

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**COLLEGE of HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE STUDIES and JOURNALISM**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**

**A Comparative Study of Magical Realism in**  
***One Hundred Years of Solitude and The Famished Road***

**By**  
**Mezegebua Taddesse**

**May 2012**  
**Addis Ababa**

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A Thesis submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and  
Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree  
of MA in Literature

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## Abstract

*Studies on various literary topics set against Western Realism and Socialist Realism are abundant. However, there are no comparative studies done on such topics on the basis of Magical Realism. Thus this study area desired to fill that gap by comparing two novels from Colombia and Nigeria. It has tried to explore Magical Realism in the two novels **One Hundred Years of Solitude** by the Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez and **The Famished Road** by the Nigerian author Ben Okri. The study revealed that both novels have mostly used the same characteristics to construct the Magical Realist effect and their differences in this respect are negligible. Distinct characteristics of Magical Realism are used for the comparison of the two novels. As research methodology, the study has tried to first identify as many characteristics of Magical Realism as possible in Chapter Two following an attempt to define it and incorporating a list of thoughts and ideas by various scholars about Magical Realism. In the next chapter, the study has moved on to the identification of the said characteristics of Magical Realism in the selected novels. Here, the study has presented the characteristics as they appear in each novel with quotations of relevant examples from them. The final chapter has analyzed the results of the identification of the characteristics done in the previous chapter by attempting to compare them. The finding of the study has established that both novels have used similar techniques such as employing fascination of technology to create an aspect of Magical Realism. Other examples of such similarities are present in the study as well. However, despite this fact, the meaning of **One Hundred Years of Solitude** is very different from that of **The Famished Road**. In addition, this does not mean that everything in the novels is the same. Each novel has its own distinct style.*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Historical Background of the Study

To clarify the origin of Magical Realism, one must start with a short explanation of Post-Colonial Theory. "The obvious implication of the term post-colonial is that it refers to a period coming after the end of colonialism." (Childs and Williams, 1997:1) In their book *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, Childs and Williams debate the when, where, who and what of the term Post-Colonial as its implications are complex and difficult to define.

Many others have had the same difficulty defining the term. One such argument is brought forth by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin say that it is difficulty arises from the broadness of its use. They argue that it is necessary to limit its use by choosing only certain periods such as after independence or by suggesting that some groups of peoples such as settlers are not post-colonial because they are not affected by the colonizing process, or "finally, by suggesting that some societies are not yet post-colonial (meaning free of the attitudes of colonization. The case of indigenous people in

*settler societies is an example of this latter argument).*"(Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:194)

An additional problem is the inadequacy of the term "Post-Colonial" in describing who falls in this category with regards to literature. Many critics argue that the term is limited. In his essay "The Dialectics of Négritude: Or, the (Post)Colonial Subject in Contemporary African-American Literature" Christopher Wise quotes Ella Shohat as she advocates that the term be used very carefully. She says she feels it is being used to refer to every literature it encounters such as Australian and even American literature.

I am suggesting then that if Henry James, Richard Wright, and Bessie Head are all "post-colonial" writers (race, class, and nationality notwithstanding), we need to rethink the relative value of this concept (Rajan and Mohanram, 1995:33)

Some, like the web encyclopedia Wikipedia for instance, over simplify matters and define Post-Colonial literature as "a body of literary writings that react to the discourse of colonization" Post-Colonial fiction writers might interact with the traditional colonial discourse by attempting to modify or subvert it. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcolonial\\_literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcolonial_literature))

When discussing African Post-Colonial literature in particular, the first theory that emerges in history is *Négritude*, which is considered to *ōbe the earliest attempt to create a consistent theory of modern African writing. The Francophone writers Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor, in particular, asserted a specific black African nature and psychology which was described by this term*” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:122). In their book *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin claim that the theory of Négritude has very few followers today. It is a concept first conceived by critics in the 1920s and 1930s which contributed to the development of Black consciousness, and was the beginning of the assertion of Black cultures that colonizers attempted to suppress.

The reaction of the first generation of Anglophone writers in the 1960s to the older tradition of French Négritude theory is usefully, if crudely, summed up by the often quoted remark of Wole Soyinka that 'a tiger does not proclaim its tigritude'. Although Soyinka was subsequently to modify this view and to acknowledge the pioneering achievements of Négritude, this jejune remark does place its finger squarely on the essential flaw of Négritudinist thought, which is that its structure is derivative and replicatory, asserting not its difference, as it would claim, but rather its dependence on the categories and features of the colonizing culture. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:122-123)

Later, in the late fifties and early sixties, Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist, *“developed one of the most thoroughgoing analyses of the psychological and sociological consequences of colonization ... approach stressed the common political, social, and psychological terrain through which all the colonized peoples had to pass. It recognized the potency of such racial characteristics as 'Blackness' at the heart of the oppression and denigration endemic to the colonial enterprise.”* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:123)

Political opposition was at the heart of Fanon’s analysis. *“His theory brought together the concept of alienation and of psychological marginalization from phenomenological and existential theory, and a Marxist awareness of the historical and political forces within which the ideologies which were instrumental in imposing this alienation came into being.”* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:123). In this regard, Fanon was able to describe this division of colonizer ó colonized as the creation of a *'manichaeism delerium'* (Fanon 1967), which gave rise to racial division of polarized oppositions like *“good-evil; true-false; white-black, in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship.”* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:123). He sees this as a possible way to free the colonized from the awkward position by creating new ways of telling a story. Hence Fanon’s work became a place where the good in the Négritude movement found a home

but also, at the same time, the historical accounts of racist stereotypes were incorporated in the fictional.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin claim that *“One obvious omission from the early development of post-colonial theory was the study of the oldest, second largest and most complex modern European empire - that of Spain.”* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:202)

Indeed, Latin America may well fundamentally change our view of the post-colonial. The antiquity and character of its colonization, the longstanding reality of its hybridized cultures, the 'continental' sense of difference which stems from a shared colonial language, the intermittent emergence of contestatory movements in cultural production - all radically widen the scope of post-colonial theory. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002:202)

Yet another complication to Post-Colonial literature is the question of what language to use when writing. This raises the question of choosing between the idea of **appropriation** and the idea of **abrogation**. That is to say should Post-Colonial writers use the language of their colonizers when writing their narratives or should they reject the usually accepted standards of that language? The implications of choosing either, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths

and Tiffin as discussed in their book entitled *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, is critical. They assert that *decolonization is an important political stance, whether articulated or not, and even whether conscious or not, from which the actual appropriation of language can take place.*" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2000:5)

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There aren't comparative studies done so far that show whether Magical Realists in different continents express themselves differently because they are influenced by their surroundings and history. This study tries to fill that gap by comparing two novels from two continents, Latin America and Africa entitled *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by the Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *The Famished Road* by the Nigerian author Ben Okri respectively.

The study will try to show how each author uses Magical Realism to address the dilemma in his environment. The review of related literature will try to explore the elements that make up Magical Realism. The analysis part of the research will then compare how these elements are used in the two novels, their effects and possibly their intended advice to the reader.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This research study has the following general and specific objectives.

#### General Objective

1. To identify and demonstrate the elements of magical realism in both novels.

#### Specific Objectives

1. To compare and contrast the use of Magical Realism characteristics in the two novels.
2. To determine and compare the effect of these characteristics in the meaning of each novel in the context of Post-Colonial Scenario.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Magical Realism is one of the important twentieth-century literary modes that have not been explored in Ethiopia. This study will attempt to contribute, in a small way, towards a better understanding of this Post-Colonial literary phenomenon by comparing two novels written in this mode.

Secondly, even though this is a small research that only compares two novels, it might be used as a springboard to other studies that might want to attempt a broader comparative study between Latin American and Asian novels or African and Asian novels for an in-depth analysis and understanding of Magical Realism.

Thirdly, Magical Realism is a difficult mode of literature to define. Zamora and Faris quote Luis Leal's assertion that

“It cannot be identified with fantastic literature or with psychological literature, or with the surrealist or hermetic literature that Ortega describes. Unlike surrealism, magical realism does not use dream motifs; neither does it distort reality or create imagined worlds, as writers of fantastic literature or science fiction do; nor does it emphasize psychological analysis of characters since it does not try to find reasons for their actions or inability to express themselves.” (Zamora and Faris, 1995:147)

Because of this complexity, students of literature have a difficult time understanding the boundaries of magical realism. In the course of its stated endeavors, this study might help a little in clarifying these complexities.

## **1.5 Methodology**

An attempt to achieve the objectives of this study will be made by first trying to gather as much information about Magical Realism as possible and presenting it in the next chapter. This will include definitions of Magical Realism, and exploring elements and literary devices that, when combined, form Magical Realism. Then the following chapter will attempt to show how these literary characteristics are used in the selected novels. Extracts from the novels will be used to support the use of these characteristics. Finally, an attempt will be made to compare and contrast the use of Magical Realism in

the novels and its contribution towards their respective meaning culminating with the conclusion of the study.

### **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

This study will only focus on the Magical Realism aspect of the two novels *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri. No other literary mode or genre will be raised during the course of this research. Neither other Magical Realist works nor other novels by the same authors will be discussed either. The scope of this study will be limited to the comparison of the literary devices of Magical Realism in the two novels and will not, as much as possible, delve in the historical, cultural, political, religious and other social aspects of the countries (or continents) of origin of the novels. The research will only refer to such aspects (if at all) only so far as they have a bearing upon the literary analysis.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The research of this study is limited to secondary data published in books, journals and articles.

## Chapter Two

### Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1 Types of Realism

Realism in literature is a movement that can be categorized in to three major groups; Socialist Realism, Western Realism and Magical Realism. Each of these categories has its own specific background that gave rise to its emergence.

##### 2.1.1 Western Realism

Western Realism is *“an approach that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity.”* (The Columbia Encyclopaedia, 2004:40680) It is usually brought up in connection with the literary movement in 19th-century France, specifically with the French novelists Flaubert and Balzac. In England, such realism was pioneered by George Eliot while William Dean Howells brought it in to the United States. Its main concern is *“the commonplaces of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where character is a product of social factors and environment is the integral element in the dramatic complications.”* (The Columbia Encyclopaedia, 2004:40680)

##### 2.1.2 Socialist Realism

Socialist Realism was developed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) by the union of writers that was established by party decree on 23 April

1932. By order of Stalin, the writers were presented with their first taste of an enforced theory of literary production on 17 August 1934 during the first congress of the union. They were told that

í to know life, in order to depict it truthfully in works of art, to depict it not scholastically, not lifelessly, not simply as 'objective reality', but to depict actuality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic description must be combined with the task of the ideological transformation and education of the working people in the spirit of socialism. This method of literature and of literary criticism is what we called the method of socialist realism. (Ellis, 1997:54 - 55)

### **2.1.3 Magical Realism**

Magical Realism, sometimes also referred to as magic realism, in the literary sense, is a mode of writing that incorporates the 'fantastic' in the 'mundane'. It emerged in the 1960s in Latin America as a reaction to Western Realism.

Magical Realism originated as an antagonistic reaction to the European rationale that according to Zamora and Faris, demeaned the dignity of colonized peoples. When speaking about the natives of Latin America, Spaniards said that they were 'as the eternal infant, immature, lazy and (in this respect worse than the European child) totally incapable of mental and psychological development' (Zamora and Faris, 1995:135). They also 'established a binary opposition between European

civilization with its consciousness of historical heritage and ability to engage in self-reflexivity, [thus] arguing that European scholars were indispensable for the understanding of the social and political organization of primitive societies.” (Zamora and Faris, 1995:135)

In the face of such indignity, it is understandable that such a view of European superiority could trigger a reaction opposing a “reality” that was defined by Europeans and “it is hardly surprising that Latin American intellectuals questioned the European rational canon – it is against this complex background of the colonized subject’s rebellion against imposed models, the resistance of the newly independent Latin American countries to neocolonial domination and the European philosophical delegitimation of metaphysical and epistemological paradigms that we must situate certain twentieth-century literary practices” (Zamora and Faris, 1995:135 - 136) one of which is Magical Realism.

Even though the above background is focused on Latin America, the setting for all colonized third world countries including those in Africa wasn’t any different. Africans suffered colonialism by the same Europeans creating a parallel context in an entirely different continent. Therefore the urge behind each author’s need to express oneself through Magical Realism has a similar origin. “Artists have frequently been considered subversive figures, challenging official dogma in spite of the various mechanism of control.” (Zamora and Faris, 1995: 136)

As mentioned above, Western Realism is a movement that Latin American writers rejected because it was perpetrated by their colonizers. This rejection of the literary style left a gap that the writers had to fill and this resulted in the foundation of Magical Realism. According to Wikipedia, "Literary magic realism originated in Latin America" and "between 1940 and 1950, magical realism in Latin America reached its peak, with prominent writers appearing mainly in Argentina". ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism)). Since then, it has been used all over the world for decades. Most notable are Latin American works that include Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of this World*, Julio Cortazar's *La noche boca arriba*, Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, Eva Luna, and *The Obscene Bird of Night* and Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* to name very few. African writers like Ben Okri, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Amos Tutuola are also magical realist authors who have used the genre to critical acclaim in their works *The Famished Road*, *The Sand Child* and *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* respectively.

Many critics and authors have attempted to define Magical Realism by explaining what it is, what characteristics it is composed of. Others have tried to use delimitation to further define it by telling us what it is not.

Franz Roh saw Magic Realism as an art where the ordinary world we see around us is expressed in a way that endows particular importance to ordinary objects to give new meaning. He asserts that through Magical Realism, we look upon the world we recognize with new eyes. He says this new style offers us an image that is completely of this world and rejoices in the mundane.

This new world of objects is still alien to the current idea of Realism. It employs various techniques that endow all things with a deeper meaning and reveal mysteries that always threaten the secure tranquility of simple and ingenuous things. This [art offers a] calm admiration of the magic of being, of the discovery that things already have their own faces, [this] means that the ground in which the most diverse ideas in the world can take root has been reconquered--albeit in new ways. For the new art it is a question of representing before our eyes, in an intuitive way, the fact, the interior figure, of the exterior world. . (Franz Roh, Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism (1925).Magical Realism. Ed. L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. p. 15-32.)

Alejo Carpentier coined the term *lo real maravilloso Americano* to refer to seemingly miraculous occurrences in [Latin America](#). This is contrasted with the lack of magic and imagination in European [folklore](#).ö ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Kingdom\\_of\\_this\\_World](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kingdom_of_this_World)) According to him, one must take faith for granted to believe in the marvelous.

The marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state. (Alejo Carpentier, *On the Marvelous Real in America. Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 85-86)

He continues, "Now then if surrealism pursued the marvelous, one would have to say that it very rarely looked for it in reality. The marvelous real that I defend and that is our own marvelous real is encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American. Here the strange is commonplace and always was commonplace." (Alejo Carpentier, *The Baroque and the Marvelous Real. Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 102-104)

Angel Flores agrees. "In magical realism we find the transformation of the common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal. It is predominantly an art of surprises. Time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality. Once the reader accepts the *fait accompli*, the rest follows with logical precision (Angel Flores, *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction. Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 113-116).

Zamora and Faris (1995) quote Luis Leal, an internationally recognized scholar of Mexican, Chicano and Latin American literature as he defines magical realism as *“an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles in closed or open structures.”* He is of the opinion that in Magical Realism, the writer struggles with untangling reality by trying to get behind the inexplicable in things, in life, in human acts.

The principal thing is not the creation of imaginary beings or worlds but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances. In magical realism key events have no logical or psychological explanation. The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality or to wound it but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things. (Luis Leal, *Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 119-123).

The renowned Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez offers an interesting definition from a different angle. “Garcia Marquez maintains that realism is a kind of premeditated literature that offers too static and exclusive a vision of reality. However good or bad they may be, they are books which finish on the last page. Disproportion is part of our reality too. Our reality is in itself all out of proportion. In other words, Garcia Marquez suggests that the magic text is, paradoxically, more realistic than the realist text.” (Scott Simpkins, *Sources of*

Magic Realism/Supplements to Realism in Contemporary Latin American Literature. *Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 148)

Zamora and Faris attribute the following characteristics to magical realist fiction. [Magical realism is] A disruption of modern realist fiction that creates a space for interaction and diversity that is no less 'real' than traditional 'realism' about transgressing boundaries, multiple worlds that blur the boundaries and destabilizes normative oppositions that is subversive that is an international phenomenon. (Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris. Introduction: Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrot(s). *Magical Realism*. Ed. L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris).

This researcher has not been able to find any study done on Magical Realism with respect to either one of the two novels selected for this study at the Addis Ababa University. However, Melakneh, in his PhD dissertation entitled *Post-Colonialism and Mainstream Anglophone African Novel Thematic and Stylistic Intertextuality*, has explored elements of Magical Realism in selected African Novels. Moreover, he has dedicated a section of the third chapter to Magical Realism, its emergence, and the literary techniques that constitute it. One concept that he has specified is the prevalence of folklore in Magical Realism, especially with reference to African novels. He asserts that folklore is a compilation of the social heritage of mankind that includes, among others,

- Social folk custom (secular and religious observances characterized by group interaction rather than individual performance),
- Physical folk life (which is synonymous with material culture),
- Performing folk arts (involves an actual physical movement ó parts of the whole body, as deemed necessary by a group on a particular social occasion) and
- Folk literature (the verbal heritage of mankind transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth are the sub genres of folklore. (Melakneh, 2010:84)

Other notable quotes on magical realism as compiled by Alberto Rios of Arizona State University (<http://www.public.asu.edu/~aarios/resourcebank/definitions/>) include a list of definitions of magical realism by different critics. Below are some of them.

- Magical realism--is not a realism to be transfigured by the supplement of a magical perspective, but a reality which is already in and of itself magical or fantastic. (Frederic Jameson, as quoted in Simpkins, Sources of Magic Realism. p. 149).
- Magical realism, unlike the fantastic or the surreal, presumes that the individual requires a bond with the traditions and the faith of the community, that s/he is historically constructed and connected. (P. Gabrielle Foreman. Past

on Stories: History and the Magically Real, Morrison and Allende on Call. *Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 286).

- Rushdie sees 'El realismo magical, magic realism, at least as practiced by [Garcia] Marquez, [as] a development out of Surrealism that expresses a genuinely Third World consciousness. [Magical realism] is a way of showing reality more truly with the marvelous aid of metaphor. (Patricia Merivale, Saleem Fathered by Oskar: *Midnight's Children*, Magic Realism and *The Tin Drum*. *Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 331, 336).
- [Magical realism] takes the supernatural for granted and spends more of its space exploring the gamut of human reactions (Susan J. Napier. The Magic of Identity: Magic Realism in Modern Japanese Fiction. *Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, p. 451).
- Magical realism's most basic concern [is]--the nature and limits of the knowable. Magical realist texts ask us to look beyond the limits of the knowable. Magical realism is truly postmodern in its rejection of the binarisms, rationalisms, and reductive materialisms of Western modernity. (Lois Parkinson Zamora, Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S. And Latin American Fiction. *Magical Realism*. Ed. Zamora and Faris, 498).
- First it is the combination of reality and fantasy and second, it is the transformation of the real into the awesome and unreal, thirdly an art of surprises, one which creates a distorted concept of time and space, fourth a literature directed to an intellectual minority; characterized by a cold cerebral

aloofness it does not cater to popular tastes, but rather to that of those sophisticated individuals instructed in aesthetic subtleties. (Erwin Dale Carter. *Magical Realism in Contemporary Argentine Fiction*. Ann Arbor: U Microfilms, 1969. p. 3-4)

- Magic realist novels and stories have, typically, a strong narrative drive, in which the recognizably realistic merges with the unexpected and the inexplicable and in which elements of dreams, fairy story, or mythology combine with the everyday, often in a mosaic or kaleidoscopic pattern of refraction and recurrence. (*Oxford Companion to English Literature*)
- A chiefly literary style or genre originating in Latin America that combines fantastic or dreamlike elements with reality. (*American Heritage Dictionary*)
- Magic realism--the result of a unique fusion of the beliefs and superstitions of different cultural groups that included the Hispanic conqueror, his *criollo* (creole) descendants, the native peoples and the African slaves. Magic realism, like myth, also provides an essentially synthetic or totalizing way of depicting reality. It was firmly grounded in daily reality and expressed man's astonishment before the wonders of the real world,[and] convey[s] a vision of the fantastic features of reality. (*Encyclopedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century*)
- Magic realism--a fantastic situation is realistically treated [discussed only in terms of German Literature] (*Macmillan Guide to Modern Literature*, Martin Seymour-Smith, ed.)

- Magic realism--a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the 'reliable' tone of objective realistic report. Designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth while maintaining a strong contemporary social relevance. The fantastic attributes given to characters in such novels--levitation, flight, telepathy, telekinesis--are among the means that magic realism adopts in order to encompass the often phantasmagoric political realities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*)
- Magic realism--[is characterized by] the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic, bizarre and skillful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the elements of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable. (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*)
- Magic realism--the frame or surface of the work may be conventionally realistic, but contrasting elements--such as supernatural myth, dream fantasy--invade the realism and change the whole basis of the art. (*Handbook to Literature*, Harmon ed.)
- Lo real maravilloso--for the practice of Latin American writers who mix everyday realities with imaginative extravaganzas drawn from the rich interplay of European and native cultures.[Writers] enlarge a reader's ordinary

sense of the real to include magic, myth, hallucination and miracles.  
(*Handbook to Literature*, Harper ed.)

- Magic realism--the capacity to enrich our idea of what is 'real' by incorporating all dimensions of the imagination, particularly as expressed in magic, myth and religion. (*Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*)

## **2.2 Characteristics of Magical Realism**

There are several characteristics that distinguish magical realism from other forms of fiction. Melakneh (2010), for instance, gives three thematic and technical features. First is authorial reticence, which is an absence of clear opinions about the accuracy of events and the credibility of the world views held by the characters. Second is the acceptance, as opposed to questioning, of the logic of the magical elements by the characters, and third, is its endeavor to grasp *the paradox of polar opposites like life and death, waking and dreaming, civilized and wild, male and female, mind and body, the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present, urban and rural, Western and indigenous.* (Melakneh, 2010:82)

Wikipedia attributes additional characteristics explaining that the extent to which each characteristic appears in a magical realist novel varies. Another point one should always keep in mind is the fact that a novel might belong to more than one

category. For example **The Kingdom of this World** by the Alejo Carpentier is a historical fiction written in the magical realist mode.

### **2.2.1 Fantastical Elements**

As recently as 2008, magical realism in literature has been defined as "...a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the 'reliable' tone of objective realistic report, designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth while maintaining a strong contemporary social relevance." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism))

### **2.2.2 Plenitude**

This is a characteristic advocated by the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier defined as "a lack of emptiness, a departure from structure or rules, and an "extraordinary" plenitude of disorienting detail (citing Mondrian as its polar opposite). From this angle, Carpentier views the baroque as a layering of elements, which translates easily into the post-colonial or transcultural Latin American atmosphere that Carpentier emphasizes in *The Kingdom of this World*." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism))

### 2.2.3 Hybridity

The Encarta (2009) dictionary defines a hybrid as a *result of mixing elements: something made up of a mixture of different aspects or components*. When coming to its use in Magical Realism, Wikipedia asserts that the plot lines use hybrid multiple planes of reality in dissonant aspects such as oppositions like waking and dreaming.

### 2.2.4 Metafiction

With its multiple realities and specific reference to the reader's world, it explores the impact fiction has on reality, reality on fiction and the reader's role in between; as such, it is well suited for drawing attention to social or political criticism. Furthermore, it is the tool paramount in the execution of a related and major magic realist phenomenon: textualization. This term defines two conditions: first, where a fictitious reader enters the story within a story while reading it, making us self-conscious of our status as readers; and secondly, where the textual world enters into the reader's (our) world. Good sense would negate this process but "magic" is the flexible topos that allows it. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism))

### 2.2.5 Authorial Reticence

Authorial reticence is the "...deliberate withholding of information and explanations about the disconcerting fictitious world." (Chanady, 1985:16)

The narrator does not provide explanations about the accuracy or credibility of events described or views expressed by characters in the text. Further, the narrator is indifferent, a characteristic enhanced by this absence of explanation of fantastic events; the story proceeds with "logical precision" as if nothing extraordinary took place. In this, explaining the supernatural world would immediately reduce its legitimacy relative to the natural world. The reader would consequently disregard the supernatural as false testimony. (Chanady, 1985:16)

### **2.2.6 Sense of Mystery**

According to Carpentier this means "...to seize the mystery that breathes behind things," (1975:107) "Something that most critics agree on is this major theme. Magic realist literature tends to read at an intensified level. Taking the seminal work of the style, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, the reader must let go of preexisting ties to conventional exposition, plot advancement, linear time structure, scientific reason, etc., to strive for a state of heightened awareness of life's connectedness or hidden meanings." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism))

### **2.2.7 Collective Consciousness**

The Mexican critic Luis Leal has said, "Without thinking of the concept of magical realism, each writer gives expression to a reality he observes in the people. To me, magical realism is an attitude on the part of the characters in the

novel toward the world," or toward nature. He adds, "If you can explain it, then it's not magical realism." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism))

### **2.2.8 Political critique**

Melakneh (2010,83) posits that "Magical realists are equally obsessed with iconoclasm or breaking the image of ideals cherished by their contemporaries or ancestors. It is also inherently political for it challenges assumptions of order unlike Realism which presents its version of the world as uniquely true or objective." Wikipedia further elaborates how Magical Realism criticizes society, particularly the elite, by breaking the usual custom of centering around the privileged and focusing on the geographically, socially and economically marginalized, especially in Latin American literature.

Therefore, magic realism's "alternative world" works to correct the reality of established viewpoints (like realism, naturalism, modernism). Magic realist texts, under this logic, are subversive texts, revolutionary against socially dominant forces. Alternatively, the socially dominant may implement magical realism to disassociate themselves from their "power discourse." Theo Døhaen titles this change in perspective, "decentering." Upon consideration, Latin America is the ideal locale and starting place for such literary subversions to a dominant power, from the colonizers to the dictators. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism))

Furthermore, Melakneh (2010,83) adds characteristics of terror by authoritarian figures, hyperbole, and cyclical repetition of time as elements that feature in a magical realist novel. However, even with such clear demarcations, there are critics that argue that it is difficult to alienate a magical realist novel from fantasy or science fiction. The term is broadly descriptive rather than critically rigorous: Winona State University Asst. Professor of Japanese Studies, and author, Matthew Strecher defines magic realism as "...what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe."([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic\\_realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism)).

### **2.2.9 Defamiliarisation**

Another device used by Magical Realists is defamiliarisation. In his book *Literature*, Widdowson describes defamiliarisation as a concept that is derived from the Russian word *ostranenie* which means 'making strange' or 'enstrangement'. He quotes the critic Victor Shklovsky's argument that *"we can never retain the freshness of our perceptions of things because the processes of our cultural and social life cause them to become 'naturalised' or 'automatised'."* (Widdowson, 1999:115-116) He asserts that Literature undertakes to restore our awareness of things that have become habitualized and let us see them as if for the very first time.

As Shklovsky wrote: "The technique of art is to make objects unfamiliar, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and

length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.ö (ibid.:12; Shklovsky's emphasis) (Widdowsen, 1999:115-116)

### **2.2.10 Binary Opposition**

Having originated from Saussurean structuralist theory, Binary Opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning by defining each unit against what it is not. One example can be the difficulty to think of 'good' without understanding 'evil'. Wikipedia posits that in post-structuralism, typically, *one of the two opposites assumes a role of dominance over the other. The categorization of binary oppositions is "often value-laden and ethnocentric", with an illusory order and superficial meaning.* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Binary\\_opposition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Binary_opposition))

Magical Realism is also distinguished by its use of binary oppositions. However, the difference lies in the fact that in Magical Realism one of the two opposites does not dominate over the other. According to Spiller (1999), Magical Realism demands its readers to have room for both fantasy and reality within a single narrative structure. He quotes Mario Vargas Llosa's remarks about a Magical realist novel being *"plural in "being at one time things which we thought to be opposites: traditional and modern; regional and universal; imaginary and realistic."* (Spiller, 1999:375)

### **2.2.11 The Prevalence of Folklore**

Melakneh posits that the prevalence of folklore is another feature of Magical Realism especially in African literature. He says:

Unlike their European counterparts, African novelists, justifiably incorporate folkloristic details like proverbs and mythological stories in their modern narratives. One cannot study African literatures without studying the particular cultures and cultures upon which African writes draw for their ideological and formal elements.

The above points draw out the characteristics that, when used, produce Magical Realist fiction. In the following chapter, these characteristics will be explored in the novels that have been selected for this research in order to make a comparative analysis.

## Chapter Three

### Magical Realism in

#### *One Hundred Years of Solitude and The Famished Road*

The previous chapter has shown the theoretical portion of Magical Realism and in this chapter an attempt will be made to demonstrate if the characteristics presented in the previous chapter appear in the two selected novels *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Famished Road*. In addition, a comparison will be made as to how each author manipulated the particular feature towards creating a Magical Realist Novel. But to begin with, below are short synopses of both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Famished Road*.

#### **3.1 Synopsis of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*** (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/solitude/summary.html>)

*O NE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE* is the history of the isolated town of Macondo and of the family who founds it, the Buendías. For years, the town has no contact with the outside world, except for gypsies who occasionally visit, peddling technologies like ice and telescopes. The patriarch of the family, José Arcadio Buendía, is impulsive and inquisitive. He remains a leader who is also deeply solitary, alienating himself from other men in his obsessive investigations into mysterious matters. These character traits are inherited by his descendents throughout the novel. His older child, José Arcadio, inherits his vast physical strength and his impetuosity. His younger child, Aureliano, inherits his intense, enigmatic focus. Gradually, the village loses its innocent, solitary state when it establishes contact with other towns in the region. Civil wars begin, bringing

*violence and death to peaceful Macondo, which, previously, had experienced neither, and Aureliano becomes the leader of the Liberal rebels, achieving fame as Colonel Aureliano Buendía. Macondo changes from an idyllic, magical, and sheltered place to a town irrevocably connected to the outside world through the notoriety of Colonel Buendía. Macondo's governments change several times during and after the war. At one point, Arcadio, the cruelest of the Buendías, rules dictatorially and is eventually shot by a firing squad. Later, a mayor is appointed, and his reign is peaceful until another civil uprising has him killed. After his death, the civil war ends with the signing of a peace treaty.*

*More than a century goes by over the course of the book, and so most of the events that García Márquez describes are the major turning points in the lives of the Buendías: births, deaths, marriages, love affairs. Some of the Buendía men are wild and sexually rapacious, frequenting brothels and taking lovers. Others are quiet and solitary, preferring to shut themselves up in their rooms to make tiny golden fish or to pore over ancient manuscripts. The women, too, range from the outrageously outgoing, like Meme, who once brings home seventy-two friends from boarding school, to the prim and proper Fernanda del Carpio, who wears a special nightgown with a hole at the crotch when she consummates her marriage with her husband.*

*A sense of the family's destiny for greatness remains alive in its tenacious matriarch, Ursula Iguarán, and she works devotedly to keep the family together despite its differences. But for the Buendía family, as for the entire village of Macondo, the centrifugal forces of modernity are devastating. Imperialist capitalism reaches Macondo as a banana plantation moves in and exploits the land and the workers, and the Americans who own the plantation settle in their own fenced-in section of town. Eventually, angry at the inhumane way in which they are treated, the banana workers go on strike. Thousands of them are massacred by the army, which sides with the plantation owners. When the bodies*

*have been dumped into the sea, five years of ceaseless rain begin, creating a flood that sends Macondo into its final decline. As the city, beaten down by years of violence and false progress, begins to slip away, the Buendía family, too, begins its process of final erasure, overcome by nostalgia for bygone days. The book ends almost as it began: the village is once again solitary, isolated. The few remaining Buendía family members turn in upon themselves incestuously, alienated from the outside world and doomed to a solitary ending. In the last scene of the book, the last surviving Buendía translates a set of ancient prophecies and finds that all has been predicted: that the village and its inhabitants have merely been living out a preordained cycle, incorporating great beauty and great, tragic sadness.*

### **3.2 Synopsis of *The Famished Road* (<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-the-famished-road/?ref=anti>)**

*Shortly after birth, it became clear that Azaro was a spirit child. He had vivid dreams, which foretold the future and he could see spirits interacting with the living. The spirits called to him and caused him to leave his body for a time, which caused his parents to think he was dead. He woke up in his own coffin and his parents found they could not afford the spiritual ceremony to cut his obvious connection with the spirit world.*

*Azaro grew and learned more about his "gift." He ran out of his compound (forcing his mother and father to follow) just before it went up in flames. Priestesses who saw his true power abducted him. Azaro made a narrow escape, only to end up in the house of a police officer whose dead son tried to take over his body. He desperately called out (psychically) to his mother, who rescued him.*

*In their new compound, Azaro's parents threw a feast to celebrate his return. It*

*quickly grew out of control and Azaro's father went far into debt to pay for the party. Creditors began harassing the family. His father beat several of them badly and became known as a "troublemaker" to the landlord. His mother became very sick and almost died from fever; a local bar owner, Madame Koto, helped revive her. Azaro found himself routinely distracted by spirits, who would lure him into the woods and get him lost. His visions were powerful.*

*Azaro spent much time with Madame Koto at the bar. She considered him lucky because of his spirit connection. Azaro's parents struggled to make ends meet; the family didn't eat well. In fact, Azaro would often rely on Madame Koto to feed him. The creditors came and took away their furniture until Azaro's father could pay his debts. His father shamed them into returning the furniture, before finally paying them off. The landlord grew more hostile towards the family.*

*One day Madame Koto hung a magical ornament (a fetish) above the doorway of the bar and almost immediately, strange customers began to fill the establishment. Azaro saw misshapen figures, blind men and half-man, half-animal spirits in the bar. One night, a group closed in on him and carried him out in a sack. He escaped by cutting a hole and running away. On the way back, he was plagued by visions and became lost. In the morning he found his way home and was beaten by his angry father. Azaro came down with malaria and it took him several days to recover.*

*When Azaro was feeling better and back at the bar, he saw a similar group of spirits intermingling with the living. He realized that the fetish above the door was attracting them. Azaro took it and fled into the night, with many of the angry spirits in pursuit. After a long chase, he lost them and buried the fetish far into the forest.*

*The political season opened with rival parties of the rich and poor making promises out of loudspeakers mounted on vans. The party of the rich gave out powdered milk, which turned out to be tainted and made everyone sick. When the van returned later, the villagers attacked it and beat the men inside. The van was burned and became a "landmark" in the village. The local photographer managed to take pictures of the incident and had them published in an international paper, making him momentarily famous. It also made him a target of the politicians. They sent men to find him and he had to "go underground," spending many nights in Azaro's home. Political thugs became more prevalent in the village. Rival gangs would fight in the streets. Azaro's mother was harassed at the marketplace because she supported the "wrong" political party. The photographer returned to Azaro's house beaten, but otherwise unhurt.*

*Azaro wandered into the city one day and was shocked to see his father working under backbreaking conditions. He carried huge bags of salt and cement and was shamed when he saw his son watching him.*

*Madame Koto updated her bar and became a supporter of the party of the rich. More thugs began to frequent the bar and they harassed her "regular" clients. Powerful men of the party arrived and Madame Koto hired prostitutes to appease them. Azaro's father was thrown out the door one night because he threatened several of the thugs to a fight after arguing about politics. Azaro had another strong vision of the spirit world in the forest. Madame Koto became much richer while many of the villagers suffered, including Azaro's family. The landlord raised their rent more than any other tenants. Azaro's father told him the story of the "King of the Road." The clientele changed again at the bar and Madame Koto had added a gramophone (record player), which terrified Azaro. The rainy season*

*caused a downpour, which lasted for two weeks. Houses flooded and collapsed; Azaro's home leaked badly.*

*One night while Azaro's father was arguing about politics with some prostitutes, Azaro was visited by a three-headed spirit. This spirit wanted Azaro to follow him to the spirit world. Azaro refused and the spirit became angry, saying a more powerful spirit would return for him. Meanwhile, Azaro's father was prodded to fight by five thugs in the bar and he managed to beat them all, but told Azaro that they would never return to Madame Koto's.*

*Azaro was then tricked by spirits into breaking the window of a magical blind man in the village. He followed Azaro home and his parents became angry. Azaro's father beat him so badly, that Azaro let himself finally be led by the three-headed spirit to the spirit world. He saw visions and places and finally came to the point of no return. He also saw his parents try and wake him, but he was too angry to care. Herbalists eventually brought him back to his relieved parents, who tried to be more optimistic.*

*Azaro's father started training to become a boxer (he had boxed previously as a young man). He trained all hours of the day, except when working and sleeping. Azaro's father became obsessed and worked less and less. The family's money problems became worse. One night, while Azaro was out watching his father train, a man that called himself the Yellow Jaguar challenged him. After a long and grueling fight, in which Azaro's father had to change his tactics many times (and take a severe beating in the process), the Yellow Jaguar fell back in defeat and disappeared into the ground. He had been a ghost from the spirit world. Azaro's father took almost a week to recover and then started training anew. He became more popular; villagers would follow to watch him shadowbox around the town. His nickname was Black Tyger.*

*Madame Koto's bar was updated again for electricity. It was a new thing for the villagers to see, since many of them had never seen a light bulb. She also bought herself a car, raised prices and opened another bar on the other side of town. Azaro met a friend named Ade. Thugs began hassling Black Tyger and brought a huge man named Green Leopard to fight him. Azaro's father sent him to bet all their money on himself and then he came out for the fight. Black Tyger started out pummeling his opponent, but the Green Leopard would not fall. Then the Green Leopard returned the beating. Finally, the Black Tyger prevailed and the Green Leopard was carried away. Azaro's family made a good deal of money on the bet. Azaro's father spent days in a coma fighting spirits in his head. When he awoke, he had a passion for politics. He planned to run for office; his first constituency was a group of beggars. He threw a party, which again turned into a disaster when food ran scarce.*

*Azaro's father had a final fight at Madame Koto's with a spirit man in a white suit. Again, he had Azaro make a huge bet and the thugs lined up to bet against him. The fight was brutal; Azaro's father was beaten to within an inch of his life. A man in the crowd kept distracting him until Azaro and Ade pushed him away. Then Azaro's father pulled the suit off the "man" and the crowd recoiled when they saw how inhuman he looked. The Black Tyger knocked his opponent out of the ring and made it back to his home to collapse. Azaro's father went on to fight the forces of evil in his dreams and eventually he defeated them. He awoke three days later and spoke of a new day beginning. Azaro felt peace for the first time in months. The spirits were quiet.*

### 3.3 Characteristics of Magical Realism as reflected in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Famished Road*

#### 3.3.1 Fantastical elements

There are many examples of fantastical elements in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* such as the death of the gypsy Melquíades and then his return 'because he could not bear the solitude.' (Garcia Marquez, 1970:50). His return from the dead was received as a matter of course and even happiness by José Arcadio Buendía, no questions asked.

Another example is the discovery of the death of José Arcadio. When José Arcadio was shot his blood trailed an incredible journey towards his mother who followed it back to find her son's lifeless body.

As soon as José Arcadio closed the bedroom door the sound of a pistol shot 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 Buendía 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 José, and went through the pantry

and came out in the kitchen, where Ursula was getting ready to crack thirty-six eggs to make bread. (Garcia Marquez, 1970:135)

Yet another example is the scene after the death of José Arcadio Buendía when *through the window they saw light rain of tiny yellow flowers falling. They fell on the town all through the night in a silent storm, and they covered the roofs and blocked the doors and smothered the animals who slept out-doors. So many flowers fell from the sky that in the morning the streets were carpeted with a compact cushion ...*” (Garcia Marquez, 1970:144)

But perhaps the most wondrous of them all is the ascension of Remedios the Beauty to the *upper atmosphere where not even the highest-flying birds of memory could reach her.*” (Garcia Marquez, 1970:243)

As can be gathered from the above extracts, all of it is narrated in such a matter-of-fact tone and is accepted as such by the characters of the novel, that the reader cannot do otherwise even though such things happen rarely, if at all, in the real world.

There is no lack of fantastical elements in *The Famish Road* either. The protagonist himself, Azaro, is what Africans call an *abiku* or “a spirit child”. He is from a spirit world that is described in the very first lines of the novel.

In the beginning there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry.

In that land of beginnings spirits mingled with the unborn. We could assume numerous forms. Many of us were birds. We knew now boundaries. There was much feasting, playing, and sorrowing. We feasted much because of the beautiful terrors of eternity. We played much because we were free. And we sorrowed much because there were always those amongst us who had just returned from the world of the living. (Okri, 1991:1)

Azaro has made a pact with his friends in the spirit world to return as soon as he is born in to the *real* world. Throughout the novel, he is seen crossing back and forth from the spirit world to the real world. In the real world, Azaro encounters ghosts, spirits, demons and sad souls. The village blind man can see when he wants to.

### **3.3.2 Plenitude**

As explained in the previous chapter, this is a characteristic defined as *ñ* a lack of emptiness, a departure from structure or rules, and an "extraordinary" plenitude of disorienting detail. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is rich in the abundance of detail in the themes that recur throughout the novel such as

Solitude, Love and Passion, Fate and Chance, Time, and Death to name a few. The detail with which these themes are presented is staggering.

For instance, Solitude, a word that appears in the title, is so well illustrated by almost each character bearing his/her particular brand of solitude. It goes so far as Melquíades coming back from the dead '*because he could not bear the solitude.*' (Garcia Marquez, 1970:50), José Arcadio Buendía being tied to a tree and left to live out his days in solitude, Colonel Aureliano's chalk-circle which was drawn around him and where no one but himself is allowed to enter and others. When characters in the novel are not particularly found in solitude, they assist in the solitude of others.

It is difficult to love a person who suffers from solitude. The best example in this regard is Remedios the Beauty. Anyone who wants to court her dies. There is also the case of Pietro Crespi, who commits suicide because he is rejected by Amaranta. To the contrary, simple passion like the one Aureliano Segundo had for his mistress ended up affecting even the fertility of his cattle and their increase in number, consequently increasing his wealth.

Fate is also a strange thing that is shown in the novel as something that cannot be avoided. For instance, in the very beginning, Ursula, the matriarch of the Buendía clan refused to consummate her marriage to José Arcadio Buendía

because she was afraid that because of their blood relationship (they were cousins) it would be considered incest and would cause her to give birth to a baby with a pig's tail. No matter how much they tried to avoid this fate, it overcame space and time to give the family a baby with a pig's tail after one hundred years in another town. In fact, the actions they took to ensure that this doesn't happen ended up being the very reason that it did.

Garcia Marquez has a way with words that makes time ungraspable. The very first sentence of the novel reads, *“Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.”* (Garcia Marquez, 1970:1) The first words take the reader in to the future, while the second half of the sentence takes him/her to the past. Similarly, at the very end of the novel, Aureliano realizes that *“Melquíades has 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.”* (Garcia Marquez, 1970:421) Either by analyzing tenses, like in the first example or by explicit information such as the second example, one can see that Garcia Marquez has used time in a nonlinear way all through the novel in a very detailed manner.

Time is also tied to fate and how it unfolds during the development of the story depicts a cyclical repetition.

Death also plays a pivotal role in the novel and thus is given the distinction of appearing in the very first sentence of the novel in context (*firing squad*). Throughout the novel, which spans a hundred years, death is a recurring theme and almost all members of the Buendía clan die. Death is also predominant in the middle section of the book where the civil wars were fought. However, the biggest death scene in the novel is the where the farm workers of the banana plantations go on strike and are in consequence massacred.

The theme that stands out in *The Famished Road* is the idea of *lacking*. The title indicates this well by using the word *‘Famished’*. There is indeed no lacking of descriptions regarding this theme in various ways: the poverty of Azaro’s family, the scarcity of money to carry out rituals and ceremonies, the perseverance of Azaro’s mother in a line of work that can barely sustain her family, how sometimes she goes without to provide for them. All of it works towards the central theme.

I began to feed on my hunger. I fed well and had a mighty appetite.  
I dipped into myself and found other worlds waitingí A world of  
famine, famishment and droughtí I lost myself and felt myself  
becoming light. I listened to the music of famine. (Okri, 1991:180)

Another example can be drawn when Azaro, who had been ill for two weeks and taken for dead wakes up, his parents give a party for the neighbors. This

party gets out of hand and Azaro's parents get in to debt trying to satisfy the neighbors' wants of food and drinks. This sets of a sequence of events that has creditors coming after Azaro's parents, threaten to take their meager worldly belongings and even provokes their landlord in to raising their rent which leads to even harsher realities for Azaro's parents.

Yet another theme is conflict and violence. The competition between the Party of the Rich and the Party of the Poor drives the conflict in the novel. The hired thugs bring about a lot of grief on the people to extract support. They threaten and beat the weak to elicit promise of support from them.

### **3.3.3 Hybridity**

Hybridity takes political, military, religious and technological forms in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Where in the beginning there was no 'official' administrator of Macondo, by page 57, Don Apolinar Moscote, the magistrate had arrived. When no one would recognize his authority, he went away and came back with military guards. Then came Father Nicanor Reyna, a Catholic priest who first came to officiate at a wedding, but stayed because *he was appalled at the hardness of the inhabitants of Macondo, who were prospering in the midst of scandal, subject to the natural law, without baptizing their children or sanctifying their festivals.*'(Garcia Marquez, 1907:85) He undertook the building of a church because he was tired of preaching in the

open where no one paid any attention to him. Then came the electric lines, the train, and the cinema all of which continued to contribute towards the building of hybridity of the novel.

*The Famished Road* is set in a Nigerian town where there is a mixture of the poor struggling for their daily survival like Azaro's parents, the rich like the Party leaders who try to force support by paying thugs to terrorize the public, entrepreneurs like Madame Koto who have their eye on profit alone and use any means to get it, idealists like the photographer Jeremiah who tries to expose wrong doing, and of course the white man. There is corruption and violence. There is a market full of people buying and selling wares, but is also full of spirits. In addition, the encroaching technological advances like the electric lights and cars also add to the increasing hybridity.

### **3.3.4 Metafiction**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* presents us with an outstanding exercise in recognizing the technique of Metafiction. It comes in the form of the manuscript that Melquídes gives José Arcadio. Beginning from the time that he gives him the manuscript, several members of the Buedía family try to decipher it. These efforts are similar to those of the reader trying to decipher the meaning of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. This is further demonstrated towards the end of the novel when Aureliano finally manages to decipher the

manuscript and comes to realize that he is reading his family history, then his present state and pushing further he reads his own future culminating in his death which is also the same instant that the wind wipes out the entire city of Macondo. At the same time, by reading this, the reader takes part in the destruction of the city.

The Famish Road is narrated by Azaro, a spirit-child who can see ghosts, demons, spirits and is also capable of crossing back and forth between the spirit world and the real world. However, these feats can only be accomplished by him and none of the other characters in the novel. So the reader is given the opportunity to move between two distinct worlds with Azaro while no one else in the novel can.

### **3.3.5 Authorial Reticence**

Nowhere in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does one find the narrator trying to explain why certain phenomena are occurring. The narrator simply tells the story in a straightforward manner whether it is Melquídes returning from the dead, gypsies coming to town with flying carpets or flowers raining from the sky. No explanations are given as to how these occurrences, which would be found to be bizarre in the real world, come to pass in Macondo.

*The Famished Road* is narrated by Azaro. Azaro is a child. He narrates of things he sees and hears. He does not try to explain them. He simply tells us what is happening and thus unfolds the story with authorial reticence.

### **3.3.6 Sense of Mystery**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* demonstrates this topic in various ways. One is the already discussed topic of a nonlinear time structure. Another is the way it tries to seize the mystery that breathes behind things. Such examples in the novel appear where people are “*dazzled by so many and such marvelous inventions... they stayed up all night looking at the pale electric bulbs ...the train ... the cinema*”. (Garcial Marquez, 1970, 229-230)

In *The Famished Road*, when Madame Koto had electric bulbs fixed in her bar, most of the villagers were fascinated. They had never seen an electric lamp before. They couldn't understand how you could have a light brighter than lamps sealed in glass. They couldn't understand how you couldn't light your cigarette on the glowing bulbs.

### **3.3.7 Collective Consciousness**

As explained in the previous chapter, this is an attitude on the part of the characters in the novel toward their world. In this regard, the characters in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* do not try to explain the Magical things that happen

in their surroundings. They simply accept them. They also *collectively* get impressed with inventions like the electric bulb, the train and the cinema.

One good example of collective consciousness in *the Famished Road* is everyone's belief in herbalists. There is nothing these men can't do for the right payment and all the people believed it. Another example is how everyone is astounded by technology like the electric lights and Madam Koto's car.

### **3.3.8 Political Critique**

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Garcia Marquez created Macado as a microcosm of Colombia. Its history corresponds to the history of Colombia. A brief summary of the history of Colombia can help in understanding the political wars that occur in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Colombia was conquered by the Spanish in the 1530s and became part of the colony of New Granada. It stayed that way for about three hundred years, creating a culture that was a mixture of Spanish, Indian and African. Then a popular uprising led by Simon Bolivar (of mixed race) led to the independence of Colombia from Spain in 1819. However, there came a time in Colombian history where political conflict took centre stage in the country. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Political strife was rampant in nineteenth-century Colombia and parties formed under Liberal and Conservative banners. These

parties corresponded to the followers of President Bolivar and his vice-president and later rival, Francisco Santander, respectively. Their essential conflict was over the amount of power the central government should have (Conservatives advocated more, Liberals less). The two parties waged a number of wars, but the civil war from 1899 to 1902 was incredibly violent, leaving one-hundred-thousand people dead. In the novel, this history of constant political struggle is reflected in the career of Colonel Aureliano Buendia. (Gale, 2002:9)

The massacre of the striking farmers is also a part of Colombian history that the Colombian government has flatly denied happening. At the time, the Colombian government was supported by the Americans who had invested in the banana plantations. In order to avoid rubbing the Americans the wrong way, the Colombian government chose to silence strikers and then deny anything ever happened. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* this is witnessed by José Arcadio Segundo, but no one will believe him when he told Macondo inhabitants that more than three thousand people had been killed in one night. “*You must have been dreaming. Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing ever will happen. This is a happy town.*” (Garcia Marquez, 1970:316) This was the military’s official response to those who asked where the strikers were.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* mocks those who get taken in by gypsies and politicians.

*The Famished Road* is set at a time when Nigeria is about to gain independence. The post-independence political future seemed bleak from the way the two political parties, the Party for the Rich and the Party for the Poor were trying to gain support. One party distributed milk that was tainted and made everyone who drank it sick. There were also hired thugs who bullied people in the streets, in the market, in bars, and tried to coerce them in to supporting their party. This lack of morality in leadership is the political critique in the novel.

### **3.3.9 Defamiliarisation**

Defamiliarisation is concerned with the quality of objects. For instance, the following extract is from the first chapter of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

When it was opened by the giant, the chest gave off a glacial exhalation. Inside there was only an enormous, transparent block with infinite internal needles in which the light of the sunset was broken up into colored stars. Disconcerted, knowing that the children were waiting for an immediate explanation, José Arcadio Buendía ventured a murmur:

“It’s the largest diamond in the world.” (Garcia Marquez, 1970:18)

It turns out, it is just a block of ice. This is typical Magical Realist way of finding the mundane outlandish and the outlandish mundane.

In this day and age, the car is a common mode of transportation. However, in *The Famished Road* Madame Koto's car was given such reverence by some. Others believed it was the work of the devil. Parents gathered their children from the roads when it passed by. Children run after it when they saw it. Madame Koto had a special party and the herbalist prayed and performed incantations.

Anyone who thinks evil of you, may this car run them over in their sleep. This car will hunt out your enemies, pursue their bad spirits, grind them into the road. Your car will drive over fire and be safe. It will drive into the ocean and be safe. It has friends in the spirit world. Its friend there, a car just like this one, will hunt down your enemies. They will not be safe from you. A bomb will fall on this car and it will be safe. I have opened the road for this car. It will travel all roads. It will arrive safely at all destinations. (Okri, 1991:210)

All this for an ordinary car.

### 3.3.10 Binary Opposition

In the opening chapter of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, we find Melquíades introducing items like magnets and an alchemist's laboratory to José Arcadio Buendía. Here we find two forms of knowledge that form a binary opposition where the former symbolizes science and technology and the latter a form of magic. This opposition between technology and magic, natural and supernatural knowledge continues throughout the novel. Where in the beginning there was ignorant bliss in Macondo, introduction of technology like the train, for example, brought with it the banana company, the massacre and the rains that lasted for four years, eleven months and two days.

Binary opposition is one of the more striking features of *The Famished Road*. One example is the opposition between the real world and the spirit world and Azaro's struggle because of the choice he made to stay in the real world. Another opposition in the novel is the conflict between the Party of the Rich and the Party of the Poor. There is also the opposition between good and evil.

### 3.3.11 Prevalence of Folklore

Folklore is present in both novels. Its presence is scarce but significant. For instance, in the beginning of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Ursula is afraid of consummating her marriage with José Arcadio Buendía. This was driven by a superstitious belief that she would give birth to a child with a pig's tail if she

has an incestuous relationship. Such a relationship was unavoidable as her husband was also her cousin. This is an example of the prevalence of folklore as the novel culminates in the last Buendía giving birth to a child with a pig's tail and all that the generations of family members have done to avoid this fate befell them in the end.

In *The Famished Road*, the protagonist Azaro is an *abiku* or spirit-child. In Yoruba folklore, *abiku* are children born to parents but die as soon as they are born or not live long enough to see their teenage years. Sometimes, *abiku* children are born over and over again to the same parents. The Yoruba strongly believe in this and their herbalists claim they can influence the *abiku* as we see them do in *The Famished Road*. By making the protagonist and the narrator of the novel an *abiku* child, Okri has succumbed to the concept of using folklore for the purposes of creating a Magical Realist novel.

### **3.4 Meaning**

As the story of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* progresses, Macondo becomes the centre of attraction and tourist destination. It began being visited by people who brought about concepts like government and technology. People started to try to come out on top and to do so, abused their surroundings. This in turn brought about conflict and degeneration of the society. One can draw a meaning of protect the environment (your surrounding) and do everything in

moderation from this novel. This can be viewed in parallel to the predominant theme of Solitude as well.

The predominant theme of *The Famished Road* is the concept of deprivation or ~~Famishment~~. Despite a very difficult existence, Azaro's parents never give up. Azaro's mother is a well of determination and ekes of a meager existence by hawking goods at the top of her lungs, every day. Azaro's father never gives up hope of a better tomorrow, trying different things to earn money, things that even harm his body. This shows the circular nature of life, to hope, to persist, to hope again when in fact nothing is changing. A meaning of ~~Sometimes~~, life is like that and all we can do is endure it and keep trying may be drawn from the novel.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

In order to conclude the study, a summary of the comparison and contrast (if any) should be made to achieve the last remaining objective of the research. As shown in the previous chapter, both novels utilize all the major characteristics that are considered to be essential in creating a Magical Realist novel; fantastical elements, plenitude, hybridity, metafiction, authorial reticence, sense of mystery, collective consciousness, political critique, defamiliarization, binary opposition and folklore. Looking at the details that have been extracted from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Famished Road* with regard to these characteristics of Magical Realism, one can see that there isn't a lot of difference in the way the two authors have used these devices to attain Magical Realism in their respective novel.

This is not to say that everything is exactly the same, but where one thing is present in abundance in one novel, it is there scarcely in the other. The best example for this is the utilization of ghosts under the category of fantastical elements. *The Famished Road* is filled with ghosts while there is only one in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. This shows that folklore is present everywhere, but at the same time, it is not exactly the same everywhere. Its mode of presence differs from place to place. On the other hand, there are

things that are exactly the same in the novels. For example, the fascination of the people with technology is comparable in the two novels. Both societies are dazzled with electricity and mechanical modes of transportation like the train in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the car in *The Famished Road*. But even though the authors have used similar devices, the meaning arrived at at the end of each novel is different. This can be an indication of the versatility of Magical Realism.

Looking at the meaning of each novel in the context of Post-Colonial scenario, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* examines the consequences of political, religious, and environmental abuse by Colonial as well as Post-Colonial authorities. It also explores the consequences of dependence on technological devices that are harmful to the environment.

The meaning drawn from *The Famished Road* shows that sometimes, no matter how hard one tries, things will not get better. Furthermore, the forecast of a politically independent Nigeria is bleak when one looks at the behavior of the political parties.

In conclusion, this study, comparing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Famished Road*, by using various characteristics of Magical Realism, has

found that, even though the meaning drawn from each novel is different from the other, the use of Magical Realism is similar in both.

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## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and has not been presented before to any University. Moreover, I declare that all the sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of approval: \_\_\_\_\_