

“UNEXPECTED ALTERNATION OF REALITY”: MAGICAL REALISM IN PAINTING AND LITERATURE

UDC 75.035/.036+82.035/.036”18“

Danijela D. Kostadinović

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Niš, Serbia

Abstract. *The term magical realism was coined by the German art historian Franz Roh in his essay *After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting* (1925), and it initially referred to a new view of the real-world painting in Germany in the 1920s. It originated as a response to Impressionism, Expressionism, and Surrealism. Magical realism painters realistically depicted objects and beings in detail, while magic and mystery were highlighted by creating illusions and through a change in perspective. Venezuelan writer Arturo Usler-Pietri used the term magical realism to describe a specific type of short story in which the view of man as a mystery surrounded by realistic data dominates. Soon enough, this term started to be used to describe Latin American literature in general primarily thanks to an article written by Angelo Flores: *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction*. The so-called Latin American Boom started in the 1960s when the elements of the magical realism narrative could also be found in the prose of writers coming from countries outside the South American continent. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to examine the magical realism phenomenon and its main characteristics with regard to painting in the first half of the 20th century, as well as to Latin American literature since the mid-20th century, and to show that art movements can be transferred from one art to another, that they can transform and change their basic concept.*

Key words: *Franz Roh, Expressionism, Post-expressionism, *pittura metafisica*, Surrealism, Magical Realism*

1. MAGICAL REALISM IN PAINTING

The post-impressionist painter Vincent Willem van Gogh died in 1890, “but the message his art carries has remained alive and influential to such an extent that it instigated two new art movements at the beginning of the 20th century: Fauvism and

Received November 2018 / Accepted December 2018

Corresponding author: Danijela Kostadinović

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy

E-mail: danijela.kostadinovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Expressionism. Both emerged in France and Germany around the same time, in 1905. The use of pure colours in order to express feelings and create drama, and Van Gogh's opinion that "the terrible passions of humanity can be expressed by means of red and green", opened up new paths and directions, but at the same time called for a rebellion against tradition and civic aesthetics" (Trifunović 2000, 42).

This rebellion against tradition and civic aesthetics was particularly present in the expressionist paintings of Vincent Willem van Gogh, Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin, Edvard Munch, James Ensor, who sought to express the inner core of human experience in their paintings. This depiction of human experience was supported by religious, social and psychological factors, whereby expressionist painters were influenced by Søren Kierkegaard's nihilist philosophy, by the religious mysticism of the Middle Ages, but also by the animism and manism, which were considered the first stage in the religious development of human culture and civilization.

By the end of the first and the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, emerging from expressionist painting and evolving almost simultaneously with post-expressionism and surrealism, as a response to expressionism, a group of post-expressionist painters appeared. They were known as *ein neuerer Realismus* (*New Realism*), who used new and specific methods to portray the real world. In painting, the predecessor of such a representation of the real world is considered to be Henri Julien Félix Rousseau, a French painter in the naïve or primitive manner. Wassily Kandinsky believed that Rousseau's paintings marked the beginning of a new art movement – the movement that brings back realism and in which realism will be used to depict abstraction.¹ Henri Rousseau's contemporaries mocked him and said that his painting was child-like, nevertheless, they acknowledged his innovative technique. It is the somewhat naïve, childish style used in his paintings, which mainly portray luxuriant jungle scenes, as well as his use of rich colours and painting in layers beginning with a sky in the background and ending with animals or people in the foreground), with varnish and glaze as the end layer, that can be considered the predecessor of magical realism painting. These characteristics can already be seen in his early work, such as his famous painting *Tiger in a Tropical Storm or Surprise* (1891).



Fig. 1 Henri Julien Félix Rousseau, *Tiger in a Tropical Storm or Surprise*, 1891

¹ Regarding the chronology, historical overview, geographical and cultural context of the term magical realism, see more in: Kostadinović 2010, 116–125.

Rousseau’s painting style had a lot of influence on the avant-garde painters who came later, such as Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger, Max Berger, but also on a great number of surrealist and magical realist painters. Trifunović says that after the end of World War I and in the early 1920s in France, realistic tendencies were revived thanks to André Derain, who did not give up on the exact representation of reality at the time of the great supremacy of Cubism. Picasso contributed to the new realism by searching for sources of inspiration in Ancient Greece and by emphasizing the idea of polarization of styles, while Fernand Léger’s realism was expressed in a completely different way because this painter focused on life, order, and machines and began to develop a myth around technology, painting the human figure using machine-like and mechanical elements (Trifunović 2000, 94).

We should also mention that as early as 1914, a German expressionist painter Ludwig Meidner, who we have already mentioned in our study *The history of the term magical realism*, attempted to portray inexplicable, dramatic and monstrous scenes of urban life. To make a long story short, Meidner, whose painting style was at first influenced by impressionism and post-impressionism and by the painting techniques of Amedeo Modigliani whom he had met in Paris in 1906, made a radical shift in his painting style and in the way he understood art and painting in general upon his arrival in Berlin in 1911. He joined painters such as Jacob Steinhardt and Richard Janthur with whom he founded the artists’ group *Die Pathetiker* in 1912. The themes that the artists in this group mostly focused on were technological development, urban life and suburbs shortly before World War I. Influenced by futurism, cubism and orphism, Ludwig Meidner took up the themes of man’s isolation in the big city, themes associated with the Apocalypse (for example, *Apocalyptic Landscape*, 1913), Great Flood and Last Judgment that we will deal with later, will be the dominant themes of magical realism in literature. Meidner himself called such a representation of reality *fantastic, ardent Naturalism*. That would in fact be a new movement within painting to soon appear carrying two different names: *Magical Realism* and *New Objectivity* (Kostadinović 2010, 117).



Fig. 2 Ludwig Meidner, *Apocalyptic Landscape*, 1913

2. PITTURA METAFISICA

The emergence of magical realism in painting in the first half of the 20th century was mostly influenced by the Italian school of metaphysical painting (*pittura metafisica*). The most important representatives of this school were Carlo Carrà, Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio, Filippo de Pisis, Giorgio Morandi, Mario Sironi. This new form of painting first appeared after an encounter between Carlo Carrà and Giorgio de Chirico in Ferrara in 1917, when de Chirico developed the concept “beyond physical reality” in Paris. However, in 1918, Carrà gave up on the metaphysical painting concept, and the movement dissolved in 1920.

Still, the most important representative and theoretician of metaphysical painting is certainly Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrà and his book *Pittura Metafisica* (1919). By shifting the focus to what is “beyond physical reality”, starting with Nietzsche's philosophy de Chirico defined the main characteristics of metaphysical painting: on their canvases, metaphysical painters portray the mysterious, mystifying, surreal and metaphysical. Their paintings rarely depict human figures, rather they focus on the heroes of Ancient Greece. The architecture is simple and the Mediterranean cities are covered in glowing light. These characteristics of metaphysical painting are manifest in de Chirico's famous paintings *The Song of Love* (1914), *The Great Metaphysician* (1917).



Fig. 3 Giorgio de Chirico,
The Song of Love, 1914

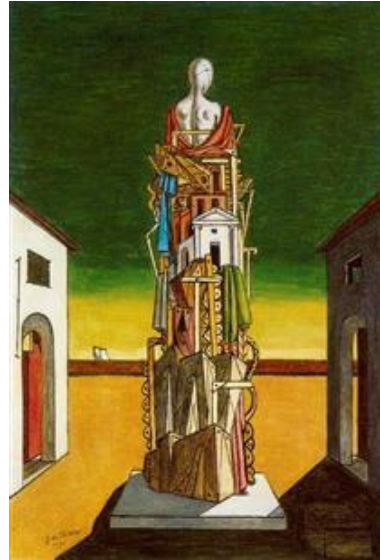


Fig. 4. Giorgio de Chirico,
The Great Metaphysician, 1917

Even though Carrà gave up on the metaphysical painting concept in 1918, as we have stated above, he left a significant legacy, such as his painting *The Metaphysical muse* (1917), which has influenced later painters. The traces of metaphysical painting school were still present in his paintings of 1920 through 1930 when his style resembled that of the Renaissance Italian painter Masaccio.



Fig. 5 Carlo Carrà, *The Metaphysical muse*, 1917

Another critic and painter who fought enthusiastically for the new art was Mario Broglio, editor of the *Valori Plastici* (*Plastic Values*) journal (1918–1922), which was being published in Italian and French. As the author of this paper has previously mentioned, it was precisely Carrà and de Chirico, as well as Roberto Melli, painter and sculptor, and Giorgio Morandi and Alberto Savinio who had made this journal so significant. In the first issue of the *Valori Plastici* journal of November 15, 1918, Carrà wrote about the new metaphysical painting movement and stated that one of its main characteristics is extreme verism and the return to the great tradition of Italian painting depicted in the works of art by Giotto and Massacio. Broglio’s art gallery, also known as *Valori Plastici*, organized traveling exhibitions all over Europe, including Germany in 1921, where the works of art of metaphysical painting school (*scuola metafisica*) were displayed. This journal which presented works of Italian painters and traveling exhibitions had an immense impact primarily on German painters Max Ernst, George Grosz and Anton Räderscheidt. Many art critics, art historians and painters of that era, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Westheim, Wilhelm Pinder wrote about the end of expressionism and the emergence of a new artistic style more oriented towards naturalism and objectivity which was named differently depending on the country: in France it was called New Realism (*realisme nouveau*), in Russia – Constructivism, while in Germany it was named New Objectivity or Magical Realism (Kostadinović 2010, 118–119).

New Objectivity or Magical Realism are two different terms basically used to describe one and the same art movement that had reached its peak in The Weimar Republic between 1919 and 1933. The official name of this state was in fact the German Reich and it was the first attempt to establish liberal democracy. However, after Adolf Hitler’s National Socialist Party assumed power, it signified the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933. Germany’s defeat in the World War I caused a great social and economic crisis, which resulted in high inflation in early 1924, the rise of nationalism and strong conflicts between right-wing and left-wing groups. Such a social environment was suitable for the emergence of an art movement that presented reality in a different way, since art was able to express and portray bitterness which prevailed due to the dehumanization that came hand in hand with technological development and due to the general state of affairs in Germany.

3. SURREALISM AND MAGICAL REALISM

In the spirit of rebellion and revolt characteristic for the avant-garde art movements, another art movement similar to magical realism emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, as a legacy of Dadaism, and it was called Surrealism (Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Yves Tanguy). At first, it firmly stood up against “artistic painting” in order to later go back to and embrace classical painting techniques. The term Surrealism by itself signifies something beyond realism, something beyond the real, rational, sensitive – something else. Surrealist painters primarily relied on the achievements of psychoanalysis which was devised by Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, in order to achieve *Pure psychic automatism*. According to them it can show the actual thought processes.

Therefore, due to their historical connection and mutual conditioning, magical realism and surrealism (surréalisme) would often get mistaken for each other. Both surrealism and magical realism are identified as art movements from the first half of the 20th century and both are revolutionary in their views. Although we have limited definitions for both movements, and even though there have been many debates about their meanings, especially regarding the notion of magical realism which is an oxymoron itself, both terms have survived. The difference between these two is that magical realism was originally linked to painting, while surrealism was linked to both literature and painting. What made the confusion even greater was the fact that both movements examined the surreal aspects of human existence, which is why some artists were seen as both surrealists and magical realists (for example: Otto Dix and Max Ernst).

Unlike surrealism which was explained and defined in various manifestos (André Breton, *Surrealist manifesto*, 1924, *The Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, 1930), magical realism neither had its own manifesto, nor an organized artists’ group. That might be one of the reasons why it is mistaken for surrealism.

Another reason might be the theme both of these movements dealt with, because both surrealists and magical realists were initially interested in examining the surreal aspects of human existence. Therefore, we can agree with the statement provided by Wendy B. Faris that magical realism is the greatest legacy of surrealism, that is, that part of surrealism “that could be written down, its textual poetics, exploited to the fullest the magic of metaphor, foregrounding the enchanting quality of all poetry as it defies reason and logic. In taking this poetics of defamiliarization to its extreme, magical realism, as is often recognized, is a major legacy of Surrealism“ (Faris 1995, 171). On the other hand, Surrealism itself, especially in the later period, was significantly influenced by magical realism as it was shifting its focus towards magic and symbolism.

The famous painting by Salvador Dalí *La Persistencia de la memoria* (*The Persistence of Memory*) 1931, is often said to be a good example of the similarities and differences between magical realism and surrealism. This painting can be viewed and interpreted as landscape, still life, and as a self-portrait. According to Maggie Ann Bowers in her study *Magic(al) realism: the New Critical Idiom*, the disintegration of time is depicted by deformed watches and clocks: “The watches are very clearly depicted and yet are extraordinary in that they have insects on them and are malformed. They appear to be paradoxically made from metal and yet are as flexible as fabric. Typical to surrealism, all of the elements of the painting are familiar by themselves, and yet distorted or placed out of context in order to express a non-physical aspect of life. This painting exemplifies those aspects of surrealism on contradiction and the unifying of paradoxes. It could be

said that the premise of magical realism – to bring together the aspect of surrealism, as magical realism is such a paradox that is unified by the creation of narrative in which magic is incorporated seamlessly into reality“ (Bowers 2004, 2).



Fig. 6 Salvador Dalí, *La Persistencia de la memoria*, 1931

4. ROH’S CONCEPT OF MAGICAL REALISM

The term magical realism was first used by Franz Roh in his essay *After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting* (1925). Using Edmund Husserl’s and Martin Heidegger’s phenomenology as a basis, he put forward the premise that magical realism connects cerebral, cold and sober point of view with spirituality, where the ultimate goal is for the mystical, supernatural and mysterious to be perceived as part of the reality, and not something opposite to it, or something that comes into conflict with it.

In this essay, Roh primarily wanted to make a distinction between the expressionist and post-expressionist painting, and between expressionist and surrealist painting. In the above essay, he suggested that the new form of painting differs from expressionism “by means of its objects“ (Roh 1995, 16), and that it appeared as a response to impressionism and expressionism “showing an exaggerated preference for fantastic extra-terrestrial, remote objects. Naturally, it also resorts to the everyday and the commonplace for the purpose of distancing it, investing it with a shocking exoticism“ (Ibid). In his opinion, this new artistic style celebrated reality, but it was also unfamiliar to the theoretically-based concept of realism. That is why he mentioned the new realism which was not too similar to the kind of realism that characterized the former realism art in Europe. This was a new objectivity “by a much wider amalgam of colours, spatial forms, tactile representations, memories of smells and tastes: in short, a truly unending complex that we understand by the name of *thing*“ (Ibid, 19). Unlike Impressionism, where the paintings are “delighted in giving maximal value and meaning to chromatic texture, which floated in the air“ (Ibid), and Expressionism “also considered the existence of

objects to be patently „obvious“ and looked for meaning in powerful and violent *formal rhythms*: vessels into which man’s spirit (that of either an artist or a man of action) could pour everything“ (Ibid, 19–20). This new art style is focused on worldly subjects, that is, on the things of this world: “In making what was formerly accepted as obvious into a “problem“ for the first time we enter a much deeper realm, even though some of the results may seem inadequate to us. This calm admiration of the magic of being, of the discovery that things already have their own faces, means that the ground in which the most diverse ideas in the world can take root has been reconquered – albeit in new ways.

The new art has been maligned for its rough drawing and `penetrating` execution. This criticism does not take into account the possibility of feeling existence, of making it stand out from the void; that a solidly modelled figure crystalizes itself, as if by a miracle, emerging from the most obscure source. Here, perhaps, the background is the last frontier, absolute nothingness, absolute death, from which something emerges and vibrates with energetic intensity (Ibid, 20).

Thus, Franz Roh emphasized that this new art style paid attention to detail on painted objects, that it was characterized by classical architecture, glazed and sharply outlined objects, the airlessness and the sober and cold gaze, free from every emotion. This new art form was characterized by the atmosphere of a technologically developed and urban world, also contributing to the creation of a new world view. He shifted from the religious and psychological domains that were characteristics of expressionism, but also from surrealism, because surrealism sought to find dreamlike phenomena in the real world, while magical realism focused on the figurative representation by introducing dreams and fantasies into the world of facts (see: Kostadinović 2010, 119). Freud’s analyses of the subconscious and subconscious’ effect on actions, thoughts and feelings, as well as the emphasis on the importance of dreams, caused surrealists to question the adequacy of art creations that realistically portray only the material world, and not the inner feelings as well. On the other hand, according to Franz Roh, the most important characteristic of magical realism paintings was to capture and portray the secrets that real-life objects carry within themselves; however, this objectivism should not be a replica of reality but rather a completely new creation, because in his opinion, a magical realist is not to discover the spirit beginning with objects but, on the contrary, to discover objects beginning with the spirit (Roh 1995, 24). Franz Roh considered the following painters to be magical realists: Max Ernst, Otto Dix, Alexander Kanoldt, George Grosse, George Schrimpf, etc.

5. MAGICAL REALISM IN LITERATURE

The ideas which Franz Roh presented in his *After expressionism Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting*, an essay favouring background over objectivity, and focused on the magical, mystical, mysterious and the spiritual, attracted literary criticism. Therefore, this essay was translated into Spanish in 1927 and published by José Ortega y Gasset in *Revista de Occidente journal (Journal of the Western World)* in Madrid, and it was later published as a special edition called *Realismo Mágico: Post Expresionismo (Magical Realism: Post-expressionism)*. In this way, Roh’s essay had an immense impact on the emergence of magical realism in literature. As early as 1928, this term began to be used in a very different cultural and philosophical context in Latin

America. The term magical realism at first referred to the writers from Buenos Aires, whose main representative was Jorge Luis Borges whom Angel Flores considered to be the pioneer of this literary movement. Without accepting the common belief that Pietri and Carpentier were the ones to thank to that the term magical realism, which in the beginning referred to European painting, began to be used to name certain prose genres, narratives and novels in Latin America. In his article *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction*, Angel Flores said that magical realism in literature began with a 1935 collection of stories by Borges: *Historia universal de la infamia* (*A Universal History of Infamy*) and with a novel by María Lusila Bombal *La última niebla* (*The House of Mist*).

However, most theoreticians believe that the term magical realism (realismo mágico) was first used by Uslar Pietri in his essay *Letras y hombres de Venezuela* (*Men and Letters of Venezuela*, 1948), in order to describe a particular narrative model used in Venezuela where man was depicted as an element of mystery surrounded by realistic data. As Emir Rodríguez Monegal confirmed, Pietri took over the term magical realism from Franz Roh. He could have been introduced to Roh's interpretation of this new art movement during his stay in Europe, “as well as to the works of the Italian poet, drama and prose writer Massimo Bontempelli, who not only wrote magical realism, but also actively promoted this movement, and to the Cuban writer, essayist and musicologist Alejo Carpentier, who was in exile in France, and who influenced Pietri's writing. As a matter of fact, Carpentier and Pietri are credited with bringing magical realism from Europe to Latin America at a time when, in many Latin American countries in the 1940s, writers sought to create new ways to express themselves, on the one hand encompassing real facts, and on the other hand myths” (Kostadinović 2010, 120–121).

This was an uncertain and insecure period in Latin American history, when people were repressed and had no freedom of thought, when they went through identity crises, which is why it was common for them to turn to myths as their only solid and strong link to the past, to their roots and the self. Therefore, it is quite understandable that magical realism first appeared in Latin America, where the writers developed a specific model of narrative fiction in which the realistic aspects were connected with the mysterious, strange, inexplicable and magical things that could be found in the mythology of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Thus, myths became a reflection of the ideological tendencies, and often the socio-political tendencies of the writer, that is, the writers of Latin America used myths to express and depict their view of reality. By including mythical elements (the writers would often borrow the myths from certain regions) and writing in the same way myths were conveyed, the literary works written by magical realists acquire mythological qualities.

It is believed that the first magical realism literary work was the novel *Hombres de maíz*, 1949 (*Men of Maize*) written by the Guatemalan writer and Nobel Prize winner Miguel Ángel Asturias. The Latin American Boom began after the Cuban Revolution of 1959. It actually began in 1960 and reached its peak around 1970 in the works of Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, etc.

The novel called *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), written by the Colombian writer Márquez, published in Buenos Aires in 1967, and portraying a specific Macondo chronotope, is seen as the zenith of magical realism. However, we should not forget the Uruguayan writer Onetti, who wrote about the mythical city of Santa María, and the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, who wrote about the marvellous world of the Caribbean. Moreover, the famous *La trilogía bananera* (*The Banana*

Trilogy), written by the Guatemalan writer Asturias, was also created between 1950 and 1960, etc.

Magical realism in Latin America is classified under three different types/categories, each of them having specific characteristics and different representatives: marvellous realism, magical realism and fantastic realism, which are seen as one and the same literary movement by some authors, while others consider them to be different forms of Latin American literature (see: Soldatić 1986, 82–133; Yurkievich 1980, 153–160).

“Marvellous realism” (*realismo maravilloso*) or “magically real” (*lo real maravilloso*) were the terms or notions first used by Alejo Carpentier in 1949, in the preface to his novel *El reino este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*), in order to explain and convey what makes Latin American literature special. In his article *On the Marvellous Real in America*, Carpentier said that he started thinking about the miraculously real as early as the end of 1943:

“I was lucky enough to visit Henri Christophe’s kingdom – such poetic ruins, Sans-Souci and the bulk of Citadel of la Ferrière, imposingly intact in spite of lightning and earthquakes, and I saw the still-Norman Cape Town, the Cap Français of the former colony, where a house with great long balconies leads to the palace of hewn stone inhabited years ago by Pauline Bonaparte. My encounter with Pauline Bonaparte there, so far from Corsica, was a revelation to me. I saw the possibility of establishing certain synchronisms, American, recurrent, timeless, relating to that, yesterday to today. I saw the possibility of bringing to our own latitudes certain European truths, reversing those who travel against the sun and would take out truths to a place where, just thirty years ago, there was no capacity to understand or measure those truths in their real dimension“ (Carpentier 1995a, 84).

Marvellous realism is actually magical realism in its original form. Marvellous realism insists on the relationship between nature and the history of different cultures which took turns and mixed in the Americas. Lucilla Ines believes that marvellous realism and magical realism have much in common; however, not everything that is marvellous always belongs to magical realism, although it can certainly be said that “magical realism is permeated with marvellous” (Mena 1978, 71–72). What is characteristic of marvellous realism is the fact that it merges natural and supernatural “creating an imaginary world where laws of nature do not apply and where everything becomes possible: time–space compression and disintegration, crossing over the boundaries between reality, dreams and visions, as well as between life and death. The imagination of marvellous realists is based upon the folklore and tradition of certain nations, especially on the tales, legends and folk stories“ (Samurović 1993, 224). Marvellous realism finds its sources of inspiration in Indian mythology, and is characterized by descriptions whose aim is to show the beauty of Latin America and the distinctiveness and culture of the people who are of mixed heritage: white, Indian and African-American. The representatives of marvellous realism are Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Àngel Asturias, and in a certain part of their literary work, Gabriel García Márquez and Augusto Roa Bastos.

The second type is “magical realism”, where the reality is intertwined with magical and extraordinary elements. According to Alejo Carpentier, magical realism is *an unexpected alteration of reality*, which becomes powerful by connecting the elements of European romanticism, realism and naturalism with the magical interpretation of the world, as well as with traditional beliefs and mythology of Latin America, which are used

by magical realists to enrich and perfect the realistically portrayed reality in their novels, often referring to historical documents and facts, which are expressed in ontological and epistemological terms (Carpentier 1995a, 75–89).

Magical realism is characterized by clear and precise prose and very often by a cyclical mode of narration. The descriptions do not try to emphasize the beauty of the landscape; they rather rely on humour, as well as the ironical and grotesque depiction of reality. The fusion of real and magical happens in order to highlight and emphasize their differences. Magical realism is based on the history of Latin America, which is used by writers in order to create an image of the world – both the real world and the imaginary world. Magic realism particularly focuses on specific spatial and temporal relationships, without establishing a clear boundary between real and surreal. Everyday life is depicted as imaginary and an illusion, while the incredible and fantastic events become the reality. The representatives of magical realism are Alberto Uslar Pietri, Gabriel Garcia Marques, Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, Mario Vargas Llosa.

The third type is known as “fantastic realism” (*realismo fantástico*) and it originated in Buenos Aires. Borges and Julio Cortázar are seen as the creators and main representatives of this literary movement. Fantastic realism is regarded as the most intricate form of Latin American literature, which first emerged in Argentina (one of the predecessors of fantastic realists was Macedonio Fernández), while Borges encouraged and inspired the writers to extend it to other Latin American countries. Although we can notice certain traces of German Romanticism (Hoffmann) and some influence of modern European writers (such as Kafka), most theoreticians believe that fantastic realism is specific to Latin America region. Marques pointed out that everyday life in Latin America, which the Europeans considered to be fantastic, could not be expressed in ordinary language, because it is “an outsized reality that exceeds the language” (*Una realidad que no cabe en el idioma*). By following Borges, he suggests that magical and fantastic literary texts are, paradoxically, more realistic than realist literary texts, because realism is: “a kind of premediated literature that offers too static and exclusive a vision of reality. However good or bad they may be, they are books which finish on the last page [...] a `realistic` text is hardly a satisfactory mode, much less an accurate presentation of the thing in itself [...] disproportion is part of our reality too. Our reality is in itself out of all proportion“ (citation according to: Simpkins 1995, 148). Together with Borges and Cortázar, additional representatives of magical realism are José Lezama Lima, Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso, Reinaldo Arenas.

Despite the fact that there were three different types of magical realism present in Latin America, and also despite the fact that literary magical realism which emerged in Latin America and is characterized by a realistic portrayal of the real world, and often supported by historical factography and permeated with fantastic elements taken from myths, folklore and magic, where the opposing relationship between the European social model (based on empiricism) and the Indian culture of Latin America and the Caribbean (which were formed based on the magical and miraculous experience of the world) is of vital importance. Even though they are mutually different due to the literary-historical, socio-political, ethnographic and cultural factors, it is still possible to systematize the common characteristics of this literary movement. The definition would be as follows:

Magical realism is neither the same as realism, nor can it be classified under fantasy genre. Magical realism portrays action, space and time realistically using historical data and documentary material. There are sporadic magical events within a predominantly

realistic mode. However, it is precisely these realistic descriptions which cross the boundaries of realism by creating double worlds of reality and dream, real and imaginary, magical and real, which are based on folklore and mythology. Unlike fantasy literature where the non-mimetic structure is translated into the mimetic one and provided a realistic denouement, in magical realism, on the contrary, initial realistic elements are not fully depicted, so the mimetic structure transforms into a non-mimetic one and it is given a fantastic denouement. Magical realism has been used by different authors in different ways, mostly depending on their home country, the country's mythology and folklore and the current socio-political circumstances. The ability of magical realism to penetrate further from the boundaries of realism and to use the energy and elements of fairy tales, folk narratives or myths, while at the same time retaining great social importance of a certain era (Baldick 2001, 146) has allowed magical realism to expand to the rest of the world. Thus, for example, magical realists were also Salman Rushdie, Günter Wilhelm Grass, Toni Morrison, Angela Carter, etc., which suggests that magical realism has ceased to be only the immanent constant for the alternative way of thinking within the distinctive Latin American post-colonial literature and culture.

Magical realism left its mark on South Slavic literary works as well. Therefore, there are many prose writers whose works have elements of magical realism, such as Milorad Pavić, Goran Petrović, Slobodan Džunić, Drago Jančar, Jordan Radičkov, Živko Čingo, Petre M. Andreevski, etc.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above mentioned, it can be concluded that the development of magical realism took three different, yet mutually dependent directions.² The first direction relates to the emergence of magical realism in painting in Italy and Germany in the 1920s. This new painting technique evolved from expressionism, and it found its basis in metaphysical style of painting, at the same time sharing some similarities with surrealists as well, and at the same time being a reflection of the state of the society while also showing the attitude towards people living in the so-called technological civilization. The second direction relates to the emergence of literary magical realism in a completely changed ideological and cultural context of postcolonial Latin America. It originated in the 1930s and 1940s inside the literary circles in Buenos Aires, gradually spreading across the entire Latin American literature, while the third direction began sometime around 1955 when magical realism gradually expanded to the rest of the world and has lasted to the present day.

This art movement has existed for more than a century in painting, and today, at the beginning of the 21st century, it is seen as one of the leading art movements in the world, which is also present in literature and film, in addition to painting (see: Stam 2005; Genevive 2010; Jameson 1986, 301–325). Some of the most significant painters of our time are for example, Canadian painter and master of optical illusion Robert Gonsalves who unfortunately passed away too early, and whose very painting title *The Space Between Words* (2004) points to the essence of magical realism – the imaginary space between words where parallel worlds flow in. Certainly, we should also mention the painters Michael Cheval, Alex Gross, Dominique Appia, a young Mexican painter Mariana Palova, etc.

² Maggie Ann Bowers came to the same conclusion in her study *Magic(al) Realism: New critical idiom* (2004).



Fig. 7 Robert Gonsalves, *The Space Between Words*, 2004

In the end of this paper, we can highlight that magical realists are art illusionists. They manage to portray the illusion by changing the perspective in the mirror of reality, and this is achieved by using different painting techniques, literary, artistic and directing elements, in order to persuade the observers/readers that the mysterious and mystical found in the background of reality are actually based on empirical elements, and these are not only possible but rather very much probable.

Translated by: Marija Mihajlović

REFERENCES

- Baldick, C. (ed.). (2001). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Bowers, M. A. (2004). *Magic(al) Realism: New critical Idiom*. New York&London: Routledge
- Carpentier, A. (1995a). On the Marvelous Real in America (1949), In: L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham&London: Duke University Press, 75–89.
- Carpentier, A. (1995b). The Baroque and the Marvelous Real (1975), In: L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham&London: Duke University Press, 89–109.
- Faris, W. B. (1995). Sheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction, In: L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham&London: Duke University Press, 163–191.
- Genevive, V. (2010). Top Ten Magical Realism Films. *fantasy-magazine.com*, <http://www.fantasy-magazine.com/non-fiction/fantasys-top-ten-fight-scenes-the-duels/>
- Jameson, F. (1986). On Magic Realism in Film. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, 301–325.
- Kostadinović, D. (2010). Istorija pojma magični realizam. *Philologia Mediana*, br. 2, 116–125.
- Mena, L. I. (1978). Ka teorijskoj formulaciji magijskog realizma. *Delo*, br. 8–9, 60–72.
- Roh, F. (1995). Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism (1925), In: L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham&London: Duke University Press, 15– 33.
- Samurović Pavlović, Lj. (1993). *Leksikon hispanoameričke književnosti*. Beograd: Savremena administracija

- Simpkins, S. (1995). Sources of Magic Realism/Supplements to Realism in Contemporary Latin American Literature, In: L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham&London: Duke University Press, 145–163.
- Soldatić, D. (1986). Tri vida stvarnosti u hispanoameričkoj prozi; Magični realizam, čudesno stvarno i fantastična književnost. *Treći program Radio Sarajeva*, br. 52, 82–133.
- Stam, R. (2005). *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation*. Maiden: Blackwell Publishers
- Trifunović, L. (2000). *Slikarski pravci 20. veka*. Beograd: Prosveta
- Yurkievich, S. (1980). Borges/Cortázar: mundos y modos de la ficción fantástica. *Revista Iberoamericana*, No. 110–111, 153–160.

„NEOČEKIVANA ALTERNACIJA STVARNOSTI“: MAGIČNI REALIZAM U SLIKARSTVU I KNJIŽEVNOSTI

*Termin magični realizam osmislio je nemački istoričar umetnosti Franz Ro u eseju *After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting (1925)* i isprva se odnosio na nov način predstavljanja stvarnosti u slikarstvu u Nemačkoj 20-tih godina XX veka. Taj pravac javio se kao reakcija na impresionizam, ekspresionizam, ali i nadrealizam. Magičnorealistični slikari su realistički detaljno prikazivali objekte i bića, a zračenje magije i misterioznosti postizali su iluzionističkim efektima i promenom perspektive. Termin je od Franza Roa preuzeo venezuelanski dramski i prozni pisac Alberto Uslar Pietri da označi poseban žanr pripovetke u kojoj do izražaja dolazi umetnički postupak sagledavanja junaka kao tajne okružene podacima. Uskoro se ovim terminom počela označavati latinoamerička književnost zahvaljujući pre svega članku Angela Floresa Magični realizam u špansko-američkoj beletristici. Takozvani latinoamerički 'bum' počeo je 60-tih godina XX veka, kada elemente magičnorealističnog pripovedačkog modusa nalazimo i u proznim ostvarenjima pisaca van južnoameričkog kontinenta. Stoga je cilj rada da ispita pojavu i glavne odlike magičnog realizma u slikarstvu u prvoj polovini XX i književnosti Latinske Amerike od sredine XX veka i pokaže kako se umetnički pravci mogu presaditi iz jedne umetnosti u drugu, transformisati i promeniti osnovnu sadržajnu koncepciju.*

Ključne reči: Franz Ro, ekspresionizam, postekspresionizam, pittura metafisica, nadrealizam, magični realizam