



# Magic Realism in Music and Literature: The French-Latin American Axis since 1920

*Caroline Rae*

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## **Magic Realism in Music and Literature: The French-Latin American Axis since 1920** Caroline Rae

This is the first book to explore the manifestation of myth, magic and mysticism in music since 1920 against a background of the emergent literary movement that has become known as magic realism. The problematic and much debated term, magic realism, has been used in the context of literary and visual arts criticism, as well as that of contemporary cinema, but its relationship to the field of musical composition has been largely overlooked. Caroline Rae demonstrates how writers and composers shared a fascination for ancient mythologies, legend, ritual, Africanism and diverse non-Western traditions, as well as a predilection for the exploration of dislocated time and memory. Their common aim was to revitalise existing forms of expression and thereby to seek creative and spiritual renewal. Rae examines the diverse and often esoteric exoticisms that abounded in Paris particularly during the inter-war years and considers the extent to which the French capital represented a crucible from which the parallel preoccupations of magic realist writers and their compositional contemporaries emerged. The work of Borges, Asturias, Paz, Carpentier, Garc a M rquez and others is considered in this French context, alongside connections with the composers Var se, Jolivet, Millaud and Villa Lobos. The book also examines those composers such as Messiaen, Berio and Ohana, who had little or no direct contact with magic realist writers but whose music reveals concerns with similar themes. The Spanish-speaking  migr s fed the ever growing French appetite for the exotic and thirst to absorb the eclectic. This French-Latin American axis pivoted on shared paranoia of Western decline and the quest for creative spiritual renewal through visions and fantasies of enchanted places. The existing French idea of the 'for t f rique' can be considered alongside the mystical, tropical forest of the magic realists. Rae therefore elaborates a new and engaging interpretation of the creative preoccupations of leading French and Latin American composers of the twentieth century.

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