

## 85. Multidimensional view of magical realism in Russian literature<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The 20th century witnessed cultural and social changes of immense proportions. Magical realism appeared in literature at the beginning of the century, which is pivotal in world history. This art movement swiftly extended beyond a regional phenomenon and developed into a significant symbol of global artistic expression. The fusion of the banal facets of daily life with fictional elements engenders a world that is simultaneously recognizable and foreign, leading the reader on a voyage. This element is considered crucial to facilitate progress towards universality. Russian literature uses magical realism and integrates its distinct cultural codes and historical context to produce a unique interpretation within the field. The groundwork of Russian magical realism rests upon the intricate psychological studies of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the fantastical realism of Mikhail Bulgakov, and the absurdist storytelling of Nikolai Gogol. Magical realism has a history spanning over a century and has influenced various fields, including literature, cinema, painting, and philosophy. The contributions of Russian literature enhance the universality and profundity of this genre. Moreover, this wide reach facilitates a variety of viewpoints and understandings of magical realism to surface. This study examines the manifestation of magical realism in Russian literature along with its differing viewpoints. It also aims to explain the place of Russian magical realism in universal culture, which has yet to be clearly established in a historical context. This will be achieved by examining the origins of 19th century magical realism and its subsequent associations with various genres.

**Keywords:** Magical realism, Russian literature, fantastic, universal culture

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## Rus edebiyatında büyüü gerçekçiliğe çok boyutlu bakış<sup>3</sup>

### Öz

XX. yüzyıl, kültürel ve toplumsal metamorfozların eş zamanlı olarak gerçekleştiği, tarihi bir döneme ev sahipliği yapar. Dünya tarihi açısından kritik dönüm noktalarından biri sayılan söz konusu yüzyılın ilk yarısında literatürdeki yerini alan büyüü gerçekçilik, kısa sürede yalnızca yerel bir akım olmanın ötesine geçerek evrensel sanat anlayışının önemli temsilcilerinden biri haline gelmeyi başarır. Gündelik yaşamın sıradanlığı ile hayal ürünü olayları ve unsurları kendine özgü özellikleriyle bir araya getirerek okuru hem tanıdık hem de yabancı bir dünyada yolculuğa çıkarması, bahse konu anlayışın evrenselliğe geçiş sürecini etkileyen önemli faktörlerden biri sayılır. Rus edebiyatı da bu evrenselliğin bir parçası olarak, büyüü gerçekçiliği kendi kültürel kodları ve tarihsel arka planıyla harmanlayarak alana özgün bir yorum getirir. Fyodor Dostoyevskiy'in karmaşık ruh analizleri, Mihail Bulgakov'un fantastik gerçekliği ve Nikolay Gogol'ün absürt anlatıları, Rus büyüü gerçekçiliğinin temel direkleri olarak karşımıza çıkar. Yüzyıllık bir geçmişi olan büyüü gerçekçilik, edebiyattan sinemaya, resimden felsefeye kadar geniş bir yelpazede etkisini gösterirken, Rus edebiyatının bu bağlamdaki katkıları, akımın evrenselliğini ve derinliğini artıran faktörler arasında yer alır. Söz konusu geniş etki alanı, büyüü gerçekçiliğe dair farklı perspektiflerin ve yorumların doğmasına da zemin hazırlar. Bu çalışmada ise büyüü gerçekçiliğin Rus edebiyatında nasıl karşılık bulduğuna ve ona dair yapılan farklı bakış açılarına değinilecektir. Ayrıca tarihsel bağlamda henüz net bir çerçeveye oturtulamayan Rus büyüü gerçekçiliğinin XIX. yüzyıla uzanan köklerinden günümüze kadar gelen farklı türlerle bağlantıları arasında kurulan ilişkiler üzerine yapılan yorumlardan yola çıkılarak bahse konu türün evrensel kültürdeki konumu aydınlatılmaya çalışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Büyüü gerçekçilik, Rus edebiyatı, fantastik, evrensel kültür

### 1. Introduction

In the early 20th century, the dissolution of empires and colonialism's cessation led to a significant change in global history. This momentous shift had profound cultural and societal consequences, ultimately triggering an unprecedented paradigm shift in artistic expression. Artists sought new viewpoints to encapsulate this extraordinary transformation. Within this context, the emergence of a new artistic movement called magical realism is significant. The very name encapsulates a stylistic approach that goes beyond the contrast between the factual and the imaginary. This is accomplished by seamlessly integrating exceptional elements into daily reality, thus normalising extraordinary events in everyday life. Departing from the fantastical, this artistic movement adeptly navigates the boundaries between reality and the otherworldly yet does so in a style reminiscent of everyday life. Unlike its fantastical counterpart, it focuses mainly on delving into the mysterious and complex foundations

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inherent in ordinary life. Through this, it acts as a reflective canvas, mirroring the changing dynamics of both the global environment and the intricacies of human psychology.

Magical realism has the ability to broaden the limits of artistic representation and it holds a widespread impact on diverse creative fields globally, such as literature, painting, and cinema. A notable figure in the new objectivity (*neue sachlichkeit*) movement, the renowned German art critic, Franz Roh, authored "Magical Realism" within this context. Post-Expressionism, as discussed in Roh's seminal work (1995) published in 1925, played a key role in the advancement of the term 'magical realism' in artistic discourse. It is noteworthy that Novalis, the German Romantic poet and philosopher who wrote under the pseudonym Georg Philipp Friedrich von Hardenberg, is said to have alluded to the concept earlier. While Novalis is considered a pioneer of magical idealism, the extent of his direct contribution is still under debate among scholars. Additionally, the inception of Roh's expression of magical realism in painting has a comparable journey in literature, which is reflected in the work of Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli. This view, previously limited to the visual arts, has recently gained significant momentum, infiltrating the film industry. As a result, magical realism has congealed into a genre that unites various artistic fields.

Aleksandr Alexandrovich Gugin's scholarly insights, as a literary critic specializing in exploring "magical realism" in the Russian context, draw a fascinating parallel between this artistic movement and a traditional Russian toy known as "ванька-встанька." Additionally, Gugin highlights the vital role played by magical realism in Russian literature, thus enhancing our comprehension of this literary phenomenon. This analogy showcases the trajectory of magical realism, which originated in philosophy, prospered in painting, and eventually established its dominance in both literature and cinema. The "ванька-встанька" toy, similar in form to the "hacı yatmaz" of Turkish culture, represents an important aspect of Russian heritage. It consists of a spherical base that self-erects when placed on a flat surface. Through this comparison, Gugin cleverly likens the term 'magical realism' to the toy, suggesting a shared dynamic movement that transforms from a prone to an upright position. This comparison effectively encompasses the expansive nature of magical realism, a term that travels fluidly through diverse artistic disciplines, much like the motion of the "ванька-встанька" (Gugin, 1998, p. 20). In addition, Gugin argues that in the domain of literary art, magical realism possesses a lively presence, and should not be demoted to a secondary position, emerging as a mere aftermath of the twentieth century. Gugin argues that designating magical realism as a subgenre or an extension of contemporary movements such as surrealism and post-expressionism is a flawed approach. The Russian critic maintains that magical realism is distinct due to its unique characteristics, setting it apart from other genres. It acts as a vital lens through which to view the chief concerns of the twentieth century. Gugin argues that an intricate web of connections between magical realism's concerns and their historical lineage is revealed, along with their implications for the future (Gugin, 1998, p. 4). Therefore, limiting magical realism to the immediate concerns of its era and depicting it in this manner would result in an inadequate depiction. Magical realism transcends temporal boundaries, creating a connection between past and future eras and preserving the essential cultural memories of society. Additionally, it aims to subtly integrate global communities into the current milieu while safeguarding their historical truths and traditions from disappearing into obscurity.

The journey of magical realism begins in the domains of philosophy and painting, but it is in literature where this movement has reached its zenith of growth and impact. Remarkably, it has discovered a receptive base in the literary landscape of Latin American communities, where the remnants of colonialism have wielded power for lengthy durations. This, in turn, has acted as a source of creativity for authors and poets from various cultural backgrounds throughout the world. In this context, it would

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be unimaginable for Russian literature, renowned for its rich heritage of works infused with surreal elements, to ignore magical realism. The profound social, political, and cultural alterations that unfolded across Russia during the early twentieth century brought about a noticeable change in the writers' perspectives. The political and ideological landscape of the time drove writers to pursue alternative modes of expression, breaking away from traditional realism. It was during this period that magical realism emerged as a leading approach among writers, allowing them to critique society and unleash their creativity with greater freedom.

## 2. The relationship between mystical realism and magical realism

Before delving into a detailed analysis of how the concept of "magical realism" has been employed in Russian literature and the various contexts behind it, it is pertinent to mention that "mystical realism (мистический реализм)" can often be used interchangeably with the term. Notably, Nikolay Berdyaev, a Russian philosopher, and Andrei Bely, a symbolist poet, are among the first to use this term. In the preface to his "Philosophical, Social and Literary Experiences (1900-1906)" (Опыты философские, социальные и литературные (1900-1906 г.)), published in 1907, Berdyaev objectively states that the term that best describes his philosophy is "mystical realism". Berdyaev elucidates that this philosophical viewpoint involves a balance between mystical revelation and realism. This approach is founded on the concept that actuality can be apprehended not through rationalism but by means of profound mystical experiences. In this context, Berdyaev maintains a critical perspective towards religious dogmas and posits that it is crucial for individuals to establish a connection with a spiritual reality based on their own inner encounters (Berdyaev, 1907, p. 2-4). Hence, the emphasis is on the individual's inner experiences and spiritual pilgrimage, overlooking religious dogma.

Berdyaev evaluates the realism of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, asserting it closely aligns with his philosophical principles, particularly in its examination of themes like individual autonomy and humanity's relationship with the Divine. This is particularly evident in the latter portion of Dostoyevsky's artistic career, which Berdyaev views as "mystical." The Russian scholar posits that the realist movement, epitomized by the creative endeavours of key figures in Russian literature during the nineteenth century such as Alexander Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Gogol, constitutes a symbolic form of art that serves as a link between two worlds. To clarify, Berdyaev argues that the truth sought by this intellectual movement, which points to a depth beyond what is immediately visible, cannot be directly represented in art and can only be conveyed through symbols. This viewpoint put forth by the Russian philosopher creates the impression that the realism movement uses symbols to depict the familiar appearance of existence in art, resulting in a constructed truth. In this context, Berdyaev aligns Dostoyevsky's artistic pursuit not with the domain of mere fiction but with a profound spiritual truth, referring to it as metaphysical realism. He argues that the depiction of the interaction between humanity, God, and the devil in Dostoyevsky's works, which delve into the deep spiritual recesses of human existence with a belief in fate and ideals to which one devotes their life, is genuine. On the other hand, Berdyaev asserts that the intricate complexities of the human psyche, which form the most profound thematic undercurrent of Dostoyevsky's novels, cannot be interpreted in a straightforwardly realistic way. Therefore, it is argued that Dostoyevsky's portrayal of Ivan's duality and inner turmoil in "The Brothers Karamazov (1880)" via the interactions between Ivan, Fyodor Pavlovich's legitimate son, and his illegitimate son Smerdyakov, cannot be described as entirely realistic. It is suggested that the connection between Ivan and the devil in the novel goes beyond reality and instead exists within a more abstract and metaphysical realm. He argues that the portrayal of the relationship between Ivan and the devil in the work is far removed from reality. Berdyaev disputes the assessment of Dostoyevsky's art within the context of psychological realism by highlighting his identity as a pneumatologist and a

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symbolist metaphysician. Berdyaev firmly opposes the classification of Dostoevsky's art in terms of psychological realism, preferring instead to recognize the author's identity as a pneumatologist and a symbolist metaphysician. The Russian philosopher posits that hidden forces of the subconscious and premonitions intricately influence human existence, impacting interpersonal relationships profoundly. Moreover, Berdyaev argues that Dostoevsky's literary works feature covert elements - portraying a mystical dimension always intertwining with human interactions in the visible realm. He supports his stance by drawing parallels between characters in Dostoevsky's novels. For example, Berdyaev argues that Myshkin, the protagonist of "The Idiot (Идиот, 1868)," is influenced by both Nastasya Filippovna and Rogozhin, while Raskolnikov, the protagonist of "Crime and Punishment (Преступление и наказание, 1866)," has a similar relationship with Svidrigailov. He suggests that the mysterious connections between Ivan in "The Brothers Karamazov" and Smerdyakov, as well as Stavrogin in "The Devils (Бесы, 1872)" and Shatov are of a divine nature. Berdyaev argues that the relationships and encounters portrayed in these works are not random incidents but predetermined in a different realm and invested with high value. He refers to this significance as "fate" and attributes the intricate conflicts and interrelationships among individuals to this transcendent dimension instead of the palpable reality. Berdyaev argues that Dostoevsky's works possess unique features that render them incongruous with the standard criteria of a realist novel. Therefore, Berdyaev suggests that if one were to evaluate the author's craft within the framework of realism, it ought to be labelled mystical in nature (Berdyaev, 1923, p. 11).

According to Berdyaev, it would be an insufficient evaluation to categorize Dostoevsky's art solely within the confines of realism, the dominant artistic movement of the 19th century. However, one must not misinterpret Berdyaev's statements to mean that the mystical elements in Dostoevsky's works diminish the author's commitment to realism. Berdyaev asserts that Dostoevsky's view of realism precedes and gives rise to a specific literary category, known as mystical realism, by connecting the tangible and the metaphysical. This perspective prompts a comparison between this genre and magical realism. The deep mystic foundation that informs Novalis's concept of magical idealism is the primary resonance in the genre emphasized by Berdyaev. In contrast, Roh's aversion to promoting the term "mystical" separates twentieth-century magical realism from a purely religious atmosphere, if not exclusively. However, since sacred beliefs exert significant sway in magical realism, it is conceivable to suggest that Berdyaev's mystical realism and this genre have substantial shared ground.

After Berdyaev, the term 'mystical realism' was introduced by Bely in his work "Symbolism as a Worldview (Символизм как миропонимание)" written in 1928. In this work, Bely reflects on anthroposophy, a system of thought established by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Joseph Lorenz Steiner, and develops a mystical perception of the world beyond reality. In his works, symbolism, icons, and metaphors are often used, inviting the reader to explore the divisions between the physical and intangible realms. Bely's philosophical framework elevates realism to a reflection of the complex inner landscapes and spiritual journeys of individuals, transcending superficial depictions. Within this context, Bely skillfully weaves symbols into his narratives, giving them an atmosphere of mystery and profundity. He expects his readers to embark on a journey to unravel the profound and cryptic significance concealed beneath the surface of reality's symbols. By using language as a mystical instrument, Bely aims to give his characters' cognitive and emotional journeys a profound resonance. In Bely's view, language, and symbols act as channels for exploring the intricacies of human experience, a concept he clarifies through the term "mystical realism" (Bely, 1994). Bely explains that the fundamental characteristics of mystical realism encompass the merging of physical and metaphysical realms, a focus on uncovering the profound significance and mystery hidden within truths, and the use of an

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unconventional stylistic approach that challenges traditional linguistic structures and modes of expression.

It should be noted that Berdyaev and Bely's mystical realism amalgamates the concrete and metaphysical realms using innovative language, symbols, and metaphors, and bears certain similarities to magical realism, which gained global attention and spread across literary landscapes in different regions. Within this framework, there is a common drive to uncover meaning beyond the limits of reality that underpins both mystical and magical realism. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that their ideological frameworks differ due to originating from separate cultural contexts. While mystical realism, nurtured by Russian writers and intellectuals, focuses on the interplay between the perceptible and the metaphysical worlds, magical realism, originated in Europe but bloomed in Latin American literature, blends ordinary facets of everyday life with elements that are extraordinary and fantastical. In addition, mystical realism places a greater emphasis on matters of spirituality, inner quests, and religious experiences. By contrast, magical realism integrates social and political interpretations into its narrative structure. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between the two approaches regarding their use of language and narrative elements. In mystical realism, where there is an abundance of symbols and metaphors, there is a preference for an abstract, profound, and philosophical discourse. By contrast, magical realism blends the everyday and fantastical seamlessly, utilizing a language that is both familiar and natural. Therefore, although mystical and magical realism may share some similarities, they should be seen as arising from different modes of thinking reflecting diverse cultural contexts.

### 3. On Russian magical realism

The comparable tendencies seen in Russian culture and literature generate a conducive atmosphere for artists in the region to embrace and integrate magical realism. The first use of the term "magical realism" in Russia can be traced back to the early twentieth century, coinciding with parallel movements emerging in the Western world. The term's first appearance in Russian literature can be traced to an article by Sergey Sharshun (1888-1975), titled "Magical Realism (Магический реализм)," which was published in the journal "Chisla (Числа)." Sharshun was a renowned writer and painter. Despite the fact that the article was published in Paris, France, instead of Russia, its significance lies in being the first instance of the utility of the term 'magical realism' in Russian literary theory. Sharshun, a renowned figure in Russian émigré literature, references the observations of French critic Edmond Jaloux on the fundamental characteristics of magical realism in this article. Sharshun claims to embody this literary genre. The opening statement of the immigrant author's article presents Jaloux's reflections on magical realism, which are expressed as follows: The purpose of enchanting realism in artwork is to locate peculiar, poetic, and magnificent elements in the real world. These elements comprise surreal, symbolic, and poetic imagery that is attainable in everyday life. (Sharshun, 1932, p. 229). Sharshun aims to establish his standing in Russian magical realism by asserting that the features highlighted by Jaloux, including the blurring of lines between reality and imagination, the infusion of emotional depth, and the use of symbolism, are also present in his own creations. However, according to Russian critic Gleb Struve's assessment, Sharshun fails to consistently integrate the extraordinary elements of unreality into the reality of everyday life, as delineated by Jaloux. Struve argues that Sharshun's works expose life in all its rawness, occasionally featuring immoral elements. He argues that the art of immigrant writers does not align with Jaloux's magical realism (Struve, 1956, p. 202). Despite Struve's ambivalent position on magical realism, Sharshun classifies the works of significant figures in Russian immigrant literature, comprising Gayto Gazdanov, Nina Berberova, Irina Odoyevtseva, and Sharshun himself, as quintessentially portraying magical realism. Describing these individuals, including himself, as Western European Russians, Sharshun categorises these immigrant authors as belonging to the mystical branch

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within the realm of magical realism (Sharshun, 1932, pp. 230-231). The contrasting perspectives of Sharshun and Struve provide evidence of the flexible and multifaceted character of magical realism, demonstrating its vulnerability to diverse interpretations and applications. These differences can be seen as a manifestation of the diversified and flexible nature that is characteristic of magical realism. Additionally, the connections established between Sharshun and other immigrant writers and their Western equivalents significantly contributed to the development of the magical realism framework within Russian literature. This occurred because diverse writers resided outside their homelands and assimilated the West's literary fabric. They redefined magical realism by amalgamating it with their cultural roots. Furthermore, Sharshun and those in similar situations had a significant impact on increasing the worldwide recognition of Russian literature, supporting the idea that magical realism is not limited to a particular region or society but can be transformed through interactions between various cultures.

Following Sharshun, Vladimir Favorsky is another individual in Russian literature who utilises the term "magical realism." Favorsky, who is famous as a Soviet engraver, painter, and art critic, describes the concept further in his 1962 article "Magical Realism (Магический реализм)." He follows the roots of the term, from an artistic rather than literary perspective, back to Ancient Greek culture and early Christian art. Favorsky examines the sculptures of Daidalos, famous in Greek mythology for his skill in architecture and sculpture, which exhibit a striking resemblance to real-life figures and convey a sense of movement. He analyses this aspect within the framework of magical realism, as well as the portrayal of Prometheus, who, according to legend, created human beings from earth. Drawing on examples from ancient Greek mythology, Favorsky strengthens his argument by introducing the term "miraculous art (чудесное искусство)" to encompass magical realism. This phrase describes a form of art that is so intricately crafted that it appears to come to life (Favorsky, 1986, p. 227-228). In Favorsky's understanding of miraculous art, the portrayal is not so fanciful that it cannot be regarded as wholly tangible and genuine. Favorsky argues that the artwork is endowed with a quality of magical realism through its portrayal, situated at the crossroads of reality and imagination. This perspective embraces the depiction of heroes as everyday individuals or sculptures so lifelike that they defy distinction from reality as commonplace within the artistic paradigm. This captures Favorsky's interpretation of magical realism.

Certainly, scholars evaluating the historical roots of magical realism in Russian literature have diverse opinions, despite the initial individuals credited with coining the term. Sharshun, a prominent proponent of the term in Russia, believes that Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol, an esteemed figure in the domain of realism, is the precursor to Russian magical realism (Sharshun, 1932, p. 230). Objective language is used and there is a clear flow of information with a logical progression of statements. On the contrary, Academician Konstantin Kislitsyn, who conducts valuable research for the field, contends that the roots of Russian magical realism should be traced back to the 19th and 20th centuries. Anna Zhuravlyova, a Soviet literary scholar and academician, supports this view stating that "19th-century classical literature created the new Russian mythology, which was actively utilized in the XXth century, not only until 1917 but also during the Soviet period" (Zhuravlyova, 2001, p. 10). Kislitsyn agrees with Sharshun's viewpoint, stating that Gogol's stories, such as "Portrait (Портрет, 1835)", "Nevsky Street (Невский проспект, 1835)", and "The Nose (Нос, 1836)", establish the basis for Russian magical realism. Kislitsyn suggests that the relationship between reality and the extraordinary in the literary works of Alexander Pushkin and Gogol is influenced by fantastical imagery rather than folklore. He associates such imagery with an unblemished form of reality, which he typifies as austere and even demonic. Kislitsyn argues that Gogol and Pushkin surpass traditional literary boundaries by blurring the line between reality and fantasy by using powerful imagery. This leads him to suggest that the works

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of these renowned writers can be considered as a source of magical realism (Kislitsyn, 2011, p. 274). Kislitsyn's thesis, exploring the literary techniques of Gogol and Pushkin, two pivotal figures in Russian realism, and their skilled integration of the real and the extraordinary, is a topic that is currently being widely discussed. Nevertheless, the existence of elements and themes associated with magical realism in the works of these respected authors supports the views put forward by Sharshun and Kislitsyn. In conclusion, it is a valid assertion that the multifaceted artistic sensibilities of Gogol and Pushkin served as a wellspring of inspiration for Russian magical realism. This recognition of the genre as a scholarly term only came in the twentieth century, while the literary legacies of these two writers date back almost a century prior.

Larisa Ilina is a scholar who has linked Gogol's artistry with the realm of magical realism. In addition to Gogol, Ilina has noted several other prominent Russian writers of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Daniil Kharms, Mikhail Bulgakov, Abram Tertz, Viktor Pelevin, and Andrey Stolyarov, who have continued the Russian magical realism tradition. Il'ina (2016, p. 2026) expands the genre's scope, presenting its lasting impact on future Russian literature. Conversely, Gugin contends that the genre's primary examples are Andrei Platonov's "Chevengur (Чевенгур, 1928-1929)" and "The Foundation Pit (Котлован, 1930)". Platonov, who participated in literary pursuits in the first half of the 1900s, depicted Soviet ideology, technology, and society's role in the individual in his work. He frequently incorporated elements of the extraordinary in his art, resulting in its classification as magical realism. According to Gugin (1998), Platonov's narrative is highly realistic, while simultaneously containing completely unbelievable events. Thus, the author's works are characteristic of this genre (p. 44,70).

Yekaterina Skorospelova, an eminent expert on Russian literature of the twentieth century, conducts an exceptional investigation of magical realism and presents an innovative perspective on its development. She compares the neomythological novel (неомифологический роман), which originated in Slavic mythology as a new genre during a period of transformation in Russian literature, with Latin American magical realism, drawing a parallel between the two. This comparative study reveals how different cultural and literary movements are connected, demonstrating how Russian literature intersected with broader global trends during the twentieth century.

Skorospelova expresses the main idea behind her analogy as follows: "The use of 'magical realism' to assert the identity of Latin American culture provides a fresh perspective on the similar drive for self-assertion that emerged among writers who preceded it, stemming from Russian folk culture." (Skorospelova, 2003, p. 73). Examining the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, it is difficult to overlook the significant social, political, and cultural changes in Russia, which inevitably impacted literature as well as other artistic fields. This tumultuous period had a discernible effect on writers, prompting them towards new creative explorations. Skorospelova, though, examines the motivating factors that led to the emergence of these explorations from a different perspective. She highlights the connection between Western-influenced magical realism and similar tendencies in Russian literature, providing a new viewpoint on the development of this literary phenomenon in Russia.

Skorospelova examines the inception of the neomythological novel by delving into Symbolists' captivation with antiquity, Slavic paganism, and indigenous folklore. As a response to their longing to reconnect with the past, express the destiny and aspirations of the Russian peasantry, and bring the forgotten world and culture imagery back to life, a group of artists emerged. This collective, referred to as the "New Peasant Poets (Новокрестьянские поэты)", consisted of figures such as Nikolay Klyuyev, Sergei Yesenin, Sergei Klychkov, Petr Oreshin, and Alexander Shirayayevets.

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Skorospelova then directs her attention to the similarities between the neomythological novel and magical realism, highlighting Klyuyev's works and their author. She emphasizes that both the neomythological novel tradition and the realm of magical realism share a common goal of preserving national identity, which is reflected by a desire to embrace ancient culture while rejecting metropolitan influence. This represents the initial indication of their likeness. Skorospelova argues that both genres strive to restore a collective mythological-magical worldview. This allows them to present the world as a never-ending cycle with its mysterious and inexplicable structure. After outlining the analogous motivational foundations that formed the basis for both neomythological novels and magical realism, the Russian scholar goes on to discuss the similar attitudes of authors within both genres. In this respect, Skorospelova emphasizes that writers who integrate neomythological fiction and magical realism must accurately depict the universe while adhering to objective principles. She highlights the importance of creating believable and realistic works. Additionally, she argues that writers aiming to reconstruct a realistic universe should also uphold the principle of challenging the deceptive self-evident reality. This integration allows for extraordinary elements to intermingle with reality, resulting in a seamless blend of the two. The inclusion of mythical and legendary elements permits fantastical events to coexist with the tangible world, creating a magical and mythological atmosphere within the works (Skorospelova, 2003, p. 76-77). Skorospelova argues that similar characteristics are evident in the writings of contemporary rural poets such as Klychkov and Klyuyev, which leads her to connect their art to magical realism. However, the Russian scholar abstains from making conclusive classifications and avoids categorising the works of these contemporary rural poets as solely belonging to the magical realism genre. She recognizes that the neomythological novel and magical realism are different genres that emerged nearly contemporaneously. They have noticeable similarities but diverge along distinct paths within literature. Specific criteria establish the exclusive limits of each genre.

It is crucial to give significant attention to the artwork of the recent rural poets, as evaluated by Skorospelova within the neomythological novel genre, which draws them towards magical realism. The literature of the new peasant poets sought to bring novelty and topicality to Russian society by emphasizing national, social, and cultural values. Their works were based on elements such as the life of the village, the challenges faced by peasants, the natural richness of Russian lands, a love for their homeland, rural landscapes, Slavic mythology, ancient beliefs, ethical values, and legendary folk heroes that are specific to the Russian nation (Ilica, 2019, p.131). The criteria, including a desire to reconnect with national identity and essence and the presence of elements from national culture and folklore, exhibit a certain resonance with the artistic philosophy of the new peasant poets, while the shared social stratum of both genres' writers is particularly noteworthy. While magical realism arose in literature of societies marked by colonialism, the literary ethos adopted by the new peasant poets emerged during the period when serfdom was abolished in Russia, purportedly liberating the peasants. This reform, aimed at enhancing the living standards of Russian peasants, inadvertently resulted in a worsening of disparities. The quest for social class equality, aimed at abolishing serfdom, ultimately worked against the peasants. This led to significant differences between the lower and upper echelons of society. As a result, poets from the peasant class - who constituted the majority and endured harsher living conditions than the privileged minority - turned to a new literary paradigm for solace. They acted with the aim of expressing themselves effectively and safeguarding their cultural heritage, like the approach taken by Latin American writers. It is important to stress that although both genres share resemblances in their origin and themes, the new peasant poets' literary philosophy should be considered separately from magical realism.

Sergey Chuprinin, a well-known literary critic, and journalist who experienced the Soviet Union and its aftermath, offers a unique perspective on the interpretations put forth by other scholars. He examines

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the presence of magical realism in Russian literature by analysing the works of Soviet writers from various national, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, all of whom wrote in the Russian language. This approach broadens and diversifies the perspectives on how magical realism is perceived and expressed in the literary sphere of Russia. Notable Soviet literature figures such as Fazil Iskander (Abkhaz), Chinghiz Aitmatov (Kyrgyz), Yuri Rytkheu (Chukchi), Gennady Aygi (Chuvash), Anatoly Kim (Kazakh), Timur Zulfikarov (Tajik), Vladimir Sangi (Nivkh), Ravil Bukharaev (Tatar) and Alan Cherkhesov (Ossetian) argue that their works have elements of magical realism. Chuprinin considers the works of these writers to be an essential but separate aspect of Russian literature. Their aim was to raise awareness of the literature of societies that existed within the territory of Russia prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After gaining independence, these societies sought to create their own national identities. Chuprinin argues that the authors' works exploring the challenges of survival in the Soviet regime's conditions are a prelude to the strenuous voyage that globalization imposed on societies striving to protect their national and cultural identities post-empire collapse. Chuprinin (2007) suggests that Soviet writers who created magical realist works were unable to disconnect from their ethnic roots in the dual cultural context. They identified themselves as descendants of Russian culture. Notably, similarities exist between magical realist writers of Latin American literature and these literary figures of the Soviet era. Both groups of writers confronted comparable challenges. Latin American societies, subjected to colonialism, strive to preserve their ethnic identities while encountering the effects of dominant cultures. As a result, the concept of "magic and reality," central to magical realism, is significant for writers originating from these cultures, which are characterized by the inherent cultural duality experienced in their endeavor to balance tradition and modernity.

Anatoliy Kudryavitsky, a Russian-Irish writer, translator, and editor, offers a unique perspective on the origins of magical realism in Russian literature. In his contribution to an anthology of short stories within the genre, Kudryavitsky defines magical realism as follows: Magical realism arises from techniques like alienation, absurdity, and caricature to exaggerate even the most negative human traits. It involves deliberate distortion of history and blurring of geographical realities. Dreams, parables, and fairy-tale narrations bring to life the most grotesque expressions of consciousness and existence. Kudryavitsky defines these methods and characteristics of magical realism. According to this perspective, the artistic movement seeks to blur the line between the tangible and the extraordinary. This is achieved by using methods such as portraying events and characters in an unconventional way, employing an absurd tone, distorting historical narratives, obscuring geographical realities, and embodying the idiosyncratic aspects of consciousness through the realm of dreams. Magical realism produces an atmosphere that is extraordinary and surreal. Moreover, it offers a distinct perspective of the real world through the inclusion of simile and fairy tale narrative elements. Kudryavitsky expounds on the principles and techniques of this artistic concept with these statements. It is argued that Russian magical realism was developed by the symbolists, futurists, and writers of the Union of Real Art (OBERIU) in the early twentieth century and the 1930s (Kudryavitsky, 2000). Furthermore, it is suggested that the genre primarily emerged in prose miniature, a genre closely linked to poetry, despite differing opinions on its origin. However, it is commonly accepted that the genesis of this phenomenon can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century, a time dominated by the rise of modernist philosophy which displaced realist aesthetics (Vladimirovna, 2023, p. 120). This form of artistic expression, portrayed through short stories or texts as traditional miniature art, comprises of unique pieces that aptly communicate the central theme (Mostyka, 2019, p. 222). Despite its brevity, the genre of prose miniature encapsulates extensive and significant connotations by judiciously employing symbols and imagery in its content (Khodina, 2023, p. 125). Magical realism blends the real and supernatural, portraying extraordinary events in an everyday reality. It is evident that these two genres,

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characterised by their content and themes, are distinct forms of literary expression. However, the presence of magical realist elements in certain prose miniature works substantiates the link highlighted by Kudryavitsky. This indicates a possible interplay and cross-pollination between these literary genres, exemplifying the dynamic and developing nature of different forms of literature.

In the prose miniature genre, Ivan Bunin's "The Day of the Name" (Именины, 1924) presents contrasting images of "a massive cloud of black dust" and "radiant sunlight". The symbolization of death through the black cloud and the narration of events through dreams evoke magical realist themes. Furthermore, the effective utilization of symbolism is a shared characteristic that brings prose miniature and magical realism in closer proximity. Nevertheless, the distinction lies in the fact that in magical realism, symbolism intertwines with reality, while in prose miniature, the portrayal of reality is augmented with imagery to offset the absence of narrative and clarification (Malinkina, 2023, p. 125-126). In conclusion, magical realism and prose miniature are distinct but intricately intertwined genres that employ language, symbols, and imagery to expand the frontiers of literary expression, delivering profound experiences to readers. The crucial connection between these genres' rests on the fact that prose miniature can incorporate magical realism elements, and both have the potential to unveil an extraordinary world to the reader. This shared potential for evoking the extraordinary emphasises their affinity.

Kudryavitskiy analyses the interplay between two genres and evaluates the works of Soviet-Russian writer Viktor Goliavkin. Goliavkin adopted the artistic ethos of the OBERIU group but developed his own distinctive style in prose miniature. His art features a milder form of irony than that of the OBERIU writers. He presents the world from the viewpoint of a child, avoiding direct opinions on society or individual nature. Additionally, Goliavkin's works are notable for his tendency to construct stories based on real historical events in his own life or immediate surroundings (Pankrashkin, 2020, p.79). Kudryavitskiy argues that Goliavkin, who practised magical realism in the latter half of the 20th century, along with writers like Andrei Bitov, Vladimir Maramzin, Alexandr Zhitinsky, Oleg Grigoryev, Valery Popov, and Valery Ronshin, who were inspired by his work, collaborated to establish the "Petersburg School" of magical realism. On the contrary, it is argued that writers like Yevgeniy Kropivnitskiy, Georgiy Ball, Gennady Tsyferov, Roza Khusnutdinova, Arkady Gavrillov, and Mikhail Sokovnin established the "Moscow School" faction of magical realism. According to Kudryavitskiy, the art of the Petersburg faction of magical realism is akin to humorous and absurd genres, whereas the works of the writers belonging to the Moscow School are more unusual than amusing. The Moscow magical realism movement, which thrived in the 1960s and '70s, continued through the subsequent years through the works of writers such as Yuri Mamleev, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Vadim Kozovoi, Dan Markovich, and Nina Gabrielian. Each writer's distinct interpretation of magical realism adds to the genre's rich diversity. For example, Kudryavitsky notes that Mamleev's magical realism, which he describes as "brutal," blends smoothly with Nina Gabrielian's style, while Dan Markovich's philosophical parables sharply contrast with the satirical nature of Petrushevskaya's "Wild Animal Tales" (Дикие животные, 2003). This divergence of styles and perspectives enriches the magical realism landscape, displaying its potential for varied expressions (Kudryavitsky, 2000). From Kudryavitsky's remarks, it is apparent that while there exist theoretical characteristics that delineate magical realism, in actual practice, authors' personal interpretations of the genre based on their unique perspectives pose a challenge in demarcating clear-cut boundaries. Additionally, the undefined boundaries of Russian magical realism, which appeared during a time marked by the arrival of different intellectual movements that overthrew the dominant artistic philosophy of realism in the twentieth century, suggest that the genre's historical path is subject to a range of interpretations. This highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of magical realism in the context of Russian literature.

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#### 4. Conclusion

In summary, the notion of "magical realism" infiltrates various artistic disciplines, prompting a range of interpretations globally and within Russia's context. Gugin's perspective suggests that magical realism is a unique and independent artistic movement that incorporates various art forms, especially in literature, which reveals the intricate artistic and cultural significance of this paradigm. This viewpoint is important in comprehending the multifaceted resonance of magical realism. The different assessments made by writers, critics, and artists in evaluating the connection between Russian literature and magical realism exemplify the intricate and adaptable nature of this concept. The presence of magical realism in Russian literature also illuminates its evolutionary path within particular geographical boundaries, influenced by various cultural, historical, and individual outlooks. Conversely, when one contemplates Russia's rich historical tapestry and its mosaic of cultural and ethnic strata, it becomes more comprehensible how magical realism assumed a distinct identity within this terrain. The harsh climate, protracted winters, folklore, mythic narratives, and historical epochs drove Russian writers to create narratives that combine realism with imaginative elements. Additionally, the interaction between Russian literary traditions and other cultures is crucial in understanding the origins of magical realism within this context. The interactions with Western and Latin American literary circles allowed Russian literature to develop its own unique interpretation of this paradigm. It is essential to view magical realism as more than just a literary genre, but also as a response to cultural and societal changes, a means of resistance, and a tool for critical inquiry. Moreover, it is essential to view the link between Russian literature and this movement as a reflection of ever-changing cultural and social trends, rather than a mere aesthetic preference.

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