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Apocalyptic Endings in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*: How Magical Realism gives Voice to the Voiceless

Introduction

The iconic ending of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* leaves more questions than answers and so does the ending of *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. Both novels end with a world changing moment of destruction. In a sense, each ending is apocalyptic: the settings of both novels are erased in the final scene. Furthermore, the reader is faced with uncertainty as to the events after the novel because both suggest a future that is unstated. While each novel raises questions throughout the narratives, the lack of a resolution at the end of the novel is more troubling because the implications of the stories are left unstated. The masterpieces of Magical Realism have given voice to the voiceless in ways that bring the plight of the colonized or subservient into the reality of the dominant culture. In so doing, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is able to bring attention to the civil conflicts of, Columbia and the influence of profit driven corporations on local populations. Likewise, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* brings the inner life of a woman in an unhealthy society into the world and shows how the trajectory of social relations in a corrupt civilization cannot be sustained.

Both *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* use the genre of Magical Realism to make statements about disenfranchised and powerless groups. In addition, both exemplify writing beyond the ending to resist conforming to a traditional narrative model.

The Memoirs of a Survivor critically evaluates decaying social conditions in which women, specifically the narrator and Emily, are repressed. By suggesting an unsettled future, Lessing's critique leaves a lasting impression. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* exposes the problem of personal and cultural isolation in the face of a modern, globalizing world. Through contradiction that undermines its own narrative, the Márquez's novel also leaves a lasting impression. While *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* were written by authors with very different backgrounds and very different purposes, the novels illustrate how unresolved, destructive endings in Magical Realism can reinforce the subversive themes and strengthen the project of championing marginalized voices.

Time, Space, and Destructive Endings

Both novels can be classified as Magical Realism, and as such they are able to undermine and criticize a dominant discourse. The genre of Magical Realism is, in its most reductive definition, a combination of magical and real elements. The power of this style of writing, however, makes further examination necessary. In *Ordinary Enchantments*, Wendy Faris offers an extensive explanation of the defining characteristics of Magical Realism, and shows the importance of the style, "[it] has become so important as a mode of expression worldwide, especially in postcolonial cultures, because it has provided the literary ground for significant cultural work; within its texts, marginal voices, submerged traditions, and emergent literatures have developed and created masterpieces" (1). As Magically Real texts, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* are able to challenge social norms by drawing in to question social norms and assumptions.

Challenges to Dominant Modes of Thought

The troubling aspects of the novels are an inherent part of the mode. One of the ways that these stories are able to bring serious issues into the fabric of the narrative, e.g. the theme of incest in *Solitude* or the cycle of neglect in *Memoirs*, is by challenging notions of reality and individuality. Faris explains the challenge to personal understandings of the phenomenal world that these texts have by writing, "Magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space but our sense of identity as well" (25). As these fundamental ways of thinking and understanding are challenged, so to is our perspective of reality. The blending of the real and the magical creates problems of interpretation in which readers must struggle to understand the impossible and explain the inexplicable.

In addition to problems of time, space, and identity, Magical Realism often plays with the nature of perception. The methods by which we are conditioned to understand the world are drawn into question. As Faris explains, "magical realism includes two conflicting kinds of perception that perceive two different kinds of event: magical events and images not normally reported to the reader of realistic fiction because they are not empirically verifiable, and verifiable (if not always ordinary) ones that are realism's characteristic domain" (Faris 43). In realism, descriptions based on sensory perception are reliable. However, in Magical texts other ways of knowing are employed. The reader is forced to accept the intuition of the characters or the contradictory descriptions because all of it is true. Both the magical and the real drive the events in the narrative, so the reader must rely on them equally.

The discomfort that readers may feel as a result of the alternative modes of perception functions to challenge the focus on traditional concerns. Faris explains, "the narrative is 'defocalized' because it seems to come from two radically different perspectives at once" (Faris

43). This defocalized quality allows the author to refocus the narrative on alternative stories. Márquez is able to highlight the cultural heritage of his native country despite the dominant narrative about globalization and progress. Lessing is able to make a similar social critique against a dominant narrative of progress by capturing the personal, inner conflicts that are the result of the deterioration of social bonds. The defocalization, however, can only be temporary in a narrative that is neatly wrapped up in a traditional ending.

Unresolved Endings

The problem of endings is discussed in *Writing Beyond the Ending* where Rachel DuPlessis explains the implications of endings in stories. Stories, according to DuPlessis, can function "on a small scale the way that ideology functions on a large scale" (3). This means that social values and assumptions are evident in the unfolding of events in a story. The ending of the novel, then, is a particularly revealing moment in which social expectations and values are on display. The author is providing an endorsement or critique through the final events of the story--i.e. an explanation of the way things are, should be, or could be. DuPlessis explains the importance of a novels ending by writing, "one of the great moments of ideological negotiation in any work occurs in the choice of a resolution for the various services it provides. Narrative outcome is one place where transindividual assumptions and values are most clearly visible, and where the word 'convention' is found resonating between its literary and its social meanings" (3). The finishing of a story, the wrapping up of the plot lines, necessarily endorses a sense of normalcy and, therefore, takes on a normative perspective of cultural institutions. Therefore, novels that resist the urge to end also resist the urge to endorse a particular set of values by

undermining the conventions of story telling and by avoiding the obligatory endorsement of an ideology.

Novels that use this technique are subversive. DuPlessis explains, "The didactic and hortatory nature of these speculative fictions calls attention to the production of alternative rather than acquiescent ideas. To write a narrative that includes future vision is, even crudely, to break the reproduction of the status quo" (197). The status quo that is broken goes beyond rejecting the conventions of story telling. As Duplessis has indicated, writing beyond the ending can function as an attack on an ideology through the rejection of a harmonious resolution. While DuPlessis is focusing on the traditional structures of narratives produced by female writers, the same critique can be applied to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. By offering a contradictory ending, one in which the story is both destroyed and lasting, Márquez undermines the role of an ending. The story is not over, and the reader must confront the idea that the past cannot be lost.

***One Hundred Years of Solitude*: Magical Realism and the End of Macondo**

Both novels, as examples of Magical Realism, conform to both the definition and purpose that Faris attributes to the genre, and the endings are illustrative of the style and value. Furthermore, the endings of each novel play a pivotal role in developing the significance of each novel by challenging the logic of the narrative and leaving unsettling doubts for the reader to struggle with. As both novels come to a close, destruction and ambiguity trouble the narrative and present a challenge to the reader. While the style of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is clearly Magical Realism, the themes of isolation, personal and cultural, have drawn attention. By focusing on a town in the middle of Columbia over a period of one hundred years, Márquez is

able to tell the history of Columbia from a very personal perspective. The toll of war and commerce comes alive through the daily events of the citizens of Macondo.

As a prototypical example of a Magical Realist novel from a prototypical Magical Realist author, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* fully illustrates Faris's definition for the genre. One way in which the novel challenges the reader is to suggest impossible realities without offering plausible solutions. In *Ordinary Enchantments*, Faris provides a list of examples that make *One Hundred Years of Solitude* an example of Magical Realism, "Macondoans ride on magic carpets, Remedios the Beauty rises up to the heavens, a pot in Úrsula's kitchen spontaneously creeps to the edge of a table and falls, José Arcadio and Amaranta give birth to an infant with a pig's tale, Melquíades foretells the family history" (121). Clearly, the magical and the real are being treated on equal terms throughout the novel.

Remedios rising into the heavens is an iconic scene in which Úrsula's reaction to such a spectacular event is to comment, "[Úrsula] watched Remedios the Beauty waving good-bye in the midst of the flapping sheets that rose with her…and passing through the air with her as four o'clock in the afternoon came to an end, and they were lost forever with her in the upper atmosphere" (236). While the image of Remedios rising into the sky could be read symbolically as a religious icon, the casual observations about the time of day and the flapping sheets blend the realistic aspects of the scene with the magical moment. The event is made even more common place a few lines later as the narrator notes that Úrsula "kept on praying to God to send her back her sheets" (236). The concern for the sheets reflects an acceptance of the highly unusual event of a young girl being lifted into the sky and a persistent concern for the mundane tasks of housekeeping.

The casual treatment of the impossible and the lack of a plausible explanation for the phenomena reflects Faris's third characteristic of Magical Realism: "the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events" (7). Each novel, by describing impossible events from the perspective of characters within the stories without offering an omniscient explanation to reconcile the impossible with the real, creates an environment in which all events within the novel are questionable, and the reader must accept or reject the events for themselves. Faris explains, "[Magical Realism] also begins to erode the categories themselves because the link between empirically constructed perceptions of reality and realistically constructed fictional discourse means that to question one is to question the other" (23). Each reader, however, no matter which interpretation she chooses, will have reason to doubt the validity.

Challenging Identity

While *One Hundred Years of Solitude* contains many characters that have unique personalities and experiences, the novel still challenges conceptions of identity because of its multigenerational set of characters and the cyclical timeline. Also, the repeated use of the same names among family members highlights the interdependent nature of the Buendía identity. Names, like the Aureliano moniker, are particularly significant symbols for the novel. In the course of a week, all of Colonel Auraliano's sons are "hunted down like rabbits by invisible criminals who aimed at the center of their crosses of ash" (238). Although, one survives only to be executed some time later, the fate of the family, a family that shares names and history, is shared. The weight of their common history is unavoidable, and their identities are tied to that history.

The significance of the Buendía shared heritage is finalized with the birth of the final Aureliano. Long before the birth of the final Aureliano, the founders of Macondo, José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula Iguarán, were married despite the fear that their children would be deformed because "they were cousins" (20). Because they were related and understood the dangers of incest, a child with a pig tail (20), their union terrified Úrsula into wearing, "a rudimentary kind of drawers that her mother had made out of sailcloth and had reinforced with a system of crisscrossed leather straps and that was closed in the front by a thick iron buckle" (21). After many generations, their fear is finally realized with the offspring of Amaranta Úrsula and Gaston. Amaranta Úrsula decides, "We'll name him Aureliano and he'll win thirty-two wars" (412). The name, already held by dozens of family members, alive and dead, is meant to honor the Colonel; however, it is soon discovered that the child had "the tail of a pig" (412). As the final birth in the narrative, this final Auraliano bears the sin of his family before him. The individual families within the narrative are connected in ways that can only be shown through the use of difficult to believe coincidences. Magical Realism helps bind them together and highlight the rich heritage that is being lost with the loss of local culture in Columbia.

Challenging Time

As history repeats itself in the novel, the reader must confront the presence of a cyclical timeline. The cyclical structure of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* undermines the traditional narrative structure and complicates traditional notions of time and causality. According to Iddo Landau, at the end of the novel, the revelation that Melquiades prerecorded the entire history of Macondo is a moment of metafiction (402). Landau compares the cyclical structure of the novel to the Hegel's history of Absolute Spirit, and he observes, "In *One Hundred Years of*

Solitude…there is no feeling for a gradual philosophical progress. The plot does not seem to go in any specific direction... Hence, there is no difficulty in taking Melquiades' book to exist not only at the end of the story, but also at the beginning" (410). Through the repetition of historical events and by suggesting that a prescient gypsy recorded the future, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* establishes a temporal framework in which to uncover the forgotten heritage of Columbia.

Challenging Space

Additionally, the novel creates a spatial framework outside of a realistic setting. An alternative space, as a concern of Magical Realism, is another way in which alternative stories can be told. The first descriptions of the town are through the memories of Colonel Aureliano Buendía as he is about to be executed. By introducing the town in this way, the novel invokes a mythological mode of expression. The personal, invested, reminiscent mode of recollection suggests a retelling of events that is about more than the recording of facts. The story is about feelings, about culture, about heritage, and about fear. By framing the novel with the Colonel's pending execution, the novel undermines the factual truth of the narrative while increasing the personal and cultural significance.

Along with the fear of death, the first descriptions of Macondo build an image of a mythic town: "built on a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs" (1). The description of the stones is paired with historical depth that suggests the uniqueness of the town. It suggests a history that extends beyond the memory. The depth of the town's history is made more clear as the description continues, "The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate

them it was necessary to point" (1). The history of the town not only extends beyond memory, it also extends beyond language. This introduction to the town establishes its mythic nature and sets the stage for a mode of expression that allows for alternatives to the dominant history.

An Alternative History

Because the novel allows for an altenative time and place in which identity and reality are fluid, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is able to blend history and myth. Interested in the role of history and myth in story telling, Roberto González Echevaría explores the ways history and myth are represented in Márquez's famous novel. Echevaría attributes the success of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to "the unrelenting way in which these forms of storytelling are interwoven in the novel" (16). The importance of myth and history are not only present in the novel, they are one of the novel's central themes. As a novel deeply rooted in history (real, fictional, and mythic), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* captures a multifaceted perspective of Latin American culture.

Beyond the End

As the epitome of Magical Realism, Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* includes many examples of the Magical being treated as the real in inexplicable, but seemingly natural, ways. Faris points out that the novel "include[s] magic and folk wisdom, like the events told from Úrsula's or Melquiades's point of view" (Ordinary 16). *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is an allegory, as Faris has pointed out in "Icy Solitude: Magic and Violence in Macondo and San Lorenzo" (45). The isolation and destruction of Macondo are symbolic of the process of globalization, and the novel uses Magical Realism to present the loss of culture that is

an inevitable consequence of opening boarders. The ominous conclusion to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* leaves questions about the narrative because it suggests the impossible:

> Before reaching the final line, however, he had already understood that he would never leave that room, for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth. (416-17)

The narrative claims that the story of Macondo, the city of mirrors and mirages, would be lost with the destruction of the city; however, the reader is finishing a narrative that has recorded that same story.

The ending of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is particularly powerful as Márquez writes, "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth." The tone of this final line is pessimistic, suggesting the rich history that has just been relayed is about a lost civilization. The heritage of Columbia has been lost. The destructive force that wipes Macondo off the map is, in one interpretation, the forces of globalization. The political significance of the novel is discussed by Faris (70, 140), and annihilation, in the end, is the final consequence of isolation.

The problem of isolation is further explored in Faris's article "Icy Solitude." Faris asserts, "We might say that solitude plus or even productive of, violence, leads to existence in a frozen future" (44). The cyclical structure of the novel, and of each chapter, suggests that the citizens of Macondo cannot, or will not, move forward. By clinging to tradition, and resisting progress

being imposed by outside powers, Macondo sets the stage for its own destruction. The final tone of the novel suggests a future that neither has nor remembers the citizens of Macondo. The futility is palpable as the reader must come to terms with the erasure of a rich culture and history.

The ending of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is not wholly pessimistic, however, because the text exists when it clearly should not. There is even optimism within the closing of the narrative. Jay Corwin even suggests, "Far from pessimistic, the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is an allegory of the mindset of much of the Americas which continues striving to be Western" (70). Corwin's optimism comes from a recognition that the narrative captures a struggle that is neither won nor lost in the end. The reader, at the end, has to reconcile the contradiction between the words on the page and the object in his or her hands. The words indicate that the history of Macondo is to be "wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men," yet the reader has just finished reading an extensive, detailed history of the town.

Because the ending does not account for this contradiction, the reader must consider the implied history that has not been recorded. During the time between the end of the novel and the reader's acquisition of the text, more has happened. This contradiction at the end of the text challenges the traditional resolution and is an example of writing beyond the ending. By employing a writing beyond the ending strategy, Márquez subverts the forces that are working against the culture of Macondo, of Columbia, and shows that the culture is still being remembered and still has a voice. For this reason, the novel is a beacon of light for the marginalized, a way of protecting a culture from the powers of progress and globalization.

The End of a World in *The Memoirs of a Survivor*

In an interview, Doris Lessing described *The* Memoirs of a Survivor as "the direct result of my meditating about the inadequacy of language" (qtd Wilson 60), which indicates that any reader attempting to find meaning in the work must be prepared to consider the limitations of language as well. The mode that is being employed, while necessarily limited by language, does not rely on traditional narrative strategies. Gayle Greene immediately suggests, "to ask what is real in this novel…is to miss the point. To be troubled by these questions…is to remain stuck within a paradigm of knowledge the failure of which is Lessing's subject" (141). The use of Magical Realism in *Memoirs*, then, is a direct challenge on traditional language, traditional logic, and a traditional perspective.

The establishing of the novel's setting illustrates the challenge to traditional perspectives and ways of knowing. As the narrator explains the social circumstances, she remarks, "every one of us became aware at some point it was not from official sources that we were getting the facts" (5). The idea that official sources are defective aligns with the idea that dominant modes of thinking are flawed. Corruption and decay are the result of the dominant culture's cumulative actions. She goes on to say, "Even at my dimmest and thickest, I did know that what I was becoming aware of, what I was on the edge of *realizing*, was different in quality from what in fact went on around me" (7). The emphasis on an alternative, inexplicable, understanding of the world is at the heart of the plot. The narrator's intuition allows her to become aware of events and her surroundings before her senses do. The disconnect between what the narrator understands and the empirical descriptions illustrates what Farris refers to as *defocalization*.

Challenging Space

Like *One Hundred Years of Solitude, The Memoirs of a Survivor* is an example of how identity, time, and space are confused in Magically Real texts. Space is most obviously challenged as the narrator moves beyond the wall in her living room. The problem of space becomes clear when the narrator explains the rooms behind the wall: "there was a room behind that wall, perhaps more than one, even a set of rooms, occupying the same space as--or, rather, overlapping with--the corridor" (8). Clearly, a room occupying or overlapping the same area as the corridor is problematic for most readers unless an alternative explanation can be offered, but the novel does not provide a clear explanation. The troubling of space is one of the characteristics that Faris indicates is a common feature of Magical Realism and it allows space for alternative expressions, as seen through the creation of a mythic town in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In this case, the space beyond the wall allows the narrator a method of discovery and growth that is not otherwise possible in her life.

Challenging Time

The linear progression of time is challenged at many points in Lessing's narrative. The first line draws attention to time: "We all remember that time" (3). As an opening line, this parallels the 'once upon a time' convention of fairy tales. Without context, it is not possible for the reader to identify what time the narrator is referring to; however, the lines parallel the fairy tale convention in which the specific time is not necessary to illustrate. By creating an ambiguous time period, and by later drawing attention to a problematic flow of time, the narrator removes the story from the limits of a linear timeline. Just as a fairytales take place in unspecified times for universal appeal, *Memoirs* may be speaking to a universal human experience.

The flashbacks within the narrative illustrate that time is not the linear progression suggested by traditional thought. For example, in one of the flashbacks, "The mother was indifferent…the squeals and protests were from her own childhood, and therefore in order, healthy, licensed" (87). The observation that the young girls "squeals and protests" were acceptable because they were the same as those of the mother's childhood shows that history repeats itself. Despite the progress of time, the same actions and reactions will continue to occur. As the flashback comes to an end, the narrator remarks, "There lay Emily now on my living-room floor" (92). The parallel of her own coming of age and that of Emily reinforce the cyclical quality established during her own memories.

Challenging Identity

Throughout the novel, identity is also confused in a number of ways. When discussing Hugo for example, the narrator remarks, "He was not a difficult animal (I nearly said person!) to share a home with" (52). The personhood of Hugo is called into question. The same challenge is discussed later when the narrator realizes, "Our emotional life is shared with the animals; we flatter ourselves that human emotions are so much more complicated than theirs" (80). Hugo's humanity not only troubles his identity, but it also challenges the identity of the other characters. Without a clear answer, the narrative brings the distinction between human and animal into question.

In addition, the identity of the narrator and Emily become conflated at times. Contemplating their relationship, the narrator thinks, "She did not know that the care of her had filled my life, water soaking a sponge" (46). Emily has become a defining characteristic of the narrator's identity, filling her with purpose, but the connection becomes even more apparent

when she remarks, “But for my part, she, her condition, was as close to me as my own memories” (47). As the narrator is expressing the way she thinks about Emily, she is drawing a deep parallel with her own history. Emily and the narrator, while separate characters, share an identity, or at least part of an identity. Where the connection begins and ends is difficult to identify.

An Alternative Story

The use of these strategies that characterize Magical Realism allows Lessing to create a space and a system in which to express experiences that traditional language and narration cannot encompass. There are significant social critiques throughout *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, but they are filtered through a single perspective. The real marginalized voice is that of the female narrator who is isolated from society and concerned with the future of her ward, Emily. The novel, for this reason, is a feminist novel in much the same way “The Yellow Wallpaper” is a feminist short story. Each presents the perspective of a female narrator who, in a sense, escapes from situational constraints.

The comparison between *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and “The Yellow Wallpaper” is taken up by Kathy Farquharson. In each story, the narrator fixates on a wall and believes there to be more space on the other side. Also, each story suggests that there is life on the other side of the wall that is somehow different, possibly better. But, Farquharson argues, “Both texts dread the next generation’s disregard for boundaries” (6). The act of moving beyond the wall is a method of freeing oneself for these women, and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* presents the act as Magically real. The narrator and the characters within the story accept the impossible with the mundane in much the same way Úrsula accepts Remedios’s ascent into the heavens.

Beyond the End

The Memoirs of a Survivor continues to subvert dominant narratives at the end by avoiding a resolution. Just as Macondo is wiped out in the final scene, so to is the setting in Memoirs. Lessing's apocalyptic ending is different than that of Márquez because the characters in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* embrace the moment of destruction,

> [Emily and Hugo] walked quickly behind that One who went ahead showing them the way out of this collapsed little world into another order of world altogether...And then, at the very last moment, they came, his children came running, clinging to his hands and his clothes, and they all followed quickly on after the others as the last walls dissolved. (213)

As the characters walk into another world, the novel suggests a better way of existing. The Goddess figure that leads the way, the beautiful and indescribable figure, suggests that the characters are leaving a decaying society and emerging into a matured, or at least different, world. *The Memoirs of a Survivor* ends without a description of the new world. The reader is left without an understanding of the nature or characteristics that make it "another order of world," and there is little indication as the fate of the characters once they arrive.

Therefore, the ending of *Memoirs* leaves more room for interpretation, but still leaves the impression of an irreversible act of destruction: "and they all followed quickly on after the others as the last walls dissolved." The dissolving is an extension of the novel's theme of societal decay and suggests the complete destruction of established order. The characters have gone to a new world where the social unrest and personal isolation described by the narrator will no longer occur, or perhaps it will. While it is unclear what the new world will be like, the decay of the old

world makes it appear that the new world is at least a cause for hope. However, because of the narrative's sudden end, there is no way of knowing the fate of the characters.

Not all of the characters seem enthusiastic about the new world. Gerald's reluctance may be caused by his clinging to a familiar way of life. Still, the last line shows Gerald and his children following the narrator and Emily into the "collapsed little world." Farquharson says, "Gerald, his children, Emily, her parents, and pet are all absolved, all protected, in a celestial nest which is cross-generational and cross-species. 'Outside' no longer exists, and 'inside' is enclosure without exclusion" (7). The moment has come for a new social order that begins with an act of re-birth, in much the same way a ceremonial baptism works. Each character is re-born, free from the socially imposed limitations of the previous world. Still, questions about this new world linger. This moment of cleansing is no guarantee that a better mode of existence will be achievable or sustainable.

Lessing's novel, just as Márquez's, demonstrates writing beyond the end. The past tense indicated by the final lines, "they all *followed*….as the last walls *dissolved*" indicates the actions have been completed and the book is still being told from memory. Because of the past tense, the reader must assume that the characters in the novel, or at least the narrator, have continued to live. The story cannot be over, yet the novel has come to an end. Sharon Wilson explains, "The book is written in the future that occurs after the novel's end" (66). Just as the novel ends, the reader must come to terms with future possibilities that remain unstated. Likewise, readers must deal with a future that shouldn't exist when finishing *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Unlike *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* however, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* allows the characters to escape into a future that is indeterminate and full of possibilities. The dystopian setting described throughout the story has been destroyed, and the main characters have found a

new life. The women, and the men, of the story are liberated from the isolation and fear that have plagued them throughout the narrative. Still, the novel does not explain that future, which leaves the reader to wonder. Uncertainty has its way.

Conclusion

The suddenness with which both novels end leaves the reader with an opportunity to reflect: What next? Neither novel provides an easy answer because each resists categorization. Faris writes, "With respect to the realm of the discourse, those reports of magic question the code of realism, and the texts foreground the constructed nature of fiction" (23). The novels are works of fiction, yet each suggests that there is more to the story. Each challenges the reader to ask more from the constructed text than the text is willing to offer. But there must be more to the story, so the reader participates in the fiction to satisfy the questions. The participation of the reader is inevitable because the reader must dwell on the suggested future and imagine a world that has yet to be articulated, a world that is somehow different. The unresolved endings function to extend the subversive themes afforded by the genre of Magical Realism and force the reader to reconcile expectation and reality.

Ultimately, both novels are optimistic despite the destruction and ambiguity that characterizes their endings. Magical Realism is, by its nature, an optimistic mode of expression. This mode of expression undermines the privileged mode of expression in which there is a rational answer for every question. As Faris explains, "in magical realism, reality's outrageousness is often underscored because ordinary people react to magical events in recognizable and sometimes also in disturbing ways, a circumstance that normalizes the magical event but also defamiliarzes, underlines, or critiques extraordinary aspects of the real" (Ordinary

13). In so doing, it undermines the traditional power associated with a hierarchy of knowledge, and gives voice to alternative modes of knowing and experiencing the world. The destructive endings of these novels are moments of rebellion. By choosing to complicate traditional narratives by leaving open large questions, both Márquez and Lessing resist the tides of traditional story telling and empower marginalized voices.

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