

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF MAGICAL REALISM IN F. KAFKA'S CREATIVITY**Mamatisaqova Sevara Shamshiboyevna**

AIFU Master's student (2nd year) in Foreign Language and Literature.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20039234>

Abstract: This article explores the specific features of magical realism in the works of Franz Kafka, one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. Although Kafka is often associated with existentialism and absurdism, his creative output also demonstrates key elements of magical realism, such as the blending of reality with fantastical elements, the normalization of the absurd, and the psychological transformation of characters. The study analyzes Kafka's major works, including *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*, to identify how magical realism manifests in his narrative techniques, symbolic structures, and thematic concerns. The article also examines scholarly perspectives on Kafka's literary style and situates his work within the broader context of magical realism. The findings suggest that Kafka's unique approach to narrative creates a distinctive form of magical realism that reflects modern alienation, bureaucratic oppression, and existential anxiety.

Keywords: Franz Kafka, magical realism, absurdism, existentialism, narrative technique, symbolism, transformation, modern literature, psychological realism

Introduction

Franz Kafka is widely recognized as a pioneer of modernist literature whose works challenge traditional narrative forms and explore the complexities of human existence. His stories often depict ordinary individuals placed in extraordinary and irrational situations, creating a sense of unease and ambiguity. While Kafka is frequently categorized under existentialism and absurdism, a closer examination reveals significant elements of magical realism in his works.

Magical realism is typically associated with Latin American literature, particularly writers like Gabriel García Márquez. However, its defining characteristics—such as the seamless integration of fantastical elements into realistic settings—can also be found in Kafka's narratives. Unlike traditional fantasy, magical realism does not separate the magical from reality; instead, it presents both as equally valid aspects of existence.

This article aims to analyze the specific features of magical realism in Kafka's творчество, focusing on how he blends the ordinary with the extraordinary, constructs symbolic meanings, and reflects psychological and social realities. The study also addresses the question of whether Kafka can be considered a precursor to magical realism.

Literature Review

The study of Kafka's literary style has generated extensive scholarly debate. Early interpretations focused on existential themes, emphasizing alienation, guilt, and the search for meaning. Scholars such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre viewed Kafka as a central figure in the philosophy of absurdism.

Later critics began to examine the narrative techniques in Kafka's works, particularly his use of surreal and dreamlike elements. Critics such as Vladimir Nabokov emphasized Kafka's ability to create a "logical irrationality," where fantastical events are presented with realistic detail and accepted by characters without question.

In the context of magical realism, some scholars argue that Kafka's works anticipate the genre's development. Magical realism, as defined by critics like Alejo Carpentier, involves the perception of reality as inherently magical. Kafka's narratives align with this idea, as they present bizarre transformations and inexplicable events as part of everyday life.

However, there is also debate regarding whether Kafka truly belongs to the tradition of magical realism. Some researchers argue that his works lack the cultural and mythological grounding typical of Latin American magical realism. Instead, Kafka's style is seen as more individualistic and rooted in European modernism.

Despite these differences, many contemporary scholars acknowledge that Kafka's творчество shares key features with magical realism, particularly in its treatment of reality, narrative tone, and symbolic depth.

Discussion

1. The Integration of the Ordinary and the Extraordinary

One of the defining features of magical realism in Kafka's works is the seamless blending of the ordinary with the extraordinary. In *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist Gregor Samsa wakes up transformed into a giant insect. This event, while fantastical, is presented in a matter-of-fact manner. Neither Gregor nor his family expresses shock in a conventional sense; instead, they focus on practical concerns.

This normalization of the absurd is a hallmark of magical realism. The extraordinary is not questioned but accepted as part of reality. Kafka uses this technique to challenge readers' perceptions and highlight the irrational nature of human existence.

2. Psychological Depth and Symbolism

Kafka's use of magical realism is deeply connected to psychological exploration. The fantastical elements in his works often symbolize internal conflicts and emotional states. Gregor's transformation, for example, can be interpreted as a manifestation of alienation, guilt, and self-perception.

Similarly, in *The Trial*, the protagonist Josef K. is subjected to an incomprehensible legal system. The surreal nature of the trial reflects the psychological anxiety and existential uncertainty experienced by the individual in modern society.

Kafka's magical realism is thus not merely decorative but serves as a tool for psychological and philosophical inquiry.

3. Bureaucratic Absurdity as Magical Reality

Another distinctive feature of Kafka's творчество is the portrayal of bureaucratic systems as surreal and incomprehensible. In *The Castle*, the protagonist struggles to gain access to an

elusive authority. The bureaucratic processes are depicted as illogical and infinite, creating a sense of disorientation.

This portrayal transforms everyday institutions into sources of magical realism. The absurdity of bureaucracy becomes a “magical” element that shapes reality and controls human lives.

4. Narrative Tone and Objectivity

Kafka’s narrative style plays a crucial role in creating magical realism. His tone is often neutral and detached, even when describing extraordinary events. This objectivity reinforces the sense that the magical is an inherent part of reality.

Unlike traditional fantasy, where the magical is highlighted as unusual, Kafka’s narratives treat it as ordinary. This technique blurs the boundary between reality and imagination.

5. Existential Themes and Magical Realism

Kafka’s magical realism is closely tied to existential themes such as alienation, freedom, and the search for meaning. The fantastical elements in his works often serve to illustrate the absurdity of existence.

For example, the inexplicable nature of Gregor’s transformation or Josef K.’s trial reflects the lack of rational order in the world. This existential dimension distinguishes Kafka’s magical realism from other forms of the genre.

Results

The analysis of Kafka’s works reveals several specific features of magical realism:

- The normalization of fantastical events within realistic settings
- The use of surreal elements to represent psychological states
- The transformation of social institutions into sources of absurdity
- A neutral narrative tone that integrates the magical into reality
- The connection between magical realism and existential themes

These features demonstrate that Kafka’s творчество embodies a unique form of magical realism that differs from traditional interpretations but aligns with its core principles.

Conclusion

Franz Kafka’s works represent a distinctive approach to magical realism that combines elements of modernism, existentialism, and psychological depth. While he is not traditionally classified as a magical realist, his narratives exhibit key characteristics of the genre, including the seamless integration of the magical and the real.

Kafka's use of magical realism serves not only as a narrative technique but also as a means of exploring complex philosophical and psychological issues. His works challenge readers to reconsider the nature of reality and the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

In conclusion, Kafka can be seen as a precursor to magical realism, whose innovative style has influenced later writers and contributed to the development of the genre.

References

1. Kafka, F. (1915). *The Metamorphosis*.
2. Kafka, F. (1925). *The Trial*.
3. Kafka, F. (1926). *The Castle*.
4. Camus, A. (1942). *The Myth of Sisyphus*.
5. Sartre, J.-P. (1943). *Being and Nothingness*.
6. Carpentier, A. (1949). *The Kingdom of This World*.
7. Márquez, G. G. (1967). *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.
8. Nabokov, V. (1980). *Lectures on Literature*.
9. Todorov, T. (1975). *The Fantastic*.
10. Zamora, L. P., & Faris, W. B. (1995). *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*.