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# Modernity in Márquez and Feminism in Ousmane

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**Geetha Ramanathan,**
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**Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12.2 (2010)**
**Thematic Issue *New Modernities and the "Third World"***
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<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss2/>

**Abstract:** In her article "Modernity in Márquez and Feminism in Ousmane" Geetha Ramanathan analyzes Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Sembène Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood.* Ramanthan argues that if Márquez presents the semblance of the signs of modernity as fantasy and delusion, Ousmane's investment in the train as an instrument of the future in realist terms seems to challenge the modernist dictum that imperialism can be challenged only through modernist decenterings and through tricking and trumping. Yet, Ousmane's refusal to engage in the hallucination of the modern in his novel offers us a version of modernity that includes women in an epic realism. The aesthetic mode here is adequate to narrating the modern space of women in history. Paradoxically, the narrative mode of *One Hundred Years* is celebrated as "magical realism" whether implicitly modern or more frequently post-modern, while Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood* is relegated to the margins of realism despite its full-fledged participation in "third world" modernity.

**Geetha RAMANATHAN**

## Modernity in Márquez and Feminism in Ousmane

"Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice" (Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* 1). The realism of the line belies the hallucinatory quality of the image of modernity descending in Macondo. Not only does the narrative not fulfill the promise of the future, but it repeats the twin tropes of both the firing squad and the ice as though to drum the fantasy of modernity as the trump of deceit. The failure of modernity to deliver more than the ephemerally melting ice is not as relevant as its inexplicable promise of itself, the object, or the sign itself, rather than what it might grandly stand in for, such as progress, escape, redemption, or entrance into the banquet of nations. The arrival of "ice" and the "cinema" are enigmatic; "signs taken for wonders," not as in the case of the English book's entrance in India because it is "repeated, translated, misread, displaced," but because the very concrete object carries magical properties (Bhaba 163). Curiously, "the magical realism" of Gabriel García Márquez devolves as much around this fantasy of the modern as it does on the coexistence of the magical in the real in the everyday existence. Paradoxically, then, the bases of critical understandings of magical realism, as part of a specifically Latin American reality can be qualified to suggest that there are two perceptions of the magical in Márquez's text: one from outside the text and located problematically in the Latin American and the other within the diegesis and experienced within the world of the text, identified as arriving from the outside and signifying the modern. Whether the invention itself is contemporary or new is beside the point; in this context the ice is new as are the magnets, suggesting what's more recently been termed "geo-modernism," a modernity situated in place and time (Doyle and Winkiel 1). Moreover, the genealogy of Márquez's style is the baroque, a period in Latin American letters that has been subject to extensive re-readings in recent scholarship. One line of thinking in new modernity studies would have it that the baroque is very much a function of the "modern," as a movement roughly contemporary to the "Enlightenment" in Europe. For example, Monika Kaup advances the idea of the "neo-baroque" as commensurate to an alternate modernity that challenges the philosophy of the Enlightenment and is trans-historical in being a modality, rather than a time-bound movement (128-53). This reclamation of the baroque of the seventeenth century in Latin America in the early twentieth century is also viewed as critiquing an exclusive western model of modernity. Both content and form, ideology and aesthetic are here perceived as proffering a neo-modernity comparable with similar usages of uneven and multiple aesthetics in the post-colonial world.

Elements of the legacy of the neo-baroque are apparent in Márquez's use of both magical and real elements to descry the complexity of the "arrival" of the realia of modernity. If the arrival clearly does not erase what existed earlier, a fear nowhere felt in the diegesis of the text, but redolent of the project of the text itself, it also escapes the tangibility of having arrived, its facticity described as lacking instrumentality and inviting fantasy. The neo-baroque aesthetic, claimed as modern, is mapped on to an existing terrain inhabited by methods of family formation which being both mythical and socially real envision women as inhabiting the real but positioned by romance. Within the framework/space of the received scholarship on *One Hundred Years* a pattern subtended by assumptions on genre emerges. Although a penchant for proclaiming the specificity of the Latin American experience cuts across most borders and is most appealing to the vast, increasing readership of the novel, its identification within the epic/myth has served to make the male characters all important to the understanding of the history of Latin America and its relationship to modernity. Most readings placed within the template, whether admiring of the women characters or not, are stuck in the narrative of male lineage or male history and are edged into reading the women as representations within this terrain. The trick here is that the male characters are not representations as such because they are acting out an inevitable saga that is moved by a teleological history and a static masculinity. Were we, however, to understand the genre within its own antecedents and take Doris Sommer's suggestion that the boom novelists do not represent a rupture within the Latin American past, but are in fact continuous, the genre at hand would be the family romance where the female characters and femininity would shift from being seen from within an andocentric purview, thus altering the nature of their importance within the narrative (1-3).

The last contention bears some theorizing and clarifying. In noting that female characters move from the outer boundaries to be more semiotically included, I am not suggesting that the romance or the family plot reverses the relationship between masculinity and femininity roughly sketched in the

myth and that it thereby enables the placement of women in history. Rather, the valences lent to femininity are shifted because of the romance genre's investment in considering the limits of femininity in the culture and in exploring women's difficulties within a patriarchal culture. Women's issues and roles in the family plot and romance are substantively explored and thus the genre, coincidentally also a popular genre, is valuable in figuring out women's access to modernity (see Franco). The mode of *One Hundred Years* then would be indigenously modern within the long historical view. The irony of the modern being perceived as magical in lieu of being a lineal moment of progress is naturalized in the diegesis of the text so that the modern and the magical are associated. The enigma of arrival, the instant of its appearance in this particular locus, marks it as both. Márquez's aesthetic style, lending the very extraordinariness of reality, shrouds the effect of the objects as "magical" in the diegesis, and seemingly enfolds time in a haze that obliterates it. The experience of the magical is subjective, the extraordinariness of Latin America is magical to the outsider as in the long voyage of the protagonist of Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*, expressing a primitive that does not exist in the other modern world of the banana company executives who plunder the region, while the inhabitants regard what is perfectly cognizable in that other world outside of Macondo as both magical and modern.

Chapter One of the novel is riddled with wonders; the Buendía father and sons come upon a giant with a heavy torso, and then "an enormous transparent block with infinite internal needles in which the light of the sunset was broken up into coloured stars" (18). Paying five reales to touch it, Aureliano finds it "boiling," and Jose Arcadio Buendía "the great invention of our time" (19). Perhaps this is why the novel opens with the Aureliano memory as he faced the firing squad of the father taking him to "discover ice" (1). Note that they are not finding it, they are discovering it. Clearly, the fantasy of modernity has Jose Arcadio in its vise, and time past and time present and time future are consecrated to this delirium (see Bell-Villada). The modern, in its wild improbability, breeds further improbabilities as Jose Arcadio finds the "deeper meaning" (27) of a dream of a city with "mirror walls" in the ice, ensuring a cool Macondo. Ursula, meanwhile, has done her best to stave off what she thinks of as her husband's lunacy. Ursula has reservations too about the daguerreotype but does not suffer from the fearful delusion her husband does: "For he was thinking that people were slowly wearing away while his image would endure on a metallic plaque" (54). In showing us how these inventions of the modern are received, the text shows how the "modern" can enter a space, not perhaps as the modern but as the strange, a strangeness that very sophisticatedly assumes that the object has existed earlier but has been unknown. Further, this reception quarrels with the easy notions of a celebratory hybridity as distinct from one that can create difficulties in the social nexus (Canclini xxx). The newness, the modernity of the object is not at stake, nor are we to assume that a different spatiality is a different temporality, but that the impact of the object as modern is less relevant than its entrance into the psychic lives of the inhabitants. Cinema is an indication of this complex moment of the modern being absorbed as both the modern and non-modern. Most western essayists, poets and painters of modernity ceaselessly discussed the cinema as the great revolutionary invention of the day, from the surrealist Breton for whom it spelled a fascinating movement, for Picasso who saw in it the mystique of shapes hitherto unimaginable (see ). In all cases, including the less laudatory Benjamin, its properties as a new form of art were hailed. The populace of Macondo were awed by some modern inventions, comparable to the awe the recorders of modernity experienced, their ultimately judgment was harsher, and they rejected the cinema as they did some other new arrivals of modernity.

Márquez's account of the arrival of the train touches on the varied experiential responses of the people, quite different from the concrete social and economic modernity and fighting ability the train is seen as bringing into Sembène Ousmane's West Africa in his *God's Bits of Wood.* In *One Hundred Years*, the distinction between the gypsies' acts of magic and the arrival of the train would appear to be that the former are seen as tricks, while the latter is a serious invention, but with complexities that can not be ascertained: "The innocent yellow train that was to bring so many ambiguities and certainties, so many pleasant and unpleasant moments, so many changes, calamities, and feelings of nostalgia to Macondo" (239). Odd that all of it is already expressed in the past, diminishing from that sense of change that exalts the arrival of the modern, so firmly placed as something already of the past, and worthy of nostalgia. The first entrance of inventions is registered as extraordinary, outside the ken of the real. People are "dazzled," filled with "amazement" and the inventions themselves are "marvelous." Electricity is a visual thrill, the cinema allied with gypsy magic, untrustworthy and of no discernible value. People are distressed by the "outlandish fraud" whereby they had sympathized with the trials of characters who apparently were not "real" (241). The wonder is cancelled by its distance from the "real" in Macondo. The women, too, choose the real not because of the uniqueness or singularity

of the band of musicians, but because of the "trick" involved in the phonogram, and because the musicians articulated a human "everyday truth" that was incomparable. Márquez connects this arrival of the modern to an epistemic crisis as sparked by the telephone: "It was as if God had decided to put to the test every capacity for surprise and was keeping the inhabitants of Macondo in a permanent alternation between excitement and disappointment, doubt and revelation, to such an extreme that no one knew for certain where the limits of reality lay" (242). Márquez's description fits in loosely with modern decenterings. Kaup and others claim that the neo-baroque subverts the colonial hegemony of modernity effectively by its embellishments, and that its features are to be seen as trans-historical (Kaup 28-45). The text's "magical realism" widely apprehended as having political uses puncture colonialism with a keen sense of the local perception of the modern as infiltrating (see Parkinson Zamora and Faris). The narrator's sly humor enhances the outlandishness of the entrance of the modern in unspoken contrast to modernity's quasi-religious imbrication with rationality as a philosophical basis for modernization and technological progress. The train itself is relegated to the status of a sundry domestic toy as the "whistling kettle" (243). However, unlike the riverboat, the train is "something frightful," and inspires dread, with good cause, as it brings the exploiters of modernization in it (239).

Márquez uses the word "trick" repeatedly in connection with the trick of "fate," presumably an insuperable entity. Curious that he should use the same term for modernity, conflating the two and preempting any sense of modernity as rational and deliberate but emphasizing rather the inevitable trickery of fate on human beings. The fantastic is in the modern, in the inscrutable aura of its presence. The magical in the space of the new world is as Carpentier insisted in the real, the marvelously real (75-89). The unevenness of form could be perceived as "magical realism," both accurately and inaccurately. Woman's movement through these forms seems equally uncertain and perfidiously certain. If the baroque in Latin America did initiate a modern sensibility primarily by bringing in an indigenous perception of the new world, such neo-modernities struggled with the notion of the "female" and her place on the baroque map. The family plot, or romance, lent her paradoxically a uniquely modern place in reference to the aesthetic mode by its placement of her in the real family nexus, but countervailing it in increasingly anxious terms through unplotting her out of a masculine modern scheme within a magical frame. The magical frame, notwithstanding the efforts of the authorial voice, does not subsume the women in the diegesis. Their implicit refusal to comply with the male modern impulse, regarding the modern as magical, on the one hand, and the authorial voice's tentativeness about including them in the masculine world of the modern magical forces the real palimpsest to emerge as both destructive and untenable. And yet the realism of the women's desire for a modern located in the empirical is everywhere viewed as lacking the poetry of the "high culture" of modernity, situating women in the familiar space of folk culture or the indigenous mother in contrast to the old world Europeanized woman, so mocked in this text, but perhaps not as brutally as in Carpentier's *Lost Steps.* Here, the magical realist mode, or the indigenous modernist mode reasserts itself booby trapping women's entrance into the discursive modern.

The masculine search for the modern is initiated early in the narrative by Jose Arcadio who seeks the sea as a route to expanding the opportunities of the community in an imperial register (Brooker and Thacker 8). That desire for expansion comes to nought as José Arcadio gives up on the search for the extant modern via the sea route after twenty-six months and founds Macondo after this signal defeat. On yet another quest for "civilization" when he finds the abandoned galleon, it persuades him that his personal destiny has "tricked" him into settling into a space from which he can never depart to embrace the modern, "We'll never get anywhere," he lamented to Ursula: "We're going to rot our lives away here without receiving the benefits of science" (13). These communities in the periphery, then, expend curiosity and energy to find out what exists elsewhere that could signify progress for them. Ursula however stymies his latest plans to move by enlisting the village so that José Arcadio's proposals of finding fertilizers and drugs are dismissed, "He tried to seduce her with the charm of his fantasy, with the promise of a prodigious world where all one had to do was sprinkle some magic liquid on the ground and the plant would bear fruit whenever a man wished, and where all manner of instruments against pain were sold at bargain prices" (14).Ursula then firmly refuses the promises of modernity as envisioned by José Arcadio. The omniscient author represents the woman, who many critics aver is the archetypal woman, as blocking the path to modernity. In terms of the valences, Ursula's refusal bears the burden of "settling," of refusing to make contact with the world and hence eventually consigning them to the foretold prophecy of the end of the Buendías and the nation.

Other efforts by José Arcadio's descendents such as the riverboat that José Arcadio Segundo brings also transforms the promise of modernity to a wonder that is domesticated into a carnival of concupiscent delights. While the total inability to exploit modernity renders it enigmatic, Márquez nev-

ertheless presents us with a community that hedges its pioneers. Ursula once again views José Arcadio Segundo's expedition, sparked by the story of the Spanish galleon, as rank folly. Ursula's animosity against the modern is replicated in the person of Fernanda, Aureliano Segundo's wife, but not in her daughter Renata Remedios (Mimi) who has a "modern spirit," fostered by the father, who plies her with cosmetics and unguents from the external world. Mimi's venture into the modern is sharply expunged into the stillness of silence that does not seem to offer the relief of solitude. Shaven and expelled, shamed for enjoying the pleasures of modern women, her punishment is extreme and brutal (293). The adjective modern is applied only to women, most directly to Amaranta Ursula who is called one without ambiguity: "a happy modern woman without prejudices" who opens the house when she is there, and who starts out by leaving it (372). Returning is disastrous for her. But when she first comes back, it appears that the modern could be absorbed as she does away with a hundred years worth of debris, and puts on the phonograph for her nephew Aureliano, whom she comfortably dubs the "cannibal" (406). Amaranta dies, overseeing the end of the blood line, doused in blood herself, bringing the saga to its end.

Among the most enthralling images of "magical realism" in the text is Remedios's ascent to heaven. Other suggestions less sublime are the line of blood from Rebeca's house to Ursula's, and the presence of butterflies around the scene of lovemaking of Mimi with Mauricio Babilonia. Yet Ursula's rootedness to the economic means of livelihood, and the eerie recurrence of gold in her activities configure modernity on women by conferring realism to the archetypal maternal figure, who survives because of a metaphorical connection with the earth, and metonymical relationship to gold. The younger Ursula, the only Buendía woman to flee from Macondo, brings about the end of the line. She dies, horribly bloodied in her after birth which is bizarre in the seemingly "magical" tinges of the narrative of the child born with the tail and the book that foretold the Buendía story. In this instance, the insertion of realism without a sense of context, or of place and time and a recognizable terrain perforce renders the mode of narration inimical to women and inhospitable to what I am calling "feminist realism," a realism that can challenge both the ground/figure model of classical realism, and the myth/modern approximation of the magical realism scene. For the purposes of this exploration, the negativity adhering to the modern, associated with male fantasy definitely suggest a strong critique of both modernity and masculinity, but also throws into relief the text's queasy understanding of the relationship of women to modernity. Albeit well dressed in the mode of the marvelously real, the mode itself, in some segments, seems to cover the rather simple thematic of woman as fantasy.

If Márquez presents the semblance of the signs of modernity, whether of ice, or later of the new art of the cinema, as fantasy and delusion, Ousmane's investment in the train as instrument of the future and in realist terms seems to challenge the modernist dictum that imperialism can be challenged only through modernist decenterings, and through tricking and trumping the sentence. Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood*, using the pre-modernist mode of realism is more openly about the arrival of a concrete modern in the communities in a large section of West Africa, including contemporary Senegal and sections of the Sudan. In an article on the status of modernism in the African context, Simon Gikandi has observed that during the 1960s Africans rejected modernism as it seemed to counter nationalist goals in its investment in the singular ego (12). And this despite the role of modernism in the development of a nascent nationalist consciousness. One of the arguments of African intellectuals on the complex question of modernism and modernity in Africa was that colonialism itself had impeded modernity and that nationalism would serve as a corrective (see, e.g., Anyokwu <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss4/1>; Ilo <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss4/2>). Historically, nationalism "appealed to both modernity and what it called tradition, a pre-colonial, pre-modern polity (Gikandi 19). Ousmane's realist mode of narration serves to address this difficulty with modernism by embedding the modern as woman, rejecting the singular modern and by refiguring realism to redefine the aesthetics of realism and modernism. Scholars have suggested that despite/within a realist armory, Ousmane plots a fictional narrative, and organizes it around specific themes that foreground the formation of community and nationalist consciousness. For example, Kenneth Harrow, exploring the form ideology takes in the novel, notes that Ousmane is successful in his use of intercalation and synecdoche which he sees as underlying the almost classical emplotment of the narrative (483). Harrow argues that these function as master tropes to reveal meanings beyond the story. His reference to Ousmane's "opaqueness" suggests the notion of a committed modernism, a contradiction in terms for the West European experience, but not necessarily for the West African context (483). Further, Ousmane seems to depart company from both the European modernists, and the nineteenth-century "file card" realists in his attempt to "expose the true nature of reality" of the people (Schipper 563). Whether using "file card" realism,

plotted realism, or engaged modernism, the text does advance, at least notionally, a feminist realism composed of both enlightened rational skepticism and modernist "unknowings" to uncover knowledge of both self and the world (see Weinstein). The mode of realism accommodates the modern feminist thematic, and ideological, even as it unmoors itself from the philosophical underpinnings of the classical model.

In ushering in the era of decolonization and thus signifying the positive side of realism, revealing the sacred hierarchies of the colonizers to show the production of a new subject, the novel would seem to be a text book model of Fredric Jameson's idea of classical realism as exemplified by Flaubert ("The Realist Floor-Plan" 313-25). Here, it is instructive to recall that for Marxist critics including György Lukács, realism remained the mode par excellence whereby "characters whose active role in the transforming of objective conditions was part of an endless interaction of consciousness and social being" (Lunn 78). For both Jameson and Lukács, Flaubert intimated the advent of the modern. Yet, Jameson, in another essay, where he discusses Ousmane's *Xala* insists that the fabular is more relevant for the third world experience, a comment revealing a strange aporia in his own understanding of modernity ("Third World Literature" 82-84). While Ousmane is an engaged modernist, it is not because of the specificity of the African modality, a reading we have seen with Márquez to result in gestures of exoticization of "third world" writings. While place is acquiring increasing significance in new modernity studies as the raison d'être of modernism, it can be fetishized to the extent that through the iconic valences of specific differences, protest itself is subsumed. In Jameson's case, it is the focus on the tribal in Ousmane. Realist devices in *God's Bits of Wood*, then, are paratactic with modernist devices. The idea that the protagonist of the realist novel is traversing knowable terrain that can eventually be mastered because of empirical principles is not completely rendered distraught by Ousman, but the "the knowable terrain" is so extensively contextualized, that it becomes unfamiliar or unknowable and also becomes avoidable. The path taken by the colonizer can not be tread by the would be post-colonial subject, thereby imbuing the modern with an enigmatic aura that alters the terrain. The train, that darling object of the colonizer, concrete as it were, is also the most signified upon in the book. Called the "Smoke of the Savannah" in the communal synecdochic figure of speech, it is metaphoric of both the machine and the modern. The French book, is also a signifier of modernity, a modernity advanced vociferously by Tiemoko and more thoughtfully by Ibrahim Bakayoko. The weird, but naturalized homology between the train and hearts of the trainmen suggest the concreteness of their acceptance of the modern; their ache when they don't hear the whistle, their pain at being relegated to the margins. But they are essential to the running of the train, and by simple extension, modernity. European abjection of the African, understood as expulsion of a portion of the self as alien, is reinscribed by the effacement of the African on the modern scene, although historically the conditions for the modernity described in the text were created by the Africans (Aguiar 284-305).

The struggle, however, is not cast in simple terms of participation or lack thereof, but as ownership of the vehicle of modernity and the living conditions deriving from acceptance of this mode of existence as opposed to subsistence agriculture. Thus, the terrain for the strikers has become unknowable because of the imperative to imagine. Organized around spaces, the greatest distance traversed is between Thies and Dakar — a march of the women to support the men while they negotiate with the company in Dakar. Absolutely, totally unknown territory for the women and undertaken as a consequence of an autonomous decision taken by the women, led by Penda, a woman very much on the margins of conventional society. The individual hero, the subject who understands the limits of knowledge as that which he/she can apprehend, has been replaced, in the first place by the individuals who "read," and imagine in other ways. Tiemoko initiates the trial of Diara, the strike-breaker, based on the Gide novel, women who hitherto had had no place in public life at all participate in the trial and then the march. So, this venture into new terrain had little to do with conquest of the familiar. The familiar in fact is not comfortable, but traumatic for it evokes the failures of the earlier strike. History, packaged as superstition and terror has to be firmly shoved to the past in the interests of an enlightened workers' modernity, soon to be national modernity. Here the text's standpoint is to be distinguished from the anti-modern stance of many standard European modernist texts. Yet this is far from the idea of enlightened predictability that defines classical realism. Bakayoko predicts to Dejean that the region will be ruled by Africans, who will refuse to speak French, but he has no clue how the strike will turn out, or what the casualties will be.

The individual hero, masculine or feminine, of nineteenth-century realism figures nowhere here. Rather, we have a series of introspective, subjective perceptions from both men and women that are embedded in omniscient narrations of action and motivation that reveal modernist unknowings and are desirous of new imaginings. As Lukács had averred, realism does contain the elements of possible

futures (66-68). The actual formation of a community is the consequence of these simultaneous movements. Yet, Ousmane's refusal to engage in the hallucination of the modern in his form offers us a version of modernity that includes women in realism. The aesthetic mode here is adequate to narrating the modern space of women in history. Ousmane's feminist realism, whereby the modern is rendered instrumental, not fantastic, explores the tumultuous challenge the people experience while trying to stay ahead to stay ahead of change, ahead of the unknowable terrain. However, the text inevitably shows the epistemic violence wreaked by colonialism and the effort required to envision modernity within this framework.

Contemporary critical readings of the relationship between the modern and the female, particularly the access women had to public spaces, their enjoyment of what was on display, their role as flâneurs, with reference to their class mobility, a mix of both working class and middle class women, and their ability to enjoy goods and services specifically as working women noted in western industrialized societies in the early part of the twentieth century were seen as what modernity was able to offer women, and then without pause, the very condition, or a salient feature of modernity (see Gleber). Content, the entrance of women into public spaces, created the new social order. Modernity comprises content, but modernism, while including content, refused to specify content except through forms that would mediate it (Gaonkar 5). The difficulties of European women with modernism have been amply documented (see, e.g., Felski). We then face a puzzle whereby material that is symbolic or abstracted about women, and does not by and large register their physical access to urban/public spaces is regarded as modern, while texts that acknowledge women as part of the new content of modernity are resolutely "realist" and consequently not modern because of the genealogy of the genre in the nineteenth century European novelistic tradition. Peter Brooks, in his analyses of Zola and Flaubert, notes the emphasis on the ugly in the modern city, its shock value and the importance of the two to realism (130). Uncannily, the above could be said to be true of realism, too, suggesting that realism performs some modern functions in a different register. The effects of modernization of course begin to be felt in the middle of the nineteenth century including the formation of a modern class system; thus affirming the notion that western realism is the first of modernisms. While traditional realism may have reproduced the world in commonsensical terms as Colin McCabe would have it, realism as a mode need not be attached to that model. Brooks notes the tendency to devalue realism for being "naïve" about its own signifying apparatus, as strain he observes as far back as the Platonic tradition (7).

Ousmane's text does pay homage to the "real" outside the text, and there are several traces of the "real" inside the text; arguably this is no different from Thomas Mann criticism itemizing the psychological and biographical occurrences in his texts (see Jones; Schipper). The structure of Ousmane's novel marks the constitution of subjects whose interpellation is through a consciousness of the "modern," of the changing time. His emphasis is on the entrance of the woman into this arena where meanings about the traditional and modern are being debated. The text's ability to embed the woman in the modern, rather than in watching her watch the modern, or in watching her as the costume or consumer of the modern marks his modality as feminist realist. This realism, in its modern content, rewrites the notion of modernism as having to eschew signifiers of realia, or of actors in a recognizably historical stage. Ousmane's departure from the "knowable" of realism to noting the evolving consciousness of the strikers, and the women, signal a realism that seeks to capture several sorts of class subjectivity. A feminist realism has to exceed the limits of even an engaged realism that both records the modern and the relationship of the actor to the historical stage. It would have to signify the real relationship of females to society and history, and the imaginary possibilities with reference to the real and he succeeds in both by developing ideas across a group of women, thus hinting at possibilities for women, as opposed to one bourgeois subject, or the fabulized female of magical realism.

In the opening chapters of the novel, two changes occur. As part of the consequence of André Gide's novel, Tiemoko insists that Diara stand trial, a stand against the traditional. Women attend, and most strikingly, one woman testifies, breaking all precedent. And this pattern will recur through the novel, of women doing what they have never done before, producing a consciousness of women as a class, suggesting a modernity that may well be vulgarly utopian but definitely not merely representational, as in the oversimplified idea of realism as transcribing signs. Ousmane's realistic account of the strike is "novelistic" in the Bakhtinian sense of the term in that he incorporates the different tones of the diverse classes of society as they struggle to understand how they can play a role in history through a modernity that seems to be altering them, and interpellating them into subjects that reformulate their own culture (Bakhtin 4-40). Mamadou Keita, the elder tells his wife, Niakoro: "There are all sorts of new machines" and that "knowledge is not a hereditary thing" (11). Niakoro dies, resisting

the militancy of the strikers because of the African loss of life in the strike of 1947, but all the other women shift from their traditional roles to occupy modern spaces; hence, the volume of commentary on the women in the novel, and in his works (see Abdurrahman; Linkhorn; Pallister). Their changes are not isolated, but linked to that of other women and portend a feminist movement in the future. The women struggle against the French, and against their own traditional prejudices. The community is sharply aware of the modernization process, and grasps the epistemic shift caused by modernization. While the workers understand their own control over production, they are also disturbingly aware of their dependence on the new mode. In one of the most quoted passages of the novel, the narrator observes: "Now the machine ruled over their lands, and when they forced every machine within a thousand miles to halt they became conscious of their strength, but conscious also of their dependence. They began to understand that the machine was making of them a whole new breed of men. It did not belong to them; it was they who belonged to it. When it stopped, it taught them that lesson" (32). The men's dependence on the train, and their work in a modern labor organization, likewise impels the women to step out of the domestic and take the initiative to find both food and water as the undoubtedly heroic Ramatoulaye does when she slays the ram, and Mame Sofi does when she runs the water-carrier out of the compound after she has taken the water from him. Economic modernization has prevented women in the towns from finding food, or growing food, and they have to opt for methods that bring them into the struggle against the French railway company. The narrator follows up on the observation, by making a similar comment about the women, but curiously this time, lending the insight to the men, thus suggesting that they are dimly aware that this epistemic shift is not solely masculine: "And the men began to understand that if the times were bringing forth a new breed of men, they were also bringing forth a new breed of women" (34).

The new breed of women explores the possibilities open to them and seek to understand themselves in this new age. Ramatoulaye, a traditional woman in her eighties, crosses her brother the Hadji, the Imam, and the colonial inspector, and emerges free. When she is asked through the translator to denounce her actions, she slaps her colonially educated grand-daughter N'deye Touti for urging her to apologize to the Hadji, her brother. Another moment of a shift in consciousness, that valorized trope of high European modernism, occurs when the women first accept that Penda, an outsider woman not connected to a male, can ration out the rice for them, thus accepting her into the community of women. Later, during the march, when the women are demoralized by superstitious dread of the *deune* (evil spirit), Penda and Maimouna prevail, inaugurating a consciously modern comportment. Participation in the proceedings of the strike, initiating the march from Thies to Dakar, organizing the food for the family, deciding what role to play in family life, opposing colonial, patriarchal, and local authorities on matters of principle, the women cover new territory, forging perhaps a modern cultural feminist consciousness combative of the colonial modernization project. In traversing such ground, Ousmane does not use the metaphor of conquest, but suggests that a certain feminist solidarity has been formed in both private and public sectors. And in delineating that, he could well be said to have sketched a notional feminist realism. Ousmane succeeds in stripping the fantastic from the modern to suggest that modernities need not be uneven, between coloniser and colonized, man and woman, even as Márquez using non-realist modes reminds us of the profound truth that modernity has been uneven as has gender in modernity. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, about the expeditions of modernity and the enigma of its arrival, is located in the register of fantasy thus mocking its relevance, but through representing women as first inhibiting modernity and then punishing them for it creates a modern aesthetic deeply hostile to the project of Western modernity. Paradoxically, the narrative mode of *One Hundred Years* is celebrated as "magical realism," whether implicitly modern or more frequently post-modern, while Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood* is relegated to the margins of realism, despite its full-fledged participation in third world modernity.

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