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Magic Realism in the Works of Isabel Allende and Gabriel García and Laura Esquivel

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Abstract

To begin, this article provides a short overview of Magic Realism. The meaning of the term the origins and development of Magical Realist literature, as well as "Magic Realism," must be explored next. Three famous authors will be discussed: Garcia Marquez, Isabelle Allende, and Laura Esquivel, as well as female writers Isabelle Allende and Laura Esquivel. In addition, a number of outstanding works by well-known authors connected with the literary movement Magical Realism are critically analysed. *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, *Like Water for Chocolate* and *The House of the Spirits* are among the notable literary works to be studied in terms of their Magical Realist aspects.

Keywords: Magic Realism, Garcia Marquez, Isabelle Allende, Laura Esquivel, Literature

Introduction

The phrase "magic realism" refers to a style of writing or method in which magical and supernatural occurrences are recounted realistically without regard for their improbability. It uses a novel mix of truth and fantasy to challenge the nature of reality and to bring attention to the process of creation. In 1925, German art critic Franz Roh used the term "magical realism" (Magischer Realismus) to characterise a return to a more realistic approach after Expressionism's abstraction. (pg. 134). This trend was initially established by Latin-American authors who used exceptional and mystical aspects to depict reality to demonstrate that their culture was alive and complex. It is believed to have started in the 1940s with the representative books *Men of Maize* and *The Kingdom of this World* by Spanish American authors Miguel Angel Asturias and Alejo Carpentier, respectively. Many indigenous elements, such as folklore and cultural beliefs, as well as a specific geographical and political environment, were utilised by these authors. Characters transform into animals, slaves are aided by the dead, and time goes backward and occasionally reverses are all common themes in these books. With the release of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1970, this trend gained popularity in English. Isabel Allende and Laura Esquivel are two female authors who utilised this approach.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Alejo Carpentier, Mikhail Bulgakov, Miguel Angel Asturias, Carlo Fuentes, George Luis Borges, Isabel Allende, and Laura Esquivel are some of the most prominent writers of Magic Realism in literature. However, all of these authors lived in various periods, had different nationalities, social and political origins, and were able to develop their own unique style in creating great works of writing, some of which would undoubtedly fall under the category of 'Magic Realist Literature.' Gabriel Garcia Marquez is one of the world's most well-known "magic realism" authors, as well as South America's most well-known author. The majority of his literary works are situated in his hometown of 'Aracataca.' Until the 1960s, Marquez worked in Colombia, Paris, London, Venezuela, and Caracas, among other locations. He produced a number of fictitious works with magically realistic elements. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, and *Love in the Time of Cholera*, for which he received the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in 1998, are just a few of his notable works. *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, his latter work, was released in 2005. In 1982, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his contribution to the field. On April 17th, 2014, he died in Mexico City.

Isabel Allende and Laura Esquivel are two female authors who have made significant contributions to magical realism literature. Isabel Allende was born in Lima, Peru, in 1942. Her uncle, Chilean President Salvador Allende, was the most famous member of her family until he was murdered in 1973. This incident had the most impact on her works. *The House of the Spirits* was first published in 1982 and has since gained worldwide acclaim and many accolades. *Of Love and Shadows*, *Eva Luna*, *Ines of My Soul: A Novel*, and *The Sum of Our Days: A Memoir* are some of his other notable works. In 2013, she became a citizen of the United States. Laura Esquivel was another female author who used the magical realism

approach in her writing. She began her career as a screenwriter, writing a script for the film *Chido One*. *Like Water for Chocolate* was her first book. She went on to write a number of literary pieces, including *The Law of Love*, *Swift as Desire*, which has many personal aspects. *Malinche and Between the Fires: Intimate Writing on Life, Love, Food, and Flavor* are two of her other books.

In the mid-twentieth century, when Latin America was thriving economically and culturally, magic realism became popular. The supernatural and exceptional are presented to the reader by the author's magic realism against the actual world's background. In a real-life environment, magical aspects are exposed. Take a peek at our three fantasy books to get a taste of this fascinating genre.

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings García Márquez's

The main features of Latin American Magic Realism can be found in García Márquez's story *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, which was published in his 1972 book *The Incredible and Sad Tale Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*. (In 1972, *Leaf Storm and Other Stories* included an English translation.) Several American editors and critics have misdated *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, which is not an early work but was written soon after García Márquez's *Magnum Opus*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, since its publication in Spanish in 1955.)

As a young law student, García Márquez read Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. It was a watershed moment, and the effect can be seen in the early stories, which often describe unusual occurrences taking place in mundane surroundings. If Kafka reinvented the story in the modern world, García Márquez recreated it on the foreign landscape of the Third World. If Kafka obscured spiritual things by trapping them in bureaucratic procedure, his Colombian pupil shifted our perspective on Latin America by claiming that visionary romanticism was just reporting from the New World. Jorge Luis Borges, an Argentinean maestro, was another significant mentor for García Márquez.

Borges had discreetly redefined the creative limits of Latin American literature, while being just thirty years García Márquez's senior. He had also almost single-handedly resurrected the weird story for high-art literature. He used the mythology of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Confucianism as metaphysical characters, removing religion and the supernatural from any set dogma. Borges' complex fictions were conveyed in popular rather than experimental genres, such as the fable, the detective story, the supernatural tale, and the gaucho legend. He was the first great post-modernist storyteller, and he found a willing disciple in García Márquez, who expanded on these new ideas in a variety of ways.

The storyline of García Márquez's tale may be described in a few words. Pelayo finds an elderly guy with huge wings lying face down in the dirt of his courtyard at the conclusion of a three-day downpour. He returns with his wife Elisenda right away to examine the bald, nearly toothless man who seems to be barely alive. They try to converse, but no one can comprehend what the winged ancient is saying. Pelayo places the filthy, meek creature in a chicken cage after consulting with a neighbour who identifies him as an angel. People begin to throng to the winged prisoner, mocking and insulting him at first, then seeking miracles

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from him. The local priest tries to find out if the unusual prisoner is an angel or a wicked imposter. He smells the old man's stink and sees his parasite-infested wings, yet he writes to the bishop and then Rome for a decision. (In a Kafkaesque scenario, Rome seeks more information but never takes a choice.)

Pelayo and his wife soon start charging a fee to visit their angel. The crowds increase to the point that additional carnival attractions are needed. A young lady was turned into a tarantula the size of a ram with the head of a virgin by a touring sideshow. Because the spider lady, unlike the quiet, almost immovable angel, is eager to speak to clients, she starts to pull the crowd away. Pelayo and his wife, on the other hand, have amassed sufficient wealth to construct a beautiful two-story mansion. A number of years pass. Their kid, who was a baby at the start of the tale, is now old enough to begin school. To Elisenda's chagrin, the weak angel drags himself about their land. His final bedraggled dad is likewise lost. The elderly man almost dies of fever that winter, but his feathers begin to regrow in the spring. The elderly guy awkwardly takes flight and flaps away over the water one day, while Elisenda watches from the kitchen.

Apart from the supernatural aspects, the narrative of Garcia Márquez's tale is dull. The conclusion is so devoid of overt narrative creativity that it comes off as anticlimactic. The tale has an unusual feel to it because of the plot's flatness—It's impersonal like a news story and episodic like a tale. The story's omniscient narrator adds to the feeling of detachment by recounting the odd events with deadpan objectivity. The story's power comes from the extraordinary details, which are seldom boring and often spectacular. A hodgepodge of people and things (varying from a normal parish priest to an enchanted tarantula lady) march by, leaving the reader unsure of what to expect next—the odd, the mundane, or the magical? That distracting but disorienting impact is crucial to the Magic Realism experience, and it is, to some extent, the characteristic that most clearly separates it from its forerunners. Although Gogol, Kafka, and Singer all produced similar kinds of fiction, none of them threw in as many strange elements as Singer did.

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings seems to encourage a wide range of metaphorical and allegorical interpretations, yet Garcia Márquez consistently undermines or defies any simple interpretation. If this scrawny, sickly creature really symbolises the miraculous fall into ordinary life, he does not conform to anyone's expectations—priest, petitioner, or even paying circus patron. This alleged angel is not just uninteresting and unknown, but also a little disgusting. No one in the narrative is ever able to speak with him effectively. We won't be able to comprehend a word he says if he speaks heavenly language. He appears, stays for a short time, and then leaves without explanation or apparent purpose. If the story is to be read figuratively, the winged old man symbolises both this world's and the next's impenetrable mysteries. Whatever he is—mortal or otherworldly—he lives beyond our comprehension. On the blank screen of his history, we may project our own thoughts, but his essence will always remain hidden. When he flies away, we know nothing more about him than we did when he arrived.

The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende

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When Allende got a phone call in 1981 informing her that her much-loved grandpa was approaching death, she was inspired to write her first book, *The House of the Spirits*. She couldn't visit him since she was in exile in Venezuela, so she instead sent him a letter. *The House of the Spirits* grew out of her grandfather's letter, which was sent in the hopes of keeping him "alive" in spirit at the very least.

Allende's first book, published in 1982, follows four generations of the affluent Trueba family through the tumultuous political periods of post-colonial Chile. The supernatural is there from the start, with Allende portraying one of the novel's major characters, Clara, as having otherworldly powers. Expect to see apparitions in the everyday, time changes in the story, and omens coming true. Not just a masterwork of magic realism, but also of feminist and Chilean literature.

The House of the Spirits was important in cementing Allende's reputation as a master of magical realism. It covers four generations of a single family, beginning with a lady with magical abilities who discreetly writes about them in her diary. Aside from the familial drama, there is a lot of political criticism. The novel's tale of post-colonialism, revolution, and the resulting oppressive regime is a fairly clear parallel for Chile's tumultuous past and present, despite the fact that the name of the country in which the novel is set is never mentioned, nor are there any recognisable names among the characters in the book. These political themes would become more prominent in several of her subsequent books.

Two years after *The House of the Spirits*, Allende returned to her origins as a children's novelist with *The Porcelain Fat Lady*. The novel is based on two major events in Allende's life: her divorce from her spouse and the harsh politics of Chile's Pinochet dictatorship. This would become a recurring theme in much of Allende's writing, with her drawing inspiration from experiences in her own life, even the tragic or bad ones.

Following it came *Eva Luna* and *Of Love and Shadows*, both of which dealt with the tensions that existed under the Pinochet dictatorship. At the time, Allende's work was also dipping back into the short story pool. In 1991, she published *The Stories of Eva Luna*, a collection of short stories recounted by *Eva Luna's* heroine.

Allende works in the magical realism genre, but not exclusively, evoking parallels to writers such as Gabriel García Márquez. Although other writers use magical realism, it is generally linked with Latin American culture and authors. The genre is a cross between reality and fantasy literature, as its name implies. It usually includes a narrative universe that is basically realistic, with the exception of one or two fantasy aspects, which are handled with the same level of realism as the non-fantastical parts.

The complicated political environment in her home Chile is depicted in many of her works, both directly and in metaphorical meanings. Salvador Allende, Allende's cousin, was president of Chile during a turbulent and contentious period, and he was ousted by a military revolution headed by Pinochet (and tacitly supported by the United States military and intelligence apparatus). Pinochet established a military dictatorship and outlawed any political opposition immediately. Human rights abuses were committed, Allende's supporters and former colleagues were apprehended and murdered, and civilians were also victims of the

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crackdown on dissent. The revolution directly impacted Allende, but she also authored political essays criticising the government. Most notably *Of Love and Shadows*, some of her books openly and critically portray life during the Pinochet dictatorship.

Most notably, Allende's writings often explore gender problems, particularly women's position in patriarchal cultures. Allende has been interested in portraying women who break out from the conventional, conservative moulds that place marriage and children as the apex of the feminine experience from her early days as a romance book translator. Instead, her books depict complicated women who strive to take control of their own lives and destiny, and she examines the positive and negative repercussions of women attempting to set themselves free.

With *Daughter of Fortune* and its sequel *Portrait in Sepia*, Allende returned to writing family epics in 1999. With *City of the Beasts*, *Kingdom of the Golden Dragon*, and *Forest of the Pygmies*, Allende returned to the fiction field with a trilogy of young adult novels that reverted to her magical realism approach. According to reports, she was inspired to create young adult novels by her grandkids. *Zorro*, her own version on the folk hero, was published in 2005.

Allende is still writing books, mainly in the magical realism and historical fiction genres. Although she often returns to Latin American tales and cultures, this is not always the case, and her books frequently show sympathy for downtrodden peoples throughout history and across the world. For example, her 2009 book *Island Beneath the Sea* is set during the late-eighteenth-century Haitian Revolution. She has 18 novels and collections of short stories, children's literature, and four nonfiction memoirs, as of 2019. *Long Petal of the Sea*, her most recent book, was published in 2019. She currently spends the most of her time in California, where she lived with Gordon until their divorce in 2015.

Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel

Like Water for Chocolate is a novel and a cookbook that was published in Mexico in 1990. Esquivel skilfully cooks up some really beautiful literary passages by bringing magical realism into the kitchen. Tita De La Garza, the youngest daughter of a Mexican family, is the protagonist of the tale., on her journey to happiness, which is fraught with obstacles. Her very birth is imbued with magical realism characteristics, and her subsequent abilities in the kitchen have a profound effect on anybody who consumes her cuisine. A must-read for anybody interested in learning about Mexico's culinary heritage.

Magic realism varies from pure fantasy in that it is situated in a real, contemporary world with realistic human and societal depictions. Magical components are mixed with a realistic environment in order to get a better knowledge of reality in magic realism. These magical elements are articulated in the same straightforward fashion as regular occurrences, enabling the real and the exceptional to coexist in the same thought stream. Magic realism is usually considered as a literary and visual art form; film and music, on the other hand, exhibit less signs of the genre. In magical realism, the supernatural is often connected to the primordial or magical. Her novel *Like Water for Chocolate* (1990), a combination of a story and a recipe, is well-known. It had been released in Mexico a year earlier. When the film

version of *Like Water for Chocolate* was released in 1992, it became well-known and well-loved all around the globe.

Like Water for Chocolate is based on real stories about Mexican people and events. It deals with family issues. Laura Esquivel starts her story with Tita, Mama Elena's youngest daughter and the sister of Rosaura and Gertrudis. Her next-door neighbour, Pedro, was her true love. He has aroused her attention, and she has expressed her desire to marry him. Her family tradition, however, said that she was not permitted to marry since she was the youngest of all the females. She has to care for her mother till she dies. On the other hand, Pedro marries Tita's sister Rosaura to be near to her. As a result, he relocates to "the ranch," where the family resides. The author's fanciful ideas were mixed with the events that occurred after their marriage and the result of their marriage. Laura Esquivel used the concept of magic realism many times in *Like Water for Chocolate*. To begin with, when Tita was born at the kitchen table, she was carried into this world by a torrent of tears that spilled over the edge of the table and splattered over the kitchen floor (LWC 10). The narrative of Tita's birth is the first fantastical image in *Like Water for Chocolate*, emphasising the book's magical realism and showing the power and improbability that characterise the events of the novel.

In Laura Esquivel's novel, *Like Water for Chocolate*, food plays a significant role. It not only has a significant part in the book, but it also has a significant significance in Mexican culture. The book depicts many of the culinary traditions that Mexicans believe to be important to their culture. Mexican women have a significant role in the house and must be competent cooks. The capacity of Mexican women to prepare meals for every occasion has become a national tradition. In addition, the phrase referred to the significance of eating. *Like Water for Chocolate* is a Mexican expression that means "at boiling point." In Mexico, hot chocolate is made with water rather than milk. Chocolate chunks are boiled in water, or chocolate tablets are melted. It's a metaphor for Tita's sexual arousal or desire when she's with Pedro. "Tita was "like water for chocolate"—she was on the verge of bursting." (170) (LWC). It's a good title for Laura Esquivel's book because of the Magical Realism combined with the food theme, which is a big element of Latin American culture. The next feature is the fusion of historical and magical themes. *Like Water for Chocolate*, by Laura Esquivel, is a brilliant blend of history and fiction. The characters in *Like Water for Chocolate* are set against the background of the Mexican Revolution, which was the most important modernising force in Mexican history from 1910 to 1917. During this time, peasants and indigenous peoples banded together under Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata's leadership to reject the old order's oppression, revive democracy, and recapture Mexico.

Laura Esquivel bridges the gap between the ordinary and the supernatural with magical realism. It permeates not just her creative work, but also her use of metaphor and symbolism. Rather than suggesting that everyone has a fire within, magical realism allows for the possibility that everyone possesses a matchbook that can be lighted. The work's abstract language is transformed into a concrete experience through magical realism.

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In *Like Water for Chocolate*, Laura Esquivel emphasises the combination of elements of "magic" and "reality," giving it beauty and meaning. She often utilises food as a metaphor for love and passion. Laura Esquivel, furthermore, can use the beauty of family life to bring political concerns to the stage. Her characters are engrossed in the wonderful atmospheres and events that occur in the house and kitchen and in the midst of traditions. As a consequence, Laura Esquivel's novel *Like Water for Chocolate* clearly succeeds in fusing imagination with a real-life situation.

Conclusion

Following the so-called "Boom" phase of magical realism in the 1960s and the hyperactive marketing of magical realism books by publishers and distributors, magical realistic literature deals with political interpretations of the genre. Many magical realism aspects were given by the writers Garcia Marquez, Isabelle Allende, and Laura Esquivel. In relation to specific political and contextual considerations, their works are rich of similar motifs and topics such as "magic and myth," "identification," "rationality and development," and "questioning of reality." These authors, who came from a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and political backgrounds, carved out their own niche in creating great works of fiction with strong magical and realistic aspects.

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