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Colonial Trauma in Márquez and Rushdie's Magical Realism

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Abstract:

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* are hallmarks of the genre of magical realism. A typically problematic genre in terms of classification, this article looks at magical realism from a Freudian perspective, with particular reference to Freud's notion of *The Uncanny*. Freud's notion of uncanniness deals in displacement; it is uncomfortable, haunting and cyclical. The dominant presence of such uncanny effects in magical realist literature, I argue, reveals the haunting presence of colonial trauma within the current postcolonial psyche.

Keywords: Colombia, India, Márquez, Rushdie, colonial, postcolonial, trauma, Freud, uncanny.

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Introduction

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* are hailed as hallmarks of the genre of magical realism. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* tells the story of the town of Macondo, from its isolated origins, through one hundred years of outside influence, to an eventual apocalyptic destruction. Macondo's development is depicted through its founders, the Buendía family, whose lives are chronicled through a century: from the solitary, enterprising visionary, José Arcadio Buendía, to the tragic and fateful Aureliano Babilonia, who is destroyed in an apocalyptic flood, which was preordained from the start in a travelling gypsy's parchments. The family's rise and fall corresponds to the foundation and annihilation of Macondo.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* recounts the life of Rushdie's narrator, Saleem Sinai, who, as the novel opens, explains is 'handcuffed to history... indissolubly chained' (Rushdie, 2013, p.3) to the fate of his nation. Saleem is concerned that his failing body, under the pressure of its correspondence with his multifarious India, is beginning to crumble. Saleem anxiously recounts the story, not only of his life, but of his postcolonial nation, beginning with his birth and the very birth of Indian independence.

Both novels are deeply personal explorations of the histories of Márquez's Colombia, and Rushdie's India. While both texts assert the individuality of their respective cultures, arguably, both texts are still dogged with the trauma of the colonial past. Such trauma, I argue, is haunting, repressive and recurrent. This article will highlight the presence of colonial trauma within the respective texts through psychoanalytic interpretation, and with particular reference to Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny.

The first chapter, 'The Psychic Sphere of The Postcolonial', explores the existing domain of psychoanalysis as a tool for postcolonial interpretation. Similarly, there is a consideration of the genre of magical realism, and its relationship to postcoloniality and the uncanny. The second chapter, 'The Nation as a Family', studies the uncanniness foregrounded in the novels' deeply personal exploration of nations and their relationships. The transformation of national history as something objective, to subjective, recounts the personal effects of colonial domination, lending a greater insight into the effects of colonialism on the individual psyche. The final chapter, 'Silence, Solitude, Darkness, and a Return to Dust', considers some key elements in Freud's notion of uncanniness, and how their presence in the novels foregrounds the trauma at the heart of the postcolonial condition. A consideration of these elements within the novels reveals a strong presence of colonial trauma at their core.

As my research found variations in different translations of Freud's *The Uncanny*, I have considered multiple translations of his theory in my preliminary research. In this article, I will reference two translations: a Kindle edition (2013) translation, and a second translation by David McLintock (2003) which details a greater consideration of Freud's idea of a 'double' or *doppelgänger*.

Magical Realism and the Psychic Sphere of the Postcolonial

Magical realism

A term first used in 1925 by art critic, Franz Roh, magical realism grew to become a key feature in the Latin American literary Boom. Years later, by the 1990s, magical realism, in the words of Homi Bhabha, became the 'literary language of the emergent postcolonial world' (Hart & Ouyang, 2010, p.7). For Roh, magical realism embodies 'the calm admiration for the magic of being, of the discovery that things already have their own faces' and this in turn, 'means the ground in which the most diverse ideas in the world can take root has been reconquered' (Roh, 1995, p.20). It is the imaginative power and political appeal of magical realism that its texts capture everyday realism, while simultaneously suggesting new modes of being (a reimagining of the past, for instance). The literary genre of magical realism has used this forum for the expression of diverse ideas to a powerful extent, paying particular attention to the postcolonial subject.

Magical realism is seen as achieving its canonical materialization in 1967, in Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. However, magical realist narratives of equal importance emerged in later years in non-Hispanic countries. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) is one of many examples of the magical realist genre migrating to other cultural shores. 'Magical realism is nowadays a complex, global literary phenomenon' (Hart & Ouyang, 2010, p.6), often an assertion by formerly colonised nations that it was not just wealth and territory that was taken from them, but also imagination (Durix, 1998, p.187). Magical realism is a recapturing of this imagination in the postcolonial age.

The application of literary theory to magical realism is, historically, deeply problematic. According to González Echevarría, the critical concept of magical realism has 'rarely gone beyond 'discovering' the most salient characteristics of avante-garde literature in general' (Zamora & Faris, 1995, p.423). Stephen Slemon advanced on this by stating, 'In none of its applications to literature has the concept of magical realism ever successfully differentiated between itself and neighbouring genres such as fabulation, metafiction, the baroque, the fantastic, the uncanny or the marvellous' (Slemon, 1995, p.407). The incompatibility of magical realism with theory and with genre in general is an interesting point for consideration. As Slemon points out, the incompatibility of magical realism becomes increasingly relevant when considering that it is 'most visibly operative in cultures situated on the fringes of society' (Slemon, 1995, p.408), that magical realism is, according to Robert Kroetsch and Linda Kenyon, linked with a perception of 'living on the margins' (Slemon, 1995, p.408). While not all marginal literary traditions exemplify the traits of magical realism, and while the writing of former colonial powers is not entirely free from the tradition either, magical realism carries a symbolic representation of a 'resistance toward the imperial centre' (Slemon, 1995, p.408). This is evident in magical realism's very refusal to adhere to imperial structures of classification. I argue magical realism retains more than a simple 'incompatibility' with classification, but rather, it is a reaction against it. It is the tragedy of both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* that the characters of both texts fail to adhere to imperial totalising systems, and are reduced to little more than dust.

Magical realism and *The Uncanny*

It is the sensory appeal and generic ambivalence of magical realism that have prompted critics to consider a psychoanalytic interpretation of the genre, although critical material on the topic, at present, is sparse (largely, I imagine, due to the

debatable nature of magical realism as a genre, and the difficulties in applying existing critical theory). The concept of uncanniness was first considered in Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* (2011, p.2540). Ernst Jentsch followed with his 1906 essay, *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*. Freud's 1919 essay, *The Uncanny*, both drew upon and elaborated on Jentsch's discussion of the topic, and is based around notions of uncertainty and displacement. The uncanny, Freud explains, is an instance in which something can be strange and familiar at the same time. Because uncanniness is both strange and familiar in a single instance, it drives an uncomfortable reaction in its experiencing subject who struggles to find congruity in the familiarity and unfamiliarity, attraction and repulsion of their response. It is a concept that deals in paradox. Drawing on Hoffman's short story *The Sandman*, Freud recognises the presence of uncanny effects in literature. Focusing on German etymology, he draws attention to the contrast in meaning between the German *heimlich* ('familiar', 'native', 'belonging to the home') and its antonym *unheimlich* (literally 'unhomely', or 'uncanny', 'concealed', 'hidden', 'secret'); that *unheimlich*, ultimately, must mean *not belonging to the home/family* (Freud, 2003, p.126-129). He purports that uncanniness is frightening because it is a resurfacing of what was 'concealed', 'hidden', 'secret'. He goes on to state that the uncanny is largely synonymous with the strange and sinister, that its presence is 'ghostly' and 'haunting' (Freud, 2013 p.45-81). Factors he lists in everyday experiences of uncanniness include intellectual uncertainty, the recurrence of similar situations (*déjà vue*) and the appearance of a 'double' or *doppelgänger* (Freud, 2013, p.243-485). According to Nicholas Royle, 'The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one's sense of oneself seems strangely questionable' (Royle, 2003, p.1). For Freud, 'the 'uncanny' is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar' (Freud, 2013, p. 124). Royle summarises: 'It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context. It can consist in a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home.' (Royle, 2003, p.1). Similar is the tradition of magical realism, which blends the familiarity of realism with the unfamiliarity of magic. Furthermore, 'the uncanny would always be that in which one does not know where one is, as it were. The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny.' (Freud, 2013, p.36). To sense uncanniness is to sense displacement - to lack place or be out of place. According to Nietzsche, 'We Europeans confront a world of tremendous ruins. A few things are still towering, much looks decayed and uncanny, while most things lie on the ground' (Royle, 2003, p.1). Uncanniness in Márquez and Rushdie's magical realism is about dealing with the ruins left by European colonialism in the pursuit of 'civilisation'.

The psychic life of the (post)colonial

It warrants consideration that the postcolonial condition, not unlike magical realism, takes shape beyond the margins of imperial classification. According to Derek Hook, '[There is a strong presence of] psychical disturbance as a means of understanding (...) the (post)colonial situation' (Hook, 2008, p.270). Theorists such as Frantz Fanon in his 1961 study, *The Wretched of The Earth*, followed by theorists such as Homi Bhabha, were early purveyors of psychoanalysis as a tool for colonial and postcolonial interpretation. For Fanon, his interest lies in 'the many, sometimes inextinguishable, wounds that the colonialist onslaught has inflicted on [the colonised]

people' (Fanon, 2001, p.200). Psychoanalysis deals with issues of repressed trauma. It is the repressed trauma of colonialism evident in Márquez and Rushdie's magical realism that warrants a psychoanalytic interpretation. The novels carry with them the haunting, unspoken truths of colonialism. Jonathan Culler states that 'Deconstructive readings of Freud try... to reveal the tension, to elicit the contradictions that disturb fixed logical categorisations' (Culler, 1998, p.124). His summary of Freud makes this clear:

Freud begins with a series of hierarchical oppositions: normal/pathological, sanity/insanity, real/imaginary, experience/dream, conscious/unconscious, life/death. In each case the first term has been conceived as a prior, a plenitude of which the second is a negation or complication. Situated on the margin of the first term, the second term designates an undesirable, dispensable deviation. Freud's investigations deconstruct these oppositions by identifying what is at stake in our desire to repress the second term. (Wright, 1998, p.124).

A psychoanalytic study is useful as it gives priority to what had previously been considered marginal. In the case of this investigation, the first term is embodied by realism, the second term, connotes the magical elements of the texts. So too, the first term refers to the coloniser, the second term, to the colonised. It is the deconstruction of these oppositionalities, the complication of 'magic' alongside 'realism' for example, that drives Freud's sense of uncanniness. Magic is given power in an otherwise realistic world. In much the same way, Márquez and Rushdie's formerly colonised nations are given voice in a world which would have otherwise rendered them silent.

Magical Realism and the uncanny in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children*

In this work, I will use Freud's model of uncanniness to examine different elements of Márquez and Rushdie's magical realism in order to demonstrate how the effects of uncanniness foreground the presence of colonial trauma within the postcolonial condition. It is the power of magical realism, much like the uncanny, that the two (magic and realism) are 'locked in a continuous dialectic' (Slemon, 1995, p.409), never reaching a union or resolution, but instead forcing readers to engage with the discomfort at their core. Such discomfort, I argue, is the discomfort/unhomeliness/ghostliness at the core of postcoloniality.

The Nation as a Family

Nations taking the form of the family model is not unusual for postcolonial literature. The families created in the writings of Márquez and Rushdie take on both literary and historical identities. Their stories are voyages of self-determination, a 'poetic journey to reclaim the central images of that history' (Schultheis, 2004, p.1). Both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* envisage an 'imaginative reclamation of history and language' (Schultheis, 2004, p.2). The metaphor of the family plays an important role: it transports a Western (imperial) reader in their vision of colonialism as a by-product of history, to something deeply subjective. As the bonds of nations transform into the bonds of families, their breaking down and destruction becomes deeply personal and ever more tactile in its expression. It offers a lucid vision of the caustic nature of colonialism. The metaphor of the nation as a

family, in the words of Alexandra Schulthesis, 'capture[s] the nation's soul' (Schulthesis, 2004, p.105). The families of both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* are entities sculpted, shaped, and eventually eradicated by the currents of colonisation. They embody the undeniably painful history of the colonial past. In Márquez's novel, the development of Macondo from a 'world so recent' (Márquez, 2007, p.1), to a place ravaged by civil war and imperialism, undoubtedly mirrors the colonial past of Colombia. The Liberal-Conservative struggle depicted by Márquez is historically accurate. Similarly, the massacre at the banana plantation is a fictional representation of the 1928 banana massacre in Ciénega, Colombia. The Buendía family, through their multiple generations and at the heart of this struggle, represent the social identity of each and every Colombian ravaged by such history. So too, the fate of Saleem's family in *Midnight's Children*, is 'indissolubly chained' (Rushdie, 2013, p.3) to the fate of Rushdie's India. Rushdie's representations of India share similar historical accuracy: the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (which Aadam Aziz survives thanks to the intuitive abilities of his nose), Saleem's birth at the exact moment of India's arrival at independence, the Sino-Indian war which brings the end of the midnight's children, and the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971, which kill Saleem's family. The transformation of history from objective fact, to subjective experience is unfamiliar, and as a result, deeply uncanny. It is a 'haunting' vision of the colonial past.

The foregrounding of uncanniness is developed further by the conflict in the very discourse of magical realism. While Saleem and his family encapsulate the history of their colonial and postcolonial India, Saleem, in a desperate bid to champion his failing body, attempts to regurgitate this entire history as his body begins to crumble. His account of history is magical, rushed and unreliable; he recognises that even Padma 'lacks faith' in his narrative (Rushdie, 2013, p.292). Saleem himself, states:

I have been only the humblest of jugglers-with-facts; and that, in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case; and maybe this was the difference between my Indian childhood and Pakistani adolescence – that in the first I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities. (Rushdie, 2013, p.453).

Saleem disrupts European notions of the self as unitary and coherent and points to psychoanalysis, which is an examination of the fears of the self at its own fragmentariness and incoherence. The presence of Márquez and Rushdie's magic alongside their otherwise realistic portrayals of history creates a 'wilfully specious discourse' (Bloom, 2006, p.1130). The magical elements of the texts are at odds with the realism, and there is an '*inescapable* sense of difference' (Bloom, 2006, p.1131). Both magic and realism are familiar, yet a discourse where both co-exist simultaneously is profoundly unfamiliar. To read magical realism is to sense uncanniness. The magical experiences of families within factually based history once again promote a sense of uncanniness as the reader, too, is 'beset by an infinity of alternative realities'. Seemingly it is a statement that a purely subjective portrayal of colonial history does not encapsulate the horror at its core, that the very act of recounting this past must embody the conflict within colonialism. The uncanniness in Márquez and Rushdie's magical realism captures this discomfort, empowering the formerly colonised and forcing a reader into a new and striking reimagining of the past.

Freud's models of infantile sexuality that appear elsewhere in his psychoanalytic work have a presence in the novels. His models of infantile sexual development echo in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Freud's Oedipus complex, for example, is distinctly recognisable in the desire that unfolds in Arcadio Buendía for his mother, Pilar Ternera. Furthermore, sexual behaviour between many of the characters of the novel is something violent and unrepressed. The currents of sexuality explored by Márquez are animalistic in tone, reminiscent of a time long before sexual behaviour was regulated by what society deemed appropriate:

The passion of the others woke up José Arcadio's fervor. On the first contact the bones of the girl seemed to become disjointed with a disorderly crunch like the sound of a box of dominoes, and her skin broke out into a pale sweat and her eyes filled with tears as her whole body exhaled a lugubrious lament and a vague smell of mud. But she bore the impact with a firmness of character and a bravery that were admirable. (Márquez, 2007, p.34).

The animalistic nature of sexuality, particularly between family members in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* not only echoes Freudian psychoanalytic themes, but reacts against them. Márquez is writing back to repression in an obscene and overt assertion of independence from colonial appropriation; in other words, normative sexual conduct for the imperial West. As the plot develops, primitive sexuality becomes less prominent, and such instincts manifest themselves in new ways: in violence, war and self-destruction. Violence develops out of sexual primitivism for a number of Márquez's characters: José Arcadio Buendía, from his disregard of the incest-driven possibility of his wife bearing a child with the tail of a pig ('If you bear iguanas, we'll raise iguanas' (Márquez, 2007, p.22)), to an obsession with weaponising almost all of the inventions brought to Macondo by the travelling gypsies. At the sight of a giant magnifying glass, he 'conceived the idea of using that invention as a weapon of war' (Márquez, 2007, p.3). This manifestation of violence is then filtered through each generation of the Buendía family. José Arcadio (II), from his animalistic encounters with Pilar Ternera (drawn to the 'the smell of smoke that she had under her armpits' (Márquez, 2007, p.26)), returns a 'protomale whose volcanic breathing could be heard all over the house' (Márquez, 2007, p.95), a violent, brute of a man wielding a 'fearsome shotgun ready to go off' (Márquez, 2007, p.132). Then there is the 'solitary and elusive character' (Márquez, 2007, p.101) of Aureliano Buendía, who believes 'the most effective thing... is violence.' (Márquez, 2007, p.101). Aureliano, who lived his brother's animalistic sexual experiences 'as something of his own' (Márquez, 2007, p.30), becomes Colonel Aureliano Buendía, leader of the rebel forces of the Liberal party, attempting to overturn Colombia's corrupt Conservative regime. His belief in the power of violence drives him to push over thirty separate rebellions throughout Colombia. Fanon asserts that violence is a manifestation of mental disorder brought about by the dehumanisation of colonialism, and that so too, 'decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon' (Fanon, 2001, p.27). So too, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, violence seems to be born out of the 'dehumanising' nature of their sexual conduct. Fanon, in his study of the psychological effects of colonialism, asserts that the act of colonisation is one of pure violence, and the native (in a process of decolonisation) finds that violence is the only suitable response (violence often breaking out internally amongst colonised nations – India's Indo-Pakistani wars, Colombia's continued civil strife between the

Colombian government and left-wing forces such as the National Liberation Army). Fanon suggests that ultimately, 'colonised people will turn inward and commit destructive acts amongst themselves... due to an 'internal,' unresolved conflict' (Hilton, 2011, p.57). Márquez's incarnation of the Colombian Conservative-Liberal conflict and his depiction of the conflict within Colonel Aureliano Buendía, bear close similarities to Fanon's depiction of the psychopathology of decolonisation. It is this trauma, discussed by Fanon and exhibited by Márquez's characters, that so frequently haunts the genre of magical realism, and lends such weight to a postcolonial, psychoanalytic interpretation.

Children are an intrinsic part of the family model and play an important role in both novels, lending particular value to a Freudian reading of uncanniness. With reference to Hoffman's *The Elixirs of the Devil*, Freud picks out a prominent motif of uncanniness as 'the idea of the 'double' (the *Doppelgänger*), in all its nuances and manifestations' (Freud, 2003, p.141). In *Midnight's Children*, Shiva is undoubtedly Saleem's 'double' or '*Doppelgänger*'. Although Shiva, for the most part, is Saleem's counterpart (violent while Saleem is passive, Hindu while Saleem is Muslim, poor while Saleem is rich), their crossed lives due to their switching at birth forces the pair to act as one another's 'double'. Both characters are chained to India's independence and to the children of midnight. According to Freud, 'The 'double' has become a vision of terror, just as after the fall of their religion the gods took on daemonic shapes' (Freud, 2013, p.278). Shiva and Saleem have an intense hatred for one another, neither one wishing to exist in the image of the other. For each of them, their double exists as something strange and familiar. They are connected, yet entirely separate, a key feature of Freud's interpretation of uncanniness. The discomfiting uncanniness at the heart of the duo is reminiscent of the 'terror' driven by imperialist forces that attempted to forge 'doubles' of themselves within the lands they colonised. Furthermore, Saleem is a 'double' of postcolonial India itself; the Buendía's exist as 'doubles' of Márquez's Colombia. Freud goes on to assert that 'the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations' (Freud, 2003, p.142) all determine a strong sense of uncanniness. The 'successive generations' of the Buendía family have 'the same names' (José Arcadio, Aureliano, Amaranta), 'the same characters' (pioneering, solitary), and they all share the same apocalyptic destiny. Children are crucial in the representation of cyclicity and recurrence in both novels. The uncanniness they represent is discomfiting, and reminds of the discomfiting, recurrent psychological struggles for the formerly colonised. Fanon suggested that the psychological trauma of colonisation 'can be passed down transgenerationally, through parental modelling' (Fanon, 2011, p.57). Seemingly, Rushdie and Márquez are foregrounding the cyclicity of such struggles within the family unit.

The nation as a family is an important metaphor in the respective novels. There are complications however: Márquez's ever present and all-powerful matriarch, Úrsula Iguarán, and Rushdie's matriarchal image of the great 'mother' India, complicate Freud's patriarchal model, once again resisting European interpretation. What is important, however, is that family is a universal concept that relates to ideas of nurture and protection. The familiarity of family combined with the unfamiliarity of a violent, historical past drives a sense of the uncanny. Ultimately, the nation as a family is a deeply personal exploration of the corrosive nature of colonialism, transforming the colonial past from the objective to the subjective.

Silence, Solitude, Darkness, and a Return to Dust

Silence, solitude, and darkness are important factors in Márquez and Rushdie's portrayal of the trauma that haunts postcoloniality. Slemon, in his definition of magical realism, encapsulates the power of silence:

The term 'magic realism' is an oxymoron, one that suggests a binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy. In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the 'other,' a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences. (Slemon, 1995, p.409).

Silence has a much deeper and much more intrinsic role in postcolonial expression, and particularly in magical realism, than it first appears. In the same way that magic and realism remain suspended, neither one managing to integrate successfully with the other, so too, the postcolonial present continues in a 'locked dialectic' with the trauma (the repetitive haunting) of the colonial past. The colonial past, as reflected in the lives of Márquez's characters, is an 'exasperated silence and fearful solitude' (Márquez, 2007, p.28). In the same way that José Arcadio Buendía is haunted by the continued presence and deafening silence of the ghost of his murdered rival, Prudencio Aguilar, so too, the coloniser and the colonised will forever be haunted by the deafening silence of the colonial past. Much as the 'locked continuous dialectic' of magical realism is beyond resolution, so too is the 'continuous dialectic' of the colonial past and the postcolonial present.

Silence, solitude and darkness are all chief components in the portrayal of Freud's 'uncanniness'. Uncanniness, for Freud, 'undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror' (Freud, 2013, p.7-8). The dread and horror that Freud considers to be at the heart of uncanniness is symptomatic of repression. Furthermore, Freud states 'Concerning the factors of silence, solitude and darkness, we can only say that they are actually elements in the production of that infantile morbid anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free' (Freud, 2013, p.541-543), and that furthermore, this anxiety 'can be shown to come from something repressed which recurs' (Freud, 2013, p.351). Silence, solitude and darkness in postcolonial literature remind of the morbid anxiety (the silence, solitude, and darkness) placed on colonised nations in the name of imperial progress.

Silence has a predominant role in both novels. In Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Meme embarks on a campaign of silence, Fernanda never finding out 'whether that stony silence was a determination of her will or whether she had become mute because of the impact of the tragedy' (Márquez, 2007, p.300). In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Saleem's grandmother similarly embarks on a three year campaign of silence. The silent relationship of Nadir and Mumtaz beneath the floorboards again reiterates notions of silence. A similar kind of silence is echoed by Márquez in the relationship between José Arcadio and Pilar Ternera, hidden from

view, silent in the darkness. The violent slaughter of the banana plantation workers renders them forever silent. Whether silence in the respective novels is a determination of will, or a by-product of the tragedy of colonisation, the result is a foregrounded sense of anxiety and uncanniness. Novels, typically, are written with the view of breaking silence; writing such as that of magical realism (that foregrounds silence) instinctively point to ideas of trauma beyond articulation. This anxiety, I argue, is reminiscent of the lingering anxiety at the heart of postcolonialism.

Solitude is another key component in Márquez and Rushdie's postcolonial assertions. In his Nobel lecture, 'The Solitude of Latin America', Márquez states that:

A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude. (Márquez, 1982, p.2).

For Márquez, the solitude of Latin America, and for colonised nations as a whole, lies in their inability to express the plenitude of their reality, which is what colonial discourse denies them (instead being portrayed in fairly reductive ways – as doomed, exotic, savage, primitive, and so on). For many formerly colonised nations, writing conventions would have been largely affected by the colonial presence. The solitary nature of their writing style (magical realism and its refusal to adhere to imperial systems of classification) is not just about the enormity of colonial trauma, but a political statement in itself (refusing to adhere to the 'language' of the coloniser). In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, many of the key characters are solitary in nature. Aureliano, for example, is solitary, often confined to the isolation of the lab in the earlier parts of the novel. The solitary nature of the Buendías is their ultimate demise, as Márquez reminds that 'races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth' (Márquez, 2007, p.422). Had the family embraced the influences and forces of the outside world, resulting in the translation of Melquíades' parchments, they may have escaped such a damned fate. Such was the destiny of all that stood in the path of colonisation and its all-encompassing progression. Ultimately, solitude is put forward as the ultimate failing of the Buendías and the reason for their apocalyptic fate. Their very refusal to adhere to the uniformity and coherence driven by colonialism (to accept outside influence and translate the parchments) results in their apocalyptic destruction.

Rushdie referred to his own temperament as a 'mixture of the solitary and the gregarious' (Rushdie, 2013, p.1), and in that sense, Saleem is a reflection of his creator. Saleem is, on the one hand, anything but solitary, embodying India in its entirety, a 'swallow of lives' (Rushdie, 2013, p.4), but, in his massive, all-encompassing entirety, he is also disintegrating. Doomed to collapse from the start, he is falling apart under the strain of modern India and its strife to assert a non-

British identity. Freud writes that 'the uncanny would always be that in which one does not know where one is, as it were. The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny.' (Freud, 2003, p.36). Saleem and his India are disorientated in every sense of the word, and it is his disorientation that renders him solitary, isolated, and without place. Saleem's true identity was lost from the very moment he was switched at birth. As the novel progresses, he searches for a place or orientation within his family. In a wider context, Saleem searches for his orientation or identity within his fragmented India, and for his place within the children of midnight (the metaphorical incarnation of India's independence). The text exists as a personal reflection on the effects of empire, but more vehemently, as a metaphor for the struggle of India in its movement into independence. So too, India is disorientated; India struggles to find its orientation and place within the family of nations, to assert an individual identity free from the influence of colonial domination. The tension between the individual and the many (a predominant theme in the novel) renders Saleem solitary, as he struggles to assert his own identity alongside an assertion of his infinite India. His constant pleas to be taken seriously do not connote acceptance. In much the same way, as India entered independence in 1947, much mutiny followed in the partition of India and Pakistan: dispute over the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Muslims fled from India to Pakistan, Sikhs and Hindus fled from Pakistan to India. It is the mutiny within his independent India (the Indo-Pakistani wars) that kills Saleem's family and renders him solitary. Saleem and the pursuit of his nation for individual identity are inextricably interwoven. Ultimately, both are rendered solitary and silent.

Darkness is a concept of particular importance in colonial literature. The reduction of a place and its people to 'darkness' is a powerful discourse, a homogenising metaphor 'that flattens places and people' (Jarosz, 1992, p.105). The 'dark' nations required the *enlightening* forces of colonisation. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* both contain elements of this metaphor of darkness. Darkness is present in both the texts, but rather than existing as a disorientating 'heart of darkness', Rushdie portrays a postcolonial India, emerging into a new age of light, trying to find its way out of the darkness of the colonial past. Darkness is important, according to Freud, in the production of uncanny feelings, because it is disorientating. In much the same way, Aureliano Buendía, 'in the absolute darkness... understood with a hopeless nostalgia that he was completely disoriented' (Márquez, 2007, p.27). Royle expands on Freud's notion of the uncanny and darkness, stating that 'it is not so much darkness itself, but the process of ceasing to be dark, the process of revelation or bringing to light, that is uncanny' (Royle, 2003, p.108). Such is the power of darkness in postcolonial expression. So too, formerly colonised nations must find their place as they re-emerge into a postcolonial 'age of light'. Rushdie's title, 'Midnight's Children', lends weight to Royle's reading of darkness and the uncanny. The title of Rushdie's novel is important: 'Midnight' is both the conclusion of an old, and cusp of a new day, it reminds of the 'dusk' of colonialism, and the 'dawn' of postcolonialism, the darkness of old, and the light of new. Similarly, it refers to the hour of midnight in 1947, when India arrived at independence. 'Children' connote new life and a new generation. While darkness is reminiscent of a driving force in colonial discourse, Rushdie's 'children' turn the metaphor of darkness on its head. Rushdie's very title deals in paradox. It is a title that foregrounds both the disorientation of darkness, and the dawn of new life. As Rushdie's India moves forward from independence into the

dawn of a new day, its 'ceases to be dark', foregrounding a sense of Freudian uncanniness.

It is the powerful conclusion of both texts that their respective characters should return to dust. Saleem's fate is determined from the second he is 'handcuffed to history', 'the child of a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together again' (Rushdie, 2013, p.586).

His fate is sealed from the outset: destined to crack and crumble at the same rate as his multifarious India in its fast paced rush to embrace independence. For the Buendía family, their obliteration was forever destined in the parchments of Melquíades, an inescapable fate which renders them merely 'wiped out by the wind' (Márquez, 2007, p.422). A return to dust reinforces the cyclicity at the heart of the novels, a final, resounding assertion that they will not conform to European models of progress and linearity. Time and temporality are important because, according to Bill Ashcroft, 'History, and its associated teleology, have been the means by which European concepts of time have been naturalised for post-colonial societies' (West-Pavlov, 2013, p.159). European models of temporality, which structured time (and history) as linear and progressive, were intrinsic to colonial domination because they provided a 'legitimizing alibi' (West-Pavlov, 2013, p.159) for the atrocities carried out by imperial forces under the guise of 'progression'. Postcolonial literature, such as that of Márquez and Rushdie, collapses European models of temporality. A psychoanalytic interpretation encourages such a reading of colonialism as something that repeatedly haunts its past subjects, as a trauma that withstands the currents of time. The compulsion to repeat certain moments in the novels serves as a reminder of the haunting trauma of this past. According to Freud, 'anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which recurs' (Freud, 2013, p.351). Both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* are cyclical in their structure and the repetition of certain names, behavioural patterns and so on, is undoubtedly vital in the creation of a sense of uncanniness. History and time are perceived as completely different from the European model of time as linear, particularly for Márquez, 'where time is measured not by dates but by generations of unlikely length; cyclical time is at odds with linear time' (Merivale Zamora & Faris, 1995, p.330). This is reinforced by the continuous compulsion to repeat we witness in his key characters, and dramatized furthermore by the limited selection of names he lends to such characters. With reference to the presence of 'uncanniness', Freud states that there is often 'the constant recurrence of similar situations, a same face, or character-trait, or twist of fortune, or a same crime, or even a same name recurring throughout several consecutive generations' (Freud, 2013, p.248). This is recognised most profoundly by Márquez's Úrsula, who 'shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing, as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle' (Márquez, 2007, p.341). A return to dust is a powerful proclamation of such cyclicity, and reinforces the cyclical nature of colonial trauma. Furthermore, the uncanny concept of fate, of an absence of free will, is foregrounded in the novels' closure. As the novels close, a return to dust reiterates the powerlessness of those that stood in the path of imperial progress, of entire nations that were reduced to 'dust' in the name of colonisation. The sense of uncanniness that arises from the absence of free will and an apocalyptic fate draws attention to a prominent aspect of colonial trauma. It is a fate realised, for Aureliano Babilonia, at the precise moment he is 'exiled from the memory of men' (Márquez, 2007, p.422). It is a resounding

reminder of the apocalyptic fate of colonised nations, and a reminder of the trauma inextricably interwoven into postcolonial discourse.

Conclusion

Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* are rich and vibrant texts. With such a wealth of imagery they are infinitely allegorical. It warrants consideration, just how apt an analysis is conductible from an imperial, Western perspective. Márquez himself, speaking of the relationship between his writing and the former imperial West, states that:

[I]f these difficulties whose essence we share, hinder us, it is understandable that the rational talents on this side of the world, exalted in the contemplation of their own cultures, should have found themselves without valid means to interpret us. It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all [...] The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary. (Márquez, 1982, p.2).

For Márquez, the application of Western literary criticism renders postcolonial writers 'ever less free, ever more solitary'. It is the power of magical realism as a genre, however, that it exists beyond the realms of generic classification, that whilst it is not free from the totalising systems of Western literary tradition, it is unique in its expression. From a Márquezian perspective, the application of psychoanalysis (a Eurocentric theory) to his literature would be somewhat problematic. Yet the application of psychoanalysis to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children* reveals much of the haunting, psychological trauma at the heart of Colombian and Indian postcoloniality. Whether that be in the deeply personal and subjective representation of family reactions to the dominating forces of colonialism, the silence, solitude and darkness inherent in the colonial condition, or the apocalyptic and fateful return to dust, what is foregrounded is a profound sense of uncanniness. Uncanniness is vital in Márquez and Rushdie's postcolonial expression because it deals in paradox and it draws attention to the discomfort at the heart of the postcolonial condition. The uncanny deals in both the familiar and the unfamiliar, acceptance and rejection, attraction and repulsion. Such is the familiarity and unfamiliarity, the attraction and repulsion for the postcolonial nations, who, moving into a new age, must mitigate the difference between the trauma and darkness of their colonial past, and the brightness of their postcolonial future.

Importantly however, Márquez and, I imagine, many writing in the age of postcolonialism, write with the will to envisage the horrors of a barbaric past, but a brighter and more prosperous future. He states:

[W]e, the inventors of tales, who will believe anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to engage in the creation of the opposite utopia. A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth. (Márquez, 1982, p.2-3).

In spite of the constant recurrence of a haunting, colonial past in the novels, they also function as visions of a brighter future. Psychoanalysis, in its origin, is a tool that promotes healing through expression. In the case of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and *Midnight's Children*, the expression of colonial trauma seems, in some way, a movement toward healing. What is most important is that the novels, whether entirely free from the haunting past of colonialism or not, are an assertion of cultural independence, and a movement away from a heart of darkness into a brighter age of healing. They move into an optimistic and vibrant declaration that now, 'at last and forever', their nations have 'a second opportunity on earth' (Márquez, 1982, p.3).

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