**Magic Realism Intro**

**Beckett 2020**

Trap. Horrible trap. At one’s birth it is sprung. Some last day must arrive. When you will need to get out of this body. Bad enough. Then we bring a baby here. The terms of the trap are compounded. That baby must also depart. All pleasures should be tainted by that knowledge. But hopeful dear us, we forget. (Saunders, 156)

As George Saunders states in his novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*, all people are faced with a beginning and an end. The world can be very indifferent to the suffering and daily struggle faced by people. Moreover, many are faced with trauma in their lives. This is reflected in much of contemporary literature. Characters face alienation, death, and catastrophic tragedy just like many do in their real lives. One popular mode in contemporary fiction that deals with seemingly insurmountable tragedy is magic realism. Magic realism is:

A mode or genre in prose fiction often associated with postmodernism and characterized by a mixture of realistic and fantastic elements. Works of magic realism are set in the real world and treat the magical or supernatural as an inherent, even mundane part of reality requiring no explanation. (Bedford, 279)

When examined, it is clear that magic realism is uniquely positioned to deal with the trauma of the human condition. Across literary forms like: Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved,* Dennis Johnson's short story *Train Dreams,* and Alejandro Iñárritu's film *Birdman,* magic realist texts often share several important commonalities. These commonalities include characters faced with catastrophic tragedy, characters' access to everyday inexplicable yet mundane magic, and characters moving forward despite the darkness. Faced with the all too recognizable blandness of death and despair, magic realism acts as a kind of balm for life’s grim realities.