Magical Realism and Children's Magical Way of Knowing
in David Almond's *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*

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Tutkielmassani keskityn tarkastelemaan maagista realismia. Tutkielmani kohteena ovat David Almondin lapsille ja nuorille suunnatut kirjat *Skellig* ja *Heaven Eyes*, joissa molemmissa maaginen realismi on voimakkaasti läsnä. Pääpainona tutkielmassani on se, kuinka maagis-realistiset tekstit voivat haastaa vakiintuneita käsityksiä tiedosta ja sitä kautta myös konstruktioita lapsista.

Tutkielmassa käyttämäni teoriat jakaantuvat pääosin kahteen osaan. Toinen osa teoriasta nojaa vahvasti maagisen realismin teoriaan ja teoreetikkoihin, kuten Anne Hegerfeldtiin tai Maggie Anne Bowersiin. Tässä pyrin tuomaan esiin, kuinka maaginen realismi pystyy kyseenalaistamaan ja purkamaan kategorioita ja faktoiksi luultuja subjektiivisia totuuksia. Teorian toinen osa koostuu lapsen ja lapsuuden sosiaalisen konstruktion käsittelystä keskittyen viattomuuden konstruktioon sekä lapsen oletettuun maagiseen ajatteluun. Näitä kumpaakin käsitellessä pyrin tuomaan esiin, kuinka ajatus oikeanlaisesta tiedosta näkyy niissä tai vaikuttaa niihin. Punaisena lankana näiden teoriaosuuksien välillä on Jean François Lyotardin teoria tiedosta narratiiveina ja kuinka tietoa jaotellaan ja arvotetaan hyvään ja väärään tietoon. Tieteellistä tietoa pidetään usein oikeanlaisena ja hyvänä, kun taas maagisia uskomuksia pidetään väärinä.

Analyysissa käsittelen maagista realismia *Skellig* ja *Heaven Eyes* -kirjoissa sekä kuinka näiden kirjojen lapsihahmot esitetään maagisen ajattelun omaavina ja viattomina. Analyysissani tutkin, kuinka nämä tekstit fuusioivat maagisen ja niin kutsutun todellisen maailman yhteen kyseenalaisten samalla oletuksia tieteellisen tiedon oikeudesta ja maagisten uskomusten vääryydestä. Samalla tutkitaan kuinka näissä teksteissä tietoon pohjautuvien viattomuuden ja maagisen ajattelun lapsikonstruktioiden marginalisoiva vaikutus purkautuu maagisen realismin subjektiivisia totuuksia kyseenalaistavan luonteen takia. Lapsen erilainen, maagisena nähty tapa nähdä maailmaa arvotetaan tällöin samalle tasolle kuin aikuisten tieteellinen ja rationaalisena pidetty tapa.


Avainsanat: maaginen realismi, lapsi, tieto, postmodernismi, viattomuus, David Almond

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# 1  Introduction

There is a mysterious ill man with wings on his back sitting in a garage, a girl with webs between her fingers found in the mud of a riverbank and a body of a long dead young man coming to life. Learning to see inanimate clay figures move by themselves, dreams blending together with being awake and the ordinary world becoming coloured with magic; these are all things that children experience in David Almond's *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*, two books written for children and young adults. Magic is undeniably present in these books. It is apparent in the events that take place in them, it brings inanimate objects and dead bodies to life and colours the world around the child characters in a way that makes the world seem normal and magical at the same time. Yet despite the presence of magic in the texts the novels should not be classified as fantasy which, according to Perry Nodelman in his essay "Some Presumptuous Generalizations About Fantasy", "depicts a world unlike the one we usually call real" (in Egoff et al. 1996, 175). Instead, because of the way the magic blends into the everyday world that surrounds the child characters another word should be used to describe these texts: magical realism. The term was coined together in the beginning of the 20th century and has been described as "the amalgamation of realism and fantasy" (Flores, in Zamora and Faris 2005, 112). A magical realist text, then, blends together the ordinary world that surrounds us every day and magical elements that according to our logic should not belong in the ordinary world.

Magical realism is the main focus of this thesis. The literary mode, which arguably took its first steps in Latin America, has been under growing interest and theoretical discussion for several decades now. Much of the discussion focuses on how magical realism can subvert categories, transgress boundaries and bring out the voices in the margin to challenge those in the dominant centre. This all happens by blending together magical elements and the ordinary world around us. This transgressive characteristic is what I have chosen to focus on as well in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. This characteristic of magical realism will be examined from the point of view of

knowledge and producing knowledge. What is regarded as good knowledge and what is regarded as the wrong kind of knowledge; what are believed to be the right ways to produce knowledge and what are not; and who has the access to the right kind of knowledge and why – these are the questions that come under scrutiny in magical realist texts. As Hegerfeldt notes, magical realism questions ways to produce knowledge and brings out the voices of the margin (2005, 3). In this thesis I will focus on two things: firstly, how magical realism is connected with producing knowledge, and secondly, how questioning ways of producing knowledge can at the same time question the categories that are turned into centres and margins. While the discussion in this thesis will flow away from magical realism at times – mainly to discuss ways children are constructed in the Western society – knowledge and the idea of categories being built and subverted and the margin challenging the superiority of the centre will be constantly present in the text.

Many have noted that magical realism has a lot in common with postmodernist writing, and some have even called it a postmodernist mode (Theo D'haen, in Zamora and Faris 2005). As will be demonstrated in this thesis, there is a clear link with magical realism and postmodernism. I will examine the transgressive nature of the mode by using Jean-François Lyotard's theory of scientific knowledge and how the idea of good knowledge plays a role in creating centres and margins – or, in Lyotard's words, metanarratives and little narratives. Lyotard's views on how the superiority of the metanarratives can be challenged by little narratives will also be used to discuss magical realism's transgressive nature and how the mode questions subjective truths. Bringing constructed categories under question and to challenge the structures of the centre and margins that are intertwined in these categories is where the idea of magical realism as a postmodernist mode can be seen. I will prove this by using Lyotard's theory of knowledge and narratives in the context of magical realism.

I wish to examine magical realism and its transgressive nature through discussing David Almond's novels *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. According to Don Latham in *David Almond:*

*Memory and Magic* (2006), magical realism is present in all of Almond's novels (8). I had several reasons for choosing *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* specifically for the subject of this thesis. One of the most important reasons was the richness of magical realism in these texts. In the novels magic blends together with the ordinary world around the child characters in a way that is both eerie and natural. However, in neither of the texts is magical realism merely a literary decoration. In both texts magical realism manifests in ways that present alternative ways of producing knowledge for science and scientific knowledge. Dreaming, myths or imagination are all viable options for theories such as evolution. The second important reason for choosing David Almond's texts for this thesis was because during his career as a writer he has focused on children's and young adult literature. The protagonists in his texts are always children or teenagers and the stories are told through the eyes of a child. I believe that presenting a magical realist text from the point of view of a child character is in a sense a natural combination. This is because the child is viewed to see the ordinary world around them as magical – in the same way that a magical realist text presents the world to be, as well.

My idea for discussing children specifically in magical realist texts in this thesis was born from the possibility of magical realism not having to be bound to postcolonial literature. That magical realism could exist in Western literature as well has been discussed by critics for a couple of decades now. Examples about women as the focus of magical realist texts have been discussed, as well as literature located in urban space. As I explored the theoretical discussion around magical realism, I figured that children's literature and the child's point of view would of course be included in this discussion. However, when reading theoretical discussion about magical realism I was disappointed to discover that there was barely anything written about children as the protagonists of a magical realist story. I had the same result when looking for magical realism in children's literature: almost nothing could be found and most of the few examples I was able to find did not focus on the possibilities of examination that the presence of a child protagonist or focalizer in a

magical realist text can create. Anne Hegerfeldt does discuss the child's perceived world-view and the advantageous tools the constructions of the child's inner world can lend to magical realism, but only fairly briefly. I found the topic of children in magical realism therefore lacking of discussion. This is odd as I believe the topic could be a source for a fairly rich discussion. With this thesis I hope to expand the discussion about magical realism further outside from postcolonial literature, which dominates the theoretical discussion of the topic, and to take a step into the specific area of children's literature and children in magical realism.

Children as the protagonists of a magical realist text are just as viable of a source of discussion as, for example, women or postcolonial subjects. This is because children can be considered belonging to a margin in the same way that the aforementioned groups. The way in which children are constructed socially and culturally in the Western society indeed does marginalise them and turns the child into an ex-centric, as Linda Hutcheon would say (*Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* 1988). The way children are seen in the modern Western society is heavily based on the perceived innocence that is unique to them and cannot be found in adults. The construction of childhood as an innocent state both glorifies the child and paints a picture of children as spurious sources of information. I will argue that, just like magical realism's subverting nature, childhood innocence is connected to knowledge. More specifically, children are seen to be in need of protection from certain kind of knowledge that involves experience about life and the world. The child is also perceived to have a special way of looking at the world, which adults tend to think of as magical. According to many child development researchers, magical thinking is caused by for example the lack of understanding of how the world works (Bidell and Shweder 2009). It will be argued in this thesis that both childhood innocence and the perceived magical thinking of the child are connected to knowledge and, through that, the marginalisation of the child. Therefore the child as ex-centric makes it a fitting subject for the discussion about magical realism.

In conclusion, my intentions in this thesis are twofold. Firstly, I intend to discuss and examine the transgressive nature of magical realism by focusing on the ways the mode questions what are regarded as right ways to produce and to have knowledge. Secondly, I intend to broaden the discussion on magical realism by examining the child's point of view as what Lyotard calls a little narrative to the metanarrative of scientific knowledge. The first intention will be carried out by the help of the second intention. While doing this I also want to prove that magical realism can exist not just outside of Latin American literature but also in literature that is not postcolonial.

## 2   Magical Realism

In this chapter I aim to cover the most important aspects revolving around the theoretical discussion about magical realism in literature. I will first cover the main points of the mode's history and examine how discussion about magical realism turned from theorists wanting to restrict the mode to Latin American fiction to the growing awareness and recognition of the existence of magical realism on a more global scale. I will provide an overview of the most important aspects in critical discussion of the definition and dominating characteristics of the term. The focal point here will be how magical realism blends together the ordinary world and the magical and how this characteristic is the key for the mode's ability to transgress boundaries and question acknowledged truths. I will also acknowledge the discussion about magical realism's subversive power from a postmodern point of view and explain why I believe knowledge and different ways of knowing are key issues when examining the transgressive characteristic of the mode. From there I will then proceed to discuss why magical realism is a field where points of view of the margin have a good basis to challenge those of dominant centres.

## 2.1 Brief History of Magical Realism

Hegerfeldt states that the time line of the history of magical realism can be broken into three phases (2005, 37). The first phase began from Franz Roh's introduction of the term, the second one when Uslar-Pietri and Carpentier introduced the term to Latin American fiction and the last one being the resurrection of the term by Flores (12, 16, 37).

Even though magical realism is mostly considered a literary term and associated with literary criticism today its origins are, in fact, in art criticism. The term "magical realism" can be traced back to German art critic Franz Roh (1890–1965), who first introduced and used it in connection with postexpressionist painting in the Weimar Republic. The term can be found in a short essay from 1923 and in his book *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* in 1925 (Bowers 2004, 8; Hegerfeldt 2005, 12). It was used in Europe by Italian critic Massimo Bontempelli in the context of both literary and painting criticism in the 1920s (Hegerfeldt 2005, 15).

Roh's book was translated into Spanish a few years after its original publishing by Fernando Vela (in Faris and Zamora 2005, 30–31, n. 1), which has been said to have taken the term "magical realism" to Latin America. According to Hegerfeldt, though, magical realism began to receive attention from Latin American literary critics only some 20 years after the translation. Uslar-Pietri and Alejandro Carpentier, who were both influenced by European artistic movements, have been credited with adding their own influence to the usage of magical realism in fiction in Latin America almost simultaneously at the same time in the end of 1940s (Hegerfeldt 2005, 15–16). Uslar-Pietri has been credited as the first person to have used the term 'magic realism' in the context of Latin American fiction while Carpentier has been credited for coining together the term "lo real maravilloso" (marvellous realism) to refer specifically to "distinctly Latin American form of magic realism" in fiction (Bowers 2004, 14). Zamora and Faris state that Carpentier, whose writings on the subject have been widely discussed, believed that in Latin America "the fantastic

inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous [sic] mixtures exist by virtue of Latin America's varied history, geography, demography, and politics – not by manifesto" (2005, 75). So, according to Carpentier's beliefs, "lo real maravilloso" is specific only to Latin America; in other words, Carpentier believed the term's usage should be geographically restricted.

Hegerfeldt notes that, according to Echevarría Gonzales, interest for magical/marvellous realism picked up again after Angel Flores' essay *Magical Realism in Spanish America*, which was published in 1955 (2005, 37). Flores famously described magical realism as "the amalgamation of realism and fantasy" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 112). Hegerfeldt writes that "[f]ollowing Flores' reintroduction of the term, magic realism for a long time was largely treated as an exclusively Latin American phenomenon" (2005, 27).

Since Flores' essay magical realism has been steadily in critical discussion. The decades following Carpentier's and Flores' essays have, however, brought some changes. Despite Carpentier's and Flores' beliefs that magical realism belongs only to Latin American literature the term has been used to describe literature outside Latin America too in the last few decades (Bowers 2004, 32, 33). Mostly the mode has been associated with postcolonial literature (see 2.2). However, magical realism has also been associated with non-postcolonial literature and in more recent writings on the topic there has been a tendency to discuss why magical realism should not be and, in fact, is not bound by restrictions based on geography or genre. Bowers notes that magical realism can be connected with fiction that "express[es] a non-dominant or non-Western perspective, whether that be from a feminist, postcolonial or rural standpoint" (2004, 102), giving examples of how magical realism has branched out, and also says that "the fame of Latin American magical realism has propelled the rapid adoption of this form of writing globally. Magical realist writers have become recognized in India, Canada, Africa, the United States and across the world" (Bowers

2004, 18–19). This is a further sign that magical realism has moved to being used all around the globe.

It needs to be said that the history of the term "magical realism" is hard to describe extensively because of the different usages of "magical realism", "magic realism" and "lo real maravilloso". Different critics seem to have had – and still have – slightly different definitions for them and how they differ from each other. For example, Bowers makes a distinction between magic realism and magical realism. According to her, magic realism is a subsection of magical realism which she uses as an umbrella term. Then again, many critics do not dwell on definitions and distinctions and instead simply use either "magic realism" or "magical realism" without further explanation for their choice of the term.

The question of whether magical realism is a genre or a mode is also something that not all scholars agree on. However, most of the most influential critics of magical realism refer to it as a mode rather than a genre. Chanady writes that "[m]agical realism, just like the fantastic, is a literary mode rather than a specific, historically identifiable genre, and can be found in most types of prose fiction" (1985, 17). Rawdon Wilson says magical realism "is unmistakably a textual mode" (from Zamora and Faris 2005, 222). Hegerfeldt argues that magical realism is a mode by linking the question of modality with the way magical realism differs from other supernatural texts. In other words, she claims that the matter-of-fact way in which the magical and the supernatural are treated in the narration is the reason why magical realism should be seen as a mode rather than a genre: "[p]utting it simply, one could say that genre primarily relates to form and, at least on the level of sub-genre, content, while mode refers to manner of narration" (Hegerfeldt 2005, 47). In relation to magical realism this means that because of the way a magical realist text blends together the ordinary world and magical elements is vital for a magical realist text to be magical realism (discussed in more detail in 2.3, 4.2 and 4.3) magical realism is a mode rather than a genre. Because

of these arguments and the fact that most scholars seem to refer to magical realism as a mode I will also be doing so in this thesis.

## 2.2  Magical Realism and Postcolonialism

Magical realism has been strongly connected with postcolonialism by scholars and critics. My aim is to trace why this is while discussing why the mode can exist outside of the field of postcolonial literature.

Bowers defines postcolonialism thus: "Essentially it refers to the political and social attitude that opposes colonial power, recognises the effects of colonialism on other nations, and refers specifically to nations which have gained independence from the rule of another imperial state" (Bowers 2004, 96). When discussing the link between magical realism and postcolonialism Bowers refers to Stephen Slemon whose work is widely referred to by critics in the discussion of this topic. Bowers condenses Slemon's ideas of how magical realism "is able to express three postcolonial elements":

> First, due to its dual narrative structure, magical realism is able to present the postcolonial context from both the colonized peoples' and the colonizers' perspectives through its narrative structure as well as its themes. Second, it is able to produce a text which reveals the tensions and gaps of representation in such a context. Third, it provides a means to fill in the gaps of cultural representation in a postcolonial context by recuperating the fragments and voices of forgotten or subsumed histories from the point of view of the colonized. (Bowers 2004, 97)

The reason why postcolonialism is a rich basis for magical realist writing is in the heterogeneity of different or opposing views of the world and reality that clash together. Magical realism is based on the blending of the ordinary and the magic and, through this, the blending of two or more different or even opposing world views (discussed in more detail in 2.3). This is true to postcolonial societies too, where local mythologies and beliefs clash or blend in with a Western world view, and where the dominant is challenged by the marginalised. Rawdon Wilson writes:

> [M]agical realism has been seen as reflecting naive superstition, left behind in sophisticated industrial societies. Magical Realism can be enlisted in the analysis of postcolonial discourse as the mode of a conflicted consciousness, the cognitive map that discloses the antagonism between two views of culture, two views of history (European history being the routinization of the ordinary; aboriginal or primitive history, the celebration of the extraordinary), and two ideologies. (from Zamora and Faris 2005, 222–223)

Eva Aldea states that "it is most often with reference to postcolonial literature that magical realism has been read in political terms" (2011, 103). Because magical realism has been widely connected with Latin American and postcolonial fiction it would be easy to draw the conclusion that the mode only exists in these spheres of literature. This is connected with the issue of the history of magical realism in fiction in Latin America mentioned in section 2.1., and the ideas of Carpentier and Flores, who both claimed that the modes of magical realism and lo real maravilloso (marvellous realism) are specifically Latin American phenomena. Carpentier did not believe that one could write magical realism in Europe without somehow destroying its core (Hegerfeldt 2005, 18). This, according to Carpentier, is because "the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 86), which European writers apparently lack. Flores based his claims of magical realism's inherent Latin American elements on Carpentier's writings on the topic. The fallacy of Carpentier's – and thus also Flores' – claims has been pointed out by many critics. Hegerfeldt summarises the problem of trying to limit magical realism geographically:

> The restriction of the mode to a single continent simply does not make sense, for as soon as Latin American reality is regarded with a view not to its contents, but to its structure, it becomes clear that similar conditions of mythological beliefs juxtaposed with scientific thought prevail in other societies as well, most obviously perhaps in those of formerly colonized countries. (2005, 29)

The concerns about the possibility of magical realism existing in European and Western literature specifically is linked with the connecting the West with rationality, which, again, is falsely assumed to be the only existing Western paradigm. Hegerfeldt notes:

> Although in post-Enlightenment times the European world-view has been equated with rationalism, empiricism and scientific thought, these are merely the dominant paradigms, not the only ones. Far from being homogenous in outlook, Western as well as postcolonial societies are characterized by different and often contradictory ways of thinking that exist side by side. (2005, 31)

Wilson, in turn, writes that such a geographical restriction "seems, flatly, to deny the parallels between Latin American (or Anglo-Indian or Canadian) magical realism and the tradition of European fantasy exemplified by, say, Kafka or Bulgakov" (from Zamora and Faris 2005, 223).

Restricting magical realism only to Latin American literature simply does not work. Similarly, restricting the mode to only postcolonial literature seems forced, even if that is the area of literature where magical realism has been found most often so far. If we follow the idea that the basis of magical realism is in the clashing or blending of different or opposing world views it would be only logical to assume that, just like with the case of restricting magical realism to Latin American literature, the mode cannot be restricted only to postcolonial literature either. Hegerfeldt argues that "[a]ssuming that magic realism can indeed be seen to arise in response to the co-existence of heterogeneous world-views, it cannot be restricted to postcolonial literatures, for such circumstances most decidedly obtain also Western societies" (2005, 31). According to Theo D'haen, "[i]t is precisely the notion of the ex-centric, in the sense of speaking from the margin, from a place of "other" rather than "the" or "a" center, that seems to be an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism we call magical realism" (from Zamora and Faris 2005, 194). I conclude that because heterogeneous and opposing world-views and the concepts of "centre" and "margin" are applicable of many aspects of Western culture as well as postcolonial cultures, magical realism can also be written outside of postcolonial literature and therefore in Western literature. This also applies to children's literature. For example, Don Latham identifies the presence of magical realism in several of David Almond's novels for children and young adults, writing that "[i]n his usage of magical realism, Almond is invoking a literary tradition that is both transnational and intertextual

by nature" (2006, 8). This day the door is open for magical realism to both exist in texts written all around the globe and to be recognised as such.

## 2.3   Definitions and Characteristics of Magical Realism

As noted before, the definition of magical realism has fluctuated during its history, but at the very core of all the modern definitions of magical realism in fiction seems to be the idea of the blending of the ordinary and the magical in the text. As mentioned before, Angel Flores famously defined magical realism as an amalgamation of realism and fantasy. However, many have extended Flores' definition by attempting to pinpoint the term down more specifically and to draw out more detailed lines for magical realism. While doing this magical realism has been defined as much more than just a blending of the ordinary and the magical. Discussion has revolved strongly around how magical realism questions subjective truths and power structures.

### 2.3.1   Blending Together the Ordinary and the Magical

The first step to map out the characteristics of magical realism is to state the obvious: in order for a text to be magical realist elements of both the so-called real, or the ordinary, and the magical, or the non-ordinary, must appear in the text. However, this is not sufficient enough for a text to be characterised as magical realism. Amaryl Chanady's work in *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* (1985) has influenced greatly the field of magical realist studies. Chanady draws out the lines and differences between several genres and modes that deal with the supernatural, including magical realism. She draws from Flores' vague definition and expands it by pointing out the ways in which magical realism differs from the fantastic. According to Chanady, magical realism is close to the mode of fantastic but differs from it through the way in which the supernatural elements are depicted in the text:

> [T]he manner in which [the codes of the natural and the supernatural] interact in the text distinguishes [the fantastic and magical realism] from each other. Whereas the antinomy appears to be resolved in magical realism, the contradictions between different conceptions of reality are placed in the foreground by the author of a fantastic text. (Chanady 1985, 69)

Chanady thus identifies the characteristic that separates magical realism from other modes or genres that deal with otherworldly or supernatural elements. She pinpoints down the matter-of-fact and non-perplexed way magical realism depicts the coexistence of the ordinary and the supernatural by writing that "[m]agical realism is thus characterised first of all by two conflicting, but autonomously coherent, perspectives, one based on an "enlightened" and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality" (1985, 21–22). The elements of magic and supernatural are not usually thought to belong to the so-called normal world around us; yet when appearing in a magical realist text they are treated as normal and everyday-ish, blending into the ordinary world. Hegerfeldt agrees with Chanady:

> The coexistence of realistic and fantastic elements in itself is insufficient to distinguish magic realism from other modes or genres which also contain heterogeneous elements, such as surrealism, science fiction, or fantastic literature. The important criterion therefore is not the mere presence of such disparate elements, but the manner in which they are presented. (Hegerfeldt 2005, 53)

This blending of the ordinary and the magical is the core of magical realism. Zamora and Faris write in their introduction of *Magical Realism: Theory, History and Community* (2005) that in the essays they have collected "the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it *is* an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence – admitted, accepted and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism" (2005, 3, original emphasis). What marks magical realism as magical realism, then, is not the presence of the magical itself but the manner in which this presence is presented in the text it appears in.

Wendy Faris' writings on magical realism have also been influential on the discussion of the topic. In her essay *Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction* Faris lists five characteristics that she considers important or central to magical realism:

1) Texts contain irreducible elements of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them.

2) Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world – this is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory.

3) The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events – and hence experiences some unsettling doubts.

4) We experience the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds.

5) These fictions question received ideas about time, space, and identity. (Faris, from Zamora and Faris 2005, 167–173)

From this we can again see the importance of the blending of the ordinary and the magical for magical realism. Elements of both the ordinary and the magical must be present and they must not be separated into two clearly different worlds.

However, whether the reader experiences any unsettling doubts about the events of a magical realist text or not has been disagreed on, for example, by Chanady and Faris. As we can see from Faris' list above, she counts the hesitation of the reader as one marker of magical realism. She therefore disagrees with Chanady who wrote that "[i]n contrast to the fantastic, the supernatural in magical realism does not disconcert the reader" (Chanady 1985, 24). Chanady's opinion is also challenged by Hegerfeldt, who points out that "magic realist texts do in fact engender a moment of hesitation – it merely has been relocated to the level of the reader (see Bényei, 152)" (2005, 55). I agree with Faris and Hegerfeldt on the account of the hesitation of the reader. Magical realist texts may present the magical happenings as ordinary, but that does not mean that the reader will automatically accept them as such. Because the reader is situated in the ordinary world that in a magical realist story is the realist part of the text they will be predestined to identify with that part

and therefore have presupposed ideas of what the so-called ordinary world should be like. The so-called ordinary world is not perceived to entail miraculous or magical things. It would be then only logical that the reader would experience bafflement at least at first when the realism in the text is disrupted by something that according to their experience should not belong there.

I also argue that the narrators' hesitation over the magical elements in the text can be expected. Eva Aldea, in trying to define what 'magic' in magical realism is, writes that "[t]he magic is therefore that which does not conform to the world-view of the realist narrator, whether it be supernatural or simply implausible" (2011, 16). If something "does not conform to the world-view of the realist narrator" it would be only logical, then, for the narrator to hesitate at least at first when encountering such magical elements. The narrator's hesitation, in turn, can bleed into the characters of the text. This happens in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* because of first person narration of the protagonists of the stories. The hesitation the characters feel is transferred into the narration of the text. This, again, is in contrast to Chanady's claims that "the magical realist … [does not] show surprise" (1985, 29–30). I argue that surprise and hesitation can occur because their presence is not what cancels the essence of magical realism. The essence of magical realism is, as Chanady writes, "to present a world view that is radically different from ours as equally valid" (1985, 30). This equalisation of two opposing world views is in the core of magical realism. I argue that, as long as the narrator of the text does not end up dismissing the magical elements that cause conflict in their beliefs and knowledge as untrue, hesitation can occur on the narrator's part as well and, through the narrator, on the characters' part.

### 2.3.2   Magical Realism as Subverting

One of the main characteristics of magical realism is the way it has a tendency and an ability to question and subvert subjective truths that are assumed to be facts. Theorists of magical realism agree that the mode can be used as a tool for transgressing boundaries. This transgressive nature is

already apparent in the name of the mode itself, where the so-called real and the magical blend together to create an oxymoron. Zamora and Faris write that "[m]agical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and, increasingly, to women" (Zamora and Faris 2005, 6). Hegerfeldt echoes this by writing that "magic realist fiction has been seen to make room for world-views that differ from those of the cultural centre" (2005, 116). This characteristic is referred to in many different ways by different theorists. For example, Faris calls this the ability to "question" and "subvert", not deciding on a definite term.

This characteristic of magical realism has also been the reason why many critics and theorists consider magical realism a postmodernist mode. For example, Theo D'haen discusses this in his essay *Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers* (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 191–208). He writes that "a consensus is emerging in which a hierarchical relation is established between postmodernism and magical realism, whereby the latter comes to denote a particular strain of the contemporary movement covered by the former" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 194). Subverting categories is in the core of magical realism and, to a certain point, of postmodernism as well: "To write ex-centrically, then, or from the margin, implies dis-placing [a] discourse" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 195). Wendy Faris writes along the same lines: "in any case, the category of magical realism can be profitably extended to characterise a significant body of contemporary narrative in the West, to constitute … a strong current in the stream of postmodernism" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 165). Indeed, there is a clear similarity with magical realism and the way postmodernist writing might be described. For example, Hans Bertens writes about postmodernist writing that "it unsettles and deconstructs traditional notions about language, about identity, about writing itself, and other major issues" (2008, 110). This is not unlike how magical realism is described by many theorists.

Postmodernism as such is very difficult to define, not only because of its complexity but also because of the vast area it can cover. I do not intend to delve on postmodernism in general but focus on the aspect that makes many magical realist critics to name the mode as postmodernist: the way postmodernist texts tend to question established constructions. Jean-François Lyotard, who is one of the major postmodern theorists, described narratives and how they are used to define what is true knowledge in his widely quoted book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984). I am particularly interested in how he uses the idea of knowledge and criticism of scientific knowledge as the basis of his theory and the links that can be seen in this theory in relation to magical realism. Lyotard writes that scientific knowledge does not cover all kinds of knowledge on its own but that "it has always existed in addition to, and in competition and conflict with, another kind of knowledge", and that is narrative (1984, 7). Narrative is a form of knowledge that "makes someone capable of performing "good" denotative utterances, but also "good" prescriptive and "good" evaluative utterances" (1984, 18); in other words, a good performance. What is regarded as "good" of course depends on cultural context. But the existence of "good knowledge" means that there also exists knowledge that can be regarded as not-so-good. Lyotard writes that the idea of good knowledge "makes it possible to distinguish one who knows from one who doesn't" (1984, 19). Lyotard labels the narratives of the ones who are seen as knowing as metanarratives and the narratives of those who are seen as not knowing as little narratives. Science, according to Lyotard, is a metanarrative in today's world, whereas little narratives can be those belonging to, for example, "the foreigner, the child" (1984, 19). The important thing is to understand that the superiority of the metanarrative has been built up by the metanarrative itself. Therefore it can be brought into question with the voices of the little narratives.

The theory described above is exactly what is subverted in a magical realist text. The superiority of a scientific, ordinary world-view (the metanarrative) is questioned by the way the

magical elements (the little narrative) are described as in the text as equal to the ordinary. This undermines the hierarchy of the scientific being ranked above the magical. According to Bowers:

> When we consider magical realism from the position of the 'other' and consider that it brings into view non-logical and non-scientific explanations for things, we can see that the transgressive power of magical realism provides a means to attack the assumptions of the dominant culture and particularly the notion of scientifically and logically determined truth. (2004, 69)

I want to point out that "scientific" in a magical realist text does not necessarily mean outright scientific discussion about, for example, physics. Rather, the scientific narrative, being the dominant narrative, is seen as ordinary while the magical is presented as non-ordinary. The idea of "scientific" in a magical realist text, then, can simply be the non-existence of the magical, or describing the every-day world around us.

I also find it interesting that Lyotard uses the idea of knowledge in his theory of postmodernism whereas Hegerfeldt claims that magical realism questions ways to produce knowledge (2005, 3). Hegerfeldt also writes that:

> Magic realism's investigation of knowledge combines two aspects. On the one hand, sanctioned paradigms of Western knowledge are scrutinized and in some sense found wanting. … At the same time, the texts probe alternative modes of knowledge production as to their explanatory potential, illustrating how they may provide a different, but nevertheless valid, access to the world. (2005, 158)

This is on par with Lyotard's description of metanarratives being challenged by little narratives. In magical realism knowledge can be gained from the imagination, the supernatural, dreams, myths and stories just as the same as from science: "In rendering metaphors, stories, dreams or magical beliefs real on the level of the text, magic realist fiction re-evaluated modes of knowledge production" (Hegerfeldt, 2005, 3). These ways are then ranked at the same level as the scientific ways, which causes the questioning of the superiority of the scientific worldview. Thus, as Lyotard puts it, "[t]he grand narrative has lost its credibility" (1984, 37).

Choosing to look at magical realism from the point of view of postmodernism does not exclude any other optional perspectives. Bowers writes that

> [c]ritics considering magical realist fiction have found that it is possible to interpret this narrative mode through various critical and theoretical perspectives. The flexibility of the mode resides in the fact that it is not a genre belonging to a particular era, and therefore is not related to a particular critical approach (2004, 66).

By pointing out the connection between postmodernism and magical realism I do not intend to say that magical realism is restricted to only postmodernist criticism. Rather, I want to say that examining magical realism from a certain postmodernist point of view is beneficial because of the strong links that connect them. It is interesting that so many magical realist theorists describe the transgressive nature of magical realism as "questioning". At the same time Linda Hutcheon writes that "[p]ostmodernism questions centralized, totalized, hierarchized, closed systems" (1988, 41) in her book *Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction*. Throughout her book Hutcheon makes a point of separating the modernist idea of "single otherness" (1988, 42) from the postmodernist idea of difference. "Such interrogations of the impulse to sameness … and homogeneity, unity and certainty, make room for a consideration of the different and the heterogeneous, the hybrid and the provisional." (1988, 42) Postmodernism, according to Hutcheon, does not necessarily mean outright rejecting these concepts, but rather "only to interrogate their relation to experience" (1988, 58). In the same way magical realism questions and subverts as well.

I also want to point out that the subversiveness of magical realism that Zamora and Faris write about (2005, 6) happens through questioning constructed oppositions. For example, Brenda Cooper writes in her introduction to her book *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* (1998) that "[m]agical realism strives, with greater or lesser success, to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites; it contests polarities such as history versus magic, the precolonial past versus the post-industrial present and life versus death" (1). The constructed oppositions that Cooper mentions are based on the Lyotardian opposition of "good" knowledge and

knowledge that is constructed as less than good (1984, 19). For example, history, which is almost always written from a subjective perspective of the powerful, may become questioned by knowledge that is constructed as less than good, magic, in a magical realist text. Bringing two hierarchically different kinds of knowledge to the same level reveals the artificial hierarchy they are set on, or "contests polarities", as Cooper says. To a large extent, magical realism has questioned these kinds of oppositions through subverting the setting of the scientific, or the ordinary, as the truth and the magical as an irrational belief. I will use the terms "subverting" and "questioning" to discuss this transgressive characteristic of magical realism from here on.

### 2.3.3   The Ex-Centric in Magical Realism

What, then, can be the little narratives, the different world-views that co-exist with the scientific world-view in magical realism? According to Bowers, questioning the hierarchy of the scientific and the magical through blurring the lines between the ordinary and the magical opens the possibility of questioning other beliefs regarded as facts: "The root of this transgressive and subversive aspect [of magical realism] lies in the fact that, once the category of truth has been brought into question and the category of the real broken down or overturned, the boundaries of other categories become vulnerable" (2004, 67–68). Whose little narrative is brought into the text to question the scientific world-view depends on the text. In magical realist literature it has often been the voice of those formerly colonised, which can be seen in the large number of written work on the subject. No matter what the margin in the text in question is, in magical realism the question of the ex-centric manifests through different ways of knowing and perceiving the world:

> In using culturally marginal focalizers to project an alternative world-view, magic realist fiction once again first invokes and then undercuts the assumptions of realism and allied non-fiction discourses. As dominant post-Enlightenment discourses, these have consistently attributed to the ex-centric a non-rational, non-scientific way of thought, thereby effectively maintaining a power monopoly. (Hegerfeldt 2005, 121)

Here the term ex-centric is picked from Linda Hutcheon. She describes the way postmodernism can subvert categories by interrogating them. Her description of subverting is similar, if not as detailed, to Lyotard's description of knowledge and little and metanarratives. The metanarrative comes from the centre and the little narratives come from the margin. The margin, in turn, consists of many marginalised groups, or the ex-centric (Hutcheon, 1988, 12), those removed from the centre.

As established previously, the dominant world-view in magical realism is the scientific, the one considered as ordinary in the modern Western world. In contrast to this, the magical is the marginal world-view that challenges the metanarrative of science. But it does not mean that the magical necessarily equates with only the magical world-view. Rather, in magical realism the magical world-view is often connected to a point of view of an ex-centric, a group that is considered belonging to the margin by the centre. As discussed in chapter 2.2, magical realism has often been found in postcolonial literature. In these cases it is often the formerly colonialised that is the ex-centric and their world-views that are the little narratives to the metanarrative of Western science. In these cases the science that becomes questioned might be, for example, historiography and the way historical happenings have been depicted, such as in Salman Rushdie's texts (Hegerfeldt 2005, 75). Often the ex-centric has also been the woman and the examples of this that are often referred to are Angela Carter's texts (Hegerfeldt 2005, 127). Moreover, even though it is not as often discussed, the child can function as the ex-centric in a magical realist text. This is discussed by Hegerfeldt through examples from texts such as *Wild Nights*, written by Emma Tenant, and *Midnight Children*, written by Salman Rushdie.

In this thesis I will argue as one of my main points that the child's world-view can function as the subverting narrative to the scientific one. Through this I will argue further that the child can indeed function as the ex-centric in a magical realist text. As noted by Lyotard, the child is considered as someone who does not know because of a differing narrative to the metanarrative of science (1984, 19). This makes the child an ex-centric, someone who is excluded from the centre.

This, in turn, makes the child a good focalizer for a magical realist text, as the child's perceived magical world-view can challenge the scientific one, which is usually regarded as belonging exclusively to adults. Hegerfeldt discusses several reasons why the child can function as a particularly useful ex-centric focalizer in magical realist fiction. The most important reason for this is the magical way the child is perceived to see the world around them. As I will discuss later in chapter 3, this perceived magical world-view is a construction that the adult has created about the child and does not necessarily mirror a reality of the child's mind accordingly. Hegerfeldt acknowledges this as well: "Obviously, the child's point of view as it is used in fiction … is very much a construction, and should not be confused with psychological reality." (2005, 147) This construction of the child's world-view, however, is particularly useful in magical realism as it borrows a good base for the appearance of the magical elements in the text. This is because children are thought to see the world as magical through a way that is regarded as inherent and natural for them. The child's perceived magical thinking will be examined closer in chapter 3, and especially 3.4, in the context of how children are constructed in modern Western society as less knowledgeable than adults. Looking at a world where the ordinary and the magical blend together and coexist is then what the child and magical realism have in common.

# 3   Child

The child as an ex-centric is, then, perhaps not as widely discussed as the non-Western or the woman as the ex-centric. However, in our world where adults decide what is best for children the child can indeed be considered as a margin. This is why I want to look at the subject of the child more closely from the point of view of how children are constructed to be in our society. Through this I wish to see more closely how the child is marginalised by the imposing of these cultural constructs upon them. Possessing the right kind of knowledge, and the ways in which it impacts how children are viewed, will be a part of this. My focus on this topic will be how on the one hand

children are seen as innocent in modern Western society and on the other hand how the child is perceived to have a magical world-view and how it causes the child to be marginalised. Knowledge and the idea of the child not having the right kind of knowledge about the world is, as I will prove, an important factor in building both of these constructions.

## 3.1 Childhood as Construction

Biologically speaking the concept of "child" is simple: a child is a human being who has yet to grow into an adult. But not only is "child" a biological fact, it is also arguably a cultural construct, and as such, a different and more complex matter than when speaking of pure biology. As categories constructed by the society, "child" and "childhood" vary from culture to culture and from time era to time era. Constructively speaking they operate and are operated the same way as any other social category: they are built and moulded by the society and culture and both affect and are affected by other social categories as well, such as gender and race (Thew, in Mills and Mills 2000, Prout and James 1997). Prout and James interpret the difference between the biological and constructed child thus: "The immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture" (1997, 7). Thus what children are and what constitutes as a childhood – particularly a good childhood – vary between different cultures and eras.

The understanding of childhood as a changing concept has been around for a good while, but as "an essential component for understanding modern Western development" (Fass 2013, 1) it was first introduced by Philippe Ariès. His book *Centuries of Childhood* (1960) is still very often quoted and referred to in the field of childhood studies and is, according to Fass, "the first, and often the only, book" read on the subject of history of childhood (2013, 1). Ariès' work has been both ground-breaking, but also criticised of being partly sensational and even false: his claims that parents did not love or have affection for their children to the degree that today's parents do

have been discussed and countered (Stearns, in Fass 2013, 159). Nevertheless, the impact of Ariès'

work has been huge in this particular field and the picture of the history of childhood has become

clearer and has been discussed increasingly in depth during the last fifty years. At the same time the

idea of childhood and children as social constructs has permeated childhood studies, and is

discussed in fields ranging from sociology to literature (James and James 1997).

Today childhood studies is a branch of its own in social studies. An own branch of

studies about children has also grown into literary studies, where children's literature is studied and

debated, as well as cultural studies. Studying childhood can be done from the point of view of for

example law and policies, but also from the point of view of constructing childhood as a social

category. The latter aspect is the one where I lean on in this thesis. I will be discussing childhood

constructed particularly through innocence (see 3.2 and 3.3) and the magical way children are

perceived to see the world.

The theory of childhood as a social construction is not fully without problems, or

rather, the problem is, as James and Prout discuss (1997, 26), how far we take the aspect of social

constructionism especially in regard to biological facts about children and their physical immaturity

in relation to adults. Claiming that the child is a purely social construct is problematic as it would

disregard the biological basis the division between adults and children is set on. I do not intend to

claim that biology has no play in the make-up of children, nor that there is no difference between

children and adults. Rather, I want to draw attention to, firstly, how many of the regarded facts

about the nature of children are, in fact, part of a social construct, secondly, that this would mean

that apparent facts are actually subjective truths, and thirdly, that there is a line between the

constructs and the biology the constructs are based upon. The construction of children in the

Western world is multi-layered, as demonstrated by Richard Mills in his essay "Perspectives of

childhood" (in Mills and Mills 2000). In the upcoming subchapters I will be focusing on the

regarded innocence of children, and discuss its history and construction in the next sub-chapters. I

will also discuss the magical way children are perceived to see the world and how this relates to knowledge.

## 3.2    Constructions of Childhood from Enlightenment to Modern Days

Peter Hunt notes that "the definition of childhood shifts, even within a small, apparently homogenous culture" (in Egoff et al 1996, 13). How such changes can be seen in the West in past centuries, and how these changes have led to the way we perceive children today will be discussed next. I will be focusing particularly on the idea of children as innocent beings and how it came to be.

In today's Western culture our views on children and what a childhood should be like are coloured by the concept of innocence. We believe that children are inherently innocent and that childhood should be lived based on the idea of maintaining that innocence for as long as possible. Adults take great measures to protect children from things that they perceive as harmful or threatening to that innocence; such threatening issues include things like work, profanities, violence, and sex. The longer a child maintains their perceived innocence the better. Consequently, leaving one's childhood and entering adolescence is regarded as a sad fact of life, as it is believed that one loses their childhood for forever and once leaving it one can no longer enter it again. There seems to be a longing back to childhood in the Western culture, which is often expressed in a wistful way. Morgado writes that "[f]rom the moment 'childhood' was allowed to exist, that is, to be represented iconographically or discursively as different from adulthood … it has been framed … by a powerful tradition of selective and nostalgic recallings by adults of their first years of existence" (in Lesnik-Oberstein 1998, 204). I argue that this longing is strongly connected with the idea of innocence and simplicity of life forever lost with the end of childhood. As said, this description of childhood is particular to the Western culture, and it should not be thought that children and childhood are perceived as the same all around the world. If this is the case in the

modern world it would then follow that childhood as an innocent state in need of protection has not always been in existence, and not available to all children throughout history.

The idea of a child born into the world as an innocent creature is a fairly new one. It is not many centuries since the concept of original sin was connected with children too, which of course affected how children were raised and perceived. A child was thought to be innately wicked and in need of saving through baptising and proper raising, which often involved spanking and using fear as means to gain obedience (Stearns, in Fass 2013, 160–161). These ideas began to change during the Enlightenment. Stearns writes that "[s]ignificant changes … began to emerge by the eighteenth century, most obviously as a result of a substantial shift in intellectual orientation away from the idea of original sin" (in Fass 2013, 161). Scientific Revolution attacked the concept, which permeated the whole society and not just how children were regarded and raised. These attacks "led to an intellectual redefinition of childhood" (Stearns, in Fass 2013, 161). Thinkers such as John Locke (1632–1704) argued for education instead of strict discipline as the best means of raising, and schooling children was seen as increasingly important. Locke's idea of a child as a blank slate spread and "went beyond" to the idea of childhood innocence (Stearns, in Fass 2013 162). Jacques Rousseau's writings "are often regarded as the emblematic source of ideas of children's innocence" (James and James 2008, 74). According to Larry Wolff, Rousseau's book *Emile* "served as both a summation of early modern discoveries and the revolutionary articulation of a modern perspective" in fields such as children's education, health, literature and the "ideological meaning of children's innocence" (in Fass 2013, 78–79). In *Emile* the tables have turned completely: Reynolds writes that "[i]n this new version of childhood, what the child acquired through instruction and experience of the world was not a state of grace, but a loss of perfection" (2012, 13). More specifically, the "loss of perfection" also means loss of the innocence that only a child can possess. This perfection was, according to Rousseau, to be guarded as long as possible, even though losing it was inevitable.

Even though the perception of childhood had changed along the many other views in the society during the Enlightenment, it took a while before the ideas described above began to reach children in all parts of society. Perhaps the most important changes happened in the field of education for children and child labour in the 19th and 20th centuries. Most children in the West worked already before the Industrial Revolution, mostly in agriculture and craft economy (Heywood, in Fass 2013, 126–129, 137), and after factories came to be in the Industrial Revolution where work force was needed working class children were seen as work force just the same as working class adults. However, Heywood writes that "[f]rom the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, there were signs that child labor in the formal sector of the economy, notably textile mills, factories, and mines, was beginning to decline in those countries that had started early on the path to industrialization" (in Fass 2013, 136) and continues that "school rather than work became established as a central feature of a modern childhood from the late nineteenth century onwards" (in Fass, 2013, 136).

All these factors played into how childhood was perceived. Childhood was no longer seen as a compulsory nuisance to get through – if one was lucky enough – but to be prolonged and cherished. Reynolds examines how middle class parents doted on their children in Victorian Britain and how commercialism was slowly taking more room in the area of child raising, showing yet again how the treatment and perception of children had changed and continued to change. As the 20th century came around, childhood and notions of children as we know them today was present in increasingly number of children's lives and it is clear that significant changes had happened compared to only 300 years ago.

## 3.3   Innocent Childhood

Children are perhaps not the first thing that would come to one's mind when mentioning marginalisation. Yet, as already mentioned in chapter 2, it is clear on a closer observation that

children and childhood in fact can be considered belonging to a margin. Children are not allowed to participate in the decisions of the society the way adults are, nor are they allowed to decide what is best for themselves, and their points of view are often given less importance.  Even childhood as such is not fully in the grasp of children: childhood the way we see it is constructed by adults, as seen in the previous sub-chapters. Here I will discuss how the construction of childhood innocence contributes to and serves as constructing children as ex-centric and creating a boundary between them and adults.

> Richard Mills writes:
>
> It is axiomatic that, however the period of childhood is defined, children are in need of physical protection and nurture for their well-being. This is true of the young of any animal species. However, within the literature of childhood innocence, protection has a different significance. It refers to the preservation of a state of ignorance, of unknowingness, about certain areas of life which adults feel should best remain secret from those inhabiting the world of childhood. (Mills, in Mills and Mills 2000, 12)

The above quote demonstrates well the difference between biological and constructed childhoods. Children are truly in need of protection until they reach a certain maturity, but what the Western culture tries to protect children from is not necessarily simply physical dangers. Rather, children are seen to be in need of protection from certain kinds of information and experience, and childhood innocence is a state where knowledge about the real world is scarce or incomplete. The crucial thing to see and understand here is that in children this is not seen as a bad thing in a way that it would be seen in an adult: instead, a child's ignorance is seen as a positive trait and sometimes even idealised and glorified as a perfect state and a necessity for all children to grow in. However, childhood innocence is a cultural construction. According to James and James, childhood innocence "refers to the ways in which childhood itself is *culturally* and *socially* constructed as a time of innocence, something that varies between societies and which creates diversity in children's experiences" (2008, 75, original emphasises).

Jacqueline Rose has also suggested that childhood innocence is a construction in her ground-breaking work *The Case of Peter Pan: Or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984). What I am particularly interested about her work is how she discusses innocence as a marginalising construction. Rose discusses childhood innocence by turning "innocence" to "infantilising", thus turning it from a positive trait to a negative one. At the same time she points out how the same has been done to colonised people:

> There are important political repercussions which follow from this concept of childhood innocence. Childhood is seen as the place where an older form of culture is preserved (nature or oral tradition), but the effect of this in turn is that this same form of culture is *infantilised*. At this level, children's fiction has a set of long-established links with the colonialism which identified the new world with the infantile state of man. (1984, 50, original emphasis)

I believe Rose makes a point of drawing a parallel between infantilising colonised people and children to point out how children have been stripped of power over their own identity. Through infantilising the social constructs for both children and colonised people come from outside themselves and not from who they believe or feel themselves to be. Constructing childhood through innocence is therefore a way for adults to use power over children. But I also interpret "infantilising" here not necessarily only referring to the powerlessness of children over the social constructs about them: I also see it as a way for adults for creating a distance between themselves and children. This is done by contrasting the child with the adult in a way that distinctly separates the two. Childhood as an innocent state does not exist on its own, but is contrasted with the way adults are perceived to be more experienced and knowledgeable. In the quote from Mills above he discusses innocence as a state of "unknowingness". This reveals that at the same time as we construct children's innocence regarding knowledge we also construct adults as knowledgeable, wise and in know of the world. This is the pattern of creating a pair of oppositions. And since this particular pair is created and kept alive by the group that has power over the construction of the other group, it is a way for the group with power to make a distinction between them and the group

without power; in other words, marginalising the other group. The construct of childhood innocence is thus not only a specific way for adults to turn children into an ex-centric group but to also make a clear distinction between the two, to put a distance between themselves and children; or, as Rose writes:

> A number of oppositions are starting to emerge --- The opposition between the child and the adult ---, between oral and written culture, between innocence and decay. These are structural oppositions in the strictest sense, in that each term only has the meaning in relation to the one to which it is opposed. They do not reflect an essential truth about the child ---; instead they produce a certain conception of childhood (1984, 50)

The linking of childhood innocence with knowledge is particularly interesting and I see it being easily linked with the discussion about knowledge and narratives examined in chapter 2. Lyotard described in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* how some ways of knowing are ranked over others and how this hierarchy does not stand against criticism because it is artificial. He also suggests that this creates an opposition that "is compatible with the premise of a formal identity between "the savage mind" and scientific thought" (1984, 19). "The savage mind" can be linked to the quote from Rose about the child and the colonised as being seen as infantile through their childish ways of knowing and looking at the world. Just like Rose, Lyotard claims that this is merely a construct that cannot stand scrutinising, as is the opposition the hierarchy of the ways of knowing creates.

## 3.4   Magical Child

Knowledge is, as discussed in chapter 2, in connection with the world-views we have. I also want to argue that one reason why children are considered belonging to the margin in contrast to adults is not only their perceived innocence but also their different outlook on the world. As I already briefly mentioned in the context of magical realism, the child's world-view is often seen as different and even magical by grown-ups. Rose continues the discussion of infantilising the child: "Along the

lines of what is almost a semantic slippage, the child is assumed to have some special relation to a

world which – in our eyes at least – was only born when we found it" (1984, 50). This different

kind of perception is believed to come from the perceived childhood innocence, the blissful

ignorance that has not yet been tainted by knowledge or experience of the world. What I find

particularly interesting is how this different outlook on the world is often thought of as magical, or

how adults tend to think that children can see magical things in the ordinary world around them.

Hegerfeldt lists several common ideas about children's way of "perceive[ing] the world", including

"[c]hildren have an intrinsic belief in magic and the supernatural", "[c]hildren frequently find things

incredible that to grown-ups appear perfectly normal" and "[c]hildren do not distinguish between

reality and fantasy" (2005, 146).

Whether these ideas are in fact true or not will not be discussed in this thesis.

However, it should be mentioned that magical thinking in the child is a fairly well established

notion in child development research. For example, Jean Piaget discussed the magical way the child

perceives the world in his book *The Child's Conception of the World* (1982). According to Karl S.

Rosengren and Anne K. Hickling, magical thinking is "the focus of many anthropological and

psychological accounts characterising thoughts of exotic populations (young children or adults in

preindustrial cultures) as illogical or irrational" (in Rosengren, Johnson and Harris 2000, 77). Bidell

and Shweder characterise magical thinking thus:

> Among child development researchers, the term *magical thinking* has been broadly
> applied to ontological confusions, fantasy beliefs, essentialistic beliefs, simple gaps in
> knowledge of physics or biology, a discrete conceptual category for things beyond the
> boundaries of the possible, and false beliefs intentionally implanted by well-meaning
> adults and/or the culture at large (2009, 583, original emphasis)

Today magical thinking is no longer reserved to only children. Adults too can and do possess

magical thinking. For example, Carol Nemeroff and Paul Rozin declare: "We believe that magical

thinking is universal in adults" (in Rosengren, Johnson and Harris 2000, 19). Then again, the child's

magical thinking is seen as different from the adult's. Rosengren and Hickling write: "This boundary between fantasy and reality or possible and impossible is not impermeable or unchanging. It varies according to age, knowledge level, context, and culture." (in Rosengren, Johnson and Harris 2000, 76) However, in the social construction of the child as possessing a magical way of seeing the world the separation of the child from the adult is much more clearly cut: the child sees the world as magical, which is an ability the adult has lost with childhood innocence. I do not mean to question that children see the world in a different way compared to adults. Rather, I want to point out that labelling this world-view as magical is a mark of the adult's perception of the child rather than an objective description.

The words "knowledge", "beliefs" and "confusion" in the quote from Bidell and Shweder are interesting. The way the child knows and believes differently from the adult is what is seen to cause the magic in their way of looking at the world. According to Nemeroff and Rozin, the classical scholarly view of magic is that it "is seen as false or failed science, and its primary flaw is its assumption that the world of reality functions according to the same principle as our thoughts" (in Rosengren, Johnson and Harris 2000, 2). Because magic colours the way children are thought to see and understand the world around them it is perceived as unreliable because it is "failed science". This kind of different way of knowing is, again, in line with Lyotard's writings on scientific knowledge as the right kind of knowledge, which allows the idea of different kinds of knowledge to be classified as wrong or irrational kind of knowledge. The child's way of knowing is seen as wrong – although it tends to be romanticised as magical and as a product of childhood innocence – as it lacks knowledge of the metanarrative that the adult holds. Consequently, as the magical child is built as irrational the ordinary adult is at the same time built as rational and knowledgeable. Since children's perceived magical way of perceiving the world strikes adults as false, it contributes to the exclusion of children from the centre that adults create.

As I have discussed in this chapter, children are socially constructed by adults in a certain way. Modern Western ideas of childhood entail two aspects that both heavily lean on knowledge: childhood innocence and magical thinking. Both are seen to be caused by the lack of knowledge about the world, and this lack of knowledge is being encouraged especially when it comes to childhood innocence. Childhood innocence and the child's perceived magical way of seeing the world are both idealised as good things for the child, yet these constructions also marginalise the child and create a difference between children and adults. This difference is largely based on knowledge and the idea that the child's way of knowing is false.

## 4   Analysis of *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*

My analysis of both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* is based on magical realism. I will particularly focus on examining how the subversive characteristic of magical realism shows in these two novels. This discussion will be twofold. Firstly, I intend to examine how the mode questions ways to know and produce knowledge by blending together the ordinary world and magical elements in the texts. I will do this by examining the different ways in which the magical becomes mixed with the ordinary.

Secondly, I aim to discuss how the mode brings out voices belonging to the margin. In the case of these two novels this margin would be the child characters. I will argue that in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* children are depicted as different from adults similar to the way which marginalises them in our society from adults. This difference is focused on the magical way the child characters see the seemingly ordinary world in both novels and on innocence of the children that appears *Heaven Eyes*. I will also argue that the way the child characters see magical things in the ordinary is in line with the tradition of magical realism, and that the children being able to see magical phenomena is also in line with the subverting way magical realism presents such phenomena.

In addition to these I will discuss why *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* both belong to the tradition of magical realism and what characteristics of the mode are most prevalent in the texts. By doing this I wish to prove that magical realism is not restricted to postcolonial literature, and that it can be present in Western literature as well.

## 4.1   Defining "Magic" and "Ordinary"

In order to examine magical realistic aspects in the texts I want to first briefly discuss what I mean by "magic". This question was shortly mentioned in relation to magical realism in chapter 2 as well as in chapter 3 in relation to magical thinking, but I wish to define my own usage of the term. Curiously enough, scholars who discuss magical realism do not always pay attention into explicitly defining "magic". Perhaps this is because of the way magical realism mixes otherworldly elements into the ordinary that makes it difficult to draw lines for the term: after all, the lines between the real and the otherworldly are blurred by the mode. Bowers addresses this issue: "It follows that a definition of magic(al) realism relies upon the prior understanding of what is meant by 'magic' and what is meant by 'realism'. 'Magic' is the less theorised term of the two, and contributes to the variety of definitions of magic(al) realism." (Bowers 2004, 20) The term is discussed in ways that fluctuate from "marvellous" to "supernatural" to "not from this world". I want to clarify that the distinction that creates the magic in magical realism is the surroundings the text is located in; in other words, the ordinary world, as for example discussed above in the context of Skellig. The magical element is something that seemingly and logically should not be in the surroundings of the ordinary world. Thus, when I use the term "magic", particularly in the context of magical realism, I mean to refer to an element of supernatural or otherworldly, something that according to the rules of our logic should not exist outside of stories of the fantastical. I use the term the same way Bowers defines magic in magical realism: "in marvellous and magical realism 'magic' refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational

science." (Bowers 2004, 20) However, I want to quickly point out that "magic" can also mean something slightly different, depending of the context of the text. Reynolds notes about magic in relation to fantasy fiction that "[m]agic is also a metaphor for the child's imagination and capacity to tell stories" (2012, 144). Here, however, "magic" will be used to mean something that is potentially real and exists outside the imagination.

In contrast to the term "magic" I have decided to use the word "ordinary" to describe the elements of the texts that locate the stories in the everyday world. "Ordinary" here means the opposite of the magical elements of the text: the things that we do not hesitate to accept and that according to our logic are natural. I use the term "ordinary" instead of "real" because magical realism itself questions what is or can be real. My usage of "ordinary" nods thus to the point of view from which the reader approaches magical realist texts: the point of view where the scientific is ordinary and non-perplexing. It is looking from this point of view that makes the magical elements magical, as they contrast with what is supposed to be ordinary.

## 4.2   Magical Realistic Characteristics in *Skellig*

The protagonist of *Skellig* is Michael, a boy whose family has recently moved across town to a new home. The book captures Michael's struggles with the illness of his baby sister, parents who are stressed out and not fully present, friends, school and his adjustment to their new home, which is in dire need of renovation. All this seems to cause him a sense of alienation and loneliness even though he is surrounded by friends and well-meaning adults who care for him. As he explores the garage of their new home he finds a strange winged man, Skellig, who is ill with arthritis and has seemingly lost his belief in healing and his will to live. Michael also befriends Mina, a girl living next door. Together the two try to heal and rescue Skellig and find an explanation for his existence.

### 4.2.1 The Ordinary in World of *Skellig*

As noted before, magical realism consists of the blending of both the ordinary and the magical. To examine magical realism in these two books we need to shortly examine the realistic aspects of the text, as a large part of the definition of magical realism lies in the blending of the ordinary and the magical. I do not intend to discuss realism as a literary technique, but rather the parts in the story and the descriptions in the text that ground the story and its happenings in the so-called real world as opposed to another fantastical reality; in other words, the parts that are ordinary and distinguish the magic from itself.

The settings of *Skellig* are clearly in our every-day world. The characters do ordinary things such as go to school, play football, renovate their homes, visit hospitals and order Chinese take-out. Doctors use Western medical practices to tackle with illnesses and schools teach things such as evolution and the anatomy of the human body. As a default, magic is seemingly not considered to exist by the majority of characters, at least at first. This does not mean that they outright reject the idea of the magical or supernatural but rather that, apart from jokes, they do not discuss them or consider the possibility of them existing at all. Apart from Michael's distressed parents asking him to pray for his sister before her heart surgery no signs of religiosity are shown either.

### 4.2.2 Skellig and Other Magical Things among the Ordinary

The realistic aspects and every-day situations in the text are subtly broken by things that seemingly should not be in the context of the ordinary world, a trait that is at the core definition in magical realism (Faris, in Faris and Zamora 2005, 167). Skellig himself is the most apparent disruption in this context, and the way his existence and actions defy the ordinary are multiple. He survives in Michael's garage even though he apparently never moves from the spot where he sits and simply uses mice, spiders and bluebells as nutrition. Yet despite avoiding death in a situation where many

would have perished he is not immortal, as he is waiting for death when Michael finds him. He is also ridden with arthritis, a crippling illness to which no final cure has been found. But despite this Skellig is later healed simply by moving from the garage to an old abandoned house and eating Chinese take-out, cod-liver oil and dead prey that owls bring to him. Skellig says that he gets better because of Michael and Mina, and Michael later wonders whether love can heal a person (Almond 2008, 161), suggesting that him and Mina caring for Skellig on an emotional level played a role in his healing.

The biggest mystery about Skellig are the wings on his back, protruding from his shoulder blades. They separate him from the other characters, who are, or at least appear to be, ordinary humans. They are also what causes Michael and Mina to wonder about questions of Skellig's existence. Skellig's existence also causes Michael feelings of the presence of another world:

> We stared at each other. My hand trembled as I reached out toward Skellig's wings. I touched them with my fingertips. I rested my palms on them. I felt the feathers, and beneath them the bones and sinews and muscles that supported them. I felt the cracle of Skellig's breathing.
> I tiptoed to the shutters and stared out through the narrow chinks.
> "What you doing?" [Mina] whispered.
> "Making sure the world's still really there," I said. (Almond 2008, 95)

Magical realism's way of questioning scientific approaches as dominant truths is manifested in the children's pondering about Skellig's existence and background. Michael and Mina are unable to come to a conclusion over what Skellig is or where he came from. Michael debates throughout the book whether he is a supernatural being, possibly an angel, or if there is a scientific explanation for his existence. For example, the possibility that Skellig is a product of evolution, either being a relic from history or a further evolved human, is hinted at several times. At some point Michael seems to believe that both the supernatural and the scientific explanations are true. This merges not only two different explanations of Skellig's background together but also two different worlds – the ordinary and the magical – which, according to Faris, is characteristic to magical realism (Faris, in Faris and

Zamora 2005, 172). Mina, on the other hand, declares Skellig to simply be "[a]n extraordinary being" (Almond 2008, 80), not dwelling into explanations any further. Skellig himself gives them a multi-faceted explanation for his existence that does not lead the children into any specific conclusions, leaving open the possibility of science and myths merging together in the story:

> "Something," he said. "Something like you, something like a beast, something like a bird, something like an angel." He laughed. "Something like that." (Almond 2008, 167)

The idea that Skellig is in fact an angel is interesting, although it is complicated by the fact that he himself calls Michael and Mina angels multiple times after his healing begins. That the children themselves could be something otherworldly or could possess magical traits is not elaborated much further. There are a couple of instances where this could be seen as hinted at, namely when Skellig invites Michael and Mina to dance and Michael witnesses ghostly wings on his and Mina's backs. The same appearing of the wings happens when Skellig dances with Michael's sister. However, this does not indicate that the children themselves are otherworldly, as it seems to be that the wings are connected to Skellig's presence. Yet the fact that Michael and Mina helped Skellig heal suggests that there is something special in them after all. Whether this specialness is of magical nature or not is left unclear.

Even though Skellig is the major part of all magical aspects in the novel other magical events disrupt the ordinary settings in the text as well. Michael's will to make sure his sister is safe causes him to be able to feel her heart beating next to his in his chest. This is described in the text first as though it is used as a literary metaphor, but it soon becomes clear that Michael actually does feel his sister's heart beating next to his own. When the baby's heart is being operated on Michael feels her heart beat stopping, leading him to believe the baby is dead. According to Hegerfeldt, literalisation of figurative speech is a technique often used in magical realism. This is because "the violation of the boundary between the literal and the figurative disrupts the reading process, engendering a certain amount of hesitation is the reader about how the text is to be understood"

(Hegerfeldt 2005, 237). The text brings to life and physically realises a literary metaphor that might have been thought to exist only on the level of language at first.

### 4.2.3 Dreaming, Old Tales and Myths

In *Skellig*, the borders between dreaming and being awake are at times blurred. I will argue that blurring these two elements serves as a way to also blur the borders of the ordinary and the magical. This contributes into both any hesitation the reader may feel and the creation of magical realism itself in the text. Dreams and dreaming are relevant to look at in the context of magical realism, as using their irrationality to merge the real and the fantastical is yet again one way to challenge realism's rationality and Western scientific thinking (Hegerfeldt 2005, 3).

Several events in the text could be interpreted as dreaming or hallucinating; yet the text lets the reader understand that despite the dreamlike quality the events are described with they actually do happen. The characters experience doubt over these instances. Michael wonders to himself several times whether what he is seeing or experiencing is actually happening or whether he is dreaming. He converses about this with Mina and concludes at one point that it is difficult to distinguish between the two:

> "We're not dreaming this?"
> "We're not dreaming it."
> "We're not dreaming it together?"
> "Even if we were we wouldn't know." (Almond 2008, 83)

Michael's mother also experiences the same doubt when she describes seeing Skellig dancing with the baby the night before her heart operation in the hospital: "And I saw this man, that's all. Another dream, though I was sure I was wide awake" (Almond 2008, 159). She believes the image of Skellig and the baby with wings on her back to be a dream, although the reader is lead to believe that what she saw actually did happen, as she apparently recognises Skellig from Mina's drawing later on (Almond 2008, 181). Despite his hesitation at first Michael himself at some point begins to

believe that the events he is witnessing are real. When Skellig recovers enough to be able to stand

and walk on his own he invites Michael and Mina to dance with him, which leads to Michael

experiencing something otherworldly:

> I couldn't feel the bare floorboards against my feet. All I knew were the hands in
> mine, the faces turning through the light and dark, and for a moment I saw ghostly
> wings at Mina's back, I felt the feathers and delicate bones rising from my own
> shoulders, and I was lifted from the floor with Skellig and Mina. We turned circles
> together through the empty air of that empty room high in an old house in Crow Road.
> (Almond 2008, 120)

As this happens early in the morning and is described soon after Michael sees a dream with Skellig

flying with his sister it could be interpreted as him merely hallucinating or dreaming. Yet when he

asks Mina whether it happened to her as well she replies: "Yes. It happened to all of us." (Almond

2008, 121). A while later he conceals the experience by dismissing it as a dream, even though he

apparently believes otherwise. Despite this when Michael and Mina go back home shortly after this

Michael sooths his frightened father by saying: "I didn't know what I was doing. I was dreaming. I

was sleepwalking." (Almond 2008, 121).

The experiences above are examples that can be interpreted as actual happenings

despite the dreamlike quality of the text. In addition to these several instances are included in the

text where Michael's actual dreams during his sleep are described:

> I lay in bed again. I moved between sleeping and waking. I dreamed that Skellig
> entered the hospital ward, that he lifted the baby from her glass case. He pulled the
> tubes and the wires from her. She reached up and touched his pale dry skin with her
> little fingers and she giggled. He took her away, flew with her in his arms through the
> darkest part of the sky. (Almond 2008, 112–113)

Including both dreams and experiences that have the potential to be mere dreams in the story causes

Michael to hesitate and ponder what is real and what is not. This leads to the lines between the

dreams and the experiences becoming even more blurry and possibly causing the reader in turn to

have difficulties in distinguishing between the two. As the non-realistic aspects of dreams become

mixed in experiencing real happenings, I argue that these two borderlands – dreaming and being awake, the ordinary and the magical – are at least partly the same in the context of this specific magical realist text.

Believing in what one experiences despite the magical nature of those experiences is clearly present in *Skellig*. In other respects religion or beliefs of religious nature are not presented much in the text, and at first the text seems to not rely on belief systems of any kind. However, as the story progresses traces of folk lore and old beliefs emerge in the story. The presence of these kinds of tales and beliefs is relevant from the point of view of magical realism as, according to Faris, "[i]n magical realist narrative, ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie in the text" (in Faris and Zamora, 2005, 182). Such beliefs in *Skellig* are mostly connected to tales of winged humans and angels. Michael's inner debate over the question of Skellig's existence leads him to have this conversation with his mother:

> "They say that shoulder blades are where your wings were, when you were an angel," she said. "They say they're where your wings will grow again one day."
> "It's just a story, though," I said. "A fairy tale for little kids. Isn't it?"
> "Who knows? But maybe one day we all had wings and one day we'll all have wings again." (Almond 2008, 38–39)

Apart from casual wondering, Michael's mother does not show any signs of actually believing the old folk lore that she is repeating. Yet the conversation sets an undertone of old beliefs being present in the text. Stories of winged humans pop up in the text casually, such as the story of Icarus (Almond 2008, 14). Angels and their existence are discussed as well, though this does not happen in an explicitly religious context but in a more general way. In the light of Skellig's existence and the inner debate Michael goes through the stories recited and repeated seem to become valid alternatives for a more scientific outlook on the world. That there could be truth to the myths and stories is outright suggested by Mina's mother when discussing the ancient myth of Persephone:

> "An old myth," I said.
> "Yes," she said. "But maybe it's a myth that's nearly true." (Almond 2008, 147)

In *Skellig* the old folk lore is mixed with scientific belief as winged humans and angels are theorised to be a product of evolution by Michael. Michael wonders whether there are humans "that are turning into creatures that can fly" (Almond 2008, 126) in a similar way that birds evolved from the dinosaurs. Mina theorises this also: "There is no end to evolution --- Maybe this is not how we are meant to be forever." (Almond 2008, 99) A mixture of old lore and scientific theories is a way for magical realism to question the hierarchy of different world-views – in other words, what can be correct ways to produce knowledge. Magical realism's relationship with knowledge production will be discussed more in 4.3.2 in the context of *Heaven Eyes*.

### 4.2.4   Hesitation

As mentioned above, the characters experience doubt over whether the things they experience are actually happening. This is an aspect that is actually in contradiction to what some theorists of magical realism believe to be an integral part of the mode. As discussed in chapter 2, Amaryll Chanady writes that an important aspect of magical realism is that the characters and the narrator do not hesitate to accept the magical as a part of the everyday world. This, according to Chanady, makes the reader accept the blending of the magical and the ordinary without questioning: "[s]ince the supernatural is not perceived as unacceptable because it is antinomous, the characters and the reader do not try to find a natural explanation" (1985, 24). This, however, is not the case in *Skellig* and, as I explained in chapter 2.3.1, I disagree with Chanady on the hesitation on both the part of the reader as well as the characters. I believe that any hesitation on the reader's part as well as the narrator's is to be expected. As seen, Michael tries to find a reason for Skellig's existence and an explanation to what he is. Michael is also the narrator of the text, the story being told in a first-person narrative; thus his hesitation and questioning are directly reflected in the way the magical events are presented to the reader. Chanady writes that "[i]f the narrator stressed the exclusive validity of his rational world view, he would relegate the supernatural to a secondary mode of being

--- and thus the juxtaposition of two mutually exclusive logical codes, which is essential to magical realism, would become a hierarchy." (1985, 30) I argue that the characters' or the narrator's hesitation over what is happening does not necessarily equate to "stressing the exclusivity of [their] rational world view[s]", as Chanady seems to suggest. In *Skellig's* case the characters, apart from perhaps Mina, possess the rational beliefs typical for Westerners, and do not consider the existence of magical things before coming face-to-face with them. It would then be only natural that hesitation and questioning would arise when meeting such occurrences. What I believe to be crucial for the definition of magical realism to be realised is not the question of whether hesitation occurs but rather where do the characters – and possibly the narrator – end up with their beliefs during the course of the story. The key to determining magical realism in terms of the characters' attitudes towards magical things among the real is whether they end up accepting the magical as a natural part of their ordinary world or not. Michael's journey to accepting his magical experiences not as dreams but as a part of his world would then be what determines the magic in the text as magical realism in *Skellig* and not his initial hesitation over its existence.

In conclusion, magical realism is present in *Skellig* in many different ways. I have examined how magical elements blend together with the ordinary world in the text. The presence of magic is seen in the existence of Skellig in the ordinary world surrounding the characters. Scientific theories, old myths and magical explanations become mixed as Michael and Mina try to come up with an explanation for Skellig's origin. The text blends together dreams and being awake in a way that confuses Michael, the narrator of the text, in regards of what is real and what is not. I argued that this is also a way for a magical realist text to blend together the ordinary and the magical. I also provided an example for how the narrator and possibly the characters of a magical realist text can in fact experience hesitation over accepting their magical experiences, which I first discussed in a more theoretical context in 2.3.1.

## 4.3    Magical Realistic Characteristics in *Heaven Eyes*

*Heaven Eyes* is the story of Erin Law, a girl who lives in an orphanage due to her mother's death.

She does not enjoy living there, having sought to escape temporarily several times in order to gain a

sense of freedom. In the book she, her friend January Carr and Mouse Gullane decide to run away

on a self-built raft to the river. They end up in Black Middens, a muddy shore next to an old

industrial area where they find Heaven Eyes, a girl with webs between her fingers, and her caretaker

Grampa. Just as in *Skellig* with Skellig, the child characters are faced with the mystery of what

Heaven Eyes is and where she came from.

### 4.3.1    Merging of Two Worlds

Just as with *Skellig*, *Heaven Eyes* is clearly grounded in the realistic world throughout the whole

book. The story begins and ends in the orphanage Whitegates, located in an unnamed British town.

The Black Middens is an old industrial area that is torn down by construction workers at the end of

the story. The description of the landscape and the town describes the surroundings in a realistic and

plain way, thus enhancing the effect of the book being set in the ordinary world. Just as in *Skellig*,

the society seems to run in the same way it does in reality. Social workers and counsellors work to

help the children of the orphanage. Construction work in the town is on-going, old buildings being

demolished and new living areas being built in their place. People are being described doing

everyday activities such as cycling and jogging along the river or going out in the evening to pubs

and clubs.

However, the assumption that *Heaven Eyes* is grounded in the ordinary world

becomes questioned both by characters in the text and possibly the reader. Grampa and Heaven

Eyes talk about the people that pass by the Black Middens like they do not belong to the same

world as they do, resulting to calling them ghosts instead:

> "There is ghosts everywhere," she said. "We eye them past where the runny water runs. We eye them in little boats. We eye them running on machines. We eye them way way down there where the bridges is. We ear when they squeal and scream and fill the night with noise." (Almond 2000, 77)

Grampa refers to the other side of the river as a "world of ghosts" and at times believes Erin, January and Mouse to be ghosts as well. Here lies the contradiction that happens between Grampa and Heaven Eyes and on the other hand Erin, Mouse and January: to Heaven Eyes and Grampa it is the world outside the Middens that seems to appear as magical and sinister, yet to the latters the Black Middens is the one that seems otherworldly and eerie. At times the reader might question whether the Middens is at all part of the ordinary world and not part of another fantastical realm. The idea that the Middens is somehow separate from the ordinary world gains support when the children leave the Middens on a raft and the people passing by the river do not notice them no matter how hard they try to draw their attention to them; only after the river takes them further from the Middens do they become noticed by outsiders again (Almond 2000, 184–185). Yet the Black Middens and the old printing houses are proven to be part of the ordinary world when construction workers come there to tear the area down at the end of the novel. This creates a feeling that the area is a borderland of the ordinary and the otherworldly and leaves open the question of whether the Middens is a part of the real or another realm.

Even when leaving aside the question of the existence of The Middens, a presence of another magical world can still be seen clearly in other aspects of the text. There are many occasions in the novel that can be interpreted as what Wendy Faris calls "irreducible element[s] of magic" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 167). The most obvious ones are the following. Wilson Cairns, a boy living in the orphanage, claims that his clay miniature people move on their own, proven by Erin as she is able to see the movement herself after returning to the orphanage from the Middens. Grampa's death coincides oddly with Heaven Eyes finding out where she came from and his deciding it is time for her to leave the Middens; this all happens as if the purpose of his existence

was to take care of her until someone else came to take her back to the world of other people. The most obviously magical element in the novel is the body of a long dead, yet a well preserved man, whom the children unearth from the riverbank and call a saint. The saint comes to life after Grampa's death and guides his soul to the river with him. The otherworldly is also present when Erin communicates with what at first seems to be the memory of her mother. In the light of the aforementioned inexplicable events the possibility of what might first be assumed to be a memory turning out to be the ghost of Erin's mother becomes a potential theory as well. Likewise, January can feel "something's happening" (Almond 2000, 195) after the children return to Whitegates and a short while later his long-lost mother comes to take him to live with her.

Because of the mixture of the ordinary world and the magical elements the reader might experience unsettling doubts about what is real and what is not. The narrator of the text is Erin, which means that any questioning that might happen on her part regarding the magical phenomena is reflected straight on the reader. I discussed hesitation the characters might feel in regards of the magical events in the context of *Skellig* in 4.2.4. There hesitation occurred when the magical events clashed with Michael's ordinary world view. In *Heaven Eyes* hesitation does occur on Erin's and January's part in a similar way it occurred on Michael's part. Erin questions whether the Black Middens is ordinary or whether there is something inexplicable there. Erin also wonders what Heaven Eyes is.

> "What is this place?" I said.
> No answer.
> "What is it? Is it evil? Is it mad?"
> "What is you mouthing, Erin Law?"
> "What are you?" I whispered. (Almond 2000, 109)

Heaven Eyes' origin and identity are a mystery for the children and they set out to seek answers. Their search for explanations is not as systematic as in *Skellig*, nor do the children try to come up

with scientific theories of any kind. Instead they set out to get information from a stash of old newspaper articles and photographs Grampa has collected.

The occurrence of the magical elements are not sprinkled out evenly throughout the course of the story. At the beginning when the story is set in the Whitegates there are barely any magical elements present. The elements that could be interpreted as magical before the children leaving for the Middens are Erin talking to her dead mother and Wilson Cairns' claims of the moving clay figures. However, at this point of the story these events might be dismissed as imagination, ruling out the possible magic in them. Most of the magical elements if the story are located in or happen at the Middens, such as the body of the saint coming to life or Grampa's soul rising from his body. At the end of the novel the magical aspects can be found from outside the Middens as well.

I argue that the occurring of the magical events is connected to the child's point of view the story is narrated from. The rise in the occurrences of the events happens because the children go through a transformation in their beliefs during their stay at the Middens. This leads them to learn to see magical things around them, which they were not capable of before. They bring this ability with them when they return back to Whitegates, which leads to them seeing magical things in the ordinary world and the world outside the Middens. Erin declares through the narration that "[t]he most marvelous of things could be found a few yards away, a river's-width away. The most extraordinary things existed in our ordinary world and just waited for us to find them" (Almond, 2000, 194). This is on-par with the core definition of magical realism: there are no clear lines between the ordinary and the magical, and to see fantastical things one does not have to clearly enter into another world. At the end of *Heaven Eyes* the lines of the magical and the ordinary have been blurred because of the change the children go through in regards of their way of seeing the world.

Just like in *Skellig*, in *Heaven Eyes* there is one instance when a figure of speech turns into reality. Erin states at the beginning: "Sometimes I go so far into the darkness that I'm scared I'll not get out again" (Almond 2000, 9). This apparently metaphorical utterance becomes concrete later on in the Middens when Erin runs to a dark corner of the industrial area and cannot find her way out. The scene mixes both the dark state of mind that she is in after her quarrel with January and the physical darkness surrounding her. The darkness in her head turns physical in the description of the scene and the ghosts and mutants she imagines around her are described as becoming real. The ghosts also replace Erin's mother, who is described in a way as if she was concrete: "I found her hand resting in mine. Her hand grew colder, colder." (Almond 2000, 104) As noted before, Wendy Faris describes the literalisation of figurative speech as "a particular kind of verbal magic – a closing of the gap between words and the world" (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 176). This demonstrates well that magical realistic texts can merge the magical and the ordinary world in many different ways, not just on a descriptive level but also on a linguistic level.

### 4.3.2   Producing Knowledge

Memory is an important theme in *Heaven Eyes* and runs in the story throughout the text. I believe that memory and remembering are also important to magical realism as they can challenge the ideas of objectivity and objective truths outside a person's mind. According to Hegerfeldt, "[magical realist] texts probe alternative modes of knowledge production as to their explanatory potential, illustrating how they may provide a different, but nevertheless valid, access to the world" (2005, 158). In *Heaven Eyes* the fragility of the human mind and memory are shown at the same time as the text uses the themes of memory and stories to question conventional ways of knowing and, to quote Hegerfeldt, "producing knowledge". Through the theme of memory knowledge production becomes another important aspect in the text that I will discuss here.

In *Heaven Eyes* memory and its impact on both our knowledge and belief systems circulate strongly around Heaven Eyes herself. Her life story and origin are muddled as she herself cannot remember where she came from: "I memory little … There is nothing but a deep deep dark. Grampa tells me this deep dark is the Middens" (Almond 2000, 79). Grampa is unable to give her a logical explanation as his mind is impacted with dementia, resulting in him telling her stories that might not be true instead. As memories are unable to give her a satisfying explanation, Heaven Eyes mixes these stories and makes up her own tale of origin, resulting in her believing that she originated from the mud of the Middens. She also changes her story accordingly when given new information, fluctuating the explanation to her existence. This happens when Erin explains her the concept of a mother and the circumstances of a pregnancy: that she came from inside her own mother, that it is dark inside a womb and that she cannot remember her time there. This explanation leads to Heaven Eyes coming up with her idea that the Black Middens is her mother, as Erin's description resembles the memories she has. She also mixes scientific facts with her own stories. From the ultrasound picture Erin carries with her she deduces that in this sense she and Erin were both alike, as "Grampa says that mebbe once I was a fishy thing or a froggy thing swimming in the water" (Almond 2000, 93).

These deductions thus mix both scientific facts and a tale that has been made up to explain Heaven Eyes' origin; hierarchically these two would not usually be regarded to be on the same level in regards of their believability, the scientific explanations being valued more over the tale. The way Heaven Eyes mixes science and stories to explain her origin is an example of the way magical realism questions ways to produce knowledge. This is because two ways of knowledge production are mixed in a way that equalises them, as opposed to the usual hierarchy of science and logic being above tales and stories. It also shows that both science and tales can exist at the same time and that one does not rule out the other: "*Mythos* and *logos* as the two basic modes of knowledge production are presented not as successive and mutually exclusive, but as simultaneous

and complementary" (Hegerfeldt 2005, 188, original emphasis), "*mythos*" here referring to tales and "*logos*" to science.

As Erin begins to tell her about her own mother Heaven Eyes claims that it is "telling tales … Like Grampa telling tales about the Black Middens" (Almond 2000, 91). In this way the text not only builds a fantastic story of origin for Heaven Eyes but also questions whether Erin's story of birth really is more believable, as Heaven Eyes sees no difference between that of Erin's or hers. The text turns reality into possible tales and muddles the lines between what is thought to be true and what is regarded as merely stories. According to Hegerfeldt, making up stories to explain the surrounding world is common for magical realist texts: "Magic realist narrators and characters frequently turn to myths, legends or fairy tales, using age-old and long-familiar patterns to make sense of their own experiences" (2005, 187). This is also seen when the children at Whitegates are encouraged to tell a life story of their own as well. The orphans have gaps in their memories of their past and they have no parents who could fill them with stories. The children are told that "it is important that each of us could tell the story of our life, even if it was a mixture of fact and memory and imagination" (Almond 2000, 6). The text suggests that having knowledge of one's past is important, so far so that it succeeds the factuality of that knowledge in importance. When ways of producing factual knowledge are not sufficient enough they can be mixed with alternatives such as coming up with stories. Hegerfeldt writes:

> in [the narrators' and characters'] search for meaning the figures avail themselves not only for existing stories, but also of the various storytelling modes as such, generating their own myths, legends or fairy tales, for turning their lives into stories allows them to confer as least a basic amount of coherence and unity onto a haphazard, frequently incomprehensible existence. (Hegerfeldt 2005, 187)

In conclusion, magical realism is present in *Heaven Eyes* through the blending of the ordinary world the characters live in and the magical things they experience. What actually is magical and what ordinary becomes questioned when the Black Middens seems to become a place

where the two become mixed in a way that confuses the children. The text also brings up the questions of, on the one hand, what is real and what can be regarded as real, and, on the other hand, what can be regarded as a right way to produce knowledge. In *Heaven Eyes* imagination and stories can function as just as legitimate ways to produce knowledge as science. This, again, has been proved to be a vital characteristic of magical realism.

## 4.4   Children and Their Different Ways of Knowing

What I would like to draw attention to in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* is how children are presented as special in these texts. By "special" I mean several things. Firstly, they have the ability to see extraordinary things in the ordinary; secondly, in the case of *Heaven Eyes* they have innocence specifically connected with childhood; and thirdly they are presented as different from adults. As I discussed before in chapter 3, a common view of children today in the Western world is that they are not like adults. This difference is seen to stem from the children's lack of knowledge of the world, which causes the perceived innocence of childhood and children seeing the world in a different, possibly magical way. In the following subchapters I will examine how both innocence and the magical outlook on the world can be seen in the child characters in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. I will also look at how the characters are presented as somehow different from adults specifically through these two traits. After this I will discuss how this difference can be seen as marginalising the child characters. Finally, I will discuss how the child characters' different ways of knowing looks like in the context of the transgressive nature of magical realism. The question of whether the transgressive nature of magical realism can be interpreted as countering ex-centric constructions will be discussed specifically in the context of constructions of the child. By doing this I wish to examine the transgressive nature of magical realism more closely.

### 4.4.1   Magical Children

Children in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* either possess or gain the ability to see magical things around them in their ordinary world during the courses of the stories. Consequently, children are presented as different from adults in both novels. I will next analyse how the child characters differ from the adult ones specifically through their ability to see magical phenomena in both novels and what kind of boundaries this creates between the child and the adult characters.

Most of the child characters are presented in both novels as more capable than adults of either experiencing magical phenomena and events or believing them to be true when experiencing them. This division is fairly clear cut in both novels, although there are some exceptions to this that will be discussed later. However, it is mostly the children who are able to find the magical things in the first place, who are willing to look close enough to see magic around them and who can experience the magical things without dismissing them as dreams or hallucinations. I want to emphasise that in both texts the ability to believe in magical phenomena is linked either closely or exclusively to the ability to see or otherwise experience the magical phenomena. Having knowledge of magical phenomena is presented as dependent of one's will to believe. The difference of the children in comparison to adults will be discussed from this point of view. The spectrum of child characters believing in and experiencing the magical ranges in both novels from readily accepting to being dismissive, although most of the child characters end up believing in the end.

In *Heaven Eyes* several of the child characters do not seem to be capable of seeing magical phenomena at the beginning of the story. They go through an alteration in their world views during the course of the novel, which results in them experiencing magical things around them. Erin is shown to engage in discussion with her deceased mother already before leaving Whitegates; however, it is not made clear whether she believes the conversations to be real or just a product of her imagination. No magical beliefs are shown on January's or Mouse's part before they

enter the Black Middens. This begins to change once the children arrive in the Middens. When they

are discovered by Heaven Eyes January, first dismisses her as a freak; Erin, on the other hand, is in

wonderment over what she is, thus more open to and less scared of the possibility of her being

magical. January gradually stops being hostile towards Heaven Eyes and mocking her, finally

accepting her when her history begins to clear up. He also stops dismissing Grampa as merely

senile and readily believes seeing the saint coming to life and taking Grampa's soul with it to the

river. Mouse represents the opposite of January, as he is the one of the three who seemingly does

not have inner struggles to accept Heaven Eyes, Grampa or the odd atmosphere of the Middens

without questioning. He is also more ready to believe in "saints" being buried in the mud when the

others first dismiss it as a symptom of Grampa's apparent dementia. Mouse learns to see the world

around him as magical even if the things around him are perfectly ordinary:

> Mouse's eyes blazed with joy.
> "Magic!" he said. "Magic!"
> He knelt on the floor, opened his hands, spilled out a little heap of discoveries. There
> were blue pebbles, the skull of a tiny animal, a coin, a red cup handle, a green plastic
> bowl. (Almond 2000, 123)

By the time the children leave the Middens they all seem to have accepted that magical things can

exist and do not seem to have any inner conflict about it anymore. Erin declares as the narrator that

magical things can happen in one's ordinary life if one is willing to look for them (Almond 2000,

194). She and her friends now have knowledge that magical phenomena are present in the world

around them.

There is one exception in *Heaven Eyes* in regards of a child going through a change in

their world view. Erin describes Wilson Cairns, a strongly introverted boy at the orphanage, as

being able to see magical things right from the beginning: "Whitegates was a place of safety for

him, a place where he could dream, work with his clay and imagine his own astounding world. …

When he spoke at all, it was in an effort to make us understand his adventures, to make us see his

magic" (Almond 2000, 15–16). Wilson does not seem to have the urge to run away from the orphanage for freedom and escapes into his own mind instead. He is presented as a contrast to the other child characters at the beginning of the text in terms of the ability to believe. During the children's stay at The Middens Erin learns to look at the world in a way that Wilson told her to:

> I told myself that I was dreaming, hallucinating. "This is impossible," I whispered to myself. Then I remembered Wilson Cairns' words just before we ran away: It's possible. It's possible. I thought of the way his eyes stared through us to a stunning place beyond. I thought of his last words: Keep watching. I watched. (Almond 2000, 168)

At the end of the story the gap between his beliefs and those of Erin and January has been reduced. In *Heaven Eyes* there are no child characters who apparently would not either believe in or have knowledge about the magical in the end of the story, as even the less frequently appearing children of the orphanage seem to believe Erin's story of their adventures in the Middens.

In *Skellig* there is also a spectrum of how readily the child characters believe and accept the magical experiences. Mina is in this sense like Mouse. She does not question Skellig's existence, and although she does wonder what he is and where he came from she does not dwell on the question for long. She readily accepts his existence and, like Mouse, does not seem to have much inner conflict with tying together the phenomenal world and magical elements in her mind. In comparison, Michael is more conflicted over Skellig's existence and seems to have more trouble with the idea of a magical being existing in his ordinary, everyday world. Just like January and Erin, Michael at first denies the possibility of the existence of magical phenomena by trying to tell himself Skellig is not real: "I told myself I was stupid. I'd never seen him at all. That had all been part of a dream as well." (Almond 2008, 10) Even as he is talking to Skellig he cannot be sure of his existence, and as Skellig asks him whether he thinks he is a figment Michael answers: "Don't know what you are." (Almond 2008, 54) In Michael's case he not only experiences hesitation but also fear that Skellig is only a dream he has been having (Almond 2008, 74). But unlike in *Heaven Eyes*, in

*Skellig* it can be questioned on some child characters' part whether they have the ability to believe in magical phenomena. Michael's friends from school do not take part in his adventures with Skellig, nor are they aware of his existence. Michael debates with himself whether he should tell his friends Coot and Leakey what he has been experiencing, deciding not to for most of the story, and only opening up to them in a vague way: "I can't tell you anything. But the world's full of amazing things" … "I've seen them" (Almond 2008, 108) The most important reason for Michael for not telling his friends about what he has seen is his belief that they would not believe him nor the things he has been experiencing. At the end Michael finally decides to open up about his experiences to his friends one day. The crucial reason for the change in his decision is his newly gained belief that they might believe him after all. Just like in *Heaven Eyes*, the will to believe is then presented as crucial for the ability to see and experience magical phenomena:

> "Would you tell me about it?" he said.
> We paused and I looked at him and I knew he really wanted to know.
> "Someday I'll tell you everything," I said.
> We saw Coot in the school doorway waiting for us.
> "Might even tell that crazy nut," I said. "If I think he might believe it." (Almond 2008, 170)

Michael thus sees passing on his knowledge about magical phenomena dependent of whether his listeners might believe him. It should be noted that Michael only debates about revealing his newly gained knowledge to his peers. In contrast, he shows no signs of doing so in regards of any adults. In fact, he specifically lies to his father because he does not believe his father would believe him:

> For a moment I wanted to tell him everything: Skellig, the owls, what Mina and I got up to in the night. Then I knew how weird it would seem. (Almond 2008, 125)

The inability of the adult characters to believe and experience magical phenomena will be discussed next in contrast to the way the children in the texts are willing to believe and experience the magical phenomena.

### 4.4.2 Non-believing Adults

The adults in the novels build a contrast with the children in the area of believing in magical experiences. In both novels the adults seem to be, with a couple of exceptions, either incapable or not interested in believing or experiencing magical phenomena. The fact that most adults in the novels do not either see or play a role in the majority of the magical happenings does not necessarily suggest that they are unable to. Rather, I argue that they are disinterested in seeing magical things or do not believe they can truly happen. This results them to either not experiencing magical phenomena at all or, when encountering such phenomena, dismissing them as something non-magical. For example, although Michael's mother is able to see Skellig when he visits the baby in the hospital, she at first dismisses it as merely a dream. This would suggest that it is not necessarily that children have a capability to see extraordinary things that adults simply do not physically possess, but rather that their minds are more open to experiencing the extraordinary without dismissing their experiences as figments or dreams. In contrast, the adults either do not want to see or seem to have lost the ability to "keep watching" for the magical things, as Wilson Cairns puts it several times. In *Heaven Eyes* when Erin tells the other children in the orphanage where they escaped to the reactions of a child and a social worker are both described:

> "Into another world!" I whispered.
> She caught her breath.
> "No!"
> "Yes. We only went across the river but it really was like being in another world."
> Fat Kev clicked his tongue. He sniggered. (Almond 2000, 199)

On the one hand, this scene demonstrates well that the children will believe readily that magical things could happen even when they seemingly are ordinary. The workers at the orphanage, on the other hand, do not believe or see the way the children do. This leads to them disregarding the experiences of the children as merely the imagination of children coping with psychological traumas. There is also a difference between how much the children are willing to let the adults

know of their experiences. While Erin will tell that she went to another world in front of an adult, Michael disregards his magical experiences as sleepwalking to his father, possibly knowing that adults would believe he is either imagining or mentally disturbed.

Both *Heaven Eyes* and *Skellig* have an adult character that is different from the rest of the adult characters: in *Heaven Eyes* it is Grampa, in *Skellig* it is Ernie, the man who lived in Michael's new home before them. Both differ from the other adults in that either they are old or are described as possibly demented by other characters. Grampa forgets dates and names and is unable to fully recall Heaven Eyes' history. Yet he believes that there are what he calls saints buried in the muddy riverbank and is also able to see magical things without disregarding them as dreams or figments of imagination, unlike for example Michael's mother. In *Skellig* it is Ernie who is the adult character that differs from others. Unlike with Grampa, with whom the reader gets to see directly how he behaves, with Ernie the reader has to lean on second-hand accounts: therefore it is not completely certain whether Ernie really was senile or whether that is the interpretation of other adult characters. Ernie's capability to believe in Skellig is questioned by himself in the beginning: "Never could tell. Used to look at me, but look right through me like I wasn't there. Miserable old toot. Maybe thought I was a figment" (Almond 2008, 54). However, it becomes clear at one point that Ernie has possibly experienced magical things and believed in them, even if they are disregarded as hallucinations of a demented old person by another adult:

> "Did he talk about seeing things?"
> "Things?"
> "Strange things. In the garden, in the house."
> From the corner of my eye I saw dad chewing his lips again.
> "Mr. Myers was very ill," said Dr. Death. "He was dying."
> "I know that."
> "And when the mind approaches death it changes. It becomes less . . . orderly."
> "So he did?"
> "He did speak of certain images that came to him. But so do many of my people."
> (Almond 2008, 124)

In both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes,* if an adult possesses the capability of seeing the magical without dismissing it as something non-magical it is connected with dementia and memory loss. In this sense dementia and memory loss are presented as ways for the adult to be able to see the world in a magical way again. What makes the children different from adults is the capability to see magical things in the ordinary world without merely shrugging them off as something else. This is the trait that both Grampa and Ernie possess and that connects them with the child characters more than the other adults. However, in the novels this trait ends up not being necessarily a bad thing in an adult, but rather a peculiar trait in adults that is otherwise only reserved for children.

I conclude here that in comparison to children most of the adults are presented as not capable of seeing the magical phenomena. Thus the children possess a way of seeing the world around them in a way that is different to adults. This trait seems to come from the will or ability to believe that magical phenomena could exist in the first place. In this sense the children are presented in a way that is in line with the idea of the child thinking in a magical way that is exclusive to them. The only way adults are able to have knowledge about magical phenomena is if they are ready to believe in them. Possessing a way of magical thinking is not fully restricted to children but the adults in the novels must be able to believe in the magical phenomena to be able to have knowledge about their existence.

### 4.4.3 Innocence

Mostly the difference of the children manifests itself in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* in the way they are able to experience and believe in magical things. But I also believe that, in the case of *Heaven Eyes,* innocence linked to childhood specifically also plays a role in separating the child characters from the adults. Whether the differences created by using this trait in the text are positive for the children or marginalises them in comparison to adults will be discussed later on in further chapters. I want to emphasise that, as discussed before, I believe the child's ability to see the

surrounding world as magical and to look at it in wonderment is culturally connected to the perceived childhood innocence. In relation to this I discussed in chapter 3 that losing one's childhood innocence is culturally connected to losing the ability to look at the world in wonderment, to see it as magical.

When the children leave Whitegates and arrive at the Middens the attitudes of Erin and January are contrasted with that of Heaven Eyes. Erin notes to January that Heaven Eyes is "[o]ld as us, but like a little girl" (Almond 2000, 67). Erin also at one point refers to Mouse as "[s]uch an innocent" (Almond 2000, 16), indicating at the same time not only that Mouse is innocent but also that she is not. At the beginning of their stay at the Middens, Erin also notes that Heaven Eyes and Mouse possess the same childlike quality: "I saw how similar they were, Mouse and Heaven Eyes, how they were both like little children." (Almond 2000, 81) A contrast is built between Erin and January, and Heaven Eyes and Mouse, and that contrast divides the child characters into ones who are childlike and ones who are not. This implicates, of course, that the ones who are not childlike have either lost or forgotten this quality. Innocence in *Heaven Eyes* is also presented as a characteristic that makes someone special. According to Grampa, Mouse possess this characteristic and it is because of his innocence that he is able to find the mysterious saint in the muddy shore bank:

> "One day way back I did hear that such saints was waiting to be discovered in these Middens. But it did take one like you, with great goodness in his heart, to find one." (Almond 2000, 167)

The fact that Erin views Heaven Eyes and Mouse as the innocent ones would then mean that she and January do not possess this quality. This division coincides with how Mouse and Heaven Eyes both are more capable of believing in magical things without dismissing them as something else, while Erin and January struggle with accepting their experiences as real. In this way, the link between innocence and the capability to believe in magical phenomena is present in the portrayal of the children.

In *Heaven Eyes*, childhood innocence appears to be divided into two categories. The first category of innocence comes from good behaviour. This kind of innocence can be tainted by behaviour that is considered bad. Grampa at one point accuses January and Erin of corrupting Mouse and Heaven Eyes: "I has seen how you has led my Heaven Eyes astray. I has seen how you has led my Little Helper astray. These two is precious" (Almond 2000, 145). This would implicate that there is something in them that can be destroyed by influencing them. This "something" appears to be innocence. The characteristic is thought to be fragile and to be protected from corruption of the outside world. Grampa seems to believe that both January and Erin, who are not described in words that paint a picture of the innocent child, would have a corrupting effect on Mouse and Heaven Eyes. January's behaviour is specifically described in a way that could be interpreted as corrupting. He encourages Heaven Eyes to do things that Grampa would not approve of:

> "Grampa will know nothing," whispered Jan. "Take one. Go on, be a devil." (Almond 2000, 132)

Heaven Eyes also shows signs of distress when January's actions force her to lie and hide things from Grampa: "I is getting bad." (Almond 2000, 132)

The second kind of innocence shown in the text is born from lack of knowledge. This shows when Grampa is adamant that Heaven Eyes should not read news articles or see photos that contain information about her past. His attitude towards her is protective – he calls himself Caretaker, after all – and he is frightened of her gaining knowledge that could ruin her. Such knowledge is in this case anything that could give Heaven Eyes factual information about her past. Heaven Eyes has resorted to make up her own stories of her past because of the lack of information. This seems to be what Grampa prefers for her as he becomes agitated when he believes that hidden items holding such information have been touched. When Heaven Eyes does find out about her past Grampa's reaction is defeated:

> "What happened to them, Grampa? Mine mum, mine dad, mine brothers, mine sisters?"
>
> …
>
> "Does you see?" he whispered. "Does you see what you has done to lovely Heaven Eyes?" (Almond 2000, 146–147)

Grampa then proceeds to tell Heaven Eyes why he hid information from her, revealing that he wished to maintain her innocence by doing so:

> "I did find your little treasures with you, wrapped in your pocket, and I did keep them hid from you, my Heaven Eyes. I did think that this would keep you happy in your heart." (Almond 2000, 170)

Shielding information from the child is then seen as preserving the innocence of the child by the adult caretaker. It should be pointed out that this is not necessarily objectively so, but only reflects what Grampa believes.

### 4.4.4   Difference as Marginalising

Difference as a trait does not stand on its own in a vacuum: being different always entails the idea of a norm existing. Norms can also be thought of as ideas being born and held up in the centre, from where the ideas would be imposed into margins. Here I want to discuss difference specifically as something that is used to push a group of people into the margins, or, in this case, the way the child characters are presented in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. As discussed in chapter 3 the construction of a child in the modern West holds the idea of the child as different from adults, who are constructed – or maybe one should say, who have constructed themselves – to be the norm. It would then follow that the depicted difference of the child characters in *Heaven Eyes* and *Skellig* could be interpreted as separating the children from the adults, pushing them into the margins and setting them up in the frames of childhood construction that adults have created. I do not intend to suggest that this is the way the texts should be interpreted, nor that it is the only way to look at how the child characters are presented as. Indeed, I intend to discuss an opposite view to this in the following subchapter and

explain how magical realism can subvert the constructs that can otherwise be seen as marginalising the child characters in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. However, in order to do this I first need to discuss how the ways the children are depicted as different from adults through their ways of knowing and seeing the world can be and have been seen as marginalising the children and as setting them in social constructs created by adults.

The way the children are depicted as having a magical outlook on the world can be looked at in the light of how this trait has been viewed as by our culture, and more specifically by adults. As discussed in chapter 3, children's perceived magical outlook on the world is just that: perceived as such and not necessarily an objective fact. This idea of the child's natural magical perspective has been generated by adults. Specifically, this trait is a way for adults to create division between them and children. By constructing the child as someone whose world view does not follow the same logic and scientific reasoning as grown-ups' the adult marginalises the child as irrational and to not to be fully trusted. Since a division exists between children and adults in regards of their ability and willingness to experience magical phenomena in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* the texts could be interpreted as drawing from and participating in creating this division as well. This would mean that the texts present the children exclusively as the ex-centric. As examined before, the ability to experience magical phenomena is only reserved to children and childlike adults in the texts. This not only creates a division between the children and adults but also has the potential to construct a hierarchy between the different ways of seeing the world presented in the texts. As the way the child characters are depicted follow traditionally constructed patterns it could easily follow that the hierarchy of the world views would follow the same marginalising pattern. I will discuss this more in the following sub-chapter in the light of magical realism.

I argue that the innocence the children gain in *Heaven Eyes* is essentially of the same nature as the innocence linked specifically with childhood, which I discussed in chapter 3. The idea that a child possesses a kind of a purity that is lost during the aging process of adolescence in

present in the text. In *Heaven Eyes* this process of losing the innocence is reversed as bitter and jaded children turn into childlike in regards of their beliefs that magical things can be seen all around us. It is not specifically the ability to see and believe in magical things that is a marginalising trait, but rather how this ability is connected with the division of adults and children. This division is what marks the trait as a difference and it is also what I see as marking the trait of childhood innocence as negative. The reasons it can be interpreted as negative are the same that I discussed in 3.3 and above in the context of the magical world view: that childhood innocence is not an inherent trait but a cultural construction. More specifically, this cultural construction is built in the centre to describe the margin, and that this building happens without the input or the consent of the margin. That the way of being different has the division of the norm and the special where the division between the centre and the margin can be found is why the trait could be interpreted as negative: because the lines of the divisions align they easily can mark the different trait as marginalising the group on which the trait is being mirrored on.

### 4.4.5   Different Ways of Knowing in Context of Magical Realism

It does, in the light of what I have discussed in the subchapters above, look like both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* present children in a way that follows the constructs which have been built around the child and childhood in our society. These constructions are childhood innocence and the children's magical way of seeing the world. As mentioned before, these two characteristics are strongly based on knowledge and what and how children can or should know. This could also mean that these depictions have a marginalising effect on the child characters. However, I want to argue that this is not automatically so. The reason for this – magical realism and its ways to question producing knowledge – will be discussed next.

Taking into account the context the different elements of the text create is necessary. This is why I do not believe that the depicted traits of the children should be looked at on their own,

nor should the texts be declared as outright marginalising the child. What needs to be taken into account is the mode of magical realism and its transgressive nature present in the text. In the following I want to discuss the ways the children are depicted as innocent and as possessing the ability to experience and recognise magical phenomena in the context of magical realism. I will discuss how magical realism subverts the marginalising effect of the traits discussed in the earlier chapters and how this subverting is in line of the tradition of magical realism. The core issue of this subchapter is the meeting point of, on the one hand, the potentially marginalising constructions of the child in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*, and on the other hand, the way magical realism subverts categories and assumed truths. This characteristic will be explored here in more detail and with concrete examples from *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*.

First we have to consider the presence of magical realism and the channel through which the mode is presented in the texts. As discussed before, it is mostly the child characters that can see the magical elements in the ordinary. This means that the way the magical elements come up in the texts is through the child's point of view. The magical realism in these texts is therefore strongly connected to, even almost fully dependent of, the children and their magical world views. Most of the adult characters in the texts lack either the ability or the will to see magical phenomena in the ordinary, leaving the existence of magical realism in the texts to be hanging from the way the children look at the world. Magical realism takes a trait that has been used to build the construct of the child and uses it to subvert the lines of what is ordinary and what is magical. A quality that can easily be viewed as turning the child into the ex-centric is therefore turned into the driving force of magical realism in the texts in question. The children and their outlook on the world function as the bridge between the ordinary and the magical in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*.

The importance of the child's point of view should be emphasised especially as the narrator in both texts is a child focalizer. Chanady writes that "[s]ince the perception of the code of the supernatural is determined by the focalizer and communicated to us by the narrator, it is

important to analyse the identity of the focalizer, and the narrative voice." (Chanady 1985, 56) This means that the magical elements are presented to the reader as the child in question sees them. The only filters that might either stop the magical elements from being presented as such or lead to the dismissal of those elements are the child narrators' own dismissal of the magical happenings. As discussed in 4.2.4 and 4.4.1, even if the narrators of both texts struggle with their beliefs at first, they end up believing their experiences are real during the courses of the stories.

Here it is important to remember that the magical in a magical realist text is what functions as a Lyotardian little narrative for questioning the metanarrative that the ordinary scientific world-view presents. As the children and the child narrators are the ones in both texts whose points of view function as the channel for the magical elements, this means that the magical world-view of the children is also, in the words of Lyotard, a little narrative. In *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* it is the children that are the ex-centric; thus their world-view can function as questioning the world views held in the centre. In contrast, it is the rational and scientific adult whose world-view is what Lyotard calls the metanarrative. I therefore argue that the child's magical point of view is the characteristic which most drives the subverting of the marginalising traits in the child characters in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*.

I argue that magical realism's way of questioning ways to produce knowledge is important in texts like *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* where a division between children and adults can be seen as possibly marginalising. This is because the constructed oppositional pair of the child and the adult is largely based on knowledge and who has the right kind of knowledge. As discussed in more detail earlier, the construction of the child leans heavily on the idea that the child is unknowledgeable and illogical, which is caused by children seeing the world in a magical way. This construction serves as marginalising the child from the adult who represents the knowledgeable centre. The way magical realism brings the rational and the magical outlooks on the world on the same level in these texts questions the adult's superiority over the child in terms of who has the

right kind of knowledge. As the borders between the ordinary and the magical are blurred and ideas of what can be real and what can only be regarded as dreams, hallucinations, myths or imaginations are brought under scrutiny, so are the ideas of what constitutes a reliable source of knowledge questioned. The texts undermine the idea that the imagination of the child or the magic they see in the ordinary cannot produce factual knowledge of the world. At the same time the scientific or logical views of the world that adults prefer are criticised as not being able to produce facts and knowledge about the world surrounding us. This is even admitted by a doctor Michael speaks to in order to find out how Skellig was able to recover from arthritis in such a miraculous way:

> "Can love help a person to get better?" I asked.
> …
> "Love," said the doctor. "Hmm. What can we doctors know about love, eh?" (Almond 2008, 161)

From this I come to the conclusion that the way magical realism combines the magical with the ordinary is especially beneficial when the text involves child characters as protagonists. When discussing the child as a potential ex-centric in a magical realist text the child's ability to see magical in the ordinary functions as an intersection for both the marginalising and the subverting traits that become mixed in the text.

In *Heaven Eyes* childhood innocence becomes another potentially marginalising trait which ends up being subverted by magical realism. Consequently, this too is connected with knowledge. This time the focus is not on knowledge production but gaining knowledge and how its connection with childhood innocence is turned upside down. Childhood innocence, as discussed before, is connected with the lack of knowledge about the world. Innocence, or ignorance, is seen as a state of blissful ignorance in children and to gain knowledge about the world means the corruption of that innocence. In *Heaven Eyes* this process is turned around. In the light of the magical outlook on world being brought on the same level as the rational one it can be argued that as the children learn to see magical things in the ordinary they also gain knowledge about the world. The magical

outlook on the world is therefore a way to either have or produce knowledge. This knowledge is, however, connected with the children gaining a sense of innocence, which I analysed earlier. This subverts the construction of childhood innocence as an ignorant state.

It should be emphasised that magical realism does not question whether the constructions of the child and the adult themselves are true or objective facts. Rather, the mode uses these constructions to subvert the hierarchical setting of world-views they create. At the same time as the mode transgresses the opposition of those world-views by questioning ways to produce knowledge it also uses those oppositions to question what can be considered as correct ways to produce knowledge. As Theo D'haen has written, "[m]agic realism thus reveals itself as a ruse to invade and take over dominant discourse(s)." (in Zamora and Faris 2005, 195)

In this section I have discussed the ways the child characters are presented as innocent and capable of seeing and believing in magical things in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. I also examined how the children were presented as different from most adult characters through the ability of seeing magical phenomena. I discussed why these characteristics could be interpreted as marginalising the child characters. However, I ended up concluding that magical realism's subverting characteristic turns this marginalising effect around. The children's capability to see and believe in magical phenomena is the driving force of magical realism in these two texts. This means that a marginalising construction of the child is used to subvert the lines of the ordinary and the magical. Ways of knowing and producing knowledge are in the core of this issue. Through this I examined magical realism's transgressive characteristic and how it relates to knowledge.

# 5   Conclusion

I have now discussed magical realism in length, both through theory and analysis. I proved that elements of magical realism are present in both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. Through this I also proved that magical realism can question and subvert categories, especially through questioning knowledge

and producing knowledge. I have discussed magical realism focusing on the way the mode can question and subvert categories, particularly those that tend to pair into the opposition of the margin and the centre. This transgressive nature was discussed by focusing on how the mode blends together the ordinary world and magical elements. How this blending can, in fact, question what are or can be good ways to produce knowledge and whose world-view is a valid way to produce knowledge became the recurring motif of this thesis.

The theory that I based this thesis on was mainly the theoretical discussion on magical realism and how it subverts categories. This has been discussed extensively by theorists such as Anne Hegerfeldt, Wendy Faris and Maggie Ann Bowers. I used the observations made by these and other theorists to discuss the different ways in which magical realism blends together the ordinary and the magical in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* – for example, dreams, myths and beliefs being mixed into scientific discoveries and being awake. These ways of blending the ordinary and the magical bring to question the superiority of science and instead suggest that belief in magical phenomena can be just as important. I also leaned on the theoretic discussion that magical realism's way of blending together the ordinary and the magical does not only subverts these categories, where the ordinary is the centre and the magical is a margin, but takes the subverting further: other categories that can be culturally looked at as margins and centres, such as Western and postcolonial, or man and woman, are also questioned. I took my own spin on these discoveries by using Jean-François Lyotard's theory about knowledge and the artificial hierarchy of scientific knowledge being placed above knowledge that is regarded as inferior to it. I also used Lyotard's theory about narratives and how they are actually different ways of knowing and also how metanarratives, such as scientific knowledge, dominate little narratives, such as the child's magical way of thinking. I justified the usage of Lyotard's theory with the observations made by for example Theo D'haen that magical realism is a very postmodernist mode by its nature. Why I chose Lyotard's knowledge-centred theory specifically, and not some other postmodernist theorist, was because of Hegerfeldt's writings

about how magical realism manifests its subversive nature by questioning what are right ways of knowing and producing knowledge. I believe that knowledge is a vital, even if not fully the most important, aspect of magical realism. So I set to examine the subversive nature and methods of magical realism by using knowledge as the link that I saw as connecting together magical realism and the transgressiveness of postmodernism. The goal of using Hegerfeldt's theory about magical realism and knowledge was to examine the subversive characteristic of the mode on a closer level than just how the categories of the ordinary as the centre and the magical as the marginal become questioned in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*.

Knowledge was also the theme that led to the theory of the constructions about children and how adults see them being picked for building the theory of this thesis. Two important constructions about the child – childhood innocence and the child's magical way of thinking and looking at the world – are both based strongly on what is good knowledge. Both childhood innocence and the child's magical world-view hold the idea that the child's way of knowing is incomplete. And even though this incompleteness is romanticised it nonetheless turns the child into someone who cannot be fully trusted. The child's perceived wrong way of knowing is then what turns the child into a marginalised ex-centric in comparison to the right, rational knowledge of the adult. Because the child can be considered being in the margin I decided to discuss how magical realism both uses and affects the constructions of innocence and magical world-view in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*. I saw discussing the child by bringing childhood studies into this thesis as important because of the child protagonists and characters in both novels.

In my analysis of *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* I have examined the subverting and questioning abilities of magical realism in two different ways. Firstly, I examined how blending together the ordinary and the magical can serve a purpose of questioning what are correct ways of knowing and producing knowledge. I found out that blending the magical into the ordinary happens in many different ways. Both texts mix myths and stories with science and factual information. In

*Skellig* dreams become muddled with being awake. Things that could be considered as supernatural are a natural part of both texts, such as Skellig's wings and inexplicable healing, or the dead saint in *Heaven Eyes*. In my analysis I proved that all these different ways of mixing the magical and the ordinary become ways to question what can be considered as good or right knowledge and what are right ways to produce knowledge.

The second intention with analysing the transgressive nature of magical realism in *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* was to examine the usage of the constructions of the child's magical world-view and innocence as a way to create the subversive characteristic of magical realism in the texts. I found out that most of the magical elements in the texts are connected to children and the way they see the world around them. I concluded that without the children's ability to see and believe in magical things the magical elements would not be present in the texts. In *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes*, magical realism is then dependent of the construction of the child's magical way of looking at the world. I also proved that magical realism can exist outside Latin American and postcolonial fiction. As David Almond is a British writer and both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* are situated in Britain I can conclude that magical realist literature can also be found in Western fiction.

I also ended up discussing a characteristic of magical realism that I did not intend to focus on at all when I began writing. The aspect of hesitation about the magical phenomena in magical realism, both on the part of the reader as well as the characters, was discussed both in the theory and the analysis section. I argued against Amaryll Chanady's claims that magical realism does not invoke any hesitation from the reader because of the matter-of-fact way the magical blends together with the realistic parts of the text. I also argued that, unlike several theorists of magical realism – for example Anne Hegerfeldt – claim that the characters of a magical realist text do not hesitate to accept the magical phenomena, uncertainty can arise in the characters when encountering or experiencing such things. This can also affect the narration of the text might if the narrator hesitates to accept the magical phenomena if they contradict their world-views. I argued that the

hesitation of some of the characters can be infused in the narration of the text. I also argued that hesitation over the magical phenomena in the text can be expected from the reader as well as from the narrator and characters without cancelling out the important matter-of-fact way the magical realist text presents the blending of the ordinary and the magical. I proved that what is important for magical realism to be realised is not the lack of hesitation but whether the characters and the narrator end up accepting the magical aspects of their experiences without dismissing them as mere dreams, hallucinations or figments of imagination.

In conclusion, both *Skellig* and *Heaven Eyes* are fiction where the mode of magical realism is present. The transgressive characteristic of the mode can be seen in both texts in the way ways of knowing or producing knowledge are questioned. Constructions about children and their innocence and ability to see and believe in magical phenomena are both present in the texts. However, because of the transgressive nature of magical realism it can be argued that the traits do not end up marginalising the children even though they do create a difference between the child and most of the adult characters. Instead, the children's different, magical way of knowing becomes a valid alternative for scientific knowledge.

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