

## Elements of Magical Realism\*\*

The following elements are found in many magical realist works.

- Elements of the magical and the mundane are interwoven seamlessly, making it impossible to determine where reality ends and the extraordinary begins.
- The story is set in an otherwise ordinary world, with familiar historical and/or cultural realities. Story events are not always explained by universal laws or familiar logic.
- The ordinary aspects of the story are what produce the greatest magic.
- Objects and settings within the story may take on lives of their own in a way that is ordinary to the characters in the story.
- The story, as it unfolds, gives the reader a sense of being inside a puzzle or maze.
- Contradictions, inconsistencies and ambiguities color the point of view, making you question what you understand about the world at large, as well as what happens inside the story.
- A metamorphosis takes place in the story. It's treated not as a miracle, but as an everyday event.
- The story bears the influences of oral tradition: fables, myths, tall tales, urban legends, a charmed storytelling narrator (who may or may not be reliable).
- The magical elements in the story may enhance a subversive message or personalized point of view. Often the point of view is revealed through voices, ideas, and places which exist outside the mainstream or majority perspective.
- Magic occurs without using devices typical to the fantasy genre unless the devices (i.e. ghosts, angels) are employed in a context that makes them ordinary. Ghosts or angels may exist in a magical realist story, for instance, but not in a way that is surprising or unusual to the characters in the piece.

\*\*Gabriel García Márquez claimed that in Latin America, "magical realism" is just "realism," because supernatural and strange things happen there all the time.