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THE ENCHANTMENT: A READING OF GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE* AND SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* FROM A VIEW OF COLONIAL VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Exploring these two magnum opus texts by Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie, one can question its very constituent elements and their immense success of enchanting the reader 'sand intriguing them time and again. Though the authors used a plethora of themed and techniques to conjure this intricate works, the most telling one among all of them are the theme of magic realism. Seen as a postmodernist method magic realism is used by many authors to engage their audience in a journey to understand the supernatural of the supernatural. Apart from blurring the difference between the real and the fantastical, magic realism not only gives the reader a respite of the ravaged phenomenal world but also makes them understand the difference between the magical land of our imagination and the real world. The extraordinary power of magic realism to portray the mundane nature of the life and environment in a mystical way is enough to prove to the readers of its remarkable facility. The description provided by both Rushdie and García Márquez in their novels regarding this mystical way of world not shows that sometimes magic is needed to grasp the real. Living in a time both of them has witnessed their country going through tough times and suffering at the hands of outside forces which caused a chaos not only in their culture but also in their lives and mentality. This paper aims to address those problems faced by those countrymen under the exploitation and violence concocted by colonial powers and how it shaped their identity, society, psychology creating hybridity and alienating them from their own culture by creating a sense of displacement which they voiced through the intellectual platforms used by their respective authors.

**Keywords:** Magic Realism, Displacement, Exploitation, Hybridity, Violence

1. INTRODUCTION

Magic Realism or magical realism was a term first concocted in 1925 at the hands of Russian art critic Franz Roh who used this "magischer

Realismus" to refer to a painterly style known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* ("new objectivity") to counter the form of "expressionism" championed by German museum director Gustav Hartlaub. According to Roh, magic realism's accurate details and

photographic clarity mellifluously portrayed the 'magical' nature of the real world and the "uncanniness" of people and modern technologies. It makes the mundane things in the phenomenal world seem fantastical and blurs the line between real and unreal which not only gives the readers a respite from real world but also makes them understand the supernatural of the supernatural. Being compared to surrealism it can be pointed out while magic realism focuses on the actual material existence of things, surrealism deals with more abstract and psychological reality. European magic realism was first observed in the writings of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic writers Nikolai Gogol and E.T.A Hoffman in their short stories and created a trend of "a European magic realism where the realms of fantasy are continuously encroaching and populating the realms of real". In the comments of Anatoly Lunacharsky:

"Unlike other romantics, Hoffmann was a satirist. He saw the reality surrounding him with unusual keenness, and in this sense he was one of the first and sharpest realists. The smallest details of everyday life, funny features in the people around him with extraordinary honesty were noticed by him. In this sense, his works are a whole mountain of delightfully sketched caricatures of reality."

If seen from this point of view, it can be said that magic realism as a satirical form works to a great extent because apart from giving the readers a momentary lapse from reality it also enlightens the fact that the world is not seemingly beautiful as it has been portrayed. Its agency to show reality through the means of surreal is what sets it apart from other forms. In this paper while re-reading two famous novels by Salman Rushdie and Gabriel García Márquez it is quite clear that both novelists tried to deal with the form by using it to depict the degrading situation that their country and culture going through due to the intervention of outside forces. While Márquez used magic realism to address the beginning and end of fictional town of Macondo and the evil effects of scientific inventions and violence creating outside forces which causes damage in their identity and culture and deaths of many; Salman

Rushdie deals with the same sense of postcolonial displacement, violence through the character of Saleem telling a tale of his motherland and his family history to his wife and how it was destroyed by Western powers ravaged and partitioned it for their own selfish gains. Though having different stories from each other there is a parallel point in the story where both of them is acting as spokesperson of their countrymen and how their countries have undergone immense damage physically, culturally and emotionally at the hands of outside intruders. Being an Indian and learning about our horrific past, in this paper I would like to aim those significant consequences of violence that both the authors had addressed in their respective novels.

## 2. MAGIC REALISM AND ITS IMPACTS

"When people use the term magic realism, usually they only mean 'magic' and they don't hear 'realism', whereas the way in which magic realism actually works is for the magic to be rooted in the real. It's both things. It's not just a fairytale moment. It's the surrealism that arises out of the real."- Salman Rushdie

It is indeed true that sometimes while learning the different aspects of magic, we tend to forget reality to let ourselves explore the realm of unreal. But such is not the case in magic realism as in this form the elements that is unreal arises from the very core of rational material things. As mentioned earlier in the novels *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* this particular form not only gives an entertaining relief to readers but it also brings to light the points of hybridity, alienation which occurs due to distorted cultural aspects, questions of identity and the mixture of binaries of fact and fiction with special attention to the space and history of personal, national and political.

### 2.1. THE VIOLENCE DETAILED THROUGH MAGIC REALISM

It is true that the Rushdie and García Márquez have completely different experiences of violence but both types was rooted in the very similar seed of colonizers goal of controlling others and forming an

atmosphere of industrializing gore where the oppressors were gaining profit at the cost of exploiting their colonized counterparts. They used magic realism not only to describe their characters' personal sufferings and history but they also connected it to the pain experienced by their fellow countrymen.

Postmodernist critic Stephen Slemon more precisely identified the term 'magic realism' by inducing a mixture of postmodernist beliefs and the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin in order to point three postcolonial perspectives. Firstly because of magic realism's dual narrative structure, it can represent both the colonizers and colonised individual's view which can be also done by its themes. Secondly, it conjures a text which divulges the "tensions" and "gaps" of portrayal of the text. And the last but not the least, is that magic realism can provide a way to fill in those "gaps" of cultural information by recuperating the forgotten voices of compromised history of the imperialist. Slemon simplified the dialogic discourse of Bakhtin by explaining that since there are two different outlooks the magical and the real, there is a constant opposition between them, "two opposing discursive systems, with neither managing to subordinate or contain the other"(1995:410). From his view, this tension is between the ever-present and ever-opposed colonized from the view colonialist discourse. This structure mirrors the relationship between the two opposing forces, for the "texts recapitulate a postcolonial account of the social and historical relations of the culture in which they are set" (1995:409). Apart from this, the "gaps" created due to this tension, can be seen in two ways- a negative gap that shows the difficulty of the cultural expression of the colonized at the face of exploiting power of colonizers and as a positive gap which presents a differing perspective from the colonizer's point of view. The hybridity created because of these issues ultimately results in a displaced and tortured narrative from the mouths of the "Others".

### **3. GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S MAGICAL DEMONSTRATION IN *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE***

Though the perspective of readers this novel fall under the banner of postmodernism, it also has an intricate relation to postcolonial views. Márquez's portrayal of the fictional town of Macondo in its pre-lapsarian state, where the townsfolk don't even have any knowledge of the basic necessities like "ice" and "magnet" indicates the precolonial condition of the South American country Colombia. The arrival of the gypsies and later the American fruit company can be interpreted as the beginning of imperialism and scientific technologies. José Arcadio Buendía, the patriarch of the Buendía family was particularly inspired by this development which led to string of unpalatable incidents which ultimately resulted in the destruction of Macondo. The political history of Macondo coincides with that of the personal history of the Buendía family which includes some fantastical events taking place in a rational world. Firstly, Macondians don't practice a specific religion but the spectacle of levitation after drinking hot chocolate as shown by Father Nicanor Reyna, the first priest of the town, made them to somewhat believe in the Christian God. This fictional incident pointed out the fact of forceful conversion of the colonized people at the hands of Christian missionaries which prompted a distorted formation of mixed culture among them, basically alienating them and forming an identity crisis. This concept of declaring the colonizer's religion to be superior over the religion of their native counterparts can fall under the category of colonizing one's age old faith and belief which create a chaos not only within a particular society but also affects one psychology making them question their own identity.

The theme of Magic Realism not only interweaves reality and fiction but also analyse the novel from a critical perspective of Colombian history. Though the author recognized the Buendía family's personal flaws incestuous relationship resulting in the birth of a monstrous child to be the cause of their downfall, but the fact that the outside forces also played a major part in it. Also, Márquez's portrayal by calling upon the incidents of war

suffering and death with a political slant. By the mid-1960's, Colombia had witnessed in excess of two hundred thousand politically motivated deaths. La Violencia, from 1946–66, can be broken into five stages: the revival of political violence before and after the presidential election of 1946, the popular urban upheavals generated by Gaitan's assassination, open guerrilla warfare, first against Conservative government of Ospina Perez, incomplete attempts at pacification and negotiation resulting from the Rojas Pinilla (who had ousted Laureano Gómez), and finally, disjointed fighting under the Liberal/Conservative coalition of the "National Front," from 1958 to 1975. This incessant war events depicts the oppressive history of Colombia, much of what was suppressed by the government for their political agenda. In the novel, Aureliano Babylonia's reinterpretation of Malquides's text helped the readers to fill in the gaps of The Banana Massacre occurred between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December 5 which though a form of industrialisation by foreign powers is also a form of asserting dominance over another group ultimately resulted in violence and numerous death of plantation workers whose bodies are carried by carts and dumped in order to avoid any political controversy as a means of power play. This incident was witnessed Col. Aureliano Buendía as he was the one who waged a war against the conservative facilitating the imperialist power and their own dictatorial police force. But this very event is not recorded much in official history. This real fact described through the fictional history of Macondo shows that sometimes reality is so much harsh that even magic can alleviate it and the readers are disillusioned through this unique technique championed by Gabriel García Márquez.

#### **4. SALMAN RUSHDIE AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN**

Salman's Rushdie's idiosyncratic depiction of Magic realism deals with life, exuberance and fantasy. The novel is a "bildungsroman in the negative sense" a mixture of natural background and surrealistic foreground filled with myth, irony, and psychology and most importantly woven in the pattern of magical genre focusing on the issue of split identity and pain of immigration creating a hybrid

culture. The special power of Saleem and other thousand children born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947 to communicate with one another telepathically and in Saleem's case reading the minds of others around him enabled the readers to get a peek into the lives of the Indian characters in the midst of political turmoil of partition. In this time of transition between Indian Independence from British Colonialism, Saleem Sinai as a representative of Independence tells his wife about his family's historical past by comparing his life to that he used to lead in India and the necessary events collided with the development of India. Saleem's description of his family's history specially how his grandfather's was on his knees after a mighty sneeze by his enormous and mysterious nose saved him when Brigadier Dyer's fifty machine gunners fired openly in Amritsar Massacre of 1919. is an event which shows that though he is being forcefully snatched from his roots he still reminisces it memories fondly. It was his father Salem who brought the villa in the Meth World, when Saleem was born at the same time all major happenings of his life led to the destruction of midnight's children and also of India the very same moment emergency was announced are all accidental in the development of a new country. Saleem hints about his body his body getting destroyed and disintegrating into 630 million pieces indicates the populace of India and he like his father is tied to the supernatural powers gifted by history. The painting boatman Tai and his claims to belong in ancient times and his unimaginable life span personify the pre-colonial India and the high pitch whining of Milan Abdullah, as a representative political figure gives a kaleidoscopic view of the destructive reality of India after partition and the pitiful conditions which the immigrants were forced into effecting not only their living condition but also their having a nameless national identity.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Thus, summing up all the pointers from the aforementioned events, it can be concluded that though Magic Realism blurs the difference between real and surreal to enchant and ensnare it readers into the world of magic, the writings of these two authors proved that is almost satirical in nature because it actually shows the very hard reality to the

readers. The violence seen by the folks of an oppressed place and their voicing their conditions through the authors is what created a gory yet surreal situation which has a different magic in itself by describing the dehumanizing situations faced by the countries at the behest of political power play which is very much relevant even in this time.

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