

A Psychological Journey Through Green Mile - In Perspective of Surrealism and Magic Realism

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Abstract:

A movie is a creation of art, meaning, its overall purpose is, like a painting or a song, to arouse an emotional reaction from its audience. Movies help to the better understanding of one's own life, the lives of those around them and even how our society and culture operate. This study analyses the elements of magical realism and surrealism in the movie *The Green Mile* directed by Frank Darabont and undertakes a psychoanalytical journey of the characters in the movie. The film is an adaptation of Stephen King's classic novel "The Green Mile". The plot of the movie is strikingly similar to the real-life story of George Stinney, the youngest person executed in 20th century US. This study hopefully throws light on the evaluative elements and how aesthetically it appeals to the audience. Apart from being a work of horror or fantasy, *The Green Mile* is a work of realism. The movie encompassed surrealistic elements and Magical Realism, it's pretty tough to pull off which is real and which is fantasy. This build-up of Surrealism jerks up as subsisting the inner puff of the movie. The untangling line between Surrealism and Magical Realism dawns on the audience and some scenes muffle them. The magical and surrealistic elements in the movie enable the audience to get a better understanding of the reality in the movie. It reflects human experience by illustrating emotions that might be difficult to convey through other means. The movie also serves as a tool to cultivate the psychiatric traits of the whole bunch of prisoners. Most of the movies do not immediately bring religious themes to the viewer's mind. It is difficult to find which part of the Bible played in them. Nevertheless, this study investigates the biblical and philosophical undercurrents soaked in *The Green Mile*.

Keywords: Realism, Fantasy, Psychoanalysis, Allusions, Surrealism, Magical Realism.

Introduction

The Green Mile is an exhaustive, rather suffocating estimation of a 1930's American penitentiary, at three hours in length the movie is an epic cinematographic production. The film is an adaptation of Stephen King's novel "The Green Mile". In the movie, the director Frank Darabont paves rectitude and credible to live in the audience psyches by ties upon the common fears. The movie "The Green Mile" moves around a man named Paul Edgecombe, the head guard of a prison at Cold Mountain Penitentiary where prisoners wait for the arrival of their time of electrocution. Paul remembers the whole story of his past life in the Green Mile from a stance of old age in a convalescent home. Paul takes a trip down memory lane through his friends and colleagues at the Cold Mountain and he think more earnestly of his deceased wife, Jan Edgecombe. He also recalls the execution of some of the convicts which he has administered. Within the movie "The Green Mile" directed by Frank Darabont,

Michael Clarke Duncan who plays the character of John Coffey, uses his magical powers to generate pathetic fallacy highlighting the viciousness and dignity of different characters in the film. The appearance of John Coffey reminds of a Godly power brought on earth to make change for the better. Coffey uses his powers to support the helpless characters in the story and to proclaim that there must be a change in this morally corrupted society. Powerful people use their weapon of magic against evil forces for the betterment of the world. John's powers also brings an irony that even characters of great power can be manipulated, and that there are instances in life when evil overpowers good.

Magic Realism

Apart from being a work of horror or fantasy, *The Green Mile* is a work of realism. Stephen King experimented Magic realism in a number of his novels and short stories such as 'Christine', 'It' etc. Magical realism in literature and film call attention to narratives where magic occur in the constructed real world. Normally, audience would not expect the world as a place where magical events take place. This is the attractive feature of magic realism. It signifies that magical, occult, paranormal or supernatural events can occur in a real or established setting. It grants a mystifying and astonishing outlook to the universe where many things remain unexplained. Books such as 'One Hundred Years of Solitude' by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 'Midnight's Children' by Salman Rushdie, 'Beloved' by Toni Morrison and movies such as 'Life of Pi', 'Midnight in Paris' etc. are full of magical realism. Behind the dull and somber normal world, the characters of these novels and movies live in another world that is lively and powerful.

The Green Mile encompassed surrealistic elements and Magical Realism, it's pretty tough to pull off which is real and fantasy. The character John Coffey is built up gradually and he swirls as a Godlike figure with the trait of spreading love. John Coffey unravels Paul Edgecombe's urinary tract infection, recoups the life of the cute mouse Mr. Jingles, he solely heals the Brain Tumor of the jail warden Hal's wife Melinda and wielding his power, he hypnotizes Percy and murdered Billy. This build-up of Surrealism jerks up as subsisting the inner puff of the movie. The untangling line between Surrealism and Magical Realism dawns on the audience and some scenes muffle them.

John Coffey is the reason behind Paul's decision to write an account of what has happened during those final months of his prison guard life in the E block. Coffey is a giant black man, eight feet tall, who always appears having tears streaming down his eyes. He talks, express and behaves benevolently, despite his ogre appearance. He was sentenced to judicial execution for the rape and murder of two 9 years old twin white girls as he had them in his arms while the police was searching for the girls. He was crying and repeating that he "couldn't help it". Though there is a lack of evidence which prove that the man is guiltless, the audience have the feeling that he is innocent. Though he was convicted of murdering two girls, Edgecombe finds Coffey's manners different form that of other prisoners in the Green Mile; one who has a fear of the dark and usually cries at night.

John Coffey cures Paul's critical bladder infection by a mere touch which sounds like a placebo effect. He has an incredible healing ability which guides the guards in the prison to appraise him as a God incarnation. Placebo effect is something that appears to be a sincere medical therapy while it does not even carry an active matter that is meant to influence the health of a person. John holds a supernatural talent to heal others and is bestowed with an astonishing power to accomplish heavenly miracles. He is even secretly sneaked out of the

prison to use his magical powers to save the life of Melinda, healing her critical brain tumor. Human mind voluntarily or involuntarily controls all physical and metabolic activities. The brain makes the body believe that a fake treatment is the real one and this stimulates the healing process which might have happened in the case of Paul and Melinda. However John uses his power to liberate Melinda's malady into another character which confusingly reveals that his divine power is not a mere placebo. For the most part, Coffey appears to be an illiterate who could only spell his own name, and in spite of his gigantic size, he is afraid of the dark much like a child, which again questions the credence of his powers. This notifies us to the ingredient of magical realism in the story.

The different spots mentioned as "The Green Miles" in the movie signifies the diverse methods through which different people should meet their own end. "The Green Mile" also performs as a portrayal of the truth that all the citizens including common men and the villain-like are mortals. In a rough way, The Green Mile manifest the inevitability of death. Every creature's life is bound to an end in death. It is also suggestive of the prisoners' inexorable move towards execution as all of them should confront the electric chair. It is an area where cruelty and compassion exist side-by-side. Similarly normal everyday survival is a mix of instances of happiness as well as sufferings. As the movie progresses, different places are mentioned as "Green Miles" such as Melinda Moore's room where she is sinking of brain tumor, the Georgia Pines nursing home where aged people live anticipating death, and towards the end of the movie life as a whole as all human beings live with the ultimate knowledge of the inevitability of death, which undoubtedly points out the essential quality of the co-existence of compassion and violence in Cold Mountain's Green Mile.

"Usually, death row is called The Last Mile. We called ours The Green Mile. The floor was the color of faded limes. We had the electric chair. Old Sparky, we called it. Oh, I've lived a lot of years, Ellie. But 1935, that takes the prize. That year, I had the worst urinary infection of my life. It was also the year of John Coffey, and the two dead girls." (The Green Mile)

John Coffey is not just a normal man but a man with an extraordinary and magical power to heal others. Coffey's miraculous powers initially appears in the movie when he heals Paul's Urinary Tract Infection by absorbing the infection right out of the affliction and blowing it out into the air.

"When John did that, when he took my hand, a part of the power that worked through him, spilled into me." (The Green Mile)

John Coffey is naive, and he is the marginal mystical being, one who probably has the mind to adore humanity, he is a vagabond since he has no home and folks. He is illustrated as a Negro with seven-foot height, an inmate who heals people by grabbing them in the crotch and coughing up the germs. Coffey consumes the trauma of whites to redeem and forgive them. The supernatural elements illustrated themselves it was a genuine surprise, and the characters were so strong the three hours whizzed by. One of the ample tormenting instants in the movie is John Coffey's cessation and his last desire to watch a movie, "Top Hat", it displays the scene of fashionable American couples dancing and relishing the moment by singing the lyrics "I'M IN HEAVEN", the way Coffey sits and watches the film is just so heart-breaking with his sparkling eyes, even though he knows that he is going to die after that he is so happy in that moment. Even though Paul and his colleagues on E block's are incapable to protect John Coffey from execution, his soul will indeed drives to heaven by his accomplishment. On

the distinct spectrum the movie portrays the inevitability of death, the only thing that has a guarantee in life is death.

Mr. Jingles can also be regarded as a kind of divine being, sent to Delacroix to prepare him for his journey from earth to the other world. This very same little mouse re-enters later in Paul's life and he remembers that the story of John Coffey was not yet told. Mr. Jingles also disclosed the real nature of people, a kind of mirror that does not lie. Delacroix adopts the mouse and takes care of it till his death, asking for a good home for the mouse when he dies. Thus the audience sympathize with Delacroix in spite of every crimes that he did in the past. Though he has done terrible crimes in his life, he appears to be kind- hearted and gentle to the audience, by providing noticeable significance and care to the little animal. Eduard Delacroix also has a captivating name, as his surname stands for the word "cross" in French. It also calls attention of the audience to a dream of Paul about Coffey being executed with two thieves, the thieves being the guard Percy Wetmore and the criminal Delacroix and they stands for a bad thief and a good thief respectively. Mr. Jingles also discloses the trifling offensive nature of the guard Percy Wetmore. It also depicts humans in front of God. John Coffey and Mr. Jingles stands in contrast with other, one being dark and jumbo while the other is a little white mouse. Both has kind of magical powers in them that is evident in their features.

Frank Darabont condenses the facet of the paranormal fiction and psychological thriller with a denomination of melodrama and Surrealism, with these ingredients Darabont widened his horizon to diverse sorts of vivid attribute that is assigned with a realistic impression. The movie is like a surrealistic painting, the light of the cinema projector over Coffey's head generating an aura and it exemplifies him as an Angel. The miracle man formulates a suspicion in us that if this was a gift or a curse. The motive of John Coffey's existence is to serve and to express love with the enthusiasm to comfort others, using his humanistic power Frank Darabont nurtures the audience to reckon him as an 'angel' and 'slave', his intentions and choices are eternally for the betterment of others. Struggles and dilemmas are the fraction of his life, but Coffey endure them with self-confidence and an innocent smile and fear of a child, this surrealistic assortment propels the art of his life. The death penalty can only kill his body not his pure soul, the judiciary system identifies him as a culprit by viewing his physical body. John Coffey's supernatural gift paves way for Paul and his colleagues to uncover the truth that questions their vastly idolized moralities.

The scene where Coffey clasped the hand of Paul and disseminate his telepathic power to him, impel the audience to comprehend who is the real murderer of the Detterick twins. The movie shift between the past and present and the casting of Michael Clarke Duncan propelled the character of John Coffey feel hundred percent genuine and humanistic. One of the most irksome scenes is when one of the prisoners was executed and Tom Hank's realized that the sponge for the electrode is dry, the man became hitch on to fire while he was still alive and screaming; this is the most disturbing scene.

John Coffey's telepathic power is exemplified with a fear that is real as well as supernatural, the unique powers while real, cannot be elucidated scientifically.

"Don't put me in the dark boss, I scared of the dark." (The Green Mile)

Coffey's unusual growth and height and his supernatural power sequester him socially because that is so real, in some paces this power horrifying and thus frightening the audience.

John Coffey accepts his punishment in the name of justice and law and more of his guilty consciousness, he wants to die.

The first disclosure of horror in the movie muffled with the electric chair, and the audience could be able to 'experience', what was ensuing in their own psyche, it prickles down in their dispositions. The audience have never ever seen a film where they have encountered or beheld death so up close. It hauls them into a distinct world and a realm where they perceive the pain and agony, ecstasy and joy the characters are feeling. This movie is a little slow pace because it's not a life oration movie, but a movie that hits our heart and makes us feel like out of our comfort zone, it paves way for our imagination to run free in direction.

Biblical Allusions

There are a lot of scenes in the movie that run parallel to the biblical tradition, the three horrific executions remembers the three crosses. The movie pushes us towards the story of Jesus and the healing powers of him. Stephen King admitted that the initials of John Coffey referred to Jesus Christ . It shows his astonishing powers, his humanity and compassion, and his power to heal others without causing any harm to himself. He is surprisingly very tall , which can be explicated as the Greatness of God, but despite all these powers, he suffers throughout his life as he sense the agony of others he touches or sees:

"I'm rightly tired of the pain I hear and feel, boss. I'm tired of bein on the road, lonely as a robin in the rain. Not never havin no buddy to go on with or tell me where we's comin from or goin to or why. I'm tired of people bein ugly to each other. It feels like pieces of glass in my head. I'm tired of all the times I've wanted to help and couldn't. I'm tired of bein in the dark. Mostly it's the pain. There's too much. If I could end it, I would. But I can't." (The Green Mile)

Whenever John uses his powers to heal someone, he lets a "swarm of flies" out of his mouth, which means that he is expelling out the pain or disease from them. A great deal of flies-related references is there in the Bible. "Lord of Flies" is one of the names of Satan. Coffey being the embodiment of goodness is able to defeat the flies which symbolizes the evil.

"That spirit of discord, which had jumbled my thoughts like powerful fingers sifting through sand or grains of rice, was gone. I thought I also understood why Harry had been able to act when Brutal and I could only stand, hopeless and indecisive, in front of our boss. Harry had been with John... and whatever spirit it is that opposes that other, demonic one, it was in John Coffey that night. And, when John stepped forward to face Warden Moores, it was that other spirit – something white, that's how I think of it, as something white – which took control of the situation. The other thing didn't leave, but I could see it drawing back like a shadow in a sudden strong light." (The Green Mile)

John curing Melinda Moore's malady in the movie is a direct reference to the Bible where, Jesus expels the devils out of a man's body in the parable "Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac" also known as the "Miracle of the Gadarene Swine" and "exorcism of Legion". Mrs. Moore is healed by John who kisses and bounds her with his love and compassion.

"I dreamed of you," she said in a soft, wondering voice. "I dreamed you were wandering in the dark, and so was I. We found each other." (The Green Mile)

Many other Biblical characters can be seen in the movie. The four guards of the prison, Dean Stanton, Harry Terwilliger, Percy Wetmore, and Brutus Howell can be compared to the four Mounties who went with Jesus to the cross to crucify him, not because they wished to do so, but because it was their duty.

“On the day of my judgment, when I stand before God, and He asks me why did I kill one of his true miracles, what am I gonna say? That it was my job? My job?” (The Green Mile)

Warden Hal Moores represents Judas. He signs John’s act of execution even after John saved his wife from a serious ailment. Burt Hammersmith, Coffey’s defender led the propaganda against him and sends an innocent man to death. Thus Hammersmith can be related to Pontius Pilate for his lack of sympathy and insensitivity. William Wharton limns Satan and is the epitome of all evil. He finds happiness in creating problems but at the end he is defeated by John Coffey as justice shall win ultimately. Paul is one of the most interesting characters in the movie. He is 104 years old at the time he starts telling his story. John Coffey granted Paul with a rare gift of extra-long life, but a doubt that arises in the mind of the audience is that whether this permanence is a gift at all.

“Sometimes there is absolutely no difference at all between salvation and damnation.” (The Green Mile)

Paul Edgecombe being immortal outlived his family, friends and colleagues but he felt absolutely lonely in a senior care home. It is a place that resembles the E block in Cold Mountain and the inmates are similar to the prisoners in the Green Mile waiting for their turn to die.

“I know I will look for death long before death finds me.” (The Green Mile)

Frank Darabont provides a noble lesson through the movie in a sense that if Christ once again took birth to make amends for the sins of human beings, conditions would not be unlike a millennium back. Christ would still be crucified by humans for being beyond their ability to understand and inculpated even when innocent. People judge others for what they see with their eyes which is similar to the case of John Coffey who was accused for a crime just because of his race.

Movies that make metaphors to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ or movies with classic Biblical stories are usually marked by an obvious lack of style and good taste. *The Green Mile* is rich with religious remarks, with John Coffey’s character and his execution obviously suggesting to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the movie does it in an appealing and stimulating fashion.

One of the most affecting scenes in the movie is Coffey’s final wish to watch a movie on the last day of his life before his execution. The movie he sees portrays a stylish American dancer singing “I’m in heaven”. John Coffey, the poor black man could not achieve the so called “heaven on earth” portrayed through the slow dancing movements of the two wealthy white Americans in the movie. This scene throws back to the beginning of the movie in the nursing home where Paul Edgecombe get emotional while watching a movie.

When Coffey cures Melinda Mores of her brain tumor, she gifts him a medal of Saint Christopher, asking him to wear it around his neck as a safeguard. It draws a parallel between the lives of John Coffey and of the Christian martyr Saint Christopher. Saint

Christopher was a legend, with an enormous size and strength. Christopher is said to be carrying the burden of the world on his shoulder. He is named as Christopher which means “Christ bearer” as he also bears the weight of his king, Christ. Coffey also carries the weight of sufferings of others. He is also doomed to get crucified as he cannot prove his innocence. He was a Godly figure who often strived to save the lives of humans in difficult situations. The medal of Saint Christopher gifted to his savior by Melinda Moores thus shows the hardships that Coffey is compelled to undergo as a “disciple of God”. It also highlights his job as an intermediary between man and God” as he aids humans to go through painful circumstances.

The psychoanalytical journey of Paul

Psychoanalysis is an interaction with the conscious mind and the unconscious element. Sigmund Freud is the major disciple of psychoanalytic criticism; he persists as a primary cultural force and he converses about the notion of repression. The movie “*The Green Mile*”, can be esteemed as a psychoanalytical journey of Paul Edgecombe, his desires are pushed on the unconscious mind, that is beyond consciousness, which has intense impacts upon his action. It fiddles a leading role in Paul's life, his life can be tied to the idea of repression, which implies an unresolved conflict within his mind which was a result of the traumatic past and events, it pushed him into the realm of unconsciousness.

The movie ‘Top Hat’, can be glimpsed as a symbolic specimen of what Coffey wishes to forget in the last days of him, this state of mind can be called as ‘Displacement’, where John Coffey and his execution is represented by the ‘Top Hat’ and the couple dance of the young Americans, this specific scene seizes him through his memory lane.

“Heaven...I'm in heaven,
And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak.
And I seem to find the happiness I seek,
When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek.” (The Green Mile)

His dreams do not usually formulate explicit statements, it communicates indirectly representing meanings through concrete embodiment of time, place and person.

For Paul his dreams are an escape, it is a safety valve through which his repressed desires and memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind. All the events in the past remained alive in the unconscious and the repressed in unconscious vocalize through precise images and symbol. Paul's desire and fear are condensed into one single image of the dancing couples in ‘Top Hat’. His unconscious is protecting him by sharing the memory with Elaine Connelly.

Freudian psychoanalysis bestows fundamental significance to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind, and it oversees to the question that what is lying in the unconscious. Paul's choking feeling is the result of his guilty consciousness, the movie is basically about good verses evil or consciousness verses unconscious.

Paul is urged to penalize John Coffey in the label of justice and law through the scheme of capital punishment and the electric chair. Nevertheless, something executed in the tag of law is not ever right or perfect. The guilty consciousness of Paul Edgecombe edging towards the blemish of capital retribution and the integrity of human life comes off trifle in the camouflage of the law and rectitude of the American nation at the period of the Depression era. Paul's guilty consciousness emanates from the sense of stance of him that the judiciary system that encompassed by him downgrading the integrity of John Coffey's life and

perpetrated a tremendous misstep through his execution. Although Paul is sullied with guilt, it's too late for the confession and repentance, John Coffey can't be brought back to life. This injustice in law, yet isolate Coffey because of his racial stature too. The naive and sacred soul of John Coffey is brutally penalized and sentenced to succumb before the call of the Almighty. So, the miscarriage of justice and awry conviction scar Paul's heart and his psyche deeply. Though John Coffey was died, he influenced Paul throughout his life and the haunting memory bestow Paul a second chance to alter the trail of his life off from the death row.

The haunting memory constantly recalls Paul the way John Coffey deceased and the inequity of the retribution. Even though Paul Edgecombe realizes the truth that the giant and childlike naive John Coffey is not the homicide and rapist of the twin nine-year-old girls, he can't do nothing to recoup his life. Paul is the assigned superintendent who has the responsibility to watch the convicts before their last days. The inner captive system of the movie is the value of human life. Through the journey of the secluded mind and memory lane of Paul it is apparent that an ethical judgment can be erroneous when it does not have any robust reason. He gropes pity for the superiority complex of whites for the racist strategies institutionalized within the judicial system.

Conclusion

The aesthetics or art experience delivered by the movie *The Green Mile* elevates the audience to a physical to a sublime level. All the characters impose their hundred percentages to confirm the unexpressed emotions of the mental level. To attain the real essence of art experience the audience should detach themselves from the oriental and occidental consciousness and the written laws of the judicial system, try to find out the experience of expressing emotions through the exact feelings and love that the director pours directly to the heart of the testifier. The movie is an ideal creation of art, and it hold a unity till the It beginning to the end. The amalgamation of imagination and idealization is the secret of Frank Darabont's movies, that beauty has an integrity and all the cast and crew are to be strive for it to infer the purpose of art. Thousand guilty persons escaping is better than one innocent man getting accused, Darabont recalls the underlined reality and oath of the judicial system. The capital retribution and the integrity of human life comes off trifle in the camouflage of the law and the rectitude of the American nation at the period of the Depression era is portrayed in *The Green Mile*. Darabont gropes pity for the superiority complex of whites for the racist strategies institutionalized within the judicial system.

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