

Language as real as magic realism: Many worlds and beyond in one hundred years of solitude

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Introduction

Language serves as a means of realism and construction of identity in the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and one of the finest examples of how language carries a sort of tradition is the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Nonetheless its traditional usage as a kind of divine gift, as a means by which the "chief" animal gropes its way toward a transcendental truth, language can also be understood—more fundamentally and perhaps more productively— as part of the behavior of mankind. The language of the novel is one of the most significant tool that connects the past, present and the future or the hundred years in the novel. The whole novel has its roots in the language, for example, one loses track of meaning at one point in the novel when Macondo is infected with insomnia, the insomnia plague symbolizes loss of both political and social memories that results in both loss of language and reality. Therefore, I wish to explore the most celebrated work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and find out how language gives meaning to a utopic town and how many social and political agendas are dependent on language. Also, how the author manipulates language and narrative focus for the purpose of blending the real and fantastic elements of his fictional world.

Nonetheless its traditional treatment as a kind of heavenly gift, as a means by which the "chief" animal fumbles its way toward a transcendental truth, language can also be understood, more fundamentally and perhaps more productively— as part of the behavior of human beings (Rorty, 1982) ^[6]. Used to generating and receiving instructions, language not only coordinates behavior, including other verbal behavior, it also invents behavior, or possibilities for behavior, and therefore its instructions, perhaps mercifully, are often ambiguous. Moreover, language is a tool that cannot be separated from its user. Insofar as language cannot be negated, it signals the state which demands a constant existence with the culture of which language itself is an omnipresent part.

Written in 1967, *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE* is the most celebrated and well received novel written by Marquez. The author received a noble prize for the same. The story reveals the socio-political circumstances of Latin America. Instead of making it a straight political novel, Marquez uses an imaginary town called Macondo and the readers learn about the predicament of the whole nation via the sufferings of this town and its natives. And while the story evolves with the rise and fall of seven generations of Buendia clan, Marquez weaves plethora of themes that construct the novel to its excellence, language being one. It is the perfect fantasy where determinants like time and language loses their meaning. The author blends fantasy and reality via language.

It's a work where fantasy becomes reality and reality is nothing more than an illusion. Numerous episodes in the novel also show the author's manipulation of language and narrative focus for the purpose of fusing the real and fantastic elements of his fictional world.

Various languages form the outside world fill the novel, including the Guajiro language that the kids learn, the multilingual tattoos that were all over José Arcadio's body after his contact and return from the outside world, the Latin murmured by José Arcadio Buendia, and the Sanskrit translation of Melquiades's prophecies.

Language serves as a means of realism and construction of identity in the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and one of the finest example is the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. This paper will further discuss several aspects of language portrayed in the novel like: language as a constructor of plot, language as a carrier of a sort of a tradition, the phenomenon of language and reality working together, how language is a source of a problematic communication and confusion, the relationship between language and memory, and how language holds the power to bewitch.

Although language and identity in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* seem at first to be opposites, but they are perfectly reconcilable. Both are necessary in order to convey the particular conception of the world. This novel reflects importance of language not as it is experienced by one character, but as it is individually experienced by those coming from different backgrounds, for example, the gypsies or the Indian servants. Language can also be perceived as a constant deconstructing force or an interfering means in the utopian world in the text or just like the damage and tragedy of Latin America—caught between modernity and industrialization, torn by civil war, and withered by imperialism.

Language, Memory and Identity

The novel has its roots in the language, for example, one loses track of meaning at a point in the novel when Macondo is infected with insomnia, and the insomnia plague symbolizes loss of both political and social memory that results in both loss and malfunction of language and reality. That also causes disturbance and confusion in identity, not only among the natives but also results in misidentification of everyday things. The insomnia plague, with its origins uncertain, spreads all over the village of Macondo and causes restlessness and sleeplessness in all its inhabitants. The side-effect of this lasting insomnia is a loss of memory because of which all the villagers slowly start forgetting linguistic signifiers. As a way out they decide to write down on each

thing its name and its particular function. This makes everything in Macondo merely functional, a mundane object for everyday use. As the sleeplessness gets worse, amnesia begins to take over Macondo and steadily, all the inhabitants start to forget the names of things and their use. As a solution, Jose Arcadio Buendia inscribes the names and use of things on pieces of papers and pastes them on those things. For example:

“The sign that he hung on the neck of the cow was... This is a cow. She must be milked in the morning so that she will produce milk, and milk must be boiled in order to be mixed with coffee to make coffee and milk (Marquez, 1978: 43) ^[4].” This is how the author reveals the importance of language in the traditional society and its meaning. Once language starts to lose its meaning, everything else seems vague and absurd. It also implies a loss of tradition as it also signifies how the natives lost the grip on their past, that is, their utopia. Therefore, memory and meaning play a vital role in the hierarchy of language structure. Language tends to disturb and destroy the essential concepts of the natives of Macondo. The natives also start to lose the traditional values of their society. A tradition is based on the hierarchies of opposite ethics, such as, Sin/Virtue, Moral/Immoral, and Work/Home, etc. But all these opposites form one opposition: sacred/mundane, and this determines the stability of a tradition. All hierarchies are established within a language (Bharani, 2013) ^[2].

It just does not end with all this chaos but, further many of the characters in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* contemplate total forgetfulness as something dangerous, they, ironically, also seem to consider memory to be a burden. About half of the novel's characters speak of the load of having too many memories while the rest of them seem to have none at all. Rebeca's overabundance of remembrance causes her to lock herself in her house after her husband dies, and to live there with the remembrance of friends rather than the actual presence of people. On a contrary, Colonel Aureliano Buendia has almost no memories at all. He lives in an infinitely repeating present, melting down and then reforming his gathering of little gold fishes. Nostalgia and amnesia are the dual diseases of the Buendia clan, one trying to victimize the past, the other trapping them in the present. Thus distressed, the Buendias are doomed to repeat the same sequences until they consume themselves, and they are never able to move towards the future. Therefore, language hinders their memory and hinders their identity. As a result the entire identity of Macondo endangers as this loss of reality, of tradition, of identity has its roots in the loss of history and memory. Not only do they forget, during the insomnia plague and after, but they forget that they have forgotten, so they never make any attempts to remember, nor even to create their past.

Language and plot construction

Language and its use, play a vibrant role in the expansion of the plot and the theme of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Language is a way to channel differences, as well as a means of asserting and maintaining distance. Language is mysterious and endangered. It explains and it obscures. There are many instances in the novel where one can identify the particularity of language, for example, the tattoos of Jose Arcadio, the Sanskrit prediction, the use of Guajiro dialect. These

examples in the text can be well compared and contrasted with the ways they are used as well as the effect they produce on the readers. While providing all such instances in the novel, the author really seemed to pay a justified attention to language and how it connects the plot and acts as one of the important central themes in a contemporary work like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Far from being a problem the narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, specifically, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling. Narrative plays a vital role, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages regarding the nature of shared reality can be transmitted. That has been done coordinating the language. Going back and forth so much in time without confusing the chronology of the plot, is where the author excels with his techniques with language and of narration. Arising between experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language, narrative ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted. And it would follow, on this view, that the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself (White, 1981) ^[7]. This meta-message reflects what White identifies as the perception "at the heart" of structuralism and what he calls the "absurdist" criticism of Derrida, Foucault, et al., namely the perception that all cultural systems [are] products of the imposition of a purely fictive meaning on an otherwise meaningless reality. All meaning derives from language's power to bewitch.

Connecting cultural reality to Language

Marquez's novels establish an aesthetically grounded fictional discourse which represents the conventions, values and myths of the society in a symbolic language. It displays those aspects that have originated from the historical and cultural realities of Latin America. Its main object is to symbolically fictionalize the social conditions and the events and communities of the continent with the cultural signs. Therefore, every symbolic element in his novels serve as a figural reference to the realities of Latin America, conveying the connotative meaning. He has also frequently applied the archetypal symbols such as the biblical references, the mythical symbols and other stereotypical symbols of his culture that their signification depends on taking into account the cultural aspects of his society. The ideological aspects of the community are mostly depicted by the characters' behaviors and personality and the events that take place in the novel and the reactions of the people to them. Therefore, by applying the symbolic language, Marquez has made up his literary discourse on the basis of persuasion that induces the reader to feel an exquisite thing behind the surface structure. Due to this, the reader is engaged in an extra mental activity in order to artistically recreate the real world within the symbolized world of the fictional discourse. The reader thus sees the social, cultural and historical aspects of Latin America through various textually symbolized components of his literary discourse.

Language and Reality

"There is some way of breaking out of language in order to compare it with something else" (Rorty, 1982:19) ^[6]
The above statement by Richard Rorty can well fit into the

conceptualization of reality in the novel. Numerous episodes in the novel also show the author's manipulation of language and narrative focus for the purpose of fusing the real and fantastic elements of his work for example, the butterflies that appear mysteriously in the novel, there the distinction between symbol and actuality is broken down and declared void by the lyrical order of his style. The technical result of this method and the value of this view is that the conventional distinction between figurative and literal language is impossible to make and pointless. Conventional literary terms are inadequate to describe this fusion of both literal and metaphorical language. We who are trained to compartmentalize our minds into fact and fancy, business and God, myth and science, are prone to wonder over the nature of these butterflies, their origin, and their significance. In reality, however, the question is presumptuous and has validity only in our narrow-minded world with its forty-hour work week and our constant, energy-consuming, watchful stand to keep fancy and reality separated in our minds. As it is well suggested by Eason David that the dual role of the reader of the literature of fact requires a dialectical attitude toward historical truth. The approach may well concede that "facts" and "fictions" are not "given that we all recognize but rather the products of interpretive commodities whose work is the making of the two categories and explaining how they interact" (Eason, 1986: 24) [3].

Another example of how the author blends his imagination with language to make it seem real is the entire gypsy sequence. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the gypsies are primarily present to act as link that connect Macondo to the modern world. They function to offer evolutions from contrasting or unrelated events and characters. Every few years, specifically in the early days of Macondo, a pack of wandering gypsies arrives, turning the town into something like a carnival and demonstrating the wares that they have brought with them. One such thing is the language spoken by them. Before Macondo has a road to civilization, they are the town's only connection with the outside world. They bring both technology—inventions that Melquiades displays—and magic—magic carpets and other wonders. Gypsies, serve as versatile literary devices that also blur the line between fantasy and reality, especially when they connect the natives of Macondo and the outside world, magic and science, and even the past and present.

Language as a source of problematic communication

Language can also be seen as a source of a problematic communication. Jonathan Ryan (2013) [5] talks about ideas relating to the nature of language, literacy and communication as presented in the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and expounds on how these ideas contribute to the novel's more central theme of personal isolation. The analysis suggests Garcia Marquez engages with theories of language ranging from the Biblical account to more contemporary concerns such as the nature of reference and the influence of language and literacy on thought; of particular interest is the conflict that Garcia Marquez identifies between the communicative and cognitive functions of language. In developing these themes, Garcia Marquez effortlessly shifts from philosophical enquiry and reflection to humor and mockery, but underlying each of these concerns is a profound appreciation of the interaction between a sense of isolation and the many forms

of communicative breakdown (Jonathon Ryan, 2013: 94) [5]

The first problem of language and communication starts right with the start of Eden like Macondo. While language is still young and fresh in Macondo, like the Garden-of-Eden state at the beginning of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when many things in the newborn world are still unnamed, its function quickly becomes more complex. In fact, this final act of translation can be seen as the most significant act in the book, since it seems to make the book's existence possible and gives life to the characters and story within. As Garcia Marquez makes reading the final force that destroys Macondo and calls attention to his own task as a writer, he also reminds the readers that reading provides the fundamental first breath to every action that takes place in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. While the text can be thought of as something with one clear, predetermined meaning, Garcia Marquez asks his readers to recognize the fact that every act of reading is also an interpretation, and that such interpretations can have weighty consequences. Aureliano, then, does not just take the manuscripts' meanings for granted, but, also, he must translate and interpret them and ultimately precipitate the destruction of the town.

Another fine example is the English Encyclopedia episode. At first, the English encyclopedia that Meme receives from her American friend is a symbol for the way the American plantation holders are taking over Macondo. Again the author uses language as a base to construct an idea. When Meme, a descendant of the town's founders, begins to learn English, the foreigners' invasion on Macondo's culture becomes obvious. The concrete threat posed by the encyclopedia is later lessened when Aureliano Segundo uses it to narrate stories to his children. Because he does not speak English, Aureliano Segundo makes up stories to link with the pictures. By creating the possibility for multiple interpretations of the text, he unwittingly diffuses the encyclopedia's danger.

There are other episodes in the novel that suggest the idea of language being problematic. Like, when Jose Arcadio is overcome with nostalgia and goes mad, Ursula ties him to a tree in the courtyard, where he remains, talking in a language that no one understands. But later Father Nicanor discovers Jose Arcadio Buendia's mysterious language is Latin which is again alien to the natives. Another significant example is the deal with the gypsies. The town Macondo exposes with the outer world only after the arrival of the magical gypsies led by Malquiadis. Even the prophecy about the downfall of the town is written in Sanskrit, which is again confusing the characters in the novel.

They were new gypsies, young men and women who knew only their own language, [who had] the multiple-use machine that could be used at the same time to sew on buttons and reduce fevers, and the apparatus to make a person forget his bad memories, and a poultice to lose time, and a thousand more inventions so ingenious and so unusual that Jose Arcadio Buendia must have wanted to invent a memory machine so that he could remember them all. (Marquez, 1978: 17) [4].

The invasion that of the insomnia plague holds utmost importance in for theme of language. The plague is notably brought to the town by the Indian servants of the Buendias. These two Indian servants are the symbolic representation of the whole Indian population of the Americans, the Indians who are forgotten and crushed by the conquering Spaniards

who in the process forget their own past. Generally, the insomnia plague symbolizes loss of both political and social memories, loss of language and loss of reality. The plague enters into the territory of Macondo and engulfs the whole inhabitants and compels them to forget about everything. So, they begin to label all objects and describe their purpose. The inhabitants of Macondo preserve their past through the medium of writing, attempting to hold on to their awareness of their surroundings and consequently the past.

Conclusion

Garcia Marquez told Leslie Raymond Williams in an interview that he learned the tricks of his trade from his grandmother; the tone that “eventually used in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was based on the way my grandmother used to tell stories. She told things that sounded supernatural and fantastic, but she told them with complete naturalness”. Therefore, the author passes on to this generation with his excellent tale telling. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the most well received and celebrated work of Garcia Marquez. Although, Magic Realism is the main central theme of the novel that has been the central interest of the researchers. But there are several other themes that provide as a base or a power booster for the central theme, that is, the sub themes which are discussed in the paper. Language is one of the most significant themes in the novel, it holds and knits each sequence, and ornamentalizes the author’s imagination. Numerous episodes in the novel also show the author's manipulation of language and narrative focus for the purpose of fusing the real and fantastic elements of his fictional world. On the other hand the paper also observes how the concrete theme of language also serve as a complication at various instances for the characters. Therefore, Marquez portrays it as both a blessing and as a curse to the natives of Macondo. This also serves as a universal acknowledgement by the author.

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