



Magic Realism: Representations in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Shame*

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Abstract— Magic Realism is a literary genre which comprises magical or supernatural elements with the narrative representing the events as something mundane and realistic without inviting the question of improbability and allowing the readers to question reality itself. Ambiguous in its articulation and innovative in its style, magic realism has been employed by several writers across different regions and is considered to be one of the most experimental and popular literary genres. This study explores two texts namely Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and aims to analyze the use of magical realism in these texts. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, magic realism is explored through events within the magical sphere of Macondo. Magic realist elements are explored through the lens of modernization and imperialism with an exploration of the gypsies and the presence of the banana company in the story. In *Shame* the issue of politics and identity is dealt with regards to the use of magic realism. Events circulating around characters such as Sufiya Zinobia, Raza Hyder, Iskandar Harappa etc. help in emphasizing the issues explored. It further attempts to build a connection between the two texts through a close examination of certain resemblances between the texts and also how it differs from one another in terms of the authors' experimentation of magical realism.



Keywords— identity, imperialism, magic realism, modernization, politics

I. INTRODUCTION

With its roots in the domain of art, the term magic realism was first used by Franz Roh, the German art critic who used it to delineate an art form or style of post expressionism. In the domain of literature, magic realism emerged as a characteristic of modernist fiction designated by an Italian novelist Massimo Bontempelli in 1927. Following the “boom period” (Camayd-Freixas, 2014) of magic realism in the 1960s, several authors from different nations, distinctive socio political backgrounds produced literary works bearing their own implementation of the style of magic realism, also leading to varied articulations of the term. Bontempelli's literary journal titled *900* accumulated authors like “James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Rilke, Max Jacob and Blaise Cendrars” (Camayd- Freixas, 2014), and the journal circulated in Italy and France. Oblivious to Roh's contribution, Bontempelli proposed an avant-garde formula of his own which normalized a supernatural setting

by presenting it with acute realistic detail, which is a core necessity of magic realist style. Then came into the frame the Venezuelan essayist Arturo Usler- Pietri, the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, and the Cuban Alejo Carpentier. They were engaged in the journal *Ensayo* by Asturias and *Iman* by Carpentier. Asturias was the first to regard his work as magic realist amongst the writers of Latin America and Carpentier proposed the concept of “*lo real maravilloso americano*” (Zamora and Faris, 2005) (the American marvelous real.) Following this, magic realism “remained primarily a counter cultural and counter hegemonic literary style.” (Camayd- Freixas, 2014)

The next development phase witnessed the attempts of a more distinct articulation of the term magic realism and introduced the figures of Angel Flores and Luis Leal. According to the formalist approach they took, the term is defined as a mixture of the real and the fantastical accompanied with a “tight and logical plot, the

transformation of everyday life into the awesome and unreal, the intemporal fluidity of the narrative, the rejection of sentimentality and lyrical effusions, and the predilection for the new and the surprising.” (Camayd- Freixas, 2014) However, the characteristics mentioned fell under that defining modernist literature and thus lacked the very idea of a precise delineation of the term. With regards to Latin American literature, Flores considers Borges as the one introducing magic realism followed by several others eventually leading to what they defined as “fantastic literature.” (Camayd- Freixas, 2014)

The next development encompassed not only the Latin American but literature of the world around the year 1970 with the publication of *The Fantastic* by Todorov, who defined fantastic as “the tension between the possibility of a rational explanation and the disquieting acceptance of the supernatural- the unsettling prospect that the laws of nature have been violated, thereby compromising the reader’s sense of certainty and understanding of the world.” (Camayd – Freixas, 2014) The 1990s witnessed a fallback of it in Latin American literature and attained global recognition. Todorov’s fantastic conception developed into what Brian McHale calls postmodern fantastic. However, the two distinctive terms of fantastic and magic realism blended with a single literary work and triggered the need for formulations regarding the two which led to the next developmental stage.

Wendy Faris (2005) in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* lists five characteristics of magic realism. These are the presence of an “irreducible element” of magic that cannot be articulated through laws of the universe, the description details bearing a strong presence of the phenomenal world, doubt arising out of a hesitation towards conceiving two distinctive instances, close vicinity of the two realms and the questioning of the ideas of space, time and identity. (Faris, 2005) Considering all aspects of the development it is observed how the more precise the definition of the term, fewer are the texts recognized. A common ground of articulating the term is the basic idea of magic realism as a style or genre transforming the extraordinary into mundane and vice versa.

Magic Realism as a genre of literature became popularized in several other regions of the world with variations taking place in every corner. Isabel Allende, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, Mikhail Bulgakov, Haruki Murakami, etc. are some of the well known authors of magic realism.

II. MAGIC REALISM IN *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE*

With the publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the genre of magic realism reached a new height which placed the Latin American fiction emphasizing upon the magic realist texts under spotlight which spread globally. Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* attempts to compile centuries of Latin American history into a single text, creating the constrained world of Macondo and the stories encircling generations of the Buendia family. The novel interweaves reality and fiction through the implementation of magic realism which transports the readers to an inescapable world revolving around the characters or members of the Buendia family and everything which befalls them in this constrained space. The use of magic realism layered with the effect of the tone of the narrator (seemingly reliable) of the novel leaves the readers in a position not to question the events and Macondo therefore is conceived as a “state of mind” rather than a “geographical place.” (Geetha, 2010) From the very first chapter itself, the arrival of the gypsies introduces the theme of progress or modernization.

‘Every year during the month of March a family of ragged gypsies would set up their tents near the village, and with a great uproar of pipes and kettledrums they would display new inventions. First they bought the magnet. A heavy gypsy with an untamed beard and sparrow hands, who named himself as Melquiades, put on a bold public demonstration of what he himself called the eighth wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia. He went from house to house dragging two metal ingots and everybody was amazed to see pots, pans, tongs, and braziers tumble down from their places and beams creak from the desperation of nails and screws trying to emerge, and even objects that had been lost for a long time appeared from where they had been searched for most and went dragging along in turbulent confusion behind Melquiades’ magical irons.’ (Marquez, 1996)

With new discoveries at their hands, which are represented as bearing magical capabilities mystifies the residents of Macondo, they bring in the concept of the outside world as the source of progress. For instance, the magnet which attracts pots, pans, tongs, braziers and even lost items is depicted as the eighth wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia and also referred to as “Melquiades’ magical irons.” (Marquez, 1996) Every invention or discovery which is introduced by these peculiar group of people are presented as modern, encapsulating, something which enables the citizens to question their own traditional lifestyle and view theirs as progressive and essential to uplift their standard of living. This binds modernity and magic realism as the items brought are

presented as fantastical as well as representative of modernization or advancement. Moreover, it is important to note how these inventions are in reality, not new but are conceived as such by the people of Macondo and thus, the place itself is perceived as alienated or backward from the rest of the world or reality. There's a chronological lag which is presented in the relationship between Macondo and the innovations. Jose Arcadio Buendia's curiosity and gradual obsession over the startling discoveries through Melquiades compelling nature is yet another depiction of the functioning of imperialism. During the particular scene in the novel, with the discovery of the fifteenth century rusted armor and the calcified skeleton invites a vision of progress and also in way, foreshadows the political turmoil associated with violence which later envelopes Macondo. Gabriel Garcia Marquez ties modernity with a connection with the exterior. Firstly, with the coming of gypsies and then through Jose Arcadio Buendia's obsession over finding a route which connects Macondo with the outside regions, an attempt which seems to be fulfilled by Ursula while pursuing an altogether different quest, that is to find her missing son Jose Arcadio who flees with the gypsies. With Ursula's arrival, several traces of modernity are brought in as well. The dealing of the concept of otherness here is in an ironical sense as the new settlers and the old residents are represented as alike which marks a breakaway from cultural solitude.

The scientific discoveries brought up in the novel serves the purpose of mystifying the citizens of Macondo on one hand and leading them towards their exploitation on the other and the first line of the book already suggests the tight link between the two. `

"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." (Marquez, 1996)

Violence and magic realism seems to form a connection in the novel through several instances. One of the significant incidents is that of the mysterious death of Jose Arcadio with the sound of the pistol shot which echoed through the house.

"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 as she gave an arithmetic lesson to

Aureliano Jose, and went through the pantry and came out of the kitchen, where Ursula was getting ready to crack thirty-six eggs to make bread." (Marquez, 1996)

The story of Colonel Aureliano Buendia is one particular angle of perceiving Colombia's political history emphasizing violence. This is depicted through his conflict with the Conservative who facilitates the rise of foreign imperialist to power through the set up of the banana plantation; another event mingling reality and fiction. This is indeed the most direct indication to the theme of imperialism in the novel. Mr. Herbert's examination of the bunch of banana during his stay at the Buendia's, and the extensive description of the particular scene by Marquez transforms the fruit into an object bearing the capability for a potential exchange value. His utilitarian perception accelerates the formation of the banana company in Macondo. The manipulative working of the banana company extracting their needs of the people and bringing the valuation of them as mere objects is a representation of the darker side of modernity. The comparison made by the author of the people with the bananas during the massacre episode is another instance which also highlights this darker side, something being rejected once its value is lost. The massacre also explores the idea of the fabrication and questioning the authenticity of written history; an idea associated with imperialism. One of the magic realist elements attached to this particular theme happens to be the episode of the almost five year rain. Once Macondo fails to appear as a source of economic benefit for them, it is rejected and pushed towards a state of degradation and solitude.

The end of the novel is suggestive of the inevitability of the obsession first portrayed in the character of Jose Arcadio Buendia, a similar trait found in Aureliano towards the end. The key to attaining the knowledge of the present resides in the ancient manuscripts of Melquiades written in Sanskrit. Here, the fate of the Buendia family as predetermined brings forth the fantastical attribute connected to magic realism.

The theme of imperialism is in parallel to the idea of time as cyclical, an idea which Jose Arcadio Buendia seems to neglect in the novel. The negligence towards the suit of armor discovered by him indicates towards the imperialism of the past and which in a way foreshadows the upcoming imperialism. The space of the inside (Macondo) and the outside world justifies the working of imperialism as a way of forming the mindset or perception of the outside as more advanced, a magical world for them. The significant event of the massacre of thousands of civilians in order to subdue a strike and the memory of the particular incident held by only Jose Arcadio Segundo projects the idea of the play with knowledge. Their notion of what is deemed significant to

remember is showed, accompanied with the questioning of the accuracy and reliability of history as known to citizens. Through the events projected, an apocalypse seems like the only possible outcome of imperialism accompanied by scientific progression. The end was already predetermined the very first time the gypsies took their first steps in Macondo along with their discoveries in hand.

III. MAGIC REALISM IN *SHAME*

The story revolves around three families, with circumstances forming a tie between them. Through characters namely Omar Khayyam Shakil, Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, and the significant element of shame in the novel explores the political and social conditions of Pakistan, minus the depiction of the name of the country itself. And with characters such as Sufiya Zinobia, daughter of Raza Hyder and Bilquis Hyder and the three mothers of Omar, Rushdie employs magic realism. The very beginning of the novel indeed seems like a fairytale exploring the magic realism technique from the very start.

The issue of language and identity are important aspects in studying post colonialism, which is also depicted in this novel. The very title 'shame' itself is emphasized by providing an explanation of the words "shame" and "sharam." (Rushdie, 1995) The identity of Pakistan is focused upon as well. Larissa states that the characters of Harappa and Hyder bear resemblances to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia ul Haq. (Gadelha, 2012)

Magic Realism in this novel is experimented through the metamorphosis of Sufiya into a beast, slaughtering people. The use of this technique allows the reader to uncover the reality not exposed apparently in the novel. With the incorporation of beastly qualities in her through great emphasis laid upon the detailed description of her eyes, the character of Sufiya Zinobia becomes the highlight of the novel in relation to its use of magic realism. Neeti Agarwal (2017) explores the relationship between Omar Khayyam and Sufiya to reflect upon the "conflict between Oriental and Occidental culture" and also pointing out the idea of the "imaginative and the supernatural East" taking over the rational West. (Agarwal, 2017) Omar's attempts to control Sufiya leads to a failure on his part and the measures taken to constrain her boundaries and freedom as a way of curing her could be conceived in this light.

The use of hyperbole is another aspect in this experimentation. This is seen in the pregnancy of Omar's mothers, as well as the birth of Naveed's twenty seven children. In this instance, magic realism is used as a tool for social critique in the representation of everyday situation in an extraordinary sense. The reality presented in the novel

through the use of magic realism by Salman Rushdie is done so in a way of fragmentation and this allows the readers to engage in putting together these fragments or pieces of reality offered.

Brought together with the political history of Pakistan, Rushdie uses magic realism to convey a much wider form of the truth he intends to depict. He uses magic realism to project the reality of contemporary Pakistan then as to expose the harsh conditions the citizens succumb to under the tyrannical rule, and most significantly presents the very idea of shame; but does so through his creative experimentation of satire and irony. In the novel, General Raza Hyder who exemplifies President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq takes over the position of power previously occupied by Iskandar Harappa. He ultimately finds himself in a labyrinth, a state which seems to be driven by his own political misfortunes, stern decisions, and responses in dealing with the circumstances which the members of his family faces, turmoil of his wife and his daughter Sufiya with the beast within her.

Sufiya Zinobia's birth emphasizes the world of nightmare which is the world or reality that Rushdie paints in his novel, the girl who is referred to as the "wrong miracle" (Rushdie, 1995) in the story and the introduction of the significance that the theme of shame holds in the story. The supernatural elements are presented through her by Rushdie. As stated by Afzal (2015), the story of Omar and Sufiya could also be interpreted as reimagining the tale of Beauty and the Beast where Sufiya's beauty which is "substituted by shame disfigures into hatred and violence" (Sankar, 2012) and Omar is described as "Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?" (Rushdie, 1995) Salman Rushdie seems to incorporate elements of fairytales into this story through the portrayal or depiction of a fantastical setting and characters who seemed to fall under the category of the damsel in distress, however in this novel, the damsel is Sufiya with a lurking beast within her and whose mental maturity is that of a young girl incapable of comprehending the complexities of the world she is a part of in the novel. She seemed to be lost in a dreamlike state; innocence echoing from her presence while the world she embodies is that of torture, violence and evil. This world that Rushdie presents accepts this kind of hero but fails to accept Sufiya as the heroine. Through her character, readers' see how humiliation, isolation, subjected to incessant hatred leads evokes violence which transforms to "self generating energy." (Sankar, 2012) And it is through this, Rushdie emphasizes upon the complexities within the theme of identity explored in the novel.

Shame and shamelessness are the core aspects of the novel, which conveys the "greed, the shamelessness and

violence of the political leaders in Pakistan.” (Sankar, 2012) The idea of violence igniting more violence is depicted in the novel through several instances such as the birth of Sufiya Zinobia’s on the part of her mother Bilquis, Rani Harappa’s shame which she imprints on the eighteen shawls sewn herself over years and years, and also that of Raza Hyder’s, of the political affairs he engages in, the murders, riots, ploys, bribes of the politics of Pakistan and the misuse of religion as to employ a rule of dictatorship and control through inhuman measures taken upon people. Sufiya Zinobia is the epitome of shame and the birth of the beast within her through overpower of the feeling of shame inside her ultimately leads her to decapitate Omar, her husband. It is the abstract notion of shame which is personified that the novel is centered upon and not upon the character of Sufiya, evident through her few appearances, but what she is representative of indeed. Rushdie’s implementation highlights this point. Even though her character resembles that of folktales and supernatural beings, she is to be perceived as an “embodiment of evil committed by the leadership of nation as well as by her father.” (Sankar, 2012) A reality which is not acknowledged in reality is what Salman Rushdie seeks to present and thus, he adopts this style or genre of magic realism to “present the story of the conflict between the forces of shamelessness and shame.” (Sankar, 2012)

A blend of fact and fiction is done in the novel *Shame*, and Rushdie’s capability and creativity in blending the historical with the fantastical is praiseworthy. Rushdie’s deliberate attempts of interference in the narrative intentionally pointing out the idea of the story not being a realistic one seems to be a crucial factor of examining the reliability of the narrator. Magic realism itself is the blend of magic and realism with equal emphasis on both the parts. The story also clearly presents a seemingly apparent picture of the socio political turmoil of Pakistan parallel to the narrator’s insistence on the idea put forward that,

“The country in this story is not Pakistan, or nor quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same place. My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality.” (Rushdie, 1995)

Rushdie then in the novel also contradicts his own statement with the interference of the narrator hinting on to the very conception of the novel bearing historical references from the political background of the country of Pakistan.

“As to Afghanistan: after returning to London, I met a senior British diplomat at a dinner, a career specialist in ‘my’ part of the world. He said it was quite proper, ‘post-Afghanistan’, for the West to support the dictatorship of President Zia ul-Haq.” (Rushdie, 1995)

This very mixture of historical facts and the fantastical world of “Peccavistan” (Rushdie, 1995) that the narrator emphasizes on the novel present Rushdie’s style of employing magic realism and his attempt at balancing both – the real and the imaginary. This also leads the readers to question the intent of the novel which the author projects in somewhat subtle and somewhat apparent form.

The grotesque depictions of the novel incorporating elements of magic realism seem to build a connection with that of the reality of the contemporary scenario of Pakistan. The climax of the novel is Rushdie’s imagination of the destiny which awaits Raza Hyder and Omar Khayyam and brings the fantastical setting delineated at the very beginning, the abode of the three wives where the two meet their destiny.

IV. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE* AND *SHAME*

Much resemblance is prevalent in the two novels *Shame* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in many aspects enveloping the way magic realism is emphasized. Both the novels carry a tone similar to myths. From the setting that the novels are set to the hyperbolic description of characters like the three wives or Jose Arcadio, there are similarities. Through the analysis of magic realism in the two texts, a comparison between the magic realism in Latin American literature and South Asian or Indian literature could also be brought to examination. *Shame* critiques on the political dictatorship or authoritative governance projected hinting a close link to that of the politics prevailing during the period Rushdie wrote the text. Unlike *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Salman Rushdie’s *Shame* seems to be more transparent in its critique upon political affairs as majority of the novel circles around Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa and the conflict between them within the political domain. The implementation of myth and history in experimenting with the style of magic realism is a resembling feature which exists in both the novels. A slight distinction comes to the forefront on the basis of the reliability of the narrator both the novels, with Rushdie’s representation of a seemingly unreliable one and Marquez’s employment of a possibly reliable one.

The climax of both the novels presents a tragic end. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* paints a devastating picture of an apocalypse erasing the last trace of the Buendia family as well as any remains of the fictional town of Macondo. *Shame*’s ending is more grotesque and in this novel, the abode of the three wives and the space Omar grew up is destroyed along with the gruesome last image of his being decapitated by Sufiya’s ultimate form of the beast; that of

the legendary white panther which is depicted in a metaphorical sense.

Few differences could be observed in the language of both the authors. Forgetting one's history is a significant element experimented through magic realism by Garcia Marquez. The insomnia plague described at the very beginning of the novel and the banana company massacre is reflective of this. Repetition of history is linked to the members of the Buendia family, particularly of the characters bearing the same names. And in *Shame*, the history is imagined and represented with the merging of fact and fiction while also commenting upon the leaders with a fictional fate embracing the two representatives of political leaders of Pakistan. While Rushdie seems to be implementing the techniques of magic realism in order to portray the Third World's consciousness, Garcia Marquez projects a mirror to the Latin American history on a much wider scale. Characters and fantastical scenarios seem to overwhelm the plot of the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Rushdie's *Shame* shows slightly less subsequent depictions of such magic realist elements of the fantasy and imagination and provides a space in the narrative for the thematic inclusions. Thus, the "carnavalesque spirit" (Faris, 2005) characteristic of both the novels shows two different representations. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* presents a more apparent and heightened form of the spirit and *Shame* presents it on a much more balanced note. Extravagant language is evident in the narrative of both the novels by Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie.

Several similarities are to be found in the novels between Rushdie and Garcia Marquez, most probably due to Rushdie's own statement of Garcia Marquez being a heavy influence on him with regards to magic realism. But while the similarities reflect upon the influence, the dissimilarities emphasize upon the authenticity and originality in his works. Fantasy as a literary device is employed in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with much significance attributed to the space in the novel. In both the novels, the two realms of real and the unreal are merged and a co-existence prevails.

V. CONCLUSION

The text *One Hundred Years of Solitude* allows the readers to peep into the politics of Latin America through the events occurring in Macondo which are fantastical yet presented as seemingly real. Thus, the way Marquez captures the blend of the contradictory elements stated above while pushing the readers to question reality makes it a well constructed work of magic realism. In *Shame*, Rushdie also blends history and myth to present this critique so as to devise a world encompassing the magical and the

real. Sufiya's transformation into a beast and the subsequent killings could be also seen as symbolic of the violence within the political administration of Pakistan during that period. Here, she is the victim of the same patriarchal structure that the country represents. As witnessed in the two texts, magic realism helps to lay out commentaries on issues and portray events of the socio-political scenario of a region which is difficult to express directly and is also difficult to present in a direct manner to highlight the impact and the significance that such events carry. Characters indeed are portrayed as extraordinary beings with their depictions bearing an exaggeration while also reflecting that of the oral tradition and folklore. Both the novels' use of magic realism offers a critique in association with their respective contexts. The genre is seen as a reaction to the contextual affairs and the technique and style as a response to the style of realism. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* allows the readers to question the history of theirs through the stories circling each member, proceeding throughout the generations of the Buendia family. From highlighting the impact of colonialism and the utilitarian schemes under the veil of progression or modernity, the aesthetics of the supernatural imbibed in characters such as Babilonia attracting yellow butterflies towards himself, Remedios the Beauty gifted with an extraordinary beauty and who levitates towards heaven in her last moments, Jose Arcadio Buendia who enlarges himself at will and Jose Arcadio's extraordinary physique to incomprehensible calamities enveloping the town of Macondo such as the insomnia plague, the rainfall continuing till almost five years and ultimately the hurricane which sweeps the entire town along with the last trace of the Buendia family line; readers experience the two realms which is brought to close vicinity in Garcia Marquez's technique of magic realism. And, the significant aspects of space and time come up in discussion. Salman Rushdie's brilliance in his experimentation with the technique of historiographic metafiction, dealing with the aspects of space and time offers a work of art echoing attributes defining it as a postmodern novel. With a satiric tone, a thrilling fairy tale like atmosphere, an unreliable narrator, Rushdie employs a mocking commentary upon the issues revolving around a post colonial world. Violence recurs in the novel in the presentation of the theme of identity; of an individual as well as the entire region he paints with his magic realist strokes.

Therefore, through a detailed analysis of the key elements of the two texts *Shame* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the perception of magic realism as an offshoot of post colonialism and bearing characteristics of postmodernism is also established. Moreover, this style or technique of magic realism is seen as a significant tool for

social commentary in a way which blurs the division between two worlds, the real and the fantastical; and it is this way or technique which allows us to perceive the world and the truth underlying it through a different critical angle.

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