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"Modern Myths: The Function of Myth in *Ulysses* and *Cien años de soledad*"

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore the complex role that myth plays in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad.* It begins by defining myth and narrative, the terms T.S. Eliot uses in his review of *Ulysses* as modes of narration, before exploring the tensions that emerge between these modes. A close analysis of two episodes in each novel demonstrates the uses to which each author puts myth and explores the implications of myth as a distinct mode to the narrative one. It progresses to examine the responses to myth both from the author and the reader's perspective, relocating the debate to a linguistic setting. The political value of myth is explored, as a way for each author to negotiate particular colonial and post-colonial relationships to literature, and indeed, in the case of García Márquez, to the other author. The final part of the paper examines the repercussions of the mythical/narrative tension for modern interpretations of reality, chiefly through literary means. As a conclusion, the paper suggests that myth as a mode produces a productive tension when forced to coexist with the narrative mode traditionally associated with the novel.

Keywords: Joyce, García Márquez, Ulysses, Cien años de soledad, Myth, Post-colonial

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Modern Myths: The Function of Myth in *Ulysses* and *Cien años de soledad*

0. Introduction: Defining Myth and Narrative

'Instead of a narrative method, we may now use the mythic method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art' (Eliot: 679-81). T.S. Eliot's review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is in many ways little more than a justification for his own modernist poetics, but it does raise an important question: does myth allow the modern author to interpret the world in a way that the narrative method is no longer able to appropriately manage? This essay will examine how García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* and Joyce's *Ulysses* incorporate the mythical into their narratives, and the effects this tension has on each of their novels. Donoghue says that 'by "narrative method, Eliot means the procedures of the realistic novel' (161) and this will be our initial definition for this essay. It will then show how myth operates in the texts through a close analysis of particular episodes, and the impact this has on our interpretation of these episodes. From here, it will analyse the function that myth has as an intertext in relation to the narrative method, that is to say realism: the political ramifications of Joyce selecting *The Odyssey*, rather than a hero like Cuchulain, or García Márquez's relation to the Latin American boom, bear investigation. The final consideration of this essay will be to show how this dialectic between the mythical and the realistic expands beyond the fictional content of each novel, and its wider implications for the interpretation of reality in the modern era.

Having established what is meant by narrative method, it is necessary to find a definition for myth as well: Doty notes no less than seventeen aspects that the mythological can be seen to encompass[1], while we must add that myth has a 'mode of existence in oral transmission, re-telling, literary adaptation and allusion' (Baldick: 218). Munz goes on to say that 'every myth we know has both a past and a future... [This is] the phenomenon of historical seriality' (ix-xii). However, this view fails to stress the importance of the cultural situation of each version of that myth: the same mythological archetype does not find equal cultural value in all of its manifestations. Kirk responds to this description by saying that 'the message conveyed by a myth is a product of its overt contents and the relations between them; not merely a structure, but a structure of particular materials, and one that is partly determined by them' (43). This conception rejects a straightforwardly typological view of myth, and demands that each manifestation of myth be viewed as a separate entity: the mythical element is not predicated upon a particular structure, but rather the content is where the potential to make a narrative mythological lies. Indeed, it is precisely this relation of mythical elements to non-mythical ones that creates tension in Joyce and García Márquez: realistic narrative is implicitly connected to a mythological hermeneutics in *Ulysses*, although crucially, there is no obligation to follow this perspective, while *Cien años de soledad* explicitly forces myth to share the same narrative space as its realism. A final view to consider in our approximation of what myth constitutes is that 'every telling of a myth is a part of that myth; there is no Ur-version, no authentic prototype, no true account' (Warner: 8). In short, there may be an overarching structure to myth, in the manner that Doty lists, but each manifestation must be taken on its own terms: the same mythical elements can

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[1] Doty's full definition is as follows: 'A mythological corpus consists of (1) a usually complex network of myths, which are (2) culturally important (3) imaginal (4) stories, conveying by means of (5) metaphoric and symbolic diction, (6) graphic imagery, and (7) emotional conviction and participation, (8) the primal, foundational accounts (9) of the real, experienced world, and (10) humankind's roles and relative statuses within it. Mythologies may (11) convey the political and moral values of a culture, and (12) provide systems of interpreting (13) individual experience within a universal perspective, which may include (14) the intervention of suprahuman entities, as well as (15) aspects of the natural and cultural orders. Myths may be enacted or reflected in (16) rituals, ceremonies, and dramas, and (17) they may provide materials for secondary elaborations, the constituent mythemes having become merely images or reference points for a subsequent story, such as a folktale, historical legend, novella or prophecy.

have different functions in different texts. This relativist approach to the mythical elements of *Ulysses* and *Cien años de soledad* is essential, because they demand significant cultural engagement in order for us to penetrate the density of reference in the text. *Ulysses* is constantly in dialogue with *The Odyssey* and yet knowledge of Dublin, Catholicism, contemporary culture and the Western literary tradition is all required in order to read the text and appreciate its references: Bloom's Jewish background is an essential part of his character and the standing of Jews in 20th-century Ireland informs the 'Cyclops' episode, but without understanding this, the parallel is lost. Similarly, the intrusion of the banana company in *Cien años de soledad* obliges the reader to consider recent Latin American history in order for it to have any mythological resonance: the socio-historic position of the work is necessary for us to access multiple levels of the text.

1. Tensions between the Mythical and the Narrative mode

Joyce's manipulation of *The Odyssey* creates tensions where the actual text of *Ulysses* doesn't. A clear example of this is to be found in Bloom's response to Molly's infidelity: if we are unaware of Ulysses' slaughter of the suitors, Bloom's meek concession to Boylan appears like simple weakness. It is only with Ulysses' actions in mind that we examine the text for clues as to how Bloom echoes the hero and interpretations such as the following one surface: 'Bloom kills his enemies… and they are not Molly's suitors so much as his own inner frustrating imbalance of envy, jealousy and excessive abnegation'(Goldberg: 35).

Another example worth dwelling on is in 'Penelope'. Molly figuratively massacres the suitors in her bathetic description of both the sexuality and the nature of past lovers, a monologue in which she seemingly plays both Penelope and Ulysses: 'his two bags full and his other thing hanging down out of him or sticking up at you like a hatrack' (U: 704), 'the ignoramus doesn't know poetry from a cabbage' (U: 726). Ames in fact suggests that 'in some sense, Odysseus has become Molly, and Penelope has become Leopold' (163). It is precisely this potential for plural interpretation that insists that *The Odyssey* is not a stable source of reference, and as such our cultural knowledge can be exploited as well as rewarded. As we progress through *Ulysses*, we are aware that there are significant differences between Joyce and Homer: unlike Telemachus' heartfelt 'Thy eyes, great father! on this battle cast' (vol. V: 204) after Odysseus' expunging of the suitors, Stephen can even be seen to reject Bloom's generosity in singing 'Little Harry Hughes and his schoolfellows all… He broke the jew's windows all', although Bloom takes the insult well (U: 643).

Structurally, *Ulysses* does not exactly match *The Odyssey*, with only eighteen episodes in contrast to the twenty-four books of the older text, while the order of these episodes does not correspond to that of the Homeric epic. Here then, the intertextual flux between the two works allows the reader to interpret details of the text from a typological perspective, which gives Joyce the freedom to ironize: we are not offered any sort of authorial judgement of Bloom, and as such it is impossible to tell whether Joyce is indeed setting him up to be a modern-day Ulysses, or whether this is a grand joke at the expense of the reader sensible to the episodes of *The Odyssey.*

For García Márquez, tension is brought about by a revaluation of myth and realism in their capacities to describe reality: Melquíades' deadpan narration inverts the reader's expectations, where the *admiratio* conventionally associated with the mythical is transferred to the historical and realistic. The discovery of ice is heralded by José Arcadio as 'el gran invento de nuestro tiempo' (CAS: 28) and the people of Macondo 'vieron hechizados el tren' (CAS: 256), whereas rainfall that exceeds even the biblical flood is unremarkable: 'llovió cuatro años, once meses y dos días' (CAS: 357) says the narrator, the specificity of his recollection, coupled with the lack of emotional response from the characters, encouraging the reader to abandon his trust of realism, which has become extraordinary, and to accept the mythical as plausible and mundane. Were this a consistent practice, where the reader is asked to reinterpret myth as realism and vice versa, there would be no tension in the novel: this is brought about when this relationship is nuanced by the reader being forced to choose between two versions of the same event, as we shall explore below.

This tension is best explored through analysis of specific episodes where the mythical elements of each novel can be highlighted: in the ascension of Remedios, la bella, in García Márquez, we see the mythical directly contrasted with a realistic portrayal:

> Úrsula, ya casi ciega, fue la única que tuvo serenidad para identificar la naturaleza
> de aquel viento irreparable, y dejó las sábanas a merced de la luz, viendo a

> Remedios, la bella, que le decía adiós con la mano, entre el deslumbrante aleteo de las sábanas que subían con ella… (CAS: 272)

> Los forasteros, por supuesto, pensaron que Remedios, la bella, había sucumbido por fin a su irrevocable destino de abeja reina, y que su familia trataba de salvar la honra con la patraña de la levitación. (CAS: 272)

Wood observes that 'the world of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a place where beliefs and metaphors become forms of fact…the texture of the novel is made up of legends treated as truths' (57-8) and this is exactly the impression that García Márquez is able to create by interlacing episodes from myth into his narrative: by synthesising myth and realist fiction, the author is able to equalize the overtly fantastic with the plausible, because the boundary between the external, mythical sources and the portrayal of realist events is so blurred.
Where *Ulysses* maintains myth at a distance, and a very specific myth at that, *Cien años de soledad* explicitly provides dual explanations for the same event, and the question of narrative authority is raised: the outsiders think that the family is simply covering up a pregnancy, while the narrator tells us that she has ascended to heaven. Furthermore, the banality of Fernanda's lamentation of the sheets with which Remedios, la bella ascends is placed into contrast with the anthropomorphic 'destino de reina abeja': the mythical becomes ordinary, and the ordinary mythical.
      However, tension emerges through Melquíades' language, when he is revealed as the narrator. Here the novel becomes retrospectively self-conscious, and language is accused of distorting a realistic portrayal: has our subjective narrator simply been exaggerating a realist story? It is precisely because of the ambiguity of language (let us not forget, the narration is described as the product of a translation from Sanskrit) that the mythological is able to coexist with the realistic: the homogeneity of the meta-language in *Cien años de soledad* means that we cannot seek an objective perspective, rather we are merely alerted to the existence of alternative narrative possibilities in Melquíades' description of the outsiders' perceptions. Higgins suggests that García Márquez uses this mythological style of narration because he is 'unable to share traditional realist fiction's confident assumption of man's ability to understand and describe the world' (37): this could of course be an commented levelled at modernist fiction as a whole, but it is especially pertinent to *Cien años de soledad* because García Márquez explicitly proposes the mythical as a system that might be able to replace realism, although it crucially never does, existing only in relation to the realistic.
      A useful contrast with this episode, where *Ulysses* distorts *The Odyssey* but on an implicit basis, relying on the reader's prior knowledge of the Homeric parallels in order to see the realist narrative as a version of that myth, is to be found in the 'Nausicaa' episode of *Ulysses,* here contrasted with its Homeric equivalent[2].

> But Gerty was adamant. She had no intention of being at their beck and call. If they could run like rossies she could sit so she said she could see from where she was. The eyes that were fastened upon her set her pulses tingling. She looked at him a moment, and a light broke in upon her. Whitehot passion was in that face, passion silent as the grave, and it had made her his. (U: 349)

> Mr Bloom with careful hand recomposed his wet shirt. O Lord, little limping devil. Begins to feel cold and clammy. Aftereffect not pleasant. Still you have to get rid of it someway…Suppose I spoke to her. What about? Bad plan however if you don't know how to end the conversation. (U: 353)

In these two extracts from 'Nausicaa', we see Bloom and Gerty MacDowell coincide, with the former masturbating at a distance while the latter ultimately comes to orgasm through her imagination of sexual intercourse between herself and Bloom. In the progression of the realist narrative, this episode highlights Bloom's sexuality and allows Joyce to characterise the young girl through the stream of consciousness technique. It is the mythical elements that are buried in this episode that may give it a greater significance. Where Gerty thinks

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[2] As Ames observes in "Joyce's Aesthetic of the Double Negative and His Encounters with Homer's *Odyssey*", Joyce consulted Lamb, Cowper, Shaw (Lawrence), Pope, and Butler and then finally Butcher and Lang at a late stage in the writing of Ulysses (30). In this and all future analysis, I shall use the Pope translation.

that 'they could run like rossies she could sit', we are reminded of Homer's description of Nausicaa:

> Wide o'er the shore with many a piercing cry
> To rocks, to caves, the frighted virgins fly;
> All but the nymph (vol. 1: 368)

However, while Homer's 'frighted virgins' flee at the sight of Ulysses' wild appearance, scared as 'the brackish ooze his manly grace deforms' (vol. 1: 368), Cissy Caffrey and Edy Boardman run to get a better view of the fireworks, and they are accompanied by Jacky and Tommy Caffrey: the virgins of Homer expand to include virgin men, while the others are unaware of Bloom's presence. The 'whitehot passion' that 'had made her his' contrasts with Homer:

> the nymph stood fix'd alone,
> By Pallas arm'd with boldness not her own (vol. 1: 368)

Rather than the goddess' influence being the controlling factor in Nausicaa's behaviour, it is the evidence of Bloom's lust in his face that overwhelms her disapproval of 'those skirtdancers behaving so immodest before gentlemen' (U: 350) and ultimately leads to her revealing her 'nainsook knickers, the fabric that caresses the skin' (U: 350) to him. As we progress to Bloom's view of the episode, with his discomfort at the feel of his ejaculate on his shirt and musing on speaking to Gerty, we once again see the Homeric parallel being distorted: the 'brackish ooze' is not a result of the sea, but his own masturbation. We might even see Joyce punning on Ulysses' musing:

> in dubious thought the King awaits
> And self-considering, as he stands, debates (vol. 1: 368)

Psychological self-reflection is replaced by physical masturbation, while 'dubious thought' is ironically applied to Gerty's own interior monologue. Joyce surely puns on 'held out her snowy slender arms to him to come' (U: 350) to show that despite her romanticised view of love, her sexuality is more developed than even she is aware. Of course, this aspect might equally be applied to Bloom's internal debate over whether to speak to Gerty. Herein lies the tension that *The Odyssey* produces: it is an unstable body of referents, and we cannot say with absolute certainty whether an element of *Ulysses* directly corresponds to the function of that element in *The Odyssey.*

These examples illustrate that both Joyce and García Márquez use the mythical self-consciously, to induce their readers to consider the boundary between non-mythical and mythical elements of the novel. While García Márquez moots that heavenly ascension might be simply a hushed up pregnancy, Joyce allows the reader to see the heroic King and princess as advertising salesman and limping 'specimen of winsome Irish girlhood' (U: 333). Neither author attempts to rewrite a myth in a contemporary setting in their efforts to create tensions between the mythical and the realistic: instead, both take elements of myths and create a text that is informed by mythical reference, preventing the reader from becoming complacent with a frame of reference (although in the case of Joyce, it is uniquely the Ulysses myth that is employed). *Cien años de soledad* uses myth as a challenge to realism on its own terms, whereas in *Ulysses*, the mythical operates on a different plane, merely a single form of interpretation that would see realist narrative become part of a greater mythical typology.

2. Mythical Reading and Mythical Writing

Joyce challenges us to read a myth stripped of the mythological through the obsessive detail of the realist evocation of Dublin, and yet once the reader becomes conscious of the Homeric parallel, it becomes impossible to ignore. García Márquez, by contrast, exhorts his reader to re-read in light of a realist explanation of mythical narration, and in so doing, accentuates the 're-telling' that Baldick identifies as an element of myth.

Indeed, it is Von Hendy's contention that 'Campbell[3] and his collaborator, H. M. Robinson, read "Joyce's 'farced epistol to the hibruws,' not as a water pistol of absurdity

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[3] The author of *A Skeleton Key to "Finnegan's Wake"* (1944).

squirted at the highbrows' (300). That is to say, one interpretation of the mythical parallel is that it allows Joyce to mock the idea that through the mythical prism, ordinary human activities become dignified. However, given that there is no explicit reference to *The Odyssey* within the text itself, this interpretation relies on a substantial knowledge of *The Odyssey* before coming to the Joycean text.

Joyce removed the chapter headings in the manuscript of the 1922 edition that originally appeared in *The Little Review* in 1918, where sections like 'Lestrygonians' were published, although subsequently banned for indecency, and the identification of *The Odyssey* as a possible 'key' to reading *Ulysses* occurred in only 1931, when Joyce gave Valéry Larbaud an authorial guarantee that *The Odyssey* could be a key, and under Larbaud's direction, Stuart Gilbert published his book *James Joyce's Ulysses*, which included a hitherto unseen version of the schema Joyce had sent to Carlo Linati. Eagleton disdains this approach by saying 'who knows that a day in Dublin must be *made* to mean the wanderings of Odysseus, wrenched into it by hermeneutical violence in the absence of any immanent correspondences between the two' (319), and in view of the removal of the headings in the manuscript of *Ulysses*, Joyce creates a text full of mythological reference, but only in the mind of the reader: the text itself is Dublin, not Ancient Greece.

An obvious point of comparison with *Cien años de soledad* is that García Márquez is a mythic writer, in that myth forms a direct part of the narrative on first reading: it is only on our realisation that the unreliable Melquíades ('pero José Arcadio Buendía no creía en aquel tiempo en la honradez de los gitanos') is our guide to this world that we become suspicious (CAS: 10). It is in placing the realistic alongside the mythical that García Márquez asks the reader to decide on which version he can put his faith into, with the inevitable conclusion that 'lo sobrenatural da lugar a lo *fabuloso*: existe en cuanto las gentes creen en ello' (Todorov: 106). That is to say, the categories of mythical and realistic are not as concrete as Eliot believes them to be, but rather contingent on individual perspectives, and perhaps most importantly of all, their presentation in language. García Marquez's realistic narrative cannot pull free of its mythical elements without totally undermining its own existence.

3. The Political Value of Myth

Joyce and García Márquez are of particular interest to us as a result of their status as marginal figures within their own respective literatures: Joyce as an Irishman writing in English, the language of the colonising power, during a time of great political and social upheaval, is mirrored by García Márquez a generation later, this time in Colombia, where Spanish letters dominate the Hispanic literary scene and rather than the First World War, the Cuban Revolution provides a politically volatile backdrop. As Pellón says, 'three decades ago few Hispanists would have believed that Latin American literature could challenge the predominance of Peninsular literature in the colleges and universities of the United States' (80). Of course, each writer belongs to a different moment in their own movement: Joyce is a pioneering figure of modernism, whereas García Márquez is a rather late arrival to the Latin American boom and the school of magical realism. With this in mind, the presence of myth in each text is strikingly different, especially considering García Márquez's admiration of Joyce. He read *Ulysses* while at university, and experimented with Joyce's formal innovations during the 1950s as evidenced in the following letter to Carlos Alemán:

> ...trata de martillarcomponerremendar cuerda inutilmente mientras tanto muchachito del agua yendoentrandoechandoaguasilbandopiezas gramofo en cada casa a ido diciendogramafonocoronel aureliano se dañó esa misma tarde gente ha corrido vestirsecerrapuertasponersezapatospeinarse... (Arango: 347)

There is no attempt to replicate the Joycean formal techniques in *Cien años de soledad*, nor does myth operate in the same way. After all, within the Latin American boom, the formal experiments of *Ulysses* can be seen in works such as Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963) and Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres* (1965), so one might argue that García Márquez looks to develop, rather than replicate, or worse, Latin American-ize Joyce. García Márquez does not lack the confidence of the modernist writers to describe reality; rather, he rejects the enterprise entirely:

> varios grandes novelistas han demostrado que la muerte del realismo burgués sólo anuncia el advenimiento de una realidad literaria mucho más poderosa... se expresa,

> más bien, en la capacidad para encontrar y levantar sobre un lenguaje los mitos y las profecías de una época cuyo verdadero sello no es la dicotomía capitalismo-socialismo, sino una suma de hechos… que realmente están transformando la vida en las sociedades industriales. (Fuentes: 17-18)

The novel is a dead end as the manifestation of that realism to which Fuentes refers: García Márquez is obliged to assert an independent, Latin American approach to writing novels that does not rely on European models, and in this way, myth has the capacity to reenergise the novel, but on Latin American terms rather than with a view to following Europe once again. Instead, 'García Márquez managed to reconstruct these two ways of interpreting and narrating reality… the worldly, rationalizing sententiousness of his grandfather and the other-worldly oracular declamations of his grandmother' (Martin: 37), and thus while *Ulysses* depicts an entirely realistic world through its evocation of 1904 Dublin, the Macondo of *Cien años de soledad* moves from an Edenic opening to an apocalyptic conclusion, while at the same time acting as an allegory for the colonization of Latin America through the emergence of technology, revolution and economic imperialism. Martin says of *Cien años de soledad* that 'it is as if James Joyce set out to write a novel using the story-telling tone and narrative techniques of García Márquez's Aunt Francisca' (301).

The Latin American boom in literature is obviously of great importance in the context of García Márquez's use of myth. As we have already mentioned, García Márquez set great store by the modernist writers of Europe and North America: Faulkner, Woolf, Joyce and Kafka were all influences, and Ramiro De la Espriella recalls that:

> No estábamos leyendo autores colombianos, entonces. Habíamos leído, porque era imprescindible en bachillerato, La María, La Vorágine y esas cosas, pero no teníamos afición o admiración hacia los autores colombianos. (Arango: 266)

Even at a young age, García Márquez was uninterested by a local form of writing and looked to be part of a greater, continental movement: the parallel with Joyce's disaffection with Yeats' Irish renaissance is striking. Birmingham describes Joyce's meeting with Yeats as a young man as follows: 'Yeats explained that he himself was shifting from poems of beauty to experiments in Irish folklore. "That," the younger writer [Joyce] said, "shows how rapidly you are deteriorating."' (22) This criticism of the Irish cultural literary movement, exemplified by Yeats' *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889) and *The Celtic Twilight* (1902), Hyde's *The Love Songs of Connacht* (1893) and O'Grady's *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period (1878)*, was to find expression in the 1904 'The Holy Office' and the 1912 'Gas From a Burner', where Joyce accused it of narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy.

It is against this cultural moment that we must view his decision to use the Ulysses myth as a deliberate move to distance himself from what he perceived to be parochialism and inferior art. It is important to observe that 'James Joyce could not read Ancient Greek' (Schork: xiii), and as such *The Odyssey*'s status as a universal work that had already transcended national boundaries even in the first instance of Joyce's access to it through translation must have appealed to him[4][5]. Furthermore, Joyce read the Lamb translation as a child[6], and in the formal transformation of epic poem to novel, there lies the implicit potential for the content to transform as well, without necessarily compromising meaning any more than translation does: the Ulysses myth's dynamism and capacity to leave its 'Greekness' behind was a stark contrast to the nationalist poetics of Joyce's Ireland.

Forty years later, García Márquez reacts in a similar way to another seemingly backward national literature. While he does not follow Carpentier's 'real maravilloso' as such,

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[4] (Arkins qtd. in Ames' "Joyce's Aesthetic of the Double Negative and His Encounters with Homer's *Odyssey*": 29) 'Joyce owned both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the original Greek… Joyce possessed a bilingual version in Greek and Italian of Book 1; an Italian edition of Book 14; translations of the whole work by W. Cowper and by T. E. Shaw; and a German commentary on the words and phrases of the *Odyssey* by O. Henke.'

[5] (Ames: 29n45) 'Butcher and Lang's translation does not appear in any of Joyce's libraries as listed by Connolly (1955), Gillespie (1983, 1986) or Ellmann (1977), nor in his list of books Joyce consulted while writing *Ulysses* (Gillespie 1983). Thus Budgen's recollection alone, rather than Joyce's ownership of the translation itself, has led to the prevailing assumptions regarding its influence upon Joyce.'

[6] (Ames: 29) Ellmann only establishes Joyce's early encounter with Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) and his choice of Ulysses for his school essay "My Favourite Hero."

some combination of the magical and the realistic had also been visible in Borges, Rulfo and Asturias before García Márquez came to write *Cien años de soledad.* García Márquez avoids parochialism in his use of myth, by either contracting to the idiosyncratic or expanding to the universal in his choice of mythical elements. Martin reports, 'the writer himself has claimed that every single incident and every single detail corresponds to a lived experience. ('I am just a mediocre notary.')' (301), while simultaneously, González Echevarría talks of 'stories that resemble classical or biblical myths… characters who are reminiscent of mythical heroes… certain stories that have a general mythic character…the beginning of the whole story' (368-9). Having said that, this eclectic combination of anecdotal, personal stories and canonical, universal mythology must be considered as particular to the author: it is the engagement with magical realism, at that point a Latin American phenomenon, which elevates García Márquez beyond the parochial, nationalist writing as exemplified by *La Vorágine.*

A further consideration for the reader must be the presence of politics within the texts themselves, and the way that myth operates in the political sphere. There can be no doubt that Coronel Aureliano Buendía becomes a quasi-mythical figure through his battles (he is defeated in thirty-two revolutions), while the central government is never seen in *Cien años de soledad.* Anti-Semitism and nationalism surface in *Ulysses*, but do these themes transform when viewed in a mythical way? The faceless government of *Cien años de soledad* will send representatives to Macondo, but it is only in these representatives that its power, or lack thereof in the case of Don Apolinar Moscote, becomes manifest. This has a strong mythological reference in the Bible, where God is characteristically absent from the real world, but constantly affects it with supernatural power, while of course resonates in the historical dimension of the novel with Latin America's history of dictatorships.

Political power is as devastating as any mythological power, and surely the gods of Ancient Greece who are able to meddle in the affairs of mortals, are replaced in the 20th century by mythological, or political, structures. The government's orders surely have an allegorical function, mimicked in *Ulysses* with the attempted violence of the citizen, showing that the authority of a structure or even a political ideology is only tangible on a realistic plane: we are reminded of Barthes' *Mythologies*, where he explains the structures that underpin the striptease, or the toy, that are all implicit in the object or situation. Politics thus becomes mythological in the sense that it has taken over the role of determining the fate of individuals within its structures: it is no longer Neptune, but nationalism that will keep Ulysses/Bloom from safety. Both authors are able to use myth as a way to distance themselves from a particular national setting through its universality, and both demonstrate an awareness of myth's capacity to express contemporary political issues within their texts as well.

4. Implications for the Modern Interpretation of Reality

'History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' (U: 34) says Stephen, and this quote has a particular resonance in both authors' attitude to the historical. García Márquez is explicitly suspicious of history's claim to truth, with José Arcadio Segundo's knowledge of the massacre of the banana workers blithely contradicted by a waitress '"Aquí no ha habido muertos… desde los tiempos de tu tío, el coronel, no ha pasado nada en Macondo"' (CAS: 350), while the dissemination of *The Odyssey* throughout the text of *Ulysses* places a realist, historically accurate narrative into conflict with not only a mythical text, but one of the foundational texts of the Western literary canon. As examples of fictionality go, Joyce could hardly have chosen a more obvious one. Volkening says of *Cien años de soledad* that 'tiene, además de lo que "consta en actas", su lado mítico, y al mito que es, por excelencia, historia inconclusa, historia infinita, historia de nunca acabar' (144) and this tension between the timelessness of myth, and the temporality of a realist, historical narrative can equally be discovered in Joyce.

It is important to remember that in Spanish, 'historia' is defined as 'conjunto de todos los hechos ocurridos en tiempos pasados' but also as 'a veces, se aplica este nombre a ciertas narraciones inventadas' (Moliner). Parkinson Zamora says 'García Márquez's fiction transmutes our temporal world into a timeless mythic realm that is at once about history and beyond it' (63). This reading is contradicted by González Echevarría, when he says 'time is circular in the fiction, but not in Melquíades' room. The Archive appears to be linear and teleological, while the plot of the novel itself is repetitive and mythical' (371). García Márquez demonstrates the ease with which history can be rewritten according to perception

and places it into opposition with the mythical, which we might see as a metonym for the fictional. Story, in *Cien años de soledad*, outlasts history, as we continue to read Melquíades account even as Aureliano dies and Macondo is destroyed.

Having mentioned the Bible earlier, it seems appropriate to return to it in a discussion of history and myth: the theological text presents absolute truth, and the reader/believer is obliged to accept the mythological as if it were real, in much the same way as Melquíades asks of us. However, in the Bible, narration take place from a single, unified position, as follows: 'and God said, Let there be light: and there was light' (*Authorized King James Version*, Genesis 1:3). As Auerbach notes, the narrative style of the Bible is characterised by its prioritisation of events, rather than psychological development:

> the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is non-existent (11).

Time does not operate on multiple planes in the Bible, nor does it seek to produce tension in the way that García Márquez explicitly sets out to do: however, its presentation of the mythological as absolutely true brings it into conflict with human historical records that exist outside of its sphere of influence. *Cien años de soledad* is not trying to replace the historical with the mythical, but it is certainly gesturing forcefully towards its capacity to do so in the hands of a compliant reader.

González Echeverría claims that 'the modern Latin American narrative is an 'unwriting', as much as it is a rewriting, of Latin American history from the anthropological perspective' (366): history can only be presented subjectively, and as such it is presentation, not content that has historical value. While Joyce does not seek to transform our impression of reality into myth, García Márquez underlines the corrupting nature of myth when it is asked to share narrative space with realism: rather than maintaining the border between the historical and the mythical as *Ulysses* does, albeit a blurred one, García Márquez goes further, and seeks to eradicate it completely.

Equally, when talking of *Ulysses*, Eagleton describes exactly what we have seen in García Márquez: 'It [myth] thus takes over something of the traditional role of historical explanation at a point where historical forms of thought are now themselves increasingly part of the symbolic rubble, progressively hollow and discredited' (319). Despite this idea that myth is capable of replacing something of this role, both authors are notable for their inclusion of contemporary historical reference in their novels, as if to specifically question this proposition. The characters of Álvaro, Germán, Alonso and Gabriel correspond to the Grupo de Barranquilla in *Cien años de soledad*, while Coronel Lorenzo Gavilán's claim to 'haber sido testigo del heroísmo de su compadre Artemio Cruz' (CAS: 340), when both characters are borrowed from *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*[7], in which Cruz deserts on the battlefield, implies that the novel takes place after 1919, when these characters were fighting in the Mexican Revolution.

Of course, there is a joke here for readers of Fuentes: Artemio Cruz is a deserter, and as such García Márquez rewrites his history. Not only does the author question his narrator's portrayal of reality as experienced in Macondo, but even external reality is vulnerable to being reimagined to suit a particular structure. Artemio Cruz's status as a fictional character in a realist narrative makes him a perfect target: Fuentes presents him one way, García Márquez a totally different way, and thus the mythical world of Macondo sits in uncomfortable relation with realist Mexico City.

Although characters from *Dubliners* reappear in *Ulysses*, and there is a great volume of contemporary reference through songs and advertising slogans, amongst other forms, myth does not have a corrupting influence on history: rather, history is allowed to exist within a realist narrative, foregrounded either by a voice as in 'he unrolled the newspaper baton idly and read idly: *What is home without/ Plumtree's Potted Meat?*' (U: 72) or by the physical appearance of the word in the text, where song titles are italicised. History is self-consciously distinct from realism, and yet both can be relocated to a Homeric context, according to the reader's persistence with the Homeric model.

Both authors look back in order to look forward: the historic forms of thought are no longer appropriate, and it is in the structure of myth that the modern world can be interpreted. In his 1902 essay on James Clarence Mangan, Joyce writes 'history or the denial

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[7] Fuentes, Carlos. *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz.* Madrid: F.C.E. de España, 1962.

of reality, for they are two names for one thing, may be said to be that which deceives the whole world' (CW: 81), and Stephen's conversation with Deasy is the clearest illustration of this idea in *Ulysses*: Deasy's swaggering 'all history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God' (U: 34) is met by Stephen's dismissal of this ultimate purpose, his definition of God as 'a shout in the street' (U: 34).

This perspective is certainly expressed in García Márquez, where the historical (which implicitly evokes post-Enlightenment, European rationalist thinking) account of Latin American civilization that can be found in *Cien años de soledad* demands to be read through the prism of myth, and is eventually totally corrupted by it. The town of Macondo is an obvious example: simultaneously Edenic and post-colonial, in our first encounter with it we are told 'el mundo era tan reciente, que muchas cosas carecían de nombre, y para mencionarlas había que señalarlas con el dedo' (CAS: 9), but a few pages later, we see that this isn't the case at all: 'al otro lado de la sierra la antigua ciudad de Riohacha, donde en épocas pasadas –según le había contado el primer Aureliano Buendía, su abuelo- sir Francis Drake se daba al deporte de cazar caimanes' (CAS: 19). In our first exposure to the town, we have missed out its foundation: García Márquez gives us Genesis 2 before Genesis 1, and what is more, in later confirming that creation has in fact far preceded José Arcadio's foundation of Macondo, he changes our assumed chronology again.

Joyce, through Stephen, reminds the reader that history is a matter of perception, and in allowing *The Odyssey* to inhabit *Ulysses*, his practice is to show the ease with which the process of mythification can operate on even the most banal of events. An example of this mythification process (we are reminded here of Eagleton's dismissal of imposing a mythical hermeneutics onto *Ulysses*) is to be found in Bloom's interaction with his cat: '-Mrkrgnao! The cat said loudly' (U: 54) and as Levine reports, 'the Italian translator of *Ulysses* has seen in it a covert version of Mrkr, the Greek spelling of Mercury, and thus a signal to the Homeric Hermes... or, alternatively, 'Mrkrgnao' may be read as a reference back to the first episode and the explicitly mercurial Malachi, Buck Mulligan. Thus Bloom's early morning interlocutor is made analogous to Stephen's' (139). The Italian translator falls rather too neatly into the trap of applying *The Odyssey* indiscriminately to passages of the text: we must be on our guard against the presentation of reality in text.

Instead, the use of language here exploits its potential to demonstrate the differences between the meta-language of narrative (the conventional mode of realist fiction) and 'true narration'. This is particularly evident in passages such as 'frseeeeeeeefronnnng train somewhere whistling' (U: 706) where the true sound is narrated for us, and then immediately expressed in terms that the reader can understand for us to see the contrast. Here we are able to see Joyce's complaint with history precisely illuminated: language is insufficient to truly express reality, and therefore history is merely an approximation, and furthermore, an approximation that is credited with exactness. As MacCabe notes, there is a clear challenge to the meta-language of realist writing, wherein 'there is an elision of the act of writing and what is written, so, similarly, there is an elision of the act of reading and what is read. Deprived of any experience of language, the reader becomes an observer and can ignore the productive effects of his or her discourses' (35). This elision is avoided through the presence of myth, where in expanding the connotations of textual elements so that all may act as symbols for another plane of meaning, we evaluate language more closely: Joyce seeks to shake the reader out of complacency with realist fiction through myth, and indeed, the mythification process can be seen as merely an aspect of this concern, just as much as his formal experimentation.

García Márquez locates history as a particular way to interpret reality, but it is consistently opposed by a mythical explanation: a consistent narrative voice will not allow the reader to see one form of interpretation privileged over the other. On the other hand, there is no single narrator in Joyce: his formal innovation will not allow for it, the plurality of source material an essential component in keeping *The Odyssey* to a series of echoes among other frames of reference.

Joyce is clear about *The Odyssey*'s influence being variable within episodes of *Ulysses*, merely a series of echoes amongst other planes of reference: in his letter to Frank Budgen, he writes 'am working hard at *Oxen of the Sun*... Technique: a nineparted episode without divisions... this progression is also linked back at each part subtly with some foregoing episode of the day and besides this, with the natural stages of development in the embryo and the periods of faunal evolution in general' (SL: 251). This variance in intensity can be seen as the result of Joyce's resistance to a single mode of narration, exemplified in the same 'Oxen of the Sun': he describes the progression of the chapter as opening with 'a

Sallustian-Tacitean prelude' (SL: 250) and leading to 'a frightful jumble of Pidgin English, nigger English, Cockney, Irish, Bowery slang and broken doggerel' (SL: 251). Where García Márquez narrates through the unreliable Melquíades and thus makes the reader attempt to distinguish between which version of events he thinks he can trust, Joyce takes the opposite approach, and amongst the cacophony of voices in *Ulysses*, everything appears realistic, yet also containing the potential to become mythical.

Even the 'flamboyantly extra-literary' (Levine: 146), such as the songs from 'Sirens', where Simon Dedalus sings *M'Appari* from the opera Martha, and Ben Dollard sings *The Croppy Boy*, can contain a mythical function in addition to the realist detail they add. In fact, this is a prime example of the multiplicity of connotations that elements of Joyce's novel have: the former song features in an opera where multiple cases of concealed identity drive the plot, while the latter is about a nationalist rebel. Mistaken identity has the mythical echo of Ulysses' return to Ithaca in disguise, while Telemachus' desire to prove himself can be found in the lyric: 'I alone am left of my name and race; / I will go to Wexford and take their place' (Malone). On the other hand, over the course of the song, lines from *M'Appari* evoke memories of Molly singing for Bloom, while lyrics from *The Croppy Boy* are distorted and inserted into Bloom's interior monologue, illustrating the mind's assimilation of external stimuli in a realistic fashion.

The ability for references to operate multi-directionally in *Ulysses* leads to a situation where 'allegory is… symbolism run riot, pressed to a self-undoing extreme; if anything can now fulfil the role of a 'concrete universal', nothing is particularly remarkable' (Eagleton: 320). *Cien años de soledad* ironises this relationship, where it is nothing that is in itself remarkable: history and myth are both systems of making the nothing into something, but both are predicated upon an arbitrary language that only has meaning within a narrative structure. The naming of objects occurs both implicitly, in the case of 'muchas cosas carecían de nombre' (CAS: 9), and explicitly, as in 'con un hisopo entintado marcó cada cosa con su nombre' (CAS: 60), on both occasions demonstrating how our reality is constructed on a system of symbols and signifiers, neither one more apt to describe the signified.

The implication here is that all history, as a presentation of fact, can be transformed through a mythical reading. García Márquez presents this as problematic and indeed, impossible without some level of corruption where myth and history share the same narrative space, whereas Joyce allows both the mythical and the historical to act as modes of interpretation, the realistic able to assume a mythological counterpart just as *The Odyssey* is able to reconstitute itself into modern Dublin.

5. Conclusion: A Productive Tension

In conclusion, Eliot's assertion that the mythic method makes the modern world possible for art is problematic for the reader of *Ulysses* and *Cien años de soledad*: while it is clear that a mythical structure can be applied to any realistic or historical evocation, it is the position of this structure within the narrative method that makes the modern world possible. Myth is fundamental to our readings of these novels because of its fictionality: the novel's association with realism is so fundamental that by using the mythical, especially in conjunction with the ostensibly factual, that realist façade is shattered.

Ulysses posits myth as a two-way street between mundane, contemporary Dublin and the heroic, exotic world of *The Odyssey*: the everyday can be seen as dignified by its mythical counterpart, but equally, the mythical can be reduced to the everyday as revealed in the respective 'Nausicaa' episodes in each text. It is also important to remember that Joyce does not write mythically, but rather allows the reader the space for a mythic reading: it would be entirely possible to read *Ulysses* without prior knowledge of *The Odyssey*, and indeed, the superabundance of references, languages, symbols and literary techniques within the novel beg the question what good does a knowledge of *The Odyssey* really do, beyond stimulating the reader to read more closely in order to find intertextual echoes? One might view *The Odyssey* as functioning as an auxiliary to Joyce's real concern, namely, meta-language as a mode of narration in realist fiction. The presence of *The Odyssey* certainly encourages the reader to acknowledge that the language of the text does not have a singular function, but a plural one: if myth will give the chaos of reality a structure, self-conscious language will give it a voice.

García Márquez also uses myth as a way to illustrate the inadequacy of the realist narrative, but *Cien años de soledad* operates differently: as we have already established, the historical and realistic is locked in combat with the mythical in García Márquez, with the

tension that this produces once again putting the onus on the reader to distinguish how the narrative discourse shapes the response to both the ordinary and the extraordinary. Where Joyce's use of myth is surely a means to the end of a linguistic revolution, García Márquez sees its content as the way to make realism self-conscious: the novel becomes dynamic when the reader is unable to apply a single structure to the text, and on re-reading, the narrative transforms from the story of the Buendía family into a twin narrative, of their story and the decoding of Melquíades' account of it. Myth is the basis of a productive tension in both novels, a tension which requires the reader to reinterpret episodes of the narrative over and over, or maintain multiple levels of interpretation that appear contradictory in mind.

It is this tension that makes the modern world possible for art: the mythic method and the narrative method, to use Eliot's terms, must operate in conjunction to produce a self-conscious text. *Ulysses* will achieve this through the polysemy of language, while *Cien años de soledad* will bring it about through an unreliable narrative voice that never allows the reader to define where the realistic ends and the mythical begins.

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