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A CRITICAL DISCUSSION ON MAGIC REALISM: MINGLE OF REAL WITH UNREAL,  
ACCORDING TO GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ'S *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE*

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ABSTRACT

Magic realism acts as resistance against Western hegemony<sup>1</sup>. In *One Hundred years of Solitude* Gabriel Garcia Marquez rediscovers the history of Latin America in an allegorical way. Magic realism is a narrative technique which acts as an identity of Latin America and on the other hand its hybrid characteristic is a protest against the conventional Western norm. Magical realism, unlike the fantastic or the surreal, presumes that the individual requires a bond with the traditions and the faith of the community, that s/he is historically constructed and connected. Like many Latin American writers, Gabriel Garcia Marquez has been inextricably linked to this style of literature," magical realism." Literature of this type is usually characterized by elements of the fantastic woven into the story with a deadpan sense of presentation. Gabriel Garcia Marquez uses the technique of magical realism in his novels as well as his short stories. Marquez uses magical realism to blend reality and fantasy so that the distinction between the two erases. Magical realism is often considered a subcategory of postcolonial fiction due to its challenge to hegemony and its use of techniques similar to those of other postcolonial texts, such as the distortion of time. Magical realists incorporate some other techniques that have been linked to post-colonialism, with hybridity being a primary feature. Magic realism itself is hybrid. Specifically, magical realism is illustrated in the inharmonious arenas of such opposites as urban and rural, and Western and indigenous. The plots of magical realist works involve issues of borders, mixing, and change. Authors establish these plots to reveal a crucial purpose of magical realism: a more deep and true reality than conventional realist techniques would illustrate. Latin America once had a thriving population of native Aztecs and Incas, but, slowly, as European explorers arrived, the native population had to adjust to the technology and capitalism that the

<sup>1</sup> **Hegemony**) is a concept that has been used to describe the existence of dominance of one social group over another, such that the ruling group -- referred to as a **hegemon** -- acquires some degree of consent from the subordinate, as opposed to dominance purely by force.

outsiders brought with them. Similarly, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Macondo begins as a very simple settlement, and money and technology become common only when people from the outside world begin to arrive. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* tells a story about Colombian history and, even more broadly, about Latin America's struggles with colonialism and with its own emergence into modernity. Garcia Marquez employs an indigenous oral tradition in *One Hundred years of Solitude*. This novel tries to create some sort of identity of Latin America. There is a strong presence of the indigenous oral tradition in the narrative. In the novel he uses magic realism to resist the western hegemony.

Key Words: Magic realism, Western Hegemony. Hybrid, Allegorical

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Magic realism is a literary form in which odd, eerie, and dreamlike tales are related as if the events were commonplace. Magic realism is the opposite of the "once-upon-a-time" style of storytelling in which the author emphasizes the fantastic quality of imaginary events. In the world of magic realism, the narrator speaks of the surreal so naturally it becomes real.

Magic realism can be traced back to Jorge Luis Borges, who wrote during the 1920s, according to noted critic Franco. In fact, Jean Franco notes that "the techniques utilized by Garcia Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are frequently compared to those of Jorge Luis Borges" Franco. However, it was not until the 1940s that Latin American writers began to experiment widely with new techniques and introduced stream of consciousness narration, unusual time sequences and other devices into the novel.

In the 1940s, a group of Latin American writers published works which incorporated new techniques. The writers included Miguel Angel Asturias (Guatemala); Alejo Carpentier (Cuba); Juan Rulfo, Agustin Yanez, Carlos Fuentes, and Jose Revueltas (Mexico); Leopoldo Marechal, Eduardo Mallea, and Ernesto Sabato (Argentina); and Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay). Their work differed greatly from that of their predecessors of the 1920s for there is a wealth of formal experiment, a display of imaginative powers and a command of language hitherto unprecedented in Spanish America. Dos Passos, Faulkner and other modern North American writers were also very important to the development of the technique of stream of consciousness<sup>2</sup>.

The following elements are found in many magical realist novels and films, but not all are found in all of them and many are found in novels or films that could fall under other genres.

- Contains fantastical elements
- The fantastic elements may be intuitively "logical" but are never explained
- Characters accept rather than question the logic of the magical element
- Exhibits a richness of sensory details
- Uses symbols and imagery extensively. Often phallic imagery is used without the reader/viewer consciously noticing it.
- Emotions and the sexuality of the human as a social construct are often developed upon in great detail
- Distorts time so that it is cyclical or so that it appears absent. Another technique is to collapse time in order to create a setting in which the present repeats or resembles the past
- Inverts cause and effect, for instance a character may suffer *before* a tragedy occurs
- Incorporates legend or folklore

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<sup>2</sup> In literary criticism, **stream of consciousness** is a literary technique which seeks to portray an individual's point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character's thought processes, either in a loose interior monologue, or in connection to his or her sensory reactions to external occurrences. Stream-of-consciousness writing is strongly associated with the modernist movement. Its introduction in the literary context, transferred from psychology, is attributed to May Sinclair

- Presents events from multiple perspectives, such as those of belief and disbelief or the colonizers and the colonized
- Uses a mirroring of either past and present, astral and physical planes, or of characters
- Ends leaving the reader uncertain, whether to believe in the *magical* interpretation or the

*realist* interpretation of the events in the story

Note that it is common in some fantasy stories to include a frame story, in which the central, fantastic story is explained as a dream. Because the main story works equally well with or without the frame story, and since either way the reader feels no ambiguity about choosing between the *magical* and the *real* interpretation, these are usually *not* included in the category of *magical realism*.

The writer must have ironic distance from the magical world view for the realism not to be compromised. Simultaneously, the writer must strongly respect the magic, or else the magic dissolves into simple folk belief or complete fantasy, split from the real instead of synchronized with it. The term "magic" relates to the fact that the point of view that the text depicts explicitly is not adopted according to the implied world view of the author. The act of distancing oneself from the beliefs held by a certain social group makes it impossible to be thought of as a representative of that society.

Authorial reticence refers to the lack of clear opinions about the accuracy of events and the credibility of the world views expressed by the characters in the text. This technique promotes acceptance in magical realism. In magical realism, the simple act of explaining the supernatural would eradicate its position of equality regarding a person's conventional view of reality. Because it would then be less valid, the supernatural world would be discarded as false testimony.

In magical realism, the supernatural is not displayed as questionable. While the reader realizes that the rational and irrational are opposite and conflicting polarities, they are not disconcerted because the supernatural is integrated within the norms of perception of the narrator and characters in the fictional world.

There is a curious mixture in the novel. On the one hand we can treat this as a wonderfully diverting comic novel, full of the most unexpected and delightful incidents and characters, and thus an extraordinarily uplifting experience. On the other hand, pervading this novel there is a strong sense of irony, a powerful undertone of prevailing sadness and a sense of tragic futility. The following remarks may link these emotional reactions to features of the novel.

One must first observe that here there is an amazingly fecund imagination at work in the characters and incidents of this novel--extraordinary people and intriguing incidents. This novel never loses its capacity to surprise and delight. No matter whom we meet, we quickly learn to expect the unexpected, the colourful, the original--from moments of evocative beauty, like the trail of butterflies, to the satiric, like the priest levitating to chocolate, to erotic scene of bawdy and prodigious sex, like characters whose farts are so strong they kill all the flowers in the house or man who runs through the house balancing beer bottles on his penis. The comic energy here is justly famous. The characters, for the most part, may be two-dimensional, and we may meet some of them only for a couple of pages, but there is throughout a sense of vitality and wonder at the world which makes this story hard to put down.

A good deal of this quality comes from the style, the "magic realism," which strikes at our traditional sense of naturalistic fiction. There is something clearly magical about the world of Macondo; it is a state of mind as much as, or even more than, a real geographical place (we learn very little about its actual physical layout, for example). And once in it, we must be prepared to meet whatever the imagination of the author presents to us.

Note that the term "magic realism" was coined by the German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 to describe "a magic insight into reality". For Roh it was synonymous with the post expressionist painting (1920-1925) because it revealed the mysterious elements hidden in everyday reality. Magic realism expressed man's astonishment before the wonders of the real world.

The intermingling of the fantastic and the factual throughout the novel keeps us always on edge, always in a state of imaginative anticipation, particularly in the story of the Buendia men, whose imaginations

are repeatedly going off in various directions, in schemes which are the constant source of amusement, novelty, and delight.

This quality of the novel is clear to anyone who reads it, so we should not propose to discuss it here. Some readers addicted to psychological naturalism may well find the fantasy interferes with their demands for a more "realistic" engagement with the imagined world of the fiction. As it should be mentioned before the end of this writing, however, I think there is an important connection between the fantasy and the reality in the novel; in other words they are not two separate elements. In fact, a particularly important point of this novel is that in many respects the civilization depicted here too often confronts the reality of life with fantasy, because it experiences life as fantasy rather than as historical fact. But more of that later.

There is a strong sense of underlying irony, a mixture of sadness, anger, and tragic fatality. For this is a story about the failure of the town and the family, which, for all their amazing vitality are finally and irrevocably wiped off the face of the earth. Amid all the delightful fantasy is a great deal of violence, cruelty, and despair--the central ingredient in the "solitude" each of the characters finally becomes immersed in. And this establishes itself as a strong qualification to the comic delight one takes in so much of the novel.

It is important, not to sentimentalize the violence and the despair, as those of us who do not sense these qualities in our own communities are likely to do. In this novel, cruelty, failure, acute despair, and suddenly destructive irrational and inexplicable violence are always present. And however we interpret the story, we need to take those fully into account, and not minimize their impact in order to enjoy the comic inventiveness and the fantasy without any serious ironic qualifications.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Garcia Marquez perfectly integrates unusual incidents into everyday life. As observed by one critic, "The magic realism in Garcia Marquez's novel forms a broad and diverse spectrum ranging from the literally extraordinary though nonetheless possible, to the farthest extremes of the physically fabulous and unlikely". For example, Colonel Aureliano Buendía tries to commit suicide and shoots himself in the chest, but the bullet exits out his back without injuring a single organ. This phenomenon has been known to occur, although it does not happen very often.

Garcia Marquez illustrates the technique of magic realism within the description of his characters. In describing Melquíades, Garcia Marquez says, "He is a fugitive from all plagues and catastrophes that had ever lashed mankind"(6).. This is a very difficult statement to believe, but Garcia Marquez continues:

"He had survived pellagra in Persia, scurvy in the Malaysian 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)

Once again, Garcia Marquez is able to make unbelievable ideas seem possible. Melquíades provides *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with an epicenter for magical reasoning. It is Melquíades who possess the keys of Nostradamus<sup>3</sup> and so possesses the keys of prophesy.

Along with science, Melquíades brings two kinds of technology (technique and apparatus) to Macondo in the form of an alchemist's laboratory. The importance of this laboratory, which he presents as a gift to José Arcadio, is underscored by the observation that it will have a "profound influence on the future of the village." This link to the time of the alchemists, when magic and science were scarcely differentiated from each other, underscore the connection between the two methods of gaining knowledge.

Melquíades is philanthropic--to a certain point--with his knowledge and understanding of nature's secrets, and the paraphernalia he introduces to Macondo pose no threat in themselves. It is that same stuff in the hands of José Arcadio Buendía, however, which becomes a threat and immediately reveals the dangers of his European patrimony, for he cannot resist turning such wonders towards wealth and power. If the Buendía race have arrived in a land laced with the fabulous, its proper usage is by no means a given. But the fabulous is often an outside force that touches human life rather than being touched by it, as we saw in the Biblical flood.

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<sup>3</sup>. **Michel de Nostredame** (December 14, 1503 – July 2, 1566), usually Latinized to **Nostradamus**, was a French apothecary and reputed seer who published collections of prophecies that have since become famous worldwide. He is best known for his book *Les Propheties*, the first edition of which appeared in 1555.

Throughout *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Garcia Marquez exaggerates events to gain fantasy. However, the exaggeration is almost always numerically specific and gives each occurrence a sense of reality. Examples of this are Colonel Buendía's thirty-two defeated uprisings; the rainstorm that lasts four years, eleven months, and two days; and Fernanda's crisscrossed calendar of sex, containing exactly forty-two "available" days. The massacre by the authority, an event in which five thousand workers were killed is an exaggerated description. In an interview, Garcia Marquez stated that he wrote this down to add the magic realist overtone with the novel. Magic realism as a technique of transforming the fantastic into reality is represented by Garcia Marquez. He has the ability to turn the unbelievable into the believable, as demonstrated in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

*One Hundred years of Solitude*, the novel by the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, has enjoyed great international success since its publication in 1967. The judgments which one hears or reads about this work is range from those which see it as an experience in pure entertainment to those which consider it to be an important exposition of how imperialism operates in underdeveloped countries. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a magic realist novel which is concerned with post colonial discourse. Magic realism is an interesting narrative technique in which the super natural or unreal mingles with the real. On the other side post colonial discourse evolves as a reaction and resistance against colonialism. Colonialism erased the history of the indigenous people. Post colonial writers play an important role to rediscover the past history of the colonized country. Macondo is the symbol of Latin America. Garcia Marquez retold the history of the region. One of the most important focuses in *One Hundred years of Solitude* is on historical subversion and violence of representation Post colonialism wants to create the identity of the colonized. This discourse tries to promote the indigenous culture, heritage. Particularly post colonialism particularly tries to focus on the indigenous folklore and oral tradition. Post colonialism is up against the western hegemony. The hybrid narrative technique of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in which the real is mingled with unreal has a post colonial outlook. Latin American literature comes to our mind whenever we discuss about magic realism. It creates a unique identity of Latin American literature.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* contains several ideas of time. First, the story can be read simply as a linear progression of events, both when considering the individual lives or Macondo's history. All the characters eventually die within the course of the novel, after all, and the town is obliterated by the final page. But Garcia Marquez obviously intends for at least two other understandings of time. For one, he reifies the metaphor of history as a circular phenomenon, through the repetition of names and characteristics belonging to the Buendía family. Over six generations all the José Arcadios possess inquisitive and rational dispositions as well as physical strength; the Aurelianos, meanwhile, tend towards insularity and quietude. This repetition of traits reproduces the history of the individual characters and ultimately a history of the town as a succession of the same mistakes ad infinitum due to some endogenous hubris in our nature. Finally, the novel explores the issue of timelessness or eternity even within the framework of mortal existence. A major trope with which it accomplishes this task is the alchemist's laboratory in the Buendía family home, first designed by Melquíades near the start of the story and which remains essentially unchanged throughout its course as a place where the male Buendía characters can indulge their will to solitude, whether through attempts to deconstruct the world with reason as in the case of José Arcadio Buendía, or by the endless creation and destruction of golden fish like his son Colonel Aureliano Buendía, among a number of other means. A sense of inevitability prevails throughout the text, a feeling that regardless of what way one looks at time, its encompassing nature is the one truthful admission. The linear sense of time is concerned with the western norm. But the circular sense of time is different. The repetition of the same name, same incident suggests the circularity of time. It is opposite to the western style of narration. All the themes of rediscovery of history, identity, hybridity, oral tradition, distortion of time have two things are common: (a) promoting the latin American culture and heritage (b) resisting the western hegemony. Finally it can be said that Garcia Marquez uses magic realism as a tool of post colonial discourse.

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#### **Brief Bio of Author**

I am Ariful Insan Emon. I was born in Razbari district in the year of 1984. I come from a small family. I have one brother. My father was a government bank officer. I started my education of Bogura Cantonment Public School. I passed my SSC Examination from Faridpur zilla School in 1999 and I passed HSC from Govt. Yasin College in 2001. After passing HSC I studied at Jahangirnagar University in the Department of English, and I completed my Bachelor's and Master's degree from there.

At the University I was involved in many cultural activities like drama, wall magazine publication, organizing cultural programs. Since then I started to write and direct television drama and many of my dramas have been telecast on various TV channels. Still I am writing TV dramas for various channels.

I started my career as a lecturer in the Department of English, Presidency University, and I decided I will make my living by teaching because I like to teach very much.

Writing is my passion. I like to write many things like poetry, sort story novel, drama. article for newspaper, etc

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