systems that are no less real than those upon which traditional literary realism draws—often non-western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation. Their primary narrative investment may be in myths, legends and rituals. Magical realist writers revitalize all these elements in their fictions. Writers like Tony Morrison, Rushdie and Derek Walcott recuperate non-western cultural modes and non-literary forms in their western novel form.

Magical Realism tends to create a complex of comparative connections, avoiding separatism and at the same time respecting cultural diversity. It is more of a tradition than trend, an evolving mode or genre that has had its waxing or waning over the centuries and is now experiencing one more period of ascendancy.

Magical Realism is a mode suited to exploring, and transgressing boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical or generic. It often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, system that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction. Magical realist texts place themselves in phenomenal and spiritual regions where transformation, metamorphosis and dissolution are common, where magic is a branch of naturalism or pragmatism. It resists the basic assumption of post-enlightenment rationalism and literary realism. Mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other, male and female, these are boundaries to be erased,
transgressed, blurred, brought together, or fundamentally refashioned in magical realist texts.

Magical Realism assaults the basic structures of rationalism and realism. It resists monologic political and cultural structures. Thus the mode has become particularly useful to writers in post colonial cultures and increasingly to women. Hallucinatory scenes and events, fantastic and phantasmagoric characters are used in several of the magical realist works. Magical Realism enjoys the privilege to alter and enrich the world to arrive at the ultimate reality.

Magical Realism presents alternative national history. The narration self consciously undermine the “facts” of history by a variety of magical narrative strategies in order to provide the structural freedom necessary to perform their own dramatic histories. It helps to recuperate the real, that is, to reconstruct histories that have been obscured or erased by political and social injustice. Robert Kroetcsch and Linda Kenyon observe, “Magical Realism as a literary practice seems to be closely linked with the perception of ‘living on the margins’” (qtd.in Slemon 408).

Magical Realism transcends literary realism by acknowledging the magic inherent in reality--a simple matter of the most complicated sort. ‘Magic’ is perceived in the ordinary. What one understands as the ‘real’ is defamiliarized: it expands, shifts, transforms to juxtapose elements normally considered opposites—life and death, waking and dreaming, civilized and wild, male and female, mind and body.

Magical Realism stretches the boundaries of realism in order to
stretch the definition of reality. Magic becomes ordinary -- admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism. But, no matter how elastic the definition may be, Magical Realism stays grounded in the phenomenal world, unlike fantasy, which is set in the unreal.

Unlike realism, which presents its version of the world as uniquely “true” or “objective”, Magical Realism encourages relativity, diversity, and variety. In the words of Zamora and Faris,

In magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption: magic is often given as cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation. (3)

The political is part of Magical Realist work because the blending/colliding of the “magic” and the “real” is often represented as colliding of cultures or civilizations, one ‘primitive’ and hence in touch with magic, the other ‘civilized’ and presumably ‘realistic’; it is committed to science and wary of illusion and superstition. Indeed, many writers use the conventions of Magical Realism to write quite directly about the extreme political conditions under which they exist. If they cannot freely criticize political and social oppression, their metaphors and hyperbole serve to express their sentiments.

Many twentieth-century Latin American writers—Gabriel García Márquez of Colombia, Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz of Mexico, Clarice Lispector of Brazil, Julio Cortazar of Argentina, Alejo
Carpentier of Cuba, María Luisa Bombal and Isabel Allende of Chile, even the influential fantasist, Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina—have used the techniques of Magical Realism in their most successful works. This raises questions like ‘What in Latin America encourages its writers to be Magical Realists?’; and ‘Why such an affinity for the genre?’

A most important influence is certainly the continent’s natural landscape. The variety of terrain, from lush vegetation to high desert, the variety of unique animal species, brightly colored and wildly variable flora, its volcanoes, waterfalls, snow-capped Andes, and Amazon basin; the land itself presents an extravagance and intensity of experience. When its variety is combined with its grandiose scale, the European setting shrinks and pales besides it. Influential essayist Carpentier points to this factor in the following description:

How could America be anything other than marvelously real, if we recognize certain very interesting factors that must be taken into account? The conquest of Mexico occurs in 1521, when Francois I ruled France. Do you know how big the urban area of Paris was under Francois I? Thirteen square kilometers [...]. When Bernal Díaz del Castillo laid eyes for the first time on the panorama of the city of Tenochtitlan, the capital of Mexico, the empire of Montezuma, it had an urban area of one hundred square kilometers--at a time when Paris had only thirteen (7).
Boundaries of physical identity are transgressed, and the hierarchy of the species is leveled, undermining any notion that the form of the human being is inherently superior to that of animals. When Europeans arrived, they found indigenous societies practicing highly developed religions. Intricate cosmologies, vast pantheons of deities, rituals and folklore were intertwined with secular experience, helping the people to understand their intense natural world. Spanish missionaries were relentless in their efforts to convert the natives to Catholicism, a task that resulted in several outcomes. In some cases, Catholicism won outright; in others, indigenous religions thrived covertly, cloaked in Catholic traditions. Other regions reached a compromise that resulted in syncretism, in which the native and the imported religions blended to create a new version of both. In any case, ongoing spiritual traditions require the participant’s active faith in the mysterious, and promote the writers’ leaps of imagination.

Finally, given the political, social, and economic upheavals in Latin America during the past five centuries, Magical Realism has been a natural vehicle through which to describe, and bear witness to, the challenges of daily life. The invasion of the conquistadors, the oppression of indigenous populations, the forced migration of African slaves, the domination of the Catholic Church, the battles to liberate the colonies from European nations, US imperialism and exploitation of natural resources, extremes of wealth and poverty, and the influence of leftist ideologies which have generated many radical shifts in government—all have shaped the human landscape from which
Latin American writers draw inspiration. And most of these factors apply to Indian English writers as well.

South Asian post-colonialism also fits perfectly into the realm of Magical Realism. Undeniably rich in culture and obviously having a long history that positively exhibits conflict, turmoil, chaos and spirituality, it seems that some of the best works of Magical Realism would be South Asian; hence, Rushdie. Rushdie is hailed as the epitome of the literary post colonial. His works intertwine the magic of the culture, the turmoil of the history and the starkness of the reality to create Magical Realism.

From Bankim Chandra Chattarji’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*, which is believed to be the first ever Indo-English novel in the nineteenth century, through Desani’s *All About H.Hatter*, the first modern Indo-English novel to Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, the Booker of Bookers--Indian fiction in English has come a long way. The worldwide acclaim of *Midnight’s Children* has certainly boosted up the image of Indian fiction in English. The big three--R.K.Narayan, Mulkraj Anand and Raja Rao--“beyond that, no one in the remarkable history of Indo-English prose--a tradition that includes Nehru, Gandhi, Mulkraj Anand, Kamala Markandeya and Raja Rao – had anything like Rushdie’s success in popularizing the subcontinent for the western public” (Brennan 1). It is Rushdie that captains the flagship. His Magical Realism has many followers- Rohinton Mistry and Amitav Ghosh in particular.
There are three important stages in Indian fiction in English. Firstly writers like Narayan, Kamala Markandeya and Anand were writers writing from India about the Indian problems. They wrote about the socio, economic and cultural world of their characters. Secondly there are writers like Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Bharati Mukerjee who were born in India but write from abroad. Thirdly there are writers like Jhumpa Lahiri and Indira Ganesan who are truly diasporic, born and brought up abroad and writing about India.

The publication of Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* in 1981 as well as the popularity of his subsequent works, Aruntathi Roy’s Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things* in 1997, Jhumpa Lahiri’s Pulitzer Prize for *Interpreter of Maladies* in 2000, Kiran Desai’s Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006, all well vouch for the place of Indian fiction in English in the International literary arena. The boom of this genre is mainly related to the big prizes and big advances for writers and the huge profits for publishers. J.K.Rowling and Seth are cases in point. This, in a way, has enabled the shift from professions in science and technology to writing and film making.

The idea of the empire and interrogation of the colonial movements, struggle for Independence, the problem of partition of India and Pakistan, mass migration and ensuing violence; are all things of the past.

Vulgar atrocities of the caste system, rampant communalism that threatens secularism, growing awareness of the rights of women and disenfranchisement of minorities get constantly represented
throughout. Many writers of Indian origin adopt a neorealist perspective to highlight these issues. Social and political events are traced through generations and merged into everyday mundane living.

Issues of identity when juxtaposition of public and private, collected and individual, local and foreign occur, expose points of collision and lead to high breed constructions. Religious orthodoxy of the past is questioned and replaced by rational theology.

Immigrant writers exhibit a tendency to reclaim their homeland. Predicament of displacement is echoed in their longings. Straddling two cultures, Salad Bowl and Melting pot existence is reflected in their writings. Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* is celebrated as the defining novel in the era of globalisation. Rushdie is more in the company of Homi Baba and Gayathri Spivak rather than with Anand or Narayan. Rushdie’s post modernist Magic Realism was clearly inspired by Lawrence Sterne, Grass and Marquez. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* appropriates orientalist notions of India as exotic and magical to suggest potential difference and excess, and becomes impossible to determine where India ends and orientalism begins. This break in the tradition successfully redefines it. Many are the subsequent writers inside and outside India like M.G.Vasanji, Shashi Tharoor and Arundhati Roy who have measured themselves against *Midnight’s children*.

It is well placed to say that the recent Indian fiction in English is influenced by the bourgeoising of the Latin American novelists of 1970s and 1980s like Marques, Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa. They
are regarded as the unofficial historians of the countries where political upheaval and military dictatorship had silenced individual voices. The newfound freedom typical of postcolonial writing enables them not only to review the past but also strike back with vigour. Indian fiction in English also shares this platform.

The publication of *Midnight’s Children* and the massive protest that followed *The Satanic Verses* (like the recent cartoon issue of Danish origin) by Muslim fundamentalists backed by Khomeini catapulted Rushdie into fame and established him as a post colonial literary icon.

Rushdie was born in Bombay in June 1947, on the same year in which he makes Saleem, the protagonist of *Midnight’s Children* born. This is the year of India’s emancipation from British rule and partition from Pakistan. He is the first writer in English from the postcolonial world to write without personal experience of colonialism. His father Anis Ahmed Rushdie was a thriving businessman. He attended John Connon and Cathedral School in Bombay, a city that fascinates him till date. In 1961, at the age of fourteen he left India to study at Rugby School in England. His family moved to Karachi in 1964. Between 1965 and 1968 he attended King’s college, Cambridge which was his father’s alma mater. He read history and did try his hand in acting. He had lived in England eversince until his recent move to New York.

In 1969 he met Clarisa Laud and started courting her. He gave up writing and took up the work of a copywriter. He relinquished this
also to write an unpublished novel *The Book of Pir*. In 1975 his first novel *Grimus* was published, but this did not succeed. He began work on *Midnight’s Children*. In 1976 he married Clarisa Laud.

1981 witnessed the publication of *Midnight’s Children* by Jonathan Cape. This won the Booker Prize and James Tait Black Prize. His sharp criticism of Indira Gandhi as the gruesome, the widow made her bring a libel suit against him and as a consequence a few lines had to be withdrawn from the novel in the subsequent editions.

In 1983 *Shame* was published by Jonathan Cape. He began work on *The Satanic Verses* the same year. The brutally critical portraits of the Pakistani leaders Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia Ul Huq caused the immediate ban of *Shame* in Pakistan. In 1984 he traveled through Central Asia with Bruce Chatwin. In 1985 he produced a film for TV, *The Painter and the Pest*. In 1986 he visited Nicaragua as a guest of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers that resulted in the publication of *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey* by Jonathan Cape which is about his time spent with Marxist Rebels. He divorced Clarisa Laud to marry Marianne Wiggins in 1988. In the same year the much controversial *The Satanic Verses* was published by Viking/Penguin. It was immediately banned in India and South Africa and in almost all Islamic countries. In 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini pronounced a fatwa on Rushdie condemning him death for blasphemy. A bounty of 1.5million dollars was placed on his head. This forced Rushdie go in to hiding and Marriane Wiggins separated.

After many years of work coordinated by the International Rushdie Defence Committee, in March 1998, the Iranian government rescinded the fatwa but another conservative Islamic ‘15 Khordad Foundation’ renewed the calls for his death and even enhanced the bounty fixed on Rushdie’s life. In 1999 *The Ground beneath Her Feet* was published. Disenchanted with life in United Kingdom Rushdie moved to New York in search of more freedom and because he started courting Padma Laxmi, a model and a cook book author. By moving to New York he proved to be ungrateful to England, which has spent over 10 million GBP to his defence in his time of need. In 2001 *Fury*, entirely set in New York was published. In 2005 *Shalimar the Clown* was published which brings Rushdie’s fiction back to India.

Rushdie’s *Grimus* is a fantastical science fiction, which draws on the twelfth century Sufi poem “The Conference of Birds”. The title of the novel is an anagram of the name ‘Simurg’, the immense, all-wise, fabled bird of pre-Islamic Persian mythology. This is “Rushdie’s
most a typical work suggesting an author in the process of finding a voice and a subject matter” (Sanga, *South Asian Literature in English*, 266). This is a quest narrative wherein Flapping Eagle, a native American Youth continues his seven centuries quest to find his sister, Bird-Dog. In the process, he enters another dimension and battles with Caugh Island’s magician ruler Grimus. The failure of this novel made Rushdie realize three things: i. the need for a firm ground on which to stand and base his novels; ii. Write something from much closer to his own knowledge of the world, and iii. The advantages of a narration that backs realism and makes use of mythology. It could be said that Grimus formed the basis for Rushdie’s engagement with Magical Realism.

*Midnight’s Children* is an intense exploration of Indian history from the last three decades of the British Raj to the Emergency of 1975. The narrator and protagonist Saleem Sinai was born at the auspicious moment of Indian independence, Midnight of August 15, 1947. Hence he has been granted magical powers. Metafictional aspects like self-questioning and self cursing of the narrator lends charm to the narrative. As Saleem is magically handcuffed to the history of the nation, his narrative explores the ways in which the lives of individuals and nations are intertwined within and limited by the destructive power of the state. The novelist is bold in his negative depiction of the people in power. Saleem tells his story retrospectively when he is thirty years old and connects it to the history of modern India. These special midnight’s children (many of whom died at birth!)
represent not only India’s multitudinous talents but also the hopes, aspirations and challenges of the new country.

Midnight’s Children is full of allusions and references to Indian history, literature, myths and popular culture. It is directly concerned with the state and political history. The novel provides all the background that an interested western reader familiar with Indian history would need to know. Many a western reader has relied on Midnight’s Children and on the film Gandhi for a brief/quick overview of twentieth century history. Midnight’s Children is about a particular history and a particular nation. It recovers the place Rushdie knows most intimately. The emphasis on phenomenological truth and on the vagaries of perception and memory make the novel seem modernist while the play with intertext, the grotesque fantasy elements and the metafictional commentary by the narrator advertise the novel’s post modernism. The comic allegory of Indian history revolves around the lives of the narrator Saleem and the thousand children born after the declaration of Independence. The work aroused a great deal of controversy in India because of its unflattering portrait of Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi, who was involved in a controversial sterilization campaign.

Shame continues the spirit of negative depiction of people in power. The story includes two thinly veiled historical characters - Iskander Harappa, a playboy turned politician, modeled on the former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and General Raza Hyder, Iskander’s associate and later his executioner modeled on Zia Ul Haq.
The novel unsparingly exposes how despotism co-exists with and
takes advantage of a gendered code of repression. It describes the rise
and fall of Iskandar Harappa and Raza Hyder. The violence center of
the novel is Sufiya Zinobia Hyder, the living embodiment of shame.
She absorbs the outrageous behaviour of others until she explodes in
ways of violence destroying her father Raza Hyder’s power and killing
her anti-hero husband Omar Khayam Shakil. She causes the
narrative to end itself in an apocalyptic finale. The theme of irrational
and motiveless anger already explored in the figure of Shiva in
Midnight’s Children gets written in all Rushdie’s works taking the
form of race raids in The Satanic Verses, domestic murders in the
Moor’s Last Sigh and serial killings in The Ground beneath Her Feet
and Fury. Shame is also recognisably post modernist in its self-
reflexivity and its combination of history and fantasy. Like its
predecessor, it concerns itself with the politics of a nation, Pakistan. It
is an allegory of contemporary Pakistani politics. Shame is also
magical realist in its self-reflexivity and its combination of history and
fantasy. It centers on a well-to-do Pakistani family, using the family
history as a metaphor for the country.

In Shame, there is imaginative construction of history into the
fictional realm. The story is slightly offset by a few degrees from
reality. This novel is sharply critical of Bhutto and his daughter
Benazir, who figures in the novel as Arjumand Harappa, the Virgin
iron pants. Zia is portrayed as the outright villain of the novel. His
military despotisms lead to a brutal Islamization programme. This
leaves Rushdie with very little hope about Pakistan’s future as a
democratic, secular state. The migrant can defy gravity and this
enables Rushdie workout a radical re-orientation with history with the
help of Magical Realism. Unlike *Midnight’s Children* presented by the
narrator - character Saleem, this novel is told in the third person and
deals with political events in an unnamed country but one gets to
know that it is clearly Pakistan.

*The Satanic Verses* triggered off what came to be called ‘The
Rushdie Affair’ when Khomeini dictated a fatwa on February 14, 1989,
a death sentence against the author and the publisher. Rushdie was
seen as a former Muslim aligned with the west to write a critical
revisionist history of Islam. The Literary world was shocked when an
artist, whose freedom of expression, individual liberty and personal
safety was attacked by politically motivated religious fundamentalists.

The novel explores the theme of migration through the parallel
lives of two characters, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha who
survive a fall from a hijacked airplane. They land on London shores
and undergo a series of bodily transformation (Metamorphoses) that
turns Gibreel into an angel and Saladin into a goat legged satanic
figure. The novelist is critical of contemporary English racist life that
South Asian British citizens face at the hands of a brutal police force
and hostile white society.

The novel earned the wrath of Muslim fundamentalists mainly
for the following reasons; i.Mohammed is portrayed to have received
the contents of Koran via the Arc angel Gabriel and has revised some
verses claiming that he had been tricked by the devil that masks the voice of Gabriel and sounds like him. ii. Mohammed is referred to by his derogatory name used in the middle ages, ‘Mahound’. iii. A group of prostitutes is shown to have taken the names of Mohammed’s wives that enhance their business. iv. Ayesha, a modern day prophet who eventually leads her followers, like lemmings, into the sea unto their death – a portrait of a religious leader that would offend any current day Imam.

_The Satanic Verses_, in one great theme of displacement and alienation, combines England and India in the same novel. Here also, as always in Rushdie, one splits to become two. Saleem Sinai in _Midnight’s Children_ is shadowed by Shiva. _The Satanic Verses_ has Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. Saladin suffers a metamorphosis like Kafka’s Geregor Samsa. The Magical Realism in _The Satanic Verses_ tackles questions of faith and transcendence.

_Haroun and the Sea of Stories_ is about the origin of stories. As the novel follows _The Satanic Verses_, it offers insights into the importance of free speech, the power of imagination and the dangers of fundamentalism.

_The Moor’s Last Sigh_ is considered by many to complete a trilogy focusing on India and Pakistan, which began with _Midnight’s Children_ and _Shame_. This combines magical real elements with contemporary social issues. The new direction in Rushdie’s Magical Realism marked by _The Moor’s Last Sigh_ resembles the change in the career of Marquez represented by _Love in the Time of Cholera_, also a
story of obsessional love in a violent world. There is more engagement with love and art than with the nation. **The Moor’s Last Sigh** is a pessimistic updating of Indian political history, underscoring the raise of corruption and Hindu fundamentalism. It was banned in India for sometime for its satirical caricature of Bal Thakeray. It locates Rushdie’s politics in a larger frame and focuses on contemporary India, and explores those activities, directed at Indian Muslims and lower castes, of right-wing Hindu terrorists. Moor ages at twice the normal rate and this which accelerates the speed of the progress of the novel.

**The Ground beneath Her Feet** is a love story about two rock idols – Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara. This focuses on rock music as Rushdie has written lyrics with Irish singer Bono for U 2 Album. This novel explores the theme of family, love, fame, myth and history. There is a fine blend of fact and fiction. This is a loosely retold version of ‘Orpheus’ Myth. It explores Orpheus-Eurydice myth in contemporary setting. This is set in the world of hedonistic rock stars with a mixture of mythology and elements from the repertoire of science fiction. But instead of Orpheus saving Eurydice, Vina saves Ormus from the trauma of a car accident which has given him the ability to see into a parallel world, a kind of Double vision. The novel is narrated by Rai, a photographer who is also in love with Vina. He follows the two musicians and chronicles their rise to fame and about the invasion of the Indian Rock band called VTO into America led by Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara. **The Ground beneath Her Feet** is a
about an international popular culture best exemplified by Rock music

Fury is set in New York. In this novel Malik Solanka, a former Cambridge professor, tries to find a new life in New York city leaving behind his wife and son in London. Solanka creates a political thinker ‘little brain’ and looses control of both his creation and his own identity. His creation Little Brain, an animated philosophising doll, has its own successful TV series. In New York he has blackouts and violent rages and becomes involved with two women, Mila Milo, who looks like Little Brain, and a beautiful freedom fighter named Neela Mahendra, through whom Rushdie weaves his favorite themes of exile and rootlessness. The novel explores the relationship between art and artist, the fate of individual identity and the power of love and anger. This is more autobiographical in nature. The three women--his wife Eleanor, a post-punk computer goddess from Serbia named Mila Milo, and Neela Mahendra--represent the three furies. The novel, as it is typical of Rushdie, is filled with historical and contemporary references- the Sopranas, Tiger Woods, Tomb Rider, Elian Gonzalez, and Clinton-Lewinsky scandal.

Shalimar, the Clown deals with the assassination of Maximilian Ophuls, a farmer U.S. ambassador to India. He is knifed to death on a personal vendetta by his Kashmiri driver, a mysterious figure who calls himself Shalimar, the clown. The allegorical story involves Max, his killer, his daughter India and Kashmira, a woman who links them.
This novel is a eulogy for the ruined, smashed paradise, Kashmir due to terrorist, separatist activities.

Uma Parameswaran’s *The Perforated Sheet: Essays on Salman Rushdie’s Art* (1988) includes articles on *Grimus*, *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*—the three novels that have been published till 1988. The article “Salman Rushdie in Indo-English Literature” concentrates on Rushdie’s attempt to speak in the truly Indian voice/idiom.

Timothy Brennan in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* (1989) makes a study of the ‘Third World’ intellectuals and their global awareness. He states in clear terms that the world is one (not three) and that it is unequal. Rushdie’s works are analysed with the above background and his Third World consciousness is brought out.

ISCS has come out with *Special Issue: Salman Rushdie* (1990) and this includes essays on *Grimus*, *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*. Thematic essays on politics, history and the individual, time and timelessness are included. There is an interesting essay “Bacchus and Buddha” that contrasts R.K.Narayan and Salman Rushdie and show how their thematic concerns differ.

M.Madhusudana Rao’s *Salman Rushdie’s Fiction: A Study* (1992) is a literary study of Salman Rushdie’s first three novels only with the total exclusion of *The Satanic Verses*. Rao analyses the technical virtuosity in Rushdie’s fictional world. He sees fantasy as an imaginative mode that had an effect on Rushdie’s fictional imagination. The book deals with aspects of ‘timelessness’, and the structural devices that enhance it. He establishes that both the domestic and political history is held together by the quest of the protagonist.

Catherine Cundy’s *Salman Rushdie* (1996) provides a chronology of the writer’s life. It analyses the formative contexts and intertexts of Rushdie’s novels. All Rushdie’s major works upto 1995 are discussed. Issues of racial, national and cultural identity are explored.

*Text and Trauma* (1996) by Ian Richard Netton presents a religious, cultural, historical and literary archealogy of three novels – Najib Mahfiz’s *Children of Gebelawi*, Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* and Nikos Kazantzakis’ *The Last Temptation*. The book studies i. why a text was considered offensive in the first place, ii. the political pattern of the alleged offence and iii. the scope of that offence.

Margareta Peterson’s *Unending Metamorphoses* (1996) starts with a discussion of the novels as well as the reception by starting out from Speech Act Theory based on J.L.Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words*. The distinction between performatives and constatives is applied. Writers’ intension and a literary work’s signification are
brought out. As all Rushdie’s novels are provocative, they call for an extensive discussion.

Joel Kourtti’s *Fiction to Live In* (1998) is a study of Rushdie’s first six novels from *Grimus* to *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. By analyzing each of these individual texts, this work aims at the evaluation of the status of fiction in these novels. There is an argument that establishes that fiction plays a central role in human societies. Fiction is seen as an epistemology and finally as an ethics.

*Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children: A Book of Reading* (1999) edited by Meenakshi Mukerjee contains ten essays and an interview with Rushdie that approaches the novel from many important aspects. Historical aspects of *Midnight’s Children* is analysed; it is compared with *Tristram Shandy*, the *Tin Drum* and *Kim* on picaresque, textual and Indian aspects respectively. Linguistic aspects of the novel are also looked into.

Jaina C. Sanga in *Salman Rushdie’s Postcolonial Metaphors* (2001) argues that the metaphors of Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy and Globalisation bring out the postcoloniality in Rushdie’s works. As Sanga herself observes, “This book is about imaginary writing and making connection after the collapse of the British Empire” (2).

*Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights* (2003) edited by Rajeswar Mittapalli and Joel Kourtti is issued in two volumes. In volume I there are essays on *Grimus*, *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses*. Different aspects like bildungsroman, satire,
allegory and politics are applied to Rushdie’s novels and analysed. In volume II, essays that provide insights into *East, West, The Moor’s Last Sigh* and *The Ground beneath Her Feet* are included. Articles that bring out postmodern elements in Rushdie’s works and his affiliation with Dickens are also included.

*Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children: A Reader’s Companion* (2004) by Tapan K.Ghosh contains two sections. First section introduces Rushdie, the novelist and his work *Midnight’s Children* with an exhaustive commentary. A detailed summary of the novel is also provided. The second section contains exploratory essays by eminent academicians that offer a wide spectrum of views on the novel. Autobiographical elements, use of history and myth and fantasy and post-modern elements are looked into.

This thesis makes an attempt to study Magical Realism, its application and presence in Rushdie’s novels. It concentrates mainly on *Midnight’s Children, Shame, The Moor’s Last Sigh* and *The Ground beneath Her Feet* as these four novels well exemplify Rushdie’s employment with Magical Realism. Though very much steeped in it, as the ban on *The Satanic Verses* continues in India, it is discussed only incidentally. *Fury* and *Shalimar, the Clown* are also referred to only peripherally since they do not contain the quintessential Magical Realism. *Grimus* is basically a science fiction and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is an allegorical tale in the tradition of children’s literature. Hence they also are not dealt with in detail.
As Rushdie's name is associated with Magical Realism along with many other writers from the third world and as he has become one of the greatest literary luminaries of current literature, an attempt is made to unearth the magical recipe with which he creates his works. Though Magical Realism is highly inclusive and accepts anything and everything into it--for it is a ‘hold-all’ term--the main ingredients are culled out and analysed.