

**ANALYSING MAGICAL REALISM IN POST-APOCALYPTIC  
FICTION: A STUDY ON PENG SHEPHERD'S *THE BOOK OF M* AND  
EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL'S *STATION ELEVEN***

*Dissertation*

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for The award  
of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

**BY**

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June 2023*

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3.	Name of the supervisor	Dr. AMITHA P MANI		
4.	Category	Master's Thesis		
5.	Department/institution	PG AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, MES ASMABI COLLEGE		
6.		Introduction / Review of literature	Materials and Methods	Results/ Discussion/summary Conclusion
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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **Analysing Magical Realism In Post-Apocalyptic Fiction: A Study On Peng Shepherd's *The Book Of M* And Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*** is a bonafide record of research done by **SHAHANA MOL A** (Register Number: AIAVMEG018), and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the preparation of this project I am happy to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to my supervising teacher **Dr. Amitha P Mani**, Assistant Professor of the Department of English, MES Asmabi College for her skilled guidance and painstaking correction and revision. I am grateful to her for providing me the valuable insights of words, appreciation and encouragement at every stage of this project.

I also thank **Dr. Reena Mohammed**, Head of the Department of English, for her valuable guidance, help and cooperation. I am also grateful to her for taking my spirits up and her immeasurable guidance in spite of her various preoccupations. I cannot forget her words of correction, appreciation, and encouragement at every stage of the project.

I also thank the librarian and her crew for providing enough materials for the project.

I express my gratitude to **Dr. A Biju**, the Principal, for the congenial research environment he has always tried to foster in the Department.

And finally, but immensely and most affectionately I acknowledge the love and affection always showered on me by my parents, whose love and prayers are the source of inspiration behind all my endeavours.

Above all I bow my head before God, the Almighty without whose blessing, this work would not have been fulfilled.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Art heals the wounds of human life and spiritualises like nature. The inevitability of art, especially in an apocalyptic world, is incontrovertible. Pandemic literature plays a significant role in human life by familiarising a world that could turn out to be true in the future. Pandemics can modify human behaviour and forth deep fears greatly. The widespread coronavirus has kneeled the whole world, even though there have been great advancements in the medical field since the 1900s. Art has played a major role in the depressed life of people during the covid-19 pandemic period. This shows the inevitability of art in every situation of life. Pandemic literature is viewing the world with a sixth sense of the future. Most of the pandemic literary works are set in the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic world.

Apocalyptic and Post-apocalyptic fiction are subgenres of science fiction as well as speculative fiction, where the end of the world that leads to the destruction of human civilization is explored. The word "apocalyptic" comes from the Greek word "apokaluptein," which means "to uncover, reveal, or disclose." The concept of post-apocalyptic fiction has its roots in earlier works of apocalyptic literature, which were concerned with the end of the world and the events leading up to it. Apocalyptic fiction deals with the events leading up to the catastrophe, often portraying the disaster as inevitable and unstoppable. Examples of apocalyptic events in fiction include nuclear war, pandemics, and environmental disasters. Post-apocalyptic fiction, on the other hand, focuses on the aftermath of the disaster and how humanity copes with the aftermath of the catastrophic event. In post-apocalyptic fiction, the survivors are frequently shown battling for survival in a perilous new world after society has



crumbled. The genre often explores themes such as survival, community, and the search for meaning in a world that has been fundamentally altered.

Human awareness of its own destructive capacity, since World War II, and its ability to produce an actual end to the world has become simple as ever. Klaus Scherpe writes in his article *Dramatising and De-Dramatizing the End*,

“Not only has it [world destruction] become producible but, perhaps, even interchangeable: an ecological disaster and the catastrophic developments now underway in genetic engineering are both just as suitable for snuffing out human existence or making it unrecognisable. The producibility of the catastrophe is the catastrophe”. (96)

Audiences of post-apocalyptic literature approach the genre with expectations of specific fundamental elements that convey the desired effect, in light of our understanding of our capacity to create our own destiny, as Scherpe writes, “a multi-media show with its proliferation of images, stories, and commentaries from the treasure trove of Biblical, literary and psychoanalytic exegesis” (96).

However, the idea of a post-apocalyptic world, in which the survivors of a disastrous occasion must rebuild their lives and societies, is a relatively modern one. The first modern post-apocalyptic novel is often considered to be Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, published in 1826. The book tells the story of a man named Lionel Verney, who is the last survivor of a global pandemic that has wiped out most of humanity. In the years following the disaster, Verney struggles to continue living in a world that has been destroyed by disease and hopelessness. The short story *The Scarlet Plague* by Jack London published in 1912, also details the destruction and reformation of humankind following a deadly pandemic outbreak. The popularisation of the post-apocalyptic genre can be traced back to the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War. The use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945

created widespread fear of a potential nuclear apocalypse. This fear was amplified during the Cold War, as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union led to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the possibility of a global nuclear war. In the 1950s and 1960s, science fiction authors began to explore the idea of a world devastated by nuclear war or other catastrophic events. Books such as *On the Beach* (1957) by Nevil Shute and *The Day of the Triffids* (1971) by John Wyndham depicted a world struggling to survive in the aftermath of a disaster. In the following years, post-apocalyptic fiction became increasingly popular, particularly in the science fiction genre. Authors such as H.G. Wells, J.G. Ballard, and John Wyndham wrote novels that explored the aftermath of global catastrophes such as nuclear war and environmental disasters. Films such as *Mad Max* and *The Road Warrior* in the 1980s and the more recent *I Am Legend*, *The Walking Dead* and *The Hunger Games* series also played a major part in popularising the genre.

Also, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* (2009), and the television series *The Walking Dead* (2011) often depict a bleak and terrifying future but also explore the endurance and fortitude of people in the face of catastrophe. Today, the post-apocalyptic genre remains popular, as writers and filmmakers continue to explore the human condition in a world ravaged by disaster. These works helped to establish the genre of post-apocalyptic fiction as a distinct literary form and encouraged the audiences to interpret the post-apocalyptic narrative as a "what is" rather than a "what if" scenario. Overall, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic literature allows authors and readers to examine topics such as human civilization's fragility, the repercussions of our choices, and the strength of optimism and perseverance when a catastrophe strikes.

The genre often implies that our industrial-technological past and present are doomed to a cataclysmic collision course with the future, the outcome of which will require mankind to remake itself or perish. The fact that humanity has some control over its own fate

is both enticing and terrifying. People are naturally fascinated by disaster situations, and that innate curiosity is heightened when cultural variables make disaster scenarios more plausible and salient. Post-apocalyptic fiction writers generally interact with universal societal worries that have their roots in human nature, and those anxieties are inflected by their distinctive worldviews. Alternatively, we must engage with four analytical categories in order to make sense of post-apocalyptic fiction: the universal (human nature's ongoing evolution and flexible cognitive systems), the cultural (historical contingencies and peculiarities), the individual (authorial worldview), and the commercial interests that profit from our fascination with apocalyptic themes.

This thesis will endeavour to describe the presence of magical realism in post-apocalyptic fiction. Peng Shepherd's novel *The Book of M* and Emily St John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* are the novels used in this study. Both novels are about the post-apocalyptic world and the struggle of humans to survive after the catastrophic end of the world.

Peng Shepherd is an American author best known for her debut novel, *The Book of M*. She was born in Phoenix, Arizona, and grew up in Ohio and California. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in literature from the University of California, Irvine. She later received a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from New York University. In addition to writing, Shepherd has worked as a freelance writer and editor, a web producer for the PBS series "NOVA," and a communications director for a nonprofit organisation. She has also taught creative writing at several universities and writing centres. Her works include *The Future Library* (2021) and *The Cartographers* (2022).

*The Book of M* was published in 2018, set in a post-apocalyptic world where people are losing their shadows and gaining magical powers. This novel has received many

positive reviews from critics, with many praising the book's originality, unique storytelling, creative use of magical realism, and well-developed characters. The novel was a Goodreads Choice Awards finalist in 2018 and was also longlisted for the Dublin Literary Award in 2020. This book has been translated into several languages and has gained a dedicated following among fans of post-apocalyptic fiction and magical realism. The story follows the lives of several characters as they try to navigate this new reality and uncover the mystery behind the phenomenon. Set in a near-future world, *The Book of M* introduces readers to a phenomenon called Forgetting. People suddenly begin to lose their shadows, and with each shadow lost, they also lose their memories. As the Forgetting spreads, individuals find themselves struggling to hold on to their pasts, their relationships, and even their sense of self.

The story primarily revolves around four central characters: Ory, a man desperately searching for his wife, Max; Max, who has forgotten everything but Ory; Naz, a former Olympic hopeful with a unique ability; and The One Who Gathers, a mysterious figure seeking those who have lost their shadows. As the characters navigate the treacherous world shaped by the Forgetting, they encounter dangerous creatures and face internal conflicts stemming from memory loss. The novel delves into the profound effects memory has on personal history, the formation of identity, and the capacity for love and human connection. Peng Shepherd's world-building is rich and vivid, depicting a haunting and atmospheric post-apocalyptic landscape. Through her evocative prose, Shepherd explores the psychological and emotional toll of memory loss, compelling readers to question the nature of memory and its role in shaping our lives. Novel received widespread critical acclaim, praised for its unique premise, immersive storytelling, and deep exploration of memory and identity. It has been hailed as a powerful and emotionally resonant novel that challenges conventional notions of self and memory.

The literary genre of magical realism combines mythical elements with realistic settings and circumstances. It creates a sense of ambiguity and wonder, blurring the boundaries between the extraordinary and the ordinary. In the novel, the magical realist elements are primarily manifested through the phenomenon of the Forgetting, where shadows are lost by individuals, consequently, their memories. This fantastical event disrupts the laws of nature and introduces a surreal element to the story. The loss of shadows and memories challenges the characters' perception of reality and blurs the line between the physical and metaphysical realms. The presence of magical realism allows Shepherd to explore the emotional and psychological implications of memory loss symbolically and imaginatively.. The characters' experiences, their struggle to retain their memories, and the repercussions of forgetting are portrayed through vivid and poetic language that heightens the feeling of awe and mystery.

Canadian author Emily St. John Mandel was born in British Columbia in 1979. She is best known for her novel *Station Eleven*, which was published in 2014 and became a critically acclaimed bestseller, winning the Arthur C. Clarke Award, the Toronto Book Award, and being a finalist for the National Book Award. Mandel's writing often explores themes of memory, loss, and identity. Her earlier novels, including *Last Night in Montreal* (2009) and *The Singer's Gun* (2010), also received critical acclaim for their intricate plotting, rich characterization, and lyrical prose. In addition to her work as a novelist, Mandel has also written for a variety of publications, including *The Millions*, *The New York Times*, and *The Guardian*. She is known for her thoughtful and insightful commentary on literature, culture, and the writing process. Her other works include *The Lola Quartet* (2012) and *The Glass Hotel* (2020).

The novel revolves around the dystopian world affected by the pandemic, 99.6 percent of civilization was destroyed. *Station Eleven* received widespread critical acclaim for

its originality, compelling characters, and thought-provoking themes. In 2015, it won the Arthur C. Clarke Award for Science Fiction and was a finalist for the National Book Award. The novel has resonated with readers for its exploration of human resilience, the power of art, and the fragility of civilization. In 2021, a television adaptation of *Station Eleven* was announced, generating further interest in the novel and its themes. The adaptation aims to bring the story to a wider audience and expand the conversation around the book's ideas.

Throughout the novel, characters struggle to hold onto memories of their past lives and the world as it was before the pandemic. Memory is portrayed as fragile and precious, and the loss of memory is equated with the loss of identity. One of the central themes of the novel is the power of art and culture to provide comfort and meaning in the face of catastrophe. The travelling theatre troupe that performs Shakespeare's plays serves as a symbol of the enduring power of art. *Station Eleven* also explores the lengths that people will go to exist in the midst of extreme adversity. The novel portrays both the best and worst aspects of human nature, with characters exhibiting acts of kindness and heroism, as well as cruelty and violence. The novel also explores the importance of human connection and relationships, particularly in times of crisis. Characters seek out and cling to human connections as a means of surviving and finding meaning in their lives. Finally, *Station Eleven* explores the nature of civilization and what it means to be civilised. Characters are forced to reflect on what it is to be human and what is truly essential in life as civilization collapses in the wake of the pandemic.

Kirsten Raymonde is the central character, a member of the Travelling Symphony who has a deep connection to Arthur Leander. Jeevan Chaudhary is a paparazzo turned paramedic who witnesses Arthur's death and later joins the Symphony. Clark Thompson is Arthur's close friend and the former corporate consultant of a mysterious

organisation called the Symphony. Miranda, Arthur's ex-wife and the creator of the Station Eleven comic book, and Arthur's second wife Elizabeth are among the other characters.

Emily St. John Mandel's writing style is lyrical and atmospheric, capturing the beauty and desolation of the post-apocalyptic world. The narrative structure weaves together different timelines and perspectives, creating a mosaic-like storytelling approach that adds depth and complexity to the plot. *Station Eleven* is a captivating post-apocalyptic novel that goes beyond the typical tropes of the genre. Through its exploration of survival, art, memory, and human connection, the book invites readers to reflect on the fragility of our world and the importance of preserving our collective humanity. Emily St. John Mandel's masterful storytelling and evocative prose made *Station Eleven* a memorable and thought-provoking read.

Both novels of study, other than sharing the same qualities of the genre post-apocalyptic fiction, have a common trait of magical realism in the plot. Magical realism is a literary genre that is characterised by the blending of realistic and fantastical elements in a way that blurs the boundaries between the two. The genre is frequently linked with Latin American literature and was first defined as a distinct literary style first used in the 1940s by the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier. Although the concept of blending the real and the fantastic in literature can be traced back to earlier works. The term itself is a translation of the Spanish "realismo mágico", which Carpentier used to describe the literary style of some Latin American writers. The term "magical" refers to the supernatural or fantastical elements that are often present in works of magical realism, while "realism" refers to the grounding of these elements in a realistic, recognizable setting. Magical realism is often used to explore deeper themes or to comment on social or political issues, and the blending of the real and the fantastic is meant to create an air of curiosity and potential.

The term "magical realism" has been the subject of some controversy, with some arguing that it is too broad or too vague to be a useful label. However, it remains a widely recognized term in literary criticism and is associated with a distinct style of writing that has influenced many writers around the world. Magical realism is different from traditional fantasy or science fiction in that it often takes place in a realistic setting and is presented as a matter of fact. In magical realism, supernatural or fantastical occurrences are depicted as if they were commonplace and are frequently employed to investigate more complex themes or to make political or social commentary.

Some common characteristics of magical realism include a focus on ordinary, everyday life. Magical realism often takes place in ordinary, everyday settings and involves characters who are otherwise unremarkable. The presence of supernatural or surreal elements. These elements can include ghosts, magical powers, or other supernatural phenomena that are displayed as a matter of fact. The blurring of reality and fantasy. In magical realism, the boundaries between reality and fantasy are often blurred, with supernatural elements seamlessly integrated into the story. Use of symbolism and metaphor. Magical realism frequently employs surreal or fantastical events as a way of exploring deeper themes or commenting on social or political issues. The importance of cultural identity. Magical realism is frequently linked to specific cultures or regions and may draw on local folklore or traditions.

Some examples of magical realism in literature include *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* by Haruki Murakami, *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie, etc.



Other post-apocalyptic fictions that incorporate elements of magic realism include *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) by Starhawk. Set in a future San Francisco after ecological devastation and political collapse, the book incorporates fantasy and magical realism with themes of activism and social change. Other post-apocalyptic novels with elements of magical realism are *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy, which features dreamlike sequences and surreal imagery, and *The Passage* (2010) by Justin Cronin, which features supernatural creatures and a world transformed by a viral outbreak.

Chapter I of this thesis discusses the history and evolution of magical realism. Also, discuss the various authors who used magical realism tactics in their works as well. Chapter II of this thesis delves into the aspects of magical realism in Peng Shepherd's *The Book of M*. Chapter III details the aspects of magical realism in Emily St John Mandel's *Station Eleven*. Chapter IV concludes the whole thesis by including the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### MAGICAL REALISM

*“I don't want realism. I want magic!”*

-Tennessee Williams

The practice of or belief in the presence and use of supernatural forces or powers to influence the physical world or accomplish particular goals beyond the scope of natural methods is referred to as magic. It is the concept that encompasses various practices, beliefs, and phenomena related to supernatural or mystical powers. The book incorporates fantasy themes with the ability to manipulate or influence natural forces and events through mystical or occult means. The understanding and interpretation of magic vary across different cultures, belief systems, and historical periods. Different cultures and traditions have their own forms of magic. Some common types include ceremonial or ritual magic, divination, spellcasting, shamanism, witchcraft, and occult practices. These forms may involve the use of rituals, symbols, spells, chants, potions, or other means to access and harness magical energies. Magic often involves the belief in supernatural abilities or powers possessed by individuals who practise it. These abilities can include spellcasting, divination, shape-shifting, telekinesis, clairvoyance, healing, or communication with spirits or the deceased. The acquisition and mastery of such abilities may be attributed to innate talent, training, or the attainment of esoteric knowledge. Magic has played a significant role in human culture throughout history. It has been intertwined with religious rituals, folklore, mythology, and the practices of traditional healers, shamans, or spiritual leaders. Magic has also been explored in literature, art, and popular culture as a supply of fascination, imagination, and storytelling. The belief in magic varies widely, and scepticism or disbelief in its efficacy is also prevalent in many societies. Some view magic as purely symbolic,

psychological, or metaphorical, suggesting that its effects are psychological or placebo-based rather than based on supernatural forces. It's important to note that the concept of magic is subjective and can be interpreted differently depending on cultural, historical, and personal perspectives. The understanding and practice of magic continue to evolve and adapt over time, reflecting the diverse beliefs and experiences of individuals and societies.

Realism is an aesthetic and literary trend that originated in the nineteenth century as a reaction to romanticism. It is characterised by an objective representation of reality, often focusing on ordinary, everyday subjects and the accurate depiction of details. Realism seeks to present the world as it is, without idealisation or embellishment. It emphasises the objective portrayal of reality. Artists and writers strive to depict subjects and scenes as they appear in everyday life, often focusing on the ordinary and mundane rather than idealised or fantastical subjects. Although realism is void of embellishment, it places great importance on accuracy and attention to detail. Artists and writers pay close attention to capturing the physical characteristics, appearances, and mannerisms of people and objects. This meticulous attention to detail contributes to the sense of authenticity and truthfulness in realist works. Realism often includes social and political commentary, reflecting the realities of the time and addressing social issues such as poverty, inequality, and class divisions. Realist works may highlight the hardships and struggles of everyday people, shedding light on the social and economic conditions of the period. Realism emerged as a reaction against the romantic movement, which emphasised idealised and fantastical subjects, imagination, and emotional expression. Realism sought to move away from romantic idealism and instead focus on objective observation and representation. Realism has had a significant impact on various art forms, including literature, painting, sculpture, and theatre. It laid the groundwork for later artistic movements such as naturalism, impressionism, and social realism. Realism can vary across different regions and cultures, reflecting the unique socio-cultural contexts in

which it emerged. For example, there are variations like American realism, French realism, and socialist realism, each with its own specific characteristics and influences. Over time, realism has kept changing and adapting. Contemporary realism encompasses various styles and approaches, ranging from photorealism to hyperrealism, where artists aim to depict reality with an almost photographic level of accuracy and delicacy. Overall, realism seeks to present an objective and truthful representation of reality, focusing on everyday subjects and the accurate depiction of details. It offers a grounded and unidealized view of the world, providing insights into social, political, and human conditions.

By combining the two words magic and realism, which have two contradictory meanings, German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 in reference to a group of painters known as the "New Objectivity", coined the term "magic realism". This term appears to be an oxymoron as the world of magic contradicts what is real. It was Novalis, a German philosopher, who used the term "magical realism" first in 1798 to describe a "true prophet" or "isolated being" who is not constrained by conventional human constraints. This prophet, according to Novalis, should be addressed as a "magical idealist" or a "magical realist." He discusses the miraculous truth, which is the essence of current magical realism. His concept of magic realism couldn't be further expanded. When Franz Roh used the term "magic realism" later, in order to describe the paintings that altered reality, a literary genre evolved. According to Roh, magical realism is the depiction of supernatural elements in a realistic setting. The odd realism of American artists like Ivan Albright, Paul Cadmus, George Tooker, and others was referred to as "magical realism" during the 1940s and 1950s. Massimo Bontempelli, an Italian writer and critic, is a key character in the intellectual lineage of magical realism in literary settings. In 1926, he defined that art as "magical realism," which seeks to locate wonders in the middle of everyday life. Some works by Kafka, Junger, and Musil are today referred to be magical realism publications, although not being recognised as

such at the time of their initial release. Bontempelli influenced both Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Angel Asturias, the two authors associated with the first works of magical realism in Latin America.

In 1955, Angel Flores used the term “magical realism” to characterise a wide spectrum of Latin American authors who share some aesthetic qualities. Flores claims that in “magical realism we find the transformation of the common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal”(114). He continues, “It is predominantly an art of surprises. Time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality. Once the reader accepts the *fait accompli*, the rest follows with logical precision” (116). Flores explains magical realism as a synthesis of the actual and the fantastic, or "an amalgamation of realism and fantasy" (112). Later in the 1960s and 1970s, the movement of magical realism got international recognition and popularity with Latin American Boom’s emergence, a literary movement that showcased the works of authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Julio Cortazar, and Isabel Allende. Marquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is often cited as a quintessential example of magical realism, with its vivid portrayal of a fictional town where the extraordinary becomes a component of everyday life. In the latter half of the 20th century, magical realism started to influence writers and artists beyond Latin America. Authors like Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, and Toni Morrison incorporated magical realist elements into their works, expanding the movement's reach and impact. These writers blended cultural traditions and mythology with contemporary settings, creating narratives that straddled the boundaries of truth and fiction. As magical realism gained popularity, it diversified in terms of styles and themes. Different authors and artists brought their unique perspectives, blending magical elements with social, political, and historical contexts. For example, Laura Esquivel's novel *Like Water for Chocolate* explores the magical connections between food and

emotions, while Haruki Murakami's works often feature dreamlike scenarios and surreal occurrences.

Magical realism has not only influenced literature but also found its way into other art forms, including visual arts, film, and theatre. Artists like Frida Kahlo and Remedios Varo incorporated magical realist elements into their paintings, while filmmakers like Pedro Almodóvar and Guillermo del Toro have created visually stunning films that explore magical and fantastical themes. The development of magical realism has been a dynamic and ongoing process. It continues to evolve and inspire artists around the world to explore the interplay between reality and imagination, blurring the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary. In this genre, fantastical events or elements are presented as a normal part of everyday life, often without explanation or surprise. The magical coexists with the ordinary, and characters accept these occurrences as a matter of fact. Magical realism frequently employs symbolism and allegory to explore complex themes and social issues. The magical elements often serve as metaphors for deeper meanings, allowing authors to address historical, political, and cultural contexts metaphorically and indirectly.

The most comprehensive compodium of critical essays on magical realism, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, was published in 1995. In this book, Zamora says, "Magic realism's most basic concern [is] – the nature and limits of the knowable. Magic realist texts ask us to look beyond the limits of the knowable" (498). When popular magical realist novels are considered, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) is regarded as a great masterpiece of magical realist fiction from the earlier period. The combination of mystical occurrences and everyday living is clearly seen here. The book opens with the protagonist's physical change into an insect overnight. Kafka narrates,

“One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug... His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumstance, flickered helplessly before his eyes.” (1)

Although the form and presentation of "magical realist" works vary, one trait in common is the incorporation of the fantastical to highlight and challenge the setting's paradigm of reality, rather than as a plot device. The vast history of magical realism reveals the Hispanic conqueror's and his Creole descendants' unique combination of beliefs and superstitions, as well as the native people and American slaves, with daily life, resulting in a new perspective of reality. The new discoveries and colonisation of America create fresh images of utopia and magical realms among humans, blurring the line between dreams and realities. This aspect has an impact on all areas, particularly the arts and literature. The tradition of storytelling through fables and myths is being revived, fictitious heroes are being popularised, and fiction is being mixed with reality.

Magical realism often takes place in familiar and realistic settings, such as ordinary towns or cities. Within these settings, magical or supernatural occurrences disrupt the expected order of reality. These fantastical elements can range from minor magical interventions to more significant and transformative events. One of the prominent characteristics of magical realism includes everyday language and narrative style to describe extraordinary events. The language remains grounded and accessible, adding to the sense of authenticity and making the magical elements appear more plausible within the context of the story. Symbolism and metaphor also play significant roles in magical realism. Magical elements often serve as metaphors for deeper emotional, psychological, or social realities. Symbolic representations are interwoven with the narrative, inviting readers to explore multiple layers of meaning. Magical realism embraces multiple perspectives and subjective

realities. It recognizes that different individuals may experience and interpret the world in distinct ways. This characteristic allows for a diverse range of voices and perspectives to be represented within the narrative. It evokes a sense of wonder and awe in readers. It invites them to engage with the extraordinary and contemplate the mysteries of life. Through its magical elements, the genre encourages readers to question their own perceptions and beliefs about reality. In this style, there won't be a distinguishable boundary between the supernatural and the real world and also the incidents seem natural and believable.

The interplay of magic and reality, blurring boundaries between everyday life and the extraordinary, the inclusion of symbolism and metaphors, the transformative power of storytelling, and all the characteristics of magical realism draw attention towards the new trend, post-apocalyptic literature. Most of the post-apocalyptic works revolve around the realistic though unpredictable future. In contrast to the past, present, and future, the world after a tragedy is unpredictable. Post-apocalyptic literature often presents a bleak and desolate milieu where society has collapsed, and survival is paramount. By seamlessly integrating magical elements into the harsh realities of a desolate landscape, authors can create a sense of wonder and possibility, challenging readers' perceptions of what is possible even in the face of ruin. One notable example is Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, where a father and son journey through a post-apocalyptic landscape. In this novel, the presence of an unnamed cataclysmic event is paired with moments of magical realism, such as encounters with a man carrying a fire within himself, symbolising hope and warmth in a cold and despairing world. This combination of the real and the fantastical confounds readers' expectations and inspires awe while showcasing humanity's resiliency and creativity in the face of catastrophe.

By presenting fantastical occurrences as part of everyday life, authors create a sense of realism within the magical, grounding readers in a recognizable world while introducing elements of the supernatural. In Jose Saramago's *Blindness*, a sudden epidemic of



blindness plagues a city, plunging its inhabitants into chaos. As the story unfolds, Saramago incorporates magical realist elements, such as the inexplicable ability of one character to see amidst the blindness, challenging the notion of what is possible in a world gone dark. This blurring of boundaries (mundane and extraordinary) disrupts readers' expectations and forces them to question their understanding of reality, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the human condition and also adding depth and complexity to the narrative.

Magical realism in post-apocalyptic fiction often employs symbolism and metaphor to convey profound themes. By examining the symbolic layers of the narratives, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the multifaceted nature of the post-apocalyptic world and its impact on the human condition. In Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*, a group of scientists venture into a mysterious, post-apocalyptic area known as Area X. The landscape itself becomes a character, filled with bizarre flora and fauna that exhibit supernatural properties. These fantastical elements symbolise the transformation and degradation of the natural world, reflecting humanity's impact on the environment. By using magical realism to imbue the environment with symbolic significance, VanderMeer explores the interconnectedness of nature and humanity's role in its destruction.

Memory and identity are recurring themes in post-apocalyptic literature, and magical realism serves as a powerful tool for exploring these existential concerns. In Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, the onset of a pandemic wipes out most of humanity, and the remnants struggle to preserve their memories and sense of self. Through the incorporation of a travelling Shakespearean theatre troupe, Mandel infuses magical realist elements into the narrative, allowing for moments of connection and remembrance amid the desolation. The use of magical realism adds depth to the exploration of memory loss, emphasising the importance of personal histories and the collective human experience.

Art and storytelling play crucial roles in post-apocalyptic literature, and magical realism further amplifies their transformative power. In Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*, set in a future post-apocalyptic Sudan, the protagonist possesses magical abilities and embarks on a journey to fulfil her destiny. Okorafor weaves magical realist elements into the narrative, intertwining the supernatural with the cultural traditions and storytelling of the protagonist's community. This integration of magical elements reflects the resilience of cultural narratives and their ability to inspire hope and preserve a sense of identity in the face of destruction.

The presence of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature adds a unique and captivating dimension to the genre. While post-apocalyptic settings typically emphasise the devastation and bleakness of a world ravaged by catastrophe, the introduction of magical elements injects a sense of wonder, possibility, and imagination into the narrative. This fusion of the realistic and the fantastical creates a rich tapestry that challenges readers' perceptions and offers a fresh perspective on the human experience in the wake of catastrophe. By seamlessly blending the real and the magical, post-apocalyptic works create a sense of wonder, challenge readers' perceptions, and offer profound insights into the human condition.

The presence of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature enhances the genre by infusing it with elements of wonder, imagination, and symbolism. The blending of the real and the magical challenges readers' perceptions, blurs boundaries and invites contemplation of profound themes and ideas. Through the exploration of memory, identity, loss, and the transformative power of art, magical realism offers a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on the human experience in the fallout of catastrophic events. It is through the integration of these magical elements that post-apocalyptic literature becomes a captivating and resonant exploration of resilience, hope, and the enduring spirit of humanity.

## CHAPTER 3

### MAGICAL REALISM IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC FICTION *THE BOOK OF M* BY PENG SHEPHERD

Magic realism, a concept that has been recognised in the literary world since the late twentieth century still has a large number of advocates. Although this movement was widely associated with Latin American authors, writers from all literary genres have made use of this. Tracing the origin of magical realism, oriental literature too is related. In the oriental myths of Arabia, we find elements of magical realism. For example, in *One Thousand and One Nights* and the epic and mythical *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi, traces of magical realism can be seen. Mythologies are neither fantasy nor without order, but they are a systematic way of thinking, and based on one definition they are logical. They are our ancestors' ways of thinking that are expressed through symbols and signs. However, if the "truth" that a myth expresses is not the same objective or scientific truth, at least, it is a true description. To put it another way, although today the signs and symbols of mythology are considered to be unreal, however, their narrators have described the facts that they believe by combining these symbols and signs (An Introduction to the Structure of the Legendary Book of Shahnameh 218).

Apocalypse, the literal demise of the world can be in any form, maybe a nuclear war or a pandemic hitting the universe or even the invasion of aliens can mark the destruction of the present world. Life after this end is what we call a post-apocalypse. The post-apocalyptic world is a mystery because everything after the destruction of the present is new. That is, the future is a new and mysterious thing that we aren't aware of. Post-apocalyptic fiction is a science fiction subgenre that describes a dystopian world. Magic realism, a literary genre that combines elements of the fantastic or magical with realistic

settings and situations, has been used in a variety of different contexts, including post-apocalyptic fiction even though they are more commonly associated with Latin American literature. Many post-apocalyptic fictions incorporate elements of magic realism into their narratives. One of the reasons why magic realism works well in post-apocalyptic fiction is that it allows authors to explore the emotional and psychological impact of catastrophic events in a more nuanced way. By blending the fantastic with the realistic, authors can convey the sense of dislocation and disorientation that comes with living in a world that has been destroyed, while also exploring themes of hope, loss, and transformation.

Can people lose their shadows forever? Is there any connection between shadows and memories? Can humans survive without memories?

*The Book Of M* by Peng Shepherd is a science fiction set in a world where shadows disappear and memories are erased from mankind. This novel is told from multiple perspectives, with each chapter concentrating on a different character. This allows the reader to see the story from multiple angles and to get a sense of the different characters' motivations and experiences. All the characters in the novel have given equal importance, and thus cannot be divided into minor and major characters. With the loss of shadows being the central element, Shepherd is creating a real world with magic in it. People who lose their shadows, known as "the Forgetting," begin to forget everything about themselves and their lives. They also gain supernatural abilities, such as the ability to create illusions or control the elements at the price of their memories. The characters are all searching for their lost shadows, hoping to regain their memories and identities.

The plot of the story begins with couples Ory and Max, separated at the beginning of the novel, and much of the story follows their separate journeys as they try to reunite. Another character is The One Who Gathers. This character is portrayed as a

mysterious figure who collects objects and memories from the Forgetting. He is feared by many, as he is rumoured to be able to steal people's shadows and memories for his own purposes. Mahnaz Ahmadi, or Naz, a young woman talented in archery, is the next voice we hear other than Max, Ory, and The One who Gathers. She becomes an ally to Ory as they try to reach The One Who Gathers and Max.

The apocalypse in this novel begins with the disappearance of shadows. The disappearance of shadows hit the universe like a deadly virus and people began to lose their memories. The post-apocalypse of this novel begins from the point where the world is divided into two groups, shadows and shadowless, that is the survivors and the victims. Peng Shepherd, in this novel, is trying to draw a connection between the memories stored in the hippocampus of the human brain and the shadows, which are the residue of a person. The loss of shadows and the subsequent gain of magical powers create a surreal, dreamlike quality to the narrative. This allows the author to explore themes of memory, identity, and the human experience in a more complex way.

While creating a post-apocalyptic world, Shepherd is mixing the certain characteristics of magical realism, to enhance the beauty of the unknown future. Things we aren't aware of are always mysterious. This mysterious feature of our future is creatively embellished by the author using magical realism as a key element. Readers are captivated by blending magic with reality. Shepherd, in the novel, uses her six senses altogether to create a disastrous end and a new beginning to the existing life. One of the most striking aspects of the novel's use of magical realism is the concept of "Forgetting," a mysterious phenomenon that causes people to lose their memories. This element of magical realism creates a sense of uncertainty and fear in the characters, as they struggle to hold onto their identities and understand the world around them. The novel also features magical realist elements such as shadow creatures, prophetic dreams, and the ability to project memories onto physical

objects. These elements create a sense of disorientation and confusion for both the characters and the reader, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy and challenging our understanding of what is possible.

The character One Who Gathers can be considered an element of magical realism in *The Book of M*. The character's ability to collect and store memories is a fantastical element that blurs the line between reality and fantasy, challenging the reader's understanding of what is possible. The One Who Gathers' power is not fully explained scientifically or realistically but rather presented as a mysterious and supernatural ability. This is a hallmark of magical realism, which often presents fantastical elements matter-of-factly, without explanation or justification. Furthermore, the One Who Gathers' unsettling presence and strange appearance also contribute to the magical realism of the character. The character's description challenges the reader's perception of what is normal or acceptable, creating a sense of disorientation and unease. Overall, the One Who Gathers is a prime example of how magical realism is used in *The Book of M* to create a sense of uncertainty and challenge the reader's understanding of reality.

Another example of Shepherd's creativity in intensifying the plot, to bring the effectiveness of the pandemic Forgetting using tools of magical realism is noted below:

“Oh, this is when they took you from the spice market and brought you here,”  
the amnesiac said.

“The what?” Hemu asked, looking at the amnesiac mid-thought, face puzzled.

“The spice market.”

“What market?”

“The—what was it called—the Manddai,” the amnesiac tried. “The spice market. Where you were when you lost your shadow.”

“I don’t remember,” Hemu said.

The shadowless was still sitting where he’d been left, staring confusedly at them. Inside, the aides were shouting and pointing at a TV playing the news. There was an aerial shot of a completely empty street on the screen. No shops, no buildings lining the sides, not even paint on the asphalt to denote traffic lines. A crowd had begun to swarm at its edges”(Shepherd 173).

Magic realism is not mere fantasy, but fantasy and reality are mixed in it. It is realism but to the reputation of the reader it is surreal and magic, thus, overall, it is a mixture of realism and anti-realism together, all the art of the writer is to create such context and situation which may result in the tension between these two elements in completion of the mind of the reader and give the reader a sense of realism (Literature Schools 245). Magic realism is a popular genre among the general public due to its emphasis on superstitious beliefs, mythical events, fantasy, and dreams. The events of magic realism are based on a tale that is unreal yet plausible and acceptable, and this has considerably increased its appeal to the populace. Such a surreal event in *The Book of M* is noted below.

“I turned and stared open-mouthed at her. She had twisted Transcendence’s power against them by giving them exactly what they wanted. She had *forgotten*. Forgotten that we’d been captive for days, that we weren’t still free, in our RV, riding for New Orleans, and who knows what else. She hadn’t tried to break the unbreakable bars of the cage, because that woman in white was right: The Great One had remembered that the bars could never be *broken*. But she hadn’t remembered anything about whether or not they could be *changed*. Ursula had transformed the cage into our RV, with us still inside” (Shepherd 312).

Toward the end of the story, further descriptions of the magic and illusions are given while introducing the city of New Orleans, the city built of the magic of shadowless.

“After the last stretch of land and glistening water of the lake, the city rose. Walls that had not been there before the Forgetting towered like shimmering cliffs around it. They were so perfectly straight and unbroken, it was as if a smooth, sheer mountain made of crystal had erupted from the earth on the old shore. From somewhere inside, vague tendrils of smoke curled up into the warm, grey air of morning. Zhang could only guess from so far away, but the walls looked to be forty feet tall at least, and so long that they disappeared into the humid, muggy horizon before he could see the end. He guessed they probably encircled the entire city, so that the only way in or out was the long, narrow bridgeway that spanned the lake”(Shepherd 395).

The use of magical realism in post-apocalyptic fiction, as exemplified in Peng Shepherd's *The Book of M*, is not only justifiable, but also necessary for exploring the complex themes of memory, identity, and storytelling in a planet that has been devastated by disaster. In post-apocalyptic fiction, where the world has been obliterated and traditional understandings of reality have been shattered, the use of magical realism can be particularly effective in depicting the disorientation and confusion of the characters as they try to make sense of their new reality. In *The Book of M*, the use of magical realism is central to the novel's exploration of memory loss and its effects on the characters. The magical elements, such as the shadows that take on a life of their own and the ability to project memories onto physical objects, create a sense of unreality that reflects the characters' disorientation and confusion as they struggle to remember who they are and what has happened to them. Furthermore, magical realism allows the novel to explore the relationship between memory, identity, and storytelling in a way that would not be possible through a strict realist approach. By blurring



the line between reality and fantasy, the novel invites readers to question their understanding of memory and identity and to consider how storytelling can be used to construct and reconstruct both.

The magical realist elements also serve to underscore the central themes of memory and identity. By introducing the fantastical concept of Forgetting, Shepherd emphasises the importance of memory as a fundamental aspect of human existence. The loss of memories raises questions about the nature of self, the formation of identity, and the role of memory in shaping personal history. Furthermore, the magical realist elements in "The Book of M" create an atmosphere of both beauty and menace. The fantastical creatures and landscapes that emerge in the wake of the Forgetting add a sense of awe and danger to the story, heightening the stakes for the characters and intensifying the emotional impact of their journeys. Through the incorporation of magical realism, Peng Shepherd infuses *The Book of M* with a sense of enchantment, evoking a world both familiar and strange. This blending of the extraordinary with the ordinary not only adds depth and complexity to the narrative but also invites readers to contemplate the power of memory, the brittleness of identity and the human spirit's tenacity in the face of unbelievable situations.

Like most of the magic realism authors, Shepherd too left unexplained the causes and solutions of the extraordinary catastrophe introduced in the novel. Also, this novel moves to and fro time and does not follow the narrative arc of a clear beginning and end. Set in a completely strange but known world, *The Book of M* satisfies all the features of post-apocalyptic fiction and magical realism.

In conclusion, the use of magical realism in post-apocalyptic fiction, as demonstrated in *The Book of M*, is not only justifiable, but also necessary for exploring the complex themes of memory, identity, and storytelling in a world that has been ravaged by

disaster. By blurring the line between reality and fantasy, magical realism allows us to see the world in a new light and to imagine new possibilities for the future. Overall, magic realism can add a unique and compelling dimension to post-apocalyptic fiction, allowing authors to explore the emotional and psychological impact of catastrophic events in a way that is both imaginative and grounded in reality.

## CHAPTER 4

### MAGICAL REALISM IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC FICTION

#### *STATION ELEVEN* BY EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL

*Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel is a post-apocalyptic novel that blends science fiction and magical realism elements. The novel was first published in 2014 and has since received critical acclaim and won several awards, including the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the Toronto Book Award. The novel takes place in the Great Lakes region of North America, in the aftermath of a pandemic that has wiped out most of the world's population. The story follows a number of characters as they struggle to survive and start again, including Kirsten Raymonde, a member of the Travelling Symphony, a troupe of actors and musicians that performs classical music and Shakespeare plays as they tour from town to town. Other characters include Jeevan Chaudhary, a paparazzo who becomes a paramedic, and Arthur Leander, a great actor who dies on stage during a performance of King Lear moments before the epidemic strikes. The novel explores themes of survival, memory, and the importance of art and culture in the face of catastrophe. It also touches on the interconnectivity of people and how their actions can have a ripple effect that continues long after they are gone.

While discussing the components of magical realism in *Station Eleven*, a point to note is that information about the future is always a mystery. When unfolding the truths of the future, artists are contributing their power of imagination to the work. In most post-apocalyptic fiction, authors' imagination of the future is drawn using several techniques including magical realism, surrealism, imagery, etc. In *Station Eleven*, Emily St John Mandel is trying to portray an unknown world. The pandemic in this novel itself is mystical yet realistic. Before the spread of the coronavirus, the world never believed in a pandemic

striking the whole world. Because after 1900, the medical field had greater advancements. So people believe that a pandemic which hits the world could be erased using the technologies of the world. Something unfamiliar yet realistic always creates a kind of mystery in the human mind with a magical touch. Thus focusing on the plot of the novel, readers are left with some kind of magical mystery which is realistic.

One of the key elements of magical realism in *Station Eleven* is the Travelling Symphony. Art is a source of happiness in human life. The Symphony is a group of musicians and actors in the novel, who travel from town to town performing Shakespeare plays and classical music after the collapse of the world. They are a symbol of hope and creativity in a world that has been destroyed by the pandemic. When a person is faced with an absence of something that was once vital or loved, a sense of urgency to fill that void arises. In the post-apocalyptic world of the novel, such an urgency to fill the void of life is cured by the intervention of art, the Travelling Symphony.

“WHAT WAS LOST IN THE COLLAPSE: almost everything, almost everyone, but there is still such beauty. Twilight in the altered world, a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a parking lot in the mysteriously named town of St. Deborah by the Water, Lake Michigan shining a half mile away” (Mandel 57).

The Symphony's performances and their ability to bring joy to others in a seemingly hopeless world add a touch of the surreal and the magical to the novel.

Another instance of magical realism in the novel is the presence of the Prophet, a mysterious figure who emerges after the pandemic and creates a cult-like following. He is the charismatic and ruthless leader of the Travelling Symphony. He claims to have supernatural powers and uses them to control his followers. Tyler Leander, the son of

Arthur Leander and Elizabeth Colton, grows up to become The Prophet and the novel's antagonist. Influenced by his mother's beliefs, he believes that the flu happened for a divine reason and the few who survived are the few chosen morally. He also believes that he was chosen by a higher power to lead the Travelling Symphony and bring order to the chaotic world. Under Tyler's leadership, the Travelling Symphony becomes more than just a group of performers. They become a cult that demands obedience and loyalty from their followers, and they use violence and intimidation to enforce their will. The Prophet sees himself as a divine figure and demands that his followers worship him and submit to his authority. The Prophet's presence in the novel serves as a caution regarding the dangers of religious extremism and the abuse of power. His rise to power demonstrates how easily people can be seduced by charismatic leaders and how quickly a group can devolve into a cult-like organisation that oppresses its followers. Despite his brutality, the Prophet is also a complex and tragic character. He is haunted by his past and driven by a sense of purpose that he believes is divinely ordained. His story highlights the human need for meaning and purpose and the dangers that can arise when that need is exploited by those with nefarious intentions. The Prophet's presence in the novel adds a touch of the surreal and the magical, and his actions and beliefs are often in stark contrast to the more rational and realistic characters.

The *Station Eleven* comic book in the novel does not contain overt magical elements, it can be interpreted as having magical realism elements due to its ability to transcend time and space and connect the novel's characters with a sense of hope and wonder. The comic book serves as a symbol of the enduring power of art and creativity, which can be interpreted as a magical quality. The fact that the comic book survives the collapse of civilization and becomes a source of inspiration and hope for the characters in the post-apocalyptic world can also be seen as having magical realism elements. The comic book serves as a bridge between the past and the present, and it connects the characters in the novel

with a larger sense of humanity and hope, which can also be seen as having a magical quality. Furthermore, the illustrations in the comic book, which are created by the character Miranda, are described in a way that emphasises their vividness and power. For example, the character Kirsten describes the illustrations as "so real they bleed" (Mandel 21). This vividness and power of the illustrations can also be interpreted as having a magical quality. Overall, while the *Station Eleven* comic book in the novel does not contain overt magical elements, its ability to transcend time and space and connect the characters in the novel with a sense of hope and wonder can be seen as having magical realism elements.

Kirsten Raymonde's tattoos are also a form of magical realism in the novel. Each tattoo represents a significant moment in her life, and they serve as a form of magical protection. These tattoos serve as a symbol of her personal history and her suppleness in the face of the collapse of civilization. While her tattoos do not contain overt magical elements, they do contain symbolic and metaphorical elements that can be interpreted as having components of magical realism. One of Kirsten's tattoos is a paper crane, which is a symbol of hope and healing in Japanese culture. In the novel, Kirsten received this tattoo after a traumatic event in her childhood, and it serves as a reminder of her ability to heal and persevere in the face of adversity. Also, it could be interpreted as having magical properties that help to protect her from harm or guide her towards safety.

Another one of Kirsten's tattoos is a knife, which can be interpreted as a symbol of protection and self-defence. The knife tattoo is also a reference to Kirsten's role in the Travelling Symphony, where she is responsible for protecting the group from danger and ensuring their survival in the post-apocalyptic world. They serve as a reminder of the power of personal history and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unfathomable hardships. It could be interpreted as having magical properties that help her to defend herself and her fellow Travelling Symphony members from danger. These tattoos connect her to a

sense of spirituality and a belief in the supernatural, which contrasts with the more pragmatic and survival-focused characters in the novel. The magical realism elements in Kirsten's tattoos are subtle, but they contribute to the overall mood and atmosphere of the novel. They serve as a reminder that, even in a world that has been destroyed by a deadly pandemic, there is still room for hope, healing, and the power of personal symbols and meanings.

The Museum of Civilization is another example of magical realism in the novel. The museum collects artefacts from the world before the pandemic, and it serves as a reminder of what has been lost, and also as a symbol of the human desire to preserve and remember. This museum has a dreamlike quality that can be interpreted as having elements of magical realism. This is a place where the memories and history are preserved, and where the characters can connect with their past in a meaningful way. The artefacts in the museum are carefully curated and displayed, giving them a sense of reverence and importance. This creates a dreamlike atmosphere in which the characters can experience a sense of nostalgia and longing for a world that has been lost. Furthermore, the Museum of Civilization is a place where the characters can connect on a deeper level. The relics and artefacts in the museum serve as a bridge between the characters' past and present, allowing them to share stories and memories. This fosters a sense of community and connection that is rare in the post-apocalyptic world of the novel. It is a place of hope and connection in a world that has been torn apart, and it serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring power of human connection and the importance of preserving our collective history. The museum is a surreal and magical space, where objects from the past are juxtaposed with the harsh reality of the post-apocalyptic world. Overall, the Museum of Civilization in *Station Eleven* can be seen as having components of magical realism in its dreamlike atmosphere and its ability to connect the characters with their past and with each other.

The presence of magical realism in *Station Eleven* adds depth and richness to the novel, and it helps to create a sense of wonder and possibility in a world that has been shattered by tragedy. The elements of magical realism highlight the resilience of the human spirit and the power of creativity and imagination to help us survive in the most challenging of circumstances. Memories always play a crucial role in post-apocalyptic fiction. The memories of the past haunt the present. Several characters in the novel long for the past which was surrounded by technologies and civilization and the pleasant days they had with their loved ones. Human beings always try to escape from the present and they love to live either in the past or in the future. These characteristics of humans inspire them to escape using magics which they believe to be real. This realistic magic can only be exposed using art. Art and magic heal desperately wounded hearts with their mystical hands. Emily St John Mandel is using the same principle to heal the destroyed world in her novel *Station Eleven*. “I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on earth” (Mandel 46).



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

*“The World will always need magic. Without it, Life is nothing but cheap tricks.”*

- Solange Nicole

In a catastrophic world, humans have the instinct to escape it and that leads them to create things beyond their imaginations. A pandemic hitting the whole world is not a new thing in 2023. We have merely witnessed an apocalypse in the form of Covid and people are still battling to survive the destruction caused by the pandemic. The whole economy was slowed down and people were forced to shut inside the four walls. All these while, everyone depended on books and arts in order to forget the hardships of life. Art transcends to a completely new world. This rudiment of art is possible only because of the use of several artistic techniques like symbolism, imagery, magical realism, etc.

In the literary style magical realism, fantastical elements are integrated into a realistic setting in a way that blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination. This fosters a sense of ambiguity and mystery, as the reader is often left to interpret the events of the story for themselves. The magical elements in a magical realist work are often presented as if they are a normal part of the characters' everyday lives, without any explanation or justification. This can make the reader feel as if they are experiencing the story alongside the characters, accepting the fantastical elements as natural and real. The goal of magical realism is to create a world that is both familiar and strange, where the boundaries between reality and imagination are blurred and the reader is left to question their own perceptions of the world around them.

When people no longer believe that they can enact change in history, they search for a substitute that not only embodies the helplessness of history but enhances the

image of the present as well. Thus the focus took a diversion to the future, which is a vast land for change. People began to think about the possibilities of the future, and this intellectual reasoning led the way for the post-apocalypse. Post-apocalypse is the world of new. That is, a new world where all possibilities of past and present are destroyed, but a stepping stone to something totally new. The catastrophic end of the world would lead the rest of the survivors to build a new atmosphere from the scrap. This future chaotic environment was foretold using the imaginative power of human brains in post-apocalyptic literature. The imaginative power of authors shapes the societal structures and dynamics within post-apocalyptic worlds. They envision new social orders, survivalist communities, or power struggles that arise in the absence of traditional governance. By exploring the possibilities of how human societies might evolve or devolve in extreme circumstances, the authors challenge readers to consider the fragility of societal norms and question the resilience of humanity in the face of adversity.

Imagination also plays a crucial role in the development of post-apocalyptic characters. Authors create complex and multidimensional individuals who navigate the harsh realities of their world. These characters often embody the resilience, resourcefulness, and adaptability necessary for survival in such harsh conditions. Through their imaginative power, authors breathe life into these characters, capturing their struggles, hopes, and triumphs, and allowing readers to empathise with their plight. The imaginative power in post-apocalyptic literature expands beyond the physical world and encompasses the exploration of themes and ideas. Authors utilise symbolism, metaphors, and allegory to delve into existential questions, such as the nature of humanity, the consequences of our actions, and the fragility of civilization. They employ imaginative devices to examine moral dilemmas, ethical quandaries, and the complexities of human nature amidst chaos and despair.

It is the imaginative power, the driving force of post-apocalyptic literature that propels to new heights. Post-apocalyptic settings are characterised by devastation, chaos, and the collapse of society, presenting authors with a unique canvas on which to unleash their creative vision. It is through the imaginative power of writers that post-apocalyptic worlds are brought to life, offering readers a peek into the possibilities and consequences of catastrophic events. Moreover, the imaginative power in post-apocalyptic literature expands beyond the physical world and encompasses the exploration of themes and ideas. Authors utilise symbolism, metaphors, and allegory to delve into existential questions, such as the nature of humanity, the consequences of our actions, and the fragility of civilization. They employ imaginative devices to examine moral dilemmas, ethical quandaries, and the complexities of human nature amidst chaos and despair.

The imaginative power in post-apocalyptic literature also encompasses the ability to weave components of magical realism into the narrative. By infusing the devastated world with fantastical or supernatural elements, authors challenge the boundaries of reality and engage readers in a thought-provoking exploration of the human condition. Magical realist elements can serve as metaphors for hope, transformation, or the enduring power of the human spirit. They add layers of depth and symbolism, expanding the imaginative landscape and inviting readers to contemplate profound themes. Through their creative vision, authors construct vivid landscapes, develop complex characters, and explore profound themes. Their ability to imagine and bring to life post-apocalyptic worlds and narratives allows readers to delve into the depths of human resilience, contemplate existential questions, and find meaning and hope amidst the darkest of circumstances. The imaginative power in post-apocalyptic literature demonstrates the enduring capacity of human creativity and imagination to transform devastation into a canvas for exploration, introspection, and profound storytelling.

Magical realism, known for blending the ordinary with the extraordinary, finds a compelling home within the context of post-apocalyptic settings. One of the primary ways magical realism manifests in post-apocalyptic literature is through the juxtaposition of fantastical or supernatural elements against the backdrop of a devastated world. These elements can take various forms, such as inexplicable occurrences, supernatural abilities, or encounters with mythical beings. By introducing these magical elements, authors challenge readers' perceptions of what is possible within the boundaries of a ravaged reality. This blurring of the line between the real and the magical adds an element of surprise, enchantment, and imaginative exploration, encouraging readers to question the limitations of their understanding and embrace the extraordinary within the ordinary.

Magical realism also serves as a powerful tool for exploring themes of resilience, hope, and the power of the human spirit in post-apocalyptic literature. The infusion of magical or fantastical elements can symbolise the indomitable nature of humanism in the face of overwhelming adversity. These elements often represent sources of hope, transformation, or renewal, highlighting the potential for positive change and growth even in the harshest of circumstances. By embracing magical realism, authors imbue their narratives with a sense of possibility and wonder, fostering a belief in the capacity for redemption and rebuilding amidst the ruins of a post-apocalyptic world. Additionally, the use of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature allows authors to delve into the psychological and emotional impact of cataclysmic events on individuals and communities. Magical elements can serve as metaphors for trauma, grief, or the internal struggles of characters grappling with the harsh realities of their existence. Through the integration of magical realism, authors provide a lens through which to explore the complex emotions, coping mechanisms, and resilience that emerge in the aftermath of the disaster. The interplay between the magical and

the real provides a rich tapestry for the exploration of human psychology, highlighting the profound ways in which individuals navigate and make sense of their post-apocalyptic world.

Furthermore, the presence of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature encourages readers to consider the broader implications of human actions and the consequences of environmental or societal collapse. The fantastical elements can serve as allegories for the destructive forces that led to the apocalypse or as warnings about the probable repercussions of human behaviour. By intertwining magical realism with the post-apocalyptic narrative, the authors prompt readers to reflect on their relationship with the natural world, the impact of technology, and the ethical considerations inherent in a rapidly changing society.

The exploration of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature, as demonstrated through our analysis of *The Book of M* and *Station Eleven*, has shed light on the transformative and thought-provoking possibilities that arise when the realms of imagination and devastation intersect. Through the infusion of magical elements within the harsh realities of post-apocalyptic worlds, both Shepherd and Mandel have crafted narratives that transcend traditional genre boundaries, inviting readers to engage with profound themes of human resilience, the enduring power of hope, and the indomitable spirit of the human condition. By incorporating magical realism into their narratives, Shepherd and Mandel encourage readers to embrace the extraordinary within the ordinary, challenging preconceived notions of what is possible in the aftermath of cataclysmic events. The magical elements in their works serve as metaphors for the transformative power of imagination, offering a source of hope, renewal, and redemption amidst the devastation. These elements represent a fundamental aspect of human nature—the ability to envision possibilities and harness our imaginative capacities to navigate the bleak of times.

Moreover, the presence of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature allows for an exploration of the psychological and emotional impact of catastrophe on individuals and communities. The fantastical elements serve as allegories for trauma, grief, and the human struggle to make sense of a shattered world. Through the interplay between the magical and the real, Shepherd and Mandel offer nuanced portrayals of characters who embody resilience, resourcefulness, and adaptability. Their journeys become a reflection of the human capacity to find meaning, forge connections, and rebuild amidst the ruins. Furthermore, the infusion of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature prompts us to consider the broader implications of our actions and the consequences of environmental or societal collapse. These narratives raise questions about the ethical and moral dimensions of our interactions with the world, the fragility of societal structures, and the impact of technology on our lives. By intertwining magical elements with themes of environmental collapse, social disintegration, or technological dependency, Shepherd and Mandel challenge readers to critically examine our present reality and contemplate the potential consequences of our choices.

In Peng Shepherd's novel *The Book of M* and Emily St John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven*, the imaginative power of human beings and the survival instinct has been explored. The presence and inspiration of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature can be traced by analysing both novels. As Zamora and Faris said, the unreal happens as part of reality (116). In both trends of literature, magical realism and post-apocalypse, unreal and magical things happen as part of reality. Similar to most magical realist works, *Station Eleven* and *The Book of M* describe a fictional world where the extraordinary becomes a part of everyday life. From the analysis of both novels, we can conclude that most post-apocalyptic literature focuses on the future which is unpredictable and beyond the boundaries of the knowable.

As we conclude our study on magical realism in post-apocalyptic fiction, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of our analysis and the potential for future research in this field. While our focus has been on *The Book of M* and *Station Eleven*, there is a wealth of post-apocalyptic literature that incorporates magical realism, offering a diverse range of perspectives and themes. Exploring other works within this genre and conducting comparative analyses could provide further insights into the interplay between magical realism and post-apocalyptic narratives. Additionally, examining the reception and interpretation of post-apocalyptic magical realism by readers and critics would contribute to a deeper understanding of its impact and significance. Exploring the cultural and historical contexts in which these narratives emerge could also shed light on how authors use magical realism to engage with specific socio-political concerns and articulate alternative visions of the future.

Additionally, examining the reception and interpretation of post-apocalyptic magical realism by readers and critics would contribute to a deeper understanding of its impact and significance. Exploring the cultural and historical contexts in which these narratives emerge could also shed light on the ways in which authors use magical realism to engage with specific socio-political concerns and articulate alternative visions of the future. In conclusion, our analysis of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature, focusing on Peng Shepherd's *The Book of M* and Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, has illuminated the profound possibilities that arise when the extraordinary merges with the ordinary in the aftermath of catastrophe. These narratives transcend traditional genre boundaries, inviting readers to contemplate themes of resilience, hope, and the transformative power of imagination. The integration of magical elements provides a unique lens through which to explore the psychological, emotional, and ethical dimensions of post-apocalyptic worlds. By immersing ourselves in these narratives, we are reminded of the enduring strength of the

human spirit, the importance of connection, and the profound capacity for transformation even in the most dire of circumstances.

As we continue to navigate an uncertain future, post-apocalyptic literature with elements of magical realism offers us not only a captivating escape but also a poignant reflection on our own humanity. It challenges us to envision possibilities, embrace hope, and confront the consequences of our actions. Through the interplay of the fantastical and the real, we are invited to reimagine our world and our place within it. The exploration of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature is a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and its ability to provide solace, inspiration, and a renewed sense of purpose in the face of adversity. In conclusion, the analysis of magical realism in post-apocalyptic literature, as demonstrated in the novels *The Book of M* by Peng Shepherd and *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel, reveals a genre that transcends traditional boundaries, evokes powerful emotions, and invites readers to engage with themes of resilience, imagination, and the enduring power of hope. The infusion of magical elements within these narratives adds depth, complexity, and a touch of enchantment, enriching the exploration of human experiences in the aftermath of catastrophe. By delving into these narratives, we gain insights into the multifaceted nature of the human condition, our relationship with the environment, and the transformative potential of imagination in the face of adversity. As readers and scholars continue to delve into the world of post-apocalyptic magical realism, further exploration of this genre will undoubtedly yield new perspectives, insights, and avenues for research.



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