The Theme Of Magic Realism In One Hundred Years Of Solitude By Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The novel One hundred years of solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez uses the theme of magic realism to drive the plot by fabricating extraordinary events and characters. Marquez uses hybridity to deliver historical events with a twist of myth, surrealism and uses the matter-of-fact narrative. Magic realists remind us that ordinary life also has its extraordinary side. There is something clearly magical about the world of Macondo, it is a state of mind as much as, or more than, a geographical place. Marquez's condensation of and the lackadaisical manner in describing events causes the extraordinary to seem less remarkable than it actually is, thereby perfectly blending the real with the magical.

The unastonished tone used throughout the novel causes the reader to question the limits of reality. The beautiful use of language, the imagery, and the peculiar style Marquez used gave the reader the perfect exposition. The incredible way that Marquez takes the complicated history of Colombia – all the way from just after Bolivar liberated the colony from Spanish rule to the middle of the 20th century and conveys it to us through the eyes of one crazily outsized, doomed family and an equally messed up fictional town is a perfect use of fatalism. The significance of the literary terms and stylistic devices dares the reader to think of the novel as an outsized reality and not just their usage to make a good read. The novel is a long story of seven generations of the Buendía family in the town of Macondo. The founding patriarch of Macondo, José Arcadio Buendía, and úrsula Iguarán, who is not only his wife but also his first cousin are the protagonists of the novel.

Magic realism, magical realism or marvelous realism is a genre of narrative fiction and, more broadly, art (literature, painting, film, theatre, etc.) that, while encompassing a range of subtly different concepts, expresses a primarily realistic view of the real world while also adding or revealing magical elements. It is sometimes called fabulism in reference to the conventions of fables, myths, and allegory. Magic realism as a theme has several elements to it and in One hundred years of solitude, Marquez addressed these themes; matter-of-fact narrative, hybridity, Incorporation of myth, the fantastic, the mundane, time, political critique and surrealism. One of these elements is matter-of-fact narrative; in magic realism literature, the most fantastic, crazy things are told in a very matter-of-fact way that extraordinary events are described as if they are the most normal thing in this world. “The boy who had helped him with the mass brought him a cup of thick and steaming chocolate, which he drank 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. He went among the houses for several days repeating the demonstration of levitation by means of chocolate while the acolyte collected so much money in a bag that in less than a month he began the construction of a new church.”(p. 46). The portrayal of Father Nicanor’s depiction is narrated in a very matter-of-fact tone of voice; this raising of the Father’s body from the ground after drinking chocolate is what would be called a miracle but the way in which it is described doesn’t show it’s wonder. Furthermore, One hundred years of solitude draws on so many of the basic narratives of the Bible, and its characters can be seen as allegorical of some major biblical figures. The novel recounts the creation of Macondo and its apocalyptic end, with a ‘cleansing’ flood in between. Also, José Arcadio Buendía’s downfall-

his loss of sanity-as a result of his quest for knowledge. The choice of characters in this novel also reflects on the elements of magic realism and they help in developing the motifs of the novel. He and his wife, Ursula Iguarán, represent the biblical Adam and Eve. About half of the novel's characters speak of the weight of having too many memories while the rest seem to be amnesiacs. Rebeca's overabundance of memory causes her to lock herself in her house after her husband's death, and to live there with the memory of friends rather than the presence of people. For her, the nostalgia of better days gone by prevents her from existing in a changing world. The opposite of her character can be found in Colonel Aureliano Buendia, who has almost no memories at all. He lives in an endlessly repeating present, melting down and then recreating his collection of little goldfishes. Though out the novel, Marquez mentions little Goldfishes. They symbolize numerous concepts depending on the chapter they are brought up in. At first, these fishes represent Aureliano's artistic nature and, by extension, the artistic nature of all the Aurelianos. Each of the seventeen sons of Aureliano is given a little goldfish representing the ways in which Aureliano affected the world. During the civil war, they are used as passkeys when messengers for the Liberals use them to prove their allegiance. n

Incorporation of myth was used to portray the magic realism in One hundred years of solitude. "The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" (p.1) Macondo is a fictional town that starts as a prelapsarian because normal objects such as magnets and ice were not known to man, they were considered as wonders whilst an object like a magnifying glass was said to be Science that eliminates distance and the gypsies, Melquides proclaimed how man will be able to see what was happening anywhere in the world without having to leave his home. The ancient myth was used as an inspiration. Melquides gives the Buendia family tons of pages of untranslatable work. Generations upon generations try to translate it but to no avail until Aureliano(II) finally translates it;" Melquiades had not put events in the order of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant" (p 415). There is a complexity of texts that stands for the mythology of the Buendia family. However, the text is originally untranslatable to them, symbolizing the blindness of those who do not understand the need for mythology and therefore continually repeat their mistakes.

The myths of flood and the return of chaos are seen as the novel ends. The house begins to return to the land, ants devour the backyard and Amaranta Ursula, instead of growing fertile in her pregnancy, decays and dies giving birth to her child; a child with a pig's tail. "Macondo was already a fearful whirlwind of dust and rubble being spun about by the wrath of the biblical hurricane….." (p. 201). Furthermore, mythology in postcolonial culture had an aspect to it about the repetition of names in the generations of a certain family. Marquez went the extra mile by not just repeating the character's names but also the characteristics. There are twenty-two members of the Buendia family named "Aureliano"- owing to the seventeen sons Colonel Aureliano had. There were variations of name Remedios, Jose Arcadio, and each incarnation shares almost the same characteristics of his or her ancestors. "Every member of the family, without realizing it, repeated the same path every day, the same actions, and almost repeated the same words at the same hour" (p.247). Another element is the fantastic, in a magic realist text, anything can happen. Crazy events that do not happen in everyday life are dominant in One hundred years of solitude.

"She had just finished saying it when Fernanda felt a delicate wind of light pull the sheets out of her hands and open them up wide. Amaranta felt a mysterious trembling in the lace on her petticoats and she tried to grasp the sheet so that she would not fall down at the instant in which

Remedios the Beauty began to rise. Ursula, almost blind at the time, was the only person who was sufficiently calm to identify the nature of that determined wind and she left the sheets to the mercy of light as she watched Remedios the Beauty waving goodbye in the midst of the flapping sheets that rose up with her as four o'clock in the afternoon came to an end, and they were lost forever with her in the upper atmosphere where not even the highest-flying birds of memory could reach her." (p.118)

Remedios the Beauty, as she was named because was the most beautiful woman that ever lived in Macondo, floating away into heaven while doing the laundry is one of the extraordinary moments in the novel. Another out of the ordinary happening was the rejuvenation of Melquides from old age to a youthful age. Melquiades had aged rapidly due to contracting multiple and rare diseases in the countries he traveled, for instance, pellagra in Persia, scurvy in the Malayan archipelago, leprosy in Alexandria, beriberi in Japan and bubonic plague in Madagascar but on the gypsies next return Melquiades was now looking like a youngster. "So that everyone went to the tent and by paying one cent he or she saw a youthful Melquides, recovered, unwrinkled, with a new and flashing set of teeth. Those who remembered his gums that had been destroyed by scurvy, his flaccid cheeks, and his withered lips trembled with fear at the final proof of the gypsy's supernatural power." (p.11). Another spectacular occurrence was that of Francisco the Man, a vagabond who was almost two hundred years old while the life expectancy of the current generation was at 90 years maximum, so Marquez was breaking the rules of everyday life by blending in with the extraordinary. Not only did Marquez write about age, but also the weird stuff that people ate. "That was how Arcadio and Amaranta came to speak the Guajiro language before Spanish, and they learned to drink lizard broth and eat spider eggs without Ursula's knowing it, for she was too busy with a promising business in candy animals." (p.25) Also, little Rebecca ate the damp earth of the courtyard and the cake of whitewash that she picked off the walls with her nails. The main point here is that anything can happen, ordinary life has its extraordinary side. Marquez emphasized the real or ordinary side of things by adding the element of the mundane alongside the fantastic. Regular stuff such as cars, trees, family, friends and cleaning the house are put in a crazy world of things we do not come across every day. "In March the gypsies returned. This time they brought a telescope and a magnifying glass the size of a drum, which they exhibited at the latest discovery of the Jews of Amsterdam. They placed a gypsy woman at one end of the village and set up the telescope and saw the gypsy woman an arm's length away." A telescope is a familiar object that does not have any magic to it whatsoever, but it is treated as a magical object. This mundane object is turned magical as the villagers have never seen it before so automatically a normal function of magnifying is seen as an eerie act. In magic 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 in the fictional world. Everyday acts such as grieving for a loved one were given an extra twist- prolonged years; "They were Rebeca and Amaranta. As soon as they had taken off the mourning clothes for their grandmother, which they wore with inflexible rigor for three years, their bright clothes for their bright clothes seemed to have given them a new place in the world." (p.32) Who mourns for someone for three years? Márquez here tries to show that magic realism offers a world of no rules or limits. No one dictates to others about the length or duration of mourning periods. Pathos is used here to evoke the feeling of longing to the reader to have existed in a time like this one when one mourned for the duration that suited them. Time in magic realist literature does not follow the normal pattern; it jumps forward and backward, one is never really sure when these events take place." Many years later as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to

discover ice. At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear prehistoric eggs.” (p.1). The novel starts with sentences like these that leave the reader with questions such as; many years later after what? when was that “distant afternoon” when the colonel discovered ice? Marquez is taking us to the beginning of time, when Macondo was being built, back then when everything was nameless, so what was happening with the firing squads is another question that might arise. It looks like things are happening in the distant past but also in the present, sense of time is completely destabilized. Another scenario is one of the affairs between Meme and Mauricio Babilonia, the details of their love affair are known to us before knowing about how their relationship started, how they met and where they met.” She would not let him speak. She would not even let him come through the door, which a moment later she had to close because the house was filled with yellow butterflies.” (p.140) “Go away ”, she told him. You’ve got no reason to come calling on any decent person.” His name was Mauricio Babilonia. He had been born and raised in Macondo, and he was an apprentice mechanic in the banana company garage. Meme had met him by chance one afternoon when she went with Patricia Brown to get a car to take a drive through the groves. Since the chauffeur was sick they assigned him to take them and Meme was finally able to satisfy her desire to sit next to the driver and see what he did. ” (p.140) Meme’s mother, Fernanda chased Mauricio away upon him calling out to Meme because she thought he was not good enough for her daughter as he was a mechanic, it is only then that Marquez gives us a full account of how their love started, after the incident with Fernanda. Time here further creates that unpredictability and abnormality that comes with magic realism. The effect of time not being linear is to create confusion in the reader to enforce an urge to read further to curb that confusion and fully understand what is entailed in the novel.

I simply cannot write about magic realism without talking about the Latin American Boom. That is the explosion of Latin American literature that took place primarily between the 1960s and 1980s. During this period, a very esteemed group of Latin American writers emerged, including none other than Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Julio Cortazar and Mario Vargas Llosa to mention a few of those who incorporated magic realism in their work.

Magic realism may be full of extraordinary, fantastic stuff, but that does not mean that it has nothing to do with the political reality of the world we live in. In fact, magic realist authors are famous for their political critique. Many magic realists lived in a time when the type of leadership was a dictatorship, where freedom of expression was limited. You could not just up and write an open critique of the dictator and think that you would not get into a boatload of trouble for it. Marquez’s childhood influence was his grandparents, with whom he lived with until the age of eight. Colonel Ricardo Marquez Meija, the grandfather, was a well-known liberal leader of the town in which they lived in. It is the Colonel’s stories of civil wars that made a lasting impression on the young Garcia and it is most likely the source of the theme ‘solitude’ in One hundred years of solitude. The ‘realism’ in magic realism is seen here as Marquez wrote about political events that went down in history. The character Colonel Aureliano Buendia, the banana strike and massacre and the evolution of the town of Macondo are actual political and social realities. The colonel is the most influential and charismatic character in the novel, his political journey begins when he tries to help the Liberal cause after seeing his father-in-law manipulate the local elections in favor of the Conservatives. The journey from being a shy young man, who falls in love, and is married to a girl who has not yet reached puberty to being the Commander-in-chief of the Liberal army is as fascinating as it is unexpected. This goes on to show the mentality of people who wield absolute power and authority. With the death of his and primary obsession, Remedios Moscote, Aureliano proclaims himself Colonel of the liberal army to fight

the violence and injustice of the conservative regime. His father-in-law, whom he spares execution, exclaims; “ This is madness, Aureliano.” But the colonel is war-ready. “Not madness, war. And don’t call me Aureliano anymore. Now I’m Colonel Aureliano Buendia” are his parting words. (p.105) Only after fighting and losing dozens of battles does the pretense of idealism fall apart. The colonel is now a stranger to his own people and has transformed into a symbol or worse, a weapon of power. “Amaranta could not reconcile her image of the brother who has spent his adolescence making little gold fishes with that of the mythical warrior who had placed a distance of ten feet between himself and the rest of humanity”. (p. 175) The intoxication of power is ruthlessly portrayed when General Teofilo Vargas is cut to pieces in order to exterminate the threat to the Colonel’s authority. Marquez writes about the fate of all dictators when he wrote, “His orders where being carried out even before they were given, even before he thought of them, and they always went much beyond in the solitude of his immense power, he did what he would have dared have them do. Lost began to lose direction.” (p. 170-171)

Through the banana company episode, Marquez’s views on imperialism are further outlined. The banana company arrives in Macondo, led by an American, Mr. Brown, and proceeds to rapidly industrialize the town. Macondo becomes a modern township in a flash and schools, hospitals, theatres spring up overnight. People now have jobs and the town appears to be flourishing and doing well. The initial contact with the capitalist system is – as almost always- characterized by awe and wonder: “Dazzled by so many and such marvelous inventions, the people of Macondo did not know where their amazement began.”(p.229) But this honeymoon period is soon replaced by ruthless exploitation and the workers rise up in protest and strike. The army, which is in agreement with the company, steps in and violence is unleashed on the striking workers. Marquez renders the episode in the least possible detail and gives the most vivid description imaginable:

“The people in front had already got down, swept down by the wave of bullets. The survivors, instead of getting down, tried to go back to the small square, and the panic became a dragon’s tail as one component wave ran against another which was moving in the opposite direction, toward the other dragon’s tail in the street across the way, where the machine guns were also firing without cease.” (p.311)

Surrealism, is all about blurring the boundary between dream and reality in order to see reality in a new way. There are times when surreal is so naturally expressed that it becomes real. In one hundred years of solitude, Garcia Marquez perfectly combines extraordinary events with everyday life. The magic realism in this novel transforms the extraordinary into reality through the use of religion, myth and belief systems. A magical event that is an example of an exaggeration of life is the long period of rain that plagued the town. ”It rained for four years, eleven months and two days.” (p.339) The simplicity in this sentence and how nonchalantly it describes the rain indicates the disconnection from life that the town’s people suffer from. This is an impossible event and it does not stress the inhabitants of the town, they would simply rearrange their lives to suit the new climate. They do not fight or question the rain or evacuate as they are too much indulged in their solitude. Even the most impressive demonstrations of magic do not stir the villagers; they have been too separated from the world to even notice what is believable and what is not.

Conclusion

The realism and the magic that One Hundred Years of Solitude includes, seem at first to be opposites, they are, in fact, perfectly reconcilable. Both are necessary in order to convey Márquez's particular conception of the world. The events in the novel that are described include some of the major turning points of the Buendias: births, deaths, marriages and love affairs. The use of particular historical events and characters narratively renders One hundred years of solitude an exemplary work of magic realism. Moreover, the dominant theme of solitude was able to intertwine with the naturalistic fiction that is brought about by magic realism literature. Macondo was founded in the remote jungles of the Colombian rainforest. The solitude of the town is representative of the colonial period in Latin American history, where outposts and colonies were not interconnected. Isolated from the rest of the world, the Buendías grow to be increasingly solitary and selfish. With every family member living only for him or herself, incorporated, as all these egocentricity happens, are miraculous and surreal everyday activities. Ultimately, the novel has a rich imagination achieved by its rhythmic tone, narrative technique, and fascinating character creation, giving it a thematic feel. The novel is a place where beliefs and metaphors become forms of fact and where more ordinary facts become uncertain so an exploration of how and why Márquez uses anthropology as a whole discipline shows the indispensable similarities between real and magic.

References

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