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Lo "real maravilloso" y el cine

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"My most important problem was destroying the lines of demarcation that separates what seems real from what seems fantastic"

Gabriel García Márquez (1)

Year after year I seek new approaches to inculcate respect and the ability to value global consciousness and cultural diversity to my students as well as to stimulate them to learn about the Hispanic and Spanish cultures while learning the grammar, vocabulary and other linguistic components of the Spanish language.

Students are not necessarily thrilled about learning a foreign language, so my task as a teacher is to make it engaging and appealing while they learn how to identify and absorb knowledge about the many different Spanish cultures and identities. Most of my high school students are exposed to other cultures daily, but choose not to take advantage of such an invaluable experience since they do not know how to deal with the unfamiliar. The unit *El realismo mágico en el cine* provides me with the opportunity to introduce my students to "Magical Realism" in Latin American Literature and some of its adaptations in film while implementing the "5Cs"—Cultures, Connections (among disciplines), Comparisons (between cultures), Communication, and Communities- that the National Standards of Foreign Language Learning promote. (2))

Most of my students have not yet been exposed to foreign authors or to any kind of film analysis and they find it difficult to interpret what they read or see. As for films, they only think in terms of whether they like them or not, they do not think of films as stories that do have an structure, characters and many other aspects such as the cinematography, the mise-en scène (settings and sets), the sound, the image, etc. In this unit, students will first learn about Latin American literature, to ultimately be able appreciate, read, understand, analyze, and interpret short stories or novel excerpts written by authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Isabel Allende or Laura Esquivel in order to compare them to some of their adaptations on the screen. They will also learn basic notions of film studies, as well as how to watch, interpret and analyze movies as making connections and comparisons with the original text, decide the point of view of a text or film, who the narrator is, etc.

The unit is to be taught at Hill Regional Career High School in New Haven. Career, is magnet school for students interested in health sciences, business, and technology. The school has a student body of about 700 students of which approximately, a 53% are African American, 27% Hispanic, 17% White, 3% Asian. About 67% of the students receive reduced lunch.

I will use this unit with my Spanish 4 students, who have an Intermediate Level on the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Performance Guidelines for K-12. (3) Since they are able to use advanced grammatical structures, we will be working in their proficiency in all four-language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will hone their higher order thinking skills as they learn to express complex opinions and analyze literature and film-in Spanish.

Most of the class activities for this unit will be conducted in Spanish, but English will be used when necessary. With proper modifications, the unit could also be taught in Spanish 3, Spanish 5 and in Advanced Placement Spanish Language and/or Advance Placement Spanish Literature.

The material will be covered throughout the third and part of the fourth marking periods in about 15 sessions, each of which will be eighty minutes in length; these long periods will allow me to implement complex strategies and a variety of activities without many interruptions.

Rationale

Realismo mágico (Magic Realism)

Many are the definitions and explanations of what magic (or magical) realism is, and few of them are accurate. Probably because when academic critics tried to define the term with rigor, they realized it is powerful, but not precise. Some critics have applied the term to any example of the unreal or the fantastic in literature, leaving behind such intrinsic features as its regionality, cultural and political circumstances, as well as its historical contradictions.

The term "magic realism" as such was initially used in 1925 by the German art critic Franz Roh, to describe a group of post-expressionist painters that included Max Beckman and Otto Dix. The general tendency was to return to realism after expressionist extravagance. Unlike the literary term, magical realism in art describes paintings that do not include fantastic or magical features. It was not until 1949 that the label magic realism was narrative techniques used in Latin American literature.

Many Latin American writers - such as the Cuban Alejo Carpentier and Guatemalan Miguel ángel Asturias-, spent time in Paris experimenting with Surrealism during the 1920s and 1930s. They combined some of the Surrealist features with the realities of their continent. Surrealists tried to produce magical effects through artificial techniques: automatic writing, hypnosis and dreaming; meanwhile the magical realists portrayed the real world as having marvelous aspects inherent in it.

Alejo Carpentier criticized surrealists, his former friends, for juxtaposing objects that would never naturally be found together. He believed that magic realism is part of the natural heritage of Latin America because of its geographic, cultural and historic uniqueness. Gabriel García Márquez supports this view of magical realism as a technique particular to Central and South America, since this magic is part of the landscape and cannot be relocated: "*poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable.*" (4)

Gabriel García Márquez agrees with Carpentier and suggests that magic realism is a part of the Latin

American idiosyncrasy since it arises out of the Latin American experience, more as a result of political necessity than as a result of cultural instability.

The term was later on used by Venezuelan intellectual Arturo Uslar Pietri to describe the work of some Latin American writers. By the 1960s many critics and readers used it since fantastic, mythical and magical elements had become a common feature in Spanish American fiction by then. He also noted that the "magical realists" described the supernatural and magical elements naturally, accepting them with little or no surprise.

Naomi Lindstrom defines Magical Realism as a "*narrative technique that blurs the distinction between fantasy and reality.*" Characterized, she says "*by an equal acceptance of the ordinary and the extraordinary. Magic realism fuses lyrical and, at times, fantastic writing with an examination of the character of human existence and an implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite.*" (5)

Another explanation of the term presents it as "*fiction that does not distinguish between realistic and non-realistic events, fiction in which the supernatural, the mythical, or the implausible are assimilated to the cognitive structure of reality without a perceptible break in the narrator's or character's consciousness. Magical realism is a style associated with Latin American fiction especially in the 1960s and after.*" (6)

Some scholars state that there would be no reason to engage in magic realism if there were not a truth that cannot be revealed except through distortion. This is a key difference between magical realism and other kinds of fantastic trends; magic realism relies on a fusion of facts and fantasy in the service of a quest of meaning, instead of just relying on isolated fantastic episodes or elements. Magic realism combines fantasy with raw physical or social reality in a search for truth governing the surface of everyday life.

Writers look for supernatural phenomena in the natural world and in human actions and they often turn common places into mysterious happenings. Reality seems to be changed, but the reader still perceives essential truths as a result of this distortion.

García Márquez' novels help to define magic realism and illustrate how it works. In *Cien años de soledad*, a woman named Remedios the Beauty ascends to heaven grasping the bed sheets she had been folding in her hands. Such beauty, García Márquez suggests, cannot survive in this imperfect world of lust and greed. Remedios escapes her endless chain of male admirers by going to heaven, where her purity best belongs.

Some of the representative magic realists besides Gabriel García Márquez and Alejo Carpentier are Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, Mexican Carlos Fuentes and Chileans José Donoso and Isabel Allende.

As mentioned before, extreme dramas of political experiences in Latin American countries prompt the authors to represent reality through distortion. Film is then a natural outgrowth of the necessity to bring this unique reality to the media. Adaptations, though, have a danger since sometimes it is not easy to express or put everything in a text into images, since there is no room left for imagination. Sometimes it is just a matter of having the economic goal instead of the artistic one as a priority.

Early on, filmmakers understood the potential of magical realism in their media, as for example, Federico Fellini, whose works in the 1950s and 1960s present qualities that would seem to be magical while still being realist.

Gabriel García Márquez (1927-)

Some of Gabriel García Márquez' novels and short stories are perfect examples of magic realism and do illustrate how it works. His masterpiece *Cien años de soledad* (*A Hundred Years of Solitude*) is considered by most scholars and critics to be the most influential work of the movement.

In fact, Gabriel García Márquez is one of the most eminent writers of all times. As a Nobel Laureate (1982) he is a master of the novel and short story, a screen-writer and journalist. He fits in many types of lesson plans for students. I introduced García Márquez in an earlier unit that I developed a couple of years ago, so please refer to it in order to get general and biographical information. (7)

One of the themes I failed to mention in detail in that earlier unit, "*Spanish Cultures through Film and Literature*," in part because it was not really relevant there, is the fact that Gabriel García Márquez grew up with his grandparents and fell under the spell of his grandmother, Tranquiliana Iguarán since she was always "*telling fables, family legends and organizing her grandson's life according to the messages she received in her dreams.*" (8) As Gabriel states "*she was a source of the magical, superstitious and supernatural view of reality.*" (9)

It would be difficult, almost impossible to talk about film adaptation in Latin America and not mention García Márquez, since he has worked closely with cinema all his life. In 1955, he studied film at the Experimental Center of Cinematography Di Cinecittà , where he met Cuban Julio García Espinosa and Argentine Fernando Birri, who later would be considered the founders of the Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano (New Latin American Cinema). This brief stay in Rome allowed him to share long hours at the moviola with film maker Cesare Zavattini from whom he learned the art of narrating with images, a technique García Márquez would use later on as part of his work in Mexico City. Many are of the idea that numerous 1960s Mexican films were written by him, who like other intellectuals of the time wrote scripts under a pseudonym. One of the works he in fact signed is the beautiful *Tiempo de Morir* (*Time to die*, Mexico, Arturo Ripstein, 1966) a film he wrote with Carlos Fuentes and was directed by a twenty-one-year-old Arturo Ripstein. In fact, I initially planned to use this film in the unit, but I am afraid it is not part of the magical realism trend I want my students to learn about. (See Appendix 1 for a list of films in which Gabriel García Márquez has been involved in, in different capacities and/or as the screen writer).

In 1986, García Márquez, Birri and García Espinosa founded the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión de San Antonio de los Baños (International School of film and Television of San Antonio de los Baños), in Cuba. The project is consecrated to support and finance the film career of young Latin American, Caribbean, Asian and African students.

In the development of the unit, we will deal with three different film adaptations: the first one, *Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes* is a 90 minute long adaptation of a very short story; *Con el amor no se juega* is a collection of three short episodes made for television written by Gabriel García Márquez in collaboration with some other young writers. Finally, *Edipo Alcalde*, is a film adaptation of an adaptation García Márquez wrote of Sophocles' classic play *Oedipus the King*.

Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes

A short story that García Márquez wrote in 1968, "*Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes*" ("*A Very Old*

Man with Enormous Wings"), tells about a poor old angel that falls in the courtyard of a house during a storm. Pelayo and Elisenda, the owners, mistreat this prodigious being by placing him in the chicken coop exhibiting him as a circus attraction. Many villagers visit and pay to gawk, thinking the angel will be able to perform miracles to solve their problems. A new phenomenon, a woman with a spider body, will arrive to eclipse the angel's fame and prominence. The angel survives wandering through the courtyard of the house and, after a harsh winter, new feathers grow and he can finally leave the house and fly away.

Story

Even though the story seems to be accessible and uncomplicated, it carries complex themes such as spiritual appearances, the concept of faith, unbelief, ignorance, disobedience (spider-woman), and opportunism. The narrator is omniscient and yet he controls all the characters thoughts and feelings.

The story is a social critique of parochial behaviors toward the unfamiliar. García Márquez plays with different levels of critique. He presents characters such as Pelayo, the know-it-all neighbor, or Father Gonzago who represent different points of view, according to their social group, but who finally fail to understand the angel.

Film Adaptation

The film script is a collaboration of García Márquez with Fernando Birri, (often called the father of "New Latin American Cinema") who directs the film and plays the old man. There is a major mistake of approach in the adaptation: the angel secretly removes his wings, destroying the film's (and the story's) essential mystery. Even though later on a final turn tries to change the tide, it is too late to do so. The film ends up being too realistic and not so magical, which spoils the beauty of this four-pages-long story.

Con el amor no se juega

Don't Play with Love is a film of three episodes, each a 30 minute adaptation for television of a Gabriel García Márquez story.

1. "*El espejo de dos lunas*" ("*The Two Way Mirror*," Mexico, Carlos García Agraz, 1990) Susana is a young Mexican woman who is about to marry the son of a prominent family. She discovers a man inside the mirror of a set of furniture from the 19th century they have bought before the wedding. She begins a romance with this apparition, Nicolás, a Lieutenant in the Mexican-American war.
2. "*Ladrón de sábado*" ("*Saturday Thief*," Mexico, José Luis García Agraz, 1991) A thief breaks into a mansion finding a lonely woman whose husband is away. The woman finds herself strangely attracted to him.
3. "*Contigo en la distancia*" ("*Far Away with You*," Mexico, Tomás Gutierrez Alea, 1991) A love letter reaches its addressee 35 years late. The letter, written in 1954 could have changed Ofelia's life. She finally finds her love and discovers how invincible true love is.

Edipo Alcalde

Edipo Alcalde (*Oedipus Mayor*) is a quite close adaptation of Sophocles' classical tragedy *Oedipus the King*, which is as well an adaptation of the classic myth. García Márquez swapped ancient Thebes and the myth's characters for today's Colombia.

In the unit we will not work with the texta screenplay—since it would be almost impossible to find it, and it

would be more interesting to focus on the *mise-en-scène* and the beautiful cinematography, as well as the cultural aspects. .

Edipo Alcalde was never one of those scripts commissioned by the producers to well known writers looking for prestige for their film. In this case, it was García Márquez who was the main project initiator and the most enthusiastic supporter. The script merges three of the author's main obsessions: *Oedipus the King* (Sophocle's tragedy, the text itself, one of his favorite plays), plagues and the violence in Colombia (due to the political clash that began in 1948 with the brutal confrontation between guerrilla groups and the Army). These three themes have influenced the writer and are present in many of his works.

Film Adaptation

Edipo is sent to a town of the Colombian Andes. He must try to reconcile the opposing interests of the groups that keep violence alive. On his way to assume his position as mayor, Edipo and his military escort arrive at a crossroads at the precise moment that Layo's kidnappers are fleeing from town. In the shootout that follows, Edipo inadvertently fulfills Layo's prophetic nightmare "to die murdered at the hands of his own son." In the subsequent criminal investigation, the new mayor meets Yocasta, Layo's wife, and falls in love with her, thereby becoming "son and husband of the woman who gave him birth, and father and brother of the son he will have with her". Edipo has fulfilled his destiny. Layo's death exacerbates the political conflicts and Edipo discovers his own origin. Oedipus Rex is now Edipo Alcalde.

This adaptation contains sex scenes, nudity, violence and intense scenes and themes, for this reason, we will work with fragments of the movie.

Isabel Allende (1942-)

Isabel Allende was born in Lima, Perú, on August 2, in a family of diplomats and politicians. Her father, Tomás was a Chilean diplomat and her cousin Salvador Allende was the president of Chile from 1970 to 1973. Isabel grew up in Europe, the Middle East and Bolivia where her step-father was a diplomat. The family member that influenced Isabel the most was as in the case of García Márquez,—her grandmother, Isabel Barros Moreira. Isabel, in her web page refers to her as s "*my clairvoyant grandmother. She died when I was very young, but her spirit has always accompanied me.*" (10)

Isabel returned to Chile as a result of the Suez Canal crisis in 1958 to finish her secondary studies. She went to a number of private schools both in Lebanon and Chile and was really well read. It was in Santiago where she met Manuel Frías, her future husband whom she married in 1962. Her first job was for FAO (the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization). In 1964-1965 she traveled around Europe and lived in Brussels and Switzerland with her husband and her one-year old daughter Paula. Her son Nicolás was born upon their return to Chile in 1966.

After divorcing her first husband in 1962, Isabel married an American lawyer named William Gordon in 1988. Like many Latin American writers, she became a journalist and worked for a woman's magazine named *Paula*, where she published a humorous column named "*Impertinentes*" ("*The Impertinents*") that she also edited, and later on briefly directed a children magazine called *Mampato*.

In 1970 Salvador Allende was elected first socialist president of Chile and the author's stepfather, Ramón Huidobro was appointed ambassador to Argentina. General Augusto Pinochet seized control of Chile in a military coup d'état in September of 1973 in which Salvador Allende died; many people thought he was assassinated. This changed Isabel's life:

because my work as a journalist I knew exactly what was happening in my country, I lived through it, and the dead, the tortured, the widows and orphans, left an unforgettable impression on my memory. The last chapters of *La casa de los espíritus* narrate those events. They are based on what I saw and on the direct testimonies of those who lived through the brutal experience of the repression. (11)

Two years later, Allende and her family moved to Caracas, Venezuela, where she contributed to *El Nacional*, a newspaper and where she worked as a teacher. They lived there for thirteen years. It was then when she began *La casa de los espíritus*. The manuscript was initially a letter to her grandfather, who still lived in Chile and soon after died, but the material from the letter was incorporated to the book. *The House of the Spirits* was published in 1982.

La Casa de los Espíritus

The novel

La casa de los espíritus is a family saga of the del Valle-Trueba family with the history of Chile and its politics as background. The novel covers from the turn of the century until the military coup that led General Pinochet to power. It was a best seller in Europe and Latin America, winning awards such as the Grand Prix d'Evasion in France, the Point de Mire in Belgium or the Panorama Literario Award in Chile.

As some scholars have pointed out, *La casa de los espíritus* was shaped in the magic realism configuration although Allende belonged to a later generation. The novel was built around a mixture of reality and fantasy, mingling the living and spirits, and characters having unusual attributes: Clara can predict the future, play the piano with its cover closed, communicate with the spirits, Alba's green hair, etc. The novel presents two levels that are intertwined, one introduces the tragic political history of Chile and the other shows a fantastic and supernatural universe with characters with supernatural physical and spiritual attributes.

The Film

The adaptation was written and directed by Bille August, a well known Danish filmmaker for the high quality of his works. He is one of the few directors to win Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or twice. He is also renowned for adapting seemingly difficult novels into successful features. His eye for characters and historical periods, has gained him a solid reputation as one of the most talented filmmakers of his generation.

The House of the Spirits despite its unique cast including Meryl Streep, Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, Antonio Banderas, Vanessa Redgrave and Winona Ryder, is not one of his finest works, due in part to the richness of detail and difficulty of the original text. The film is neither as politically charged as Allende's novel nor retains the flavor of her setting, which at times seems quite European. Other differences include the compression or loss of main characters: August, who wrote the screenplay, decided to blend Clara and Esteban's daughter and granddaughter, in Blanca (Winona Ryder in the screen). Blanca's two brothers do not exist in the adaptation, as the green hair or the "dog-rug."

For the unit, we will use only fragments of the film, since it contains several sexual situations, brief nudity and graphic and disturbing violence.

Laura Esquivel (1950-)

Laura Esquivel was born in Ciudad de Mexico, September 30, 1950. She started writing while she worked as a kindergarten teacher. *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) was her first novel and a tremendous success in Mexico and internationally.

Other novels and various works include *La ley del amor* (*The Law of Love*) published in 1996; *Íntimas suculencias*, 1998; *Between the Fires*, 2000 and *Malinche*, 2006.

Como Agua para Chocolate

The novel

Published in 1989, the novel makes heavy use of magical realism. *Como agua para chocolate* is written in a unique style since it combines a romance novel with elements of a cookbook and it is a parody of both genres. The work divided into twelve sections named after the months of the year. Each section begins with a recipe of some sort, involving Mexican foods. The chapters outline the preparation of the dish as she ties them to an event in Tita de la Garza, the protagonist's life.

The novel follows Tita's life and how her love for Pedro is impossible due to a tradition, fabricated by the author, that dictates the youngest daughter must forsake all personal aspirations, including love and/or marriage, in order to take care of her mother until her death. During her youth, Tita is sent to the kitchen where she learns how to cook with recipes from the family's servant, Nacha.

As for the narrative, the author intertwines magical elements, exaggerates situations and adds many fantastic details. The most evident magic realm would of course be the kitchen as she develops the ability to cook emotions in her dishes causing magic effects in her diners. Furthermore, her tears have magical qualities: she cries before she is born when someone cuts onions, she cries so much that her tears run down the stairs in a torrent, etc.

One of the most obvious themes in the narrative is the contest for authority. It develops very early, when Mamá Elena forces Tita to become her caregiver. Another relevant matter would be the way characters are portrayed, for women seem to be stronger than men: Gertrudis is presented as a powerful general in the Mexican Revolution, for example. On the other hand, men are weak, passive, incapable of making important decisions and easily influenced by women around them.

Critics consider *Como agua para chocolate* to be a well-written and intelligent parody of the standard romance novel. They also have referred to Esquivel's ability to use metaphors and symbols to give the love story many deeper levels of meaning. Though some have difficulty placing the book into any genre of writing because it contains elements of a traditional novel, a romance novel, a fantasy, a parody, and a cookbook, they generally find *Como agua para chocolate* to be both entertaining and stimulating.

Film Adaptation

Released in 1992, *Como agua para chocolate* became one of the largest grossing foreign films ever released in the United States.

Alfonso Arau's direction can be seen as plain, especially in light of the curious events the film often depicts. Everything is portrayed with the simplicity of a folk tale, with exaggerated events blending effortlessly into those that seem real.

For the unit, we will use only fragments of the film, since it contains several sex and nudity scenes.

Juan Rulfo (1917-1986)

Mexican novelist and short story writer Juan Nepomuceno Carlos Pérez Vizcaíno Rulfo (Juan Rulfo) was born into a family of landowners in Sayula, Jalisco in May 1917. The region was the scene of war and political unrest and it would later on serve as the setting for some of the author's fictional works.

As a consequence of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the Cristero Rebellion Rulfo's family was ruined and his father and two uncles were murdered. His mother died in 1927 when young Juan was sent to the Luis Silva school for orphans in Guadalajara.

During his years in San Gabriel, Juan had access to a library, which was going to become the base of his literary formation. After Luis Silva School, he went to seminary (the equivalent of secondary school) from 1932 to 1934. He could not attend to university afterwards because he had not taken preparatory school and because the Universidad de Guadalajara closed due to a strike. He then moved to Mexico City, where he attended the National Military Academy and later on studied law for a short time in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Rulfo worked for the next two decades as an immigration agent in Mexico City (where he was able to audit courses in literature) Tampico, Guadalajara, and Veracruz. He began writing under the tutelage of a friend and co-worker, Efrén Hernández, and published his short stories in two magazines; in Mexico City's *América* and Guadalajara's *Pan*, which he co-founded.

He soon advanced in his position and travelled through the country as an immigration officer, a job that allowed him to learn to take pictures that he would also publish in *América*. In 1946 he started as a foreman in a tire manufacture, a year later, in 1947 he married Clara Aparicio and had one daughter and three sons.

In 1952 Rulfo obtained the first of two consecutive fellowships at the Centro Mexicano de Escritores, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. As a result, he published in 1953 *El Llano en llamas* and, in 1955 *Pedro Páramo*. *El Llano en llamas* is a collection of short stories about rural Mexico during the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion. *Pedro Páramo* is a short novel about a man who travels to Comala, his mother's hometown, looking for his father to find it is literally, a ghost town.

After the publication of these two renowned books, he ceased writing narrative fiction and began writing screenplays for film and television, remaining a major figure of the Mexican literary world. Among his admirers are Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Günter Grass, Susan Sontag, etc. In his new endeavor as a screenwriter he collaborated with Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes on, for example,

El gallo de oro (Mexico, Roberto Gavaldón, 1964).

Besides his activity as a photographer, he served as the director and head editor of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenist Institute), where he was responsible for editing one of the most important collections of contemporary anthropology of Mexico. In 1970 he was awarded with the Premio Nacional de las Letras (National Prize for Letters), and a decade later he was elected to be a member of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua (Mexican Academy of Letters, an organization which principal function is to ensure the purity of the Spanish language with the help of many of the leading figures in Mexican letters, including philologists, grammarians, philosophers, novelists, poets, historians and humanists). In 1983 he won the Premio Príncipe de Asturias (Prince of Asturias Award) for his achievements in literature. Rulfo died in 1986.

Pedro Páramo

Novel

Pedro Páramo is the author's only novel and his second book, published in 1955. As he confesses, his short story titled "Luvina" was the origin of the novel. Other previous titles include *Una estrella junto a la luna* and *Los murmullos* (a clear reference to the influence of William Faulkner's *The Wild Palms* or *If I Forget Thee Jerusalem*). It is the story of Juan Preciado, who travels to his dying mother's hometown, Comala, to discover who is Pedro Páramo and to recover what is rightfully his. Comala is deserted; Juan soon learns people he meets are really the wandering souls of former inhabitants. It is through these ghosts that Juan Preciado, as the principal narrator, reveals the history of the town's end.

Pedro Páramo tells the stories of its three main characters: Juan Preciado, Pedro Páramo and Susana San Juan. From Juan's point of view, the novel is a story of a son's search for identity and retribution. Weaved in Juan's story the reader grasps fragments of Pedro's life, so the two storylines alternate distinct narrative voices. In various fragments Juan Preciado narrates his journey to Comala, his search for his father and his own death. Later on in the novel, a more traditional third-person narrative voice appears and mixes with poetic passages of interior monologue of Pedro's love for Susana. Finally, within this alternation between the first- and third-person narrative voices, readers find another voice and reconstruct a third story, that of Susana San Juan.

The novel became one of the landmarks of Latin American literature of the past century. At first, it did not receive unanimous support, even though it was critically applauded. Some rejected it due to its complexity and structure which were not very popular. It is now considered one of the literary summits, not only Latin American but globally. It also has been very influential for many authors.

Due to the obvious difficulty of the text, I will develop a substantial detailed Power Point presentation including structures, characters, quotes, themes, etc, so students will be fully familiarized with the novel by the time we watch a few of the 1967 adaptation scenes and hopefully the new Mateo Gil one.

Film Adaptations

Pedro Páramo (Mexico, Carlos Velo, 1967)

The complexity of the novel due to its fragmentary structure, poetic style, and enigmatic plot makes it very difficult to adapt to the big screen. With a screenplay written by Manuel Barbachano Ponce and Carlos Fuentes, this is highly symbolic and allegorical adaptation with the Mexican Revolution as a background. It depicts some of the early Mexican cinema archetypical characters. It might be difficult for non-Mexican

viewers since it relies in many historical and cultural details.

For the unit, we will use only fragments of the film, since it contains sexual situations, nudity, and violence.

Pedro Páramo (Spain-Mexico, Mateo Gil, in development-2010?)

Spanish filmmaker, screen writer and one of Almenabar's frequent collaborators, Mateo Gil, is working on an adaptation of *Pedro Páramo*. The shooting of the movie was supposed to start in Fall 2007 with a budget of six million Euros and a crew that included the cinematographer of *El bosque del Fauno* (*Pan's Laberynth*).

Apparently the project is paralyzed as a result of lack of funding. According to IMDb (Internet Movie Data Base) the movie is in development and expected to be finished in 2010. Other facts about the movie are that Mexican film star Gael García Bernal would participate in the movie as an actor and the film would be supported by Canana Films, the production company owned by Diego Luna and Gael. So there remains much hope that the adaptation will be completed and at a higher budget than before. Different media now talk about a 7.5 million Euro budget.

The possible apparition of this adaptation would be perfect for the development of my unit, since we could work with parts of the novel and fragments of the other 1967 one to end up speculating about our expectations of the new adaptation with the unique help of the press book Mateo Gil distributed in Cannes Film Festival 2007, when he thought he was going to be able to complete the project.

Objectives

This unit will primarily serve as an introduction to the world of Latin American literature and its adaptations to the big screen.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Read, understand, analyze, and interpret short stories or novel excerpts written by
- main Latin American literary figures such as García Márquez, Rulfo or Allende.
- Learn basic notions of film studies.
- Analyze and interpret movies comparing them with the original text to decide the point of view of a text or film, who the narrator is, etc.
- Learn and recognize basic *viewing cues*.
- Discuss and understand the relation between a literary work and its screen adaptation, their difficulties and connections
- Discuss and interpret main historical elements in Chile and México.
- Understand and interpret various cultural elements intrinsic to different countries in Latin America: Chile, Colombia and México.
- Identify and compare different music genres.
- Be able to read, understand and express an opinion about newspaper film reviews.

Strategies

Two of the main goals I want my students to achieve with the unit are related to the interpretation of various literary forms or structures and their adaptations to film. A third goal, having students become aware of the cultural aspects, goes along with the other two.

The world of magic realism and literature

All through the duration of the unit, I will furnish students with the necessary tools to recognize structures in stories, main features of magic realism and how to recognize both. I will provide them with appropriate activities by which they will practice reading and writing in Spanish, as well as trigger their critical thinking skills.

The world of film

Viewing Cues

This is a strategy that I included in the previous unit "*Spanish Cultures Through Film and Literature*"(12). Since it worked when I taught it, I will use it again. It consist on introducing one or two "Viewing Cue(s)" contained in Timothy Corrigan's *The Film Experience* (13) each day. Students will get a piece of paper with the description of a "Cue(s)" everyday as they walk in. We will discuss it as a group and then we will look at some examples to make sure they understand. We will do this in the first 10 minutes of each period.

Writing a newspaper film review

After having read and understood a number of film and theater reviews previously and during the unit, students will have to write one of their own. They will be able to choose one of the movies to work with.

Final Project: Press Book

As a final project, students will have to produce a pressbook of one of the movies/fragments viewed for the unit or, if they prefer so, any other Spanish-speaking movie they want. In order to do so, they will be divided in groups of 2 (or 3, depending on their skills) and they will be familiar with the format and all the requirements. As for the format, we will analyze and examine the pressbook (14) film Spanish director, Mateo Gil, created for the adaptation of *Pedro Páramo* he thought he was going to start filming in Fall 2007, and brought to Cannes Film Festival that year.

Not only will this analysis serve to have students learn about the importance of different aspects as marketing and advertising in films, but also they will review the novel and movie fragments, as well as practice their reading and writing and, those who are visual learners, bring out their artistic skills in a school that does not offer art in its curriculum.

Sample Lesson Plans

All of the unit's lesson plans are to be developed in 82-minute classes. However, they can easily be changed according to teachers' needs.

Lesson 1: Newspaper Film Reviews

Goal

Understand and analyze the purpose of newspaper reviews and their structure as a vehicle to express one's own point of view.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. (Standard 1.1)
2. Understand and interpret several newspaper film reviews in the target language. (Standard 1.2)
3. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the film reviews, films and perspectives of the culture in them. (Standard 2.2)
4. Reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through Spanish. (Standard 3.1)
5. Use (reading and writing) the target language in the classroom. (Standard 5.1)

Special Needs

Students have already (partially) seen Alfonso Arau's *Como agua para chocolate*. They will be familiar with it.

Materials

LCD projector, computer with Internet access, computers for students with Internet access, copies of the New York Times Movie Review for *Como agua para chocolate*, dictionaries.

Procedure

Teacher will start the lesson asking students what they think a review is, what they think it is for and whether they read them or not. Then teacher and students will read Janet Maslin's New York Times' movie review for *Como agua para chocolate*. Teacher will handle a handout with various questions (in English) about the structure and interpretation of the review and finally, if they agree with the author. Teacher and students will discuss their answers in detail. Later on, the teacher will provide students with a list of websites in which they can find film reviews of the same movie in Spanish. Students will have to go on line, choose one of them, print it and then they will compare both of them in a 20-25 line paragraph they will turn in at the end of the period.

Assessment/homework

Students will be asked to write their own film review of a Latin American/Spanish movie.

Lesson 2: The Film World

Goal

Examine basic film techniques and terms to help students to become critical viewers.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. (Standard 1.1)
2. Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied (Standard 2.2)
4. Reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language (Standard 3.1)

Special Needs

Students are already familiar with film analysis concepts such as *mise-en-scène*, cinematography and sound.

Materials

Computer and LCD projector, copy of Bille August's *The House of the Spirits* (in Spanish), graphic organizers and questionnaires.

Procedure

The teacher will start the lesson showing the first 7 minutes 45 seconds of *The House of the Spirits* to follow up with questions to the students, asking them to summarize what they have seen and noticed. The teacher will then ask different students who will have their notes in front of them—brief questions (What's a prop, a shot...?). Next, the teacher will divide the class in 3 groups. The teacher will assign each group different tasks: the first group will be in charge of the *mise-en-scène* (props, actors, costumes and lights); the second group will be in charge of the cinematography (shot, frames, depth and movement) and the third one will be working with the voice, music and sound effects. Once the students get in their respective groups, they all get a copy of their specific graphic organizer, as well as a questionnaire on their section to be completed while watching and taking notes of the fragment for a second time. Students then will have time to discuss their notes and complete both their graphic organizers and questionnaires. Finally, they will briefly expose their answers to the rest of the class.

Lesson 3: Press Book

Goal

Help students understand the importance of film promotion.

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Work cooperatively in groups (of 2 or 3) using Spanish (and eventually produce a press book of a movie.) (ACTFL standard 1.1)
2. Understand and comprehend the 2007 press book for Pedro Páramo written in the target language. (Standard 1.2)
3. Read about and discuss the already mentioned press book. (Standard 2.2)
4. Use (reading and writing) in the target language in the classroom. (Standard 5.1)

Special Needs

Students are already familiar with the structure and all the main narrative and stylistic characteristics, as well as cultural connections of Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*.

Materials

Computer, LCD projector, printed copies of the 2007 Pedro Páramo's press book, copies of the project's rubric, and computers for students to use.

Procedure

To initiate the lesson, the teacher will informally ask different students questions about *Pedro Páramo*: symbology, characters, structure, etc. Teacher will then group students, mainly in pairs, so they will be able to collaborate. The teacher then, will give copies of the storybook and present it to students through the LCD screen so they will be able to appreciate and describe the illustrations (in Spanish). The teacher will ask some student to read some of the sections out-loud. Once students have a clear idea of what the press book is and what is the teacher is asking for, they will sit down in their groups to decide a work plan for their own press book of a movie they like, the only premise is that it has to be a Latin American or Spanish movie. The students will handle a brief pre-draft with the title of the film and a couple of ideas at the end of the period.

Assessment/homework

Students will be asked to choose one of the nine wonderful illustrations included in the press book in order to write a 10-15 detailed description of it.

Notes

(1) Revista Primera Plana - Año V, Buenos Aires, 20-26 June 1967 N° 234, pages 52-55.

(2) National Standards for Foreign Language Education.

<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3392>.

(3) ACTFL Performance Guidelines: Samples of Performance Descriptions.

<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3329>

(4) Gabriel García Márquez, Nobel lecture, 1982; reprinted in *Dictionary of literary Biography, Yearbook: 1982*, edited by Richard Ziegfield. (Detroit: Brucoli Clark/Gale, 1983).

(5) N. Lindstrom, *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

(6) *Dictionary of Twentieth Century Culture: Hispanic Culture of South America*, edited by Peter Standish (Detroit: Manly/Gale, 1995), pp. 156-157.

(7) "Spanish Cultures Through Film and Literature" in *Adapting Literature*. Yale National Initiative, 2007.

(8) Joan Mellen, *Literary Topics: Magic Realism*. Gale Study Guides to Great Literature (Farmington Hills: Gale Group, 2000).

(9) Marlise Simons, "A Talk with Gabriel García Márquez." *New York Times*, 5 December 1982.

<http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/06/15/reviews/marquez-talk.html>. July 12, 2009.

(10) http://www.isabelallende.com/roots_frame.htm. July 10, 2009.

(11) Nora Erro-Peralta, "Isabel Allende" in *Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, vol. 51 (Detroit: Gale, 1996).

(12) "Spanish Cultures Through Film and Literature" in *Adapting Literature*. Yale National Initiative, 2007.

(13) Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004).

(14) Pedro Páramo. Página Oficial. Pressbook.

<http://www.aieteariane.com/pedroparamo/index.php>

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-Corrigan, Timothy and White, Patricia. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*. Bedford/St. Martin's: Boston, 2004. Comprehensive text on film concepts and techniques.

-Esquivel, Laura. *Como agua para chocolate*. Grijalbo Mondadori: Barcelona, 1990. Beautiful graphic design and amazing illustrations

and pictures.

-García Márquez, Gabriel. *Cómo se cuenta in cuento*. Taller de Guión de Gabriel García Márquez. Voluntad Interés General: Santafé de Bogotá, 1995.

-García Márquez, Gabriel. "*Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes*." Editorial Norma S.A.: Santafé de Bogotá, 1999. García Márquez' short story with many beautiful illustrations.

-Jameson, Frederic. "On Magic Realism in Film", in: *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 12, Number 2, Winter. Useful article about adaptations of Magic Realism in cinema.

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-Rulfo, Juan. *Pedro Páramo*. José Carlos González Boixo (ed.). Cátedra- Letras Hispánicas: Madrid, 2002. Juan Rulfo's text with an extremely helpful introduction.

-Stam, Robert. "Beyond Fidelity: the Dialogic of Adaptation" in Naremore (ed.). *Film Adaptation*. The Athlone Press: London, 2001.

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Other Resources

-Criticalia: Revista española de opinion cinematográfica. <http://www.criticalia.com/orden-alfabetico>

-Isabel Allende. <http://www.isabelallende.com/>

-Juan Rulfo. Página oficial.

<http://www.clubcultura.com/clubliteratura/clubescritores/juanrulfo/index.htm>

-Juan Rulfo: entrevista. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUj6mMCbnNY&feature=related>

-Juan Rulfo (entrevista) con Mercedes Milá. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJqQFpEXU6Y&feature=related>

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-Margin: Exploring Magical Realism. <http://www.angelfire.com/wa2/margin/index.html>. July 9, 2009.

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<http://www.aieteariane.com/pedroparamo/index.php>

- Simons, Marlise. "A Talk with Gabriel García Márquez." New York Times, 5 December 1982.

<http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/06/15/reviews/marquez-talk.html>. July 12, 2009.

Filmography

-*Como agua para chocolate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*, Mexico, Alfonso Arau, 1992)

-*Con el amor no se juega* (*Don't Fool with Love*, Carlos and José Luis García Agraz and Tomás Gutierrez Alea, 1990-1991).

-*Edipo alcalde* (*Oedipus Mayor*, Colombia-Spain-Mexico-Cuba, Jorge Alí Triana, 1996)

-*En este pueblo no hay ladrones* (Mexico, Alberto Isaac, 1965)

-*La casa de los espíritus* (*The House of the Spirits*, Portugal-Denmark-Germany-USA, Bille August, 1993)

-*Pedro Páramo* (Mexico, Carlos Velo, 1967)

-*Pedro Páramo* (Mexico, José Bolaños, 1978)

-*Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes* (*A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, Spain-Cuba-Italy, Fernando Birri, 1988)

Appendix 1

Some other movies Gabriel García Márquez has been involved in include:

-*En este pueblo no hay ladrones* (*There are no Thieves in this Village*, Mexico, Alberto Isaac, 1965).

-*Juego peligroso* (Mexico-Brazil, Luis Alcoriza and Arturo Ripstein, 1967).

-*Patsy mi amor* (*Patsy, my Love*, Mexico, Manuel Michel, 1969).

-*Presagio* (*Pressage*, Mexico, Luis Alcoriza, 1975).

-*La viuda de Montiel* (*The Widow of Montiel*, Mexico-Colombia-Venezuela-Cuba, Miguel Littin, 1979).

-*María de mi corazón* (*Mary my Dearest*, Mexico, Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, 1979).

-*El año de la peste* (Mexico, Felipe Cazals, 1979).

-*Eréndira* (France-Mexico-West Germany, Ruy Guerra, 1983).

-*Cronaca di una morte annunciata* (*Chronicle of a Death foretold*, Italy, Francesco Rossi, 1987).

-*Milagro en Roma* (*Miracle in Rome*, Colombia, Lisandro Duque Naranjo, 1988).

-*Fábula de la bella Palomera* (*Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier*, Spain-Brazil, Ruy Guerra, 1988).

-*Cartas del parque* (*Letters from the Park*, Cuba-Spain, Tomás Gutierrez Alea, 1989).

-*El Coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (*No One Writes to the Colonel*, Mexico-France-Spain, Arturo Ripstein, 1999).

-*Los niños invisibles* (*The Invisible Children*, Venezuela-Colombia, Lisandro Duque Naranjo, 2001).

-*El amor en los tiempos del cólera* (*Love in the Times of Cholera*, USA, Mike Newell, 2007).

-*Del amor y otros demonios* (Costa Rica-Colombia, Hilda Hidalgo, in production-2009)

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