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MAGIC REALISM AND THE FEMININE IN *ENCANTO*

Genre and Narrative Mode as Paratext

Introduction

The Oscar-winning Disney film *Encanto* (2021) was hailed for its authentic representation of Colombian culture, but it also sparked a discussion on film's ability to capture aspects of a culture – or even change the global image of a country.¹ Many international reviews claim that the film is a tribute to the Colombian concept of family and find a dissemination of matriarchal ideals in *Encanto*'s portrayal of a Colombian household dominated by female characters.² Furthermore, reviews highlight that the animated musical is influenced by the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez's iconic novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*), particularly through the literary style *magic realism* often associated with García Márquez.³

Encanto is constructed around a family saga of the Madrigal family – 'los Madrigal'. The story takes place in a Colombian setting, in the village Encanto, and in the family's house the Casa Madrigal (mainly referred to as 'Casita'). It is located in a rural area in the mountains, in an atmosphere of magical happenings. We follow the main character Mirabel as she has to figure out her place in her own extraordinary family, being the only child not blessed with a magical gift. Step by step, Mirabel discovers that the magic surrounding her family's house is in danger. The flame of a candle known as the Magic Candle or simply Alma's candle, which contains the miracle that blessed the Madrigal family, is about to be extinguished. In the end, crisis is averted as Mirabel reminds the family matriarch that love, respect and mutual care is the basis of the Madrigal family's many blessings.

Mirabel can be seen as an anti-hero in the sense that she is not the typical princess that appears in traditional Disney films. She does not share the physical traits of Disney female lead characters like Ariel, Cinderella or Belle, but is an ordinary girl, with specs and somewhat heavy physical features. This unconventional beauty is presented as a positive, clearly addressing a more diverse, modern audience able to identify and sympathize with Mirabel. In parallel to the film's general portrayal of the matriarchal

family ideals, the character of Mirabel can thus be seen as raising questions of gender representation. Some reviewers, on the other hand, see the film as a continuation of generic structures of Disney films.⁴

This essay does not attempt to evaluate the merit of *Encanto* as a conveyor of Colombian culture or literary traditions – as argued in a number of reviews – nor to assess the progressive aspects of Mirabel’s character in terms of politics or genre. Instead, we aim to investigate how Norwegian reviewers of *Encanto* have navigated the film’s portrayal of culture and gender, particularly with regard to the relationship between the genre conventions and the presentation of the feminine. While clarifying certain aspects of *Encanto*’s reception in Scandinavia, our investigation also contributes to the understanding of transcultural reception in a more general sense, especially relating to how notions of genre and gender are transmitted across languages and cultures.

Since viewers around the world may have responded differently to *Encanto* according to a number of variables – their cultural background and knowledge of languages, as well as their familiarity with Disney productions, magic realism, and García Márquez’s literary universe – we have limited our study to questions concerning how genre knowledge may influence the different ways the film is reviewed by Norwegian critics.

Theoretically, genre and film reviews can be viewed as paratexts.⁵ We take as our point of departure Gérard Genette’s concept of paratext and paratextuality and his classification of paratextual elements.⁶ However, as Genette was mainly preoccupied with literature we rely on Kathryn Batchelor’s idea that it is possible to adapt Genette’s framework to other kinds of texts, such as films.⁷ The paratextual value can be vested in different types of manifestation, including the genre to which it belongs, and verbal and non-verbal texts.⁸

Since paratexts may influence both the preconception and the reception of *Encanto*, a survey of international reviews – for instance Spanish and English-language (*core*) film reviews – would have been highly relevant with regard to culturally situated understanding of genre and the possibly varying perceptions of the connection between genre and gender. Such a survey, however, lies beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, we have chosen to focus on the (*peripheral*) context of Norway and have selected a set of Norwegian reviews for close scrutiny.⁹ We aim to discover to what extent the element of magic realism and its connection to the feminine in *Encanto* is appreciated by Norwegian critics when they address their Norwegian readers. Considering the core/periphery dynamics between Colombian, Anglophone and Norwegian settings, it is especially important to gauge reviewers’ recognition of the appeal of the female characters (particularly of the main character Mirabel) in relation to some of the feminine aspects being virtually “untranslatable” into a Norwegian peripheral perspective.

One Hundred Years of Solitude, *Encanto* and Magic Realism

García Márquez’s novel is an internationally recognized canonical novel, first published in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1967.¹⁰ It has been translated into more than 35 languages, and is highly researched.¹¹ Several of García Márquez’s other novels have been adapted to the screen, for example *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* [*Crónica de una muerte anunciada*] and *Love in the Time of Cholera* [*El amor en los tiempos del cólera*].¹²

The novel *One Hundred Years* is constructed around a family saga: the multigenerational story of the Buendía family. The story takes place in the fictional town of Macondo, a rural and tropical location thought to be on Colombia's northern Caribbean coast, and it is set during the span of a 100 years against the backdrop of ongoing civil wars. The novel portrays everyday life, state brutality and politics. It deals with folklore and the common people, in an atmosphere of magical happenings, superstition and exaggeration, which are often linked to the everyday and domestic life in a household of women. The novel alternates between the real and the magic, using the same narrative voice, the omniscient narrator.

According to García Márquez, magic realism [*el realismo mágico*] is a narrative style, a stylistic phenomenon, and he has often stated that his magic realism comes from his grandmother's storytelling that included folktales and superstitions from the rural region of Colombia.¹³ Maria-Elena Angulo points out that magic realism is the juxtaposition of natural and supernatural elements without conflict.¹⁴ The fusion of reality, imagination and superstition is perceived as a natural part of normal existence, or being, and supernatural events do not surprise any of the fictional characters. According to Angulo, García Márquez is an expert in using natural and supernatural elements without transition and in this way, the barriers of time and space break down.¹⁵ Thus, the combination of natural and supernatural elements demonstrates the limitations of science and rationality.¹⁶

García Márquez is considered one of the main exponents of magic realism, and the term is often used to characterise the New Novel of Latin American fiction in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it has its origins in Europe and was already present in Latin American fiction in the 1930s. The term appeared for the first time in 1925 in the book *Nach Expressionismus. Magischer Realismus* by the German art critic Franz Roh. Roh used the term as an aesthetic category, a way of representing the mystery inherent in things (a concept created by the artificial modes of the surrealists).¹⁷ The Venezuelan author and essayist Arturo Uslar Pietri (1906–2001) used the term in the 1940s, defining a new prose “[...] where man is a mystery among realistic data.”¹⁸

The Cuban author Alejo Carpentier (1904–1980) was one of the initiators of this mode in the New Latin American novel. His essay-prologue to the novel *El reino de este mundo* [*The Kingdom of this World*] from 1949 can be characterised as a kind of *manifesto* for the New Latin American fiction.¹⁹ In his essay-prologue, Carpentier encourages Latin American writers to look to the American continent as a source of inspiration for how to define themselves, rather than the foreign European cultural models by which Latin American writers had been strongly influenced. From his point of view, *lo real maravilloso* and the “American marvellous” presupposes faith.²⁰

Theorists such as Irlomar Chiampi and Graciela N. Ricci have attempted to establish theoretical principles of magic realism as a narrative discourse, emphasising the differences between the marvellous and the fantastic. Chiampi points out that the fantastic is based on the “poetics of the uncertain,” with a merging of the natural and the supernatural. In *realismo maravilloso*, on the contrary, the unusual is incorporated into reality, and there is an “effect of enchantment” produced by the nondisjunction of natural/supernatural (semantic aspect) and by the internal causality of the narrative (syntactic aspect).²¹ According to Ricci, marvellous discourse would reproduce the supernatural universe, which is accepted by the reader without question. Fantastic dis-

course departing from a realist discourse would have its “familiar reality” interrupted in the unusual or the unknown reality.²² Thus, marvellous realism does not avoid the “realia” nor eliminate causality, and the reader accepts the coexistence of both worlds. In other words, *magic realism* signifies a new form of representation aiming to draw a multivalent image of reality: “The inclusion of magical realism itself in a text provokes readers to reflect on what they are willing to believe and on their assumptions of the reality.”²³ In this way, magic realistic fiction allows a plurality of readings. Geetha, for instance, suggests that one interpretation of *One Hundred Years* might be that it tells the story of the female life of Úrsula Iguarán, but could also be the story of the literal life of the town Macondo and its inhabitants.²⁴

Encanto was an instant, global, and pop cultural success, in the tradition of so many Disney productions in recent years. Although *Encanto* was not promoted as an adaptation of *One Hundred Years*, the filmmakers claim that the film is inspired by the novel and shares some common features, such as the appearance of yellow butterflies, the family saga, and the imminent destruction of their home and village. In both *One Hundred Years* and in *Encanto* there are characters associated with magical elements. For instance, in the novel the female character Amaranta dies at a very old age, precisely as she had predicted, and the male character Mauricio Babilonia has a “halo of butterflies.”²⁵ In the film, Mirabel wears a costume embroidered with butterflies at the gift ceremony, signifying metamorphosis and renewal.²⁶ In both family sagas, the matriarch plays an important role. Even if the sociocultural background in *One Hundred Years* is patriarchal, the female domain plays a crucial role in the novel. In *Encanto*, the loss of the head of the family, Abuela Alma’s husband, forces Abuela Alma to take responsibility for the family. Both female characters Úrsula, in *One Hundred Years*, and Abuela Alma, in *Encanto*, have complete control of the household.

José Arcadio is a male character in the novel whose virility and strength is supernatural. In *Encanto*, this super-strength is given to Mirabel’s sister, Luisa, who takes care of all her family and the community. In contrast to the novel, where this super-power is sometimes a destructive force, in *Encanto*, Luisa’s powers are solely utilitarian.

In both the novel and in the film, the themes of prophecy and solitude are linked. In the novel, the male character Colonel Aureliano Buendía is clairvoyant, predicting the arrival of Rebeca, his adopted sister, as well as several deaths and catastrophes. Even though he is a revolutionary hero, he is doomed to a cyclical fate, where he is not killed in war but dies in solitude under the same chestnut tree where his father died years before. Similarly, the male character uncle Bruno [tío Bruno] in *Encanto* has the ability to predict the future. Since his visions are of an ominous kind, he would rather leave the Casa Madrigal to avoid destabilizing the family. Mirabel, however, realizes the importance of Bruno’s visions and turns to him for guidance. Thus, *Encanto* tells a story of how the ostracized become the saviors of those who exclude.

Magic in the Disney genre

As mentioned earlier, in García Márquez’s novels magic realism is the juxtaposition of natural and supernatural elements without conflict, with certain characters being endowed with supernatural abilities. In *Encanto*, on the other hand, the lack of a

magical gift makes Mirabel an outsider. Two aspects related to the genre of this Disney production are particularly important to our discussion on core/periphery dynamics in the perception and reception of magic realism and the feminine. Firstly, the storytelling conventions of Disney animation itself.

In *Magic(al) Realism* (2004), Maggie Ann Bowers points out that many global cultural expressions can be associated with magic realism, and that both adult viewers and children are implicitly familiar with and accept film conventions that include elements of magic realism. Much recent children's culture, particularly literature and television, have adopted magic realism. This access prepares children for accepting the structures and effects of the narrative style.²⁷ In these developments, Disney has played a crucial role. Ana Salzberg explains that Walt Disney's appropriation of classic fairy tales and narratives has made Disney Pictures the

collective auteur of the fairy tale genre for generations of children. (...) [T]he lushness of the images conjuring a realm of thrilling, fantastic possibility; the spirited musical numbers punctuating the progression of the narrative; and the 'happy ending' ultimately affirming the supremacy of domestic accord and the triumph over a destabilizing supernatural.²⁸

While recognizing this impact, however, it is important to differentiate between magic realism and the fantastic in Disney. A Disney fantasy film often combines magic and animation to create supernatural events and make-believe creatures. As opposed to the mundanity of magic realism, these events are meant to be seen as extraordinary and often involve the dangerous awakening of magic by the hand of a sorcerer or a witch. Alternatively, the magic exists in the form of an enchantment which aids the hero or heroine in their quest.²⁹

The second aspect of relevance to our discussion is the much debated Disney Princess phenomenon, where critics have challenged the depiction of female characters and demanded a broader notion of gender. Johnson Cheu stresses the that as a global media conglomerate, for almost three decades Disney has become increasingly multicultural and inclusive, both in terms of content and image. For instance, non-Caucasian female main characters have been introduced in films such as *Pocahontas* (1995), *Mulan* (1998), and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009).³⁰ Two later films, *Frozen* (2013) and *Moana* (2016), even feature princesses who either take it upon themselves to rule alone or decide to give up the throne to seek spiritual freedom.

Discussing gender issues specifically concerning Disney and Latin America, Karen S. Goldman argues that the stereotypes depicted in Disney films of Latin Americans are those of a "gendered narrative of U.S. masculine-identified hegemony vis á vis a highly feminized representation of Latin America [coding] the nations and people of Latin America as exotic, idealized and sexualized."³¹ From this perspective, it is possible to also see *Encanto* as continuing these stereotypes with its depiction of a matriarchal household. This "invitation to fantasize about the Other," according to Dorfman and Mattelart, also represents a grave threat to the cultural autonomy of Latin American nations, since it "is the manner in which the U.S. dreams and redeems itself, and then imposes that dream upon others for its own salvation, which poses the danger for the

dependent countries [as it] forces us Latin Americans to see ourselves *as they see us*.³² In order to avoid this, the directors of *Encanto* made a trip to Colombia and hired cultural consultants.³³

From a Norwegian peripheral perspective, however, and based in a more gender-equal Scandinavian culture, it might be difficult to discern how this feminized Colombian culture represented by the matriarchal household of the Madrigals combines with Mirabel's role as anti-hero in an American modern narrative of diversity and gender equality. A Norwegian audience will be able to recognise narrative modes such as magic realism, because also Norwegian folklore and fairy tales are characterised by the convergence of the mundane and fantastical.³⁴ However, with the pop cultural domination of the Disney format they are just as likely to recognise these narratives as animation and established Disney conventions, which is evident in the Norwegian reviews of *Encanto* (see *Results and discussion* below). Leaving the question of Colombian authenticity aside, we will discuss these complexities further in our analysis below, including how the depiction of magic realism in *Encanto* as essentially feminine might be similarly lost on a peripheral audience and reviewers accustomed to seeing these fantastical narrative elements first and foremost as inherent in animated Disney films.

Film review as epitext

In the introduction to the book *Translation and Paratexts*, Batchelor states that “we form opinions about a text based on surrounding or apparently superficial elements”³⁵ and that Genette labels such elements *paratexts*. According to Genette, paratextuality can be defined as the “relationship that binds the text properly speaking to what can be called its paratext: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; [...] illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic [from a third party] or autographic [from the author].”³⁶ Batchelor summarizes the paratextual elements explored by Genette, stressing that any material physically attached to the text conveys a comment on the text, and that the paratextual elements may or may not be manifested materially:

The paratext consists of any element which conveys comment on the text, or presents the text to readers, or influences how the text is received; where they are, that manifestation may be physically attached to the text (peritext) or may be separate from it (epitext). Any material physically attached to the text by definition conveys comment of the text, or presents the text to readers, or influences how a text is received.³⁷

In Batchelor's definition of paratexts, reviews become epitexts. According to Batchelor, interviews, reviews and online commentaries are comparable to the authorial and allographic epitexts discussed by Genette.³⁸ However, Genette's concept of epitext is restricted by *authorial intention*³⁹, and Batchelor has developed Genette's framework.

Genette's definition of paratext depends on its functions, and the “paratextual value [...] may be vested in other types of manifestation”, including the ‘purely factual’, such

as the age or sex of the author, the era in which the text was written, or the genre to which it belongs. Genette explains: “By *factual* I mean the paratext that consists not of an explicit message [...] but of a fact whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is received.”⁴⁰ Hence, Bachelard concludes that the definition of paratext depends not on materiality but on function.⁴¹

Writing in 2010, Jonathan Gray called for a relatively new type of media analysis which would focus on the media world’s equivalent of book covers, such as opening credit sequences, trailers, posters and promotional campaigns.⁴² Gray adopts Genette’s terms paratexts and paratextuality to denote such supposedly peripheral elements, arguing like Genette that they play a crucial role in meaning-making for the films and other media products to which they are thresholds.⁴³ Sara Pesce and Paolo Noto note that in today’s society, there is an extraordinary quantity of paratextual materials circulating on- and off-line, among others posters or billboards, and trailers, interviews, websites, merchandise and toys, reviews, and so on.⁴⁴ In addition to these tangible paratexts, intangible aspects such as the genre of a film can also function paratextually, in much the same manner as the factual paratext identified by Genette.

Film Reviews and Methods

We began our investigation by searching for film reviews of *Encanto* in Norwegian digital newspapers. Using two data bases: 1) *Retriever Mediearkivet Atekst*; 2) *PressReader*,⁴⁵ we found reviews in two national newspapers, *VG* and *Klassekampen* (R1 and R2) and in three regional newspapers, *Stavanger Aftenblad*; *Bergens Tidende*; *Fædrelandsvennen* (R3-5).⁴⁶ We also found a review of *Encanto* on the website *Barnevakten* (R6).⁴⁷ Our approach to the analysis of the data’s basic topics were a selection of First Cycle and Second Cycle Coding Methods.

First Cycle Coding Methods

First, we applied *Descriptive Coding (Topic Coding)* to identify the topics of the reviews (*what was written about*).⁴⁸ Here, we summarized in a word or short phrase the basic topic of the passages. Second, we combined the *Descriptive Coding* with *In Vivo Coding* and *Versus Coding*. *In Vivo* is a meaning driven method, and as a code, it refers to a word or short phrase found in the qualitative data record. For example, we coded the terms used by the film reviewers themselves. In accordance with Charmaz (2014), we attuned ourselves to words and phrases that seemed to call for bolding and underlining and we tried to grasp what was significant to the reviewers: how they perceived and interpreted the film.⁴⁹ We used *Versus Codes* to identify dichotomous or binary terms with regard to genre characteristics, narrative mode, and gender characteristics.⁵⁰

We carried out First Cycle Coding of the title, the ingress, and the main body of each review, paying close attention to terms the reviewers used to describe the film’s genre and narrative mode (nouns, bolding), especially words denoting positive or negative qualities (underlining).

Review	Title	Coding
R1	«Nye tider, nye helter»	Contextual elements (time) Characters in <i>Encanto</i> vs. traditional Disney characters
R2	«Animerte karakterar som «pustar», syng og svingar seg til salsarytmer» Main title: <u>Blendande bagatell</u>	Characters Art of animation Musical elements Content Light vs. dark
R3	«Disney leverer magi til jul»	Disney Magic Contextual elements (time)
R4	« <i>Encanto</i> er en fengende, musikalsk sukkerbombe»	Film title Music Colourful vs. grey
R5	«Frodig og fargerik Disney-magi»	Visual elements Disney; magic Colourful vs. grey Fertile vs. arid
R6	<i>Encanto</i> . Anmeldelse.	Film title

Table 1. Title. First Cycle Coding.

In addition, we numbered the genre categories given in the fact boxes in the reviews: Animated film (5); Fairy tale (1); Children's film (2); Family film (2); Comedy (1).

Review	Ingress	Coding
R1	Jakten på den <u>tapte magien</u> .	Content, Magic, Loss of magic vs. control of magic
R2	« Roller, musikk og <u>teknisk handverk</u> er på plass, men ei historie mangler »	Characters Music Art of animation Content Music and animation Lack of narrative progression
R3	Musikalnumrene er <u>klare høydepunkt</u> i den nye Disney-filmen	Music, Disney
R4	Disneys nye animasjonsfilm « <i>Encanto</i> » <u>byr på farger</u> , fantasi og magi for store og små	Disney Art of animation Target audience Colourful vs. grey
R5	Å <u>se</u> denne filmen er som å oppholde seg i <u>varmere himmelstrøk</u> et par timer	Art of animation Contextual elements Perceptions from a periphery North vs. south
R6	<i>Encanto</i> er en <u>fargerik</u> og <u>frisk animasjonsfilm</u> med en <u>spennende historie</u> , <u>flotte sanger</u> og et <u>flott budskap</u> om familie og fellesskap.	Art of animation Content Musical elements Community vs. individuality

Table 2. Ingress. First Cycle Coding.

Review	Excerpts from the data illustrating the method	Coding
R2	I Disney-filmar er familien spesiell viktig og dei viktige familiane spesielle. Det er også bodskapen i den colombiansk-inspirerte , magisk realistiske Encanto , utan at denne knappe oppsummeringa yter filmen rettferd som sanseoppleving på kino. Her handlar det det nemlig mest om animasjonskunsten – og ikke minst den animerte musikalen eit steg vidare [...] Abuela Alma velsignet med et mirakel: den hemmelige dalen: han er framstilt som ein tidlaus, folkloristisk eventyrstad der matriarken Alma i spissen for tre generasjonar Madrigal enno held si hand over dei som flykta saman med henne og deira etterkomarar .	Disney Content Contextual elements Narrative mode The art of animation Musical elements Matriarchy vs. patriarchy
R3	Historien sparkes i gang av en introlåt som både er skikkelig catchy , og effektivt introduserer alle medlemmene i familien Madrigal med deres magiske evner . Vi møter blant annet Mirabels mor , som kan kurere sykdom med maten hun lager, den kjempesterke Luisa , den perfekte Isabela [...] og det hviskes om Bruno , som kunne se i fremtiden og så noe så forferdelig at han forlot familien . [...] Det litt spesielle med «Encanto» er at det egentlig ikke finnes en skurk . Det er press og forventninger fra familien Mirabel må kjempe mot.	Content Musical elements Characters Magic Strong vs. weak Perfect vs. imperfect Matriarchy vs. patriarchy Loyal vs. disloyal Outside pressure vs. inside drive Story archetypes Quest
R5	[...] å gi filmen troverdige latinamerikansk koloritt : Både språk, farger og sanger [...] bærer preg av like deler respekt og nitidig research.	Contextual elements Musical elements Art of animation
R6	«De bor i et magisk hus i et område de kaller Encanto – et undrenes sted »	Contextual elements

Table 3. Film review, main body. First Cycle Coding.

When words and concepts in the data appeared to stand out or struck us as important, we highlighted them and listed them on a text-editing page, and then cut and pasted them into outlined clusters that suggested categories of belonging and an order. In our Outlined Clusters, we emphasised the following topics: I) Genre characteristics and narrative mode; II) The feminine.

I. Genre characteristics and narrative mode

- A. Characters: **new+heroes**, **not+villain**, etc.
- B. Magic: **loss+magic**; **colourful+Disney-magic**; **magic realism+Encanto**; **magical+abilities**, etc.
- C. The art of animation: **technical craft+demonstrated**; **colourful+animated film**; **intro song+catchy ...**, etc.
- D. Musical elements: **great+songs**; **sing+dance+salsa rythme**; **Musical numbers+highlight**; **Lin-Manuel Miranda+Into the Heights**, etc.

II. The feminine

- A. Female characters: **Mirabel+loss of magic+ordinary**; **a rational girl**; **Mirabel+outcast**; **Mirabel+independent+young**; **great+girl power**; **Mirabel+save the family**; **Mirabel's mother+healing powers**; **giant strength+Luisa**, **perfect+Isabela**, etc.

- B. Male characters: **Bruno**+predict the **future**; terrible+**Bruno**+outcast+left the family, etc.
- C. Matriarchy: **Abuela Alma**+miracle; fairy tale setting+matriarch Alma+three generations, etc.

We also paid close attention to words and short phrases which denoted contextual elements (time and space) in *Encanto*.

III. Contextual elements

- A. Continent: salsa rhythm; credible latinamerican **depiction**; ‘warmer shores’
- B. Country: Colombian inspired [...]; fantasy version+**Colombia**; remote+lush+**Colombia**; **different setting** from the US
- C. Landscape: ‘live in a magical **house** in the **mountains**’; magical house+region+**Encanto** – a marvellous **place**; the secret valley+timeless, folkloristic+fairy tale setting; enchanted+world
- D. Domestic domain: gift+animated **house**; magical **house**
- E. Time: ‘new times’; ‘for Christmas’; ‘a couple of hours’; ‘look into the **future**’⁵¹

Each of them was extracted from the body text and reassembled together in separate files for an organized and categorized description of the topics for further analysis.

Post-coding transitions

To better focus the direction of our data set, we paid more attention to the versus coding, as seen in Table 4 (below). We focused on how the reviewers had appreciated and communicated genre characteristics and the feminine in *Encanto*.

R1	<p>«<u>mangler</u> et par av eventyrets <u>arketypiske</u> ingredienser: Skurken, og den <u>ensomme</u> reisen som helten <u>må foreta</u>, <u>langt hjemmefra</u> (Mirabel <u>forlater aldri</u> familiens skjød) [...]</p> <p>Tiden da prinsesser var ute av stand til å redde seg selv, men måtte vente på en ridder på hvit hest, er over. Tiden da alle prinsesser og helter skulle være <u>ariske</u> og <u>blonde</u> er også forbi</p> <p>Mirabel er en helt <u>vanlig jente</u>, med <u>runde</u> briller og <u>kraftige</u> øyenbryn. Hun tar mangelen med <u>godt mot</u>, men føler seg naturlig nok <u>litt utenfor</u>. Skal hun noen gang få sin dag i solen?</p>	<p>Narrative elements in traditional Disney films vs. narrative elements in <i>Encanto</i></p> <p>Hero vs. villain</p> <p>Journey of discovery vs. stay in home</p> <p>Gender in traditional Disney films vs. gender in <i>Encanto</i></p> <p>Active vs. passive</p> <p>Physical traits in traditional Disney films vs. physical traits in <i>Encanto</i></p> <p>Princess vs. ordinary girl</p> <p>Light vs. dark</p> <p>Inclusion vs. exclusion</p>
R2	<p>Abuela Alma <u>velsignet med</u> et mirakel: den <u>hemmelige</u> dalen: han er framstilt som ein <u>tidlaus</u>, <u>folkloristisk</u> eventyrstad der matriarken Alma i spissen for <u>tre generasjoner</u> Madrigal enno <u>held si hand over</u> dei som <u>flykta</u> saman med henne og deira etterkomarar.</p>	<p>Natural vs. supernatural</p> <p>Matriarchy vs. patriarchy</p> <p>Role of protector vs. vulnerable</p> <p>Timeless vs. time specific</p> <p>Isolation vs. community</p> <p>Fantasy place vs. real place</p>

R3	Det litt spesielle med Encanto er at det egentlig <u>ikke finnes</u> en skurk .	Narrative elements in traditional Disney films vs. narrative elements in <i>Encanto</i> Hero vs. villain
R4	Og for en gangs skyld er <u>ikke</u> moralen denne gongen like <u>glætt, polert og perfekt</u> <u>disneysk</u> , men faktisk med eit <u>lite element</u> av de <u>uperfekte og menneskelige</u>	Overall message in traditional Disney films vs. overall message in <i>Encanto</i> Perfect vs. imperfect
R5	Mirabel «en <u>uvurderlig rolle</u> å spille»	Important vs. unimportant role
R6	Med de <u>fantastiske</u> talentene sine <u>hjelper</u> familien menneskene i samfunnet rundt seg, og familiens overhode Abuela gjør sitt beste for å <u>holde</u> familien <u>sterk</u> Det vil si, ikke alle i familien har en <u>spesiell</u> <u>magiske</u> <u>evne</u> . Den <u>unge</u> jenta Mirabel er en <u>livsglad</u> jente som er veldig <u>glad i</u> familien sin, men hun føler seg litt <u>utenfor</u> siden hun er den eneste <u>uten</u> talent . Men det viser seg snart at det er Mirabel som er den <u>viktigste</u> personen i filmen. En dag oppdager hun nemlig at det er <u>sprekker i</u> idyllen i den <u>tilsynelatende</u> <u>perfekte</u> familien .	Matriarchy vs. patriarchy Strong vs. weak Loss of magic vs. control of magic Inclusion vs. exclusion Anti-hero vs. hero Important vs. unimportant role Perfect vs. imperfect

Table 4. Post-coding transitions.

In order to construct categories from the classification of our codes, we applied *Code Mapping*.⁵² First, we made a simple list of all the versus codes from our first cycle coding (27). Then we reorganised them into six categories. Finally, the *Versus Coding* led to two major moieties:

- **Narrative elements in traditional Disney films vs. *Encanto***
hero vs. villain; journey of discovery vs. to stay in the home;
loss of magic vs. control of magic, etc.
- **Gender description in Disney films vs. gender description in *Encanto***
matriarchy vs. patriarchy; active vs. passive; protective vs. vulnerable;
beautiful vs. ordinary; lightness vs. darkness, hero vs. anti-hero;
exclusion vs. inclusion, etc.

Second Cycle Coding

After having finished the post-coding transition, we reorganized and reanalysed our data coding and searched for the most significant codes to develop the most salient categories.⁵³ To progress towards major themes, we categorized the coded data from our array of first cycle coding, based on thematic or conceptual similarity (*Focus Coding*), and we grouped the passages that seemed to relate to each other (*Axial Coding*).⁵⁴ In this way, we could determine which codes in our research were the dominant ones, and which were less important.

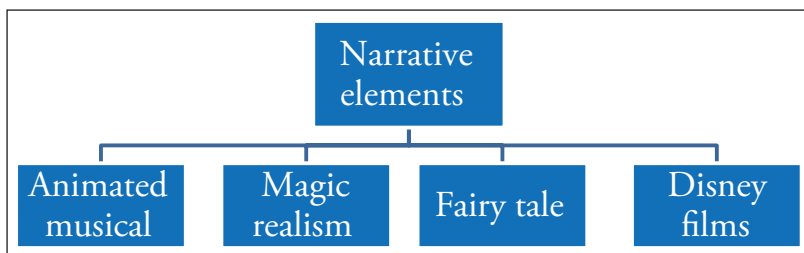


Figure 1. A tree diagram of categories and subcategories – Narrative elements

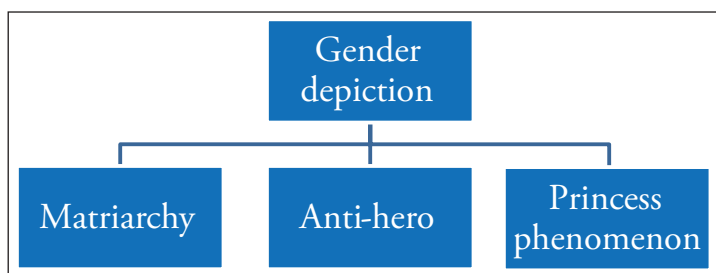


Figure 2. A tree diagram of categories and subcategories – Gender description

Results and discussion

In the reviews, as may be expected with the release of an animated musical film, the main part of the comments concerned the animation and the musical numbers, where both were hailed as state-of-the-art. The comments emphasised the innovative animation techniques and the vibrant and colourful atmosphere. However, despite placing *Encanto* in the magical realistic tradition, none of the reviewers pursued this any further. While emphasising the importance of the song- and playwriter Lin-Manuel Miranda's creativity, making Miranda appear as a cultural reference, none of the reviewers mentioned García Márquez and his work as a source of inspiration for the film.

Our analysis indicates that the reviewers perceived magic elements first and foremost as inherent of classical fairy tales and the Disney genre, and less so as the narrative mode of magic realism. The reviewers also consider animated Disney films to be an independent genre (Disney-magic; Disney fantasy universe) and associate the genre with classic fairy tales. This is in line with Salzberg's claim about Disney's appropriation of classic fairy tales and narratives.⁵⁵ A few of the reviewers note that *Encanto* lacks some archetypal elements of fairy tale, for instance the typical villain and the lonely journey away from home. From the reviewers' perspective, this poses a problem with narrative complexity: they state that although the animation and the musical scenes are outstanding, the plot is both vague and superficial. Here, we ask if this problem could be due to Mirabel's role as a modern anti-hero in a narrative of conformity. She never actively challenges the power structure established by her grandmother Alma and her quest becomes one of keeping both the structure of the house and Alma's authority intact.

In *Encanto*, the usually necessary lonely journey in the form of a quest takes a different turn, quite literally, inside the hidden corridors and walls of the house of the Madrigals, as Mirabel seeks out a possible helper in her uncle Bruno who is hiding in the secret rooms. Although the reviewers do not consider the male character Bruno a villain, they accept that he is not allowed to return on the grounds that he left the family in the first place (the moieties loyal vs. disloyal; inclusion vs. exclusion).

Gender depiction was highlighted by some of the reviewers, but not more thoroughly debated. They stress as positive that Mirabel is not the typical princess that appears in traditional Disney films, and the fact that she does not share the physical traits of a Disney female lead character (the moiety princess vs. ordinary girl). They also point out that it is easy for a Norwegian audience to identify with Mirabel as a female antihero.

In fact, there are significantly more female characters than male characters in *Encanto*, and those male characters that do feature are marginalized. However, none of the reviewers make any remarks concerning this. Interestingly, not many reviewers have cared to comment on the role of Abuela Alma, the grandmother, either, except for a few who label her a matriarch. Alma treasures the ceremony in which the future generations receive a magical gift, and she appreciates strength (the moiety strong vs. weak). The magical power of which she is the guardian, is a guarantee that the stability and harmony of their home, the Casa Madrigal, is not threatened. However, when her love and care become controlling and superficial, the magic starts to fade. One of the reviewers remarks that Alma exudes authority, and when Mirabel does not receive a magical gift, the grandmother turns cold towards her. According to the reviewers, this degree of cynicism is understandable, taking into account Alma's experiences during the armed conflict that left her a widow, and it explains her need to protect both the family and the village.

None of the reviewers touch on possible connections to *One Hundred Years* and the significance of the house as a domestic and feminine domain. The novel depicts the challenging life of a matriarch, Úrsula Iguarán, in a patriarchal society and describes female characters of various social status (wives, daughters, concubines, prostitutes, entrepreneurs, etc.). In this world created by García Márquez, both male and female characters are central to the development of the narrative and the novel tells the story of the family's exodus and foundation of the village Macondo. The antecedent for their fleeing to start a new life is violence, but they are not victims of violence, like Alma. Rather, José Arcadio commits a homicide. Since José Arcadio and Úrsula are cousins, Úrsula is gripped with fear of the possible effect of her incestuous relationship with her husband, and that their children will be born with a pigtail. This curse on the family is present throughout the book and symbolizes the married couple's feelings of loneliness and guilt. One important element which does seem to be a more likely source of inspiration for the Madrigal family is the novel's Buendía family house. It can be regarded as a main character because it communicates the emotions of the characters, and the Norwegian reviewers similarly note that it seems to reflect the family's various emotional states. Yet, they do not discuss the lack in *Encanto* of female participation in society outside of the domestic domain, nor the marginalization of male characters.

As mentioned earlier, the main character Mirabel, the regular girl in the position of the anti-hero, shows courage by undermining her grandmother's rules, and thereby

saves the magic. Traditionally, this can be regarded as a masculine, active and rebellious trait and from the peripheral, Scandinavian perspective of the reviewers, this display of feminine assertiveness, is described as “girl power.”⁵⁶ As the Norwegian reviews indicate, *Encanto* appears to fall neatly into the category of a modern, multicultural, diverse and feminist-oriented Disney production. What they do not discuss, however, are the ramifications of matriarchal structures on female emancipation, as seen in Mirabel’s desperate desire to fit into the existing structure.

We would argue that lacking the magic power renders Mirabel a threat to the stability of the matriarchy. And the fact that the grandmother controls the magic and is in a position to abuse it, makes her, in turn, a potential villain. Naturally, as one of the reviewers herself remarks, this problem is not developed further in the film, as such ambiguity is avoided to secure a happy ending. With Salzberg’s words, such progression of the narrative must be ‘punctuated’ as it has no place in a modern Disney film featuring anti-heroes and diversity.⁵⁷

According to the Spanish speaking film critic Samuel Lagunas, *Encanto* could even be viewed as a confining space for the female characters – “un claustro de princesas” – and that this narrative of conformity is hidden behind multicultural and literary references in a Latin American, and more specifically Colombian, context.⁵⁸ This is in contrast to Latin American female authors, for instance, the Chilean María Luisa Bombal, who in the 1930s, addressed the need for emancipation from patriarchy and traditional family structures.⁵⁹ If one wants to investigate this topic further, it would be interesting to compare how Latin American female writers and film directors treat the emancipation of women, compared to the trends and fads of Hollywood, and how this, in turn, is perceived by readers and viewers in Scandinavia or other (semi) peripheral contexts.

Another interesting topic could be the relationship between English as a kind of hyper-central language, the Spanish language as semi-peripheral, and the role of Norwegian as peripheral. In the words of Heilbron, on the issue of books and the flow of translations between language groups, “English functions as an intermediary or vehicular language – as a means of communication between language groups which are themselves peripheral or semi-peripheral.”⁶⁰ In spite of *Encanto*’s use of Colombian culture consultants, the nods to García Márquez, and the film’s Spanish-speaking co-writer, it is possible to view the film’s Disney format with its genre conventions as a kind of hyper-central narrative mode.

Notes

- 1 Jared Bush, Byron Howard & Charise Castro Smith, *Encanto* (Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2021). Regarding international reviews, see for example Parkin J. Daniels, “Not just cocaine and war: Colombian pride at Oscar-winning *Encanto*’s positive portrayal,” *The Guardian*, 2022-03-29, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/29/colombia-encanto-oscars-animated-film>; Laura Zornosa, “‘*Encanto* May Be Accurate, but Can It Carry a Whole Country?’ The filmmakers behind the Disney hit worked for cultural accuracy. Some Colombians and Colombian Americans are looking for more,” *The New York Times*, 2022-03-11, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/movies/encanto->

- colombia.html?smid=em-share; Samuel Lagunas, “Encanto. El triunfo del princesimo,” *Cine Divergente*, 2021-12-09, <https://cinedivergente.com/encanto/>.
- 2 Nicolas Ayala, “Encanto’s Real Life influences: how Accurate Is Its Colombian Story?” *Screenrant*, 2022-05-27, <https://screenrant.com/encanto-movie-real-life-influences-colombia-explained/>; “Colombia and the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez,” *American Post*, 2021-11-23, <https://www.americanpost.news/colombia-and-the-magical-realism-of-gabriel-garcia-marquez-shine-in-encanto-the-new-disney-animated-film/>.
 - 3 Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad* (Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Random House Mondadori [1967] 2003); Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, transl. Gregory Rabassa (London: Penguin Group [1967] 1972). Hereafter abbreviated *One Hundred Years*. The first translation into Norwegian appeared in 1970: Gabriel García Márquez, *Hundre års ensomhet*, transl. Kjell Risvik (Oslo: Gyldendal [1967] 2021).
 - 4 See for example Lagunas, “Encanto. El triunfo del princesimo.”
 - 5 Kathryn Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts* (London and New York: Routledge 2018), 59.
 - 6 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature into the Second Degree*, transl. Channa Newman & Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1997); Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, transl. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cambridge University Press 1997).
 - 7 See Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 46–47; Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, 3; 407.
 - 8 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 10; Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and their Paratexts* (London and New York: New York University Press 2010).
 - 9 Johan Heilbron, “Toward a sociology of translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System,” *European Journal of Social Theory* vol. 2 (1999:4), 434, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431999002004002>. Yvonne Lindqvist, “Det skandinaviska översättningsfältet – finns det?” *Språk och stil NF* vol. 25 (2015), 69–87.
 - 10 Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana 1967).
 - 11 Mario Vargas Llosa, *García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio* (Madrid: Alfaguara [1971] 2021); Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge 1988); María-Elena Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse* (New York: Garland Publishing 1995); Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (London and New York: Routledge 2004); B. J. Geetha, “Magic Realism in Gabriel García Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*,” *Rupkatha Journal On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* Vol. 2 (2010:3), 345–349.
 - 12 Original title of the film adaptation: *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*, Francesco Rosi dir. (1987). Writers: Gabriel García Márquez (novel), Tonino Guerra, and Francesco Rosi. Original title of the film adaptation: *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Mike Newell dir. (2007). Writers: Gabriel García Márquez (novel *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*), Ronald Harwood (screenplay).
 - 13 Raymond L. Williams, *Gabriel García Márquez* (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1985), 6; Gabriel García Márquez and Plinio Apuyelo Mendoza, *El olor de la guayaba* (Barcelona: Random House Mondadori 1994), 10–11.
 - 14 Scholars apply different terms when referring to this narrative mode such as *magic realism* (*realismo mágico*), *magical realism*, and *marvellous realism* (*realismo maravilloso*), and we have chosen to use the term magic realism.
 - 15 Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 20, 72.
 - 16 See also Gabriel García Márquez, “Fantasía, creación artística en América Latina y el Caribe,” *Texto crítico* 14 (1979): 3–8.
 - 17 Franz Roh cited in Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 3.

- 18 Arturo Usler Pietri cited in Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 4.
- 19 Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial [1949] 2012).
- 20 See Carpentier, cited in Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 5: “Lo maravilloso comienza a serlo de manera inequívoca cuando surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad (el milagro) [...] de una ampliación de las escalas y categorías de la realidad percibidas con particular intensidad en virtud de una exaltación, del espíritu que lo conduce a un modo de ‘estado límite’.”
- 21 See Angulo, *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, 10. Several theorists have attempted to define the concept of magical realism, from a literary point of view or from an anthropological and linguistic point of view. Some theorists provide a broad definition of magic realism, including the fantastic (considered a tendency stimulated by authors such as Kafka and Proust).
- 22 Graciela N. Ricci Della Grisa, *Realismo mágico y conciencia mítica en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: García Cambreiro 1985).
- 23 Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, 79.
- 24 Geetha, “Magic Realism in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*,” 346–47.
- 25 García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 302.
- 26 Madelaine Ipema, “Encanto Writer Explains The Significance Of The Butterflies On Mirabel’s Gift Ceremony Costume,” *Gamerant*, 2022-03-26, <https://gamerant.com/encanto-mirabel-costume-butterflies-meaning/>.
- 27 Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, 104.
- 28 Ana Salzberg, “(Indivi)duality in *Return to Oz*: Reflection and Reversion,” in *Diversity in Disney Films. Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, ed. Johnson Cheu (Jefferson: McFarland & Company 2013), 225–26.
- 29 See Lagunas, “*Encanto*. El triunfo del princesimo”.
- 30 Johnson Cheu, “Introduction: Re-casting and Diversifying Disney in the Age of Globalization,” in *Diversity in Disney Films. Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, ed. Johnson Cheu (Jefferson: McFarland & Company 2013), 1.
- 31 Karen S. Goldman, “*Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* The Representation of Latin America in Disney’s ‘Good Neighbor’ Films,” in *Diversity in Disney Films. Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, Johnson Cheu ed. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013), 25.
- 32 Dorfman and Mattelart cited in Goldman, “*Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* The Representation of Latin America in Disney’s ‘Good Neighbor’ Films,” 26.
- 33 Inés Santaaulalia, “The Real Story Behind the Disney hit movie *Encanto*.”
- 34 Britt W. Svenhard, “There must be trolls in what I write: Ibsen’s mythopoesis adapted in(to) music and film,” in *Song Translation: Lyrics in Contexts*, eds. Franzon, Greenall, Kvam & Parianou (Berlin: Frank & Timme 2021), 401.
- 35 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 2.
- 36 Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, 3.
- 37 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 12.
- 38 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 60.
- 39 Malin Podlevskikh Carlström, “Translation Visibility and Translation Criticism in the Swedish Reception of Post-Soviet Russian Literature. Literary Reviews as Epitexts,” in *Paratexts in Translation*, eds. Pleijel & Podlevskikh Carlström (Berlin: Frank & Timme 2022), 126.
- 40 Genette, cited in Batchelor, 10.
- 41 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 10.
- 42 Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and their Paratexts*, 4.

- 43 Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 58.
- 44 Sara Pesce and Paolo Noto (eds.), *The Politics of Ephemeral Digital Media: Permanence and Obsolescence in Paratexts* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 3.
- 45 *Mediearkivet Atektst*. Retriever Medicarkivet Atektst (retrievergroup.com); Press Reader: www.pressreader.com.
- 46 Morten Ståle Nilsen, "Nye tider, nye helter," *VG*, 2021-11-24, https://www.vg.no/i/bGjXlB?utm_source=email; Kulas, Guri, "Blendande bagatell," *Klassekampen*, 2021-11-26; Jan Zahl, "Disney leverer magi til jul," *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 2021-11-25, <https://pressreader.com/article/282016150594850>; Hanne, Marie Nord, "Encanto er en fengende musikalsk sukkerbombe," *Bergens Tidende*, 2021-11-26, <https://pressreader.com/article/282097754975620>; Roy Søbstad, "Frodig og fargerik Disney-magi," *Fædrelandsvennen*, 2022-01-14, <https://pressreader.com/article/282467122253499>.
- 47 Rune H. Rasmussen, "Anmeldelse Encanto," *Barnevakten*, 2022-01-07, <https://www.barnevakten.no/film/encanto/>. *Barnevakten* (www.barnevakten.no) is a free and independent foundation that gives facts and advice to children on the usage of media.
- 48 Johnny, Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: Sage Publications 2016), 102.
- 49 Kathryn Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory* (London: Sage Publications 2014).
- 50 See Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 137.
- 51 Our translation.
- 52 See Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 218.
- 53 See Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory*, 138.
- 54 Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 244; Charmaz, *Constructing grounded theory*, 148.
- 55 Salzberg, "(Indivi)duality in Return to Oz: Reflection and Reversion," in *Diversity in Disney Films. Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, 225–26.
- 56 Cathrine Holst, *Hva er feminisme* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget 2009), 103.
- 57 Salzberg, "(Indivi)duality in Return to Oz: Reflection and Reversion," in *Diversity in Disney Films. Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, 225–26.
- 58 See Lagunas, "Encanto'. El triunfo del princesimo."
- 59 María Luisa Bombal, *La última niebla / La amortajada* (Barcelona: Seix Barral [1938] 2021).
- 60 Heilbron, "Toward a sociology of translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System," 435.