

Magic, Madness, and Metaphor: Cognitive Insights into Magical Realism and Healing

Cristina Garcia Miguel

13:30-15:00, November 27, 2024
Room 301, 3F, Building 10
In person only
No registration required

Christina's World (1948) by Andrew Wyeth

This talk investigates the complex and often contested term “magic” to explore what magical thinking reveals about human cognition and how it can illuminate terms like ‘magical realism’ and their connections to concepts of irrationality and madness. Often dismissed as primitive or irrational, magical thinking offers a powerful means of structuring experience and organizing knowledge, transcending cultural boundaries through the use of conceptual metaphor to shape experiences. By examining magical realism as a narrative form that mirrors and engages with this cognitive style, I propose that it opens unique possibilities for framing trauma, mental health, and healing. Through exploring the metaphoric and therapeutic potential of magical realism, this talk argues that these literary techniques provide a space for understanding trauma and recovery in ways that conventional therapies may overlook.

Cristina Garcia Miguel is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at University College London, where she researches the intersection of magical realism, trauma narratives, and cognition. Her current thesis explores how magical elements in literature serve as vehicles for cognitively processing violent experiences. She holds an MA in European Affairs from King’s College London and an MA in Asian Affairs from Renmin University of China. As a visiting researcher at Sophia University’s Institute of Comparative Culture in Tokyo, she’s investigating magical thinking and magical realism in contemporary Japanese literature. Her work has been supported by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.



This talk is organized by Mathew Strecher (Professor, FLA Sophia University).

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