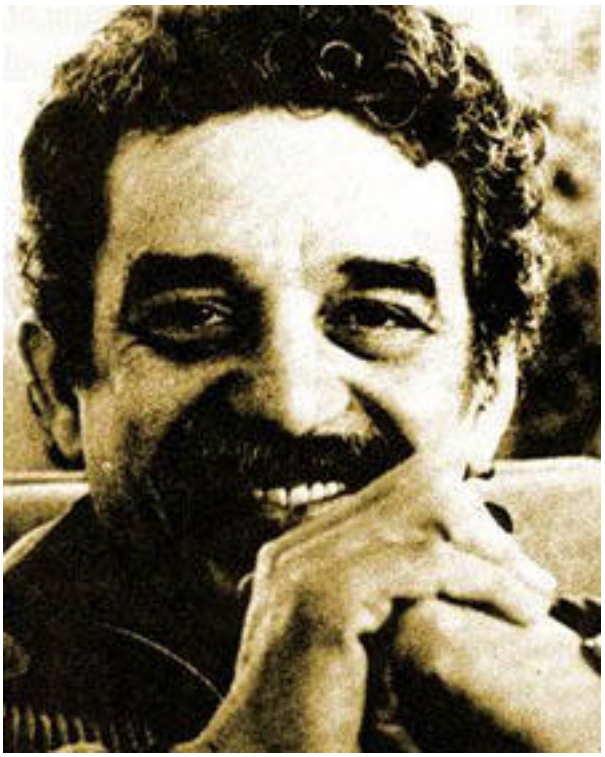
# Gabriel García Márquez



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## BIOGRAPHY

Gabriel García Márquez was born in the northern Colombian town of Aracataca on March 6, 1928. He spent his childhood there living with his mother's parents and listening to their stories. He attributes much of his narrative style to his grandmother's homespun, colorful tales, while his grandfather steeped him in military lore of Colombian history that would later figure prominently in his writing.

For instance, Col. Aureliano Buendía in One Hundred Years of Solitude was based on General Rafael Uribe Uribe, who "before I was born . . . had come through Aracataca and drunk a few beers with my grandfather and other veterans." Also in Aracataca García Márquez developed a taste for the bizarre. "The world of my childhood," he has recalled, "was spent in a large, very sad house with a sister who ate earth, a grandmother who prophesied the future, and countless relatives of the same name who never made much distinction between happiness and insanity."

When he was eight, his grandfather died and Gabriel left Aracataca for life with his parents in Bogotá. The capital city on the high Andean plain was cold and drizzly compared to his first home. At the age of twelve, he went off to boarding school, briefly in the major northern city of Barranquilla and then in Zipaquirá, near Bogotá. Feeling that "school was a penance and that icy town an act of injustice," he took refuge in books. "I would read bad poetry on the one hand and Marxist texts lent to to me secretly by my history teacher on the other."

In 1947, he moved back to Bogotá to attend law school at the National University, but two things derailed his professional intentions. First was the explosive brew of Colombian politics. In April 1948, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leader of the Liberal left wing, was assassinated in downtown Bogotá in broad daylight. This triggered the Bogotazo, a spell of rioting which began in the capital and eventually caused over half a billion dollars in property damage nationwide. García Márquez quickly fled the climate of violence and returned to the coast, this time to Cartagena. Second, his interest in writing had already been awakened. "When I read [Kafka's] *Metamorphosis*, at 17, I realized I could be a writer," he has written.

"When I saw how Gregor Samsa could wake up one morning transformed into a gigantic beetle, I said to myself, 'I didn't know you could do this, but if you can, I'm certainly interested in writing.'" The following day he wrote his first short story.

Soon, García Márquez completely abandoned law for journalism and fiction. He worked as a reporter at *El Heraldo* in Barranquilla, moved to Bogotá's El Espectador in 1954, went to Caracas in 1957, and spent two years working for the Cuban government's news agency, Prensa Latina, in Havana, New York, and Bogotá. "I watched the evolution of the Cuban process closely and carefully," this avid fidelista has written. "My view is that although the Revolution took a difficult and sometimes contradictory course . . . it still offers the prospect of a social order which is more democratic, more just, and more suited to our needs."

During the same years, the objective journalist began to churn out his supremely subjective fiction. His early stories written between 1947 and 1955, collected under the title Eyes of a Blue Dog, are Kafka-esque parables of dead souls, individual minds in various states of suspended animation. Not until the last of these, *Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo* ("Isabel viendo llover en Macondo," 1955), did García Márquez introduce his fictional town of Macondo and start the wheel of magic realism turning. In the same year, a much fuller portrait of Macondo emerged in his first novel, Leaf Storm (La hojarasca). In terms of content, this novel chronicles the banana boom and depression in his fictional city during the first quarter of the century. But in its form, *Leaf Storm*, with its four narrative points of view, shows the direct influence of William Faulkner, one of García Márquez's great inspirations.

Also in 1955, García Márquez produced a long piece of reportage, The *Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (Relato de un náufrago), which appeared in fourteen installments in El Espectador and did wonders for the paper's circulation. But the story (not published as a book until 1970) contained revelations about the government's involvement in contraband, which led to the temporary shutting down of El Espectador. Suddenly García Márquez, on assignment in Paris, found himself unemployed. Staying in Paris, he quickly wrote a novella, *No One Writes to the Colonel* (El coronel no tiene quien le escriba, 1961), which is still among his most loved works.

In the middle of the 1960s, while living in Mexico, García experienced a brainstorm while driving along the road to Acapulco with his wife and two sons. For years he had struggled to find a way to write a novel which he had first started when he was 18. "It came to me in a flash. I had to tell the story the way my grandmother used to tell me hers, starting with that afternoon when the little boy is taken by his grandfather to discover ice. A linear history where the extraordinary fuses, in all innocence, with the commonplace." Suddenly he put the family car into a U-turn and returned home. There he sold his car and gave his wife, Mercedes, the money. "I reckoned that we could live on it for six months but it took me a year and a half to write the book." Meanwhile, Mercedes held off their creditors, and when the book was finished she mailed the manuscript off to her husband's publisher in Buenos Aires, worried that it might "turn out to be no good."

This long and expansive novel was *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Cien años de soledad), a huge success in the years after its 1967 publication. At the end of the twentieth century, it had sold more than 10 million copies in more than 30 languages.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* made García Márquez a leader of the Latin American literary "boom" and an international phenomenon. The resulting financial independence allowed him to move to Barcelona during 1967 to 1975 and then to maintain a variety of residences in Mexico, Colombia, and Europe. And more than any other of his writings, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was responsible for García Márquez being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982.

At the rate of one book every four years or so, García Márquez followed *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with a string of major fictions. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (El otoño del

patriarca, 1975) was another Faulknerian monologue piece, this time of a troubled, rambling soul. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (Crónica de una muerte anunciada, 1981) fused fiction and journalism, as García Márquez reexamined a famous news story of 1950, presenting himself as an impartial observer of a story worthy of the Greeks. *Love in the Time of Cholera* (El amor en los tiempos del cólera, 1985) brilliantly portrayed love in one of his most tender works.

His most recent books have remained diverse in subject and audience. *The General in His Labyrinth* (El general en su laberinto, 1989) again plunges the reader into the mind of a dying patriarch. As the great liberator, Simón Bolívar, makes his final journey down the Magdalena River, his dream of a unitary Latin American state is destroyed by greed and nationalism. *Strange Pilgrims* (Doce cuentos peregrinos, 1992) is a series of short stories about "the strange things that happen to Latin Americans in Europe," to quote the author. *Of Love and Other Demons* (De amor y otros demonios, 1994) is another historical piece, this time showing an eighteenth-century Colombia in which various religions- Catholic and African especially -- suffer from a crisis of faith that besets Latin America near the end of its colonial age. At the century's end, his most recent work is journalistic, and it addresses one of contemporary Colombia's greatest problems: *News of a Kidnapping* (Noticia de un secuestro, 1996).

## Cronica de una muerte anunciada Synopsis

The scene is an arena, such as used for bullfighting or cockfighting. On bleachers upstage sits a Chorus, composed of all the characters.

The background story concerns the marriage of Angela Vicario to Bayardo San Román, a romantic and wealthy stranger who has recently come to town. On the night before the play takes place, Angela and Bayardo are married, but in the middle of the wedding night, San Román suddenly returns his bride to her family because he has discovered that she was not a virgin. Angela's family beats and threatens her until she admits that the man who took her virtue was Santiago Nasar. Angela's twins brothers, Pedro and Pablo Vicario, set off to kill the seducer as the city awakes.

The Chorus begins by foretelling the death of Santiago Nasar. Plácida Linero, his mother, recalls sending her son off on the morning after the wedding feast. The townspeople remember the weather that day-but their memories conflict. Santiago drinks coffee served by his cook, Victoria Guzmán, and flirts with her daughter, Divina Flor. In the town, he meets the author's sister, Margot, and promises to visit her after going home to take a nap. By the end of the act, the whole town knows that Pablo and Pedro Vicario will kill Santiago.

In the next movement, the Vicario twins proclaim their innocence because of the events of the night before. They tell everyone they meet, even Santiago's best friend, that they will kill Nasar. Colonel Aponte confiscates their knives, but the brothers replace them. The townspeople are uncertain: is Santiago dead already? are the brothers serious? does Santiago know his fate? Victoria Guzmán awakens Santiago, telling him only that it is the

hour of his awakening. The brothers raise their knives. Blackout. Santiago Nasar is dead, and the twins leave their bloody knives before the priest.

The Chorus remembers more about the aftermath of Santiago's death. Barking dogs want to devour Santiago's innards. The priest performs an autopsy on orders from the mayor. After the funeral procession, Ángela tells the story of her wedding night. Memories go back to Bayardo's wooing of Angela, how he hears of her virtues, buys her a handsome present, asks for her hand, and buys her dream house. Despite her coolness toward him, they marry. Again, we see the scene in which Bayardo returns his bride to her family. The act ends with the revelation of Ángela's later love for Bayardo and his rejection of the 2000 letters she sent him over several decades.

In the final section of the play, we realize that the evidence against Santiago is flimsy. His fiancee upbraids him for writing love letters to another, and a friend offers to hide him, but Santiago Nasar does not understand. The Judge, from the pulpit, interrogates the town about the murder. At last, the murder itself is played out in the ring as Plácida Linero bars the door against Santiago, thinking only to prevent his assassins from coming in to attack her son. She hears the murder and runs among the chorus, seeking her son. When she sees him, he tells her of his own death. The Chorus tells Santiago Nasar how he will die.

## A Chronicle Told and Retold

*Crónica de una muerte anunciada* was originally a short novel by Gabriel García Márquez published in 1981, one year before the author won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The action of García Márquez's tale is extremely simple. On a Monday morning following a wildly festive marriage, the groom returns the bride to her family after discovering that she is not a virgin. When the bride blames another man for the loss of her virginity, her twin brothers wait for the accused lover and kill him with pig-slaughtering knives. Everyone in the small Colombian town knows that the brothers are going to kill the lover. But no one can stop the blood from flowing.

No matter how simple the plot, the story-telling of *Crónica* is rich and musical. García Márquez begins with the deceptively simple line: "On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on." From that sentence until the end, Santiago's death at the hands of Pedro and Pablo Vicario is guaranteed. But the narrator weaves together stories from more than thirty different witnesses, including the victim's mother and servants, the narrator's own mother and sister, the town whore and town priest, and many other bystanders. Some interviews and accounts come from as long as twenty-seven years later. The narrator relates the later lives of Angela, the unhappy bride, and Bayardo San Román, the unhappy husband, and how thousands of letters between them piled up unread. But no matter how wide his focus on the townsfolk who watch this drama, García Márquez never loses sight of the blood-soaked principal characters and the terrible ending implicit in his

opening line. With the murder of Santiago described at last, the final five paragraphs of the novella explode in blood and gore and terror.

The earliest version of this romantic tale was raw fact. On a Monday morning, the 22nd of January, 1951, in the town of Sucre, a man named Cayetano Gentile was killed by the brothers of Margarita Chica Salas, after she had been returned home by her husband, Miguel Reyes Palencia. Certain key elements of the true story differed from García Márquez's later novel. In real life, the husband was not a super-wealthy stranger but the son of local landowners; the marriage had no romance but was only the result of threats and pressure from the bride's brothers; the brothers were not pig-slaughterers but fishermen; the victim, Cayetano, was not an Arab like García Márquez's Santiago Nasar but a tall, good-looking medical student from a successful family of Italian immigrants; Cayetano, like Santiago, began his final, fatal morning by going down to the river port, but he went to see the couple off on their honeymoon (of course, they never appeared). And the real story had a very different ending. While García Márquez reunites the bride and groom many years later in a cloud of romantic fantasy, the real Miguel and Margarita had virtually nothing to do with each other.

But allowing for all these differences, the novel and the real-life story are strikingly similar, in the victim's pattern of movement through the town, in the reactions of the bystanders, and especially in the bloody knifing that forms the climax, ending with the victim walking around with his guts hanging out before he dies.

In 1951, when the events took place, García Márquez was working as a journalist in the Colombian city of Cartagena, removed from the action. But his family not only lived in Sucre, where the murder took place, but had been involved in the story of Cayetano Gentile's last morning. Minutes before being stabbed, Cayetano had mailed a letter to García Márquez's father and had encountered García Márquez's brother and sister, who invited him home for breakfast. So the writer heard the story in intimate detail from his mother, and he would later weave his family into the web of rumor, coincidence, and deceit which surrounded the murder. But before he could make an artwork out of an anecdote, García Márquez had to wait thirty years:

"When the event took place in 1951, I was interested in it not as material for a novel but as a newspaper article. But that genre wasn't very well developed in Colombia at the time, and I was a provincial journalist on a local paper which wouldn't have been interested in the matter anyway. I started thinking about the case in literary terms several years later, but I always had to bear in mind how upset my mother would be at the very thought of seeing so many of her friends and relatives in a book written by her son. Still, the truth of it is that I wasn't really gripped by the subject until, after I'd chewed it over for many years, I discovered the vital ingredient- that the two murderers didn't want to commit the crime and had tried their utmost to get somebody to prevent it, without success. This is the only really unique element in the drama, the rest is pretty commonplace in Latin America. A later cause for delay was the structure. In real life [García Márquez means in the chronological sequence of his fictional story], the story ends nearly twenty-five years after the crime, when the husband comes back to his

rejected wife, but it was always clear to me that the book had to end with a meticulously detailed description of the crime. The answer was to introduce a narrator who could move freely through the novel's temporal structure: I wrote in the first person, for the first time. So what happened was that after thirty years I discovered something we novelists tend to forget-the best literary formula is always the truth."

This long quotation contains the seeds of much discussion about the novelist and *Crónica*: its woven structure of time, it complex emotional landscape, its questioning of social versus personal responsibility, and the relation of specific disciplines like fiction, journalism, and law to our understanding of events.

García Márquez especially seduces the reader through problematic story- telling into a complicated world of tellings and retellings. Consider the title, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* -- a chronicle tells of events in the past, but a foretelling explains how events will be. His narrator is a nameless "I," but he is also Gabriel García Márquez, for his relatives appear under their own names. The narrator is much more involved in the story than the novelist had been in fact, but he is also very removed, for he returns to the rural setting twenty-seven years later to piece together the mysteries and emotions of a single morning from many aging memories and from hundreds of pages of transcripts and notes left by a legal investigator. In sifting and blending the accounts, García Márquez explores the dynamics of telling and retelling, of memory and prophesy.

The story has attracted many adaptors over its life. Major productions have appeared in many Latin American countries. A film version was released in 1987, and its virtues included stylish direction by Francesco Rosi, an evocative Colombian location, and a good cast including Irene Pappas as Angela's mother and Rupert Everett as Bayardo. In 1995, Lincoln Center mounted a dance-drama adaptation by choreographer/director Graciela Daniele and a talented team of artists. But the production was roundly panned by the New York critics and ran only a short time.

With this new retelling of the *Crónica*, Repertorio Español brings back one of García Márquez's greatest interpreters, Jorge Ali Triana. Triana is a Colombian director who has collaborated with the novelist on films and plays.

In 1993, he brought to life García Márquez's *The Innocent Erendira*, a swirl of dust, color, magic, and female power. Luckily he is back at his trade with this 1999 production of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, another story from the master about wild souls in a bizarre world.

## Modern Colombian Theatre

Although plays were a part of life in Bogotá at least as early as the 1580s, the development of Colombian drama lagged until the middle of the twentieth century. By the 1930s and 1940s, when other Latin American theatres were entering an aggressive, modern phase-subsidized acting companies, acting conservatories, schools of national writers, and independent, experimental theatres -- Colombia's was still struggling to leave the nineteenth century behind.

The modernization of Colombian theatre began during the 1950s, and, as happened across Latin America, it was sparked by imported talent. Spaniard José María de Mena came to Bogotá in 1951 and built the Escuela Nacional de Arte Dramático on the model of a Madrid school. Three years later, another Spaniard established a theatre school in Cali. Colombian Enrique Buenaventura arrived there to teach, and before the 1950s were over, he had taken over as director, spun off the independent theatre known today as Teatro Experimental de Cali (TEC), and begun to make a modern national drama.

With the arrival of television in 1954, the broadcasters of Bogotá realized that their actors needed training in the new, more intimate medium. From Mexico they brought a Japanese teacher named Seki Sano who had learned the techniques of the great Russian theatre masters, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and Vakhtangov. Within three months the right-wing regime had branded Seki Sano as a communist and promptly sent him packing back to Mexico. But this powerful teacher had already inspired a generation of young devotees. They developed his methods, founded a theatre called El Buho (The Owl), and formed their own schools, which in turn provided the troops for the independent theatre movement of the 1960s. Among this first generation of Seki Sano pupils was a young architecture student, Santiago García, who would become a seminal director, playwright, and founder of Teatro La Candelaria. "He was the maestro," García remembers of Seki Sano. "For me his influence was fundamental: his teachings, his ethics, his vision of art as a medium for finding reality, a new reality."

At the dawn of the 1960s, Colombian theatre was growing in many directions. Buenaventura spent a year in Paris, where his company made a stir. García spent two years studying theatre in Prague and Berlin. Another young group, including Jorge Alí Triana, also went to Prague to study and perform. Back home, Bogotá's theatre festival, which was first instituted among local theatres in 1957, connected groups from various cities and popularized modern international plays as well as those by local writers. New independent theatres sprouted up around Bogotá. As the decade went on, university theatres created politically insurgent productions that encountered controversy, censorship, and the dismissal of both Buenaventura and García from their university positions.

Today's Bogotá theatre scene took shape when a generation of politically motivated and artistically ambitious artists spilled out of the now defunct university theatres. In 1966 Santiago García and Carlos José Reyes merged their theatres to form Bogotá's Casa de la Cultura, where the output was prolific-33 shows in the first five years-and the aesthetic

was broad, ranging from classics and psychological theatre to happenings, political didacticism, and the plays of the international avant-garde. (Two years later, this theatre became El Teatro Candelaria, named after the historic district where its new theatre is still located.) In 1967 the students who had studied in Prague founded Teatro Popular de Bogotá (TPB), and Jorge Alí Triana quickly emerged as its stabilizing force. Here too the repertory was broad, including classics, moderns, and contemporary Latin American works. A year later, inspired by the famous home of experimentation on New York's East 4th Street, Teatro La Mama was born. It became an outlet for contemporary plays under the leadership of Eddy Armando, among the founders of Casa de la Cultura. Also in '68, Teatro El Local was established as a forum for Iberoamerican dramatists, from Alejandro Jodorowski and Augusto Boal to García Marquez, whose La cándida Eréndira appeared there in 1987. In the early 1970s, another group of university graduates founded Teatro Libre, which has embraced an international repertory of ancient and modern classics under the directorship of Ricardo Camacho. Soon these theatres toured and played festivals across the Americas and in Europe.

During the 1970s, most of these new theatres adopted the strategy of "collective creation" made popular in the US by the Living Theatre and the Performance Group and in Colombia by Enrique Buenaventura's theatre in Cali. Suddenly Colombian stages were filled with new Colombian plays based on Colombian history, politics, and folklore, very often "pieces that treated more directly the real problems of our working class," according to Santiago García. Companies conducted research, experimented with texts and rituals, and jointly decided on the production values of these plays. Probably the most famous of all the collective pieces was La Candelaria's Guadalupe, años sin cuenta (1975), built on oral histories and other accounts of "La Violencia," the years of agrarian and guerrilla struggles which convulsed Colombia during the 1950s. Guadalupe made the theatre's reputation by playing 1500 performances in 28 Colombian cities plus twelve countries of Europe and the Americas. TPB's collective creation I Took Panama, a satire about Colombia's loss of Panama in 1903, became a major hit of modern Colombian theatre.

From the beginning of the 1980s, Colombian theatre has shown signs of growth and crisis. Mainline Colombian theatre gradually returned from collective creation to traditional scripted drama. Commercial theatre, which had not existed in Bogotá, made an emphatic entry during the 1980s when Argentine actress Fanny Mikey began producing popular North American plays by Neil Simon, Edward Albee, and Marsha Norman as well as musicals and farces featuring TV stars. Signs of crisis in the early 1990s were particularly plentiful in Medellín and Cali, where theatres have withered under the intense violence among drug gangs and official or paramilitary armies. In Bogotá, theatre directors complain of dwindling attendance and virtually no governmental support. Several of Colombia's leading drama schools, including the Escuela Nacional de Arte Dramático, have been closed for years with little prospect of reopening. Actors and other theatre workers have no union, and many earn less than the national minimum wage. There are few young playwrights and few, if any, dramatists who support themselves with their writing. Ricardo Camacho, Artistic Director of Bogotá's Teatro

Libre, looks at his country's theatre and calls it "an absolute disaster." Many of his colleagues agree. And yet, Bogotá has much more theatre today than it had thirty years ago, and in the face of threats and deterioration, new and old groups do vibrant and exciting work.

Against remarkable odds, Colombian theatre lives.

## Magic Realism

The term "magic realism" was not coined to describe Latin American fiction. The label had earlier been stuck on certain young painters in Germany and Italy during the 1920s. It resurfaced in 1943 when New York's Museum of Modern Art mounted an exhibit entitled "American Realists and Magic Realists" including works by Edward Hopper and Charles Sheeler.

Over the next decades, "magic realism" began to be applied to the tendency among fiction writers-including Franz Kafka, John Fowles, and Günter Grass-to lace elements of the fantastic and surreal into their otherwise realistic prose. By the mid-1960s, this heady stylistic brew was becoming a trademark of Latin America's "new novelists" and of the "boom," the term used to describe the sudden international success of Julio Cortázar, José Donoso, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel García Márquez.

Many critics pointed to Jorge Luis Borges' *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935) as the first truly magic realist novel, but no writer was more touted as an exponent of "magic realism" than Gabriel García Márquez.

Latin Americans often explain the logic of this literary phenomenon by citing the illogic of their daily reality. According to Jorge Alí Triana, who directed two García Márquez productions for Repertorio Español, "Latin American reality is tremendously crazy. It has no Cartesian logic. . . . Our history is one of violence and even of dementia, of crazies who came in to split up a continent. Ours is a mestizo culture combining people from Africa, from the Arab countries -- the closest thing I've seen to it is New York, which is crazy, too."

Referring to García Márquez's favorite fictional setting, Triana adds, "New York is the biggest Macondo in the Américas. I've never seen so much 'magic realism' in my life!"

By the end of the 1980s, the tag "magic realism," though not its literature, was showing signs of wear. Latin writers chafed at being pegged as fantasists. European and American critics were limited, as García Márquez has pointed out, "because their rationalism prevents them seeing that reality isn't limited to the price of tomatoes and eggs. Everyday life in Latin America proves that reality is full of the most extraordinary things." Citing the case of an American explorer who found "a river with boiling water" in the Amazon jungle, he says, "There's not a single line in my novels which is not based on reality."

René Buch, Artistic Director of Repertorio Español, believes in magic realism: "If you go to Latin America," he says, "you believe that someone can levitate. That's why Hispanic art is called 'magical realism.' It's Don Quixote. It's in our genes. There has to be a magical element for the audience to relate to it. Hispanic theatre looks at an experience beyond society." Buch even sees an altruistic element in this art: "The United States has been so generous to us that we feel we have incurred a debt, and we want to pay it back by enlarging Americans' view of the world."

## Quotations from García Márquez

My grandmother ... used to tell me about the most atrocious things without turning a hair ... I realized that it was her impassive manner and her wealth of images that made her stories so credible.

For other writers, I think, a book is born out of an idea, a concept. I always start with an image. . . When I was a very small boy in Aracataca, my grandfather took me to the circus to see a dromedary. Another day, when I told him I hadn't seen the ice on show, he took me to the banana company's settlement, asked them to open up a crate of frozen mullet and made me put my hand in. The whole of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* began with that one image.

Graham Greene taught me how to decipher the tropics . . . with a few disparate elements connected by an inner coherence both subtle and real. Using this method you can reduce the whole enigma of the tropics to the fragrance of a rotten guava.

When I wrote *Leaf Storm* I was convinced that every good novel should be a poetic transposition of reality. But, if you remember, that book appeared during a period of very bloody political repression in Colombia and my militant friends gave me a terrible guilt complex. "Your novel doesn't condemn or expose anything," they said ... I moved a long way away from my initial literary ideas. Luckily I was able to get back to them. In the meantime, I ran the serious risk of getting my head kicked in.

I have a great many reservations about what came in Latin America to be called "committed literature" or the novel of social protest. This is mainly because I think its limited view of the world and life does not help achieve anything in political terms. Far from accelerating any process of raising consciousness, it actually slows it down.

The Colonel [Aurelio Buendía in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*] was already an old man, making his little gold fishes, then one afternoon I thought, "Now he's had it." I had to kill him off. When I finished the chapter, I went up to Mercedes . . . trembling. She knew what had happened the moment she saw my face ... I lay down on my bed and cried for two hours.

I was brought up by a grandmother and numerous aunts who all showered me with attention, and by maids who gave me many very happy childhood moments because

their prejudices, while not fewer than those of the women in the family, were at least different. The woman who taught me to read was very beautiful and graceful and I used to like going to school just so I could see her. [Women] find their way more easily, with fewer navigational aids . . . . They make me feel secure.

I think our decision to leave Prensa Latina was correct. If we'd stayed on, with our views, we'd have ended up being slung out with one of those labels on our forehead-counter-revolutionary, imperialist lackey and so on.

## Jorge Ali Triana on Adapting García Márquez

Jorge Ali Triana is a Colombian director and adaptor who came to Repertorio Español in 1993 to produce *La cándida Eréndira*, which he adapted from one of García Márquez's most famous short stories, "The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Erendira and Her Heartless Grandmother." Two years later, Triana returned for *Y se armó la mojiganga*. In the following extracts from interviews, he speaks of his history with the novelist and his experience of adapting *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*.

### The Process of Adaptation

"One great difficulty is that readers always have the possibility of creating an imaginary production, and the imagination can go far beyond the concrete images that one creates in theatrical or cinematic language. In every reader is a director. The first challenge, I think, is to create a vision that doesn't disillusion the spectator."

The novel presents "an entire town observing the manner in which Santiago Nasar is going to be killed. Everyone knows they are going to kill him - everyone but he, who is the last to find out. García Márquez even begins this novel, brilliantly, with the ending. We know already that they've killed the man.

"The adaptation process was quite complicated because of [García Marquez's] handling of time and space, but one day, in a kind of insomnia or perhaps in a dream, I dreamed of the work as if it were happening in a bull ring. And with this analogy, shall we say, I found the key to be able to adapt it."

### The Metaphor of the Bull Ring

"It was during a period of insomnia or in a dream that I found the bullfight analogy where all the spectators wait for the bull to be killed, know the bull is going to die, but stay until the very end-for until he falls, one cannot rest easy as a spectator. Then I discovered that what there was in the novel was a chorus, an almost Greek chorus, of all the people whose fate hung on this instant, on that analogy of the bull ring, with all its barriers [barrera is both the fence that keeps the bull inside the bull ring and the term for the seats in the front section near the barrera] and counter-barriers [contrabarrera is also a seat behind the barrera] and burladeros [enclosures in the barrera where the matador can escape from the bull], all watching the central action of Santiago Nasar's death.

"If one takes a look at the talk shows which are so fashionable in the United States and the whole world, they are a kind of little chorus of people around the bullring, meddling in people's private lives, rummaging through their intimate secrets and, what's more, doing it with that morbid fascination . . . that is the idea I wanted to mold in the production. Everybody's worried about something and when the tragedy happens, they all want to elude it, wash their hands of it."

### Working with García Márquez

We have a very deep friendship in the world of our work. I once directed a film based on a screenplay of his, *Time to Die* (Tiempo de morir). It won a Golden Toucan award in the Rio de Janeiro Festival in 1985 and was a great international success. I met García Márquez at a screening of a the film, which he likeed very much -- so much that in 10 years, when they were to shoot *Edipo alcalde* (*Oedipus the Mayor*), another project of his, he called me to direct it. It's a marvelous screenplay-a mayor in a violence-ridden Colombian town runs up against all those private wars we have in Colombia-the drug traffickers have an army, the anti-drug forces have another army to combat the drug lords, the guerrillas have five armies, and the Army itself has a paramilitary army to wage war at different levels. Like a labyrinth with no way out -- everyone has his own reason to buy machine guns and outfit an army. It's the reign of irrationality, absurd and tragic. That's why Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* with its incorruptible, inexorable destiny served very well as a parable for the present Colombian situation."

### García Márquez and This Adaptation of Crónica

"I worked independently and then requested the rights from his Barcelona agent. I understood that he wanted to see the adaptation before granting me the rights. I sent him the adaptation, and he made a couple of observations and approved the rights, so I suppose he approves of the text. Then I spoke with him last week [before the New York opening] -- I was very enthusiastic leaving rehearsal that day -- to tell him I was very pleased with the work. He asked me about some specifics and told me he would come to see the show."

### On Casting the Repertorio Español Production

"We saw over a hundred actors. And I found myself with the highest level of any auditions I've ever held in New York, and I felt that there had been great strides in that sense. I think this is the best production I've done for Repertorio."

## Cronica Study Questions

1. Do you believe that Santiago Nasar was responsible for deflowering Angela Vicario? What is the evidence in the play that Santiago is, in fact, guilty of the crime for which he dies?

2. What attitude does Crónica show toward the people of the town and their inability to stop the "muerte anunciada"? In García Márquez's short novel or in the Repertorio Español adaptation, is the story's point to satirize or criticize the townspeople? Or are they, like Santiago and the Vicarios, somehow swept up in a fate from which there is no escape?

3. Consider the scenery of the Repertorio Español production. What is its symbolism? Why is that particularly important to García Márquez's story? How does the director provide other visual images that fill out such symbolism?

4. Why is it particularly effective that most of the cast remains on stage throughout the play? What does the director emphasize by using this convention?

5. What is the role or nature of memory in this story and play? Do the characters agree in their memories? Do they reconsider evidence as they remember?

6. Compare the importance of virginity in this story and some other piece of contemporary or classic literature (e.g. Bodas de sangre or La casa de Bernarda Alba by Federico García Lorca).

7. How does the music of the production help in your appreciation of its characters, emotions, and themes?

8. Write a character study of one of the play's major characters: Santiago Nasar, Angela Vicario, her brothers Pedro and Pablo, or her lover Bayardo San Román. What do these characters say about themselves? What is said about them? What actions give you special insight into their characters?

## Reading and Viewing García Márquez

**Chronicle of a Death Foretold** Crónica de una muerte anunciada was published in 1981, one year before García Marquez won the Nobel Prize. Gregory Rebassa's English translation followed in 1983.

**"Eréndira"**
García Márquez's story is available in Spanish as the title work in a collection of stories, La increíble y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira y de su abuela desalmada (1972) and in Todos los cuentos de Gabriel García Márquez, 1947-1972 (1975). Its English translation by Gregory Rabassa appears in Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories (1978) and in Collected Stories (1984).

**García Marquez's Major Fiction**
La hojarasca (1955, trans. Leaf Storm and Other Stories, 1972)

El coronel no tiene quien le escriba
(1961, trans. No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Stories, 1968)

La mala hora (1962, trans. In Evil Hour, 1979)

Cien años de soledad (1967, trans. One Hundred Years of Solitude, 1970)

El otoño del patriarca (1975, trans. The Autumn of the Patriarch, 1976)

Crónica de una merte anunciada (1981, trans. Chronicle of a Death Foretold, 1982)

El amor en los tiempos del cólera (1985, trans. Love in the Time of Cholera, 1988)

El general en su laberinto (1989, trans. The General in His Labyrinth, 1990)

Doce cuentos peregrinos (1992, trans. Strange Pilgrims, 1993)

De amor y otros demonios (1994, trans. Of Love and Other Demons, 1995)

**Film and Theatre Scripts**
Viva Sandino (1982)
El secuestro (1984)
Diatriba de amor contra un hombre sentado (dramatic monologue, 1994)

**Reportage and Criticism**
La novela en América Latina: Diálogo
(1968, a dialogue on the boom with Mario Vargas Llosa)

Relato de un náufrago
(from the 1950s, published in book form 1970, trans. The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor, 1986)

Cuando era feliz e indocumentado (1973)

Chile, el golpe y los grinos(1974)

Crónicas y reportajes (1975)

Operación Carlota (1977)

Periodismo militante (1978)

De viaje por los países socialistas: 90 dias en la 'Cortina de hierro' (1978)

Los Sandinistas (1979)

Así es Caracas (1980)

Obra periodística (6 volumes, 1981-1984)

La democracia y la paz en América Latina (1986)

Primeras reportajes (1990)

Noticia de un secuestro (1996, trans. News of a Kidnapping, 1997)

**Interviews**

García Márquez habla de García Márquez (1979)

El olor de la guayaba (trans. The Fragrance of Guava, 1983)

**Websites**

http://www.themodernword.com/gabo/index.html This up-to-date, multi-level site, called "Macondo," contains biography, bibliography, criticism, the Nobel Prize speech, and links to various other sites.

**Films from Fiction by García Márquez**

María de mi corazón (Maria my Dear), Mexico 1979, in Spanish; 137 minutes.
Directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo.

Eréndira, Mexico 1983, in Spanish; 103 minutes.
Directed by Ruy Guerra,
starring Claudia Ohana as Eréndira, Irene Papas as Eréndira's grandmother, and Oliver Wehe as Ulysses.

Cronaca di una morte annunciata (Chronicle of a Death Foretold).
Italy/France 1987, in Italian; 109 minutes.
Directed by Francesco Rosi,
starring Rupert Everett as Bayardo San Roman, Ornella Muti as Angela Vicario, Gian Maria Volonté as Dr. Cristo Bedoya, and Irene Papas as Angela's mother.
Shot in the Colombian town of Mompox.

Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes (A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings), Cuba 1988, in Spanish.
Directed by Fernando Birri.

Mujer que llegaba a las seis (The Woman Who Arrived at Six),
Mexico 1991, in Spanish; 10 minutes.
Directed by Arturo Flores and Rogelio Jaramillo.

Gabriel García Márquez Collection,

six videotapes with eight hours of made-for-television films, in Spanish.
Letters From The Park, Miracle In Rome, The Summer Of Miss Forbes, A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings, I'm The One You're Looking For and The Fable Of The Beautiful Pigeon Fancier.
Available over the Internet from Wellspring Media and from Applause Learning Resources (1-800-277-5287) or Critic's Choice Video.

El coronel no tiene quien le escribe (Nobody Writes to the Colonel), France/Mexico/Spain 1999, in Spanish.
Directed by Arturo Ripstein,
starring Fernando Lujan and Salma Hayek.

The Autumn of the Patriarch, USA 2000.
Written and directed by Sean Penn,
starring Marlon Brando.

**Films with Screenplays by García Márquez**
see Gabriel García Márquez Collection, above.

Juego peligroso (Dangerous Game), Mexico 1966, in Spanish; 94 minutes.
Directed by Luis Alcoriza & Arturo Ripstein.

Tiempo de morir (A Time to Die), Mexico 1985, in Spanish.
Directed by Jorge Alí Triana.

Un domingo feliz (A Happy Sunday), Spain 1988, in Spanish; 90 minutes.
Directed by Olegario Barrera.
Written by Eliseo Alberto, Olegario Barrera, and Gabriel García Márquez.

The Two Way Mirror, Mexico 1990, in Spanish; 27 minutes, television.
Directed by Carlos García Agraz.
Written by Gabriel García Márquez and Susana Cato.

Contigo en la distancia (Far Apart), Mexico 1991, in Spanish; 27 minutes, television. Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.
Written by Gabriel García Márquez and Eliseo Alberto.

Saturday Night Thief, Mexico 1991 in Spanish; 25 minutes, television.
Directed by José Luis García Agraz.
Written by Gabriel García Márquez and Consuelo Garrido.

Edipo alcalde (Oedipus Mayor), Colombia 1996, in Spanish; 100 minutes.
Directed by Jorge Alí Triana
Written by Gabriel García Márquez and Stella Malagón.