Magic Realism Study Guide

Magic Realism

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Magic Realism is a literary movement associated with a style of writing or technique that incorporates magical or supernatural events into realistic narrative without questioning the improbability of these events. This fusion of fact and fantasy is meant to question the nature of reality as well as call attention to the act of creation. By making lived experience appear extraordinary, magical realist writers contribute to a re-envisioning of Latin-American culture as vibrant and complex. The movement originated in the fictional writing of Spanish American writers in the mid-twentieth century and is generally claimed to have begun in the 1940s with the publication of two important novels: *Men of Maize* by Guatemalan writer Miguel Angel Asturias and *The Kingdom of This World* by Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier. What is most striking about both of these novels is their ability to infuse their narratives with an atmosphere steeped in the indigenous folklore, cultural beliefs, geography, and history of a particular geographic and political landscape. However, at the same time that their settings are historically correct, the events that occur may appear improbable, even unimaginable. Characters change into animals, slaves are aided by the dead, time reverses and moves backward, while other events occur simultaneously. Thus, magic realist works present the reader with a perception of the world where nothing is taken for granted and where anything can happen.

The fantastical qualities of this style of writing were heavily influenced by the surrealist movement in Europe of the 1920s and literary avant-gardism as well as by the exotic natural surroundings, native and exiled cultures, and tumultuous political histories of Latin America. Although other Latin America writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Fuentes, and Julio Cortazar used elements of magic and fantasy in their work, it was not until the publication of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in English in 1970 that the movement became an international phenomenon. Subsequently, women writers like Isabel Allende from Chile and Laura Esquivel from Mexico have become part of this movement's more recent developments, contributing a focus on women's issues and perceptions of reality. Since its inception, Magic Realism has become a technique used widely in all parts of the world. Thus, writers such as Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, and Sherman Alexie have recently been added to the magic realist canon of writers because of their use of magical elements in real-life historical settings.

Themes

Exploration of Latin-American Identity

A theme that runs through nearly every magic realist text is the urge to redefine Latin-American identity by forging a point of view specific to the events, history, and culture of that region. Therefore, its history of colonization, the importation of slaves and influx of immigrants, the political tumult after independence, and economic dependency on imperial powers like the United States and England that positioned Latin America as inferior and backwards become subjects of investigation that are rewritten and retold from an alternative point of view. For example, Carpentier's *The Kingdom of this World* is told by a slave who is witness to numerous catastrophic and traumatic events occurring in Haiti during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Likewise, in *The House of the Spirits*, Allende attempts to forge a feminine identity within a social and historical framework that covers nearly a century of political conflict. For many writers, magic realist tech- niques were used as an attempt to break with many of their inherited representations by engaging with oral histories of indigenous people, as found in Asturias's *Men of Maize*.

Importance of Magic and Myth

A defining aspect of magic realist texts is the powerful capabilities of myth and magic to create a version of reality that differentiates itself from what is normally perceived as "real life." This approach to narrative relies on legends and myths from oral pre-Columbian cultures, family histories (both García Márquez and Allende note the influence of their respective grandmother's yarnspinning on their writing), the narratives of early explorers and clergy to Latin America, and the spiritual magic of African slaves to the Caribbean region. Drawing from these various influences, magic realist writers redraw the parameters of what is possible by invoking legends and myths that have been passed from one generation to the next and that invoke a loss of some kind with the onset of the modern age. Sometimes it is the loss of traditional values, as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; other times it is the loss of the intimate relationship between humans and animals. These mythical influences form a collective voice that often acts as it does in *Men of Maize* and *The Kingdom of this World*, as a resistant force against oppression and exploitation.

A Critique of Rationality and Progress

The use of magic and myth in magic realist fiction can be viewed as a critique of rationality and progress. Because many South American countries were economically exploited by countries in the industrialized West, first through slavery and exploration and then through economic imperialism, magic realist writers attempt to subvert the values that dominating cultures privilege in order to justify their exploitation of other

cultures. Thus, logic, progression, and linearity are cast aside for a reliance on emotions, the senses, circularity, and ritual. For example, Asturias's *Men of Maize* consistently thwarts the notions of progress and rationality by presenting the perspectives of indigenous peoples as being outside of what most consider traditional concepts of time. Rather than present the reader with a linear narrative, Asturias divides his book into six chapters, each exploring an aspect of indigenous beliefs that counter Western conceptions of time, rationality, and progress. Similarly, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with a sentence that disrupts the sense of time being a logical progression with a distinct past, present, and future: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice." The fast-forwarding of time as well as the memory embedded in this future scene reveals time as occurring simultaneously. The notion of progress and its relation to technology is also critiqued in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, particularly in its relationship to economic imperialism. For example, the railroad that is finally established in Macondo is viewed as both a sign of Macondo's assimilation into the modern world as well as a metaphor for its eventual exploitation by the North American Banana Company.

Questioning of Reality

Many magic realist writers use language in innovative ways that raise doubts about the concept of reality as well as art's ability to imitate it. For many writers who work within the magic realist paradigm, reality is much more ambiguous and complicated than meets the eye. Rather than create a realistic fiction that attempts to mimic the events and outward appearance of the external world, magic realists use a variety of techniques that force the reader to question the nature of reality. For writers like García Márquez and Allende, reality constitutes both real and imagined acts. Thus, a levitating priest, appearances of the dead, and animals that have transcendent powers all take on a matter-of-factness by those who observe these phenomena. For Borges, reality becomes an exploration of multiple universes and existences that tear away assumptions most people share about observed reality. Reality in *Fictions* is never taken for granted but in fact is often distorted so that what the reader thinks he or she knows is cast into doubt. This approach to understanding the nature of reality assumes that reality is not external from human thought but is created by humans. In this respect, reality and selfhood itself become fragile concepts. For many magic realist writers, existence is a concept that does not have a one-to-one correspondence with observed reality. By subverting the assumption of an observed reality through innovative forms and devices that address the fantastical, magic realist writers relay the message that language itself is unable to provide an accurate depiction of reality.

Style

Genre

An innovative technique of magic realist writers is to experiment with incorporating different kind of genres into the novel and short story form. Genres are different kinds of literary forms that share certain characteristics. Thus, plays, short stories, novels, biographies, and poems can all be seen as having specific characteristics that set them apart from each other. In magic realist fiction, genres such as the epic, autobiography, historical documents, essay, and oral storytelling are used as a way of blurring the lines between fact and fiction. One of the earliest magic realist writers, Borges, is known for his use of the short story form that uses elements of the essay and autobiography to question the ability of language to represent observed reality. His stories also make use of the parable, a genre found most frequently in the Bible, in which brief narratives stress a philosophic statement about existence through the telling of a story. Other magic realists, such as Asturias, rely on older storytelling traditions from pre-Columbian times and thus incorporate tall tales, nonlinear narrative sequences, and repetitive phrases that are also onomatopoeic: they attempt to imitate sounds they denote. A genre used by Carpentier in *The Kingdom of this World* is the travel narrative, specifically those written during the centuries of exploration in the New World that described in detail the flora and fauna found in Latin America.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole, or overstatement, is a figure of speech, or trope, that makes events or situations highly unlikely or improbable due to its gross exaggeration. Hyperbole is often associated with the folk tale to make an event that may be commonplace appear larger than life. It is often used for dramatic affect, such as to invoke comedy or irony, yet it may also have serious underpinnings. Magic realist texts tend to use hyperbole for both comic and serious effect. In engaging the reader with bizarre and catastrophic historical events that have occurred in Latin America, magic realist authors use hyperbole to dramatize the emotional and traumatic effects these events had on the people affected. At other times, hyperbole may be used to make what is commonplace seem extraordinary and magical. This is a technique that García Márquez uses quite effectively to convey the mystery that ordinary objects, such as ice, for example, can have for those who have never been exposed to them: "When it was opened by the giant, the chest gave off a glacial exhalation. Inside there was only an enormous, transparent block with infinite internal needles in which the light of the sunset was broken up into colored stars." Thus, hyperbole has the effect of making the ordinary appear extraordinary through excessive and outlandish description.

Imagery

Imagery is an essential stylistic device used in magic realist works since the attempt to create aspects of reality that are unfathomable must appear likely through the development of convincing images. Thus, the use of concrete language in detailing supernatural events and conjuring a sensual world that is both mysterious and based in material reality is key. Allende, García Márquez, and Carpentier use extensive description in their works, detailing the worlds they create with sensory images that communicate the mysteries of the natural world. In *The Kingdom of this World*, a description of the sea is like peering into a kaleidoscope: "It was garlanded with what seemed to be clusters of yellow grapes drifting eastward, needlefish like green glass, jellyfish that looked like blue bladders." The wonder and amazement at the varied diversity of life forms found in the New World is part of Carpentier's construction of "the marvelous real." Images of the natural world also pervade *Men of Maize*, in which, as the title indicates, maize is an essential life-force for the people who grow it. Thus, as the maize's sacred powers are destroyed by outsiders, the traditional ways of the Indians are eroded.

Point of View

A main feature of magic realist writing is its attempt to incorporate numerous points of view into their narrative, many of which are drawn from popular or folk tales and are thus based more on popular understanding of events rather than originating from a specific character. Point of view traditionally investigates the formal dimensions of how a story is told and who is telling it. Magic realist texts often subvert these traditional notions of who is telling a story by presenting different versions of a particular event through a collective perspective, thus raising the question of which version is true. For example, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the disappearance of Remedios the Beauty is described as having two versions. The more descriptive one that is promoted by Remedios's family is that she ascended into heaven, holding her bed sheets tightly in her hand, whereas the more mundane story has Remedios running off with a suitor. However, because the village people of Macondo believe the family's story, it is that version that becomes privileged despite its outlandish cast. Thus, point of view in this context suggests that reality is ascribed not by any sense of rationality but by what people tend to believe.

Historical Context

As a literary movement, Magic Realism was part of a larger cultural development in the mid-twentieth century among a group of Latin-American writers in the Caribbean, South America, and Mexico who contributed to the creation of an innovative approach to writing called "the new novel." Some generic aspects of the "new novel," as defined by Philip Swanson in his introduction to the anthology *Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction*, are interior monologues, multiple viewpoints, fragmented or circular narrative structures, and an overall distorted sense of reality. Thus, to understand the social, political, and cultural climate that engendered magical realist fiction, one must first view it as being a reaction to the narrative Realism that attempted to mimic reality. At the same time, "the new novel" arose as a response to the increasing understanding that Latin-American society was changing, particularly as it became increasingly urban and modernized by new technological innovations. Thus, many writers responded to these changing conditions by experimenting with new forms and genres that presented reality as ambiguous, complex, and disorganized rather than orderly and meaningful. This style of writing reached its height in the Boom period of Latin-American literature, a period from the early 1960s to the mid- 1970s, in which a number of extremely important works, most notably Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Cortazar's *Hopscotch*, became internationally recognized.

As one literary development among many occurring at the time, Magic Realism focused on the fantastical elements of everyday life as found in imagined communities situated primarily in Latin America. Its specific influences are found in the surrealist movement in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s of which Asturias, Borges, and Carpentier, three early magic realist writers, were exposed to while studying in Europe. In fact, the first magic realist movement was centered in Europe, especially Germany and France where the major exponents of Surrealism were Franz Roh and Andre Breton, respectively. During the 1920s, these critics and their cohorts declared the "marvelous" not only an aesthetic category but a whole way of life. These critics influenced and learned from artists like Max Ernst, whose painting *Two Children are Threatened by a Nightingale* brings together a random association of images to jar the viewer's conventional sense of what the contexts for the images should be. Ultimately, the work of Ernst, Joan Miro, Salvador Dali, and others, as well as the writings of Breton and other surrealist thinkers, sought to utterly confuse the distinctions between art, thought, ideas, and matter.

This interest in an ultimate union of all things was not shared by the first major proponents of Magic Realism in Latin America. This second movement, whose best known figures were Borges and Carpentier, both of whom lived as young men in Europe, borrowed from the surrealists' style and shared in their fascination with the fact that a banal everyday object could become magical simply by having extra attention called to it. But these writers practiced their versions of Magic Realism almost exclusively in narrative fiction rather than visual arts, and each had his philosophical difference with the European movement. Borges, a staunch philosophical idealist, rejected the attempt to unify all categories. Instead, he wrote stories and essays that

consistently embraced the notion of an orderly universal realm of thought that was confused by a flawed (and utterly separate) world of matter. Carpentier also rejected the surrealists' attempt to impose the magical on everything. But in his rejection of surrealist unity, he went in the opposite direction from Borges. In his 1949 essay, *On the Marvelous Real in America*, which was a prologue to his novel *The Kingdom of this World*, Carpentier argues that the very material history of the Americas is essentially magical (or "marvelous," in his own terminology). Specifically for Carpentier, this magical element comes from the rich religious mixture, heavily invested in magic, which manifests in Afro-Carribean culture. This essay by Carpentier is considered a landmark because it is the first attempt to describe Magical Realism as uniquely Latin American. Thus, whereas Surrealism focused on dreams and the unconscious in creating new kinds of images and experimental writing styles through the juxtaposition of unrelated objects, both Asturias and Carpentier returned to their homelands in Latin America and infused their writing with mythic, historical, and geographical elements found in their local environments.

The historical and political currents that are often an indelible aspect of magic realist writing reflected a variety of social and political ills that individual countries were undergoing or had undergone at some prior time. More specifically, Latin America's history of conquest, slavery, imperial domination, and subsequent attempts to self-govern become the backdrop as well as the primary "raw" materials for many magic realist writers. For example, Carpentier in *The Kingdom of This World* focuses on the slave uprisings in Haiti, which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Other writers, like Fuentes in *Where the Air is Clear*, probe the issue of national identity in contemporary urban societies like Mexico City or Havana. In Allende's and García Márquez's work, historical events of the recent past tend to appear as pivotal scenes. For example, American multinational companies' entrance into Latin America economies in the late nineteenth century resulted in exploitation, alienation, and sometimes death of workers. The consequences of American economic imperialism is referred to in the massacre scene at the banana plantation in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in which hundreds of demonstrating workers are killed and thrown into the sea. This scene is based on the 1928 banana strike by United Fruit Company workers in Colombia, many of whom were gunned down by the army. Similarly, both *The House of the Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reveal the rise of military dictatorships that created an endless succession of civil wars and political coups in countries like Colombia and Chile.

On the other hand, a much-lauded event in Latin-American countries, where divisions between the rich and the poor were and still are extreme, was the socialist revolution in Cuba in 1960. The overthrow of a long-standing despot ushered in an optimistic era among socially minded Latin- American artists and intellectuals who were fueled by the socialists' hopes for an egalitarian, classless, and safe society. Thus, despite the many horrific atrocities that many magic realist works depict, the movement's adherents have often been seen as delivering a hopeful message in their work, revealing at its roots a joyful engagement with life that is bound together with the utopian vision that destruction and violence will be overcome.

Movement Variations

Once writers like Asturias and García Márquez began using magic realist narratives to critique the role of imperialism (especially U.S. imperialism), it should not be surprising that the style became well known and popular in other regions of the world where writers, readers, and thinkers found themselves in similar political and social predicaments. Thus, Magic Realism has emerged in fictions in various parts of the postcolonial world such as South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East while also influencing many writers in the United States and England. In turn, it has reemerged in Latin America with a particular focus on women's writing.

In the years between the end of World War II and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the political predicament of imperialism and the social catastrophes of dictatorship and underdevelopment were very common throughout developing regions such as South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. For example, in Salman Rushdie's second and most celebrated novel, *Midnight's Children*, the Indian-born author creates a narrator who is born at the very moment that the British leave the subcontinent and when India and Pakistan are partitioned on midnight, August 14, 1947. This point of departure allows the narrative to relate a series of accounts of the climactic events in India's colonial and postcolonial history from the perspective of a very ordinary Indian family. The resulting effect suggests that free movement of South Asian history does not obey the narrow empirical rules of European historiography and that history is rewritten from the perspective of one born into the legacy left by the British colonial enterprise. In other well-known works such as V. S. Naipaul's *The Bend in the River* and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, narratives are infused with narrative surprises and events that jar the reader's sense of reality.

Meanwhile, in Latin America female novelists revised the traditional genre with a feminist slant in Allende's *The House of the Spirits* and Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, two novels that focus on the experiences of women and their roles within the family and state. Feminist Magic Realism was combined with a connection between Third World oppression and oppression of African Americans in the works of Toni Morrison and Ntozake Shange and also among Native-American and Latino writers such as Sherman Alexie, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Rudolfo Anaya. In her book *Show and Tell: Identity as Performance in U.S. Latina/o Fiction*, literary critic Karen Christian notes that magic realist approaches to Latino fiction are found in the 1971 novel *Bless Me, Ultima* by Anaya: "Anaya's novelistic portrayal of rural Chicana/o life and folkore, set in northern New Mexico, offered readers access to mythical, magical, and spiritual aspects of Chicana/o culture." However, Christian is quick to note that although influences of Magic Realism are found in contemporary U.S. Latino fiction, it does not necessarily mean that there is a Latino "mystical essence" that derives from Latinos connection to their ethnic roots. Instead, she claims that these magic realist tendencies are used to perform a certain kind of Latino identity that in fact may parody magic realist techniques rather than imitate them.

In another recent incarnation, the magic realist movement has begun to influence Western writers in what is seen as an ironic circling back to Surrealism in the work of Czech writer Milan Kundera in such works as *The Joke* and the Italian writer Italo Calvino in a Borges-like blurring of genres book called *Cosmicomics*.

Representative Authors

Isabel Allende (1942-)

Isabel Angelica Allende was born on August 2, 1942, in Lima, Peru, the daughter of a Chilean diplomat, Tomas, and his wife, Francisca. They later moved to Chile, where Isabel attended a private school. Afterwards, she worked for a United Nations development organization before becoming a journalist in Santiago. Allende's most notable family member was her uncle, the Chilean president Salvador Allende, who was assassinated in 1973 as part of a military coup. This event heavily influenced Allende, who commented in an interview later that she divided her life before and after the day of her uncle's assassination. Her first novel, *La casa de los espíritus* (*The House of the Spirits*), published in 1982, won a number of international awards in Mexico, Germany, France, and Belgium. In the mid-1980s, Allende moved to the United States where she has taught creative writing at various universities. In 1985, an English translation of her first novel, *The House of the Spirits*, was published by Knopf. Since then, she has written a number of other well-known novels, including *De amor y de sombra* (*Of Love and Shadows*), translated in 1987, *Eva Luna*, translated in 1988, which won a number of national book awards including the Before Columbus Foundation award, the Freedom to Write Pen Club Award in 1991, and the Brandeis University Major Book Collection Award in 1993. Allende's most recent novels include *Daughter of Fortune: A Novel* (1999) and *Portrait in Sepia* (2001).

Miguel Ángel Asturias (1899-1974)

Born in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on October 19, 1899, Asturias was the son of a supreme court magistrate, Ernesto, who later became an importer, and his wife, Maria Asturias. He became a lawyer in 1923 and left Guatemala for political reasons, residing in Paris and studying the history of ancient Mesoamerican cultures at the Sorbonne in Paris from 1923 to 1928. In Paris, he associated with members of the surrealist movement, such as Andre Breton and Paul Valery. His exposure to Surrealism as well as his intellectual and political interests in Central American indigenous cultures would later influence his own writing. Returning to Guatemala in 1933, Asturias worked as a journalist, publishing books of poetry in small presses. In 1942, he was elected deputy to the Guatemalan congress and later became a diplomat under Jose Arevalo's presidency. In 1946, he published his first novel, *El señor presidente*, translated in English as *Mr. President*, which garnered praise from both South and North American critics. His next novel, *Los hombres de maize* (*Men of Maize*), published in Spanish in 1949, was not as highly praised but has come to be viewed as his masterpiece. In 1954, Asturias was exiled again due to the establishment of another repressive Guatemalan regime. He worked as a journalist in South America and later returned in 1966, becoming the French ambassador under Carlos Montenegro's moderate government. He was awarded the 1967 Nobel Prize for literature for his commitment to writing about

the injustice and oppression of Guatemalan people, particularly working class and peasants. He died on June 9, 1974, in Madrid, Spain.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986)

Born on August 24, 1899, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jorge Luis Borges was the son of a lawyer and a translator. He was born of mixed European and Spanish-American heritage and was educated in Switzerland, England, and Argentina. In 1919, the Borges family moved to Spain. However, young Borges moved back in 1921 and began to write poetry and essays for literary journals. He also cofounded a number of magazines before publishing his first book of poetry in 1923. His current reputation is based more on his short stories than his poetry, and it was the publication of *Historia universal de la infamia* (*A Universal History of In- famy*) in 1935 that heralded his career as a wellknown writer of a hybrid genre that was part fiction, part essay. In 1941, his magic realist tales *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (*The Garden of Forking Paths*) were published, and a few years later, it was followed by *Ficciones*, 1935-1944 (*Fictions*, 1935-1944) and *El Aleph* (*The Aleph*). For many years, he worked as a municipal librarian in Buenos Aires, as well as a teacher. In 1955, he was appointed director of the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) where he served until 1970. By the late 1950s, he was completely blind but continued to publish in a variety of genres: poetry, essays, and stories. Borges died of liver cancer on June 14, 1986, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980)

Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier y Valmont was born on December 26, 1904, in Havana, Cuba, to a Russian mother and a French father. He attended the Universidad de Havana until dropping out due to economic circumstances. For many years afterward, he worked as a journalist, editor, educator, musicologist, and author. Involved in revolutionary activities against the dictator Gerardo Machado y Morales, Carpentier was forced to leave Cuba after he had been imprisoned and subsequently blacklisted. He lived in France for many years, publishing his first novel in 1933, *Ecue-yamba-o!*, which faded quickly into obscurity. In 1939, Carpentier returned to Cuba, where he began to write fiction again. This time, with the publication of novels such as *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of This World*) in 1949, *Los pasos perdido* (*The Lost Steps*), and *El Acoso* (*Manhunt in Noonday*), Carpentier became an established and world-renowned writer. He continued to write short stories, novels, essays, and criticism until his death, from cancer, in Paris, France, on April 24, 1980, where he served as Cuba's cultural attache.

Laura Esquivel (1951-)

Born in Mexico in 1951, Laura Esquivel began her writing career as a screenwriter. Married to the Mexican director Alfonso Arau, Esquivel wrote a screenplay for a 1985 film, *Chido One*, that he directed. They continued to collaborate on projects, culminating

in Arau's directing of Esquivel's first novel, *Like Water for Chocolate*. Published in Mexico in 1989 as *Como agua para chocolate*, the book became a best-seller and was soon translated into numerous languages, including an English translation in 1993. The film's release in the United States brought record-breaking attendance to a foreign film. Subsequently, Esquivel has published *The Law of Love* and *Swift as Desire*, in 2001, and a book of autobiographical writings, *Between Two Fires: Intimate Writings on Life, Love, Food & Flavor*. She currently lives in Mexico City.

Carlos Fuentes (1928-)

Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes was born in Panama City, Panama, on November 11, 1928. The son of a Mexican diplomat, from an early age, Fuentes was exposed to a number of South-American literary giants, such as the Brazilian poet Alfonso Reyes and the Chilean novelist Jose Donoso. He attended Henry D. Cooke, a public school in Washington, D.C., where he learned to speak English. He later went on to study in Geneva, Switzerland, and followed up by receiving a law degree from the National University of Mexico. Fuentes has written a number of influential and deeply provocative novels that interrogate the notion of Mexican identity. In 1958, he published his first novel, *La región más transparente (Where the Air Is Clear)*, translated in 1964 to international acclaim. With the publication of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (*The Death of Artemio Cruz*), translated in 1964; *Aura*, translated in 1968; *Terra Nostra*, translated in 1976; and *Gringo Viejo* (*The Old Gringo*), translated in 1985, Fuentes is currently seen as Mexico's premier author, winning a host of literary prizes in Spanish-speaking countries such as Venezuela, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Chile, as well as making the *New York Times* best-seller list for *The Old Gringo*. He currently lives in London, England.

Gabriel García Márquez (1928-)

Born in Aracataca, Colombia, on March 6, 1928, Gabriel García Márquez is South America's most renowned author. Many of García Márquez's novels are set in a mythical town based on the town of Aracataca where he was raised by his maternal grandparents. For many years, García Márquez worked as a journalist, first in Colombia, then later in Paris, London, and Caracas, Venezuela until pursuing his writing career full-time in the 1960s. In 1967, García Márquez published his most famous novel *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), translated in 1970. The publication put Latin-American fiction on the world's literary map, particularly those works related to the movement known as Magic Realism. Although primarily known as a fiction writer of novels such as *El otoño del patriarca* (*The Autumn of the Patriarch*) and *El Amor en el tiempo de colera* (*Love in the Time of Cholera*) and short story collections *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (*No One Writes to the Colonel*), García Márquez continues to produce reportage for both Spanish- and English-speaking periodicals. In 1982, he won the Nobel Prize for literature. He has also won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for fiction in 1988 for *Love in the Time of Cholera*. He currently lives in Mexico City.

Representative Works

Aura

Aura, a novella by Fuentes, was published in its original Spanish in 1962 and later translated into English in 1968. Narrated by a young scholar who has been hired by an elderly woman to write the memoirs of her husband, a deceased general, the novella reveals how the past and present are often interlocked and how time is fluid, rather than progressive, through the figure of Aura, who is a projected ghostlike image of the general's widow at her most beautiful. In this novella, Fuentes's use of the second person "you" is meant to pull the reader into the web-like reality that the scholar is caught up in. He cannot escape the past nor extricate himself from others as his identity slowly transforms into that of the dead general. Because of its accessibility and brevity, *Aura* has been anthologized widely as a classic example of Magic Realism's ability to transform what people think of as reality into something mysterious and grounded in the supernatural.

Fictions

Originally published in Spanish in 1944 as *Ficciones*, Borges's collection of short stories could more aptly be described as essays and parables rather than fiction. Embroidered with images of mirrors, circular towers, mazes, gardens, swords, and ruins, these concise, broadly imaginative sketches are meant to be viewed as allegories of different states of consciousness. Rather than creating fully developed characters and traditional narratives, Borges creates characters who appear to have no relation to contemporary reality but who are, for different reasons, on a quest for some kind of knowledge. Unlike García Márquez, who views the specific historical and political reality of South America as having certain magical or "unreal" aspects to it, Borges uses different settings, historical characters, and fantastical plots as a way of exploring ideas about politics, philosophy, world events, art, and above all the limitless power of magic to envision a better world. *Fictions* offers readers a series of inventive worlds that are intellectually challenging but are not situated in current Latin-American politics and history. Both in its maze-like narratives that often pose questions that are never answered and in its excessive use of details, *Fictions* presents reality as a linguistic puzzle that needs to be obsessively figured out.

The House of the Spirits

Allende's 1982 novel, *La casa de los espíritus*, published in English in 1985, immediately became an international best seller among the literary crowd who had followed the older "Boom" writers like Marquez, Fuentes, and Borges. The narrative follows four generations of an upper-class family in Chile, revealing the political and social upheaval of that country as witnessed by various members of the family. The

novel is a reconstruction of history that has been undertaken by Alba, who is a recent descendent of the family and its current social commentator. Its fierce political critique of the Pinochet dictatorship as well as its use of fantastical description and supernatural acts places it well within the parameters of magic realist fiction. As many critics have noted, in tone and content this novel is similar to García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, yet its focus on women as agitators and writers of history demands that it be viewed as a work that is not completely derivative of García Márquez's. Feminist critics have applauded the novel's ability to portray women not as passive victims of political and social injustice but as active resisters to political and sexual oppression through their desire to write about these experiences.

The Kingdom of this World

The Cuban writer Carpentier, one of the earliest writers of Magic Realism, is best known for his novel, *El reino de este mundo*, published in 1949, and later translated into English in 1957. This seminal work, set in both Cuba and Haiti, follows the story of Ti Noël, a slave who recounts the numerous insurrections by slaves who were aided by magic and the natural world against their oppressors from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Its emphasis on Afro-Caribbean life, with its roots in African spiritualism, music, magical and healing practices, reveals the vitality of a culture that refused to be completely assimilated into Western cultural practices. Critics claim that this novel paved the way for a new generation of Spanish American writers who used the novel as a form of social protest that related particularly to the political, social, and physical conditions found in Latin America. The novel can be seen as a fictive extension of Carpentier's essay on "the marvelous real," an essay that argues that the rich cross-fertilizing of different cultures in South America engendered the literature that has come to be called Magic Realism.

Love in the Time of Cholera

Originally published in 1985 as *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*, this novel is another lavishly drawn epic written by García Márquez. However, unlike many of his previous novels and short stories that focus on the political and social upheavals in Latin America, *Love in the Time of Cholera* relates the intricacies of Florentino Ariza's love for Fermina Daza, a love that is requited after nearly sixty years. The novel is a tribute to the longlasting abilities of love to succeed in a corrupt and unpredictably violent world. The bizarre and unlikely political and social events that become commonplace in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* take a backseat in this novel to a lyrical and deeply affecting portrait of the everyday lives of a group of people who are intimately connected to each other. Because this novel lacks some of the political punch and narrative improbability that much of his previous work had, it has not received as much critical attention, yet for many *Love in the Time of Cholera* reveals the same intelligent and forceful wit at work that emphasizes the magic inherent in the everyday.

Men of Maize

In 1949, Asturias published his novel *Hombres de Maize*, which was later translated into English as *Men of Maize*. Although the book may be viewed as too early to be part of the Magic Realism movement, the novel's focus on politics, the effects of colonialism, and the fantastical qualities of reality certainly shares characteristics with many later novels. Influenced by both European Surrealism and the indigenous myths of pre-Columbian Latin America, Asturias's novel reveals the plight of indigenous Guatemalans as their world becomes increasingly subjected to exploitation by the encroachment of whites. The novel's magical qualities invoke indigenous myths of the power of transformation through humans' ability to assume animal shapes. Critics have pointed out that its narrative nonlinearity, shifting points of view, and magical aspects were informed by the sacred Mayan book *The Popol-Vuh*.

One Hundred Years of Solitude

A book that put the term Magic Realism into circulation, García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* was first published in 1967 and later translated into English as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1970. The book, amazing in its ability to cover the intricate lives of several generations of the Buendia family, has sold more than thirty million copies worldwide and has been translated into over thirty languages. Through his penetrating analysis of Colonel Aureliano Buendia and his subsequent descendents, García Márquez provides the reader with a micro-history of Latin America that pushes the limits of what readers think of as reality. His ability to mix historical and political events with fantastical and often outlandish events in the village of Macondo on the Colombian coast has given this book the title of a masterpiece. Although the novel ponders serious questions about the nature of reality and the effects of colonialism, progress, and imperialism on so-called Third World countries, it is also comical and ironic in tone.

Critical Overview

As a literary movement whose most well-known writers are from Latin America, Magic Realism played an important role in placing Latin-American fiction on the international literary map in the 1960s, particularly in the United States. As Jean- Pierre Durix points out in his book *Mimesis, Genres, and Post-Colonial Discourse*, the term Magic Realism "came into common usage in the late 1960s, a time when intellectuals and literary critics were often involved in Third-Worldism, civil rights, and anti-imperialism." Propitiously, these same issues are often the underlying themes of many magical realist novels, and thus they were widely read and discussed as significant testimonies that "evoke the process of liberation of oppressed communities." However, it was not just these novelists' politics and commitment to social justice that made their works so well received. In their article, Doris Sommer and George Yúdice claim that Magic Realism's popularity could not be summed up as response to one particular aspect of the works but instead to an array of characteristics:

> Latin Americans dazzled the reader with crystalline lucidities (Borges), moving renderings of madness (Sábato, Cortázar), and violence (Vargas Llosa), larger than life portrayals of power and corruption (Fuentes, García Márquez), ebullient baroque recreations of tropical culture (Carpentier, Souza, Amado, Cabrera Infante, Sarduy).

However, for Latin-American critics, the concept of Magic Realism had been debated for quite some time. In his famous 1949 essay, "On the Marvelous Real in America," Carpentier discusses the importance of "lo real marvilloso" (the marvelous real) as an artistic movement that had sprung from the soil of Latin-American history, myth, and geography. The richness one finds in Latin America due to its unique history and fecund landscape acts as a catalyst for the imagination in Latin-American writers. However, other critics such as Angel Flores disagree. In his 1955 essay, *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction*, Flores argues that (Latin) American Magical Realism is distinguished by a transformation of "the common and everyday into the awesome and the unreal." Flores locates magic realist's roots in the aesthetics of European art, particularly Surrealism. Interestingly enough, Flores does not even mention Carpentier's earlier essay on marvelous Realism, which later became influential. However, much later in 1967, Luis Leal put forward a thesis in his essay "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction" that resonated with Carpentier's. His claim that Magic Realism is not "the creation of imaginary beings or worlds but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances" coincides with Carpentier's material definition of Magic Realism as being a confrontation with a specific sociohistori- cal reality rather than an escape. Thus, a large part of the critical reception of magic realist fiction has been defining what exactly it is in terms of origins and philosophy.

For the most part, critics tend to fall into two camps: those that view Magic Realism as being specifically tied to the formation of a Latin-American literature and others who

view Magic Realism as being less about geography, history, and culture and more about rendering a specific version of reality that can be adapted across cultures. For example, whereas Chilean literary critic Fernando Alegría, in "Latin America: Fantasy and Reality," reads magic realist works as a political critique in which "we come to realize [that their realism] is a truthful image of economic injustice and social mockery which passes off as authoritarian democracy in Latin America," for other critics, such as Zamora and Faris, authors of *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Magic Realism "is a mode suited to exploring□and transgressing□ boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic." What is most impressive about Zamora and Faris's book is the liberty it takes in presenting Magic Realism as a device utilized by writers worldwide yet at the same time publishing key articles such as Carpentier's and Leal's that argue against this global approach.

Other recent critical approaches to Magic Realism that fall within the two poles mentioned are also worth mentioning for what can be seen as unorthodox approaches. For example, the most radical view is taken by González Echevarría, who represents the skepticism that is part of poststructuralism. He states, "The relationship between the three moments when magical realism appears is not continuous enough for it to be considered a literary or even a critical concept with historical validity." Others such as José David Saldívar in *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* attempts to forge a pan-American approach to Magic Realism that includes the diaspora of slaves and Mexican immigrants in North America as being part of the collective voice that situates specific histories in a magic realist moment. Lastly, Durix's book *Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse* probes Magic Realism as a specific genre that developed within a sociohistorical postcolonial moment in which writers and intellectuals in former colonized countries began to question the representations and realities handed to them by the colonizers. Thus, Durix is attempting to broaden the concept of Magic Realism by viewing it as an artistic manifestation of the psychological and ontological conditions posed by the European colonial era.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6

Critical Essay #1

Piano is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Bowling Green University in Ohio. In this essay, Piano analyzes the literature of the Magic Realism movement as a new form of social protest to oppressive governments and imperial powers through the use of history and myth, supernatural events, and folkloric tropes as an antidote to narratives of progress and rationality.

In the mid-twentieth century, a literary movement developed in Latin America that expressed a new form of writing that was deeply embedded in the cultural, physical, and political landscape of Latin America. This movement known as Magic Realism has been interpreted as both a literary device in terms of infusing realistic narrative with fantastical qualities and hyperbolic descriptions such as those found in the works of García Márquez, Allende, and Carpentier as well as an attitude that, as critic John Brushwood notes, is the reaffirmation of the novelist's right to invent reality, to make up his story rather than copy what he has observed. Thus, Magic Realism can be viewed as both a political and aesthetic movement in its attempt to forge new formalistic developments in literature at the same time that it addresses social and political issues.

One of the most daring innovators of magic realist fiction is Borges, author of *The Garden of Forking Paths* and *Fictions*, who not only questions the limits of what is known as reality but who questions the possibility of language to depict it accurately. His wide-ranging experimental forms of writing explore chance, coincidence, and fate as essential elements of a reality that needs to be figured out. Thus, his preoccupation with images such as labyrinths and mazes attest to his construction of a puzzling universe that has an order to it, but one that must be figured out. His numerous short fictions, however, are less concerned with the phys- ical geographies and political landscape of Latin America than other magic realists' works are. In fact, although he is viewed as part of the magic realist movement, he is more concerned with different kinds of settings as a way to probe metaphysical questions about the nature of reality. Thus, although he shared many of the aesthetic aspects of Magic Realism such as innovative structure and uses of time, fragmented narratives, and shifting points of view, it is the later writers such as Asturias, Carpentier, Fuentes, and García Márquez who were more involved in invoking fantastical elements within a realist depiction of Latin America.

Therefore, although the fantastical elements of Magic Realism are its most notable feature, the importance of setting, particularly the social and political climate of Latin America, is not to be dismissed. In his introduction to *Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction*, editor Philip Swanson argues that "Magical realism is based around the idea that Latin American reality is somehow unusual, fantastic, or marvelous because of its bizarre history and because of its varied ethnological makeup." The observation that Magic Realism was a literature that stemmed specifically from Latin America was first delineated in Carpentier's ground-breaking essay "The Marvelous Real in America," which ends on this note: "After all, what is the entire history of America if not a chronicle of the marvelous real?" Thus, the fantastical elements these writers use are intimately situated in the physical and historical realities in which their

works take place. García Márquez makes this clear in *The Fragrance of Guava* when he states:

> The history of the Caribbean is full of magic□a
> magic brought by black slaves from Africa but also
> by Swedish, Dutch and English pirates who thought
> nothing of setting up an Opera House in New Orleans
> or filling women's teeth with diamonds.

His comment intimates how the particular ambience of Latin America engendered acts of radical imagination that were not confined to the literary.

That Latin-American culture is a product of numerous cultural influences and powerful forces is revealed most powerfully in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a work that probes the very question of what is real and what is not. His use of traditional storytelling techniques and reliance on historical events points to an implicit conclusion that it is more a matter of point of view than the existence of facts that constitutes reality. For example, although the massacre of thousands of banana strikers in Macondo that takes place in the novel, based on a historic confrontation between the American multinational company United Fruit Company and the local workers, is witnessed by the sole survivor Jose Arcadio Segundo, his story is discredited, the event erased from history because of the power of the military to determine which version of history should be written.

That power has been dictated from the top down in Latin-American history, first through the conquistadors, then the colonizers, and more recently through the rise of military dictatorships, has inspired writers such as Carpentier, Asturias, Allende, and García Márquez to use literature as a method of telling a different version of history, one that critiques progress and rationality and that protests social injustices, especially as it is directed toward those most vulnerable□the working poor, peasants, indigenous peoples, and slaves. David Danow's observation that Magical Realism manages to present a view of life that exudes a sense of energy and vitality in a world that promises not only joy but a fair share of misery as well reveals the importance of understanding Magic Realism not as simply a way to make stories appear fantastical like traditional ghost stories emerged as a radical artistic response to the complex history that envelopes Latin America. In fact, another form of novelistic genre that magic realist writers engage in is called "the dictator novel," which may or may not invoke magical elements. García Márquez's *The Autumn of the Dictator*, Asturias's *Mr. President*, and Carpentier's *Reasons of State* are all examples of another form of "protest" novel that has emerged in Latin-American literature.

Magic realist writers incorporate innovative narrative techniques to convey an alternative view of history by borrowing aspects of traditional storytelling devices as well as avant-garde experimental writing. James Higgins, in his essay "Gabriel Garcia Marquez," poses the theory that magic realists' use of hyperbole and/or linguistic exaggeration is linked to traditional forms of storytelling such as the "folk tale" and preliterate forms like the epic. Using the "tall tale" provides an alternative perspective of

historical events from the point of view of "the people." In other words, "it permits a rural society to give expression to itself in terms of its own cultural experience." Creating a "people's history" has the effect of raising doubts about historical accounts that appear rational and sequentially ordered by providing a point of view that may disrupt the appearance of an orderly universe.

Although the narrative's point of view may shift from one character to another through omniscience, by focusing on local settings or specific histories, these writers project a version of history that is polyphonic, using a number of points of view to create multiple and sometimes conflicting histories. In Asturias's *Men of Maize*, the narrative structure of the novel is divided into six parts and an epilogue that creates a shifting point of view. The disruptive breaks in point of view prohibit traditional notions of cause and effect and reveal a concept of time that is recursive, revealing that the injustices occurring to indigenous peoples continue despite occasional moments of resistance. Thus, the history of conquest and colonization is one that continues to be present in the lives of indigenous people who are supposedly "free" of this history.

This presentation of time as nonlinear raises questions about the art of storytelling, particularly as it relates to the construction of a collective, and not individual, voice. García Márquez, Allende, and Asturias tend to view the stories told by families and communities as true rather than to weigh their truth-value against objective notions of reality. In many magic realist works, truth lies in a community's agreement of what constitutes reality rather than its ability to convey logical reasoning about certain events. Thus, extraordinary events in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* such as the levitation of Father Nicanor Reyna, the ascension of Remedios the Beauty into heaven, and the birth of a child with a pig's tail are as common as ice that is discovered and delighted over in Macondo. As Zamora and Faris note:

> Texts labeled magical realist draw upon cultural systems that are no less than those upon which traditional literary realism draws□often non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation.

Emphasizing the fantastical qualities of reality allows for a blurring of fact and fiction where the quest for truth is discerned as being beyond the mere surface of things.

What becomes most clear in reading the works of magic realists is that a reconfiguration of the relationship between artists and society has occurred. A more recent fictional work by Allende, *The House of the Spirits*, illustrates this point succinctly by having one of the narrators of the novel, Alba, chronicle not just her family's history over four centuries, but the history of a nation that has not yet been told. In her book *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction*, Naomi Lindstrom claims that "[t]he long-standing association between social criticism in literature and realistic representation began to be questioned by writers who found stylized, mythical, and magical modes the best vehicle for their artistic statements about society." Thus, although magic realist writers were, like their narrative realism predecessors, social critics particularly concerning freedom from

oppression, their approach incorporated elements of traditional forms of storytelling as well as new technical innovations that engaged in questioning the assumptions of an observed reality and that embarked on a new form of social criticism.

Source: Doreen Piano, Critical Essay on Magic Realism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Spindler explores the origination of the term "Magic Realism," and attempts "to put forward a framework that will incorporate the different manifestations of Magic Realism into one single model."

Magic realism is commonly associated with Latin American novelists such as Gabriel García Márquez, Alejo Carpentier, Isabel Allende and Miguel Angel Asturias. The term, however, originated in Europe in the 1920s when it was applied not to literature, but to painting. Since then, critics have made use of the term when dealing with various art forms including, more recently, cinema. The lack of an agreed definition and the proliferation of its use in various contexts have resulted in confusion. This, in turn, has led to the indiscrimi- nate use of the term to describe almost any work of literature or art that somehow departs from the established canons of realism.

Despite terminological and conceptual problems, which have persuaded a number of critics to abandon it, the term continues to have, in Fredric Jameson's words, "a strange seductiveness." Furthermore, it can be argued, as I do, that Magic Realism, properly defined, is a term that describes works of art and fiction sharing certain identifiable thematic, formal and structural characteristics, and that these characteristics justify it being considered an aesthetic and literary category in its own right, independent of others such as the Fantastic and Surrealism, with which it is often confused. This article attempts to put forward a framework that will incorporate the different manifestations of Magic Realism into one single model, and in this way, help to clarify the present confusion by distinguishing between different types of Magic Realism, while maintaining the links and points of contact between them.

The first to use the term was the German art critic, Franz Roh. He applied it to a group of painters living and working in Germany in the 1920s who, after the First World War, rejected what they saw as the intensity and emotionalism of Expressionism, the tendency that had dominated German art before the War. These artists, who included painters such as Carl Grossberg, Christian Schad, Alexander Kanoldt, Georg Schrimpf, Carlo Mense and Franz Radziwill, prescribed a return to the representation of reality, but under a new light. The world of objects was to be approached in a new way, as if the artist was discovering it for the first time. Magic Realism, as it was then understood, was not a mixture of reality and fantasy but a way to uncover the mystery hidden in ordinary objects and everyday reality.

In 1927 the Spanish writer and philosopher José Ortega y Gasset had Roh's book translated and published in his influential journal *Revista de Occidente*. The term Magic Realism soon became widely used by Latin American critics in the context of literature. The Argentinian writer and critic Enrique Anderson Imbert, for example, writes that the term was used in the cultural circles of Buenos Aires in the 1930s to refer to European writers such as Kafka, Bontempelli, Cocteau and Chesterton. The first to apply the term to Latin American literature was the Venezuelan writer Arturo Uslar Pietri. At that time, the generally accepted meaning of Magic Realism was still based on Roh's definition.

In 1949 Alejo Carpentier published his novel *El reino de este mundo*. In its prologue the Cuban novelist introduced his concept of "lo real maravilloso americano", by which he referred not to the fantasies or inventions of a particular author, but to the number of real objects and events which make the American continent so different from Europe. In Carpentier's view, America's natural, cultural and historical prodigies are an inexhaustible source of real marvels: "¿qué es la historia de América toda sino una crónica de lo real maravilloso?" Furthermore, this marvellous reality was supposed to be qualitatively superior to "la agotante pretensión de suscitar lo maravilloso que caracterizó ciertas literaturas europeas de estos últimos treinta años." In this way Carpentier manifested his disillusion with Surrealism, a movement he had joined while living in Paris.

Surrealism was, to a large extent, a reaction against the excessive emphasis on a rational outlook demanded by the Western traditions of empiricism and scientific positivism. It aimed at liberating the creative forces of the unconscious and the imagination, and was profoundly influenced by the work of Freud. It was the product of a highly developed industrial society where the ability to be amazed and enchanted by mystery had been lost. Carpentier's "lo real maravilloso", on the other hand, while taking the Surrealists' fascination with "le merveilleux" as a departure point, presents two contrasting views of the world (one rational, modern and discursive; the other magical, traditional and intuitive) as if they were not contradictory. In Latin America, for example, the rational mentality that accompanies modernity often coexists with popular forms of religion largely based on the beliefs of ethno-cultural groups of non-Western origin such as the Native and Afro-Americans. Instead of searching for a "separate reality", hidden just beneath the existing reality of everyday life, as the Surrealists intended, "lo real maravilloso" signals the representation of a reality modified and transformed by myth and legend. In this, it comes closer to the ideas of Jung, especially his concept of the "collective unconscious", which relates to the fabrication of myth, than to Freudian psychoanalysis with its emphasis on the individual unconscious, neurosis and the erotic, which attracted the Surrealists.

Carpentier's sense of amazement at the "marvellous" reality of America, however, can be seen as a reflexion of the European myth of the "New World" as a place of wonders, based on a constant reference to European experience as a measure for comparison. This is clearly seen in the chronicles of discovery and conquest, from Columbus' diary to Bernal Diaz del Castillo's history of the conquest of Mexico, which according to Carpentier is "el único libro de caballería real y fidedigno que se haya escrito."

Also in the 1940s, the Guatemalan writer Miguel Angel Asturias was moving away from Surrealism towards ideas and concerns similar to Carpentier's. Asturias was interested in how the Maya of Guatemala conceive of a reality coloured by magical beliefs:

Las alucinaciones, las impresiones que el hombre obtiene
de su medio tienden a transformarse en realidades,
sobre todo allí donde existe una determinada
base religiosa y de culto, como en el caso de los indios.
No se trata de una realidad palpable, pero sí de

una realidad que surge de una determinada imaginación mágica. Por ello, al expresarlo, lo llamo "realismo mágico".

A few years after Carpentier's formulation of "lo real maravilloso", Angel Flores delivered a lecture on "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction" to the 1954 Congress of the Modern Languages Association in New York. Published in a subsequent article, it contributed to popularise the term Magic Realism among critics to the extent that it came to overshadow "lo real maravilloso". Flores departed from Roh's original formulation as he considered Magic Realism an "amalgamation of realism and fantasy." He included in this category all those narratives which achieved a "transformation of the common and everyday into the awesome and the unreal" and where "time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality." These included, according to him, the works of Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares, María Luisa Bombal, Juan José Arreola, and others. Based on Flores' definition, Magic Realism began to be associated with a certain type of narrative which employs apparently reliable, realistic descriptions of impossible or fantastic events (the exact opposite, in fact, of what the original term signified). The terms Magic Realism and "realismo maravilloso" became more or less interchangeable and were applied to an increasing number of Latin American writers associated with the post-Second World War "New Novel".

In 1967 the Mexican critic Luis Leal attempted to return to Roh's original formula of making the ordinary seem supernatural. According to Leal, the writer of magic realist texts deals with objective reality and attempts to discover the mystery that exists in objects, in life and in human actions, without resorting to fantastic elements: "lo principal (en el realismo mágico) no es la creación de seres o mundos imaginados, sino el descubrimiento de la misteriosa relación que existe entre el hombre y su circunstancia." Similarly, the Argentinian Enrique Anderson Imbert rejected the presence of the supernatural in Magic Realism. The latter, for Anderson Imbert, is preternatural rather than supernatural, in other words, it exceeds in some way what is normal, ordinary or explicable, without transcending the limits of the natural. Instead of creating a text where the principles of logic are rejected and the laws of nature reversed, magic realist narratives, in his view, give real events an illusion of unreality.

At this point it will have become apparent that the debate between critics has been provoked, to a large extent, by the existence of two different, and even apparently contradictory, understandings of the term: (i) the original one, which refers to a type of literary or artistic work which presents reality from an unusual perspective without transcending the limits of the natural, but which induces in the reader or viewer a sense of unreality; and (ii) the current usage, which describes texts where two contrasting views of the world (one "rational" and one "magical") are presented as if they were not contradictory, by resorting to the myths and beliefs of ethno-cultural groups for whom this contradiction does not arise.

Usage (i) comprises the definitions proposed by Roh, Leal, Anderson Imbert, and the United States critic Seymour Menton. As a style, it presents the natural and the ordinary

as supernatural, while structurally excluding the supernatural as a valid interpretation. Usage (ii), which is the one most commonly employed by critics of Latin American fiction and has now largely replaced the previous one, is based, to a considerable extent, on "lo real maravilloso". In fact, in the Latin American context, Magic Realism and "lo real maravilloso" have now become synonymous and have been mentioned not only in connection with Carpentier's and Asturias' novels but also with the work of writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, Rosario Castellanos, Juan José Arreola, Manuel Scorza, Isabel Allende and José Maria Arguedas. Usage (ii) refers, stylistically, to texts where the supernatural is presented as normal and ordinary, in a matter-of-fact way. Structurally, it considers the presence of the supernatural in the text as essential for the existence of Magic Realism. A. B. Chanady, for example, proposes three criteria to determine whether a text belongs to Magic Realism or not: firstly, the presence in the text of two conflicting views of reality, representing the natural and the supernatural, the rational and the irrational, or the "enlightened" and the "primitive". Secondly, the resolution of this antinomy through the narrator accepting both views as equally valid. Thirdly, authorial reticence in the absence of obvious judgements on the veracity or authenticity of supernatural events.

Neither usage (i) nor usage (ii) on its own is sufficient to account for all the different examples of magic realist works. Usage (i), for example, leaves out key novels such as *Cien años de soledad* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez and *Hombres de maiz* (1949) by Miguel Angel Asturias, because of their descriptions of impossible or fantastic events; while usage (ii) excludes equally important novels such as *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981), also by García Márquez, and *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) by Alejo Carpentier, for they do not include supernatural or fantastic occurrences. Given the existence of these two different interpretations of Magic Realism corresponding to two different traditions, one pictorial and mainly European, the other literary and mainly Latin American, I propose the following typology which will unify the definitions put forward by critics in both continents. Instead of two completely different conceptions of Magic Realism, the two understandings should be seen as two sides of the same coin. There is, indeed, the possibility of a third type of Magic Realism, which I will discuss below. It has to be stressed that there are many points of overlap between the three types proposed, and that they are by no means mutually exclusive. Works by the same author, furthermore, might well fall into different categories. These categories correspond, moreover, to three different meanings of the word "magic".

Critical Essay #3

This form of Magic Realism corresponds to Roh's ideas and the original definition of the term. Examples of this type of Magic Realism, consequently, are common in painting, where unsettling perspectives, unusual angles, or naive "toy-like" depictions of real objects produce a "magical" effect. "Magic" here is taken in the sense of conjuring, producing surprising effects by the arrangement of natural objects by means of tricks, devices or optical illusion. This approach can be observed in some of the works of Giorgio de Chirico, a painter who had the most important, direct and acknowledged influence on the German painters studied by Roh.

Together with Carlo Carrà, who would later found in Italy a movement called *Realismo Magico*, De Chirico established a style known as *Pittura Metafisica*, which was characterised by its sharp lines and contours, and by the airless and static quality and eerie atmosphere of the scenes portrayed. De Chirico explained the use of the term "metaphysical" for his work:

> it is the tranquil, flawless beauty of matter that seems metaphysical to me, and things appear metaphysical to me when through their clarity of color, the precision of their dimensions, they form contrasts with each "shadow".

In literature, Metaphysical Magic Realism is found in texts that induce a sense of unreality in the reader by the technique of *Verfremdung*, by which a familiar scene is described as if it were something new and unknown, but without dealing explicitly with the supernatural, as for example, in Franz Kafka's *Der Prozeß* (1925) and *Das Schloß* (1926); Dino Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari* (1940) and Jorge Luis Borges' stories "Tema del traidor y del héroe", "La secta del Fénix" and "El Sur". The result is often an uncanny atmosphere and the creation within the text of a disturbing impersonal presence, which remains implicit, very much as in Albert Camus' *La Peste* (1947), Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) or Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). Also belonging to this type of Magic Realism are those works that present phenomena of the preternatural kind, in Anderson Imbert's characterisation. Examples of this are Borges' "Funes el memorioso", about a man who could remember literally everything; and Patrick Süskind's *Das Parfum* (1985), where the protagonist is endowed with a monstrously developed sense of smell.

Dino Buzzati's novel *Il deserto dei Tartari* has often been compared to Kafka's *Das Schloß*. It is the story of Giovanni Drogo, a young lieutenant who is commissioned to Fort Bastiani, a fortress that guards the Northern Frontier against a mythical enemy which has not been heard of for centuries. Buzzati describes the monastic regime of the fort where soldiers and officers remain in strict readiness for battle, constantly waiting for the invisible enemy that would justify their and the Fort's existence. Like Kafka, Buzzati presents a world recognisable as within the boundaries of the real. Despite its superficial similarities with the world of the reader, however, the latter cannot help

finding it alien and disconcerting. The time and the geography of the events are uncertain. A serene and melancholy atmosphere similar to that of De Chirico's paintings contributes to produce an effect of mystery which is achieved without resorting to the irruption of the supernatural in the narrative. Buzzati's novel, like Kafka's, opens in the reader's mind the suspicion of being confronted with an allegory or a metaphor of something which remains almost within grasp and yet, unknown.

Critical Essay #4

In this type of Magic Realism the narrator usually has "two voices". Sometimes he/she depicts events from a rational point of view (the "realist" component) and sometimes from that of a believer in magic (the "magical" element). This antinomy is resolved by the author adopting or referring to the myths and cultural background (the "collective unconscious") of a social or ethnic group: the Maya of Guatemala, in the case of Asturias; the Black Haitian population, in Carpentier; and small rural communities in Mexico and Colombia, in Rulfo and García Márquez. The word "magic" in this case is taken in the anthropological sense of a process used to influence the course of events by bringing into operation secret or occult controlling principles of Nature. This is the most current and specific definition of Magic Realism and it is strongly associated with Latin American fiction. European critics such as Jean Weisgerber reserve the term "realismo maravilloso" exclusively for the Latin American variety, in order to distinguish it from European Magic Realism, which generally approximates to the metaphysical type. Although this type of Magic Realism is, in my view, synonymous with "lo real maravilloso", Anthropological Magic Realism is a more exact and useful term, as it places it within a larger category (Magic Realism) of which it is a part, as well as not confining it to Latin America, as "lo real maravilloso (americano)" does.

In Latin American literature, Anthropological Magic Realism forms part of a more general trend reflecting a thematic and formal preoccupation with the strange, the uncanny and the grotesque, and with violence, deformity and exaggeration. This tendency, apparent in writers as diverse as Andrade, Arreola, Asturias, Borges, Cabrera Infante, Carpentier, Cortázar, Fuentes, García Márquez, Lezama Lima, Marechal, Onetti, Puig, Roa Bastos, Rulfo, Sábato and Vargas Llosa, has been named *neobarroquismo* by some critics to emphasise its roots in the Latin American tradition of Baroque art and literature. Similar concerns, however, were to be found in the "modernista" movement and especially in the short stories of the Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937). "Modernismo" has had a profound impact on writers such as Borges, Paz, Cortázar and Lezama Lima. Latin American Magic Realism draws on these two literary traditions, but also on that represented by other writers such as William Faulkner and Jorge Amado who, in their writings, show the contrast between the claustrophobic and stagnant atmosphere of provincial or rural communities and the vivid imagination of those who live in them. In both Faulkner and Amado, the lives of the characters are subtly but constantly overshadowed by the slave-holding past of their societies (the Southern United States and North-Eastern Brazil, respectively). In the culture of the descendants of the slaves and other groups that live in contact with them, there are echoes of magical beliefs, half-forgotten but still powerful enough to influence attitudes and behaviour.

Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) and Gabriel García Márquez's *La mala hora* (1962) also depict the asphyxiating atmosphere of provincial life. In this, however, they depart from previous Latin American realist novels such as Rómulo Gallegos' *Doña Bárbara* (1929), Jorge Icaza's *Huasipungo* (1934) and Graciliano Ramos' *Vidas se-cas* (1938). An important difference is the existence of a "magical consciousness" in the characters,

which is regarded by the author as equal or superior to Western rationalism. This feature links Anthropological Magic Realism to popular culture.

The survival in popular culture of a magical and mythical *Weltanschauung*, which coexists with the rational mentality generated by modernity, is not an exclusively Spanish-American phenomenon. It can be found also in areas of the Caribbean, Asia and Africa where writers such as Wilson Harris (Guyana), Simone Schwarz-Bart (Guadeloupe) and Jacques Stephen Alexis (Haiti) in the Caribbean, the Indian-born Salman Rushdie, and Amos Tutuola and Olympe Bhêly-Quénum in Africa, have resorted to Magic Realism when dealing, in English or French, with similar concerns to those of Spanish American writers.

La littérature la plus contemporaine des Antilles et
de l'Amérique Latine parvient, semble-t-il, à se fixer
à la fois dans un contexte national et dans un contexte
universel, en faisant appel à des archétypes
hérités de la culture traditionnelle, mais aussi en
découvrant d'autres au coeur de la réalité moderne.

In fact, the strength of Magic Realism in the "periphery" (Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean) and its comparative weakness in the "core" (Western Europe, the USA), could be explained by the fact that collective myths acquire greater importance in the creation of new national identities, as well as by the more obvious fact that pre-industrial beliefs still play an important part in the socio-political and cultural lives of developing countries. Magic Realism gives popular culture and magical beliefs the same degree of importance as Western science and rationality. In doing this, it furthers the claims of those groups which hold these beliefs to equality with the modernising elites which govern them.

Critical Essay #5

Unlike anthropological Magic Realism, ontological Magic Realism resolves antinomy without recourse to any particular cultural perspective. In this "individual" form of Magic Realism the supernatural is presented in a matter-of-fact way as if it did not contradict reason, and no explanations are offered for the unreal events in the text. There is no reference to the mythical imagination of preindustrial communities. Instead, the total freedom and creative possibilities of writing are exercised by the author, who is not worried about convincing the reader. The word "magic" here refers to inexplicable, prodigious or fantastic occurrences which contradict the laws of the natural world, and have no convincing explanation.

The narrator in Ontological Magic Realism is not puzzled, disturbed or sceptical of the supernatural, as in Fantastic Literature; he or she describes it as if it was a normal part of ordinary everyday life. Formally, the factual style employed in Ontological Magic Realism, where impossible situations are described in a very realistic way, represents the exact opposite of the technique of *Verfremdung* used in Metaphysical Magic Realism.

Examples of the ontological type are Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (1916), Carpentier's "Viaje a la semilla", and some of Julio Cortázar's stories such as "Axolotl" and "Carta a una señorita en París". This type of text can be interpreted sometimes at the psychological level, and the events described seen as the product of the mind of a "disturbed" individual, as in Gogol's "Diary of a Madman". They should be regarded as magic realist, however, for these "subjective" views are endorsed by the "objective" impersonal narrator, by other characters or by the realistic description of events that take place in a normal and plausible framework. Instead of having only a subjective reality, therefore, the unreal has an objective, ontological presence in the text.

Julio Cortázar's short stories often deal with strange, unexpected or unexplained occurrences. Antinomy, in most of them, is left unresolved in order to produce a disturbing effect on the reader, as in "La noche boca arriba", "El ídolo de las Cícladas", "Continuidad de los parques" and "La isla a mediodía". These stories belong not to Magic Realism but to the related mode of Fantastic Literature. In some of Cortázar's stories, however, antinomy is underplayed by presenting a supernatural event as if it did not contradict reason. In "Axolotl", for example, the narrator explains at the beginning of the story that he is an axolotl, an amphibious creature from Mexico, and then proceeds to recount how he became one. He used to be a man who became obsessed with the axolotls when he visited the aquarium. After studying them intensely for many days, he actually became transformed into an axolotl. No surprise is expressed by the narrator in the face of such an unusual occurrence:

[. . .]no hubo nada de extraño en lo que ocurrió. Mi
cara estaba pegada al vidri del acuario, mis ojos trataban
una vez más de penetrar el misterio de esos ojos
de oro sin iris y sin pupila. Veía de muy cerca la cara

de un axolotl inmóvil junto al vidrio. Sin transición, sin sorpresa, vi mi cara contra el vidrio, en vez del axolotl vi mi cara contra el vidrio, la vi fuera del acuario, la vi del otro lado del vidrio. Entonces mi cara se apartó y yo comprendí.

As in Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*, where in the first paragraph the protagonist, Gregor Samsa, wakes up to find himself transformed into a giant insect, the horrific transformation is described almost incidentally. There is no apparent antinomy between the natural and the supernatural. The statement that the narrator is an axolotl ("Ahora soy un axolotl") is made in the same tone used to describe an ordinary action ("Dejé mi bicicleta contra las rejas y fui a ver los tulipanes"). The ordinary and the extraordinary are portrayed on exactly the same level of reality. Cortázar does not want to titillate his reader with mystery or suspense. No explanation is called for, or put forward, for the incredible occurrence. The reader is simply invited to accept the ontological reality of the event.

Critical Essay #6

Magic Realism is a label that has been applied to a number of works of art and literature at different points in time. At first, it appears that those who have used the term, or continue to use it, have in mind widely different concepts. On closer inspection, however, it is possible to detect similarities and links between the different usages. This makes it necessary, for the sake of clarity, to differentiate between the various types of work being categorised as magic realist. The fact that there is a degree of overlap between the three types of Magic Realism suggested here, and the fact that works by the same author can belong to different types, demonstrate that they are all related in different ways.

The magic realist novels belonging to Italo Calvino's trilogy *I nostri antenati*, for example, are difficult to categorise. Two of them, *Il visconte dimezzato* (1951), where a man is bisected by a cannonball and continues to live in two separate halves, and *Il cavaliere inesistente* (1959), about an empty suit of armour which moves as a result of its own will power, are close to the ontological variety because they depart from an initial absurd situation and then proceed methodically to explore the practical problems caused by it, moving towards a logical outcome (as in Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*). They, however, borrow elements from popular sources such as fairy tales, the Sicilian puppet theatre and the medieval romances of chivalry and, in that way, approximate also to the anthropological type. The other novel, *Il barone rampante* (1957), tells a strange but not utterly impossible story, that of a boy who climbs up the trees and refuses to come down for the rest of his life. Despite its unusual departing point, the novel does not narrate any supernatural events. For this reason alone, it should be included in the metaphysical type, in spite of the fact that its tone evokes the playful and cheerful mood of adventure stories (Stevenson is frequently alluded to), instead of the eerie and melancholy atmosphere of most metaphysical magic realist novels and paintings.

García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, again, is characterised by the absence of the supernatural. The inevitability of its plot has some of the qualities of classical Greek tragedy. Although this points to the metaphysical, it also fits well with the anthropological, for it takes the view that reality is a collective construction. Some critics have drawn attention to the structural similarity between Magic Realism and the detective story, and although they typically have in mind Argentinian writers like Borges, Bioy Casares and Anderson Imbert, *Crónica's* concise, perfect, wellknit plot provides a good example of this relationship, being in fact a detective story, albeit in reverse. Finally, the fact that anthropological magic realist novels such as *Cien años de soledad* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) also make use of the stylistic device of *Verfremdung*, characteristic of Metaphysical Magic Realism, points to a formal relationship between the two types. The most memorable example is the scene in *Cien años de soledad*, where Aureliano is taken by his father to see the ice for the first time. Some- thing very ordinary is presented as if it were a real prodigy by describing it through the eyes of a character for whom this is the case.

Source: William Spindler, "Magic Realism: A Typology," in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, January 1993, pp. 75-85.

Adaptations

On its release by Miramax in 1993, the Spanish- language film *Like Water for Chocolate*, based on the novel by Laura Esquivel, was an instant international success. Revised as a screenplay for film by Esquivel and directed by her husband, Mexican director Alfonso Arau, the film effectively translates the fantastical qualities of Magic Realism to cinema.

As a series of cassettes produced by National Public Radio in 1984, *Faces, Mirrors, Masks* provides a good introduction to twentiethcentury Latin-American fiction writers. Authors represented include Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and Alejo Carpentier. Each tape provides an in-depth discussion of an individual author that includes interviews, music, and excerpts from stories and novels.

Gabriel García Márquez: Magic and Reality is a an hour-long biopic on the life and times of the Colombian author and Nobel Prize winner. The film (written, produced, and directed by Ana Christina Navarro) is distributed by Films for the Humanities and Sciences and was released in 1995. It covers Márquez's life, the sources of his books, his development of Magical Realism, and a history of Colombia. Interviews with him, his friends, and critics are an integral part of the presentation.

The Modern Word, an Internet resource for contemporary authors, has an informative web site on Gabriel García Márquez at http://www .themodernword.com/gabo/index.html with many links to other related sites and sources.

Topics for Further Study

Compare Allende's *The House of the Spirits* to Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by researching the histories of Chile and Colombia respectively. How does the use of Magic Realism evoke the specific political and social realities of these countries? What do the histories of these countries tell us about the formation of Magic Realism as a literature of protest?

Read Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in light of Carpentier's notion that magic realist texts are specifically related to Latin-American history and culture and that the term cannot address imaginative works outside of this context. State whether you agree with his argument by making a case for or against *Beloved* as a magic realist text.

Many magic realist writers incorporate indigenous people's legends, myths, and rituals into their fiction as a way to disrupt traditional notions of time and space. Read Asturias's *Men of Maize* in light of the Guatemalan oral text *The Popol-Vuh*. What structural and conceptual elements does he borrow from this traditional text to enhance the "ethnographic" elements of his novel?

The natural world plays a large part in magic realist texts, often providing a richly textured backdrop to the social and political aspects of these works. Research the natural resources of one or two Latin-American countries. What minerals, plants, cash crops, natural formations, and ecosystems are most common in these countries? How have these natural resources become a source of conflict as well as of value to the various inhabitants and outsiders of these countries? Use examples from magic realist texts to help formulate your argument.

Compare and Contrast

950s-1960s: Many Latin-American writers rely on aspects of indigenous cultures, especially their customs and beliefs that flourished before the Conquistadors arrived in America, as material for their writing.

Today: Many indigenous cultures of Latin America are celebrated all over the southern hemisphere through the reenactment of traditional songs, dancing, and music by national and international groups and organizations.

1950s-1960s: The Magic Realism writers mix elements of fantasy and fact, history and mythology as a way of capturing the social and cultural complexity of Latin America and exposing social injustices and political instability.

Today: A new generation of Latin-American writers such as Elena Poniatowska and Carlos Montemayor rely on documentary realism to expose the contradictions and corruption that make up the contemporary urban realities found in Latin-American countries.

1950s-1960s: Very few Spanish-American writers are translated or taught in English classes in high schools and college classrooms in English-speaking countries such as the United States and England.

Today: Teaching literatures from India, Nigeria, Latin America, Egypt, and East Asia has become a staple of the English classroom as more and more novels by non-Western or non- English speaking writers are translated and become part of the literary canon.

1950s-1960s: Many Latin-American countries are controlled by military dictatorships that often resort to violence, suppression of rights, and censorship to maintain their power.

Today: Most Latin-American countries have moved toward democratic forms of government, although corruption and human rights violations continue to exist, especially in countries such as Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador where drug trafficking creates regional and national conflicts.

What Do I Read Next?

The History of Surrealism, written by Maurice Nadeau and published in 1944 in French, is a classic text on this avant-garde movement. It provides an overall account of the movement and its evolution as well as internal debates about the meaning of artistic production. Leading surrealist proponents like Breton, Tzara, and Aragon are quoted extensively.

Published in 1967, Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann's book *Into the Mainstream: Conversations with Latin American Writers* is one of the first books to present interviews with the leading writers of the Spanish-American Boom period. Interviews with Asturias, Borges, Cortazar, Fuentes, García Márquez and Vargas Llosa are included.

Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction, edited by Philip Swanson, provides a variety of essays on notable twentieth-century Latin American authors. Included are essays on magical realist authors like García Márquez and Borges as well as on avant-garde writers like Cortazar and Rulfo. This collection reveals a range of Latin-American literary styles and traditions that Latin American writers were working in during the Boom period.

Based on an exhibition of Latin-American art at the Museum of Modern Art in 1993, the book *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Waldo Rasmussen, reveals a range of essays that focus on the previous century's visual trends found in different parts of Latin America. Particularly relevant may be the essays that focus on Surrealism and its connection to artistic movements in Latin America.

Twenty five years ago, Paraguayan writer Eduardo Galeano wrote a highly engaging social and political analysis of Latin-American history entitled *Open Veins of Latin America* that is still a definitive poetic and historical work on the area's colonial and postcolonial past, particularly as it relates to United States foreign policy.

A 1999 article by Jon Anderson in the *New Yorker Magazine* titled "The Power of Gabriel García Márquez" provides a current profile of this prolific author within the current political and social context of his homeland, Colombia.

Naomi Lindstrom's book of literary criticism, *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction* (1994), covers each period of Latin-American literature extensively from the beginning to the end of the century. She reveals important works in their historical context while providing indepth discussions of adherents to specific movements such as Realism, Modernism, Magical Realism, Avant-Gardism, Boom and Post-Boom literature.

Further Study

Asturias, Miguel Angel, *Men of Maize: The Modernist Epic of the Guatemalan Indians*, translated by Gerald Martin, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993.

This critical edition of an early magic realist masterpiece includes a series of critical essays by wellknown critics and writers of Latin-American literature that cover a variety of topics related to Asturias's work.

Bruner, Charlotte H., *Unwinding Threads: Writing by Women in Africa*, Heinemann, 1994.

This is a collection of short stories by African women from all parts of the continent. Divided by region, the book provides a comprehensive view of the variety and diversity of African women's approaches to imaginative writing. Many well-known and new writers are represented.

Graham-Yooll, Andrew, *After the Despots: Latin American Views and Interviews*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 1991.

Collected in this book are interviews, observations, and political analyses about Latin America by an Argentine journalist. Written in a style á la the *New Yorker*, Graham-Yooll has his finger on the pulse of the current literary and political currents of his time. A number of pieces focus on Latin America's leading writers: Allende, García Márquez, Borges, and Fuentes.

James, Regina, *"One Hundred Years of Solitude": Modes of Reading*, Twayne Publishers, 1991.

This informative book engages in a number of readings of García Márquez's masterpiece. It provides biographical and historical context as well as a good discussion of the novel's form and content.

Owomoyela, Oyekan, ed., *A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures*, University of Nebraska Press, 1993.

A range of bibliographic articles covering African literary production in all European languages represented

on the continent. In particular, chapters on women's literary production and on East African English-Language fiction are particularly relevant to Ogot's work.

Parekh, Pushpa, ed., *Postcolonial African Writers*, Greenwood Publishing, 1998.

This is a reference book that covers individual authors of postcolonial Africa, including biographical information, a discussion of themes and major works, critical responses to the works, and bibliographies.

Williams, Raymond L., *Gabriel García Márquez*, Twayne Publishers, 1984.

Williams's book is a literary and biographical account of García Márquez, discussing not only his career as a journalist and writer but providing an in-depth account of his literary output over a period of thirty years.

Zamora, Lois, and Wendy Faris, eds., *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Duke University Press, 1995.

This recent collection of essays provides an historical overview of the various scholarly approaches to interpreting Magic Realism. Of particular importance are the essays by Carpentier that describe the importance of Magic Realism to the geographic and political climate of Latin America.

Bibliography

Alegría, Fernando, "Latin America: Fantasy and Reality," in *Americas Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1986, pp. 115-18.

Allende, Isabel, *The House of the Spirits*, translated by Magda Bogin, Bantam, 1985.

Anderson, Jon, "The Power of Gabriel García Márquez," in *New Yorker Magazine*, September 27, 1999.

Asturias, Miguel Ángel, *Men of Maize: The Modernist Epic of the Guatemalan Indians*, translated by Gerald Martin, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993.

Brushwood, John, *The Spanish American Novel: A Twentieth Century Survey*, University of Texas Press, 1975, pp. 157-304.

Carpentier, Alejo, *The Kingdom of This World*, translated by Harriet de Onis, Noonday Press, 1989.

□, "On the Marvelous Real in America," in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 75-88.

Christian, Karen, *Show and Tell: Identity as Performance in U.S. Latina/o Fiction*, University of New Mexico Press, 1997, pp. 121-28.

Danow, David K., *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque*, University Press of Kentucky, 1995, pp. 65-101.

Durix, Jean-Pierre, *Mimesis, Genres, and Post-Colonial Discourse: Deconstructing Magic Realism*, Macmillan Press, 1998, pp. 102-48.

Esquivel, Laura, *Like Water for Chocolate*, Doubleday, 1991.

Flores, Angel, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction," in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 109-17.

Galeano, Eduardo, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, translated by Cedric Belfage, Monthly Review Press, 1998.

García Márquez, Gabriel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, translated by Gregory Rabassa, HarperCollins Publishers, 1998.

González Echevarría, Roberto, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 107-29.

Graham-Yooll, Andrew, *After the Despots: Latin American Views and Interviews*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 1991.

Harss, Luis, and Barbara Dohmann, *Into the Mainstream: Conversations with Latin-American Writers*, Harper & Row, 1967.

Higgins, James, "Gabriel García Márquez," in *Landmarks in Modern Latin American Fiction*, edited by Philip Swanson, Routledge, 1990.

James, Regina, *"One Hundred Years of Solitude": Modes of Reading*, Twayne Publishers, 1991.

Leal, Luis, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature," in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 119-24.

Lindstrom, Naomi, *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction*, University of Texas Press, 1994.

Mendoza, Plinio Apuleyo, and Gabriel García Márquez, *The Fragrance of Guava*, Verso, 1983.

Nadeau, Maurice, *The History of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Howard, Belknap Press, 1989.

Saldívar, José David, *The Dialectics of Our Americas: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History*, Duke University Press, 1991, pp. 90-96.

Sommer, Doris, and George Yudice, "Latin American Literature from the 'Boom' On," in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, edited by Michael McKeon, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 859-81.

Williams, Raymond L., *Gabriel García Márquez*, Twayne Publishers, 1984.

Zamora, Lois, and Wendy Faris, Introduction, in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 1-11.

BOOKRAGS

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Literary Movements for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literary Movements for Students (LMfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, LMfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LMfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LMfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LMfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LMfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literary Movements for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literary Movements for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LMfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LMfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literary Movements for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literary Movements for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Literary Movements for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535