Chapter II

The Magic in Realism: A Tapestry of Realisms

All discussions of Magical Realism begin with a working definition of the term since it is fraught with plurality. But the basic definition of the mode overlaps between fantasy and literary fiction. This study does not have a working definition because it is not a search for a perfect meaning of the term. The study goes back to Latin American Magical Realism— the beginnings of Magical Realism in literary discussions to examine its variety. The focus is on the short stories of Latin America. Cornelia Vlad’s article ‘Latin America and the Fascination of the Short Story’ contributed many ideas to consider the potential that lies in the short stories of Latin America. Before analyzing the choice of the short story, it is necessary to discuss the novel in Latin America.

Critics, in their discussions on Magical Realism, have privileged the Novels of Latin America, written during the 1960s, referred to as ‘El Boom’. These novelists, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel Marquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Maria Vargos Llosa to name a few, became famous internationally. Latin American Fiction moved out of the narrow boundaries of their regional and local spaces to embrace World Literature. There is no doubt that the novel in Latin America during the 1960s reached a high level of sophistication and refinement and discussions about Magical Realism centred on Garcia Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude. But what many critics do not discuss is the fact that all these internationally known writers were equally efficient in another literary genre—the short story. The exploration of the short stories of Latin America proves that the short story writers made an equally important contribution to the study of Magical Realism and the popularity of the short story genre during the Boom and the Post-Boom periods is apparent.
The short stories in Latin America are called ‘cuentos’. The word ‘cuento’ has both a Latin and a Spanish origin. Its derivation in Latin comes from the word, ‘computare’ and in Spanish from the word ‘contar’ and ‘calcular’. These origins emphasize the fact that a ‘cuento’ was something that was recounted; in Spanish, it meant a story, a tale and it was also used as a verb meaning ‘to tell’. The word ‘cuento’ got mixed up with ‘novela’ and for a long time, there was no distinction between the two. For the Renaissance world, the word ‘cuento’ was widely associated with the fable, the legend, the proverb, the parable and the short story. It is only when literary histories talked of Romanticism and Realism that the difference between ‘cuento’ and ‘novela’ arose.

It is significant that even today the Latin American writers refer to their short stories as ‘cuentos’. The insistence on the word ‘cuento’ is a continuation of the tradition from where ‘cuentos’ developed. ‘Cuentos’ found their roots in the oral tradition of the pre-Colombian cultures, the Mayan, the Aztec and the Incas. In spite of the mighty influence of the Spanish Conquest and the thrust to Evangelicize, the oral tradition survived and was a part of the collective memory of the people of Latin America. The spoken narrative is still important to the Latin American and hence their desire to keep the ‘cuento’ alive in their memory. As Vlad puts it in her article, Latin American short stories “reactivate...those magic-mythic ways of knowledge and launch the possibility of recuperating the shattered Whole” (Vlad 2008:8). The multiple ways of acquiring knowledge was erased when the Western world stressed “the scientific empirical approach to reality” (Vlad 8). This becomes significant for the study of Magical Realism and the short stories from Latin America become a valid space to research on the magical and the real.

The ‘cuento’ was at first a simple adaptation of legends that were popular in Latin American cultural past. It took a more complex and sophisticated turn as writers began to introduce varied influences like that of the discourse of the African slaves in Cuba. The Latin
American realized that his universe could best be revealed in magical realism. The short story was an important choice for the Latin American writer as it directly evolved out of the oral stories and could easily continue the preservation of the cultural past.

The earlier regionalist writers focused on rejecting “cultured” Europe and exoticizing “primitive” America, like Negrismo, Indigenismo, Nativism and Regionalism. The 1960s ‘El Boom’ writers catered to the need for a Latin American discourse which would be able to preserve their cultural past and dialogue with the European world by using the mode of Magical Realism. This mode focuses on the difference to the European tradition of Realism. The short stories of Latin America, even more than the novels, are rooted in the oral tradition and allows for the multiple voices of story-telling. The ‘Rhapsod-poet’ of the oral tradition, is the most important source for Latin American writers to find their literary voice. The ‘Rhapsod-poet’ is the story-teller of oral traditions using the power of his voice to tell ancestral stories, provoking the listeners to react and evoking her/his hidden desires (Vlad 2008:11).

Magical Realism in Latin America has gone through varied changes. The Latin American writer, in the past, used Magical Realism to ‘differentiate’ himself from the European discourses. He retained his cultural past in all his literary expressions especially fiction. The power of the voice of the story-teller, the legends, the tall tales and the rumours became the raw material of his literary world and reality. At present, s/he uses the short story form as an expression of the “fragmentary nature of contemporary culture” (Vlad 2008: 11). The episodic nature of the short story in Latin America is similar to the short incidents that oral stories and conversations focus on. A study of Magical realism must necessarily analyze the short stories from Latin America to get a better understanding of how the past and the present juxtapose without occupying conflicting spaces.
Magical Realism of the global variety keeps a balance on the oxymoron by making conscious efforts to play the magical against the real, thereby maintaining the supremacy of the real. The text is seen from the perspective of the narrator who belongs to the real world and not by the person who belongs to the magical world. When the text is enunciated by the magical narrator, it gains a different perspective. This aspect is lost when the mimetic quality of the text is emphasized. It is important to begin the search for facets by investigating into the magical and the real.

Eva Aldea’s ‘Magical Realism and Delueze: The Indiscernibility of Difference in Postcolonial Literature’ is an significant study of Magical Realism that helped to formulate this research. Aldea’s study problematizes both the ‘magic’ and the ‘real’, the basis of Magical Realism in Latin America. Magical Real texts demand that readers need to go beyond absolute ways of looking at both, the ‘magic’ and the ‘real’. This chapter will analyze how the ‘magic’ and the ‘real’ of Magical Realism are treated in the short stories of Latin America chosen for this study.

Fantastic Literature is most often used as a point of reference to study the main features of Magical Realism. Generic studies have placed Fantastic Literature in a realm that highlights its difference from Magical Realism. In Fantastic Literature, the world created and the characters portrayed belong to imagined spaces and time frames that are removed from the real world. Fantastic Literature never loses the idea that the fantastic elements in the text have no semantic value as they do not belong to the world that we know and identify with Fantastic Literature, as the name suggests, has nothing of Realism in it and hence to use the concept to study Magical Realism is erroneous. Magical Realism is not escapist Literature and it has its roots in Realism-the kind of realism that certain cultures are connected to. The most interesting and disconcerting fact about Magical Realism is that the unreal features of
the narrative belong to the mundane and magic prevails in the real as much as the real is seen in the magical.

A study of the magical elements of the Magic realist texts is the point at which the analysis of Magical Realism must begin. It is important to decide whether the magical elements belong within the text or to the extra-textual reality of the world that surrounds Latin America. If it has only textual value, Magical Realism becomes a subset of Fantastic Literature and if it is associated with Latin American reality, it promotes a postcolonial reading. Latin American short stories prove that the kind of Magical Realism that these writers engage in cannot be categorized as either a fantastic genre or a postcolonial text.

The observations made from the stories that were analyzed verify the fact that the magical elements are a part of a reality that does not question their presence, in the same way that unreal elements in a narrative puzzle the Western consciousness. The characters in the magical texts from Latin America are witnesses to unreal happenings within the texts but that cannot be interpreted as being natural happenings in their lives. Both the Latin American influenced by the European world as well as the Native of Latin America question the magical events in the texts and this fact disproves the Occidental belief that native cultures are steeped in an unreal world and are witnesses to bizarre events in their daily lives. To quote Anne Hegerfeldt “The use of a marginal perspective to project a ‘magical’ world view is a literary technique, not a mimetic representation of a extratextual reality” (Sanchez et al 2009:117).

‘The Miracle of the Birds’ by the Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado and the Nicarguan, Ruben Dario’s ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ are examples that best fit this observation. The narrator of ‘The Miracle of the Birds’ does not take it for granted that this story is acceptable to the Latin American world, and that it is a normal happening with the Latin Americans. The
story begins with the narrator protesting the ‘veracity’ of his tale. ‘A lively market day in Piranhas’, ‘witnessed by hundreds of townspeople’, ‘Dona Heliosa Ramos is notoriously truthful’ are details that the writer painstakingly gives in order to highlight that the ‘miracle’ takes place in front of the aristocrats as well as the common people of the town ‘on the Sao Francisco River in the state of Alagoas, Brazil’. In ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ Doctor Z and the listeners are equally amazed, listening to the bizarre story of Amelia. Such stories like the story of Amelia, of a girl who has not been subject to the cruel passage of time, focus on the fact that they are not normal happenings in Latin American society. People in Latin America, like the narrator and the other two listeners, need to be convinced that the story of Amelia is acceptable.

Amaryll Chanady’s ‘authorial reticence’ does not indicate that, since the narrator or the implied author does not pass any judgments on the magical events, it is an everyday happening in the Latin American world. The magical events in a magical realist story are treated with surprise by both the European and the Latin American world. But there is a vast difference between the surprise shown by the European and that shown by the Latin American. The fantastic events that take place in fairy stories, ghost stories and other fantastic literature of Europe are treated by the characters of the text and the readers as ‘unreal’ happenings that have no connection with their lives. It retains its relevance in the text, has textual reality, playing no role in the world of their real-life existence and thereby possesses no semantic reality. But this is not the case with the magical events of the texts from Latin America; it is a part of the text but it is not dismissed as having no semantic reality. This intrinsic difference between the reaction of the European and the Latin American world to the magical events is important and makes the study of Magical Realism in the short stories of Latin America relevant to the global world.
The European world cannot accept the magical events and this non-acceptance is based on scepticism and cynicism. It borders on pessimism and the need to get a rational explanation for all the happenings in the world outside oneself. In the case of Latin America, there is an element of intrigue about the magical events—the simple acceptance that man does not know and does not need to know everything that happens in the world around him. The Latin American characters of the short stories indicate that their wonder of the magical events is based on humility and the knowledge that man plays a very small role in the larger scheme of things. Doctor Z’s questions, “Who understands exactly the concept of time? Who knows for certain the meaning of space? interrogates Western faith in the authority of knowledge gained through Empirical Science. Doctor Z’s interrogation explains his way of life that does not privilege one over the other, as is the case in a binary opposition.

This attitude is in keeping with the American novelist John Barth’s reference to ‘Literature of Replenishment’ as an exploration of the great themes of human existence. The ‘Literature of Replenishment’ was written twenty years after his well-known essay of 1967, ‘Literature of Exhaustion’. The latter essay talked of the death of the novel and its having reached a point of ‘used-upness’ (Barth 1984:205). In his later essay, Barth explains what he meant by the word ‘exhaustion’ which was criticized by many writers and critics. Barth refers to high modernism when he talks of ‘exhaustion’ and postmodern literature as ‘replenishment’. He makes a reference to Gabriel Garcia Marquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in his essay on the ‘Literature of Replenishment’ as an example of fiction that has produced a freshness to Literature, but he does not refer to the magical realist features of the novel.

Western critics attributed Postmodernism to the West and Magical Realism to the literature of non-western discourse. (Sanchez et al 2009:61). Geert Lernout’s claim in
‘Postmodernist Fiction in Canada’ that “what is postmodern in the rest of the world used to be called magic realist in South America...” is derogatory to Magical Realism and dismisses its place in major literary discourses (qtd. D’Haen 1995:194). Latin American critics, on the other hand, believed that to use the term Postmodernism to describe Latin American fiction is a type of ‘discursive colonizing and recolonizing’ (Irvine 2009:128). The postmodernist lens to study Magical Realism uses a western methodology that does not take cognizance of indigenous constructs. The story-teller of the oral traditions was a postmodern story teller who subverted the one truth and exposed the listener to a plural world. Post modernist discourse is also referred to as post-realist as it subverts the absolute truths that are emphasized by the traditional realist discourse. This kind of ‘world-creating’ as opposed to ‘world-reflecting’ realism has been a part of the oral tradition. Maggie Ann Bowers in her book ‘Magic(al) Realism’ quotes David Grant to describe ‘world-creating’ realism as “achieved not by imitation, but by creation"(Bowers 2004:22). She adds that in this kind of realism, ‘it is the reader who constructs the sense of reality from the narrative rather than the text revealing the author’s interpretation of reality to the reader (Bowers 2004: 22’). This approach to realism is intrinsic to the discourse of Magical Realism. Western critics, in ‘othering’ and making Magical Realism a reductive type of discourse, calls it ‘a subset of Postmodernism’ (Sanchez et al 2009:62) and such a conclusion brings it under the domain of western thinking.

The privileged centres, having faith in a mimetic representation of life, can accept elements that undermine rationality in so far as it is an ‘extravagant...literary achievement’ (D’Haen 1995:201). Postmodernism is a rebellious stance taken against the realism of the 19th century, modernism and the west’s focus on empiricism. Magical Realism, on the other hand, is also a ‘rebellious mimetics’ (Aldama 2003:28) but is the result of the continuity of ‘the local, ‘ethnic’, marginal and silenced traditions’ in Latin America (Sanchez et al 2009:
64). Hence Barth does not use the oxymoronic term Magical Realism to discuss *One Hundred Years of Solitude* since he does not see the same path in the novel as is seen in the path of Magical Realism. Barth focuses on the Western postmodern path of ‘exhaustion’ leading to ‘replenishment’ but in actual fact Marquez in his novel is highlighting and thereby continuing the local discourse, transpiring out of an oral tradition. Magical Realism from Latin America focuses on “recovering and replenishing an otherwise void sphere- the unspeakable of the past” (Sanchez et al 2009:65). Postmodernism attacks the accepted and the traditional form of realism from ‘above’, from within the discourse of realism but Magical Realism attacks from ‘below’, “from the past, the communal history and the magical world of orality” (Sanchez et al 2009:69). Hence Postmodernism keeps within the dominant whereas Magical Realism becomes an alternative realism; it is more than mere mimesis in that it uses the discourse of realism in order to create alternative world-views.

Gerald Vizenor refers to the kind of realism that is prevalent in Magical Realist texts as ‘mythic verism’. He defines ‘mythic verism’ in his ‘Trickster Discourse’ as a kind of realism that counters ‘terminal creeds’; the term ‘terminal creeds is Vizenor’s reference to Western Realism that does not allow for any freedom or creative play. These ‘creeds’ make for a static representation of life and it is that which results in representing the Latin Americans as in a ‘museum-like setting’ (Sanchez et al 2009:92). The magical events subvert the mimetic code but it does not merely bring back the past, it looks at the present and the future. The imagination of the oral tradition cannot be contained within the present; it embraces an atemporal and ahistorical space.

The characters in a text of Magical Realism from Latin America demonstrate that they belong to the ‘here and now’ and that they are witnesses to a magical event. Jorge Amado begins his story ‘The Miracle of the Birds’ by placing it first in the ‘here and now’- “An illustrious visitor who was being feted that day in Piranhas, the widow of our great
regional novelist Garceliano Ramos saw it too; and since Dona Heloisa Ramos is notoriously truthful, her testimony alone should be enough…” (Amado 1991:94). Ubaldo Capadocio, the protagonist, is an anti-hero; he is a creation of the community with none of the individualization found in traditional realism. “Contrary to traditional realism, which took pride in the creation of great individualized characters of complex psychology” magical realism highlights a few traits that get centre place and “the rest is tribal uniformity” (Camayd-Frexias 2000:124). He invites trouble for himself when he goes to Captain Lindolfo Ezequiel’s wife, Sabo. ‘Not because he was reckless and brave as a lion, but out of sheer ignorance of local customs’. The focus is on the fact that he is an outsider who does not know the rules of the town- the rule being that even if Sabo is willing to be disloyal to her husband, men have to ignore her and pretend that they are not attracted to her. Capadocio becomes a hero in the eyes of the town. The detached narrator of the early part of the story doubles up to be the voice of the town- ‘Our troubadour’- as the story progresses.

The magical event takes place when the protagonist of the story, Ubaldo Capadocio, is transported by the birds who are freed from the cages. The sight is ethereal when “twelve macaws opened a pathway through the clouds, escorting the troubadour as lightly as a verse wafted by a zephyr” (Amado 1991:100). The magical event is so powerful that Ubaldo Capadocio’s enemy, Captain Lindolfo Ezequiel “was rooted to the spot in the middle of the square where he remains to this day”. The narrator gently brings the reader back to the real world when he mentions Ezequiel turning into “a magnificent horntree…the former killer was transformed into an object of real public utility” (Amado 1991:100).

The important issue is not whether the characters in the text accept or not accept the magical events; the focus is on the fact that the magical event opens doors to readers that allow them to re-think the world around them and loosen themselves from monolithic
structures. Paradoxically, readers are ‘rooted in fluidity’ and are released from the fear of living and the linear movement of time that emphasizes progress, decay and ruin.

The concept to discuss this particular facet of Magical Realism is found in Kim Sasser’s thesis titled, ‘The magical sublime: a new-old lens on magical Realism’. This thesis makes a comparison between Magical Realism and the Aesthetics of the Sublime. This is another dimension and framework for the study of Magical Realism in general and Latin American Magical Realism in particular. Sasser begins by making a historical study of the aesthetics of the Sublime. Sasser analyzes the Romantic period in detail as it displays many features of the use of the Sublime, echoes of which can be seen in Magical Realism. “The sublime is ... the point where the mind breaks down” (Sasser 2007:4). But after the ‘break down’, there is a spiritual experience which is common to both Romantic Literature and Magical Realism.

Amado’s ‘The Miracle of the Birds’ exhibits this quality. The magical event of the protagonist, being taken by the birds into the skies, belongs to the Aesthetics of the Sublime. The motif of flying is found in many Magical Realist stories; it recalls spaces that are not governed by socio-political constraints. Spectators witness an event which goes beyond the knowable. The German word for ‘sublime’ is ‘das Erhabene’ which literally means ‘the raised up’ and the event in Amado’s story ‘raises’ readers from the normal happenings in their lives. But, just as in Romantic Literature, the return to the ‘real’ world takes place and the spectators ‘reassimilate’ themselves. (Sasser 2007:5).

Dario’s ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ is another example that discusses this facet of Magical Realism in the stories of Latin America. The real world, the ‘here and now’, is gently set before the protagonist; Doctor Z begins to tell his unreal story. Incredible stories are not public announcements; the audience need to be chosen. So as in ‘The Miracle of the Birds’ the writer of this story chooses four members to listen to the story. They have been
alienated from the other guests and the occasion, the New Year Party. The magical story is
enframed by the ‘real’ story and historical and scientific details set the story in the ‘here and
now’ like references to ‘Rosa’s time’ (Dario 1974:25)

The writer chooses a narrator who bridges the world of reality with the magical. He is
a part of the urban, metropolitan world and not of a remote, Latin American past. It is only
when the narrator says that he believes in the supernatural does Doctor Z embark on the
telling of his story. The reader too is prepared to suspend disbelief and enter into the
supernatural story. The story-teller is from the Latin American world and allows the rational
world to experience the faith in elements that transgress the knowable and which have been
very carefully preserved by the Latin Americans.

Amelia’s story, the ‘story within the story’, is bizarre. The writer uses the technique
of the story within the story, to focus on discarded ideas. The frame story tells us that
Amelia has not grown old in spite of the passage of time and witnessing the event, Doctor Z
is transported to a world that contrasts with the abstract pursuit of knowledge. It seems that
his journey to understand the truths of life has been futile and he has returned to the young
Amelia, whose eternal child like body contradicts knowledge that has been tested and proved.

The Newtonian belief in absolutes has given way to Quantum Mechanics, Theoretical
Physics and recent trends in science that are an ally of Magical Realism. (Sanchez et al 2009).
The concept of time is questioned in the story. ‘Monochromic’ Europe/ North America sees
the linear progression of time and this interacts with ‘polychromic’ Latin America that has
faith in the notion of time being circular. A single story of this nature can trouble man’s
belief system that is steeped in rationality and reason.
Scientific knowledge becomes ‘backward’ after the story of Amelia (Aldama 2003:18). The story of Amelia is as important to the progress of knowledge as all scientific study of time; it should be treated as one more aspect of time which contributes more vitality and energy to the theoretical knowledge of the concept of time. Latin American culture sees time as being circular and not linear; Amelia embraces childhood and old age simultaneously. This aspect of time “should not be considered a mere aesthetic whim, but understood within the generalized primitive optic that affords them their consistency” (Camayd-Freixas 2000:116). But Doctor Z is not a primitive, superstitious Latin American; he has been an important man in the world of Western Science and Philosophy. The story is not a mere representation of a ‘primitivized’ Latin American but a man who does not wish to stagnate in knowledge that has become monotonous. Doctor Z resists the sameness of the knowledge that he has so far absorbed and the story of Amelia adds a new dimension that he has preserved and protected against all hegemonic Western theories of knowledge.

This story once again embraces the Aesthetics of the Sublime and the readers are taken beyond the limits of the knowable. The sublime experience is caused by objects that astonish the mind and make man rethink concepts that s/he has taken to be absolutely true. It results in a rearrangement of one’s thoughts, which can be related to Franz Roh’s definition of Magischer Realismus as being a ‘reengagement’ with the real. In Latin American stories, it is more than just a reengagement; the Latin American world embraces the sublime, the magical.

Dario juxtaposes the real world and the supernatural world but stands outside both as a spectator. The narrator guides the first part of the story but by the end, one of the four listeners steers the story. This resembles the oral tradition where the listener becomes responsible for the progress of a story. The narrator and one of the listeners, Minna, introduce
the reader to questions about the purity of compartments, be it the rational world of science or the superstitious world of Amelia. These characters steer the readers into the magical story. Both the mimetic world and the magical world are negotiated by the readers. Hence the world of reference, the world of science and the New Year party get re-created by the reader at the end of the narrative. Discussion of time is against the backdrop of linear time, exemplified in the New-Year Party, and both the linear and the circular, one privileging the future and the other in the present.

The story does not give any suggestion that the magical story within the story is acceptable to the listeners but a reference to Doctor Z’s bald pate brings the characters and the readers to the real world as Ezequiel’s transformation to a tree does the same in ‘The Miracle of the Birds’. The ‘reassimilation’ takes place after the mind has gone beyond the knowable (Sasser 2007:5). The world of concrete images does not surpass the abstract world but competes with it.

As seen in these two short stories which belong to the Magical Realist mode, the ‘magic’ is not a daily event in the Latin American world. It epitomizes a feature of ‘inclusiveness’ which is missing in the fantastic stories of the traditional genres. The magical events do not focus on a system of hierarchy. The colonizer, the colonized, the European, the Native, the rational, the irrational, the scientific, the unscientific, the organized, the unorganized, the mono, the multiple, the linear, the cyclic, the mind, the body, the head, the heart gain an ‘inclusive’ space without merging into one. They stay in their disparate spaces and do not become as Chanady says ‘resolved antinomy’. All forms of knowledge gain importance in the Magical Realist texts from Latin America. It is a tapestry where every colour is significant and valid.
Valerie Henituik’s article ‘Step into my Parlour: Magical Realism and the Creation of a Feminist Space’ discusses Amaryll Chanady’s concept of ‘resolved antinomy’ in connection with Magical Realism. This discussion must be studied along with the concept of ‘antinomy’ analyzed by Immanuel Kant in ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ as well as W.V. Quinn in ‘The Ways of Paradox’ as used by Rachel Tudor in her article, ‘Latin American Magical Realism and the Native American Novel’. These critics agree that Chanady’s associating the word ‘resolved’ to ‘antinomy’ is misplaced as far as Magical Realism is concerned. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter I.

The antinomy is sustained and it is in sustaining it that the intrinsic quality of Magical Realism lies. This facet of sustaining the antinomy is seen in the short stories of Latin America. The Mexican writer, Octavia Paz, does not give explanations for the magical events that take place in his short story ‘The Blue Bouquet’. The brilliance of the story lies in the method in which the ‘antinomy’ is maintained and neither the character nor the reader demands that the ‘antinomy’ be resolved. The protagonist of ‘The Blue Bouquet’ has an unusual encounter with a man who could be ‘real’ or a ‘shadow’ of a person.

‘The Blue Bouquet’ transports the reader to a world of imaginary situations and people. But the ‘real’ world that is presented is as extraordinary as that of the fantastic, because of which the strange world does not encroach into reality as it does in Fantastic Literature. There are no hierarchical positions in the story; both the real and the fantastic share the same space and the ‘antinomy’ is unresolved.

The narrator’s description of the room in the village that he has occupied as an outsider and the scene that he can see from his window locate the story in an ordinary situation but expressions like ‘a warm vapour was rising from the red tiles’ and ‘the feminine breathing of the night’, ‘heighten’ our senses and prepare us for the rest of the story. The
narrator decides to take a walk in spite of the hotel keeper’s warning. Initially, the walk invites him to ‘converse’ with nature – “I thought that the whole universe was a grand system of signals, a conversation among enormous beings”. But later he becomes conscious of his vulnerability, of his being “only one syllable, of only one word”. Yet man’s ego prevents him from succumbing to ‘irrational’ warnings or messages either from fellow human beings or nature. The unusual metaphor, “The night was a garden of eyes” is the point in the story when the ‘eerie’ atmosphere reaches its climax (Paz 1974:134).

The man following him has an unusual request; he demands a pair of blue eyes to make a bouquet for his sweetheart. The narrator tries to save himself by offering money and appealing to his Christian principles. But the man is serious about the narrator’s ‘eyes’ and frees him only when he is certain the colour of his eyes is not blue. The story is a fine juxtaposition of the natural world and the supernatural realm. The description of the man makes it difficult to place him completely in the space of the supernatural - “He was short and slight, with a palm sombrero half covering his face. He had a long machete in his right hand”. The earlier ‘dialogue’ between man and nature becomes a ‘dialogue’ between the real and the unreal; between the Colonizer and the Colonized; between the natural and the bizarre. ‘The Blue Bouquet’ revolves around ‘eyes’, ‘sight’, ‘perception’ and the image of a dark world.

As Lane Kauffman notes in the essay ‘Cortazar’s “Axolotl” as Ethnographic Allegory’, “Sight has provided the metaphorical basis of Western Ontology” (Kauffman 2000:143). It is a good example of Luis Leal’s idea that “In order to seize reality’s mysteries the magical realist writer heightens his senses until he reaches an extreme state [estado limite] that allows him to intuit the imperceptible subtleties of the external world, the multifarious world in which we live” (Leal 1995:123).
Chanady’s assertion that the supernatural in the Magical Real texts is not presented as problematic goes against the grain of Magical Realism in Latin America. This observation by Chanady, which is used as the basis to understand Magical Realism, has led to a number of misconceptions of the term and expression. ‘Antinomy’ allows for disparate ideas being brought together and its importance lies in its remaining disparate, demanding no simplified resolution. The magical elements and the real do not merge without questions being raised. Traditional Realism is most often associated with a ‘horizontal’ world that reminds one of a similarity to real life. Magical Realism, on the other hand, allows a ‘vertical perspective’ that embraces a multifaceted and multilayered reality and history’. (Sanchez et al 2009:43).

Magical Realism proves that mimesis is not homogenous; there are many ways of looking at reality and hence a simple merging or resolving undermines the complexity of the mode and strips it of its role in creating alternative worlds. The antithetical worlds engage in “...a mutual questioning of each one’s pretensions to totality” (Sanchez et a 2009:47).

Magical Realist texts from Latin America portray a tension between what is, the ‘real’, and what can be imagined, the ‘magical’. The real is ‘here and now’; the magical events give us a glimpse of ‘what can be imagined’. In Amado’s ‘The Miracle of the Birds’ or in Dario’s ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ the magical events depict ‘what can be imagined’. The entire town is a witness to Ubaldo Capadocio’s fleeing from his enemy, Lindolfo Ezequiel. When the birds are freed from their cages, the town witnesses an event which is a manifestation of their imagination. In the same way, the story of Amelia transports the listeners to their own ‘imagined’ past-childhood- when time stood still. Both the magical events, far from being bizarre, become the suppressed desires of the community. It is the disjunction between the real world and our imaginative thoughts that create spaces that are significant for man’s spiritual growth. When an attempt is made to ‘merge’ ‘blur’ or ‘combine’ these spaces, the tension is avoided and growth is diffused. Ubaldo Capadocio subverts the hegemonic power
of the town which revolves around Lindolfo Ezequiel and the desire to displace power is so strong that an opportunity presented is used to perfection by a community. In the same way, Amelia’s story, in ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ draws the listeners into a world of their own childhood; it is Minna, who is eager to know what happens at the end; she prompts the story-teller and this becomes an expression of her own desire to break the hegemonic structure of time being linear. Paz’s ‘The Blue Bouquet’, in its bizarre encounter, displaces the hegemonic power of the world of order created by rational thinking of the European world that intervened into the Latin American world. The narrator gives expression to the freedom of ‘what can be imagined’ being in the here and now.

Jorge Luis Borges, in his essay ‘The Argentine Writer and Tradition’ makes an attempt to place the literary tradition of Argentine Literature in particular and Latin American Literature in general. Many critics believe that the Latin American writer must adhere to the Spanish Literary tradition which would be the most acceptable thing as Spain colonized Latin America. Moreover the colonized Latin America chose to use the language of the colonizer. It is significant to remember that Latin America withdrew from every form of Spanish influence during the period of Independence. Many Latin Americans travelled to different parts of Europe either as exiles from their own countries or to gain knowledge from Europe. Borges says emphatically that “I believe our tradition is all of Western culture and I also believe we have a right to this tradition greater than that which the inhabitants of one or another Western nation might have” (Borges 1964:184). The writers from Latin America were able to handle the European idea of ‘realism’ with irreverence because they were not tied to the idea of European realism; they had the freedom to innovate. This is significant when it is applied to assess the Magical Realist short stories. The Magical realist stories from Latin America exhibit a kind of freedom when dealing with the magical elements in the text. This freedom results in varied forms of Magical Realism; the facets, drawn out from the
interior of the texts, lead to a plurality, Magical Realisms. The freedom can be associated with a kind of rebellion on the part of the writer.

The rebellious aesthetics of Magical Realism is self-reflexive; the space created at the intersection between magic and reality is important and going beyond Brenda Cooper’s ‘third space’ is Frederick Luis Aldama’s ‘fourth space’. The ‘fourth space’ is a more complex space than a mere binary of Us/Them. It critically revises such divisions as the scientific, rational and the magical/superstitious. The characters of the ‘fourth space’ can see beyond the restricted, limited and monotonous ‘firstspaces’. Doctor Z appears to occupy the ‘firstspace’ with his desire for intellectual and philosophical knowledge. He echoes Christopher Marlowe’s ‘Doctor Faustus’ in his pursuit of knowledge. Doctor Faustus makes a pact with the devil and uses his boon to satisfy such banal desires as a bunch of grapes, a woman and ridiculing the religious order. Unlike Faustus, Doctor Z does not sell his soul to the Devil; he creates for himself a ‘fourthspace’ where divisions cease…. a ‘resistant fourthspace’. Doctor Z is empowered in the ‘fourthspace’ and does not passively accept his postcolonial identity as essential and exotic (Aldama 2003:40).

Aldama’s ‘Postethnic Narrative Criticism’ focuses on concepts that relate to the narrative techniques used in Magical Realism. These techniques echo those present in traditional genres but are realigned in Magical Realist texts in general and Latin American Magical Realism, in particular.

Aldama claims that magical stories of Latin America are in the tradition of the picaresque fiction of 16th century Spanish novel writing. The magical realist stories use a trickster/curandera to lead one into and explain the magical world of the text. These tricksters stealthily, like ‘picaros’ (rogues) take us into the magical world resulting in a re-analysis of the knowledge system that we have grown up with. We, as readers, begin to question
universal truths. The trickster is ‘the product of imaginations working within the context of an ever-expanding chaotic world’ (Aldama 2003:34).

Aldama’s concept of the ‘trickster’ who takes the reader into a magical world is an important tool to analyze the narrators and implied authors of the magical real short stories from Latin America. Doctor Z, in ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’, leads us to Amelia’s magical world. The ‘trickster’ is a rational, scientific thinking man, belonging to the metropolis. But what needs to be understood is that this rational being is also a part of the magical world. ‘Antinomy’ is not resolved but ‘sustained’.

The Latin American writer leads us into the magical that exists under the superficial world of modernization. It may be seen as a voyage to the origins, the lost world of the Incas, Aztecs or the Mayans but is narrated through the mind of a writer who can search for truth keeping a scientific approach (Ecchevaria 1998). The contradiction lies in the fact that characters occupy metropolitan centres but the narrative of a Magical Realist story is ‘meant to ‘imaginatively destabilize and critique a capitalist machine’ (Aldama 2003:31).

The journey, embarked by the reader, is physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. He cannot return and be the same person he was before he undertook the journey; he encounters the sublime. Since the trickster has secretly taken him into this magical world, he is placed in a situation where truth cannot be shared with others; it becomes an ‘encounter of privacy’. As M.H.Abrams says of the picaresque fiction, it is episodic in structure, the magical realist stories are “episodic adventures not to achieve a disembodied enlightenment, but to come into an awareness of an embodied self within a collective Latin American culture and history” (Aldama 2003:34).
The Sublime is now what Sasser calls, the Urban Sublime. This is what differentiates the Romantic’s use of the Sublime from the Magical Realist and especially the Latin American Magical Realist. It is in the incorporation of the Urban Sublime that Latin American Magical Realism breaks the boundaries created by the post colonial approach. The magical world is not a world into which the Latin American escapes; it is not, to quote Sasser, a “wilderness myth” (qtd in Sasser 2007:73). It is not located in a place that is extraordinary, embracing Alejo Carpentier’s ‘lo real maravillaso americano’. On the other hand, it talks of urban spaces; it does not merely glorify the indigenous. It confuses critics because the Latin American writer of the magical realist mode focuses on the natural and the urban sublime, privileging neither. The urban sublime is in keeping with one of the important features of Latin American Magical Realism, the ability to ‘defamiliarize’ which the Russian Formalists attributed as crucial to art.

Urban spaces have lost the magic of living and there is a constant desire to get over the monotony of a ‘consumed’ space by moving into the natural world to feel the sublime. This creates a dichotomy of how to live in the ‘real’, the ‘here and now’, the urban spaces. The Latin American, dispossessed of his roots, experiences a feeling of what Peggy Bartlett refers to as ‘placelessness’ (Sasser 2007:76). The Latin America created by the Spanish Conquest and the migrations that took place thereafter is a space that the Latin American is connected to. By defamiliarizing the objects in that space, Latin American writers have been able to use the Urban Sublime and ‘celebrate the mundane’ (Roh 1995:17). This results in the ‘sacralisation of the city’ (Sasser 2007:77).

The city becomes a place which can have as many sublime moments as the wild open spaces of the countryside. The city and the country cease to be contrastive spaces. Latin American Magical Realism, by locating the sublime and the magical in both contexts, that of
the natural and the urban, has moved away from ideas of absoluteness. The stories show evidence of the fact that the magical elements do not belong to a premodern past of Latin America. They happen in cities in the midst of rational, scientific, progressive and modern ideas. Dario’s ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ is a case in point; intellectual discussions at a New Year Party narrate the city and its desires. The story of Senorita Amelia takes place in the midst of the city of Argentina. Doctor Z is not recounting a story that is set in Latin America’s past; it is well within the urban spaces familiar to the listeners. The trickster, Doctor Z takes his listeners to a story that is of his past, making them connect with the earth and its concrete truths. Robert Pogue Harrison, in his book, ‘Forests: The Shadow of Civilization’ says “Detachment from the past...culminates in one way or another with detachment from the earth” (Harrison 198). The trickster, in this case, demands that his listeners move away from the One Truth which is poised away from the past, from tradition and enables them to look forward to the future.

The trickster differs from the Western ‘picaro’ in that he is not a satirical figure. Ellen Basso’s study about tricksters in ‘In Favour of Deceit: A Study of Tricksters in an Amazonian society’ shows that in the place of the notion of truth which occupies a primary place in Western culture, validation is given importance in native cultures like Latin America. When Minna eagerly asks Doctor Z for the end of the story, it validates the story and enables the story-teller to continue. It breaks the power of unified, focused consciousness which Basso calls, ‘material consciousness’ in ‘In Favour of Deceit: A Study of Tricksters in an Amazonian society’ (Basso 1987:2). Sean Kane, in ‘Wisdom of the Mythtellers’ makes the same point in “What the mythtellers and the oral poets know is that truth cannot be captured in a solitary idea. . . . It tumbles about in the polyphonic stories told by the animals and birds and mountains and rivers and trees . . . in the play of exchanges among them” (qtd in Cheney 2003:59). Mary Douglas’ observation that tricksters have “a social function of dispelling the
belief that any given social order is absolute and objective” applies to Doctor Z in ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ (Cheney 2003:72).

The need to analyze native cultures and write their history is dominant in Western thinking. Hence the magical elements in the text are viewed through a western lens which marginalizes it into a subordinate space. It is then treated as information which is not reliable and which is subject to intuitive responses. Discussions on Magical Realism have foregrounded the intuitive approach; it ‘is’ Magical Realism because it ‘feels’ so. The intuitive approach has led to labelling diverse texts as Magical Realist texts. This, along with the fact that Magical Realism defies a working definition, has resulted in a number of problems in the analysis and study of the mode. It is important to combine both literary scholarship and popular intuitions about it. This assists in gaining tools that help in literary analysis and a better interpretation of the texts.

In Latin American Magical Realism, as seen in the short stories scrutinized, the rational narrator or character is found in as much a fluid place as the characters who are participating in the magical events. The best example is in ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ where the first part of the narrative gives us a picture of Doctor Z. He is described as a man who is scientific in his thinking, who is an intellectual. But the writer questions the absolute quality of his intellectual discussions; he ventures into a path of doubt about Western knowledge and the accolades given to a reputed intellectual. He examines the intellectual world as one which is as unbelievable as the magical world. The magical story is enframed by the real story. The frame is not as fixed or permanent as Western notions of science think it so—“Science goes grooping like a blind man along the road, and when at odd moments it catches a faint gleam of the light, it proclaims its final triumph ...” There is as much mystery and uncertainty in the real world as there is in the world of magic. This sense of mystery binds both the worlds but
man’s ability to have faith in abstract science is far greater than what is concretely visible in front of him—a child who has not grown old. The story is incredible but all tall tales and rumours are too difficult to believe. When the writer focuses on Doctor Z’s bald pate, he depicts the splendour of the natural world which is not subject to doubt and questions. This ‘enlightened’ man taking us on a journey into an unreal world is significant. The story within a story technique allows the writer to keep both realities distinctly apart.

The magical events and characters give us clues of how to read Magical Realism. Magical events are overstated to become acceptable in the Eurocentric view of the world. Alejo Carpentier’s idea that the magical in Latin America is built on faith which is lost to the sophisticated European holds good in this discussion. Scientific and Technological Progress has led to distrust in man about events that do not fit into the rational vision of the world and hence magical events have to be exaggerated in order to be acceptable. The characters in the magical real texts also have a problem dealing with the magical events because they have been subjected to scientific, logical thinking during colonization and hence cannot be rid of it. In order to make the magical spaces valid, it seems necessary for the magical realist writer to use hyperbole in place of the natural. This leads to the tension between the magical and the real spaces which are sustained in order to ‘problematize’ both the spaces and create a space between the two which becomes significant. The space that is created is, as Magali Cornier Michael, talking about Angela Carter’s ‘Night at the Circus’ (qtd by Hentuik 2011:415) “a space where possibilities for change can be explored”

The rational characters in the magical real stories of Latin America are introduced as the standard of the colonial intervention that Latin America was subject to in the 16th century with the Spanish Conquest. They epitomize the hegemonic, the rational, the enlightened, the patriarchal view. Unlike in the magical realist texts that belong to the First World writers,
Latin American writers do not use effort to put into effect the magical events. The hyperbole is restrained and not as bizarre as is found in the First World texts. Ubaldo Capadocio is as much a bird in his baby-doll nightgown as the exotic birds of Latin America. The ‘hesitation’ which Todorov spoke of in his discussion of the fantastic is absent in the texts from Latin America. Todorov’s ‘hesitation’ applies to all Western texts that deal with the fantastic including the so-called magical real texts. The Western Magical texts are positioned to ‘subvert’ whereas the magical texts from Latin America do not aim at mere subversion of hegemonic structures. They also portray the possibility of looking at life from different angles rather than accepting the absolute. They create spaces of heterogeneity which is similar to what Jorge Luis Borges calls in ‘The Aleph’, “a place where all the places of the world meet”. The infinity of this space “challenges traditional orderings and privileges paradox”. (Sanchez et al 2009:53-54)

It is in the acceptance of the multiple that Latin American texts play an important role in the global world that is predominantly separating and dividing the world into many parts and creating hierarchies. Speaking of Romance, Winfried Fluck used the phrase ‘a history of cultural dehierarchization’ (qtd inSanchez et al 58) that can be applied to Magical Realism. As much as Latin American texts “...explode...constrictive cultural stereotypes” (Hentuiik 414) they also participate in a collaborative enterprise where the world of rationality and the world of superstitions can be related without going through the process of merging. The validity of the world of magic is ‘retained’ and as Hentuiik noted, ‘sustained’ in her article ‘Step into My Parlour: Magical Realism and the Creation of a Feminist Space’ (Hentuiik 2011:411).

The ‘real’ is considered the dominant discourse and the hegemonic structure. The ‘magical’ is treated as the subordinate discourse. Most post colonial critics view Magical
Realism as a counter discourse to Realism. The Magical Realist stories of Latin America do not show evidence of a dominant discourse arguing with a subordinate discourse. Our position as readers is important to make a fair estimate of a Magical Realist text from Latin America. If the focus is on the real, the dominant discourse is the real and if the focus is on the magical events in the text, the dominant discourse is the magical. The European reader may read a Magical Real text from Latin America keeping the real in mind as deep in the Western consciousness the empirical alone has validity. On the other hand, cultures which have a strong oral tradition, even if it is not present any more, find it easier to accept the magical events in the text as a part of a richly made tapestry. The short stories from Latin America prove that the focus on the ‘real’ against the ‘magical’ or vice versa is not possible. That would make the reading of the stories lose the important quality of keeping both spaces disparate and yet valid.

The hyperbole used by Magical Realists of the West is different from that used by the Latin American short story writers. There is an element of exaggeration in spaces that are ‘static’ like rooms and physical appearances, descriptions that create bizarre settings and people. But in the short stories from Latin America, the hyperbole is in the movement; it is ‘fluid’. So instead of concrete spaces that are exaggerated, the hyperbole is found in the detailed study of the ordinary. Hence spaces that are threatening and inviolable are not created; readers are drawn to the magical spaces in Latin American short stories as they are inviting because they are rooted in the daily and the ordinary. Tommaso Scarano, in the article, ‘Notes on Spanish American Magical Realism’ observes that Latin American Magical Realists operate ‘hypertrophically’. Scarano adds “Everything is ordinarily enormous, extreme, and hyperbolic...with the result that the overall reality turns into total unreality” (Scarano1999:26). The hyperbole, the exaggeration of the descriptions is what creates the magic. The exaggerated details make the situation larger than life and contribute to a
‘heightened’ understanding of life. The hyperbole used in the short stories of Latin America distinguishes it from the magical real texts of the West.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s ‘The Handsomest Man Drowned in the World’ is a good example to study this facet of Latin American Magical Realism. The story is built on hyperbole. Superlatives become the building bricks of the story and help in creating the magical and the unreal. The title in itself is based on an extravagance that resembles the manner in which people speak of situations in their daily lives, the language of tall tales and rumours- “he weighed more than any dead man they had ever known, almost as much as a horse” (Marquez 1973:489). The exaggeration is controlled, based in reality, approximating conversations between people, making extraneous use of similes and metaphors relating to things, people and incidents in an oral tradition.

“Not only was he the tallest, strongest, most virile, and best built man they had ever seen, but even though they were looking at him there was no room for him in their imagination” (Marquez 1973:490). This example from the text, built on hyperbole, reverses our views about ‘reality’ and ‘imagination’. The imagination of the women has atrophied and it has lost the ability to dream or imagine. The handsomest man, described in hyperbolic terms, gives them the ability to break their incapacity to dream. The women express themselves freely to the ‘dead’ man in the absence of the ‘live’ men of the village. The hyperbole of their actions is an attack on the silence that is forced on them by the patriarchal world. Silences cannot always be read as submission—there is a rebellion involved. The dead man encourages ‘voices’ that concretize the power of silence. It is not that the women cannot speak; they do not share the language of the dominant discourse. The discourse of silence is the new idiom of women who do not use the dominant discourse but the dead man compels
them to break the silence, partake in a different discourse and express hopes and desires that are considered unacceptable in a male-dominated world,

The children of the village find a plaything in the dead man; the women cherish the body and the men do the responsible thing of throwing the corpse back into the sea. So the corpse is ‘doubly drowned’. The story is the creation of Esteban, creating a myth out of a non-existent thing. Overstatement is the basis of the magical elements in this story. But it is steeped in the reality of the lives of the people. The hyperbole revolves around the progress of the lives of the village. It has not devised an inviolable space; it is a creation of a space familiar but stagnant. Finally a heroic figure revolutionizes mundane reality. “The resultant hyperbole is more festive than grotesque: an affectionate and compassionate caricature of a people” (Camayd-Frexias 2000:128).

Marquez’s story ‘The Handsomest Man Drowned in the World’ presents a bizarre incident which is accepted as true by native cultures. Native cultures are quite often referred to as ‘feminine spaces’. Belief in superstitions, legends, myths are spoken of as subordinate discourses in the hierarchy of knowledge. The dominant culture is the Western with its emphasis on rationality. Magical Realism in Latin American stories focuses on the fact that a native worldview is not homogeneous and that it cannot be contained within a frame of real or magical. As these writers deconstruct (term used literally) the Western view of the native vision, they also validate both spaces, the ‘magical’ and the ‘real’.

Latin American culture is simultaneously real and magical. The writers of the short stories do not conceal belief in superstitions nor do they pretend to be ignorant of the change brought about by colonization. They go to the extent of inviting the reader into their world with no inhibitions. They neither use the magical events to showcase their culture nor do they
use it to attack the European attitude to life. The magical events exist because Latin American culture exists. The Latin American writer asserts his role in the building of his culture. The short stories exhibit a healthy control of the Latin American world. The magical events lift the Latin American from being subject to or confined by the reality emphasized by the dominant West.

“Time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality” (Flores 1995:115) The treatment of time goes against the realist genre and surprises the reader of a magical realist text. This is an important way of taking control of one’s own ‘being’. The Latin American stories show varied ways in which the writers take stock of and preserve Latin American culture. The magical events in the story stop the clock of linear time, thereby indicating that these stories destabilize the passage of time; they transport readers to a space which is a-historical and atemporal.

In the magical real stories of Latin America, it is difficult to ascertain whether it is the magical world or the real world that becomes the intervening component. Both the magical and the real are not passive; they are active spaces that together lead to a redefinition of fiction. Winfried Fluck’s essay ‘Fiction and Fictionality in American Realism’ gives another dimension to the study of Magical Realism. Fluck observes that realist fiction faces a critical dilemma. In order to give a world-reflecting mimesis, realist fiction is compelled to ‘de-emphasize’ the fictionality in the text (Fluck 1986:106). The paradox lies in the fact that realist fiction critiques fiction but uses fiction to give a mimetic representation of the world as the reader knows it. Magical Realism in Latin America proves that this paradox is the essence of fiction and it results in an understanding that Mimetic representation is not a homogenous concept and has the capacity to be is flexible to both similarity and difference. (Sanchez et al 2009). The ‘real’ spaces in Magical Realism do not merely contrast with the
unreal; they emphasize that ‘realism’ has a capacity to create multiple spaces. Kathryn Hume makes a distinction between fantasy and mimesis in her book ‘Fantasy and Mimesis’ and says that they are both ‘antithetical approaches to the real’ (Sanchez et al 2009:32)

In Latin American Magical real short stories, the spaces, the real and the magical are active in their own spheres. Hence both become dominant; not as post colonial critics would have us think that the real world is the subject and the magical world is the object of gaze. It is only when the magical space is considered as an active space that Magical Realism being a post colonial discourse is deconstructed. Through the magical realist discourse, Latin American writers have proved that Latin American culture refuses to be contained in the Western authoritative vision of the colonized world.

Latin American Magical Realism is most often read as a decolonizing discourse. This is because the mode became popular at the same time as the peak of the Cuban Revolution. In addition to this, the anti-mimetic elements in the magical realist texts made it easy to connotate it with ‘anti-colonial elements’ (Aldea 2011:42). The double bind of Magical Realism makes it possible to look for postcolonial features in both the magic as well as the real. Gerald Martin gave magical realism a political reading by focusing on the realism in the texts. To label all magical realist texts as the discourse of the colonized ‘writing back’ to the Empire is a universal approach that ignores the fact that all postcolonial countries come from different cultural contexts.

It is important to read these texts as aesthetic artefacts by focusing on the complex ways these novels textualize the world, on how the magical elements dialogue with realistic representations, not as anthropological reports but as fictional creations embedded in particular contexts. (Sanchez et al 2009:117). The history of dislocations varies; it may be recent or very far back in history as in the case of Latin America. Latin America has already
internalized syncretisation and hybridity and even if the magical elements may recall a past, it is rooted in the present socio-political situation in the country. The Latin American short story writer is not trying to make a deliberate effort to go beyond the real into the world of magic; s/he is, on the other hand, expanding the discourse of the story in order that the reader is exposed to alternative world-views. “The magical is not making any ontological ruptures, it is another element in the fictional representation of an immediate, intimate reality” (Sanchez et al 2009:106-105).

To discuss the magical, Gilles Deleuze’s discussion of Ontology, as used by Eva Aldea in Magical Realism and Deleuze: The Indiscernibility of Difference in Postcolonial Literature, is a significant method to explore Latin American Magical Realism. The meaning of the word ‘ontology’ differs in its understanding with different philosophers and is crucial to determine Deleuze’s use of the word in order to apply it to Latin American Magical Realism. Deleuze is grouped with two other post-structuralist theorists, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, both of whom do not approve of the term ‘ontology’. ‘Ontology’ has come to mean the ‘study of being’ and for both Derrida and Foucault, the flux of language and history prevents the construction of ‘ontology’ separating what is from what is not. The word ‘ontology’ to both Derrida and Foucault would mean the “unchanging”, and to talk in terms of “pure nature or essence is misguided, for either linguistic or historical reasons... and harmful” (Todd 2005:15). Deleuze, on the other hand, does not reject ontology but believes that it can be the basis of how one might live. By emphasizing the importance of ontology, Deleuze parts ways with most of the important philosophic theorists of the twentieth century. Deleuze approaches ontology in a divergent way which distinguishes him from the other thinkers. He does not look at it as something that reduces the way to live; on the other hand he sees creativity in ontology, not merely the discovery of what there is. Deleuze’s use of ontology changes the way we look at creativity
and discovery as well as identity and difference. (Todd 2005). Similarly, magic and real are two sides of the same coin, yet they differ from each other-‘two orientations of the same being’. (Aldea 2011:43)

The ‘realism’ in Magical realism is structured on real situations- ‘a system of convergent series’. (Aldea 2011:45). The details that create a verisimilitude to reality allows for the grounding of the text in the ‘here and now.’ This is the territorialization of the text, taking the idea from Deleuze (Aldea 2011:54). In ‘The Miracle of the Birds’ the narrator gives us a number of details about the protagonist of the story. Ubaldo’s talent as a singer, his past life, his wives and the children he has including the ones he has adopted, give a picture of the man and his abilities. These details ground the text in a space that has rules and is confined to the dictates of the law of the state- a territorialized space. The linear progression that critics believe is undermined in the magical realist text and is present with a difference. The narrator takes the reader through a linear description of Ubaldo’s past life; how his three households were made and how each of his adopted children found room in his life. To take another example, ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ begins with a detailed description of the New Year Party, the setting of the story that has connotations in the linear progression of time. The discussion of time is appropriate in the setting and the narrator’s remark “If only we could stop time in its course!” is an intellectual study of time.

The magical elements do not follow a concept of time which is linear. The magical element is, using Deleuze’s term, a ‘deterritorialized’ space which is not controlled by the structures of power as in reality. Deleuze and Guattari call this a ‘nomadic’ space, which is not subject to and a victim of social structures and powers. The way in which the magical elements are treated in Latin American Magical Realism show that the nomadic space of the magical is not fore grounded as a route of escape; on the other hand, it is in that space that Latin America finds an expression of the ‘missing’ generations, like the Mayan, the Aztec
and the Inca civilizations. The power of the Spanish Conquest on the land was
insurmountable but the magical elements in a magical text by deterritorializing space
weakens the connections with the past and creates a self which is open to spaces that are
porous and unlimited.

The magical elements that come at the end of each of the stories, embrace circular time,
a deterritorializing space and leads to a ‘total deterritorialization of the text’ (Aldea 2011:54).
The unreal story of how time stood still in Amelia’s life and the description of the birds and
Ubaldo’s flight become nomadic spaces that are not controlled by the real world of a nation
state. They resemble global spaces that lead to the shrinking of the world.

The actual and the virtual are the two concepts that best describes the real and the
magical. It is not that the magical loses touch with the real; it is that it has an internal logic
which subverts the real. The logic that native cultures and Latin America exhibit is placed in
the magical as much as it is in the real. If we apply Deleuze’s ontological approach, the
magic and the real are two sides of the same coin. It is when we privilege the rational, logical
world that magic loses the power of its ‘autarchic fictional world’ (Aldea 2011:42). Latin
American Magical Realism does not allow the dismissal of the energy of its fictional world
and hence adds dimensions to the study of Magical Realism as a mode. It is the experiences
grasped from the magical that surprises the reader and s/he chooses to either suppress it or
give reign to it.

It is relevant to this study to see how the magic is created in the texts. Franz Roh’s
definition of Magischer Realismus centred on the description of objects and the
‘reengagement’ with realism. In the Latin American texts, the people and objects that are
found in the magical parts of stories are as much a part of the real world as the real people
and objects. Having connections to folk tales, myths or legends from Latin America is the
sub-text and focusing on this element will take us to Spindler’s anthropological Magical
Realism. The magic lies in the similarity between the people and objects in the real as well as the magical parts of the stories.

No doubt the magic is a divergent series that encroaches into the convergent series but that does not limit or reduce its power of creation and discovery. The fact that it is different from the real does not make it less significant in the text and “Disjunctive synthesis is also a counter-actualization, that is, a way of thinking the virtual side of reality that reveals both the text as a production of the real, and difference-in-itself as the condition for that real” (Aldea 2011:49)

In the magical elements of a magical real text in Latin America, we witness a view of the Latin American world before territorialisation, before the Spanish Conquest. It is the essence of Latin American culture and takes us back not just to the cultural past but to the beginnings of life. Folk tales, legends and myths recreate the times when man is yet to participate in the act of ‘becoming’. According to Deleuze, “becoming is never an imitation, but two things entering a zone of imperceptibility” (Aldea 2011:64). ‘Being’ associated with the real and ‘becoming’ associated with the magical makes Latin American Magical realism unique and different from the First World Magical Realism. Decimated history and culture cannot be recounted but it becomes a part of collective memory. Latin America magic is not an account of the cultural past but the spaces that were lost during the Spanish Conquest. These magical spaces will help in recreating and reterritorializing Latin America.

The magical elements are like premonitions and omens in the stories; they do not base themselves on truths which are absolute. Relative truths are exemplified in the narration of the story of Amelia or the magnificent flight of the birds. In moving away from set boundaries, the magical texts create spaces that are flexible and unstable, deterritorialized spaces which are rooted in the past, present and the future of Latin America. It revolves around the improbable and implausible but does not focus on the supernatural. The ghosts
that are present in Maria Elena Llano’s ‘In the Family’ are not placed in spaces that are beyond man; they belong to the here and now; they have the passions and feelings of man; they do not come from an esoteric place. They are from Latin America.

The narrative ‘In the Family’ begins with an unreal event and, like the characters in the story, the readers are taken from disbelief to acceptance; it becomes an everyday situation. The mirror reflects the dead members of the house and the reader is very slowly made to accept it as a normal/natural happening. The narrator takes the reader into confidence and this relationship between the narrator and the reader that is established makes the reader a participant-observer to the unreal situation described in the narrative. The mirror becomes the symbol of Latin America’s past and present. The dead and the living see themselves in each other whereby the distance is diminished. The Latin American reality incorporates the past and the magical past becomes an ‘exotic’ artefact to the West. It is alive in the present and will continue in the future.

The story creates a binary between the living and the dead and the fact that the mirror people, the ‘them’ are not sociable hurts the ego of the living, the ‘us’ since life is always prioritized over death in the rational, scientific, empirical world. But the story depicts the similarity between life and death, symbolizing the similarity between the past and the present. ‘In the Family’ is a bizarre story from the Western point of view but it focuses on the harmony between the living and the dead, the past and the present.

There is no doubt that magical realism is ‘rooted in place and history’ (Aldea 2011:62). But unlike Carpentier’s ‘lo real maravillaso’ that leads to a search for identity, Latin American magical realist texts prove that there is a move to subvert identity. This makes a postcolonial study limiting and as Eva Aldea notes, ‘how pervasive the view of Magical Realism as a decolonizing genre is’ (Aldea 2011:16). This kind of approach keeps the socio-
cultural and geo-political contexts in view and it is important to look for ontological rather than anthropological features of Magical Realism. The history of Latin America has led critics to make a simplistic conclusion that Magical Realism in Latin America is a decolonizing discourse. It is when a study of the stories is made, by separating the texts from the context, that it is possible to arrive at the features of Magical Realism that make for its popularity in the global context (Aldea 2011).

The multi-faceted features of Magical Realism, seen in the stories from Latin America help in distinguishing it from the global context. The context is important in so far as the stories are from Latin America and its diverse culture but the probe into the mode goes beyond the geographical space to the place, which “is a portion of geographical space, sometimes defined as ‘territories of meaning’”. This is Arild Holt-Jensen’s words, in his study of geographical concepts (Holt-Jensen 224)

The creative artist brings out the brilliance of the gem called Magical Realism by chiseling out the magical events in a matter-of-fact manner that unsettles the reader into believing that he can define Magical Realism, only to find that he is unable to find his way through the labyrinth of everyday experiences that the creative artist is focusing on.

The magical realism of Latin America is beyond any binarized study as the magical elements focus on deterritorialization and despecification. The magical does not belong to any specific space of subordination and hence to look at the real as dominant is irrelevant. The magical in Latin American stories do not play on ideas of hierarchy which is intrinsic to the binarized situation. On the other hand, the magic unleashes man from stagnant spaces and gives room for multiplicity and change. Change is the quality of movement and life; the magical elements in Latin America give visions of thought which do not dismiss or suppress other views. It adds another dimension to the knowledge that exists in societies. It is a different type of knowledge which embraces a primordial state- a state when man was not
conditioned by a society, a political situation or rules of morality. This primordial state is still present in society and Latin American stories exhibit the power of that state which the West believes it has eradicated in the pursuit of rational thinking.

The historical and social factors do not belong to the magical world that is portrayed in the texts. It is firmly rooted in the real. Dr. Z’s social life in ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’, the balladeer’s life in ‘The Miracle of the Birds’, the life of the people in the village that receives the dead body in ‘The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World’, the orderly setting of the apartment in ‘Letter to a Young Lady in Paris’, etc are all built around the varied changes that take place in Latin American life in the here and the now. The magic belongs nowhere, has no fixed place and lies in a realm of nothingness and infinity but has a greater influence on man’s mind than the real. The magical is not introduced to merely subvert oneness of thought, that would be limiting. It has a role to play in touching upon the infinite in this world of finiteness. The infinite is recreated, not represented, eventhough it looks as if it has all the characteristics attributed to the real/actual. “The magic, in its divergence, is removed from not only the details of daily social life depicted by realism, but also from its engagement with the negotiation of identity, and indeed, with any historical or geographical situation” (Aldea 2011:71). It is a factor in the text which is ahistorical and apolitical; it adds to the wholeness of life. The active and the passive, the territorialized and the deterritorialized, the historical and the ahistorical, the living and the dead, all play parts in the kaleidoscopic vision of life. In Deleuze’s ontological framework, which places both the actual and the virtual on the same plane, it is not the representation of the real that needs to be privileged but art must create a new world. This is the power of art and can be found in the magic of magical realism.

The Deleuzian idea of revolution is not about resolving issues like master/slave; colonizer/colonized but ‘about inventing a people beyond any such opposition’ (Aldea
This is significant as Magical Realism as a mode developed in Latin America four centuries after the Spanish Conquest. Magical Realism, coming in the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in Latin America, cannot be given the nomenclature of being post colonial. The history of Latin America proves that the colonial experience was different from the experience of other post colonial countries who gained independence in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The fact that the people of Latin America were colonized much earlier makes a difference and hence the narrative discourse of magical realism that they used becomes a post post-colonial discourse. It has all the ingredients which make for the global discourse that has become popular now in the globalized world. Testimonial writing that came earlier took care of the anticolonial discourse which was the first form of protest that all colonized countries participated in. Along with Testimonial writing, the Latin American writers went back to their cultural past in novels that belonged to the Criollismo, Indiginesmo and Regional discourse. Hence Magical Realism in Latin America is not a post colonial discourse as Stephen Slemon and others have made it out to be. It is more on the lines of a revolutionary discourse as Deleuze put it or ‘rebellious aesthetic acts’ (Aldama 2003:17)

Fredrick Jameson’s idea that a return to the myths of the past is third world literature finds a contrast in Deleuze for whom it is not a return but a creation of new myths, ‘legending’ or inventing myth; ‘an act of story-telling which would not be a return to myth but a production of collective utterances capable of raising misery to a strange positivity, the invention of a people’. The magical realist writers in Latin America create new myths which are for the people of the present (Aldea 2011:115).

What is important is not whether the real is contrasted with the magical but what does the method of story-telling preserve. The story telling is not a return to the past because the past does not exist in Latin America, they are a missing people. It is a recollection of myths but these are new and belong to the present. They are myths and legends which have no
origins and whose origins do not matter as they speak to the new, the present. It becomes a return to the silent realm before myths were created (primordial state of being). This is the state when identity was obliterated. On the other hand these new myths taking us to a silent place is not embroiled in desires of identity. It represents the ontological state of being which is both creative and discovers freshness.

The magic is beyond time, history and space and becomes the ‘hybrid signifier’ (Aldama 2003:36). The magical moment has no meaning or significance in the terms of the real. It is an incomplete signification and that is where the in-between space emerges. It is a ahistorical condition of culture. The dead man who arrives in the village, in Marquez’s ‘The Handsomest Man Drowned in the World’, belongs nowhere and he comes to change the present into the future. He takes the people to a time when they were not tied to the condition of culture. It is the same with the story of Amelia; the listeners are taken back to a time when timelessness was a state of being. So the contrast is not between modernity and a premodern state but in culture itself. It is in the meaninglessness of the hybrid sign that makes it a new myth. It is when the world is emptied of the old myths that new myths are created. The Latin American world is a creation of new myths and Magical Realism becomes significant as a literary mode. Latin American writers like Alberto Fuguet may have reservations about Magical Realism, but there is no doubt that writers still continue to use the mode and this is attributed to the need to make new myths as an invention of themselves.

‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ “allows for a multiple-layered re-visioning of a world that increasingly threatens to annihilate our Macondos-the plenitude of the human imagination.” (Aldama 2003:20) The story of Amelia pushes the reader out of his pre-conditioned understanding of reality and moves him to look at reality from a different perspective. The real world is the bridge through which the reader enters the magical world; it is also the bridge which allows him to return from the magical world.
‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’ is not just an ‘ethno poetic artefact’ (Aldama 2003: 28). Amelia’s story makes the reader re-study his observations of science, which breaks the stereotypes that ‘freeze Othered subjects within a primitivist frame’ (Aldama 2003:29) Stories such as these helped the conquerors justify the kind of colonial power, they showed over the colonized. A postcolonial reading of the story is based on a political interpretation and moves away from an aesthetic reading, keeping the Latin American reality in mind.

The Latin American writer ‘exoticizes’ the Other and plays on the Western reader by giving him what he expects of the ethnic cultures, the stereotypes that he is used to. Stories like ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’, ‘The Handsomest Downed Man in the World’, ‘The Blue Bouquet’ ‘In the Family’, ‘Letter to a Young Lady in Paris’, seem to fit in with the western reader’s concept of the margins, the ‘other’. The stories play with the idea that Latin America has faith in incredible stories that flout all logic. But in actual fact the writers are addressing issues about Western ideas of knowledge; they finally provide a picture of the exotic primitive Other and simultaneously question truths that have been established by the Western ideology. This is achieved by the subtle use of parody. Parody is a powerful technique used to ‘hybridize genres’ (Aldama 2003:36). Magical Realism in these stories deliberately focuses on the hybridized individual and ‘plays’ with the stereotypical impression that the West has of the East. But by using the expected narrative of the West, the writer of Magical Realism resists the hegemonic notions of knowledge, creating a ‘fourthspace’ which the West cannot penetrate (Aldama 2003:40).

When the focus is on anthropological magical realism, then resolution becomes important. The resolution privileges the real and the rational. It attributes all resolution to the suppression of the magic and for all situations and characters to move to the real- what ‘in postcolonial terms [. . .] represents an imaginative projection into the future, where the
fractures of colonialism heal’ through a ‘positive imaginative reconstruction of reality’ (Aldea 2011:125). Looking for solutions or healing in the end of the story puts magical realism back into a binary space. This kind of reading simplifies the mode and its potential and has led to a haphazard use of the term in the global world. The complex worlds that it embraces can be seen when we place a magical realist text within this framework where simple solutions are not the purpose of the mode. This complexity is visible in the stories from Latin America. The magical in the stories have no defined purpose and cannot be constructed as belonging to the past or the supernatural world or the world of witches and mysticism. Its sense of belonging is in the real world of objects and to that extent its ontological nature resembles Roh’s definition of magic in art.

The Latin American is a nomad who keeps on travelling in his own culture with short breaks. The magical moments, in the stories, become the imagined spaces of the missing people of the land. Myths are a part of the nation-state and nation-states are not opposed to myth but magic wanders into spaces that cannot be territorialized. Old myths are conditioned in the past, fixed and belong in stability; new myths, the kind that Deleuze speaks of, are created in the magical narratives of magical realism, and tell the story of an uncertain future.

The history of Latin America makes it possible to use the Magical Realist mode as no other country can. They can talk of two worlds that oppose each other and not belong to either. Having lost their roots, they are a part of US intervention which is their reality now. The Latin American “floats” without firmly rooting himself either in the past or the present, to use Octavia Paz’s observation “…floats in the air. I say “floats” because it never mixes or unites with the other world, the North American world based on precision and efficiency” (Paz 1985:13). This is the way in which he preserves his past in the present by not dismissing either. Magical Realism is a similar expression of this reality in that the artist recalls the past,
brings it to the present and is able to go beyond both. The need to look for truths either in the magical world or the real world is not a serious binding for the Latin American writer.

The double bind, the hybridity and the oxymoronic quality of Magical Realism lends itself easily to the postcolonial reading and because of the double nature of the mode, critics have either found examples of merging the two or giving both equal spaces but with Deleuze’s ontological framework, the difference becomes the focus and it is by maintaining the difference of the two spaces that they serve as complementary facets of the text. Magical realism, instead of bringing disparate elements together, enhances the divergence of the two, in Deleuzian terms. This divergence is useful to bring out the immense potential of Magical Realism in Latin America. “The power of art is the power of unsettling surprise” said art historian, Schama. (Peer 2008:14). In Latin American Magical Realism, writers leave contrasts as contrasts to bring about the element of surprise which is an intrinsic quality of art. The real does not negate the magical and vice versa but they both make for a better understanding of human experience. The characters in both spaces partake of the richness of experience. This is what a multiple view encourages; neither proves the better but allows each to stay in its own space.
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