Chapter III

Orderly chaos in Magical Realism: Native to Latin America

The use of a master narrative to represent a group is bound to provide a very narrow depiction of what it means to be Mexican-American, African-American, White and so on... A master narrative essentializes and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group’s cultural life... A monovocal account will engender not only stereotyping but also curricular choices that result in representations in which fellow members of a group represented cannot recognize themselves.

(Solórzano and Yosso 2002:27)

Critics of Magical Realism like Wendy Faris, Lois Parkinson Zamora, Clark Zlotchew, Stephen Slemon, Anne Hegerfeldt and others begin discussions about the exclusivity of Latin American Magical Realism being a representation of the everyday reality of Latin America. But as their essays and articles progress, they get submerged in the same theories that focus on ‘core/dominant’ and ‘margin/subordinate’. In his essay, “Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse”, Stephen Slemon speaks of “the “marvellous” as something ontologically necessary to the regional populations’ vision of everyday reality” (Slemon 407) but his arguments privilege the study of Magical Realism as postcolonial discourse. This discussion has gained the status of being the seminal work, used by scholars, to discuss Magical Realism as postcolonial discourse. Slemon observes that the discourse of Magical Realism “carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial centre and to its totalizing systems of generic classification”, and this “dogs the practice of Magical Realist writing” (Slemon 1995:408). Slemon’s attributes to Magical Realism an opportunity for the silenced voices’ “re-visioning
process” abetting a “positive imagined reconstruction of reality” (Slemon 1995:415). This is in compliance with the colonizer’s need to bring about harmony in places that have been destroyed during colonization. The individualist approach to reality that is seen in the magical real stories of Latin America is not defined as most theories overwhelm us making demands on researchers to place research in the realm of these premises. Academia, today, has distanced itself from understanding Magical Realism in Latin America leading to misconceptions about the term and its literary use. The controversy surrounding the term in academia has come from many sources; the fact that it is a fashionable trend, the fact that it is too limiting a concept and the fact that it is a postcolonial discourse. Academia subtly decides what positions have to be taken.

Postcolonial scholars have effectively discussed the mode in the context of colonization and decolonization. Both the ‘core’ and the ‘margins’ comply with each other to further this project. A huge body of theoretical studies revolve around this position. This chapter navigates through these innumerable discussions related with postcolonial theory to explore postcolonial terms like ‘native’, ‘other’, ‘transculturation’ and ‘hybridity’ in Latin America, being aware of the imminent danger of disassociating it from such studies. Keeping the political, social and cultural background of Latin America in mind, the focus is on the literary explorations of the mode in that region, how it has evoked a Pan-Latin American interest.

In spite of all theoretical discussions about and around Magical Realism, the fact still remains that it is even today associated with Latin America. The ‘El Boom’ of the 1960s accelerated the popularity of Magical Realism from Latin America and with the passage of time, it gained the status of an interesting mode, which was used by many writers both in the West and the East. Latin American Fiction became “a major critical and commercial phenomenon”. (Cobb 2008:76); it was earlier known to the world through the poets, Pablo
Neruda, Gabriella Mistral and Cezar Vallejo but the West was oblivious to the world of Latin American Fiction before the Boom. Hence the response to the Boom was two-fold—it determined both the literature in general and the fiction in particular from Latin America.

Critics focused on the high level of literary innovation in Latin American Fiction that the world was introduced to during the ‘El Boom’ period. They did not concern themselves with the external facts of how Latin American writing exhibited “the corrupting influence of liberal capitalism” (Cobb 2008:93). But the main argument of the critics who criticized the Boom centred on the fact that the ‘Center for Inter-American Relations’ which began in 1962 introduced the literature of Latin America in order to build greater understanding and mutual respect between US and Latin America. There is no doubt that the enterprise had a political motive and it was enthused by the need to bring the cultural capital of Havana, Cuba to the United States of America. The process of locating the Latin American texts and training translators became an important enterprise taken up by the Departments of Literature. This led to good translations; Latin American Literature was well-positioned in English translations and “Readers did not need to know Spanish to appreciate Latin American culture. . . . It communicated with the larger American intellectual community and advanced the idea that Latin America was producing genuinely innovative literature” (Cohn 2006: 153).

The translation Programme was criticized by US intellectuals, some of whom felt that literature encouraged to bring about better political ties does not focus on the best that is written in Latin America; still others opposed Latin America for its leftist views and they assumed that there was no need to encourage their writing when they were always critical of American economic policies. The most important view came from Maria Eugenia Mudrovic who says that it is now difficult to know what the Latin American canon looks like because of the intervention of US. The heterogeneity, diversity and the open body of texts was lost in
the translation programme. The canon might have been more flexible and probably unstable. This project resulted in the “commercial degradation of Latin American writing”. (Cobb 2008:76).

The critics who opposed the material conditions under which the Boom took place railed against the literary journal *Mundo Nuevo* which was published from 1966-71 edited by Uruguayan critic Emir Rodriguez Monegal. This magazine was instrumental in spreading the ideas and the literary productions during the Boom. Many novels appeared in serial forms in this journal before they were published in full length. The main objective of the journal was to promote “cultural freedom” and place Latin American writers along with European writers in order to move Latin American Literature into Pascale Casanova’s ‘international literary space”( Cobb 2008:82). This again was detrimental to exploring the varied Latin American literary discourses.

The ‘El Boom’ in Latin America had a different connotation to what the West analyzed of it. The Boom resulted in the Latin Americans becoming aware of their literature produced in their own country, a literature which had gone beyond regional boundaries. Readership enlarged bringing in the middle classes and not limiting it to the elite, which was the case prior to the Boom.

The earlier Literature of Latin America, Modernismo, Indigensmo, Regional Literature were direct reactions against colonial structures both in the social as well as literary arenas. These literary forms kept their focus on Colonization and its effects to such an extent that the Latin American writer became aware of herself/himself in contrast to the European who dominated her/his imagination for four centuries. This literature “defended literature as an auchthonous expression of a nation’s identity” and “had provided rhetorical power for a defence of the nation” (Cobb 2008:92).
The Chilean novelist, Jose Donoso, writes about the ‘El Boom’ in this way, “We were reacting very strongly against the Naturalism that had preceded -writers who had attempted to recount the faithful history of each country, the ecology and the ethnography. That earlier generation was putting names on things, was seeing them for the first time...We scrambled it all up and gave it shape” (McNees 1974:1). Donoso, whose memoir is an important document about the Boom, criticizes regionalist tradition as “chauvinistic machismo” (Cobb 2008:92) and alleges that they treated all narrative innovation as “europeizante” (Cobb 2008:93). The result of this ‘scrambling’ was Magical Realism, that found its best expression during the ‘El Boom’ and created an awareness of a Latin American identity and catered to the Latin American imagination. The analysis of how this was achieved by Magical Realism in Latin America will lead to the fact that Magical Realism is native to Latin America and that is the standpoint of this thesis.

This focus on literary innovation, both in the international and Latin American approaches to Magical Realism, has undermined these writers’ relationship to the social and historical reality from which they emerged. Magical Realism brings out “a new national-consciousness without being nationalistic” (Castle 2009:136).

Most studies of Magical Realism have privileged the idea that it is a postcolonial discourse and Latin American critics have taken objection to this fact. Bill Ashcroft, in his article “Modernity’s First Born: Latin America and Postcolonial Transformation”, notes that the term, ‘Postcolonial’ must be used to any Literature of Latin America as this nation was the first to have experienced colonization and hence the effects continue to the present. Ashcroft argues against the discussions made by critics that Latin American Literature cannot be approached only as postcolonial discourse. He states that “Latin America fundamentally changes our view of the Postcolonial... The antiquity and character of its colonization, the longstanding reality of its hybridized cultures, the "continental" sense of difference which
stems from a shared colonial language, the intermittent emergence of contestatory movements in cultural production—all radically widen the scope of postcolonial Theory" (Ashcroft 1998:12). To Ashcroft, the Latin American experience is “postcolonialism at its roots” (Ashcroft 1998:13). Ashcroft of course goes on to talk of the postcolonial ideas that go beyond the mere historical trajectory of countries coming after colonization. He asserts that “Latin America then, the "first born child" of modernity, is simultaneously "worlded" by Europe, as Gayatri Spivak puts it, and relegated to the periphery of that world” (Ashcroft 1998:13). The examples he takes to prove his point is centred in Testimonial writing of Latin America which was significant in the early part of the Twentieth century. But Ashcroft makes no mention of Magical Realism in Latin America.

Eva Aldea in Magical Realism and Delueze: The Indiscernibility of Difference emphatically asserts, “how pervasive the view of Magical Realism as a decolonizing genre is” (Aldea 2011:16). This view can be substantiated in the study of Latin American Magical Realism. The short stories of the magical realist mode from Latin America display facets that do not fit into the accepted postcolonial discourse of ‘natives’ writing back to the empire.

The meaning of the term ‘native’ has gone through a chequered history. The political and ideological connotations of the term began with colonization. Arjun Appadurai’s essay, “Putting Hierarchy into Place” observes that expressions like ‘native categories’, ‘native belief- systems’, or ‘native agriculture’ are ambiguous in themselves as it is difficult to place who the native is in a number of societies with the varied advances made in societies. When we decide that the native is one who belongs to a particular place, we can use the term to describe all human beings as they belong to some country or the other. Yet anthropologists have distinguished between the native and the people who come to observe the natives. Then, according to Appadurai, it must be understood that the native is immobilized and does not move out of his confined space, ‘incarcerated’ and that the researcher or anthropologist or
missionary travels to his place to study him. The confinement is not so much physical as ecological; they find themselves limited by the land that they are attached to and from where they get their identity. They are prisoners of their intellectual and spatial confinement. Levi-Strauss says that natives are scientists of the concrete, the concrete being the land that they belong to - the fauna, flora etc. Their intellectualism is connected with the concrete land. But this kind of approach or understanding of the native freezes him in time and does not take into consideration that he is also capable of change as the rest of the metropolitan world.

Many anthropologists believe they are observing ‘pristine’ cultures but ‘diffusion’ is a part of every culture and it is the incorporation of this diffusion that is important. They would have learnt about what is outside their culture through ‘migration, trade, conquest or indigenous narratives’ Appadurai emphatically states in his essay that ‘pristine’ cultures without contact with the outside has never existed. Then ‘Natives are creatures of the anthropological imagination’. ‘Topological stereotypes’ are prevalent in the minds of most anthropologists. Appadurai asks to break such stereotypes; the first way in which this can be achieved is by attributing ‘essences’ to the ‘temporary localization of ideas from many places’, secondly, he asks that there is a need to encourage study of ethnographies that focus on the diversity of the place and thirdly, places need to be compared ‘polythetically’ - which would mean looking for family resemblances between many societies whereby the confined native, as coined by anthropologists, would cease to exist (Appadurai 1988).

The ‘Native American’ is the term used to describe the indigenous people who lived in parts of North and most of South America. The South American Natives were victims of the European Conquest way back in the 16th century and they became to history ‘a forgotten race’. Yet it must be remembered that these people constituted varied tribes who had a unique culture and way of life. In contrast to popular beliefs, these tribes developed cities and advanced systems of government, language, and social structure. This variety of tribes,
knowledges, languages, systems of government and social structures was brought under one nomenclature as belonging to Indians by the European world. This gave them a single identity erasing the diversity of the cultures. “This new identity was racial, colonial and negative” (Quijano 2000:551): it resulted in the people of South America being displaced, losing their identity, by becoming the inferior and the past of the progressive European.

The Iberian Conquest of the 16th Century destroyed these natives and their cultures. They also became victims of disease and destruction that came with the Spanish. When the Native Americans, also called the Amerindians, were exterminated, the Conquistadors brought in African slaves in order to participate in the exploitation process of South America. This has only complicated the indigenous roots of South America.

The Iberian Conquest was the first of its kind where the differences between the colonizer and the colonized were highlighted. The idea of race got highlighted; Spanish and Portuguese became known as ‘race’ which was earlier referred to as ‘place’ in Europe. This Conquest resulted in ‘the universal social classification of the world population’ (Quijano 540) and created commercial empires. It is in the second wave of colonization, coming after the Industrial Revolution in Europe that industrial empires were created. In ‘The Wretched of the Earth’, Frantz Fanon claims that ‘the colonial world is world cut in two’ (Fanon 2001: 38). The European hegemony exploited the resources available in South America in order to develop capitalism and it also ensured that knowledge of the natives was erased. The Spanish put all native knowledge to the beginning of a trajectory that culminated with European knowledge, thereby made room for the superiority of the European and his knowledge base. The colonizer himself was depicted as a more advanced and cultured species than the native. The ‘native’ became an uncivilized, naive and uncultured being who needed to learn the machinery of technology and become ‘cultured’. The binary structure in the world population was determined thus; East/West; primitive/civilized; mythic, magic/scientific;
irrational/rational; traditional/modern. This automatically led to the notion of modernity which has been contested by many theorists. Traditional is placed as the opposite of Modernity and it has inferred that the colonized world is ‘traditional’. James Clifford in ‘The Predicament of Culture’ has made references to the fact that by ‘locating’ tribal art as traditional, the fact that such art is still being made is forgotten, that it is also a part of modernity. By placing ‘traditional’ in the past and the fact that earlier traditional cultures are also a part of the modern world, makes it difficult to point out the contrasts between traditional and modern. Westernizing the colonized world does not mean that the non-European world has been modernized and it is important that modernization does not apply to only the Western world. Mayan-Aztec civilizations were highly modern before the Spanish Conquest and the present world-system, before the formation of the European identity (Quijano 2000).

The name ‘Latin America’ owes its existence to the European Conquerors who distinguished the land they conquered from the Anglo America of the North. The name is reminiscent of the colonial power that subjugated the Indigenous people. Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmnn, in their critical work *Into the Mainstream; Conversations with Latin American writers*, observe that the American continent “had not only been discovered but invented. It had started as a European utopia...” (Harss & Dohmann 1967:277)

References to Latin America has always been as a ‘whole’ ignoring the fact that it is made up of a diverse set of countries. The Europeans, in their desire to stamp the land as one, forget to look into the heterogeneity of the culture. “In the foreign imagination, an equalizing, all-embracing blanket covers this immense territory...” observes Alberto Manguel in the Introduction ‘Other Fires: Short Fiction by Latin American Women’ (Manguel 1986:1-2). In the same introduction, Manguel goes on to say that the term ‘Latin America’ is used to ‘define a nonexistent entity’. Latin America is made up of a number of nations with varied
political governments, societies, traditions and cultural representations. Yet there are two realities that unify this diversity in the European imagination, magic realism and political realism (Manguel 1986:1-2).

In his essay ‘Latinamericanism and Restitution’, Enrico. M. Santi, notes that “Latinamericanism like Orientalism is never far from the collective notion that identifies Europe and by extension the United States, as a superior culture in comparison with all other non-European peoples and cultures” (Santi 1992:90). This probably explains why Latin America is treated as ‘whole’ ignoring its ‘fragmented’ reality. Any study of Latin America must be done keeping in mind regional, racial differences. Every Latin American has a regional identity before he becomes a part of the national.

In addition, it is important to remember that the colonial language, Spanish and Portuguese, gives Latin America a uniqueness that distinguishes it from the Anglophone countries. Latin America stays apart from the Anglophone postcolonial world and can be studied only in translations. This diversity of cultures is an important aspect of Latin America and it cannot be dismissed when the literature of Latin America is being studied or researched into.

Shannin Schroeder in her book ‘Rediscovering Magical Realism in the Americas’ talks about the uniqueness of Latin American reality when she says that this reality is a part of the Latin American history of the influence of migrations and differences in the regions. (Schroeder). Magical Realism in Latin America becomes the most suitable mode to represent this multicultural, disparate society which has been in a state of flux from the time of the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century. Magical texts are in “a continual state of transition” and can be the best mode for Latin American society which allows for defining and redefining itself. The use of the Magical Realistic discourse by the Latin American writers helps to see
the diversity in Latin America and is different from Magical Realism in Japan, India, China and Africa. In these countries, the pre-colonial past is so well defined that a search for one’s own identity in the past is important. Magical Realism is deployed in these countries for other purposes, as to describe cultures to the Western man or to remind the living of the dead past. This type of Magical Realism differs from that of Latin America in that, in the other countries, there is a security in one’s past which has continued to the present. Mario Vargas Llosa observes in his article ‘The Paradoxes of Latin America’ that “Latin America’s wealth lies in its being many things simultaneously - so many, in fact, that it is a microcosm in which all the races and cultures of the world co-exist”.

In Constructing Culture and Power in Latin America Daniel. H. Levine, poses questions about Latin America and says that the problems in dealing with Latin America is that the Latin American experience challenges “conventional ways of thinking about culture and power”. (Levine 1993: 3). Most studies on Latin America focus on the fact that the Latin Americans are “captive of their culture” (Levine 1993: 4). Levine states that by the 1960s there was a great move towards urbanization and that explains why the discourse of Magical Realism was better suited to the fiction that focused on the indigenous past and the present. This resulted in “expressions of new and valid identities” which becomes instrumental in approaching a study of Magical Realism in Latin America (Levine 1993: 6).

Unlike the other colonized countries, the ‘native’ in Latin America is not easy to define. Llosa believes that the migrations of the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, African, Chinese or Japanese have also become the ‘natives’ of Latin America along with the ancient Aztecs, the Mayans or the Incas. Spain was influenced by the Islamic tradition and hence was different from the rest of Europe. Christians, Jews and Moslems lived in harmony in Spain, a policy brought in by the Islamic rulers. But this changed when the Conquest of the
Amerindians took place. They needed to develop rules that would help them to bring the natives of South America under their control and thereby suppress them.

Hence the Iberian Peninsula was a melting pot of cultures for many years before the Conquest of Latin America; the Celts, black Africans, Romans, Moors, Goths, Arabs, and many others came and contributed to a Roman province. This multiculturalism was brought to Latin America during the Conquest and it added dimensions to the existing ancient cultures. Iberian colonization has a distinct mark. Enrique Dussel notes that Spain “inaugurates…the first world hegemony” and with it “the world system’ and “modernity” (Dussel 1994:59) The other colonial powers from the West learnt about slavery and the plantation system as well as racism from Spain. In addition to this, the mixing of blood between the colonizer and the colonized was not as much seen in the other colonies as it was in Latin America. This created a number of anomalies in dealing with Latin America and its colonial experience.

The colonial experience in Latin America is different from that of the other colonies in Asia and Africa and this fact has been highlighted by a number of Latin American critics. The ‘criollos’ (born of Spanish men and Indian women) who came into existence during and after Spanish colonization represented both the inheritors of the Spaniards and the ethnic culture of Latin America. But the criollo in Latin America presents a third position as he is both the inheritor of the colonizer and has a strong mingling of the indigenous. He is a part of the European world as well as the representative of the indigenous culture. Hence his resistance to colonial rule is unlike the other countries in so far as he participates as well as opposes the West. In the national arenas, the criollo is in the centre as the criollo elites became the hegemonic group whereas in the international sphere, he occupies a subaltern position. He is located in Western culture at its margins. Though it had all the features of political power, military power and exploitation as the other colonies, the condition of the
criollo who was both the colonizer and the colonized made the study of Latin America intriguing to students of culture (De Castro 2008).

The native who is stereotyped in the imagination of the West is subverted when a study of the Latin American native is taken up. Alejo Carpentier returned from Paris in the early part of the twentieth century and began the project of talking about the differences between Europe and America. His descriptions of the native, as observed by Aldama, focused on being “prerational, childlike and primitive” (Aldama 2003:10). This description of the Latin American native has resulted in a problematic study of the native.

The fact that natives are products of the anthropological imagination is clearly understood when we look into a recent CNN report, titled ‘More Latinos identify as Native American, census shows’ by Laurie Guthmann, dated September 30, 2011. This article indicates that many Latinos/as are finding out their roots and their ancestors in Amerindian tribes and the need to belong is so strong in them in the 21st century. Dr. Juan Carlos Martinez Cruzado, a geneticist from the University of Puerto Rico, was the main reason for the Latinos to be interested in finding their indigenous roots. Cruzado’s research proved that the ancient tribes of South America were not completely destroyed but that the mitochondrial DNA of indigenous origin was present in people as it had been assimilated. Mario Garza, who started the Indigenous Cultures Institute in 2005, made sure that research would be done to see that indigenous cultures are preserved. There was an increase in the number of people who identified themselves as Native American in the 2011 census and this gave Garza hope to say “The Spaniards tried to destroy our civilization and history, outlawed our ceremonies, yet we are still here”. These reports and programmes suggest that the Latin American Natives do not give proof of being confined as anthropologists expect; they have moved out of their ‘homes’ but are still interested in finding out their roots and identities that have been completely destroyed by the Europeans.
This desire to reach ‘home’ is not physical, but imaginary. The word ‘home’ has gained importance when dealing with diasporic societies. The need to go home and to belong is rooted in the anthropological idea of being, as Appadurai says ‘incarcerated’. Alexandra Ludewig, in the article ‘Home meets Heimat’ says that “the yearning for a home has experienced a semantic shift, which aligns it more closely with Heimat’. ‘Heimat’ is the German word for ‘home’ but it is embroiled in the cultural baggage of the Nazi Regime. The positive feelings of ‘heimat’ is that it transports an individual into a feeling of home that is a sign of security and happiness like the Latinos feel when they can derive their indigenous roots. The idea of ‘home’ becomes an ‘uncontaminated space’- a place of one’s origin and native place. If the term has to be studied in the context of Nazis and the homelessness that they brought about for the Jews, it carries with it connotations of pain and bitterness experienced in losing one’s roots to an outsider- the European. The use of the term ‘heimat’ is appropriate for the Latin Americans who were displaced first as exclusive tribes and then as Native Americans, later migrations and exiles. So the term ‘heimat’ means to the Latin Americans, feelings of belonging and feelings of loss. Though semantically ‘heimat’ means home, it also represents a longing to be whole and united as the Latin Americans were before they experienced a sense of alienation after the Spanish Conquest.

Instead of home being a place of security, all over the world, it is now associated with threat and trauma, especially after the episode of 9.11 in USA. Hence it has become important now to accept that going back to one’s past goes hand in hand with the notion that there is need to respect the ‘polyphonic nature of historical discourse’. When the magical realist writer in Latin America recalls his past in the magical spaces of the text, s/he is constructing home for the present immigrant, creating a text full of contradictions. Home then goes beyond the insecure place that it has become to peacefully resign itself to ‘a heimatesque knowledge of self’ (Ludewig 2007).
Magical Realism enables in the creation of such a home, which allows for a self that is rooted and yet not rooted in home. The Self in Latin American Magical Realism does not get fixed as it does in traditional Realism. The self divides itself into so many multiple forms and finds expression as a human, an animal, an inanimate object etc. It is so porous that it disengages itself from a fixed place and time and it drifts toward another notion of self, Emmanuel Levinas’ concept of ‘alter-identity’. The Self does take notice of the ‘other’, the ‘external’ but it is the freshness of the other that helps it understand the intrinsic quality of life. We reach ‘the very paradox of alterity within identity’ (Sanchez et al 2009:180) in the stories from Latin America.

The story by Juan Bosch, from the Dominican Republic, ‘The Beautiful Soul of Don Damian’ is a good example to focus on this facet of Magical Realism in Latin America. Hegemonic religion refers to the soul of an individual as being ‘beautiful’ and that this beauty surpasses itself in that the body is ugly and useless. The debate between the material body and the immaterial soul is thus laid to rest by the ecclesiastical world. In the story, Don Damian’s soul escapes out of his body and sees itself in front of a mirror. The amorphous and nondescript form of the soul realizes that there is nothing without the beautiful body. The story makes the reader rethink notions of the soul vis-a-vis the body, a debate that is intrinsic to religion.

The agitations that the soul is subject to at the time of death interests the reader and lead her/him to deconstruct the teachings of the Christian religion. Yet the perception of the soul/ body dilemma is rooted in Christianity; the deconstruction has been replaced by the world of magic where the soul resides. “Because no difference is made between the two kinds of “objects” physical existence loses its significance as a criterion of value: the conceptual world appears on a par with material reality... the technique once again underlines the extent to which the nonmaterial, too, is an essential aspect of human reality” (Hegerfeldt 2002:}
This story deconstructs the intrinsic importance that is attributed to the soul of man and develops the idea that the soul’s life is in harmony with the actions of man. All the characters in the story refer to the ‘beautiful soul of Don Damian’ which augments the egoistic nature of the soul. It is only when he sees his physical form in the mirror that it realizes that the beauty associated with it is intrinsically connected with the material qualities of Don Damian’s actions.

Bosh’s story looks back to a time in history before religious institutions played power games and asserted their positions as the conscience keepers of the parish. Latin American Christianity is ‘nativized’ in this story and the focus is on the native imagination that works on balance rather than on extremities. The division of the Self as body and soul achieves the result of portraying the relevance of both selves. Magical Realism in Latin America does not concentrate on one fixed, stable self that is devoid of contradictions.

The self expressed in Latin American Magical Realism exhibits differences that contrast with the Self presented in Western Realism in that it is not complete; the Self believes that it is in a state of flux and not the origin of all knowledge. The Self exhibits an indeterminacy which is the basis of survival. This self is not absorbed in searching for a secure homeland but it accepts that more than a physical space that connects with belonging, the Self is accepting of contradictions and loss in its search for ‘a heimatesque knowledge of self (Ludewig 2007)’. This Self is best described by Mario Vargas Llosa, in his article ‘The Paradoxes of Latin America’. Llosa observes that the wealth of Latin America lies in its universality that has embraced different cultures. “The amalgam is our greatest patrimony; to be a continent that lacks an identity because it contains all identities” (Llosa 2008).

The terms ‘hybrid’ and ‘transcultured’ are used to describe Latin American culture. These terms downplay the power of oppositionality which is more important in Latin
American Magical Realist Fiction than syncretisation. The historian, Gary Nash believes in ‘hybridity’ as the only solution to racial absolutism. He takes the example of Latin America and remarks that ‘mestizaje’, the Spanish word for racial and cultural mixture, predominant in Latin America, is the answer to all racial problems that arise out of focusing on purity of races. But Garcia Cancilini is not so sure about this larger framework in which hybridity works. He observes that “the cultural hybridisations that occur in the Latin American city can relativise and dehierarchise, but can also reinforce old inequalities. There are critics unlike Nash who believe that hybridity is not the answer to conflicts and inequalities in a society. (qtd in Wade 2004:360).

The term ‘hybrid’ is used by the post colonial theorist, Homi. K.Bhaba, who asserts that the bringing together of different cultures results in a third space that he calls the ‘Space of Enunciation’ (Bhaba 56). In the postcolonial situation hybridity is considered a distinctive mark of multicultural empowerment but in the Latin American context hybridity is not used as a tool of resistance. The criollo elite and the discourse of the Mestizaje embraced hybridity and spoke of it as a national identity (De Castro 2008).

It is important to look at hybridity as belonging to a specific space, rather than as a term that embraces all post colonial countries. The definition of ‘hybridity’ from different disciplines like Biology, Language and Culture has resulted in a complexity of the term. In eco-evolutionary studies, the demand is for Conciliation Biology which allows for the coexistence of natives and non-natives. This leads to a more inclusive approach to invasion, conquest and intervention. The Science of Biology believes that invasion adds dimensions to the natives in their capacity to adapt. Latin American Magical Realism does not represent such an inclusive space, where there is a co-existence of two autonomous codes.
The Spanish-Colombian media scholar, Jusus Martin-Barbero talks of multiplicity which goes beyond “oversimplified Manichean identifications”. Barbero notes that Mestisaje refers to “the sense of continuities in discontinuity and reconciliations between rhythms of life that are mutually exclusive”. This plurality that Barbero associates with Mestisaje is important in seeing Magical Realism as plural. Barbero, being a media scholar, sees communication as creating meanings rather than as merely transferring information. This must be applied to Magical Realism as a type of hybridity that creates meanings. (Kraidy 2005:7)

Barbero looks at the Telenovela from Latin America as a newer version of Magical Realism. Barbero’s observations of the telenovela holds good for the Latin American Magical Realist stories as “a profound dynamic of memory and imaginaries”. Both keep the Latin American intrinsic nature and conjoin it with the modernized present, to create a meaningful discourse. “In the case of cultures particularly susceptible to the creation of hybrid forms such as Latin America... the long duree of history, including colonialism, conquest and trade is the scene of a protracted cultural fusion”. (Kraidy 2005:8) Approaching hybridity contrapuntally helps in placing Magical Realism in plurality rather than in the mono-definition that it is liable to become in most studies.

The term hybridity is most often related to ‘transculturalism’, a term coined by Cuban Anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s. Most studies of hybridity prefer to associate it with ‘transculturation’ because it is considered to be a more acceptable process than acculturation, which involves a loss of one’s culture to a dominant one. Transculturalism believes that all cultures are mixed and hence sees no difference between cultures. Magical Realism in this thesis goes beyond such a syncretic view. A constant attempt has been made by critics to bring the two discourses of Realism and Magic together by either viewing it as a resistant discourse or by using the transculturing theory and appropriating it as being the
same all over the world. Ortiz’s study was further enhanced by Angel Rama’s ‘literary transculturation’ in his essay ‘Literature and Culture’.

Elliott Young’s review of Silvia Spitta’s book ‘Between two waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America’ is explicit enough to understand that Spitta bases her arguments on Ortiz’s ‘transculturation’. Transculturation for Spitta consists of the "complex processes of adjustment and re-creation--cultural, literary, linguistic and personal--that allow for new, vital and viable configurations to arise out of the clash of cultures and the violence of colonial and neo-colonial appropriations" (Spitta 1995:2). She defines a "transculturated subject" as someone who is "consciously or unconsciously situated between at least two worlds, two cultures, two languages, and two definitions of subjectivity, and who constantly mediates between them all" (Spitta 1995:24). Spitta expands the idea of transculturation to the colonizer and gives examples from Latin American colonial texts to show how the colonizer also goes through a process of transculturation. This again results in understanding transculturation as a process that brings all differences together making it harmonious and single. Spitta’s use of the term ‘transculturation’ removes Latin American cultural representations from the framework of postmodernism. She is clear about not using the theory of postmodernism as it is a Western theory and results in the “cannibalization of the ‘third world’” (Spitta 1995:20).

Antonio Cornejo Polar, Latin American theorist, discusses the three terms associated with Latin American Culture and Literature, ‘Mestizaje, Transculturation, Heterogeneity’. These terms, according to Polar, highlight a kind of synthesis in all of Latin American cultures and Literatures. This leads to a kind of facile harmony where both the “Hispanic and the Indian were harmonically reconciled” (Polar 116). Polar draws attention to the fact that this kind of thinking ignores “endless processes of the formation of nations internally
fractured since the Spanish Conquest”. To assume that “there is a non-conflicutive meeting point” is to look at Latin America as whole and to perpetuate the idea of the European imaginary of Latin America (Cornejo 2004:117).

“Transculturation would imply...the construction of a syncretic plane that finally incorporates in a more or less unproblematical totality...” Hence Polar prefers to say that literary systems in Latin America remain autonomous and form a “contradictory totality”. (Cornejo 2004:118) Extending Polar’s views to the discourse of Magical Realism in Latin America, it must be understood that the two discourses of Realism and Magic are ‘competing truths’ that do not merge but continue to represent in contradictory terms the innate wisdom that lies within the Latin American world. The concept of ‘competing truths’ is based on two schools of thought. One values the idea that two disciplines are irreconcilable and the other believes that there must be an understanding between the two. But Richard Coleman, the author of the book ‘Competing Truths’ disagrees with both schools and argues that ‘theology and science are sibling rivals competing for the attention of truth seekers’.

In an interview with the award-winning poet and author Julia Alvarez, on August 6 2007, Alvarez expounds the idea of competing truths as a creative artist. She believes that as artists, it is important to “present not just the one truth, our tribe’s truth, but the manifold truth, which includes the complexities, competing realities of any situation”. This best explains Magical Realism in Latin America which is not an expression of the tribe’s truth but truths that belong to the whole world. Though this may be a betrayal of one’s own culture, it gets its sustenance from belonging within and moving out into the world as a whole. This allows for a ‘remapping of identities’ and in contesting the meaning of periphery (Barros 2010:12).
Magical Realism from Latin America becomes a self-definition rather than an expression of a Manichean anxiety. This is the foremost reason for its presence in different periods of history from the Boom to the present. Maria Eugenia Rave in her thesis, ‘Magical Realism and Latin America’, submitted in 2003 clearly notes that:

The use of Magical Realism as a means of artistic and literary expression continues to prevail for now, because while there exist problematic situations or changes in normal life in the countries of Latin America, there will always be inspiration for the creators and a motive to express their feelings. Its use will disappear for periods of time and will reappear at other times, as if it were manipulated by the magic of life. At the time that Magical Realism is observed, other styles will also be seen. But this is the one that many prefer and which will prevail (Rave 2003: ii)

The past is present in the Latin American mind in figures of speech and language. So to say that the magical part of Magical Realism is a mere longing for the past is a misnomer. The Latin Americans had no real Empire to ‘write back to’. Spain had already become a metropolis which was defunct and France became the ‘cultural imaginary of Latin America’. Hence Latin America, by using the mode of Magical Realism was not bringing back the indigenous past but was constructing itself as an alternate to the West. This past is presented by writers of the magical realist mode by using the method of autoethnography.

An important tool to study the cultural past used by ethnographers is ‘autoethnography’. ‘Autoethnography’ combines both autobiography and ethnography. Memory is an important aspect of autoethnography and could be both good and bad. The
Latin American memory of the past is vague and yet present. The Latin American writer is
dependent on the stories recollected that lie within the society that have not been validated by
anyone. This body of stories of the past are as unreal as the memory of the past. They collect
stories that both belong to them and come from a distant memory of the history of
colonization. It becomes an observation of one’s own culture and history from the outside.
That is what lends itself to the subjective and objective study of oneself in the magical realist
mode of Latin America. The interpretation made by the text focuses on “a cultural
understanding of self that is intimately connected to others in the society” (Chang 2008:9).
Studying oneself leads to a better understanding of others and this is the crucial reason for
Magical Realism in Latin America not being a simplistic binary structure of a constituted
other. The European culture that could be the ‘other’ to the native Latin American becomes a
part of the Latin American world, even as the ‘other’ that destroyed the culture. Learning
about others and expanding our understanding of cultures that are different, is what an
authethnographic approach to Magical Realism in Latin America exposes the reader to
(Chang 2008).

‘Autoethnography sensibility’ makes room for the unreal and emotional sides that is
seen in the magical real texts from Latin America. The emphasis in these stories is to the
subjective description of oneself and not based on theories given by a canonical study of how
the native is represented. The Latin American’s influence in describing himself liberates
Magical Realism from Regionalist discourse that protests about one’s culture and from
postcolonial discourse that focuses on a Eurocentric definition of the native. The liberation of
oneself from such discourses and from hiding facts about one’s culture is what assists Latin
American writers of the Magical Realist mode to make meaning of the world around them.
The subtle combination of autobiography and ethnography makes autoethnography a possible
way to study Magical Realism in Latin America (Ellis et al 2011)
Marie Louis-Pratt in her seminal work ‘Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturalism’ focuses on varied experiences of the natives to colonization through which she manages to bring about a possible base for “imperial meaning-making”. Her work is centred in the idea of decolonization and thereby she brings about a “rethinking of the relation between centre and periphery” (Pratt 2008). Pratt’s definition of ‘autoethnography’ as "instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms ... in response to or in dialogue with . . . metropolitan representations" helps in analyzing the way in which Magical Realism in Latin America is an “autoethnographic dialogue” (Sabra 2005)

‘Autoethnography’ helps in defining how the Other sees himself and this becomes the best way to study the self-representation that takes place in the magical realist texts in Latin America. This kind of approach varies from the way the native is defined and redefined by the Eurocentric, dominant world. The stories from Latin America of the magical realist mode centre on protagonists who are ethnographers. The best example is the short story by Leopoldo Legunos, ‘Yzur’. Yzur is the name given to an ape that the ethnographer/narrator owns from a circus. The name makes no sense and the narrator himself says “ Yzur (where he got his name I could never find out, for his former owner did not know either)...” (Legunos 1974:32 ). The names of the natives baffled the European and hence he anglicized them to make for easy categorizing and coding.

On first reading, the binary stand of “I am your master” and “You are my ape” seems to be an echo of the colonizer/colonized relationship (Legunos 1974:36 ). As Lane Kauffmann says in the essay ‘Cortazar’s “Axolotl” as Ethnographic Allegory’ “the perennial Western ontological hierarchies-subject over object, self over other, human over animal, mind over body-are not overturned, but faithfully replicated” (Kauffman 2000:146). The frustration that develops in the master when he cannot get the ape to talk questions the very
dynamics of who is the master, focusing on the illusion of power. Legunes uses “the power of narration to intervene in power relations” (Sabra 2005).

Theories of knowledge about speech and speech acquisition abound but the native ape cannot be categorized as belonging to any one theory. “His silence would not yield” continuing to preserve, what belonged to the ancient mysteries of the forest (Legunos 1974: 37). The power of silence that the ape displays is contrasted with the language of the master. The Latin American native came from the silent world of gestures and signs and when the native spoke the European could not connect with ‘native speech’ as it seemed to be a system of cries. The narrator/ethnographer tries hard to penetrate the world of the ape. The strengths of the ape - a taste for learning, an excellent memory, a capacity for reflection and an attention span better developed than a human child’s are coded. Yet the ape is constantly referred to as a deaf mute.

The story is a description of European research which goes from hypothesis to coding to analysis to experimentation leading to results. This research project is like a colonial project. The ape is overwhelmed by the exercises and the experimentation but it complies because of intellectual curiosity and a spirit of enquiry. As the research progresses, the results are not what the researcher expected. The researcher has to accept the fact that his object of study is logical in its own way. He has to accept the defeat of his search and agree with “the natives of Java (who) ascribe the absence of articulate speech among the apes to deliberate abstention, not to incapacity” (Legunos 1974:31). But instead of accepting what the natives told him about the innate quality of the ape, the researcher found it necessary to experiment and prove the native wrong and thereby show his superiority.

When the researcher hears from the cook that the ape spoke a few words, he loses control over himself and beats the animal which questions the concept of who a civilized being is in comparison to the Eurocentric notion of an uncivilized native. Every lesson begins
with “I am your master” and ends with “You are my ape” and these statements indicate different positions of power (Legunos 1974:36). The first is the confidence of power whereas the second results from the stubbornness of the ape and is a compelling authority. The researcher manages to “shatter his organic unity” but it is in silence that the ape retains his essence and does not allow the modernizing techniques of the researcher bring him down (Legunos 1974:37).

The Latin American native keeps his roots; the same that the European imagined had been completely destroyed. The native in Latin America allows the European to make him the object of study, transform himself in many ways but holds on to the last salvation that will separate him from his conqueror—the power of speech. Finally when the ape speaks, the researcher has proved nothing because this speech arises out of an instinctive need for water.

The story ‘Yzur’ very meticulously builds the fact that the European researcher, in spite of his power position, has to succumb to the power of the native, who chooses to speak and accept his authority only when he feels it necessary. The native does not lose his natural self in making the changes; he keeps his autonomous status as the researcher does. The native in this story is ‘constituted at multiple sites’ (Sabra 2005). At the end, the researcher is addressed to as the ‘master’ by the ape which indicates the power of knowledge gained from an instinctive source to rational theorizing. The researcher becomes the master of his spiritual journey when he is close to death and in need of water—“The closeness of death had ennobled and humanized him” (Legunos 1974:36).

In his desire to attain an absolute truth, the researcher dismisses the varied knowledge that he is faced with in the course of his research—knowledge based on intuition and the spirit.
Horacio Quiroga’s ‘How the Flamingoes got their Stockings’ is centred on humanized animals. The animals become symbolic of the varied tribes in Latin America with their own individual customs, traits and habits. The costume ball, a carnival with masks is a customary event in the tribes of native cultures. The costumes result in a transformation of their intrinsic selves and in keeping with the notion of a carnival, there is turbulence in the order of power. The coral snakes become the cynosure of all eyes and the tall flamingos watch as the fundamental quality of their power is taken away by the otherwise slithering snakes. They are carried away by their desire and envy which results in a lack of balance in their behaviour- “Naturally they were envious of all the gowns they saw, but most of all, of the fancy dress of the coal snakes. Every time one of these went by them courtseying, pirouetting, balancing, the flamingos writhed with jealousy” (Quiroga 1974:42). They decide to get stockings that match the beauty of the coral snakes. Their search for stockings becomes futile till the Owl directs them to the Barn Owl. The wise owls play on the weakness of the flamingos that portray foolishness and stupidity. The Barn Owl offers them stockings made from the skin of coral snakes that they preyed on.

The story recounts the Spanish Conquest-the deception of the Europeans pitted against the simplicity of the natives. But this simplistic, essentialized binary stance becomes a dynamic space when the flamingos continue life with a different look after being punished by the coral snakes. The costumes become the reality of their lives-“That is why the flamingos have red legs instead of white” (Quiroga 1974:45).

Both the short stories, Legunos’ ‘Yzur’ and Quiroga’s ‘How the flamingos got their legs’ depict the Latin American native looking at his own culture, thereby creating autoethnographies. The magical realist writers of these stories do not emphasize just the binary structure of magical realism but take the reader into a more vibrant space where resistance is an intervention into the dominant depiction of the subordinated peoples. The
search for the ‘authentic’ native is subverted. ‘Authentic’ is used in the sense of how the colonizer views the native but that does not discount the authentic feelings and emotions attributed to the people of the land and the way in which they negotiate the world around them. Both the ape and the flamingos continue their authentic feelings of themselves which makes for a relevant understanding of both the colonizer and the colonized. (Sabra 2005)

The problem with ‘authentic’ is that it results in imposing certain cultural traits on the ‘Other’ and thereby separate their feelings, actions and ideas as being inferior and not relevant to the present society. This then discounts the varied ways in which different natives deal with the world around them. The aim to find cultural purity amongst the natives becomes the colonial discourse that looks at change as the prerogative of the West and that the natives are fixed in places and ideas that do not go through any type of negotiation. If the native must negotiate, according to the Western premise, it can only be to better understand the colonizer’s culture and use discourses that the colonizer has marked out as the best. Lane Kauffman observes in the discussion, ‘Cortazar’s “Axolotl’ as Ethnographic Allegory’ “those who would venture to meet the Other in authenticity must first leave behind the security and comfort of their own ontological baggage” (Kauffman 2000:150).

Pratt’s discussion on autoethnography “involves an assertion not of self-as-other, but of self-as-another's-other, and of self-as-more-than-the-other's-other”. The magical realist stories of Latin America are a good example of this facet-they present images of “self-as-more-than-the-other's-other”. The real and the magical together form the reality of the Latin American native, who allows both codes to remain in autonomous spaces- resistance to the discourse of realism but not a facile coexistence of the opposites. The hybridity that is a part of Latin American culture is contrasted within itself and not contested with the dominant discourse. In the example of ‘How the flamingos got their Stockings’ Quiroga presents to us the diversity of the culture but does not pit it against the Eurocentric’s power of deception as
exemplified by the Barn Owl. It is clear that the flamingos are the victims of the deception brought on them by the Barn Owl but this deception is not the subject of the story as much as the flamingos’ stupidity which makes them victims of themselves. The dynamic spaces created when the binary structure is undermined are what make Magical Realist stories popular in the Latin America imagination.

The popularity of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has resulted in the European and North American’s reception of such a discourse as Magical Realism. That reception has overlooked the dynamism of the Latin American culture and has focused on the fact that the literary canon has shifted from the centre to the margins. This is the reason that Latin American writers have resorted to the mode of Magical Realism as a “continuous engagement with representations” of themselves even to the present day. The need to take up the ‘native idiom’ and discuss it in Latin America has been the objective of the magical realist mode in Latin America. The word ‘idiom’ is a reference to idiomatic representations of the civilized/uncivilized; sophisticated/barbaric as discussed by Samah Sabra in her thesis ‘(Re) Writing the other/self: Autoethnography in the Transcultural Arena of Representation’.

Pratt’s discussion of ‘autoethnography’ is built on the idea of transculturation but Magical Realism in Latin America is not just a ‘transcultured’ discourse. It is the deployment of a dominant discourse as Realism in order to make meanings of their own discourse of magic. It is not a passive representation of the native who imbibes all that the dominant provides. It is because the Latin American Magical Realist texts do not fit into the structure laid by the dominant discourse that the stories analyzed in this thesis have remained hidden to the world. They disrupt the way in which dominant discourses view the native and native knowledge. They demand a change in the reading practices of texts that emerge from the subordinate spaces. The magical and the real in Latin American Magical Realism do not
harmonize or ‘transculturate’ but move towards a dialogue of differences that lie in competition with each other. The irony lies in the fact that there is no resolution of incompatible wholes. The paradoxical placing of terms like ‘dialogue’ and ‘differences’ is the bases of the use of Magical Realism in Latin America.

The magical realist texts are analyzed from the outside and stories like Legunos’ ‘Yzur’ as well as Quiroga’s ‘How the flamingos got their Stockings’ become suitable examples that represent the discourse of domination. The ‘Other’ is seen as the subordinate, constituted in a way that gives an identity to the European. The dominant power is analyzed in the context of the resistances to it. In both cases the dominant and the subordinate are stereotyped. It is important to study the discourse of resistance, not merely as a counter discourse but as a space that studies the native in keeping within his own imagination of himself. In ‘Yzur’ resistance is apparent and contributes as much to the domination of the researcher as the expression of the native. In a study which focuses on the power relations of dominant versus subordinate, without studying the points of resistance and representing the native as a passive object rather than a subject who gains power through resistance, the power relations also get fixed.

The short stories of Latin America do not present power relations that are fixed. It resists by determining who the native is in his own understanding of himself and not in keeping to the normative understanding of the native that the Eurocentric imagination has determined. The dominant world approaches the Magical realist stories from Latin America by confining them within their understanding of the ‘native’, categorizing them as discourses that simply resist the discourse of realism. The Eurocentric search in other cultures is to find answers to situations, customs and traditions that are deeply rooted in a society. But the ethnographer/narrator of Magical Real stories from Latin America is not looking for answers
but experiences the pain of solitude that Latin America experiences in its multiple identities. He becomes the “discoverer and chronicler of hidden realities” (Camayd-Frexias 2000:129).

Autoethnography is not just about objective facts about one’s culture. Then the speaker becomes a native informant. In Magical Realism, “the tension between what is said in the text and what the text performs” becomes the point when autoethnography parts ways with the postcolonial notion of natives. The colonized give a record of their suppression but at the same time they are subjectively creating their own lives—“to meld the elements of a fictional story together in ways that arise naturally from the context of the story and reflect the actual beliefs and practices of communities of people who share cultural and material landscapes” (Lawless 2009).

When Latin Americans read the stories of the magical realist mode, they approach them as ‘stages’ where their indigenous traditions are performed. They would not have felt the need to give it a terminology like ‘Magical Realism’. It would have been read as Marquez pointed out in his Acceptance Speech at the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony in 1982:

I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression... A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us ...we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.

Elaine J. Lawless takes objection to the use of the term ‘Magical Realism’ as it denies “the link in these fictions between the oral world and the literary one and the novelists’ intentions to transform the oral upon the written page and in the process "perform" it for the reader... The talent it takes to make this move is extraordinary. To reduce it to a literary trope
identified as "magical realism" is to strip it of its power as a living belief force within communities and among human beings”. To her, it is not a mere transgressing of boundaries and attacking the dominant discourse but rather an expression of their lives and cannot be approached as two parts, magic and realism, rather they need to be seen as belonging to them ‘holistically’ (Lawless 2009).

The magical real stories from Latin America use the autoethnographers’ tools of ‘telling’ and ‘showing’ as a part of the narrative. The conversations in the stories, the ‘telling’ are juxtaposed with many passages that ‘show’ the Latin American culture. Autoethnographers problematize words like reliability and validity. This is what Latin American writers aim through the mode of Magical Realism. The magical components of the story highlight the question of truths that are real; they make the reader enter the world of the narrator and accept that point of view even if it does not resemble reality. The focus is on differences in culture that have to be lived with and not resolved (Ellis et al 2011).

As Marquez says in Conversations with Gabriel García Márquez -“... in the Caribbean, we are capable of believing anything, because we have the influences of all those different cultures, mixed in with Catholicism and our own local beliefs. I think that gives us an open-mindedness to look beyond apparent reality” (Marquez 2008:112).

Autoethnography as ‘accommodative resistance’ is an important tool to study Magical Realism from Latin America. The stories accommodate the European’s notion of the ‘Other’ as he has constituted it to be. Hence most of the protagonists in the stories like the narrator of ‘Yzur’, Doctor Z of ‘The Case of Senorita Amelia’, the narrator of ‘The Blue Bouquet’, Clara of ‘In the Family’, to name a few, are from the dominant spaces of knowledge that the colonizer has given to the natives in order to bring them out of their primitive selves. But the resistance created by the magical components of these stories makes for the meanings of their
culture and identity. “To read autoethnography as purely accommodative or purely resistant is to miss the point of autoethnographic expression as a transcultural (and thus transculturated) site of negotiating identity and meaning-making. Such a reading would reproduce the discursive division between colonizer and colonized as mutually exclusive, insist on a total separation of dominant and subordinate” (Sabra 2005).

It is when ‘accommodative resistance’ (Sabra 2005) is applied to the short stories of the magical realist mode from Latin America that the discourse moves into both the dominant and subordinate knowledges. This facet can be seen in the short story, by the Brazilian writer, Jorge Amado, ‘How Porcuincala the Mulatto Got the Corpse off his back’. The cultural differences between the North American and the Mulatto become the foundation of the story. This difference is directed to the ability to tell stories and unburden oneself of pain. The narrator of the story focuses on the two protagonists who come from different cultural backgrounds. The reference to the North American in the derogatory term of ‘gringo’ makes him the outsider of this culture. The aloofness and loneliness of the ‘gringo’ is pitted against the spontaneity and warmth of the mulatto. As in almost all Magical Realist stories from Latin America, the position occupied by the colonizer’s culture and knowledge is subordinate to that of the Latin American culture. Yet the resistance to colonization or the colonizer is not done by ‘show-casing’ their culture but by focusing on the difference and the inability of the West to learn from this difference.

The ‘gringo’ is unable to speak about himself whereas the mulatto is ‘a wizard at telling stories’ even though he has no formal education (Amado 1973:360). The narrator points out that the story-teller is honest –“he told it the way it really was” (Amado1973:363) and “I’m not someone who tells stories about things he doesn’t know” (Amado1973:368). The mulatto tells the bizarre story of how he married a dead woman, a prostitute, whose only desire was to wear a wedding gown and a bridal wreath. The wedding in a whorehouse takes
on the grandeur and purity of a celestial union. The abstract vows of a Christian wedding ceremony are translated into a concrete reality. The telling of this ‘out of the ordinary’ situation helps the mulatto to unburden himself of the pain that he feels - the tragic mulatto who is biracial and does not belong either to the black or white race completely. The tragic mulatto in literature is suicidal in that s/he cuts herself/himself from black ancestry in order to integrate with white culture. The tragic mulatto is agitated because of her/his mixed blood and most often advances the idea that mixing of races is detrimental to society.

The ‘gringo’, on the other hand, is silent about his past and his story is interpreted by the people around him as hearsay. His story is confined to an individual space and is not shared with anyone. He belongs to a pure race and has no problems with that Self that is a part of the dominant culture. Yet his pain and burden remain within him and the complications of his story need more time than can be told ‘over a drink’. It needs a ‘long rainy night’ or ‘a fishing trip’. The final sentence of the story- “Still, if you’d like I could tell it. I don’t see any reason why not” - told by the narrator indicates the fact that all stories come from the same human space but become voices of different struggles (Amado 1973:368).

In the field of modern psychology, therapeutic devices used by counsellors look to such types of story-telling to help their patients. ‘How Porcuincala the Mulatto Got the Corpse off his back’ depicts methods of listening to stories without differentiating between the real and the unreal. This leads us to understand how Porcuinca, the Mulatto, makes meaning of his tragic life. In counselling conversations, people are at marginal moments in their lives when they cannot distinguish between the real and the fictional. The ability to listen without judgment values placed on the story is what allows for mental health resulting from the ‘corpse off one’s back’. The question then is if it is possible to listen to the gringo’s story with the same ability, whether it is possible for him to unburden his heart in the same way as the mulatto. The short story, in addition to privileging stories and the Oral tradition,
makes a contrastive study to the Western pride of repressing his deeper feelings as a sign of strength. ‘How Porcuincala the Mulatto Got the Corpse off his back’ focuses on this important aspect, associated with modern psychological studies.

It is time to focus on the reading of such texts. If it is to look for the definition of the Other as constituted by the dominant culture, then these texts do give enough evidence of it on first reading. The garrulous mulatto is the ‘Other’, no doubt to the tight-lipped, civilized ‘gringo’. But if the reading stops with that search, then the text becomes limited; the reader is unable “to be attentive to, respect, analyze, and indeed celebrate, the potential autoethnographic characteristics of indigenous self-representations” (Sabra 2005).

The association of Magical Realism to Postmodernism is as frequent an approach as examining its connection to Postcolonialism. Wendy Faris in *Ordinary enchantments: Magical realism and the remystification of narrative* refers to Magical Realism becoming now a ‘literary globalization’ and ‘a remystification of the narrative in the west’ (Faris 1995: 2-3). Theo D’Haen, in the essay ‘Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentring Privileged Centres’ is dismissive of the discourse of Magical Realism, when he says that it is “a ruse to take over the dominant discourse (s). It is a way of access to the main body of “Western” literature for authors not sharing in or not writing from the perspective of the privileged centers of this literature for reasons of language, class, race, or gender, and yet avoiding epigonia by avoiding the adoption of views of the hegemonic forces together with their discourse” (D’haen 1995:195). D’haen asserts that “the cutting edge of postmodernism is magic realism” (D’haen 1995:201). It is the observation made by Karla Sanders that is applicable to the Latin American Magical Realism. Sanders argues that magical realism is not synonymous with the postmodern as postmodernism “focuses on technology, media proliferation and logos, (on the other hand) Magic Realism emphasizes a return to cultural
knowledge, and authority and values pathos” (Shroeder 2004:10). This is what is the difference between postmodernism and Magical Realism.

Stephen Tyler, in his essay on Postmodern anthropology, considers discourse as ‘a maker of the world, not its mirror...’ Tribal narratives are discourse and Indian Literatures are the world rather than a representation. Tyler argues that one of the constant themes in the dominant culture has been ‘the search for apodictic and universal method’. For the dominant culture, tribal narratives are ‘pleasurable misreadings’; there can be no objective or correct readings (Vizenor 1993:4-5) They are meant for the ‘more to come’ consumer culture that the dominant culture concentrates on. Umberto Eco, the Italian critic and historian in his book ‘Travels in Hyperreality’ discusses this type of consumer culture in detail. Latin American Magical Realism was a form of commodity to the North American world; it was treated as a ‘fake’ type of reality and it was delinked from the Latin American context.

Magical Realism, does not take cognizance of the ‘apodictic and universal reality’ that the dominant culture is used to and hence is not taken seriously. North America is in a position to ‘misread’ it as not a serious work (Vizenor 1993:5). But with its popularity increasing, the First World writers began to participate in it with a hope of making it as interesting as the Latin American writer. First World writers are so caught up in mimesis and representation that the discourse of magic is alien to their culture. Social Sciences have dealt with native cultures in a monologic realistic fashion and post modernist readings have given the consumer culture something to enjoy as ‘pleasurable’ reading. Magical Realism must be addressed on the lines of what David Carroll says “Any narrative that predetermines all responses or prohibits any counter narratives puts an end to narrative itself by suppressing all possible alternative actions and responses, by making itself its own end and the end of all other narratives” (Vizenor 1993:6). Magical Realism allows for counter narratives and instead of weakening mimetic reality, it adds dimensions to reality. The ‘magic’ of Magical
Realism goes far back into the history of Latin America, the Pre-Columbian period, before the Spanish Conquest. It predates colonial discourse and if referred to as postmodernism, does not have conditions which explain the post modernity of the West. “I embrace the world. I am the world. The white man has never understood this magic substitution. The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. . . . He enslaves it. An acquisitive relation is established between the world and him. But there exist other values that fit only my forms” (Fanon 1992:97).

In the oral tradition, the story-teller himself occupied a post modernist space but this was different from the Western concept of Post modernism. The short story in Latin America in the Post Boom period “is complex in form and content, featuring a variety of styles that includes parody, the introspective fiction, the grotesque or fantasy”. (Vlad 2008:6) This goes against the postmodernist notion that genres are not valid and that there is a breakdown of forms. The short story has been a ‘fascination’ for the Latin American writer and it “continues to answer the individual’s need to define his or her place in the Universe” (Vlad 2008:7). The fantastic has given the short story in Latin America its distinctive flavour and hence a good study of the short stories of Latin America necessarily demands how the mode of Magical Realism has been treated.

The Trickster Discourse discussed by Gerald Vizenor allows narratives from native cultures to be studied under a lens which decolonizes the powerful lens of the West. Vizenor is a postmodernist thinker and he categorically states that the Trickster, found in many native literatures, is postmodern. Jean Francois Lyotard uses the word postmodernism to describe “the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies” (Vizenor 1993:3). A difference must be made between this type of postmodernism to that exhibited in native literatures.
Magical Realism can be looked at as Trickster Discourse where the author, the narrator, the characters and the audience come together. Trickster Discourse helps the Latin American to liberate himself from the colonial/postcolonial situation that he finds himself in. It helps both the colonizer and the colonized to heal relationships. Magical Realism is the mode that the Latin American writer uses as a strategy to challenge the notions of native cultures. It helps to ‘decolonize the lens of power’ (Knopf 2008:16).

Magical Realism has been in some way or the other a part of the Latin American narrative technique. It stems from the fact that the oral tradition and the folk stories, myths and legends have told stories differently from cultures that have been for the most part dependent on the written form. That what is perceived as ‘irrational’ by the Surrealists is the ‘real’ and the ‘truthful’ to the Magical Realism.

Magical Realism has its origins in that time in history when man was a part of the natural world, when the synthesis of being was important to man. This is a time that predates a period of history when the Western world immersed itself in analyzing the physical, intellectual dimensions in man. These divisions obstructed man from being treated as ‘whole’ and one with nature. The dangers of separating man’s ability to think from his feelings have resulted in the exploitation of nature, in hatred of other people and groups, in marginalizing others and in terroristic enterprises. Magical Realism centres man in his whole self where opposing viewpoints find a space of understanding each other. It does not ask for amalgamation; on the other hand it encourages the building of respect for different points of view.

Instead of focusing on Magical Realism as being an ‘Other’ to Realism, it is important to see it as a view of reality that exists in every one of us. This alternative reality has been suppressed in favour of ‘rationality’ and ‘positivism’. As the well-known anthropologist,
Carlos Castaneda said, discussing his magnum opus ‘The Teachings of Don Juan’, it is a ‘non-ordinary reality’. It is another way of ‘coding reality’; it is meaningful reality but is dismissed by the European mind as it elongates the range of the real. The magical reality is more subtle and difficult to grasp but in its subtlety lies alternative knowledge.

It is time to study Magical Realism as intrinsically valuable in itself, as an expression of the native imagination. This ‘imagination’ is dismissed by Eurocentric readers and writers as being inferior and incapable of giving a true picture of life. The short stories of Latin America argue against such a Eurocentric view; they emphasize the fact that the ‘native imagination’ is no doubt different from the Western but is in no way inferior. Difference is not an expression of inferiority but rather opens one to new view points. The point at which Magic and Reality meet is the moment of enlightenment—a true understanding of life which only adds quality to the realistic, objective and scientific view of life.

Steven Crum, in his review of Sandy Grande’s book ‘Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought’, says that the concept ‘Red Pedagogy’ has more than one facet which can be used to describe Magical Realism. The first facet of prime importance is that it is necessary for native and non-native scholars to break the dominant ways of looking at indigenous narratives. Magical Realism focuses on a study that moves away from dominant views of the mode. It is an indigenous mode in that Latin America has perfected it as a form of narrative expression. The next point is that in the place of the deconstruction of the dominant mode, it is important to fill the space with another more relevant form or narrative. Magical Realism may be from a Latin American point of view the deconstruction of the dominant mode of Realism and filling the empty space with a multiple worldview, what Gerald Vizenor calls ‘survivance’ explained in the title of his book Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence. ‘Survivance’ is not mere survival and embraces a far greater activity that includes "the active recovery, reimagination, and reinvestment of indigenous ways of being"
Magical Realism has been able in its own way to give expression to narrative modes that have been dormant, due to the assimilationist programmes of the Europeans. The concept of ‘Red Pedagogy’ becomes one of the ‘emancipatory pedagogies’ required for a better understanding of indigenous forms of expression.

Referring to Gabriel García Márquez’s Memoir, Nicaraguan poet Gioconda Belli observed: “His (Marquez’s) talent to blend magic and reality relieves us from the rationalist Cartesian split — so unhealthy for the spirit — and presents an alternative, wholesome way to embrace both”. Latin American Magical Realism gives the people of Latin America a “credible version” of the history of Latin America that cannot be had from reading History, the dominant discourse. The magical is the history of Latin America which is treated as unreal by the Western readers. As Belli continues, “García Márquez has fooled reality once more, this time by remaining faithful to it.” This is the case with all writers in Latin America using the magical real mode. (Belli)

The magical and the real are two ‘competing truths’ which arrive at the same reality. The Latin American writer sees his culture in both the discourses. He does not separate the two as one being dominant and the other subordinate. It is because the Western reader begins the story with this idea in his mind that the binary situation between magic and the real becomes his understanding of the mode. Take the example of Julio Cortazar’s ‘Letter to a Young Lady in Paris’. The protagonist of the story and the Latin American reader sees reality in both the confining order of the apartment as in the disturbance created by the rabbits that he vomits.

Cortazar’s story opens up various interpretations and can be a nightmare for the Eurocentric reader, who is eager to resolve the contradictions in the story. The letter written by the narrator is an admission of his deepest thoughts and feelings to his lady love. She lives in a ‘gracious flat’ and coming to take care of it, the narrator becomes conscious of the
relationship he shares with her (Cortazar 1974:137). Everything seems natural when looked at from the perspective of reality, ‘Everything looks so natural, as always when one does not know the truth’(Cortazar 1974:138). At the outset, it speaks of an innocent move on the part of the narrator to take care of her house but it throws up many issues of the incompatibility of the relationship- ‘Moving that tray alters the play of relationships in the whole house, of each object with another, of each moment of their soul with the soul of the house and its absent inhabitant’(Cortazar1974:138).

The purpose of the letter is to inform her about the rabbits. Animalization is the means that Latin American magical realist writers use to show the proximity between man and nature. This does not harmonize with the humanly individualistic world of the lady which sees no relation to the world that is present outside man’s existence. The narrator’s life is steeped in reality though to the Eurocentric consciousness, the lady’s home, her travel to Paris, the cultural centre of Europe, and her way of life seem more real. Her home displays a lack of movement; it is static and frozen in time and feelings. The narrator, on the other hand, has ‘closed so many suitcases in my life’- a life that has seen and experienced diversity (Cortazar138). Vomiting rabbits cannot be explained to anyone, least of all to this sophisticated lady who will perceive it as something bizarre and not acceptable to her world of order. To the narrator, the event is natural and he has dealt with it in a natural way; he has made provision in his life for this bizarre turn of events—‘evidences of our physical selves which happen to us in total privacy’ (Cortazar 1974:138). The unnatural act, he realizes, will isolate him from society and hence he finds it easier not to expose himself by telling people the truth.

The process of the birth of a rabbit emerging out of the narrator’s throat and mouth is described in detail and though it seems to resemble ‘a chocolate rabbit’, it is ‘very thoroughly a rabbit’(Cortazar 1974:139). In the privacy of his house, he knows how to tend to this
‘unnatural birth’; he takes care of all its needs as anyone who bought rabbits at a farmhouse would. Vomiting bunnies is accepted as a habit which becomes a part of the rhythm of his life- ‘that portion of rhythm which helps to keep us alive’ (Cortazar 1974:139). The rabbits become manifestations of one’s instinctive responses that remain controlled within one. Since these responses belong to one, it is difficult to kill it and continue a normal life with people around us.- ‘A month puts a lot of things at a distance; a month is size, long fur, long leaps, ferocious eyes, an absolute difference’ can be compared to the relationship between the narrator and the lady (Cortazar 1974:140). The alarms that vomit brings up in oneself are the same alarms one feels when one encounters certain instinctive feelings in oneself that are hidden from the world. To accept what one has within oneself is to accept that reason and logic are not the only facts that have a place in this world.

From the moment he walks in he is an intruder and has to hide his alien feelings in the ‘handsome wardrobe’ (Cortazar 1974:140). The inversion of day and night for the rabbits symbolizes the subversion of the dominant power of the Enlightenment. The narrator’s desire to read and assimilate all the knowledge available in the varied shelves of books is sabotaged by the presence of the rabbits. The rabbits become older, adolescents and a part of the household and its objects. When he sees that the rabbits have brought about, ‘unavoidable and helpless destruction of your home’, he tries to save all objects that have been destroyed (Cortazar 1974:144). The intrusion is complete and the narrator is settled enough to write about these changes in the house to the lady, when the eleventh bunny is born.

The eleventh bunny opens up too many possibilities like the twelfth and the thirteenth and makes it difficult to return to the point at which the entire process had started. Control is lost when the number moves from ten to eleven- the thin line between madness and sanity- ‘happiness ends, reminiscences, you and perhaps a good deal more’ Dawn is the meeting point between the narrator and his bunnies. When he commits suicide, the death of the rabbits
would go unnoticed; people would evince an interest in the human body for a few minutes and then get on with the business of cleaning it up from the street, back to business.

Cortazar creates a distance between the narrator and the reader when he takes us into an ‘unreal’ world of vomiting bunnies. This distance is similar to the story-telling in the oral tradition where the answers to the mysteries of life are found in situations that have no resemblance to the ‘real’ world of objects and attitudes. In addition, he avoids dialogue in the story, resembling the dramatic monologue in European literature. This avoidance of dialogue makes a demand on the reader to assess the story in his individual way. The fluctuating line between sanity and insanity, night and day, natural and bizarre, original and translation, reason and instincts become the diversity of the text which is beyond a simple resolution.

Latin American history resembles the protagonist and his rabbits; chaos is the intrinsic quality of the culture. The lady’s apartment exemplifies the logical, scientific outlook of the West in its desire to categorize all other cultures and save them from the point of being forgotten. Hence the story displays the inability of different cultures to communicate with each other. Magical Realism in Latin America is a narrative strategy emerging out of a social reality that is irrational and cannot be described in language and situations that are natural and normal.

Magical Realism in Latin America gives evidence to the fact that the real is superimposed on the magical world and will always remain subordinate to the elements that make man’s life chaotic. Excessive control over one’s real life results in pessimism, scepticism and aversion to change. The chaotic world that the magical components foreground is alluring and is still present in man’s imagination; it is not of the past but has a quality that embraces the future.
Chaos and imagination go together. Too much of order in the external world suppresses the play of imagination and leads critics like Dieter Riemenschneider label countries where the global and the local merge as ‘transnational imagiNation’ (Riemenschneider 2005:16). Riemenschneider notes that the magical writing of the non-west cultures is directed to “part company from realist narrativation that had been part of the colonial baggage many writers had been burdened with as the literary mode and model to follow” (Riemenschneider 2005:16). Magical Realism in the short stories of Latin America show facets that are akin to ‘transnational imagiNation’ but such a description suppresses the power of the imagination as a commodity which can be located in the past of Latin America. Riemenschneider, in the article, ‘Global fantasy–glocal imagination’ takes over from the argument made by Sudeep Dasgupta that in the context of globalization, there is a need for ‘a retheorization’ of culture which goes beyond “the very onto-epistemological foundations that conceptualized “culture” according to the binarisms of East/West, Self/Other, Civilized/Barbarian”. (Riemenschneider 2005:16). Riemenschneider refers to the New Literatures as ‘transglobal multiple exchanges of global and local factors’ focusing on the use of a ‘glocal literary discourse’. Magical Realism, as seen in the short stories of Latin America, do not exhibit a ‘glocal’ discourse which would once again focus on the merging of two cultures. The magical is not present to ‘merge’; it is there to stand apart from the real and lay emphasis on being ‘different’ from all else. Hence chaotic knowledge, derived from the magical spaces, becomes valid in the communication of the everyday reality in Latin American Magical Realism.
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