

Seminar Paper
On
One Hundred Magical Years of Reality

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for Award of Degree of
B.A English (H)



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DECLARATION

Date: 22nd February 2016

I, Vrinda Maheshwari student of B.A English (H) of Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, hereby declare that I have completed the Seminar Paper on *One Hundred Magical Years of Midnight's Reality* in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of B.A English (H)

I declare that it is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for award of any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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Date: 22nd February 2016

CERTIFICATE

- This Seminar Paper titled *One Hundred Magical Years of Midnights* submitted by Vrinda Maheshwari Enrolment No. A0706115096 of Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of B.A. English (H), is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or full, for award of any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This Seminar Paper may be placed before the examiner/s for evaluation.

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One Hundred Magic Years of Midnight's Reality

Magic Realism is a style of creative expression whose growth accelerated in the Latin American societies in the late 1950s, chiefly the decades following World War I. But, before all the literary techniques came into play, Magic Realism was first conceived and used by a German historian of art, Franz Roh in 1925. Roh wanted to represent reality with a touch of magic in it; he characterized this style with accurate details, clarity, photographic elements and mainly, the magical portrayal of the logical world.

“Roh saw this tendency as post-Expressionism, a return to figural representation and yet a departure from realism (de Chirico, Picasso, Grosz). Although the movement in art that Roh wrote about was eclipsed by Neue-Sachlichkeit and Surrealism, the concept took hold in literature and film, an appellation for some of the most important creations of the twentieth century in those genres” (Lee, Sorensen)

The artistic style of Magic Realism stemmed from the genus of Realism which in turn came from the denunciation of the Romantic (idealistic) representation of life after the French Revolution of 1848. Idealisation of reality was abandoned and a pragmatic outlook of reality came to be represented.

“The momentum in the literary movement which also adopted the name Magic Realism moved in an opposite direction, away from Realism toward alternative consciousness and frequently embracing the fantastic” (Kremer)

The focus is not on the iconography but the literary genre of writing. But, before we jump onto the books, it is extremely important to distinguish Magic Realism from fantasy and myth. These three literary genres share a blurred line of meaning. But, once individually explained, they can be distinctively seen and separately understood and can be clearly fathomed and appreciated.

Fantasies are created and bred in alternative dimensions but in the universe, where the supernatural or the uncommon is the natural state of life and the world. Magic is a central theme pertaining to fantasy. A few famous examples of fantasy fictions are *The Harry Potter Series* (J.K Rowling) or *The Lord of the Rings* (J.R. R. Tolkien) or *The Hunger Game series* (Suzanne Collins) to name a few classic children fantasies.

William Bascom's article "*The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives*" defines myths as "tales believed as true, usually sacred, set in the distant past or other worlds or parts of the world, and with extra-human, inhuman, or heroic characters."

Myths involve the mystical elements like Gods or mere humans with unimaginable power. They are more concerned with the historical and the 'religious' aspect. Myths are a traditional 'folklore' of the olden days when science, technology and other areas of study had not been developed much. The myth of Hercules stealing the golden apples is a well told story. Or, the use myths and biblical stories in Milton's worldly acknowledged epic, *Paradise Lost*.

Magic Realism, on the other hand, is a literary technique in which the author retains the normal and natural law and order of the world, while the reality remains as it is. It blends the 'magic' and the supernaturalistic element in such a way that it is accepted as a

part of everyday life. Having innumerable yellow butterflies follow Rebecca everywhere in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is seen as an ordinary occurrence to the otherwise peculiar. Also, to take an example from Rushdie's writing, the path to Saleem's psychic abilities was through his great, big nose; he was able to confer with the midnight's children's convention due to his runny nasal gland. Obviously implausible but Saleem's accepts this strange occurrence with quite a normal attitude.

These definitions are generalised in order to explain the meaning of each in a short, concise manner. The main agenda is concentrated around Magic Realism, and its appearance in the artistic world of writing and cinema.

Magic Realism, as a literary genre, took roots in the Latin American world with the writing of authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez's and Julio Cortazar. They soon paved the way for this genus to step out of America and spread across international boundaries to countries like Africa, Europe and even India. Toni Morison or Salman Rushdie are fine examples. The fine line between reality and fantasy is blurred to such an extent that supernatural and 'magical' comes to be accepted as a part of the normal, mundane everyday routine.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* will be contemplated upon. While, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* will be the only magical realistic work of his that will be taken up in the research and study. The adaptations of *Midnight's Children* on the big screen will be compared to its literary counterpart. This will help realise whether the original write-ups are a better choice or the adaptations of the same.

The book *One Hundred Years of Solitude* opens with an eccentric and unconventional line. The writer wants the reader to realise the fact that the world is so old in his manuscript that most of it hasn't even been discovered yet. It is still expanding and growing into something that the dwellers of then cannot even fathom. Life, as we know it now, is breathing to life in this book.

“At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.” (Marquez, 1)

Also, Marquez wants to create a mixture of love, romance, intrigue, politics, and anything and everything else that happens and can happen in this world.

“Aureliano thought without saying so that the evil was not in the world but in some hidden place in the mysterious heart of Petra ... Intrigued by that enigma, he dug so deeply into her sentiments so that in search of interest he found love, because by trying to make her love him he ended up falling in love with her.”(Marquez, 35)

This quote clearly recalls the magic realistic aspect of being able to go through one's emotions like leafing through a book. Marquez beautifully scribbles the heart wrenching lines of love through the psyche of Aureliano who, in search of evil, instead fell victim to the drug addiction of Petra's love.

Another paragraph by Marquez reads:

“No one had gone into the room again since they had taken Melquíades's body out and had put on the door a padlock whose parts had become fused together with rust. But when Aureliano Segundo opened the

windows a familiar light entered that seemed accustomed to lighting the room every day and there was not the slightest trace of dust or cobwebs, with everything swept and clean, better swept and cleaner than on the day of the burial, and the ink had not dried up in the inkwell nor had oxidation diminished the shine of the metals nor had the embers gone out under the water pipe where José Arcadio Buendía had vaporized mercury. On the shelves were the books bound in a cardboard-like material, pale like tanned human skin, and the manuscripts were intact.” (Marquez, ch10)

Now, this quote gives an eerie kind of feeling when read. How can a room, which has been closed since so many years, look as if it was just freshly cleaned up? Marquez tackled and reasoned this strange happening with a logic that the reader has to interpret on his own. Melquiades had died in that room. So, one can assume that it is the spirit of his which resided in every nook and corner of the very room where Jose Arcadio Buendia “had vaporized mercury”.

One Hundred Years of Solitude won Marquez the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. Marquez never came around to selling the rights of this particular novel to any screen play writer nor did he himself tried to convert or represent the Magic Realistic qualities in cinema. But, Marquez has been a screenplay writer to quiet a few Spanish movie plots like “Eréndira”, “El gallo de oro” ,“Tiempo de morir”, and some more. In a world-famous interview, the movie produce, Weinstein, who was turned down by Marquez told the media of Marquez’s creative yet impossible request for him to make the movie.

“We must film the entire book, but only release one chapter – two minutes long – each year, for 100 years,” Weinstein said.”

Now, the second novel that is to be studied is of Rushdie’s. It is a literary bemoth and, *Midnight’s Children* is a pseudo autobiography of his protagonist, Saleem Ahmed, a

child of India's midnight's independence hour, exactly 15th August, 1947. 0000 hours. Taking birth at this special moment presented Saleem and a thousand other children with magical abilities who cried for the first time in their lives within these first sixty minutes. It is bildungsroman journey of Saleem who has the awesome power of being able to read minds through his nose and is the head of the Midnight's Children's conference. The novel maps his journey from the day he is born to the day he dies and he Saleem) wants the listener of his life story, Padma, to realise and understand few extremely important phenomenon which happened with and to him and henceforth shaped India's own personal history. This is an extremely brief description of the novel that Salman Rushdie wrote and won the "Booker of Booker Award" in the year 2015.

"There will be two heads—but you will see only one—there will be knees and a nose, a nose and knees" (Rushdie, 96)

This was a part of the prophecy that Ramram Seth told Amina, Saleem's mother; this combines the mystical aspect of Saleem's life with his unreliability of his story telling. The reading of *Midnight's Children* makes the reader realise that Saleem is puffed up with his pompous attitude. He believed he is the pre-cursor of Modern India's future. So, he might have edited the prophecy in order to help it fit better into his life events. Rushdie wanted to mix the mystical and the psychological aspects of Saleem's life and story.

"...something was ending, something was being born, and at the precise instant of the birth of the new India and the beginning of a continuous midnight which would not end for two long years, my son, the child of the renewed ticktock, came out into the world." (Rushdie, 481)

These lines were spoken by the protagonist of the novel, Saleem, when Parvati, another of the midnight's children bears him a son. The moment is glorious but ,yet in a

way, history repeats itself. Just like Saleem was born at the stroke of midnight, his son came into the world the moment the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, declared a state of emergency on the 25th of June.

“As the fifty-one men march down the alleyway a tickle replaces the itch in my grandfather’s nose... Adam Aziz ceases to concentrate on the events around him as the tickle mounts to unbearable intensities. As Brigadier Dyer issues a command the sneeze hits my grandfather full in the face. “Yaaaakh-thoooo!” he sneezes and falls forward, losing his balance, following his nose and thereby saving his life” (Rushdie, 41)

Using humour in serious and sombre situations gave Rushdie a fresh appeal. When Adam Aziz, Saleem’s grandfather sneezed, he fell forward. Again and again, the novelist made the reader realise that Aziz himself had a great big nose and hence, the sneezing of Aziz during the Jallianwala Bagh massacre almost seems comical in nature and veers away the reader’s mind from the complexity mediocrity and of the situation.

“Nobody could remember when Tai had been young. He had been plying this same boat, standing in the same hunched position, across the Dal and Nageen Lakes... forever” (Rushdie, 10).

Rushdie here just wants his readers to know that no one knows about Tai, the boatsman. It is as if he had always been there, filthy and existing as a boats person. Tai’s disgust for Adam Aziz’s foreign education is apparent. And, he, himself seems symbolic of the India before the conquests and the wars.

After this brief and concise analysis of the quotes and writings of Rusdhie, the comparison will be drawn between the movie and the literary work. The movie is a 2012 British adaptation of the book, directed by Deepa Mehta. The filming was kept a confined affair as the director was worried about protests by Islamic fundamentalist groups.

Now, the screenplay writer of this movie is Salman Rusdhie himself but, watching the movie did not give a magic realistic representation of the very novel he crafted. Most of his plot line was absent; the magic realism was more or less absent in the modest yet incomparable movie of Deepa Mehtas—“a filmmaker whose socially engaged naturalism seems a mismatch with Mr. Rusdhie’s gleeful too-muchness” (Rachel Saltz

Those who have read the books expected much more from the movie and were sourly disappointed when the movie finished even before it began. The beautiful and compelling essence of Rusdhie’s writing and extremely vibrant and vivid imagery was absent in the movie.

A few critiques of the movie, *Midnight’s Children* have been quoted below for a critical analysis of the movie as well.

“There’s nothing to hang onto here. Most scenes last only two or three minutes, and events don’t accrue so much as they just pig-pile on top of one another.” (Burns, *Philadelphia Weekly*)

“The effort to pack an already overstuffed picaresque epic into a film of more than two hours ends up an indigestible stew.” (Keough, *Boston Globe*)

A sprawling, lumbering epic that manages to preserve a substantial amount of the book’s content but achieves little of its magic. (Frank Swietik)

All in all, it can be concluded that movie adaptations do not always, or rather, extremely rarely ever do justice to the creative expressions of an author. Weaving magic realistic stories with words seem a better and much more convenient pedestal for an author to help a reader or a person visualise and live the world that he himself lives in when he writes. Sadly, no movie of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* will ever be made and hence, the comparison cannot be done. Yet, it won't take too much of a coax for one to realise and believe that books are and will always be the better form to represent ideas and literary genres.

As Stephen King proudly proclaimed, "Books and movies

are like apples and oranges. They both are fruits, but taste completely different."

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