
Magical Realism in the World of Cartoons and its Impact on Children

Dr. Cheryl Davis

Department of English
St. Joseph's College (Autonomous)
Tiruchirappalli – 620 002

Magischer Realismus or Magic Realism, coined by Franz Roh in 1920, captures the mystery of life behind surface reality. A term introduced in 1925 referring to art that attempts to produce a clear depiction of reality that includes a presentation of the mysterious elements of everyday life. It is an expression that includes magical happenings in a realist-matter-of-fact, where supernaturalism becomes an ordinary matter. Since the 1980's, the term 'magical realism' has become both highly fashionable and highly derided. It refers to a particular narrative mode discussing the alternative approaches to reality like Western Philosophy, Postcolonial, Postmodern and Non-Western works of Contemporary fiction.

The history of magical realism spans about eight decades. The first period

is set in Germany in the 1920s, the second period in Central America in the 1940s and the third period beginning in 1955 in Latin America continues internationally to this day. All the periods are linked by literary and artistic figures whose works spread the influence of magical realism around Europe, from Europe to Latin America and from Latin America to the rest of the world. The key figures in the development of the term are the German art critic Franz Roh best known for his work in the 1920s, the mid-twentieth-century Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, the Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli from the 1920s and the 1930s, the mid-twentieth-century Latin American literary critic Angel Flores and the late twentieth-century Latin American novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

In today's world, Magical Realism is much associated in children's culture. Much recent children's culture, particularly literature and television for children in the English language has adopted magical realism. Fairy tales are not magical realist, since the stories take place on another plane of narratives that are related to our own reality at some interpretative level. Through magic realism, children explore a world through their imagination without losing a connection to what they recognize as the "real world" (Bowers 104).

Children's literature critic Roger Drury explains that "a child seems positively obsessed by a need to experiment with ways of looking at the world, to rearranging place and time, to challenge the stable and predictable frame of experience"(Bower 104). Many magical happenings in children's fiction occur in ordinary settings for limited periods of time while maintaining a close connection

to reality. In English, the writer that first approached the idea of magical realism was the trail-blazing late-Victorian English Children's writer Edith Nesbit. Nesbit wrote books which later became known as modern fantasy and was revolutionary.

Magical Realism has become a popular narrative mode that describes a particular attitude to non-scientific and non-pragmatic beliefs in a world which is universally influenced by science and pragmatism. The attitudes to the concept of magic produce a wide variety of magical realist and magical realist works. It can be a synonym for mystery, an extraordinary happening or the supernatural. The critic Zamora states that magical realism is a mode suited to exploring and transgressing boundaries whether they are ontological, political, geographical or generic.

The narrative point of view relies upon an absence of obvious judgements about the veracity of the events and the

authenticity of the world view expressed by the characters. Magical realism can also be related to other terms like realism, surrealism, allegory and fantastic. It relies upon the prior understanding of what is meant by magic' and what is meant by 'realism'. In magic realism,

- Magic refers to the mystery of life
- Magic refers to any extraordinary and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science.
- It includes ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents and strange atmosphere.
- Conjuring the magic is brought about by tricks that give the illusion that something extraordinary has really happened.

The mixture of using magic and realism came into existence in the mid-eighteenth century. It is also related to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle's concept of mimesis. The idea of

portraying real actions in art was discussed by Aristotle who claimed that the act of imitating life, or in mimesis, is a natural instinct of humans. He explains that the ancient Greek belief that witnessing art is an essential way to learn about the universal truths of life. For instance, "for this the art itself must appear to be real to the reader or viewer in depicting something that exists, has existed or could or should exist" (Bowers 21). Thus Aristotle paved the way for what is understood as realism in fictional narratives. He claimed that it is better to convince the reader of the realism of something impossible rather than to be unconvincing about something that is true.

Magic realism is closely connected with surrealism. The mixture of these movement where first developed in the first half of the twentieth century. It explores the non-pragmatic, non-realist aspects of human existence. It attempts to portray an aspect of life, memory and that

is psychological, through pictorial and physical means. Another term that is associated with magical realism is that of the fantastic. The fantastic elements like the appearance of the ghost, evil omens, witchcraft, extraordinary events etc. that is included within a realistic tale. The narrational effect is indeed a mixture of the real and hallucination in a way that accepts the imaginary as an ordinary part of the reality. The viewer and the narrator however know that these imaginings are just that, originates from the mind and not present in the material world of recognizable society.

Today's society is entirely dependent on one of the most entertaining media, the television. From morning news to social media feeds, blog posts, advertising messages and a network of programmes, people are glued to the television world. Not only for adults, but also for children, television has become a baby sitter, whose parents are busy with

their own jobs. Television is a telecommunication medium for transmitting and receiving moving images that can be monochrome (black-and-white) or coloured. Commercially available since the late 1920s, the television set has become commonplace in homes, businesses and institutions, particularly as a vehicle for advertising, a source of entertainment and news. Since the 1950's, television has been the main medium for moulding public opinion.

While radio has sound, television content includes both sound and visuals. This audio visual character of television makes it a "Magic Medium" (Mahajan 204), which allows us to watch the world from our drawing rooms. It is generally regarded as a domestic medium. It provides entertainment and information right inside our homes and has become an integral part of our everyday lives. This makes the viewer's experience a sense of

closeness to the anchors of a show or with the characters in a serial.

Television keeps all types of audiences in mind whether they are children, women, youth, elderly, farmers, industrial workers, students or even illiterates and thus offers a number of channels for everyone. They telecast many such programmes that are audience specific. Keeping the target audience in mind, these special programmes are planned, fulfilling the desires of specific group. In case of children's programmes, stories, music, games and general knowledge are available. In women's programmes, tips on cooking, cosmetics, sewing, legal problems etc. are given. In case of farmers programmes, subjects on agriculture, dairy farming, poultry, cooperative activities etc. are adequately covered. The youth programme has a separate format which provides for discussion on the problems, desires and requirements of the youth, generally

presented by young anchors and for the young audience.

The most popular category of television channels among kids are the cartoon channels. Cartoon network is the most popular cartoon-dedicated television channels. It airs in different languages of variety of cartoons like Tom and Jerry, Doraemon, Ben 10, Ninja Hattori, Motu Patlu, Chotta Bheem etc. By watching their favourite cartoons, children are unable to differentiate between fantasy and reality, and tend to adapt to the actions of their favourite characters, which make them violent and aggressive. Such behaviour effects their psychological development in the later stage.

Children are some of the most fascinating beings to inhabit the world says Dulumoni Narah Pegu. They are a blessing to the family and the society. Children need a positive environment to live and grow. Parents are considered their first teachers and teachers as second

parents. These two play an important part in bringing up a child. They are responsible for the child's psyche, behaviour and growth. The experiences they share and the interactions they make have a lasting influence on almost every aspect of their development. The homes and schools play an influential role in protecting them from the adverse effects of poverty, dangerous neighbourhoods or difficult home environments.

Psychological development in a human being is a dynamic process which begins at birth and matures through a series of sequential stages resulting in specific characteristic behaviour. These stages are governed by genetic, familial, cultural, interpersonal and inter-psyche factors. The word 'Psychology' is derived from two Greek words, 'Psyche' and 'Logos'. Psyche means soul and logos mean science. Thus psychology was first defined as the 'science of soul'. According to earlier psychologists, the function of

psychology was to study the nature, origin and destiny of the human soul. But soul is something metaphysical. It cannot be seen, observed and touched. In the 18th century, psychology was understood as the science of mental processes. But the word mind is also ambiguous regarding the nature and functions of the mind.

Modern Psychologists defined psychology as the 'Science of Consciousness'. James Sully defined psychology as the 'Science of the inner world'. Wilhelm Wundt defined psychology as the science which studies the internal experiences. At present psychology is defined as 'behaviour'. William McDugall defined psychology as the 'Science of Behaviour'. W.B Pilsbury and J.B Watson also defined psychology as the science of behaviour. So thus psychology came to be defined as the study of human behaviour and human relationships.

Childhood is the age span ranging from birth to adolescence. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, childhood consists of two stages: preoperational stage and concrete operational stage. Understanding a child is one of the most important things that a parent and teacher should learn. It is very helpful in guiding and nurturing a child as it grows and matures. The child has a unique personality trait that remains consistent throughout life. Child development refers to the biological, psychological and emotional changes that occur in human beings between birth and the end of adolescence, as the individual progresses from dependency to increasing autonomy.

During the stage of development, young children begin analysing their environment using mental symbols. These symbols often include words and images. The child will begin to apply these various symbols in their everyday lives as they

come across different objects, events and situations. Piaget calls this stage as preoperational because children are not able to apply specific cognitive operations, such as mental math. In addition to symbolism, children begin engaging in pretend play where they begin pretending to be people such as heroes or super heroes. Hence they may use different props to make their pretend play more real.

Health Link, British Columbia states that the ages between 2 and 5 are often called the preschool years. During these years, children change from clumsy toddlers into lively explorers of their world. A child develops in these main areas:

- **Physical Development:** In these years, a child becomes stronger and starts to look longer and learner.
- **Cognitive Development:** A child at this age makes great strides in being able to think and reason. In

these years, children learn their letters, counting and colours.

- **Emotional and Social Development:** Between the ages of 2 and 5, children gradually learn how to manage their feelings. By age 5, friends become important.
- **Language:** By age 2, most children can say at least 50 words. By age 5, a child may know thousands of words and be able to carry on conversations and tell stories.
- **Sensory and Motor Development:** By age 2, most children can walk up stairs one at a time, kick a ball and draw simple strokes with a pencil. By age 5, most can dress and undress themselves and write some lowercase or capital letters. Each child grows and gains skills at his or her own pace.

Today, children have become more interested in cartoons. Children begin

watching cartoons on Television at an early age of six months, and by the age of two or three, they become enthusiastic viewers. Cartoons are the central focus of many children's lives that parents manipulatively use to help keep the children occupied while they are busy with their office work or any other domestic work.

Cartoons may have its positive or negative impact on children. Children at every age learn a variety of things easily by watching cartoons. Infants and toddlers start learning different words and their meanings. Sometimes watching cartoons have a tremendous impact in improving the cognitive aspects among young children, where they became very creative. They try to do things in different ways so their imagination and creativity is enhanced.

Watching cartoons regularly has its advantages and disadvantages. Watching cartoons has become a part of a child's life

or a habit. Parents should think about how to prevent their children from the bad effects of cartoons. Parents should spend time with their kids as much as they can. If they do not have enough time to spend with their children, they should know what kind of cartoons their children can be allowed to watch every day. Sometimes when watching cartoons, children become violent and addictive. Children who watch too much cartoons on television are more likely to have mental and emotional problems, along with brain and eye injuries and unexpectedly the risk of a physical problem.

If a cartoon character conveys an educational or moral lesson, then it can help to speed up the learning process in children. But many cartoons depict scenes of violence or danger. Without proper lessons to counterbalance those effects, children may grow up aggressive and eager to engage in violence – unaware that the real world contains far more

consequences than what a TV show depicts. Sometimes children tend to identify themselves with the cartoon characters as role models that encourage good behaviour.

Children who spend inordinate amounts of time in front of the television don't always get as much exercise as they should and are more likely to be overweight. Reports from "Bowling Green State University" cite a detrimental effect on the brains of children who watch too many cartoons, including children developing attention deficit disorder and seizures. Children must have balanced lifestyles that include exercise and outdoor activity. This may help them to have a good and healthy growth physically and mentally.

Modern cartoons are very violent, create false sense of reality and negatively affect the development of children's social skills. While watching cartoons, children's brain processes a lot of violent acts. The

researcher has taken six cartoons for study, and as made an analysis of it on children. The following cartoons taken up for study are Tom and Jerry, Chotta Bheem, Ben 10, Ninja Hattori, Doraemon and Motu Patlu. The six cartoons are popular among children in today's scenario. The magical reality in the select cartoons is analysed by the researcher.

Tom and Jerry

It is an all-time favourite cartoon of children. It is an animated series created in 1940, by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. It centres on a rivalry between its two title characters, Tom and Jerry, and many recurring characters, based around slapstick comedy. The series features comic fights between an iconic set of adversaries, a house cat (Tom) and a mouse (Jerry). The plots of each short usually centres on Tom's numerous attempts to capture Jerry and the mayhem and destruction that follows.

Tom and Jerry's relationship is an oxymoron. They appear to be friends but are dynamic enemies. Tom is innocent and ignorant, while Jerry is intellectual and criminal minded. If anyone states you are like Tom and Jerry, it means they are like cats and dogs or cats and rats or in contradictory terms. They don't have smooth relationships. Tom is always seen chasing Jerry. Jerry is shown as one who masters all criminal tricks. Jerry tries to hurt Tom in all possible ways such as using dynamites, sticks, pins, stones, weapons, guns etc. The episodes are humorous meant for children. Yet there is a lot of violence in it like fighting, aggressive actions, killing, cutting, hurting etc. Children watching Tom and Jerry tend to become violent on the other. They may try to use the same actions on their friends or siblings, just as Jerry uses on Tom. Children may learn to fight, throw things, hit, kick, break etc. The child tries to imitate Jerry and not Tom. You ask a

child whom it likes, Tom or Jerry? The child immediately says Jerry. The impact of this cartoon makes the child behave very violent and aggressive.

Doraemon

It depicts a magic world. It is a Japanese manga series written and illustrated by Fujiko F. Fujio. The story revolves around a robotic cat named Doraemon, who travels back in time from the 22nd century to aid a pre-teen boy named Nobita Nobi. Nobita is a young boy who suffers from poor grades and frequent bullying. In order to improve the life of his descendants, the robotic cat Doraemon is sent back in time by one of those descendants to protect and guide Nobita. Doraemon has a pocket from which he produces items known as “gadgets”, which range from toy and medicines, to technology from the future.

This cartoon is filled with magical elements to the core. The cat Doraemon has many gadgets in his pocket with which

he is able to do magic. He is helpful to his friend Nobita who is a slow learner and very lethargic. Doraemon is able to take Nobita to the past or the future, he takes him to strange lands with the time machine, he meets strange people etc. Children watching this cartoon get confused between the past and the future. They also believe that they can go back to the past or look at the future. This creates an ambiguity among the minds of the children. Doraemon fulfils every wish of Nobita through his magic spell. This encourages children to demand for everything they wish for. They believe that they can get everything that they want in the world. This attitude makes them stubborn and arrogant. Parents find it difficult to control them and decide to give them whatever they want.

Ben 10

It is an American animated TV series created by Man of Action Studios. The story revolves around a boy named

Ben Tennyson who acquires a watch like alien device (the Omnitrix) which allows the wearer to transform into ten different alien creatures. Ben Tennyson stays with his grandfather, Max and cousin Gwen. During his stay, he discovers the Omnitrix, an alien device which allows him to change his DNA to that of various aliens and take on their form. Ben uses this device to avert disasters, save people from terror, and fight off hostile villains including Vilgax, an alien warlord bent on using the Omnitrix to outfit an alien army.

This cartoon created a mass audience among children. Children were very much addicted to this cartoon character called Ben 10. Ben Tennyson who turns into an alien by the turn of his watch to destroy his enemies became very popular. Children started becoming Ben 10's. They wore the things used by Ben 10. Starting from their cap to their shoes was of Ben 10. Many children were almost found wearing Ben 10 watches. Ben 10

watch was the magic element with which the character uses to change himself into an alien. This made market products to focus more on Ben 10 toys which ran to millions of sales. Children believed that there existed such aliens and started behaving violently like them.

Chotta Bheem

Chotta Bheem is an Indian animated comedy adventure television series created by Rajiv Chilaka premiered in 2008. It focuses on adventures of a boy named Bheem and his friends in the fictional kingdom of Dholakpur. Bheem and his friends are usually involved in protecting Raja Indravarma, the King of Dholakpur and his kingdom from various evil forces. Sometimes they also help other kingdoms from various evil forces. It is one of the most animated series for children in India.

This Indian cartoon more or less like Ben 10 had a great impact on children. Bheem became a favourite role model in

the mind of every child. Children started to believe that by eating laddoos, they would become strong like Bheem. They started dressing like Bheem and wearing and using everything with the image of Bheem. Even the stationery items like pens, pencils, water bottles, tiffin boxes, school bags, lunch bags etc were a demand among kids. By using all these things, children almost looked like cartoon characters. Children also believed that they really existed a place called Dolaphur. They insisted their parents to take them there to meet Bheem. The outcome of Bheem was another famous cartoon serial 'Mighty Raju'. The plot was modelled on Bheem's friend Raju. Raju, an ordinary boy gets his super powers and becomes mighty Raju to destroy his enemies. Children tend to use these super heroes as their role models as they grow. Such influence may make them violent and aggressive as they grow.

Ninja Hattori

Ninja Hattori is a series created by Fujiko Fujio from Japan. The main protagonist is Kenichi Mitsuba, an 11 year old boy, who is not good in studies. He is found always lazy and stubborn, and ends up giving a lot of problems to his parents and teacher. A Ninja named Hattori befriends Kenichi. Hattori becomes a part of Kenichi's family along with his little brother Shinzo, his ninjo dog, Shishi-Maru. Hattori helps Kenichi with his problems.

This cartoon is similar to Doraemon. Hattori who is a Ninja helps Kenichi who is lazy and slow in learning. Kenichi is the same like Nobita in Doraemon. Hattori with his Ninja tricks always fulfils the wishes of Kenichi. Kenichi and his enemy Kenumaki, a Koga Ninja and his ninja cat Kagechiyo, are always shown to prove their might in front of a little girl Yumeko, to gain her love. This might expose children to the world of romance. Children may get attracted to the

opposite sex by losing their innocence. They come to learn what love is and become infatuated to it. They may also claim to have girlfriends at a very early age. Every super hero tends to have a girlfriend starting from Bheem, Ben 10, Ninja Hattori, Doraemon and Mighty Raju. This destroys the innocence of children and they develop an infatuation towards the opposite sex.

Motu Patlu

It is an Indian-Singaporean series. It focuses on two friends, Motu and Patlu, living in the fictional city Furfuri Nagar. It focuses on how they have a penchant to land in hilarious situations and later rescue themselves merely by sheer luck. Samosa is the favourite food of Motu which makes his brain to work. When he eats samosas, he receives more energy and derives more strength than his normal state. He often lands in trouble because of his actions.

Motu Patlu deals with two adult characters that are very funny and act silly in their actions. Motu like Bheem becomes intellectual after eating samosas. This makes children to believe that they can become intellectual after eating the samosas. The eating of laddoos or samosas portray that it gives strength or knowledge. Children tend to believe that it is true. Children try to imitate all these characters and tend to learn whatever they do or speak. Due to this children fail to learn the real way of living in action or language. The languages used in these cartoons are so obscene that children try to relish the dialogues. The cartoon is relayed in different languages like English, Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam. The dialogues are very harsh and unsuitable for the children to use.

In today's generation, television has a great influence on children. Most of the programmes watched by children have a negative impact on them. Such

programmes give a wrong impression of what really happens in everyday life. It also influences their development and their behaviours. Many experts who have made a study on childhood development say that infants as young as 14 months old imitate behaviour they see on TV. Some children up to the age of 5 lack the cognitive ability to distinguish fact from fantasy.

Whatever children view on television, they tend to imitate them. Cartoons create many super heroes who try to attack the evil ones. But the actions of the super heroes are all filled with numerous acts of violence. The superheroes are portrayed as good heroes fighting, kicking, punching, attacking and beating the bad ones. Children who watch such behaviours think it is appropriate. They become aggressive and hyper-active and tend to do the same thing on other children. Sometimes the superhero uses weapons like knives, guns, sticks, stones etc. to hurt others. Children may also adapt

to this technique of showing their anger or violence.

In the postmodern world of technology advancement, it is not only the cartoon programmes, but children have many distractions in the social world. Children are also influenced physically and mentally by using the computer and the internet. Working on computers for a long time may affect children with their eyes, causing obesity and mental defect. Children surf the internet mostly for music and for pictures of their favourite movie stars and email to exchange messages among their friends. The main reason is children feel lonely, when their parents are away or engaged in any house work. Most of the children are affected with Myopia - commonly known as short-sightedness. Such children are able to see close objects clearly but far away objects appear blurred. Many eye doctors state that children who watch TV or Computer for a long time develop this defect at an early

age. The problem is they don't wink their eye often which is necessary for the eyes. They stare watching the TV or Computer for a long time till the eyes becomes dry.

The next hazard that addicts children is video games. Video games introduce children to the computer technology and the internet world. This has become the most common activity among children today. Children are often found with cell phones of their parents playing video games. Even in some rich houses, children have their own cell phone even at the age of 10. Recent social networks like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, have created a mass addiction on the youth. The advancement of technology has only created a lethargic effect on children. Hence it is highly recommended for parents and teachers working with children that they should limit the time children spend with such social networks and also supervise for the contents their children are exposed to. Appropriate

monitoring and controls must be put to practice so that there is little abuse of the Internet technology among children and it helps in the overall development of not only their lives but also the future of the nation.

Today there are many TV shows created for the purpose of children. For instances, music programmes, dance programmes, comedy shows etc. are conducted for children from the age of 5 to 12 years. Parents encourage their children to take part in it. These shows are very sensitive to the minds of the child. It is so competitive with huge prizes like lakhs of money and other costly things like Television sets, cell phones, gift items etc. Sometimes children are even forced to take part in it. If the children fail to win in any of these shows, they become very sad and sensitive, and it affects their mental behaviour. Parents also become very sensitive when their children fail to get a prize. Such shows that target children

should be stopped. Otherwise parents should advice their children to take such shows as very sportive and not to take it to their heart.

To sum up the effects of cartoons on children

- Children spend hours watching cartoons on television.
- They become violent, stubborn, aggressive and arrogant.
- They don't spend much time in outdoor activities.
- They develop obesity and short sightedness.
- They become overweight.
- Marginalization of cognitive functions, divergence from realities and increase of negative behaviour.
- They become nervous and belligerent.
- They become insensitive to others pains and sorrows.

- They do not feel discomfort from any elements of violence around them in real life.
- Whatever children watch in the cartoons, they try to imitate it or do it in real life.
- Children are confused with the real world and the magic world. They are made to live in a make believe world.
- Cartoons often show explosions, gunshots, physical deformations, weapons, violence and destruction.

To conclude, it is the entire responsibility of the parents and the teachers to make cartoons a healthy entertainment and a good and effective source of learning for children. They should pay more attention in allowing their children to see selected cartoons which would create a positive impact on them. Parent must also control the time children spend watching television. Parents can also discuss the magic and realism used in

cartoons and teach their children what is right and wrong. They can try to engage their children in lot of outdoor activities like swimming, cycling or sports etc. Watching Television programmes in moderation can be an excellent educator and entertainer. But despite its advantages, too much television can be detrimental.

The adults know that the cartoon characters are imaginary ones. But children do not have any idea that there is no real spider man who can jump over building or there is no superman with supernatural powers. Hence it is the duty of the parents to decide which cartoon their children should watch. They should not allow the TV to be a ‘babysitter’ for their children. A young toddler has a blank mind. At this stage, the child starts learning by observing what is going around. They can’t differentiate the good and the bad things. They always accept what they see and follow it. Thus it is the duty of the Parents to ensure what kind of

cartoons their children are watching and what would be the effect of the cartoons on the child’s mind. Such guidance will help the children to grow in a healthy and protective environment.

Cartoons are becoming an inevitable part of the daily life of children today. Enjoying cartoons should be fun and entertainment only. It is time for the parents to think about the negative effects of cartoon on the development of the child. This will in turn affect their physical and mental development. Even it may affect the imagination power of children. They will be driven away from the real world and real life experiences. Studies state that children spending too much of time in front of cartoons is one of the root caused for isolation and indifference in children. Parents should manage their child’s cartoon timings and let them play in the real world. Thus children should be protected from the negative impact of the

world of cartoons and the social Medias to give them a safety and healthy future.

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