

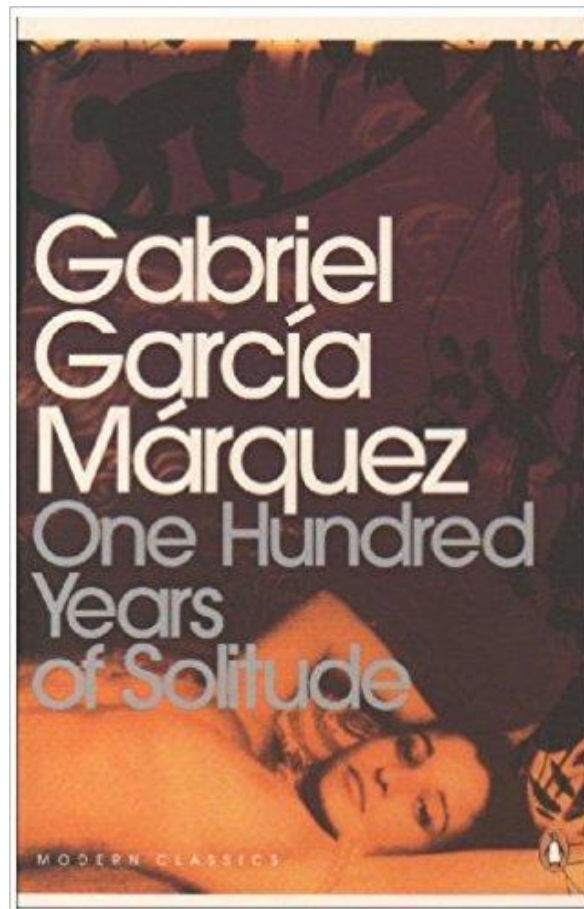
One Hundred Years of Solitude: The Elements of Fantasy

A. Revathi and Dr. A. Selvalakshmi

Abstract

The present paper elucidates the existence of magical elements in the novel of Garcia Marquez. The purpose of the current paper is to look closely at the concept of fantasy elements which combines with the day-to-day details in the lives of people in Macondo. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has been taken for the study to substantiate the above stated concept. It is found that Garcia Marquez presents the reality by incorporating the magical elements and it is used as a weapon to rewrite the history of his homeland.

Key Words: Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Magical Realism, Macondo, hyperbolic events, Surreal.



Introduction

According to Matthew Strecher, magical realism is "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe" (263). For instance, in *The Metamorphosis* Kafka narrates, "One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug... His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumstance, flickered helplessly before his eyes" (1). In this work Kafka blends the magical happenings with the day-to-day life.

Magischer Realismus is a term which was later translated as Magical Realism. In 1925 the term Magical Realism was first used by Franz Roh, in order, to refer the painterly style known as New Objectivity. In literature, magical realism first appeared in 1955 in an essay *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction* which was written by Angel Flores. The combination of magical realism and marvelous realism is witnessed in her work.

Generally, magical realism is associated with the Latin American literature, because many have written works based on magical realism. Some of the authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), Isabel Allende (*The House of the Spirits*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*), Ben Okri (*The Famished Road*), Toni Morrison (*The Bluest Eye*) and Milan Kundera (*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*) used magical realism in their works. Even the writers of the next door who have written works based on magical realism are J. K. Rowling (*Harry Potter*, seven series) and Stephenie Meyer (*Twilight*, four series). These series on magical realism not only hit the state of best-selling but also bagged the box-office hit on the big screen. Maggie Ann Bower says,

In recent years the term 'magical realism' has become the most popularly used one of the three terms, referring to a particular narrative mode. What the narrative mode offers is a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy, expressed in many postcolonial and non-Western works of contemporary fiction by, most famously, writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie. It is this aspect that has made it most pertinent to late twentieth-century literature. (1)

Magical Realism: Characteristics

The works based on magical realism consist of certain elements in common. They are as follows,

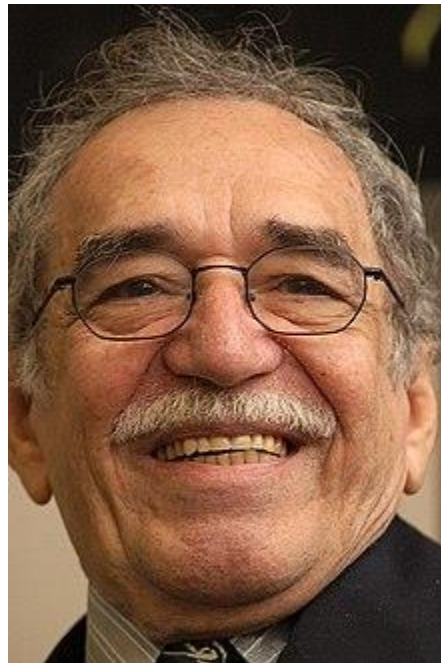
- The novel consists of fantastical elements which are intrinsically plausible.
- The characters in the novel accept the logic of the magical realism rather than questioning it.
- The novels exhibit the richness of sensory details.
- the cause and effect aspects are inverted in the novels. For instance, a character in the novels may suffer before an occurrence of tragedy in his or her life.
- the novels may incorporate folklore.
- sometimes the novels are presented in multiple standpoints.

- Past against present and astral against physical planes are represented in the novel.
- The open-ended conclusion of the novels leave the readers to determine whether the magical realism is the mundane rendering of the truthful plot or in accord with the world as it is.
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Garcia Marquez: An Overview

Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* brought reputation to the term magical realism in the Latin American literature. This highly popular style is used by Garcia Marquez, in order, to reconstruct and rewrite the history of his homeland. Marquez combines day-to-day details with the elements of fantasy. Marquez fetched the folkloristic tradition of his country in this masterpiece, which acts as a powerful weapon to rewrite the history of Colombia. It chronicles the life of the Buendia family. Philip Swanson remarks Garcia Marquez' magical realism as,

... a political question of reinterpretation of reality, utilizing the oral style inherited from his grandmother's fantastic storytelling, Garcia Marquez seems to want, to reproduce a traditional, popular rural perspective- challenging the hegemony of the alien, dominant, imported culture and reinstating the value of the community's own cultural perspective. (12)



Garcia Marquez (1927-2014)

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Garc%C3%ADa_M%C3%A1rquez

Magical Realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Macondo is the fictional town created by Marquez. This town is not polluted by the people from the outside world. Jose Arcadia Buendia seems to be the founder of the town. Marquez says, "At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of

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a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point” (1).

The rise and fall of Macondo and the seven generations of Buendia family are showcased in this novel. Through magical realism Marquez speaks about the war, suffering and death with a political outlook. La Violence, the Thousand Days of War and Banana Massacre are the political disasters which swallowed the lives of many in Colombia. The protagonists in the novel are controlled by the past and the complexity of time. Throughout the novel the characters are visited by ghosts. Here, ghosts act as a symbol of the past. Garcia Marquez demonstrates magical realism with the description of the characters.

In Macondo, the occurrence of surprising events cannot be explained by the dint of rationalism. Even there is a man whose age is two hundred years is also an unbelievable element which is added by the writer in this novel, “Francisco the Man, an ancient vagabond who was almost two hundred years old and who frequently passed through Macondo distributing songs that he composed himself” (50). There are more unbelievable things incorporated in this novel.

Father Nicanor Reyna grows about six inches above the ground after drinking a cup of hot chocolate, “Father Nicanor rose six inches above the level of the ground... raised his hands and the four legs of the chair all landed on the ground at the same time” (82). The blood from Jose Arcadio’s slaughtered body finds its path from his home and back to the kitchen of the Buendia’s house, where his mother is preparing food. The rain of yellow flower pours down in Macondo, when Jose Arcadio Buendia is dead. The beauty of Remedio rises to the heaven along with her lover Fernanda’s expensive sheets. The magical nature of this scene is lessened by the various realistic details. At first Garcia Marquez gives a detailed description about the sheet. The realistic detail about the wind allows the readers to visualize the extraordinary event.

At the beginning of the novel the small fictional town Macondo seems to be infantile and biblical. The people who live in this town never become old and no one meets death. Ursula, the great-great grandmother is alive during the period when there is an attack between Sir Frances Drake and Rohacha. Actually, this attack has a trace in history, which took place during 1568. It is impossible in reality, but there is evidence that Ursula, who lives in Macondo never reached the state of ageing.

When Ursula dies, she takes away the memory of the town. Many unusual things happened in her house after her death, which is also can be brought under the concept of magical realism, “An empty flask that had been forgotten in a cupboard for a long time became so heavy that it could not be moved. A pan of water on the worktable boiled without any fire under it for half an hour until it completely evaporated... One day Amaranta’s basket began to move by itself and made a complete turn about the room” (35).

Technology reached the town through outsiders and the town is ready to accept the incredible as a vital part of life. The flying carpet is a fictional element which is found in the novel. The exaggerated description of the characters and also the events provide the sense of

reality to the readers. While describing Melquiades, Garcia says: “He was a fugitive from all the plagues and catastrophes that had ever lashed mankind. He had survived pellagra in Persia, scurvy in the Malayan archipelago, leprosy in Alexandria, beriberi in Japan, bubonic plague in Madagascar, an earthquake in Sicily, and a disastrous shipwreck in the Strait of Magellan” (6).

Bountiful episodes in the novel present the writer’s manipulation of language and also the narration is focused on fusing the real and fantastic elements. The mysterious death of Jose Arcadio acts as an evidence. When he is in his bedroom after hunting, the pistol sound indicates his death. The incident is narrated by Garcia Marquez as,

A trickle of blood came out under the door, crossed the living room, went out into the street, continued on in a straight line across the uneven terraces, went down steps and climbed over curbs, passed along the Street of the Turks, turned a corner to the right and another to the left, made a right angle at the Buendia house, went in under the closed door, crossed through the parlor, hugging the walls so as not to stain the rugs, went on to the other living room, made a wide curve to avoid the dining-room table, went along the porch with the begonias, and passed without being seen under Amaranta's chair, and went through the pantry and came out in the kitchen, where Ursula was getting ready to crack thirty-six eggs to make bread. (135)

Aureliano son of Jose Arcadio possess magical quality and he seems to be the first human born in the soil of Macondo. Aureliano has premonition when he says that the pot will fall on the ground which is placed in the middle of the table, at once, the pot falls on the ground. Aureliano’s birth is also unbelievable because he is born with his eyes open, He had wept in his mother’s womb and had been born with his eyes open... he moved his head from side to side, taking in the things in the room and examining the faces of the people with a fearless curiosity” (14).

Ursula encounters the ghost of Pruedencio, who is slaughtered by her husband. The spirit of Pruedencio appears often and often in the novel. The appearance of ghost does not create horror to the characters rather the characters have seen the ghost in pity and accepted the reality that the ghost is need of water. Ursula arranges water pots to be placed in many places inside her house because she always encounters ghost near the water pot. Even the room of Melquiades is another incident which consist of fantastic element,

... a familiar light entered that seemed accustomed to lighting the room every day and there was not the slightest trace of dust or cobwebs, with everything swept and clean, better swept and cleaner than on the day of the burial, and the ink had not dried up in the inkwell nor had oxidation diminished the shine of the metals nor had the embers gone out under the water pipe where Jose Arcadio Buendia had vaporized mercury. In spite of the room’s having been shut up for many years, the air seemed fresher than in the rest of the house. (183)

The death of Jose Arcadio seems to be ridiculous, but it is made believable by the writer through the scrupulous stylistic precision. This episode clearly illustrates Garcia Marquez' methods of making the surreal seem to be real. In this novel Garcia Marquez presented his country which is torn by Civil War and also ravaged by imperialism. Through magical realism Garcia Marquez conveyed the reality by incorporating the magical elements.

Conclusion

Magical realism is the only technique which transforms the fabulous things into an existing. By using this narrative device Garcia Marquez blends fantasy and hyperbolic events which are expressed as real throughout *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Garcia Marquez narrated the story in a serious and also in a natural narrative tone. Garcia Marquez showcased surreal as real, which remain as the secret behind the work for acclaiming the state of masterpiece in the literary world of fiction.

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