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How to Find out and Teach the Magic Realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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Coming to the end of the twentieth century, realism and individualism drifted into ecopolitical and ethnic issues. This period clearly doesn't a new direction in our complicated life. Such conflicts arise when one reads the Gabriel Garcia Marquez's. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In his work, these problems show also the confused and uncertain world, and huge conflicts stemming from the gap between a desire to keep their ethnic identity and social political structure despite of the oppression of their ethnic authenticity. The viewpoint of author is foreshadowed by satirizing their society's ills such as the issues of the true reality blurred by subjective historian, political power, and dominant paradigms caused by high culture. Thus, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, reality raises the reader to reconsider the true reality in the twisted reality caused by the dominant culture and our own fixed perception. In addition, Marquez's work helps us define our own identity and reality amidst multiple divergent cultures.

I.

One hundred Years of Solitude is perhaps the most widely discussed book in literary circles of English speaking countries in Africa, the Caribbean and far Eastern countries such as India, Malaysia, Korea, and Taiwan. One reason is that Gabriel Garcia Marquez supports the idea that other cultures have a unique real value or worth based on their native myths and superstition. Garcia Marquez also

invites the readers of these countries to examine how the reality of their own history, including myths and superstition, evolves in the "meaning-then and meaning-now" (Birch 2). Thus, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, reality raises the reader to reconsider the true reality with the exclusion of dominant paradigms caused by political powers and high cultures : these paradigms really are predefined concepts that exist in unquestionable and unchallengeable circumstance. In the viewpoint of Marquez, it seems that we cannot easily judge which culture is right and which one is wrong. Thus, here is also an important theme of magic realism ; the unfixity with this novel. This theme of unfixity may be well-explained by the fact that the author employs the varied points of view which are dispersed in Colombia from a variety of perspectives. Among these perspectives are political situations, the role of churches and priests, family relationships of indigenous people, and the influx of people of other cultures. From this viewpoint, I would like to argue how the element of reality is reflected in historical, political, cultural, and religious situations in Columbia. Furthermore, I will examine how we consider reality in the realm of myths and supernatural powers.

II.

In addition, there is a sense of magic realism wholeness not to be categorized by critics' viewpoints. For instance, in the interview of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, we find that magic realism is not a relative meaning for the basic realm of realism. Marquez illuminates that there are certain experiences that cannot be explained or defined with our rational minds. In the act of writing, he[Marquez] believes, "a 'supernatural force' takes over, something like a 'state of grace'" (Munoz, 176). Marquez's statement represents the point that the element of realism already mixes with myths or supernatural elements.

To the contrary, I have a question about how we can reach the reality in our daily lives. Obviously, the element of reality is always blurred by many different views and opinions regarding any given situation. For example, in Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the commonsensical, journalistic, totalitarian understanding of the reality is reinterpreted through a number of viewpoints of certain characters. Angel, for instance, was supposed to have been deflowered

by Santiago Nasar and then returned to her parents by her husband, Bayardo San Roman. Her twin brothers killed Nasar to avenge their sister's deflowering. But the reader cannot be certain that Nasar really deflowered Angela since the narrator deconstructs any objective viewpoint in his investigation of the crime by mixing his own fictional retrospection about the crime with personal interviews and official records for his evidence. Accordingly, in the opinions regarding the murder case, the element of reality can be minimized, defrauded, and exaggerated. Thus, we never get to clear-cut reality.

At the same time, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the issue of reality appears in the narrative voice when an everyday object is presented as "fantastical." Such narrative voices invite the reader to examine how some sort of myth, superstition or belief creates an "untypical reality" which converges with everyday reality. Moreover, the author does not seem to reject a possibility of attaining a dialectical order which synthesizes an "untypical reality."

III.

As Foucault points out, history is not fixed in "events", it is an "on going process" (Foucault 68). Foucault's statement presents that history is always imposed by the subjective historians. In a sentence, the reality in history might be blurred by multiple dominant perspectives in a certain era. Simultaneously, the Colombian culture including myths and superstition as being necessary first or second components to the understanding of history produces foregrounded questions that bring in a variety of insights to the complexity of problems and policies interwoven in the tapestry of Colombian realities. Present-day events in Colombia are indeed linked into the past of Colombia. For example, today's issues, such as drug trafficking, political corruption, and seemingly endemic violence in Colombia, are problematic questions of the dark side of Colombia's history.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez raises a question of what life is like for the inhabitant of an isolated Macondo, Colombian coastal river town. Throughout a family generational history in the Macondo, (which might have been existed in Colombia's prehistoric place or not), Marquez, through Macondo, creates a fictional place that existed in Colombia. Moreover, Marquez

makes the reader confused about what can be said to have happen in the actual events that took place in Macondo's history. At this point, Marquez helps the reader to excavate the issue of "an authentic sense" of what is national through Colombian history and the absence of reality in his nation. At the same time, in the process of the reader's investigation, Marquez invites the reader to examine how the reality of Colombia's history evolves in the "meaning-then and meaning-now" through the political chaos arising from biparty hegemony struggles and cultural conflicts between Colombia and United States (Birch 2).

On the other hand, from the historical viewpoint of Marquez, reality is an issue constantly raised by the political events and religious rituals. For reality might be misread by the subjective historians. Nietzsche, in his book entitled *The use and Abuse of History*, supports this idea that modern man's subjective attachment to history can be dangerous (58). Like the reality of history and Nietzsche's view of history, reality is a question of perspectives.

One Hundred Years of Solitude begins with a description of a macondo's prehistoric atmosphere. According to critic Gene H. Bell-Villada, Macondo is located on the mouth of the Magdalena River (19). In macondo, there is, seemingly, magic in everything. Solitude pervades and permeates everything also. The town is described as lying outside civilization and behind mountains that lead to the ancient city of Riohacha. Riohacha is the place that was home to the Buendia ancestors many, many years ago. Thus, Macondo has the lively cosmopolitanism of a port culture due to its steady influx of new people and their ideas from overseas. From the viewpoint of Marquez, Macondo's cultural cosmopolitanism is deeply related to an insomnia's plague. For instance, this insomnia enters Macondo when the mysterious Rebeca arrives in town, we are told then that as a toddler, Aureliano had clairvoyant powers: he predicted that a cooking pot of his mother's would fall—just before it actually did. Now he foresees the arrival of his "step-sister", Rebeca, who will bring the plague to Macondo. After Rebeca arrives is Macondo, an insomnia plague begins. Marquez describes the beginning of insomnia symptoms:

One night about the time that Rebeca was cured of the vice of eating earth and was brought to sleep in other children's room, the Indian woman, who slept with them, awoke by chance and heard a strange, intermittent sound in the corner. . . . and then she[Visitacion]

saw Rebeca in the rocker, sucking her finger and with her eyes lighted up in the darkness like those of a cat. Terrified, exhausted by her fate, Visitacion recognized in those eyes the symptoms of the sickness whose threat had obliged her and her brother to exile themselves forever from an age-old kingdom where they had been prince and princess. It was the insomnia plague. (Marquez 44-45)

The villagers begin to forget the name of things since the beginning of insomnia symptoms and as they begin to suffer acute insomnia, the illness becomes a metaphor of Macondo's cultural chaos. This chaos exemplifies lost innocence and pre-consciousness.

In other developments, by influxing a new foreign banana company and a train, Macondo in turn becomes a symbol of corruption. The railroad opens Macondo to bring modern technology, and increase commerce. By introducing new civilization from foreign countries, the Buendias settle into decline. Their household suffers increasing disruption and alienation from the town. Marquez explains the Buendias' confusing mood due to the advent of the train:

The innocent yellow train that was to bring so many ambiguities and certainties, so many pleasant and unpleasant moments, so many changes, calamities, and feelings of nostalgia to Macondo. (Marquez 228)

With the advent of train, Macondo assumes the hustle and bustle of a boom town. Bruno Crespi, the brother of the dead pianola expert, Pietero Crespi, introduces a cinema into Macondo, and it is met by disbelief. The townspeople cannot understand how an actor dies in one film and reappears again in another. By introducing cinema, the townspeople are confused by their thoughts for the real sense of reality between death and life in the cinema. In this sense, Marquez strongly stresses that the cultural identity of Macondo's people is blurred by foreign cultural elements.

In addition, the railroad opens Macondo to prosperity with the rise of the banana company. At the same time, the field workers are betrayed by their wages and working conditions from the banana company. Dissatisfied workers protest

working conditions and low compensation. The company, at first, responds to the strikers' demands with humiliating concessions, but the response trivializes the protest objectives. Therefore, the workers strongly strike against the banana company. In interpreting this situation of the field workers' strike, the reader finds a new true reality. The government and banana company profits define the field workers' strike as the "Violence". In the conception of the "Violence", it seems to me that the field workers' purposes against the banana company is completely blurred. And, their responsibilities for strikers' deaths are reverted by strikers' violence. But, the word of the "Violence" is completely different from the origin of its meaning. Michael Wood states that "The violence came from guerrillas, gangsters, self-defense groups, the police, and the army" (9). From Wood's view, Marquez's novel reveals that the interpretation of the workers' strike is always blurred by the subjective view and the political power.

One the other hand, Wood indicates that the interpretation of the workers' strike is blurred by the view of historians: "Historians have speculated interestingly on the cause of the "Violence". Economic, political and other motives obviously mingle such as disaffected migrants, protection rackets, corrupt or inconsistent judges, uncertainty of property rights, conversion to cash-crop farming" (10). In this historical approach to the event, this historical way of looking at the event leads to being mislead. For, historians' investigations for the event might be openly misinterpreted with lots of the causes and effects of the event through many, many significant investigators' opinions. Thus, it seems impossible to get to true reality.

In reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the reader really has a big question about Colombian history regarding how many workers, women, and children were dead in that evening. In Marquez's work, the government officers announce no casualties in that evening's accident:

There were no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rain stopped.

(Marquez 315)

To the contrary, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Jose Arcadio Segundo insists on three thousand massacred by the gunshots of the government's army:

“There Must have been three thousand of them, he murmured” (Marquez 313). He also describes the scene of terrible massacre in the train:

Jose Arcadio Segundo dragged himself from one car to another in the direction in which the train was heading, and in the flashes of light that broke through the wooden slats as they went through sleeping towns he saw the man corpses, woman corpses, child corpses who would be thrown into the sea like rejected banana. 312)

From the different views of both the government’s report and Jose Arcadio segundo’s insistence, the reader is curious to know what really happened in Colombian historical events. Gene H. Bell-Villada, in his book entitled *Garcia Marquez: the Man and His Work*, states the real story based on actual events and specific details of the 1900-1928 period in Colombian history:

Concerning casualties for the entire strike, General Cortes Vargas would a figure of 40 dead and 100 wounded. By contrast a prominent union leader, Alberto Castrillon, would calculate the dead at Cienaga alone at 400; for the larger strike he estimated a total of 1,500 dead and 3,000 wounded—Garcia Marquez thus took for his climactic scene the highest of all reported casualty figures. (Bell-Villada 105)

Throughout Bell-Villada’s statement and Marquez’ exaggeration of casualty figures, the reader recognizes that a great deal of Colombian real history gets stealthily into Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

The arguments over reform in the nineteenth century, the arrival of the railway, the war of Thousand Days, the American fruit company, the cinema, the automobile, the massacre of striking plantation workers which took place in the year of Garcia Marquez’s birth. (quoted in Michael Wood 9)

Simultaneously, in both Colombian history and Marquez’s novel, the reader has a question of **true** reality in the banana firm strike by field workers. Furthermore,

throughout both history and Garcia Marquez's novel, the reader faces the new views toward the field workers' strike against the banana company: the field workers' basic demands such as decent health facilities, hygienic dwelling place, one day off in seven, and payment in cash rather than paper scrip (valid only in the company's stores) were rejected by the United Fruit Company (quoted Gene H Bell-Villada 104). Moreover, the reader has a question about what really happens in that reality is always minimized by the government and the company's supporters for their profits. Marquez also insists that the reader seek to rebuild his work's "true reality" in the twisted reality caused by political power. Furthermore, in the enlarged view of Marquez's whole world, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* discusses not only the social and political reality of the author's country but also the entire reality of this global world.

IV.

Finally, the quest of "reality" for Marquez certainly consists of historical and political events yet of such things as religious rituals and popular myths and superstition. In retrospect of colombian church history, the catholic church holds a special place in colombian history. The clergy plays a key role in helping to capture the new lands and establish the society. But, since the clergy continuously hold great power in their church and society, churchmen are changed into hypocritical moralists. They also are timid, apologetic, and ineffectual in the face of the government's terror, preoccupied far more with the moral quality of the movies (being seen by their parishioners) than with the blood being shed in local political feuds.

In One Hundred Years Of Solitude, Marquez searches for the issue of reality in the function of the Catholic church and priests. In the process of Marquez's search for the Father's miraculous performances, he indicates that the priest disguises his face as either hypocrisy or greed for money. Simultaneously, Marquez reveals that miracles might be disguised by another reality beyond human beings' consciousness. For instance, the levitation and miracles of Father Nicanor are performed chiefly to gather money for a church building. Marquez attacks the Father's hypocritical miracles:

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 the church. (Marquez 85)

In regard of the Father's hypocritical miracles, Marquez presents a more complex issues of Biblical miracle and supernatural power. The realm of **true** reality is blurred by other world's reality beyond human beings' unrecognized abilities. Here, the most obvious point is that the blur of reality is caused by the Father's hypocrisy or greed for money. Instead, Marquez does not deny that the Father's miracles exist in both Biblical miracle and supernatural power. In the interview of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ilan Stavans supports in this regard:

Garcia Marquez, it should be made clear, does not attack God or human spirituality: his target is the clerical hierarchy. In his universe the Almighty is alive and well, although one senses that the Creator is imagined as a reflection of his creator. (157)

Throughout the Father Nicanor's hypocritical miracles, Marquez indicates that the reality of the Father's miracles is disguised by Father's inside greed. On the other hand, Marquez stresses that Biblical miracles actually exist in God or Supernatural power beyond the Father's disguised miracles. The most obvious moment is the concluding paragraph in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where Macondo is blown away by what is actually presented elsewhere as a "biblical hurricane" (Marquez 422). Accordingly, Marquez believes that Biblical miracles and supernatural power always exist in Almighty God's power beyond human beings' understandings and thoughts

V.

In closing, I think that this work states some purpose and thought of the issues of the **true** reality arising from a variety of perspectives. This paper shows that

the issues of the **true** reality are always blurred by subjective historian, political power, and dominant paradigms caused by high cultures. Thus, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Marquez seems to conclude that magic realism novels seek to rebuild the true identity in the twisted reality caused by the dominant culture and our own fixed perception.

In addition, I think that Marquez's work helps us define our own identity and reality amidst multiple divergent cultures. I believe that past of truth is in each voice while the whole truth is in the framework of conflict among all of them. Marquez introduces the marginalized myths and superstition to the whole framework of cultures. Simultaneously, he rescues "other" cultural inferiority caused by the dominant Euro-centric cultures.

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