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## Blending of Magical Realism in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: A Critical Study

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**Abstract:** *Magic realism is a Latin American narrative style. It encompasses wide range of intricacies of life. Initially it was used to describe literary works of Latin American authors who applied mythical elements in fictions. The term was used for the first time in regard of the novels of Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), a Cuban novelist. His 'lo real maravilloso' reveals the real history and geography of Latin America. Therefore, that novel appears more fictional now to native readers and appears magical to outsiders. Arguably, magic realism is natural outcome of post colonial writing. It distinctively portrays reality of conquerors and actual world of conquered. It shares certain characteristics of socio-economic set up of Post Colonial time. The term is often associated with Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014). But he claims that he is an anti colonial Latin American. He won Noble Prize for Literature in 1982 for his remarkable contribution to the genre of Magic Realism. His 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' is considered world's most popular novel in any language of last fifty years because of its mysteriously alive characters. Defying logic and rationality, Marquez in this novel maintains a profound world view for human race. He leans to phantasm to create a new world. He juxtaposes reality and superfluous events to create the past. Therefore, Fred d' Aguiar has rightly said in Guardian that if South America and Caribbean didn't exist then it would be possible to create them from this novel. The paper aims at to explore some roots of magic realism directly connected to Marquez's life and history of his place, and tries to understand how the author has weaved the spells in the novel.*

**Key words:** *Imagination, Magical Events, Realism, Marquez's life, Mythology and History*



**Introduction:**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* reduces Latin American Narrative to folk myths and fantasy. It includes different aspects of human life and different kind of forms of art. It encompasses a vast cultural and geographical area. It gives a brief view of a place named Macondo and the people living there. It gives an idea of a pattern of living structure of the people from the beginning of European settlement in America. It covers their history until their dislocation in mid of twentieth century. One can witness seamless narrative technique in Marquez. His story never stop happening. It appears as if time ceases only after the final line. His novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is best known not for 'its scrupulous realism but for its imaginative flights of fantasy, its unreal sorts of actions' (Bell, 2010:131). His characters are commonly identified with the characters depicted in folk myths, classical epic, medieval romance, fairy tale, gothic novel and science fiction. His characters stand face to face in contrast and the 'contrast between different characters, the understanding of economic and political change and the way it may be perceived either historically or mythically' (Martin,2012:28) to anticipate the Latin American literary identity which has been foreshadowed with the aspect of myth.

In the book *Fragrance of Guava*, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza gives a detail history of Marquez's ancestors. Marquez's grandparents lived in Aracataca. The place left a significant influence on Marquez. Plinio in the book mentions that Marquez's grandmother used to talk with the deceased family members of her family. Even Marquez had numerous aunts. They showered attention and care upon him. Even maids were very congenial. They all gave him happy childhood moments. They helped to grow in him a sort of different outlook to look at life. His grandmother used to tell him tales relentlessly. She told fairy tales very convincingly that they appeared real. He used the same technique of telling tales in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

**Area of Research:**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is replete with paragraphs narrated in magic realism. It shows Marquez's ability to entwine fantasy and reality together in view of recreating the past of a place and people living out there. The novel is an evident proof of a writer's conscious use of mythology, history, fairy tales and personal experiences. The paper aims at to explore the mythical and fantastic elements in characters of the novel and peep into how the characters apparently appear real in the said fiction.

**Objective:**

The objective of the paper is to find out the sources of Magic Reality used in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and tries to find out the reason why the novel has become one of the celebrated novels in the genre of postcolonial writing.

**Discussion:**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with an unexpected but vivid recurrence of past experience. At the outset the character Colonel Aurelino Buendia recollects bygone days. The moment he arrived at Mocando, a most cherished place that he always dreamt of, the place



helped him to recollect his past. A band of gypsies brings technological marvels to the place. The place is an isolated village. Jose Arcadio has unbridled imagination. His imagination takes him beyond the world of reality. He extracts gold from the bowels of earth. He has explored every inch of the region. He succeeded to unearth the suit of 'fifteenth century armor' (p.2). The rusted armor had hollow resonance of an enormous 'stone filled gourd' (p.2). Melquiades, the chief of the gypsies, like God, enjoys immortality. He dies from a fever on the beach at Singapore and his body is thrown into the Java Sea, yet he returns to life. He can be seen in the novel interacting with characters of several different generations. It is also Melquiades who brings to Macondo the novelty of ice, making Jose Arcadio Buendia say 'this is the great invention of our time'. He thinks that God's power of creation is replaced by human acts. In general, most of the acts related to 'Melquiades are impregnated with the supernatural power that the Book of Genesis attributes only to God' (Pelayo,2010:107). Ursula too is portrayed as to possess certain kind of power when she claimed that she has power to control over her death like her daughter Amaranta. Besides, she was suffering from irrational fears and superstitions that she might give birth to a deformed child with a pig's tail. Jose Arcadio Buendia spent his time in solitude in many reason. He kept himself in a small room which he built. That was the period in which he acquired the habit of talking to himself. He developed the habit of walking through the house without paying heed to anyone. Even the village in which he was living was a truly 'happy village where no one was over thirty years of age and where no one had died' (p.9). Ursula recalls his great great-grandmother who was frightened with the ring of alarm bell and the firing of cannon. She fell down on a lighted stove and got burnt. She became a useless wife for rest of her life due to burn up. Later on she was obsessed with the feeling that her body released a foul odor. She was frightened of dog's attack through the windows of her room. Hence, she could not sleep. Later on her husband Aragonese sold out all his mercantile properties and house, and went to a foothill of a sea coast. He built a bed room for his wife without any windows so the 'pirates of her dream would have no way to get in' (p.20). Rebecca, an eleven years old orphan girl, arrived one day mysteriously. She was raised by Buendia as one of their own children. Firstly, she had to conquer her self-destructive habits of eating dirt and whitewash. Very soon, she was afflicted with memory loss. Eventually, the entire town became infected with an inability to sleep. The inhabitants of the town began to label everything: table, chair, clock, door, wall bed, pan, cow, goat, pig, hen, cassava, caladium, banana etc so as to help the people to regain their memories. They even put up a signboard that said 'MACONDO' and also put up a proclamation 'GOD EXISTS'. Even Jose Arcadio Buendia decided 'to build the memory machine that he had desired once in order to remember the marvelous inventions of the gypsies' (p.49). The affliction of memory loss continues till the end of the novel. Marquez writes in the novel:

'They always remember that the past was a lie, that memory has no return, that every spring gone by could never be recovered ...In that



Macondo forgotten even by the birds, where the dust and the heat had become so strong that it was difficult to breathe secluded by solitude and love and by the solitude of love in a house where it was almost impossible to sleep because of the noise of the red ants' (p.408-410)

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* tries to shape a fictional world by reflecting back the reality of the author's world. It explains many of bizarre incidents like Ursula's plugging her ears with bees wax (10), Jose Arcadio's feeling of his bones turned foam (26), Rebecca possessed greenish skin(42) and had infected the town with insomnia, Petra kept a pair of patent leather boots which Aureliano Segundo wants to 'wear in his coffin'(210), Aureliano's feeling of removing and decomposing of all traces of man from the moon by the prehistoric plants and steaming puddles and his sensation in regard of 'scorpions and the yellow butterflies'(421) etc. are based on factual events which are deployed in the novel with magical touch. Marquez recalls an electrician who used to come to their house in Aracataca to change the meter. His grandmother was a superstitious woman. On many of the occasions it appeared that whenever the electrician visited their house a swarm of yellow butterflies came after him. Therefore, his grandmother by shooing away the butterflies with a duster remarked that whenever that man came to the house, those yellow butterflies followed him. Marquez had an extended family. He had an endless array of cousins, nephews, grandchildren and other kin and kith. He was influenced by their stories and experiences in his formative age. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* shared many direct and indirect experiences of the author. 'Two sets of memories in particular would stay with him-the adult women and his grandfather, the soldier. Their stories encouraged his curiosity. He started to introspect superfluous events from his childhood. His grandmother 'Tranquilina, who went blind in old age used to tell the all manner of amazing stories with a straight face, and would talk about people without distinguishing them between quick and dead'(Bell,2010:63).

Marquez has drawn an extended picture of Colombia in the novel. The novel is about to get back to past i.e 19<sup>th</sup> century Colombia. Marquez used the reference of arrival of railway, the war of thousand days, the arrival of American Fruit Company, the installation of Cinema House, the rising of automobile industry and the massive killing of plantation workers in 1928 in his novel to give pace to the story. It is true that the novel has described some basic incidents of Colombian History which was full of dearth and death. The story of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* goes with a large terrain of incidents like guerillas attack, initiation of self-defense groups, death of lacks of people, starting of self defense groups, and deputation of police and army force to control civilians in his novel to recreate the past. He writes in his autobiography *Living to Tell the Tale*:

'when my grandmother tried to awaken the family's enthusiasm with the fantasy that the streets were paved with gold there, Mina said: " Money is the devil's dung." For my mother it was the kingdom of all terrors. The earliest one she remembered was the plague of locusts



that devastated the field while she was still very young. "You could hear them pass like a wind of stones" (p.40).

There are many magnificent passages of magic realism in Marquez's autobiography that apparently suggest that how they pave the way to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Marquez recreates the past in the novel with the help of his memories, personal and public experiences. There are several references of civil war and geographical description of the place Macondo, history of Colombia etc in this novel, and he resorts to magic whenever he felt the gap so that the story gets no rupture. Apparently, the references and description used in the novels are taken from the source of the author's personal account. Marquez said: 'Macondo- This world had attracted my attention ever since the first trips I had made with my grandfather' (p.19).

**Result:**

The discussion comes to a conclusion that Gabriel Garcia Marquez grew up listening to his grandmother's stories. His grandmother was a treasure trove of mythology, fables and stories of the place where they lived in for ages together. Her stories helped them to understand human nature and characteristics in colossal aspects. Besides, Marquez was an avid reader of world literature. He developed his idea about magic reality from reading The Bible and other writers like Cervantes, Virginia Woolf, GB Shaw, William Faulkner and Franz Kafka. Even his personal and insightful understanding about his place and people gave him a broad sense of observation. His close affinity with reality helped him to think how to deploy fantasy so that it appears real. He gently yokes reality and magical phenomenon and blend them sophisticatedly that everything appears as true and real for a while.

**Conclusion:**

From the above discussion, we can draw a conclusion that Marquez's magic realism has got substantial source from his own personal experience and life which he celebrated with his grandparents and aunts. As the books like The Bible, Don Quixote, Metamorphosis, Mrs Dalloway had left huge influence upon Marquez, therefore he did not only borrow details from his own life but also borrowed phrases and characters from other writers. All of them helped him to formulate a new idea of telling his story –*One Hundred Years of Solitude* which one can read like a fable either, or can be read to understand how broken memories be repaired with the help of magic realism and how to weave the spell. ♦♦

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