

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CIRCULAR RUIN BY JORGE LUIS BORGES AND A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS BY GARCIA MARQUEZ FROM THE VIEW POINT OF FEATURES OF MAGIC REALISM

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### ABSTRACT

Magic realism is a modern technique popularized in the fiction by the Latin American writers. Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Gorge Luis Borges are the top names whose fictions elegantly and artistically deal with the blend of the magic in the ordinary situation. The Circular ruins by Gorge Borges and A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings are the fine examples of the mastery of these writers in magic realism. The Circular Ruin is packed with the mystery of the creation of a man dreaming a son while A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings narrates the story of a family who finds a mysterious old man with wings on the sea shores. The stories are replete with the characteristic examples of magical elements and events taking place in every life and mundane setting. The plot is woven in mysteries that sometimes ravel and sometimes leave the readers thinking. Borges and Marquez artistically play with the words and provide elaboration of the magical elements which makes their stories perfect example of their mastery in the elegant treatment of the magic and reality. The findings have been incorporated from the stories and supported by various other secondary data from internet and journals to infer the conclusion.

**Keywords:** Magic realism, mystery, supernatural, transformation

### INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century was dominated by significant events like World War I, World War II, and the cold war that brought a socio-economic and political change in the world order. The literature of the century got a shift from the traditional forms of literature in its themes, style, and techniques. Many writers around the world felt the need to create their works by using different approaches and techniques. Magical realism is one of the narrative techniques initially adopted by Latin American writers and artists. They created magical elements along with the threads of realism to depict the social, cultural, and political picture of the modern world differently.

Magic realism is a literary movement that refers to a writing style or techniques that includes magical and supernatural events in a more realistic way. It is against the traditional portrayal of reality in the

works of literature. The term magic realism (magischer realismus) was first used in 1925 by German art critic Franz Roh in the art category (Zamora, 1995). He considered magical realism a way to explore the hidden mysteries in daily life (Bower, 2004). Later on, this term was introduced to Latin American writers and critics in 1949, and Alejo Carpentier brought the term *lo real Maravilloso* which means marvelous reality in the prologue of his *The kingdom of this world* as a mixture of magical and realistic views of everyday life of Latin American culture that is expressed through art and literature. (Sims, 2013). Till the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the technique of magic realism was adopted by many great Latin American writers in their fictional works that include magical and strange happenings in the realist matter-of-fact descriptions and narratives (Sreeparvathy, 2019).

As a literary movement, magical realism gave international exposure to Latin American fiction. Many writers of Latin America, like Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Carlos Fuentes, and Garcia Marquez used the elements of magic and fantasy in their works. The new users of this technique have strengthened the relationship between the literature of Latin America and magic realism (Ziegler, 2008). Garcia Marquez one of the most prominent and Nobel prize-winning Latin American writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century frequently adopts the technique of magic realism in an artistic way his his fictional works to address some meaningful themes. Similarly Jorge Luis Borges, a well known and influential writer of Latin America, produced successful short stories which are rich in magic realism. It is prominent to examine and compare the works of Marquez and Borges based on Magic realism to know how both writers have reflected the blend of magic and reality in their works respectively. It is also significant to examine the effect of Marquez and Borges on Latin American writers. It is worthwhile to analyze their works within the framework of magic realism.

This current study explores two short stories ‘A very old man with enormous wings’ written by Garcia Marquez and The Circular Ruin by Jorge Luis Borges in the light of magic realism. It aims to investigate the treatment of magic and reality and compare their uses in these two stories. The study is significant as it enhances the understanding of the stories through a different technique called magic realism. It further gives an extensive knowledge about the technique of magic realism through these short stories and further enhances the understanding of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American literature.

The research method is qualitative, using an in-depth textual analysis method. The data is collected from various scholarly articles, books, different interviews of the authors from youtube channels, and sites to support the analysis of the two short stories. The mentioned short stories are selected because these both contain the features of magic realism respectively.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Magic realism proposes a complex reading to fiction that goes beyond the limits of realism. It is against the traditional portrayal of reality. It rather blends magical elements with every day life. Magic

realism has certain features and principles that separate it from other narrative techniques. The features such as: the blend of natural and supernatural events, magic accuring in the real world, sense of mystry, fragmented identity, using crispy and witty language, metamorphosis and transformation. These features of magic realism help to make the comparison of these two works more comprehensible.

These two short stories affirm the very nature of magic realism. In magical realism daily life is presented as a mixture of natural and supernatural events. supernatural is not an obvious matter it is rather presented as natural that occurs in daily life. It is integrated and admitted into rationality (Zamora,1998).

Borges and Marquez are both Latin American authors who usually incorporate magic occurring in the realistic and everyday world. Usually, the setting of magical realistic fiction is the mundane and realistic world where fantastical things appear as normal. In The Circular Ruin though the character is a wizard dreaming a man into life which is something mysterious and supernatural the fantastical events are normalized in the real world. The world of The Circular Ruin is an “amphitheater which was approximately the burnt temple” (p. 2). Similarly, the story A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings by Garcia Marquez is set in the normal world per se Pelayo’s house where an old man with enormous wings considered to be an angel is kept captive. In an essay titled “An Overview of a Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”, Tom Faulkner argues, “By combing realistic and supernatural or imaginative representation and their explanations seems like the Author is treating them with equal credibility, and at the same time suggesting that both “ways of knowing” are valid”.

Because the setting in magic realistic stories is quite mundane and realistic the fantastical elements are presented in a way that looks normal for example in The Circular Ruin, the man was not surprised seeing his wounds got healed (p. 1). The fact that the wizard dreams his son into reality and entirety is incorporated in a way that looks realistic. Notwithstanding, in Marquez’s short story A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings, Pelayo sees “a very poor and old person, who is handicapped by his enourmous wings lying down with his face in the mud, who, inspite of many efforts could not get

up, and the people very soon found him familiar and their surprise ended at the time of their discovery. The wings on the creature look so natural that the narrator feels that why everyone does not have certain wings. Additionally, when Payalo plans to leave the angel-like winged man back to the sea in a raft the other day, he finds the people playing with him “As if [it] weren’t a supernatural creature but a circus animal” (p. 1). Furthermore, the magical realistic stories have a sense of mystery. In the story *The Circular Ruin*, Borges keeps an air of mystery throughout the story revealing it at the end. Firstly, the character of the man is mysterious and does not have any name in the story but is referred to as “the taciturn man”, “the grey man”, “the stranger”, “the wizard” and at places just “the man”. He is in a mysterious process of creating a man, his son, through dreams. He focuses on his dreams and spends a thousand days sleeping and dreaming a man which he fails to bring in reality until he prays to the God of Fire who brings his creation into life. Later, at the end of the story, he finds that he is unaffected by a fire that breaks in the temple realizing “He also was an illusion, that someone else was dreaming” (p. 7). Besides, the master of magic realism, Garcia Marquez also builds a sense of mystery in his short story. In the story, the old man having enormous wings is a mysterious creature that is presented in the story in various ways. The narrator initially describes him as “an old man, a very old man... impeded by his enormous wings” (p. 1) but soon realizes it is a “flesh and blood angel”. At times they feel it is like a “circus animal” while other times feel it like a “huge descript hen” and find “that his wings were not like the ones angels have but, rather, the wings are those of a sidereal bat”. Fragmented identity is an integral characteristic of magic realism which is obvious in the two short stories under investigation. The dreamer’s identity is fragmented unknown and mysterious. Similarly, his son, the dreamed man is also fragmented with no definite physical wholeness, fragmented in parts and the dreamer dreams for endless hours to put it into its entirety. In Marquez’s *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* the old man is incomplete and fragmented and drops the furs of his wings and grows them again to be able to finally fly. The identity of the old man is also fragmented and not definite as nobody know what creature it is.

Characteristically, a magical realistic fiction usually involves an elaborated description of the magical and realistic elements using crispy and witty language. Borge’s language is descriptive with vivid elaborations. The wizard who takes great interest and focuses on every detail of his creative process is happy that “His son’s existence depends only on his sleep, his dreaming” (Monga, 2019, p.433). Borges puts it into witty words, “He wants to dream a man; he wants to dream him in minute entirety and impose him on real world” (p. 2). Borges also uses descriptive elaborations in the presentation of the magical realities in the story. He writes; “The kind of a stranger dreaming that he is at the center of an amphitheater which is to a certain extent the burnt temple”. He further mentions about the uncommunicative students as the “tiers of seats and the faces of the farthest ones hung at a distance of many centuries very high above the stars”(p. 2). He further calls that their attributes are more accurate. Marquez’s language is equally crispy with great witty details. When the news of the man with enormous wings spreads in the village, everyone comes to find their solutions because “His prudence fell on sterile hearts”. Marquez adds his wits in the descriptive passage and writes; “The most unfortunate invalids on earth came in search of health”. He uses phrases for the woman like “counting the heart beat” and “running out of numbers”. Similarly other evidences are about the Portuguese man who was disturbed because of the “noise of the stars”, the sleepwalker who woke up at late night and do certain works like to change or remove whatever he had already done or fixed when he was awake; and many others which are present in the text. Metamorphosis and transformation usually occur in the magic realism narrative. The two selected short stories inculcate the idea of the transformation in the characters. In *The Circular Ruin*, the man who dreams his son creates him through transformation. He creates his pupil into reality from the cloud to human form and then undoes them and prefers focusing on one pupil only. As he rises from his dream one day insomnia falls over him and he is unable to sleep and assemble the body parts of his students. he tries hard to get back to his dreaming and once he succeeds in doing so, he starts dreaming of one part

of the body at a time. Thus the story revolves around the 'doing', 'undoing', and 'redoing' of the student in his dream.

Transformation also occurs in *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*. The old man undergoes a transformation as at the outset of the story he appears to be weak and his wings not so strong that could support him in his flights, but as the plot develops towards the resolution, the angel musters his strength and attempts his first flight. Moreover, the narrator also makes a reference of the woman who has been transformed into spider because she did not respect her parents instead disobeyed them.

### **Conclusion**

In short, Magic realism as a narrative technique adds charm to the text giving readers different perspectives to think various possibilities within the everyday world. Gorge Luis Borges along with Gabriel Garcia Marquez are both masters of the magic realism technique. Their mentioned short stories are rich in the hues of the blend of magic and reality. In these two stories, the supernatural elements are incorporated with the realistic and everyday ordinary settings and events. The *Circular Ruins* is based on a dream of a person whom someone else is dreaming. It is a dream within a dream which is supernatural. In *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* the winged man seems to be a supernatural and mysterious creature. However, the mundane setting and the mysterious happenings are also the elements of the magic realism in the short stories. The stances of transformation of the characters and the fragmented identities in the stories are some other features of magic realism found in the texts of Borges's *The Circular Ruin* and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* that give the readers the aesthetic joy of exploring new ways to look into the reality. Magic realism as a technique proposes perspective that magical and strange things can happen in a normal world.

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