

An Analysis of Allende's "*Ines of My Soul*" from the View Point of Magic Realism: A Case Study

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Received: September 26, 2011

Accepted: October 26, 2011

Published: March 1, 2012

doi:10.5539/ells.v2n1p15

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ells.v2n1p15>

Abstract

Magic Realism is a literary movement that tries to give real states to the world of imagination of modern narratives/novels. The movement originated in the fictions/novels of Latin-American writers in the mid-twenty century. It reflects the ontological uncertainty of our times, rather than relying on traditional realist fictions which assume to describe the world of reality, and challenges the traditional perceptions of the ordered world which underpins realist fiction's pretensions to reproduce reality in literature. This type of novel tries to accord the same status with the world of mind and imagination as that of the social/real world. Being innovative in nature, magic realism challenges rational cultural traditions of the West; the ways in which the West has used the novel to reflect and make sense of experience. It also questions the Eurocentrism of the West by expressing the Third World experiences and drawing upon and focusing on local culture/s. Magic realist novels reflect resistance against the dominant culture and traditions imposed by the West and/or dictated from outside, to make sense of the third World countries and their native languages and cultures.

This paper attempts to analyse Isable Allende's "*Ines of My Soul*" from the view point of Magic realism. In her novel, Allende depicts the mysterious world of fantasy in (magic) realistic ways to show the psychological reality of modern man of today; modern man as he is or can be, not as the West wants him to be. First, with reference to the features and principles of magic realism, a model of analysis will be established. Second, Allende's novel will be analysed within the model. Finally, the results of the analysis will be discussed to show how they imply for better reading and understanding of novels of this type.

Keywords: Magic realism, Traditional realism, Latin-American literature, Mysterious world, Psychological reality, Reading literature

1. Introduction

This study attempts to analyse Isabel Allende's novel, "*Ines Of My Soul*", from the view point of Magic Realism, to see the extent to which the principles and features of this literary movement can be traced in the novel. The term Magic Realism was used for the first time by Franz Roh, the German literary critic, in 1925 (see Roh, 1968). He considered Magic Realism as a special approach to art, particularly literature. For him, Magic Realism was the way of expression, the way to answer to reality and imagination of the mysterious picture of reality (Flores, 1955).

Magic Realism is one of the literary movements that focuses on the fantastic elements of every day life as found in the imagined communities situated primarily in Latin America. Its specific influences can be found in the surrealist movement in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, the first magic realist movement was centered in Europe, especially in Germany and France, where the major exponents of surrealism were Franz Roh and Andre Berton, respectively (Galens, 2002).

Magic Realism was the knack for expression of American's thinking and making a new way of modern literature in Latin America in the 1940s: every magic realist text is the urge to redefine Latin American identity by forging a point of view specific to the events, history, and culture of that region. Therefore, its history of colonization, the

importation of slaves and influx of immigrants, the political tumult after independence, and economic dependency on imperial powers like the United States and England that positioned Latin America as inferior and backward become subjects of investigation that are rewritten and retold from an alternative point of view (Zamora and Faris, 1995). Isabel Allende, who is one of the well-known Latin American writers, is famous for using Magic Realism in her works.

Allende was born on August 2, 1942, in Lima, Peru. Her first novel, *"The House of the Spirits"*, published in 1982, won a number of international awards in Mexico, Germany, France, and Belgium. The main theme in her works is Chile and its people. Her best-seller book, *"Ines Of My Soul"*, published in 2006, is one of historical and romance novels. She has influenced to some other writers, particularly women writers (Main, 2005).

As a result of developments of magic realism, women writers like Isabel Allende and Lura Esquivel became contributors of such recent development, focusing on women's issues and perceptions of reality in their works. Since its inception, Magic Realism has become a technique used widely in all parts of the world.

It is important to investigate Isabel Allende's influences on the Latin-American writers and novelists. In addition, it is equally important to study Allende's novels and those writers' works who were influenced by her within the framework of magic realism. In spite of the importance of Magic realism in studying Latin-American modern literature, and Allende's influences on some modern American and Latin American writers, and, less has been done on studying Allende's works. Thus, the present paper aims to shed some light on this subject. The result of the research can help the readers understand and analyse the works of these writers much better.

2. Analysis and Discussion

2.1 Magic Realism

The term magic realism was coined by Franz Roh and used in the title of his book (*Nach-expressionismus, Magischer Realismus: Problem der neueren Kunst*, 1985). He applied the term to a group of painters living and working in Germany in the 1920s who, after the first world war, rejected what they saw as the intensity and emotionalism of Expressionism, the tendency that had dominated German art before the war.

Magic realism spread from Germany to many other European countries, and subsequently, to North America. Although in many ways the movement was soon overshadowed in Europe Surrealist movement, it flourished to a considerable extent in America, as a current artistic mood to the mainstream Abstract Expressionism movement which developed in the 1940s and 1950s. Later, early in 1943 in the USA, the New York Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition called American Realists and Magic Realism.

In the mid-twentieth century, a literary movement developed in Latin America which expressed a new style of writing while it was deeply embedded in the cultural, physical, and political landscape of Latin America. This movement, known as Magic Realism, has been interpreted both as a literary device in terms of infusing realistic narratives with fantastic qualities and hyperbolic descriptions such as those found in the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Allende, and Carpentier. The movement, however, originated in Europe in the 1920s and was applied first to painting and then to literature. Since then, literary critics have referred to it when dealing with various art forms including more recent cinema. However, understanding both the term and the nature of the movement is more possible by understanding the features and principles of Magic Realism. These will be briefly explained as follows.

2.2 Features and Principles of Magic Realism

2.2.1 Features of Magic Realism

Magic Realism was formerly regarded as a regional trend in Latin American literature, but it has become more popular and world wide in modern literature. Magic Realism is a narrative technique that blurs the distinction of fantasy and reality. It emphasises on these two ways: 1) an unexpected or improbable element is inserted into a predominantly realistic work in a matter-of-fact; 2) magic elements are incorporated into a realistic tale in a matter-of-fact manner (Ziegler, 2010, p.1).

Magic realist stories usually begin with one of the two ways: 1) The story begins with the "magic" event/s, then the story continues with the characters behaving "normally". 2) The story begins in ordinary ways then gradually becomes extraordinary. Usually, this second beginning is used, so the magic dimension is gradually established in the readers' imagination.

The magic realistic style of the narrative is designed by the language it uses, with no boundaries at all, and it is due to the durational infinity of time and the isolated spaces delineated in metaphors. Unlike other styles, in which their descriptions are full of dead metaphors, magic realism abounds in metaphors in a sequence of events; its metaphors are sharp, alive, naive and living, ironical and hyperbolic, they signify the super fluiding nature of the story.

Malice is a feature of the Baroque and of Magic Realism too; it is based on multi-semantic phrases which gives the narrative an illusion that is either comic or bloodcurdling. Like fable, the story's episodes inside the magic realistic novel have morals. Magic Realism uses fables to enhance the moral values of the writing.

Magic Realism tries to individualise the moral failures of some social classes, or the strife of a nation in the narrator's imaginary homeland; the narrator questions and challenges historical events and ancient beliefs by narrating them, using the vocabulary as imaginative and fictional diction to give parable features to the discourse (Splinder, 1993).

The montage technique is another feature of magic realism: even if the name and description of a country, and other details are taken from real life or the reality we are familiar with, at a closer look, we can notice many anomalies and anachronisms the reader is unaware of while reading, and maybe s/he is not interested as s/he follows the story in the way the narrator is telling it. The country may have features borrowed from other countries or simply they are imagined, but given real names. Thus it quits being the real country and it starts being an imaginary one.

Magic Realism is an attempt to overcome death and fate. A strong and overt element in the magic realist novels is the fact; they have the structure or the elements of a tragedy in that:

- a crime is usually followed by another, of or for revenge;
- they have a choir who comment upon the character's acts;
- the writer uses irony to stress the importance of death;
- the heroes are always characterised by their deeds;
- the ending is almost always catastrophic;
- the story is subjected to fate.

In magic realism, tragedy is more the imitation of the divine sacrifice than the disastrous intensification of the myth. The presence of death is not scary any more, death is an everyday presence and it is life itself that acquires metaphysical values; death is not enough, so in the end of the whole novel the literary universe blows up (Bowers, 2004, p. 25).

"Metamorphosis", one of the features of magic realism, is one such event in magic realist story where a person or object transforms into a new being, but both the narrator and the characters of the story treat it as a normal event. Magic Realism is very attached to nature; many characters are archetypes that show clash between nature and modernity (Connell, 1998, p. 23). In other words, it is a mixture of magical features and realistic settings that resemble magic realism as "our world". Character's attitudes facing unrealistic events into the realistic world are magical; although the happenings do not go along with realistic world at all, characters perceive them as casual.

Magic Realism has mainly developed in Latin America because of Latin America's perspective accepting fantasy as a part of reality which probably developed from their historical "facts" that shift between reality and fantasy, and its enormous natural landscape (Wolfe, 2008, p. 1).

2.2.2 Principles of Magic Realism

Having explained some features of Magic realism, we turn to explain its principles. Magic Realism is, first and foremost, an "amalgamation of realism and fantasy", or at least that is what a survey of the critical debates suggests (Flores, 1955: 189). The brevity of this "definition" is surpassed only by its inadequacy, for obviously there is a considerable number of genres and modes that equally respond to this description, quite apart from the problem that terms like "marvelous", "fantastic" or "supernatural" are culturally contingent. The "fantastic" elements of magic realist fiction are not inherently so, but become visible as such only against the conventions of literary realism, which are installed only to be immediately subverted.

Magic Realism uses prominent techniques of realism such as the doubling of the extratextual world, the imitation of non-fictional modes like history or journalism, or the abundant use of (frequently superfluous) detail, which, according to Roland Barthes, is fundamental to creating [*L'effet du réel* "The Effect of The Real"] (cf. Barthes, 1968: 87) on the one hand, and the magic realist mode to introduce items that violate the realist standards on the other. Characteristically, explained away as dreams, hallucinations, metaphors, or lies, presented in a strikingly non-chalant and matter-of-fact manner (often even demonstratively so), there seems to be no option but to accept them as part of the fictional world (Galens, 2002, pp. 55-73).

"Normalising" or "Naturalising" the non-realistic elements, magic realism fundamentally differs from fantastic fiction, which by contrast uses a rhetoric of vagueness to shroud them in a sense of mystery and ambiguity (on this point, see Galens, 2002). At the same time, magic realism refuses to be reabsorbed into the realm of fantasy or

marvelous fiction, though these forms have likewise been seen to use realist techniques to present non-realistic elements (see Zamora & Faris, 1995).

Reading magic realism as a quasi anthropological or sociological inquiry into the workings of human mind is much supported by the mode's focus on issues of knowledge and knowledge production. In tracing how human beings individually and collectively perceive their world, magic realist fictions/novels critically review different strategies of knowing or, as the texts suggest, constructing reality (Zamora and Faris, 1995). The co-presence of oddities, the interaction of the bizarre with the entirely ordinary, the doubleness of conceptual codes, and the irreducibly hybrid nature of experience make the problem extremely interesting in magic realistic works.

Magic Realism focuses on the problem of atmosphere. It does this by suggesting a model of how different geometries can inscribe its boundaries that superimpose themselves upon one another (Schmit, 2010).

Magic Realism has been given powerful contextual accounts. It has sometimes been explained as the representation of primitive, or naive, reality, more likely to be found in South than North America. In this way, magic realism has been seen as reflecting naive superstition, left behind in sophisticated industrial societies. Magic Realism can be enlisted in the analysis of postcolonial discourse as the mode of a conflicted consciousness, the cognitive map that discloses the antagonism between two views of culture, two views of history (European history being the routinization of the ordinary; aboriginal or primitive history, the celebration of the extraordinary) (Zamora & Faris, 1995, pp. 5-6).

In magic realism, plural worlds, like distinct kinds of writing, like parabolic trajectories, approach each other, but do not merge. Magic Realism lies close to a pure model of textuality, but it is also the fundamental mode of storytelling. It is neither recent nor ancient, but is always the present shape of fiction.

Magic Realism clearly shows fictions to be capable of providing knowledge about the world, potentially allowing insights which other, rational-scientific paradigms cannot offer. At the same time, it emphasises that all knowledge is constructed provisional, which means that in the end, human insight remains limited to fiction (Zamora & Faris, 1995, pp. 104-21). Based on what discussed so far, both the features and principles of magic realism can be summarised in Table 1.

Corresponding to these features and principles which introduce magic realism as a model of literary analysis and criticism, Allende's novel, "*Ines of My Soul*", will be analysed based on this model.

3. Applications and Analysis

Based on the features and principles of Magic Realism, as a literary movement and style of writing presented above, we can analyse the works that relate to magic realism. As a case study, Allende's "*Ines of My Soul*" was selected to be read and analysed based on both the features and principles of magic realism. This can be seen in the following lines.

3.1 The Analysis of "*Ines of My Soul*" Based on the Features of Magic Realism

Ines Suarez, a poor seamstress from Plasencia, a town in Spain, comes to the new world in a ship with her niece to search for her husband Juan de Malaga who went to the New world for seeking gold. In reality, she decides to escape from poverty and the backward thinking of the society she was born in. When she finds her husband dead, she tries to make it on her own with nursing and housekeeping skills.

In traveling to find her husband, a man who was in the same ship with her tries to attack her, she kills him out of self-defence, but the ship's captain takes the body of the man from her house and discards it, keeping her name clear. After this, Ines wants to move on to another town in the new world, partly with fear of being found out. It is this time that she meets Pedro de Valdivia, the conquistador of Chile, and becomes his mistress.

Ines gets Pizarro's (king's agent) permission by saying that she knows nursing and can find water in the desert; so, together with Valdivia, she travels to Chile, crossing an impossible arid region and facing many hardships to establish the city of Santiago in the Mapuche valley as a Spanish settlement. They call the new town "*Santiago de la Extremadura*". The date is February 12, 1541.

In this settlement (Chile), cut away from Peru because of distance and dreadful travel conditions, the group face a terrible struggle against chief Michimalonko's fierce Mapuche Indians. Ines faces with the trouble in the New world, in the native land; she sees poverty, because of famine, she has to cook with lizards, and also when Mapuche tribe attacks them, Ines saves Santiago.

Using a Narrative technique in which the magic and the reality blend together, Allende shows the history of her native Chile through these legends and historical events. The story is told from the imaginative point of view of Ines Suarez, from what she might have written in her diary when she was seventy years old. The diary's existence is also

imaginary and all events are narrated with Ines for her step-daughter, Isabel. In the second chapter of the novel, Ines Suarez says:

"I beg you to have a little patience, Isabel. You will soon see that this disorderly narrative will come to the moment, when my path crosses that of Valdivia and the epic I want to tell you about begins" (p. 85).

Of features of magic realism, that structure this novel, are Fable and Myth. In Latin American literature, it is a traditional way of writing a fiction with two of these features, because of this, all the stories get more attractive (see Alegria, 1986, pp. 115-16).

Allende is well-known for using these features which introduce her novel as magic realism. Ines was faced with the world of myth and fable since she was a child, she used to hearing and seeing what people believed in during the Holly week:

"Every year during the holly week some gils suffered the same things. She would levitate, emit the fragrance of roses or sprout wings, and at that point she would become the target of exuberant devotion from believers" (Chapter1, p. 7).

In this novel, another feature of magic realism is picturised, the Montage technique; that is, the name and description of a country and other details are taken from the real life. As it is seen, in this novel names and events are taken from the reality, too. Allende starts her story in Ines's voice based on this feature :

"I am Ines Suarez, a townswoman of the loyal city of Santiago de Nueva Extremadura in the kingdom of Chile" (Chapter 1, p. 1).

Basically, in magic realist stories, the elements of tragedy (death, fate, ...) and disaster are featured. Ines faced with the death of her friends and all people she thought:

"My dead. Nearly all my loved ones are dead. That is the price for living as long as I have" (Chapter 4, p. 209).

The other side of Magic realism, as pointed out above, are the principles of the movement and technique, according to which the novel can be read and analysed. This can be seen as follows:

3.2 The Analysis of "Ines of My Soul" Based on the Principles of Magic Realism

There are some principles of magic realism according to which the novel gets form. Binary oppositions or antinomies, as the major principles of Magic Realism, can be traced in this novel. The binary between truth and fiction, or the real and imaginary incidences, in the narration of Ines own life:

"I hope to be as meticulous as possible, but memory is always carpicious, the fruit of all one has lived, desired, and fantasized. The line that divides reality from imagination is very thin" (Chapter 1, p. 43).

The tradition of Latin America is used in Allende's novel, in which this principle of magic realism has been seen in magic realist texts. Ines skillfully defines it in the Indian American and Mapuche tribes:

"They believe in one god, not our God, but one they call Ngenechen" (p. 120).

Allende uses another principle of magic realism, historical events, that blend with magic. Ines narrates the historical events when Valdivia goes to the new world for conquering Peru that is blended with magical description of the new world:

"Where there were birds with jewels-like feather and naked, complaisant women the color of honey" (Chapter1, p. 36).

Finally, the last principle of magic realism, that can be seen here and can be traced in the novel, is superstition. Ines describes her mother's belief to the kind of statue that she believed it could help her to become pregnant, but according to Ines words, it didn't work at all:

"My mother brought me a gift of a small wood statue of the miraculous Nuestra Senora del Socorro, hoping she would bless my womb, but the virigin must have had more important matters on her hands, because she ignored my pleas (Chapter 1, p. 13).

As it is seen, in this section, the analysis of the novel "Ines of my soul" based on the features and principles of magic realism was discussed briefly. This may hopfully help the reader better analyse and understand novels of this type.

4. Conclusion

In short, magic realism has some features and principles, based on which literary works can be read, analysed, and interpreted. As it is seen, in this novel, "Ines of My Soul", the features of magic realism like fable and myth, the elements of tragedy, montage technique and narrative technique, and the principles of magic realism like

superstition, history blended with magical events in the story, binary oppositions, traditional way of Latin-America and supernatural events are the major ones according to which the novel was analysed and realised as a magic realist one.

Magic realism is a literary movement that influenced writers of Latin America in late 20th century. It can be applied not only to this novel of Allende, but also to her others as well. Moreover, the works of other Latin-American writers' such as Garcia Marquez, who is believed to be the father of Magic Realism, and Toni Morrison's can also be seen from this view point. However, further research will hopefully provide more evidence in support of the applicability and productivity of this model in literary analysis and literary criticism.

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Table 1. Features and Principles of Magic Realism

Features of Magic Realism	Principles of Magic Realism
1.Narrative technique that blurs the distinction of fantasy and reality in the story.	1.Supernatural events appear in the story.
2.Metaphors are hyperbolic and ironic in the story.	2.Normalising and naturalising, these as the non-realistic elements in the story.
3.Malice; gives the narrative an illusion that it is either comic or bloodcurdling.	3.Marvelous fiction is the component of the magic realistics story.
4.Fable and Myth are presented in the story.	4.The traditional way of Latin America, is in the story.
5.Montage technique; the name and description of a country and other details taken from real life.	5.Superstition, that is the main part of magic realistics story.
6.The elements of tragedy (Death,Fate,...)are structured the story.	6.Binary opposition (the realistic and the magical)can be discovered in the story.
7.Metamorphosis where a person or object goes into a new being but narrator treats that it is normal events.	7.History blended with the magical events in the story.