Understanding the cinematic elements of magical realist films: Analysis of Guillermo del Toro's Pan's Labyrinth

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Abstract

Magical Realism is a term that lacks clarity, especially in its use in films. This form/style of narration originated in the Latin American literary movement of the 20th century. However, we can find its traces in several other places under different names such as marvellous realism, fantastic realism, and so on. From a layman's point of view, Magical realism is an aesthetic facet of art where an ideal realistic setting is interfered with by magical elements in an ordinary form.

This study explores the application of magical realism in filmmaking to understand the relative difference in the dynamics of its different facets such as cinematography, lighting, set designs, wardrobe, and the story.

For the analysis, the film Pan's Labyrinth (2017) by Guillermo del Toro is chosen as it holds a firm academic backing as a magical realist film of the modern era.

#Filmmaking #Magicalrealism #Pan'sLabyrinth

Introduction

Magical realism has inspired several art forms from paintings, literature, photography, film to modern digital art. It possesses a significant aesthetical beauty that has been frequently experimented with from the beginning. Parallel to surrealism and expressionism, magical realism also grew discretely until it garnered widespread appeal in its literary evolution. A widely appreciated work of magical realism in literature is 'Cien años de Soledad' (Márquez, 1967), translated as 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' which blends history and fiction which attracts the wide reach. Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's children', is also one of the best selling novels at the time.

A magical realist artform might contain highly imaginative worlds, supernatural happenings, folkloric content to say the stories of the socially real world as (Delicka, 1997) observes, who further states,

"the coexistence of magic and realism is presented matter-of-factly as being natural. . . . In the fusion of these two opposite epistemological concepts, the former boundaries between the real and the supernatural fade, and the improbable becomes objectively possible"

Many works of literature feature magical realism because of its effectiveness in telling the darkest realities of history in the most appealing manner. Eventually, it was applied in films that proved to be more interesting with certain films directly adapting from magical realist literature. However, the

fantastical idea already existed in films with German expressionist filmmakers experimenting with the concept in the early 1920s.

(Claire, 2013) observes how the aesthetics of magical realist narrative encompassed a blend of gothic costumes, theatrical and non-naturalistic settings, exorbitant usage of steam and smoke, and exaggerated acting. The characteristics of expressionist films paved the way to contemplating and differentiating the narrative aspects of magical realism.

Magical realism never attained the individual position to be a 'genre' or a 'film movement', and always remained as a narrative device in films. Some of the speciality that magical realism only describes from the origin is the culturally motivated storytelling, it always has the historical-cultural -socio-political essence in the stories. The social realism part is often discussed in almost every study that magical realism is a concern.

There exist numerous filmmakers from F W Munroe, Fritz lang to recent filmmakers like Guillermo del Toro, Spike Jonez, Tim Burton and David Lynch, who have recognisably experimented in magical realism. Each of them portrayed their unique interpretation of magical realistic films.

Most of the existing academic studies focus on the definition and characteristics of magical realism. However, this study aims to discuss the analytical approach to understanding magical realist film narratives which remain relatively scarce.

In the present globalised consumption of art forms breaking geographical and cultural barriers, it is pivotal to academically understand the less explored concepts in films like magical realism.

Moving images have the power to influence the audience to think and learn throughout the process. All of the processes in filmmaking are extremely important to communicate the story. Each element of *mise-en-scene* of a film is delicately created by the Screenwriter, Director, Production Designer, Cinematographer, and every one of them to ensure that the story is accurately communicated and can responsibly tell the underneath layers of social messages.

This study is done on the film Pan's Labyrinth (2007) by Guillermo Del Toro as it is the most academically and socially cited magical realist film. (Kolker 2009; Bordwell and Thompson 2010; Klonowska 2010; Colman 2011) observes that Pan's Labyrinth epitomizes the mode of cinematic magic realism.

History of Magical realism

Magical realism is a perplexing term lacking a firm academic framework. The term was coined in the 1920s as relating to Surrealist Painting. French surrealist painter Andre Breton observes the same in his book First Manifesto of Surrealism (1924, as the moment at which everyday life is interrupted by the mysterious or the unexpected.

Eventually, Franz Roh a German art historian made the impression of magical realism as an alternative to the expressionist painting as mentioned in his book 'Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerei' (Roh, 1925), translated as 'After Expressionism, Magic Realism: The Problem of the New European Painting', parallel to the Surrealist movement/New objectivity in Europe.

He states magical realism as the portrayal of a realistic world decorated with attention-seeking elements of magic. Jorges Luis Borges, an Argentinian novelist wrote the third text 'Narrative Art and Magic' (1932). The work paved the way to a change in the style of European and American

magical realist fictions and further presented an opportunity for re-evaluating the Latin American magical realist fiction.

Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier's essay 'De Lo real Maravilloso Americano' was published as the preface to his first novel 'El Reino de Este Mundo' (Carpentier, 1949), translated as 'The Kingdom of This World'.

Klonowska (2014) considers Carpentier's essay as the ontological strand of magical realism depending on the excessive adaptation of the supernatural elements, depicting strange and improbable events, creating a different reality. On the contrary, she observes that Franz Roh's paintings act as the epistemological strand that relies on the less adaptation of supernatural elements to estrange the known reality.

The aesthetics of magical realism is interpreted and made to evolve by artists all over the world. Due to this, the exact characteristics of magical realism are hard to define. The continuing argument on magical realism is inevitable as there exists only a thin line differentiating the concept amidst the many defined art genres or movements. It is a product of hybridity which exists dependent on many factors. However, with the support of defined independent variables, Magical Realism can be defined to a limit.

Cinematic Magical Realism

Magical realism never got acceptance as a genre and was not even considered as a recognized film movement. It is explained as an add on to various other movements of art history like Surrealism, expressionism, and so on. In films, the elements of expressionism are often confused with magical realism.

The expressionist movement in Germany had made films that deal with larger-than-life concepts and fantasies under Avant-garde films. The films of F W Munroe (Nosferatu (1922)), Fritz Lang (Metropolis (1927)), and Robert Huyang (The cabinet of Dr Caligery(1920), had complete freedom in showing the unreal or imaginative world. Drummond(1979) observes the expressionist style of filmmaking in the twentieth century, which was a blend of stylistic visuals, dreamlike set designs, and innovative use of techniques to make the film a different experience.

Magical realism evolved as an art. It is studied by art critics and experimented with by many artists in their discipline. The auteur's idea of the film treatment and the narrative made the style more complex.
Magical realism does not refer to entirely magical like experiences as found in expressionist movies, fantasy films, horror films, and so on. It can be said applies in different genres ranging from intimate family dramas to social panoramas or political analysis as observed by Klonowskaa (2014).

A film that entirely explores magical realism needs more clarity in the narrative, style, and other cinematic elements. Claire Gee (2013) observes that the magical realist narratives are to be a,

"national cinema in which films feature a highly underscored folkloric content; films in which an imaginary realm (signalled by a fairy-tale structure or a regression through childhood memory, for example) is juxtaposed with a contemporary reality; and adaptations of magic realist novels."

(Jameson, 1986) observes three major features for magical realist narratives:

- their historical setting on the threshold between pre-modern and modern times,
- the conscious use of colour employed to separate important objects, and

- the reduction to the body slowing the narrative down and leading to pornography and/or violence.

(Flores, 1955) observes how the experts of magical realism hold onto reality in an attempt to prevent literary obstructions and to prevent their myth from escaping into supernatural realms.

To be more specific, the film's realistic geography and socio-political factors are intertwined with a magical world explored by the character, or the film's narrative itself. It is one of the many distinctions magical realist films explore.

Various films are adapted from the novels of magical realism like Midnight's Children (2012) (Salman Rushdie's internationally acclaimed novel(1981)), and Alfonso Arau's adaptation (1992) of 'Like Water for Chocolate' (Esquivel, 1995). However, Jameson (1986) strongly argues that magical realism will attain its mode without connecting with any literary form. For that, understanding the cinematic apparatus behind the making is important.

So analyzing the specific cinematic elements like camera, lighting, production design, costumes, editing, and various technical functions is key to distinguishing the magical and realist elements of filmmaking.

(Gee, 2013) argues that cinematic magical realism is related to the structure and symbolic placement of objects, making it significant to study the signs and symbols expressed in a text. It is very rare to find a full-length study on the visual and cinematic aspects of Magical realism.

Even though there are criticisms which state, magical realism in films never have a strong base, (Issak, 2007) observes that films have the limitation of a rectangular screen.

Viewers are only capable of interpreting what is shown on the screen and hence, the effectiveness is under a grey area. In Film, literature or any medium for that matter, storytelling has a restricted boundary which is set by the author, filmmaker or artist. It is their creative freedom to set pieces for audiences' interpretation and it is the soul of the relationship between art, artist and audience.

All of Guillermo Del Toro's films are considered a material suitable for studying the magical realism in film. (Floss, 2017) observes how film critic Daniel P Haeusser argues that the themes and tone of Del Toro's cinema have led to the creation of an intricate masterpiece of magic realism.

Research question

- What are the technical cinematic elements of magical realist films?
- Is there a specific and definite style and framework for a magical realist film?

Research objectives

- To understand the technical framework of magical realist films.
- To identify the importance of Mise en scene elements in magical realist films.
- To identify the interconnectedness of the realistic and magical world in magical realism.

Review of literature
(Gee, 2013)

This text observes the lack of proper study in understanding the relevance of magical realism in the field of art. Magical realism is most appreciated in relation to the European expressionist painting and Latin American literary works, but the studies have to extend their knowledge to evaluate every form of art, especially cinema because of the popularity and following for the medium today. (Gee, 2013) states that considering the emergence of magical realism in the mid 1920s as an art historical mode, the relevance of developments in cultural production and the cinematic apparatus is central to a categorization of magic realism as a visual rather than a literary mode.

This literature clearly maps the history of the evolution of the literary genre 'Magical realism', in order to specify the need for such an aesthetic art in the culture. (Gee, 2013) follows the ideas of Franz Roh, Alejo Carpentier, and Frederic Jameson by understanding their contribution to magical realism. Furthermore, the author speaks about cinema and the applications of magical realism in cinema. The socio-political narrative in a highly imaginative visual art and how the art becomes more strong in conveying the history and culture, specific to geography is mentioned prominently in the text tracing the roots of Magical realism.

(Haeng, 2013)

This literature is a pure application of cinematic elements in the Magical realist narrative. (Haeng, 2013) experimented on doing several short films and feature-length films to understand the film-making elements behind magical realist narratives. We understand the aspects of narration and treatment from a filmmaker's point of view. We also understand the characteristics of magical realism through the analysis of the same films, and also the international commentary on the film's depiction of culture and traditions.

The social and cultural relevance of the film is discussed with examples of his works. These analyses prove useful in identifying the key elements of the auteur's choice of style and techniques in magical realism films. Apart from the practical applications, the author also discusses the criticisms of magical realism in movies and the one-sided interpretations of ontological expressions. The films lack the imagination of the audience and rather pushes the visuals into their mind. (Haeng, 2013) approaches it with the same limitation as found in literature where the readers are made to use their imaginations to construct the world that the author describes in detail.

(Floss, 2017)
(Floss, 2017) analyzes the adaptation of magical realist literature into films. He explores the hybridity of magical realism literature when it is remade into visual art. The author studies Salman Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children (1981) and its adaptation into a film in 2012, intending to critically identify the effectiveness of film compared to literature.

The author studies the dynamics of adapting a magical realist novel into visual form without losing the aesthetic sensibilities and political implications of the original text.

To answer this, the author studies the mise-en-scene elements of the film in comparison to literature, by reading passages from the text and analyzing how they are adapted in the film, thus helping us understand the techniques employed.

This method can aid in identifying the relative effectiveness of both versions. The author believes that magical realism is a very broad subject in art and his article motivates future researchers to study it from different perspectives. In this manner, the article contributes to converting arguments into facts.

Jameson (1986)

Jameson (1986) attempts to understand the strange attraction of magical realism and its evolution into an alternative for narrative logic in postmodernism, especially in the case of films.

Jameson analyzes magical realist films to discover the common factors which were the historical significance, strange colour tone, and the simplification of narrative to show violence/ pornography on a lesser level.

He calls magical realism "nightmare of history", referring to its rise from suppression to tell the pain and suffering of the people throughout history.

He deeply explained the narrative of certain films and attempted at solving the confusion of the term magical realism. Magical realism in the film is a postmodern art, which is said to be a significant medium of narrative which is dipped in magic with all qualities of the real world.

Klonowska (2014)

Klonowska prominently describes the historical factors of magical realism in polish film and how films across cultures adopt magical realism. "Polish magical realist films illustrate the seemingly unlimited and universal convention of magical realism".
Klonowska's analysis of polish film tells the forgotten history which is related to Jameson's understanding of nostalgia blended in magical realism,"The majority of Polish magic realist movies tend to present idyllic versions of Polish past or Polish provincial life, preserving them as memory".

The author notes,

 "The relatively little importance attributed to the detailed analysis of the present, reduced usually to mere background; the absence of political involvement, appearing only implicitly as a veiled criticism of post-war changes; the focus on life rather than on particular lives – all of these traits seem to be lasting characteristic features of Polish cinematic magical realism."

Through the critical observation and acquiring of certain information from magical realist films from different cultures, we can identify the underlying features of the genre and its evolution across the world.

Łukasiewicz (2010)

(Łukasiewicz, 2010) finds the film Pan's Labyrinth as a different and unique Fairy tale movie that portrays an ominous version of fairy tales. "presents a much more ominous take on the fairy tale. The author cites the lack of bright colours, comedic characters, and extravagant happiness that mark most well-known fairy tale films, as the key reason for this.

The interdependence of both magical and real-world is communicated with the 'maze' likewise, the film is considered as parallelism of fantastic and the real. The author notes the uniqueness of magical realism to blend events between the real and the imaginary worlds thus facilitating the fusion of distinct spaces that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction. The article defines both real and fantastic to find the stand of magical realism, and the author explores the characters to find almost every relationship they share with the world. He observes that Ofelia is the only character that feels fantastic as she opens the door to fantasy in the film. At times she finds the magic unbelievable with the audience resonating the same confusion.

The author referring to Pan's Labyrinth, a film that represents a powerful and innovative new genre, provides a new term 'Neo-magical realism'. The author believes this has the scope in the future studies of magical realism in films.

Methodology

Content Analysis
This research aims at understanding the cinematic elements of magical realism in films. For that purpose, the study uses content analysis which is an ideal method for a film text. Mise-en-scene analysis of Pan's Labyrinth in terms of the setting/location, props, set design, colour, and costumes are done to understand the magical and realistic elements that constitute the filmmaking. In addition, the Camera, sound, and editing are also to be analyzed which gives us more details on the cinematic style of magical realism.
We analyze each element and its meanings along with the montage of how each shot together forms a meaning.

Mise en scene
It is a method of understanding the configurations behind filmmaking. A mise en scene consists of many aspects in a scene. The basic 5 elements of mise-en-scene are

- props,
- set design,
- costumes,
- lighting,
- performance

Furthermore, analyzing additional elements like stage blocking, editing, sound, shot composition, and so on helps in making the study more critical.

Mise en scene comes from french meaning 'setting a stage'. They mention how a stage is arranged with elements for storytelling.

Setting
Setting deals with the period the story is set in and which area it is happening. Accordingly, the elements will be related to the period. For instance, a story happening in the '90s include the costumes, the style of construction, and every element resembles the '90s.

Set design
It is the space occupied by the characters and properties of the film. The set is designed as per the demands of the story and location. For instance, A house can be set in a manner where the style and specifications of the house are related to the mood of the film, psychological factors of characters and the setting, etc.

Properties
Properties in a film are closely related to the characters which indirectly tells more about the characters' motives and psychology. The properties will be motifs that push forward the story narrative.

Costumes

The appearance of each character has its significance in what they communicate to the audience. Similar to the basic psychology of judging according to looks, the audience analyses the nature of the character from their costumes along with the makeup.

Color

Colour is a factor that differentiates a film from others where the colour tone of the film expresses the genre and mood of the film. A certain palette of colour signifies a particular emotion as per colour theory.

Lighting

Lighting projects the actions, themes and mood. The style of lighting can influence the perception of the audience in understanding the character's state of mind. We can manipulate the importance of objects and subjects inside a frame by lighting as it affects the audience's mood.

Image

It is the most important factor of filmmaking as the story is shot in images making it the fundamental art of cinema. The camera tells the story and the perspective, the shots together convey meanings to the audience. It has many aspects like shot composition, framing, symmetry, spatial details, and so on.

Editing

Editing process helps a film to be a film, the number of shots are put together to form a film. Editing creates the real meaning of a movie, the narrative structure of a movie is determined in the editing process. The story attains the power to catch the eyes and mind of the people by the rhythm, pacing, and flow of editing

Sound

Like the image, the sound is an inevitable part of the film. The sound makes people hooked inside the world of film. It influences the audience feelings and conveys the theme and mood of the film.

Mise en scene Analysis

Setting/location

The film is set in a hilly region in Spain after the Spanish civil war in 1944.

World of a fairy tale (00:01:31 - 00:02:11) and (01:49:45 - 01:51:00)

From the beginning, we are made aware of the fairy tale that gives us the existence of the two realities in the film. The underworld realm is connected with the real world through a well-like structure inside the 'labyrinth'. The underworld is shown by an amazing set design that makes the film more like a fairy tale.

Likewise, From the introduction scene (00:02:31 - 00:02:40)

We can see cars entering the frame, and in an establishing shot, we can see they are entering another world surrounded by a forest, which is, in reality, going from urban cities to rural areas where all the

magic takes place. The particular forest can be seen as the middle ground where the magical and the real elements of the film meet each other.

(00:02:45 - 00:04:32)
Ofelia and her pregnant mother Carmen arrive at the place where she feels sick. Ofelia and the audience observe the subtle elements of magic in the realistic location like the stone carved with the shape of an eye which Ofelia placed where it belongs.

(00:05:44 - 00:06:01)

When they arrive at the mill or the camp, we are made known the significance of the location. Due to the civil war in Spain, the camp is like a headquarters on the border of Spain. Carmen and Ofelia came there as Carmen's husband is controlling the area. This particular place/area is primarily set for showing the real world throughout the film.

Set design

A film like Pan's Labyrinth finds its essence of a fairytale-like magical world in the realistic setting from the set design. It needs to be real and at the same time magical. The film is successful in creating such a middle ground for the story to happen. The magical elements of the set mostly interacted with by Ofelia is an ancient-looking labyrinth rather than a hyper stylistic location. The real part is a labyrinth and the magical elements are the details of carvings and narrative itself.

The Abandoned Church (00:02:14 - 00:02:18)

The castle which we see in the second scene resembles the architecture of the Roman empire. The parts of Spain were once under the roman empire which adds up to the details of the film. It shows the significance of history and culture blended in the film

The Mill (00:05:51 - 00:05:55)

The mill or army camp is the place where Ofilia and Carmen are living along with the whole troop of soldiers and people working there. The choice of such a place in the film is important as it is not built by the soldiers but exists much before their arrival.

The damages in the mill and the decay of wood adds to the ancient detailing of the place. The fight between the ordinary people to live freely in their land is conveyed in the film by this set. The set design is made to show how realistic the setting of the film is.

The Labyrinth and Carved Stone Structures

The entrance to the labyrinth is shown at the beginning, built next to the mill seen as an old mythical structure. The carvings in the stones show some mysterious elements which can be closely related to magic. The roots of trees around the stone prove its existence long ago.

The carvings in stone

The carvings seen in the labyrinth resemble the mythical creature 'faun', that Ofelia interacts with and the style of bold letters surrounding resembles the fairy tale books. This set is built by rocks that don't have precise edges and cuts which shows the realistic existence of ancient structure in the place.

The stone block Ofelia encounters on their way to the mill is blended in nature, and the mysterious carvings make it magically realistic. The action of Ofelia filling the missing piece of stone which releases the strange insect is visually the magic of the scene.

The Old tree
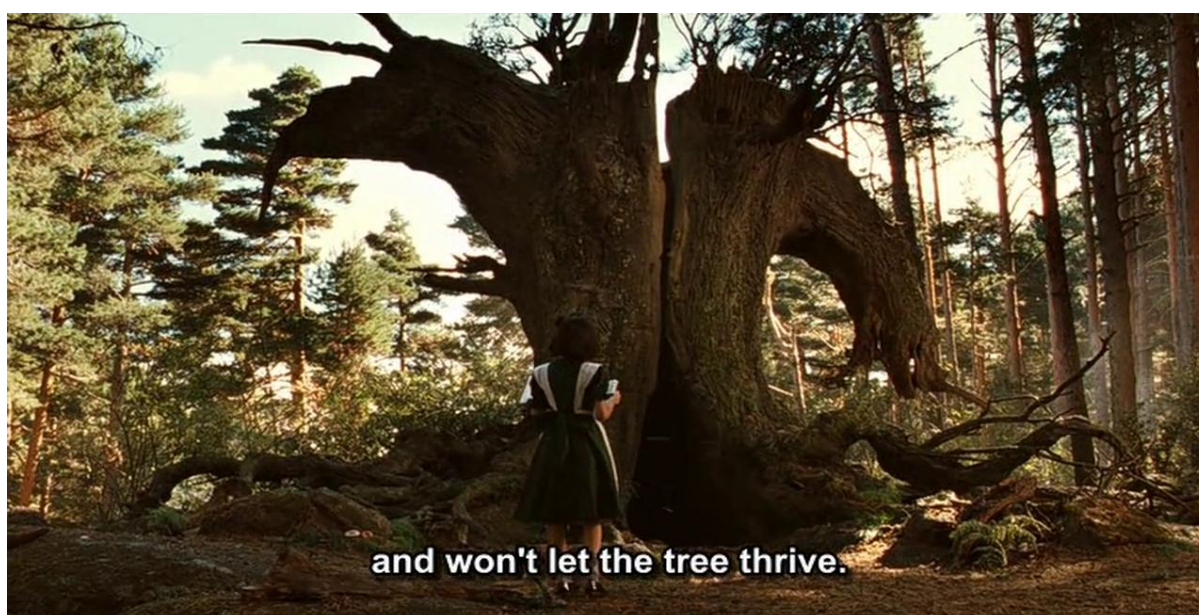
As part of completing the first task, Ofelia finds this old tree that is dying because of the toad settled inside the roots. The tree is a connection between the real world and the magical world. The tree in reality looks fine but something unimaginable is happening to the tree caused by the giant toad living in the roots.

Also, the shape of the tree looks like the horn of the faun, circular on both sides, which makes it more magical in the world of Pan's Labyrinth with the shape repeating in various areas.

The Hyper magical set of Underground Realm
(00:01:31 - 00:02:00)
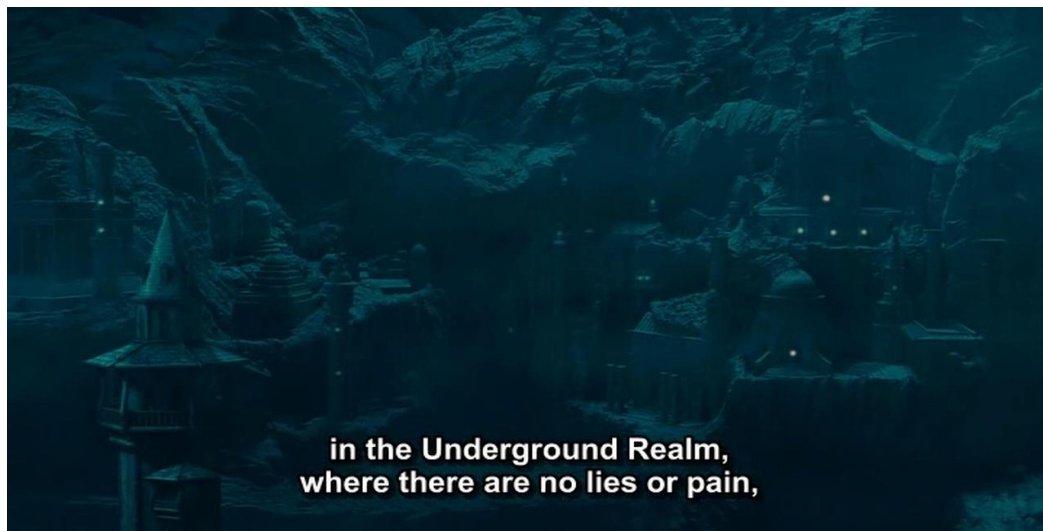
In the complete story, we are shown the underworld two times. Once in the beginning at the place surrounded with large rocks where the structures are in the way it is made out of rocks. The visuals are very dreamy and unrealistic.

(01:49:45 - 01:51:00)

This set is shown at the end of the film which starts with Ofelia, in a different world where the background shines like gold providing the feeling of a fantasy world. The curved designs in the wall resemble all of the magical elements in the real world.

In the wide shot, we see three chairs in greater heights providing a more dreamy fairy tale world feeling.

In general, most of the set designs in the film are in the real world where the magic is expressed through the bizarre placement of unrealistic sets like the labyrinth, tree, stones, and so on. At the same time the designs are based on the history and culture of the old Spain in the Roman empire.

Properties

The film has many properties which are very important to show the real and the magical world in film. Most of the properties are the source of interaction between the magical and real world. I will point out some of the properties that give the unique feature of magical realist text.
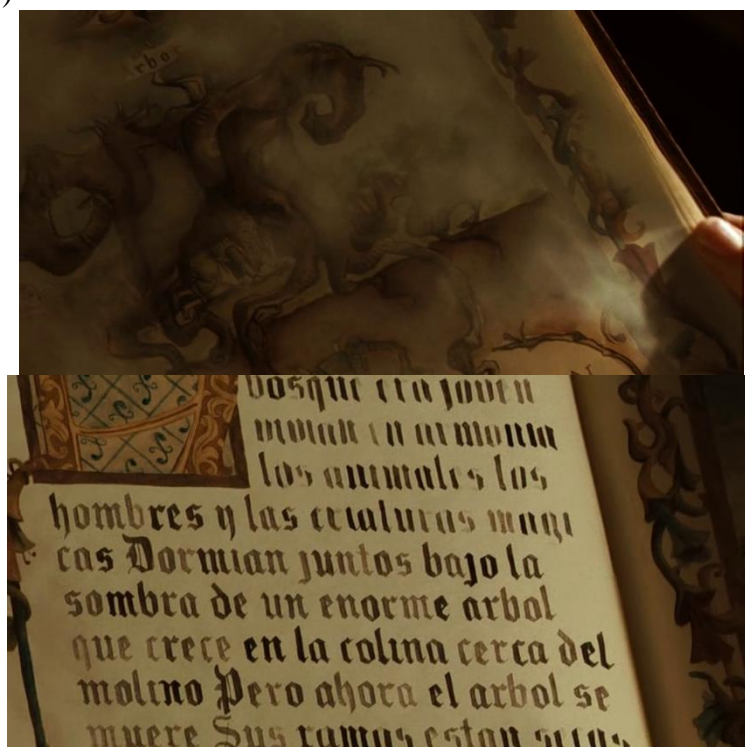
Books

(00:02:42 - 00:02:45)

Fairy tale book

(00:27:36 - 00:28:06)

Magical book

Books play an important role in the film because of Ofelia's love for reading fairy tale stories and it is also a motif in the film. When Ofelia reaches the forest she is reading a fairy tale book narrating the story of the lost princess.

The first thing that she gets from the faun is a book that is like a guide to her future tasks for getting into the underworld. From fairy tale stories to magical book she believes the stories more than the real world.

That character of her is the very existence behind the film 'Pans Labyrinth'. These books are related to the magical and real-world and make us believe in a strong association with both realities in the film. This is one of the features of magical realism.

Chalk

The Chalk that faun gives for opening doors in the solid walls was used for one of her tasks to get a knife from a monster. This chalk is used in the real world to do magical things and it interacts with captain Vidal when he finds out Ofelia is in his room taking his son (01:39:34 - 01:39:45). Chalk is just a common material in the real world, its properties in the magical world are different, this creates confusion about whether it is real or magical, among the audience when the chalk interacts with characters other than Ofelia. Not only the chalk other props make that confusion

The Magical root

It is the most magical property in the list where it is said to be a Root but the shape looks like a human. The magic of the root affects the real world character Carmen to get well. This root is also another property that interacts with other characters. For them, it's a plain root and they interpret Ofelia's madness or fixation to believe the fairytale as real, but in Ofelia's reality, it is a magical root that cures her mother. From the audience angle, this property also shares the confusion when Carmen throws it into the fire which results in Carmen's sickness and the behaviour of the property itself.

Costumes

Costumes in the film are based on 1940s Spain's ethnic dress. The costumes show the difference between the people in the film.

Carmen and Ofelia have a transformation of costumes, when they arrive at the mill they have an average-looking costume not that elite in style because of the previous lower-middle-class social status. Carmen forces Ofelia to wear a beautiful dress for the dinner, but she ruins the dress while she goes to complete the task, this shows her denial of the life she has in the real world.

Vidal and the soldiers wear military dresses which shows the uniformity of anger, control, and rage. The tidy makeup of Vidal conveys discipline in his life.

The maids and other servants of the captain have costumes with a similar colour to the dark tone of the camp and show the below-average living.

The Costumes of liberal guerilla protesters are brown-coloured which depicts the element of nature, non-linear styles in the combination of Coat, scarf, hat, and so on. It shows the freedom of opinion and choice, unlike the Francoist nationalist dictatorship.

Color

The colour in this film expresses the state of mind of the people, and the overall mood of the film is set by the colour according to what the scene conveys. Until we see the magical world the colours in the film are mostly relating to the natural circumstances. Like dark blue at night, orange and yellow tone in the morning, and yellow when it comes to natural light from tungsten bulbs. There is not a clear distinction between colour when it comes to the situations where magical elements or characters or creatures are shown in the film. The colours are mostly used to convey the characters in the movie and the social role they play.

1) At the very beginning of the film (00:01:08 - 00:01:30),
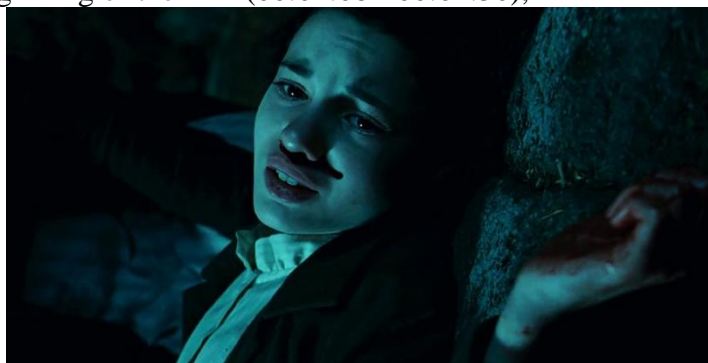
We see Ofelia is bleeding to death which is a blue tone that reflects the moonlight, the darker shade of blue shows the darkness of the film unlike a normal fairy tale movie starts. This shade is shown throughout the film when the natural source of light is the moon. This tone helped the film in establishing the flat but darker colour of real life.

2) (00:21:20 - 00:24:16)

Introducing the Faun in the real world, the tone is similar to Ofelia's death scene. The cyan colour with patches of green, makes it feel fantastic without using unfamiliar colours compared to the film's tone. There is not a big difference in other scenes where the faun is present.

3) (00:03:15 - 00:05:02)

The scene where Carmen asks to stop the car because of her sickness. The forest starts with a wide shot of nature and the most prominent colours of the scene are yellow, brown, and green. These colours depict the pleasant nature to give the mood of reality. Ofelia's green colour dress with an overcoat helps us to identify the connection between her and nature, it is kept throughout the film. On one side she is thrilled because of the flora and fauna but agitated as she hates her mother's decision to choose an arrogant stepfather.

4) The Color of Mill & Labyrinth

All the set design in the mill and the labyrinth which is closer to the mill is coloured in grey as it was built with rocks which strongly shows the control of the surrounding environment, similar to the colour of the Fascist military uniform.

5) (00:35:00 - 00:35:15)

(00:53:42 - 00:55:22)

When the liberal militants are shown, the colours in the film are dominated by the brown colour. They are liberals who fight for their freedom in their land. Earth's colour of brown is reserved to symbolize their stand for their rights. Their part of the film conveys the real-world implications of the film Pans Labyrinth, it is made sure that they are shown with utmost real colours.

6) (00:35:15 - 00:38:20)

The scene under the tree to finish her first task was colored in yellow tones signifying the fantasy world.

Whale as soon as she leaves the tree we see the darker tone to show the reality.
Ofelia's magical world is brighter and positive than the real world, this decision of Del Toro is very personal to the character, but it is important to understand the perspective to show the differences in the magical and real-world in such genre

7) (01:49:45 - 01:51:00)

In the scene where Ofelia enters the underworld realm, there is a drastic colour shift from blue to orange. The frame is the brightest in the whole magical world. In the real world, nature is shown in the brightest colours, because the magical elements are mixed. In the real world, the colours of those elements are related to the colours shown in reality.

There is a linear use of orange tone in the film but in addition, more shades of the colour are used in the magical world. Also, the colour red is used to show the distinction between the two worlds. This combination is used before in the dinner table of monster.

Lighting

The lighting in the film shifts from High key to Low key in the mill and other locations due to the need of showing both the fantastic and real world. The style of Low key lighting resembles the darker social tone of the content, while the high key lighting shows the Magical experience Ofelia goes through. The army is camped to infiltrate the liberals who are fighting against the dictator's rule.

Also, the psychological state of Ofelia's frustration of being in control of captain Vidal is the moody lighting in the mill surroundings. The Rembrandt lighting method is used to give high key light to the characters for highlighting them on screen. Most of the light is created as a practical source without making it more magical but resembles reality.

Del Toro used the lighting to be more from nature which is sunlight, fire, moon. The brilliant use of contrast with shadows makes the film dramatic. The high key lighting situations are when we see the forest and the final magical world. It conveys the reality of both worlds as Ofelia's subjective reality.

Comparing the color and lighting of vidal and monster's dinner table

The use of colours in the two scenes helps us understand how del toro used colour and lighting to form a distinction between the magical and real world.

The scene where Vidal is having dinner with other officials is filled with more people wearing dark shades of grey. The dinner table has food mostly in shades of brown, the only thing that is different is the white table cloth. Overall it is happening in the real world.
On the other hand, for making a magical dinner table, he used more colours like red and orange. Though the large variety of colours makes us feel it is magical.

The lighting in both scenes is similar to the extent both are lit in the natural light of the fire, which can be considered as the practical source. The style of the lighting is not big different from each other but the amount of light is.
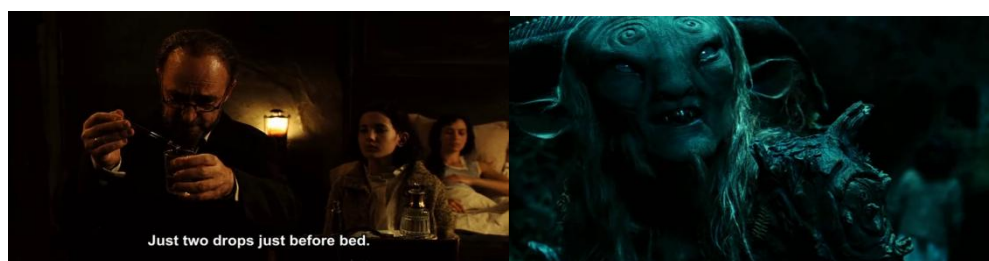
Camera
Del Toro understands the importance of characters and the world in the film. That is evident in the shots of the film.

His shot division is based on the character, showing them on the mid or close up a shot during conversations and wide/full shots only when the situation comes to show their personal space.

The introductory shots of the main characters in the film are shown as in the above images that show the importance of characters in the film. Magical realism always deals with the magical elements immersed in the real world through a character's point of view, making the characters in the setting are important.

Freedom of space

The long/ extreme wide shots are used when we see a lot of nature and the introduction of the magical world in the frame. It conveys the freedom for the liberal militants and spatial details of the fantastic in connection with reality.
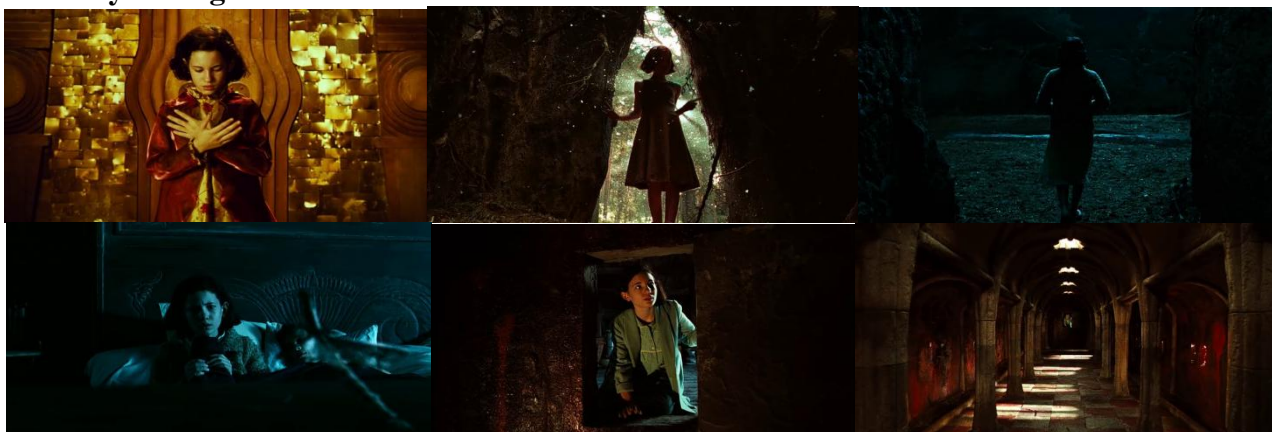
The fluid camera movement
(00:31:24 - 00:31:44)

Another speciality is the fluidity of the camera. Through a lot of camera movements, a visual flow is created that makes us immersed in the world of Ofelia. Harsh jump cuts are the reality but the continuous and long shots make it more of a fairy tale reading experience. This flow is assured by the editing also.

Doorway to magic

Whenever Ofelia is introduced to the magical world, the framing is centred to enhance her experience of the magical space. She is a fellow human who sees the magic from reality and that transition is conveyed through the framing. Also, another aspect of the film is the ambiguity of whether it is true or just her imagination. That confusion is strong in these shots where it is she entering the magical realm through a doorway which is sometimes physical, motivated by fairies, random colour shifts.

Editing

The editing is very invisible in the film as we travel through the fantasy of Ofelia like we are flowing in a river. Supporting the fluid camera movement editing transitions are motivated by the movements and elements in the frame.

(00:30:52 - 00:35:15)
In the scene where Vidal goes to find the guerilla militants and Ofelia is on her way to find the tree, the transitions are seemingly flowing with masking transition. The two situations overlap each other showing the action of our Protagonist and Antagonist. it is ironic shots of the discoveries of Vidal exploring the real and Ofelia exploring the fantasy.

Sound
The film brilliantly used sound to enhance the feeling of magic in the film. The exaggerated sound of a cricket in the intro scene of Ofelia (00:04:34 - 00:04:50) is so blended with the magical element in the film, it emphasizes the presence of unnatural occurrence as Ofelia's subjective experience.

The film is filled with a magnifying unnatural sound like that of Mandrake Root when it is burned when Vidal finds the root under the bed (01:23:14 - 01:23:30).

One of the most important scenes is the transition of sound from a magical scene to a real scene, portraying the interaction of magic and reality. It is initially used when Ofelia escapes from the monster where the strong banging on the door is slowly matched with the sound of wooden screeches (01:02:00 - 01:02:18).

The wooden sounds that scare Ofelia are explained by her mother as the wind causing the wooden furniture to make that sound. She also compares it with the busy sounds of the city (00:11:50 - 00:12:20), which is very natural but from this scene, we can assume the real-world occurrences have a connection with a world we are not aware of. Both worlds complement each other.

Music in this film beautifully sets the audience into the magical world, when Ofelia enters the magical reality which is supported by music smoothly backing her actions. The use of a lullaby for Ofelia's tragic life also keeps the mystery within.

Findings

The purpose of the research was to analytically study the elements of filmmaking in Magical Realism. As we understood film is an effective medium of representation of such a hybrid aesthetic, the only difference is the tools of constructing a film.

The analysis helped in discovering elements that differentiate the real and magical world. The settings of the film resemble the real world while the production design of a labyrinth and sculptors indicates the magic in it. Various aspects of costumes and colour in the film are closely related to the social status and psychological state of the characters. It is important that in a story the expressions of characters are important to empathize with the audience, the feelings are key to the immersive experience. Del Toro without compromising on the characters' emotions made a fairytale-like narrative with the right placements of cinematic apparatus.

The mixing up or overlapping of lighting, colours, set design, properties in both the magical and real-world was a brilliant idea that the whole experience of the film was linear while in Hollywood traditional formats of fairy tale movies, the thrill we experience will be part of the magical world, it is a kind of escapism from the real world which is the subjective reality.

The Camera, Editing and Sound was also supporting Del Toro's approach to magical realism, as we can see in the analysis, the interconnectedness of different realities, the emphasis on the subjective reality is very well worked in those departments

It is visible that Del Toro doesn't want to make a fantasy thriller film but discuss the politics of oppression and fascism through a more engaging narrative device. The historical element, as well as the social critiquing functions of magical realism, is explored in the film.

Conclusion

Magical realism is truly an art that can be effectively used in films. Films can be the most interesting medium as it visually shows the magic and it is an evolution from a time when ordinary films were seen as magic. Now we apply magic inside a film to get the seductiveness. Generally, the storytelling of films do not require the same approach, but the basic idea of magical realism should be prioritized.

Del Toro's films are the best place to learn the techniques of magical realism in film from the construction of a better mise en scene, to identifying the elements which you can effectively use to create the magical world, and so on.

Identifying mise-en-scene is an essential work for a magical realist cinematic narrative, we need to bribe the audience to feel the adventure while addressing social reality.
We can find the ordinary elements of real life, convert them into a magical experience, form a relevant narrative and create a beautiful piece of art.

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