

Revisiting the Elements of Surrealism and Magical Realism in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 'One Hundred Years of Solitude'

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ABSTRACT: In his One Hundred Years of Solitude Gabriel Garcia Marquez through the arsenal of magic realism, deals with war, suffering, and death in the mid-1960 of Colombia which had witnessed two hundred thousand politically motivated deaths. The purpose behind portraying the politics of the region is to comment on how the nature of Latin American politics is towards absurdity, denial, and never-ending repetitions of tragedy. His magical flair is to merge fantastic with reality by introducing to the reader his Colombia, where myths, portents, and legends exist side by side with technology and modernity. These myths, along with other elements and events in the novel recount a large portion of Colombian history.

KEYWORDS- surrealism, magical, realism, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, solitude

I. INTRODUCTION

Magic realism is a technique which combines the real and the imaginary to create a fantastical, yet believable story. In the novel One Hundred Years of Solitude, author Garcia Marquez uses magic realism as a tool to draw the reader in.

In addition he uses it as a representation of the Columbian culture which strongly influences the culture of the people living in the mystical village of Macondo. More specifically, the magic realism used in this novel serves two main purposes. It introduces the Columbian culture which the story revolves around and also forces us to question the absurdity of our everyday lives.

Columbian culture is made up of many old traditions and superstitions. In 100 Years of Solitude, Marquez ties in both aspects in order to represent the culture of this era. However, his approach to magic realism is somewhat unconventional as he uses exaggeration to create fantasy.

This method gives the culture a mystical aura which is an accurate representation of actual Columbian culture. In the town of Macondo, the people are unfazed by the supernatural as they encounter it in their daily lives. This nonchalant reaction makes it easy for the reader to also accept the bizarre incidents that the people of Macondo call reality.[1]

Incest also plays a large role in this novel and when the main character Ursula expresses her fears about marrying her cousin, Jose Arcadio Buendia, one learns of an old family story that fuels Ursula's fears.

"An aunt of Ursula's, married to an uncle of Jose Arcadio Buendia, had a son who went through life wearing loose, baggy trousers and who bled to death after having lived forty-two years in the purest state of virginity, for he had been born and had grown up with a cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew and with a small tuft of hair on the tip," (Marquez, 20)

This incestuous marriage resulted in Ursula and Jose having a child with a pigtail. This "curse" fills Ursula with fear as she firmly believes that this will be the outcome of her incestuous marriage as well. Consequently, through Ursula's firm belief, Marquez convinces the reader that the possibility of a child being born with a pig's tail is not as ridiculous as it sounds.

In addition, the people of Macondo treat the magical and supernatural as normal. "This time, along with many artifices, they brought a flying carpet. But they did not offer it as a fundamental contribution to the development of transport, rather as an object of recreation. The people at once dug up their last old pieces to take advantage of a quick flight over the houses of the village." (31)

When gypsies present the people of Macondo with the phenomenon of a flying carpet they are amused but not amazed. The fantastical and magical aspect of the flying carpet is lost as the author is more concerned about

how it could be used to develop the village. Thus, Marquez once again allows the reader to skip over the absurdity of this event as it entwined into a realistic, everyday problem.

This also reflects the Columbian culture as in those times they discovered and invented many things for both work and entertainment and everything seemed to have a magical element to them. The flying carpet can be viewed as an exaggeration of these discoveries that the Columbians of this era discovered.

When the priest of the town, Father Nicanor shows the town another magical trick, the people of the town justify the miraculous event through God. “The boy who had helped him with the mass brought him a cup of thick and steaming chocolate, which he stank without pausing to breathe.

Then he wiped his lips with a handkerchief that he drew from his sleeve, extended his arms, and closed his eyes. Thereupon Father Nicanor rose six inches above the level of the ground. It was a convincing measure....No one doubted the divine origin of the demonstration.” (82) The levitation of the priest is another magical occurrence in the novel. In this case, however, Marquez combines magic and religion.[2]

In Latin American culture, many things were explained through religion when humans could find no scientific or logical explanation. Thus, Father Nicanor leads the townspeople to believe that his trick is possible because of the hot chocolate that he drinks before each performance combined with some kind of divine intervention. From a western perspective, the possibility of this trick and the logic behind it seems absurd. However, because the levitation is explained by religion, it is less difficult for the reader to accept as this has become a habit of humanity to explain the unknown through a higher being.

Marquez’s approach to magic realism also includes using many numerical facts. This addition gives imaginary events a more authentic and realistic description. However, in making these fantastical events believable, it provokes one to question the absurdity of our everyday lives, as the situations which Marquez presents us with are the only exaggeration of what we face in our daily lives. At one point in the story, “It rained for four years, eleven months, and two days.

There were periods of drizzle during which everyone put on his full dress and a convalescent look to celebrate the clearing, but people soon grew accustomed to interpret the pauses as a sign of redoubled rain.” (315) The numerical description of the length of time contrasts the actual literal time to reduce the absurdity of this event. Thus, these descriptive details act as a distraction to the reader. In addition, by stating that the people of Macondo gradually grew accustomed to the rain, the reader finds it easier to grow accustomed to this concept as it seems normal to the people of Macondo.

Another example of numerical exaggeration is shown when Marquez describes Colonel Aureliano Buendia’s life is described. “Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad.” (103)

This description of Colonel Aureliano Buendia’s life can be interpreted as an exaggeration of a soldier’s life during times of war. The numerical accuracy of every aspect of his life works in two ways. It creates an unbelievable scenario. However, the numbers also add a sense of reality to it. Thus, Marquez’s use of numbers balances out the fantastical elements of the story in order to make it easier for the reader to digest.

Dates were also exaggerated and twisted in this novel to contribute to the magical aspect of it. “Fernanda carried a delicate calendar with small golden keys on which her spiritual adviser had marked in purple ink the dates of venereal abstinence. Not counting Holy Week, Sundays, holy days of obligation, first Fridays, retreats, sacrifices, and cyclical impediments, her effective year was reduced to forty-two days that were spread out through a web of purple crosses.”(209)

Fernanda’s crazy calendar seems mystical and unbelievable because of the number of restricted days that she has. However, there is a realistic element to it as many people use calendars to keep track of holy days. Her calendar is an exaggeration of the restrictions that we place on ourselves due to “religious holidays” or “holy days”.

Garcia Marquez uses magic realism in his novel as a tool to exaggerate the Columbian culture which has strongly influenced this novel. He amplifies the absurdity of this culture and the superstitions that it

follows. However, he balances these fantastical elements with reality by presenting them in a very “normal” way. [3]

The magical elements become overshadowed by the characters’ reactions to them. They seem oblivious to the unconventional situations that they face in their lives. Marquez also uses magic realism to exaggerate things that we take for granted in our daily lives. He uses numbers to show extremities, however, these numbers also give the story a sense of realism.

Marquez perfects this balance to show that humans today are still oblivious to their ways and the things that surround them. Thus, his technique of exaggeration of realistic elements to obtain a magical story is effective in obtaining a balance that the reader can accept and relate to.

II.DISCUSSION

One Hundred Years Of Solitude (Everyman's Library (Cloth)) is a story based in the mythical town of Macondo, which is a metaphor for Columbia. It follows seven generations of the Buendia family. The story starts off with Jose Arcadio Buendia and his wife Ursula Iguaran, who is also his first cousin. They decide to leave their hometown in search of a new beginning and a new home. It is during this journey that Jose, inspired by a dream, decides to found Macondo by the side of a river they were passing.

Soon, Macondo becomes a city frequented by extraordinary occurrences that affect the members of the Buendia family. They are unable to escape their misfortunes, which are most often self-inflicted. Finally, Macondo is destroyed by a hurricane, typical to the misfortunes that have become a frequent companion to the city and it’s inhabitants.

One Hundred Years Of Solitude (Everyman's Library (Cloth)) is a magical novel that deals with time, reality, incest, and most significantly solitude. This book was published by Everyman’s Library, in 1995, and is available in hardcover.[4]

Key Features:

- The novel was awarded the Chianciano Award, the Prix de Meilleur Livre Etranger, the Romulo Gallegos Prize, and the Books Abroad/Neustadt International Prize for literature.

III.RESULTS

Over the years, magical realism has succeeded to become a popular genre of Latin America and an international mode of postcolonial writings as well. In this perspective, this dissertation attempts to conduct an empirical analysis to examine, on the one hand, the extent to which this genre has been incorporated in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude, and the range of depicting the social and political life in Latin America on the other. In order to conduct such analysis, two hypotheses have been formulated: the first highlights the relationship between the incorporation of Magical Realist elements in One Hundred Years of Solitude and the reinforcement of the literary movement in Latin America and in the Third World; and the second examines the extent to which magical realism in Garcia's novel has succeeded in mirroring the real social and political life in Latin America. In order to investigate the validity of our hypotheses, we selected the corpora subject to this study from the previously mentioned novel, using the techniques of the historical and descriptive-analytical methods. The Findings of the study have revealed that elements of magical realism are strongly present in the entire twenty chapters of the novel through the plot, the characters, the themes and the style, which contributes to the improvement of the literary movement in this area. In addition, we have also found that this genre does really depict the social and political life in Latin America. The inclusion of magical realist elements in this novel has contributed to the development of the literary movements whether in Latin America, or in the Third World

“One must picture everything in the world as an enigma and live in the world as if in a vast museum of strangeness.”

–Giorgio de Chirico, Italian painter“Art makes you face the paradox of life; the creation of art gives you the ability to participate in the irony of being alive.”

–Fernando Lozano, artist

How does Gabriel García Márquez' One Hundred Years of Solitude relate to what we see on the gallery walls of Fernando Lozano's exhibition? Here are some thoughts.

In 1955, literary critic Angel Flores used the term Magic Realism to describe the literary works of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez. As in the visual arts, Flores used the term to describe depictions of fantastical or seemingly supernatural events seamlessly connecting to the ordinary. The real world is the setting, and any unreal elements of a story co-exist naturally as if they have always been part of that real world.

Because unlike a painting a novel unfolds over time, other aspects of writing have become part of the definition of Magic Realism. Often such writing favors a circular rather than linear pattern of time. There is a sense that what is happening has happened before and will happen again. Sometimes different characters seem to experience different timelines simultaneously. The writer in this genre maintains an ironic distance from the magical worldview, so as not to compromise the overall sense of realism. "Unreal" phenomena are synchronized with the narrative, not treated as folk belief or fantasy. An overall even tone of calm description prevails when describing events believable and unbelievable. The goal is to arrive at a more deep and true reality than a conventional approach could accomplish.

When Flores used the term to describe García Márquez' writing, it was a recognition that this genre was a natural fit for the Americas, as indigenous communities there often simply did not draw as fixed a line between the natural and supernatural as did their European counterparts. García Márquez later said, "Surrealism comes from the reality of Latin America." [5]

Drawing mural at Art Space Vincennes, 2015; artist Luisa Cohrs chooses the subject of corn, associating the hair "tucked within" the ear of corn with Stephane Mallarme's phrase "the fragrance of sleeping hair". In both cases, there is reference to memory and the mysterious unfolding of life. offering us another way of understanding our lives.

This statement acknowledges that fantasy has always been a part of the Latin American perspective; Magical Realism is not a colonial idea gifted from Europe. It also asserts that Latin America has a culture, a life and a purpose outside of being a colony. One Hundred Years of Solitude was published in 1967, a time of movement toward Latin American independence during an era of Cold War politics.

Magical realism in Latin America was used by writers like García Márquez to tell the stories of those on the fringes of society, outside of dominant power structures and cultural centers. These are stories of people without wealth, and they become critiques of the oppression practiced by people with political power and influence.

Although the "plotline" of the complex novel One Hundred Years of Solitude defies summarization, B.J. Geetha makes this attempt in an essay for the Rupkatha Journal:

"In One Hundred Years of Solitude Gabriel García Márquez through the arsenal of magic realism, deals with war, suffering, and death in the mid-1960s of Colombia, which had witnessed two hundred thousand politically motivated deaths. The purpose behind portraying the politics of the region is to comment on how the nature of Latin American politics [leans] toward absurdity, denial, and never-ending repetitions of tragedy. García Márquez merges the fantastic with reality by introducing to the reader his Colombia, where myths, portents, and legends exist side by side with technology and modernity. These myths, along with other elements and events in the novel recount a large portion of Colombian history."

How does One Hundred Years of Solitude relate to what we see on the gallery walls of Fernando Lozano's exhibition, From the Dust Bowl to Climate Change? Lozano cites García Márquez as an influence in his work. There appear to be connections to this particular novel both in terms of form and content. García Márquez unfolds a sequence of family stories, describing interactions over 7 generations. The actors and specific events change in rich and wondrous ways, but the pattern remains. The narrative is infused with confluences between the real and the unreal, which often have great visual power. For example:

"A short time later, when the carpenter was taking measurements for the coffin, through the window they saw a light rain of tiny yellow flowers falling. They fell on the town all through the night in a silent storm, and they covered the roofs and blocked the doors and smothered the animals who slept outdoors. So many

flowers fell from the sky that in the morning the streets were carpeted with a compact cushion and they had to clear them away with shovels and rakes so that the funeral procession could pass by.”

In Lozano’s prints, the real and supernatural likewise merge. The images are based on photographs, which are as close as we can get via visual two-dimensional work to how things actually appear. The veracity and detail of the photo sources are retained through all the prints and help convince us that what we are seeing is “real”. But strange things also happen. A large map of the globe floats in the back of each composition, filling the format. Arbitrary color rather than local color is added. Unnatural, saturated reds, oranges, ochres, and yellows dominate what we know would be in actuality drab landscapes.

The balance between the real and the imaginary is such that the imaginary is accepted as real and the real as imaginary. This is reinforced by the surreal character of the photographs themselves. People are involved in an ordinary activity in extraordinary circumstances. Dust masks and goggles don’t belong on the faces of children in a rural landscape. The window of a man’s home should not be covered with locusts. But the camera records these occurrences as having actually happened.

IV.CONCLUSION

In the way that García Márquez repeats the structure of family stories, Lozano uses a repeated format size and compositional structure throughout the series of prints. Each print contains the map in the background, and a landscape setting, overt or implied. The narrative event changes from canvas to canvas, but the series is unified by the design decisions.

Lozano also deals with a circular idea of time, in the way that the first and eleventh images of the series are very similar in composition, as are the second and ninth. These are beginning and ending points that suggest the end is a return to the start. As the title of the show indicates, the impending catastrophe of climate change is a revisiting of the smaller scale catastrophe of the Dust Bowl.[5]

In a 1977 interview with Alan Weinblatt for the New Republic García Márquez stated:

“Reality is not restricted to the price of tomatoes. Life is filled with the miraculous lying dormant at the heart of the quotidian. The key to writing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was the idea of saying incredible things with a completely unperturbed face. The ideal novel should ‘perturb’ not only because of its political and social content but also because of its power of penetrating reality; and better yet, because of its capacity to turn reality upside down so we can see the other side of it.”

In his artist statement for his current show Fernando Lozano comes to this conclusion:

“Day by day, I draw from the injustices, conflicts, and tragedies in life that define the art I’m compelled to explore and produce. Art has recorded all aspects of evolving human history. My goal is to add to this amazing pictorial collection by documenting profound events I’m experiencing in my lifetime.”

Lozano’s show runs from November 1 during the November First Friday Art Walk through December 7, 2019.

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