Jane Robinett

This Rough Magic

Technology in Latin American Fiction

PETER LANG
New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • San Francisco
Bern • Frankfurt am Main • Berlin • Vienna • Paris

Table of Contents

I. Setting the Boundaries 1

The Philosophy of Technology ... 4
Defining Technology ... 6
Philosophy and Literature ... 7
Magic and Technology ... 8
Magic: The Problem of Definition ... 9
Natural Magic ... 11
Magic and the Origins of Modern Science ... 12
Magic and Science as Complementary Systems ... 15
A Working Definition for Magic ... 17
Magic v. Magical Realism ... 19

II. The Roots of Magic and the Limits of Technology: The Seamless World of García Márquez 23

Introduction ... 23
Melquíades ... 25
José Arcadio Buendía ... 27
The Alchemist's Laboratory ... 31
Failure and False Teeth ... 33
The Enchanted Region ... 34
The Transformation of José Arcadio ... 38
Ursula's Technology ... 42
The Insomnia Plague ... 45
The Return of Melquíades ... 48
Madness ... 53
Levitation and Other Matters ... 54
The End of the Patriarch ... 57
Ghosts ... 58
Clairvoyance and Telepathy ... 63

Blood Ties 65
Losing the Magic 66
The Cross of Ashes 68
Aureliano Triste 69
The Nature of Technology 74
The Banana Company Plague 76
Reshaping Macondo 80
Mauricio Babilonia 81
The Rains 85
Melquíades' Room 87
Ursula's Death 90
City of Mirrors and Mirages 92

III. The Power of Technology and the Limits of Magic: Allende's *The House of the Spirits* 101

Clara's Gifts 103
Marriage 109
The Coming of the Mora Sisters 111
The Plague of Ants 113
Charity and Justice: Technology and Magic 119
The Home Front 121
Ferula: Clara's Failure 123
Ferula's Curse: Magic and Medicine 126
Ghosts and Spirits 129
Clara's Children 132
Alba 134
Magic and Technology: Perspectives 145

IV. Technology, Progress, and Power: Amado's *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* 153

Crime and Punishment 155
Engineers and Other Aliens 157
The Boss and the Challenger 161
Technology as Foreign 166
Technology and A Woman's Place 168
Gabriela: Guerilla in the Kitchen 170
Mediation as Technological Mode 173
The French Chef 176
Breaking Rules: Gabriela's Marriage 179
A Force for Change 182

V. Technology as Natural Disaster: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* 189

The Politics of Bananas 190
Superiority: Technological Proofs 192
Engineers, Owners and Dogs 193
Inside the Chicken Wire Fence 197
The Banana Police 199
Wealth, Poverty and Other Enigmas 201
Strike and Counterstrike 202
Manipulations, Legal and Otherwise 205
Military Maneuvers 206
Quick and Dirty Fixes 207
The Four-Year Storm 209
Two Models 210

VI. Military Technology as Political Authority: Allende's *The House of the Spirits* **215**

City, Country 216
The Electoral Process 217
Technique as Political Threat 219
Whistle-stop Campaigning 221
Radio Wars 222
Military Technologies as Political Tools 224
Soldiers As Machines 227
Suits and Uniforms: Civil and Military Authority 229
Human or Near-Human Weapons 231
Erasing Memory, Changing History 232
Pernicious Technology: Torture 233
Transferring Pernicious Technology 238
Technopolitics: Progress, Exploitation or Terror? 239

VII. Minor Notes, Major Changes **251**

Two Realities 251
Foreign Influences 254
Temporary Fixes: Permanent Illusions 259
Decentering Technology 266

Bibliography **271**

Index **281**