Week 7

1. How is Magic Realism different from fantasy? Choose one of the week 7 set texts and discuss what elements in this story locates it as a magical REAList text.

Magic realism and fantasy are similar genres of writing that convey magic or supernatural elements. However, several differences separate these into separate genres, such as the characters reaction to the magical element, the setting of the story and how the element is incorporated and explained. “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World”, from the book *leaf storm and other stories,* author Gabriel Garcia Marquez utilizes catalyst magic realism. This form of magic realism uses the magic element to further the plot. However, the introduction of the magic element does not startle or bother the characters, alike it would in fantasy genres, as if the element was mundane. Here, the story introduces a drown man where children are playing on the beach and see the body floating past. Their reaction was not terror or fear but to play with the body that washed up with no explanation to its introduction.

“*The first of the children who saw the dark and slinky budge approaching thought the sea let themselves think it was an enemy ship. Then they saw it had no flags or masts and they thought it was a whale. But when it washed up on the beach, they removed the clumps of sea weed, jelly fish tentacles, and remains of fish and flotsam, and only then did they see that it was a drowned man. They had been playing with him all afternoon*,” – Marquez, 1972. p.89

Later the non-rotting corpse, or magical element in this story, was incorporated into a realistic depiction of life which establishes the realism aspect. As the story progressed, the small plain village that existed with the introduction of the dead man, “Esteban”, changes. The characters and village began to change to better suit the handsome dead stranger.

“*They were going to paint their houses gay colours to make Esteban’s memory eternal and they were going to break their backs digging springs among stones and planting flowers on the cliffs*.” – Marquez, 1972. p.112

This is both an example of catalyst magic realism, as the magic element is affecting the characters and furthering the plot, but also how a corpse is integrated into everyday life that sets this magic realism story apart from fantasy.

References:

Marquez, G 1972 *Leaf storm and other stories*. Harper & Row: New York, pp. 98-112