One Hundred Years of Solitude

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One Hundred Years of Solitude

First edition

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One Hundred Years of Solitude (Spanish: *Cien años de soledad*, 1967), by Gabriel García Márquez, is a novel that tells the multi-generational story of the Buendía family, whose patriarch, José Arcadio Buendía, founds the town of Macondo, the metaphoric Colombia. The non-linear story is narrated via different time frames, a technique derived from the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (as in *The Garden of Forking Paths*).

The widely acclaimed story, considered by many to be the author's masterpiece, was first published in Spanish in 1967, and subsequently has been translated into thirty-seven languages and has sold more than 20 million copies.[1][2] The magical realist style and thematic substance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* established it as an important, representative novel of the literary Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s,[3] that was stylistically influenced by Modernism (European and North American), and the Cuban *Vanguardia* (Vanguard) literary movement.

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[edit] Biography and publication

The Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez was one of the four Latin American novelists first included in the literary Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s; the other three writers were the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa, the Argentine Julio Cortázar, and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) earned García Márquez international fame as a novelist of the Magical Realism movement within the literatures of Latin America.[4]

As a metaphoric, critical interpretation of Colombian history, from foundation to contemporary nation, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* presents different national myths throughout the story of the Buendía Family,[5] whose spirit of adventure places them amidst the important actions of Colombian historical events — such as the nineteenth-century arguments for and against the Liberal political reformation of a colonial way of life; the arrival of the railway to a mountainous country; the Thousand Days War (Guerra de los Mil Días, 1899–1902); the corporate hegemony of the United Fruit Company ("American Fruit Company" in the story); the cinema; the automobile; and the military massacre of striking workers as government–labour relations policy.[6]

[edit] Plot

One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) is the story of seven generations of the Buendía Family in the town of Macondo. The founding patriarch of Macondo, José Arcadio Buendía, and Úrsula, his wife (and first cousin), leave Riohacha, Colombia, to find a better life and a new home. One night of their emigration journey, whilst camping on a riverbank, José Arcadio Buendía dreams of "Macondo", a city of mirrors that reflected the world in and about it. Upon awakening, he decides to found Macondo at the river side; after days of wandering the jungle, José Arcadio Buendía's founding of Macondo is utopic.[1]

Founding patriarch José Arcadio Buendía believes Macondo to be surrounded by water, and from that island, he invents the world according to *his* perceptions.[1] Soon after its foundation, Macondo becomes a town frequented by unusual and extraordinary events that involve the generations of the Buendía family, who are unable or unwilling to escape their periodic (mostly) self-inflicted misfortunes. Ultimately, a hurricane destroys Macondo, the city of mirrors; just the cyclical turmoil inherent to Macondo. At the end of the story, a Buendía man deciphers an encrypted cipher that generations of Buendía family men had failed to decipher. The secret message informed the recipient of every fortune and misfortune lived by the Buendía Family generations.[6]

[edit] Historical context

The critical interpretation of Colombian history that is the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* draws from the nationally agreed-upon history to establish the world of Macondo, where a man's will to power allows him to invent the world according to his perceptions.

El Conquistador: Vasco Núñez de Balboa

Before the Spanish colonisation of the Americas by "right of conquest", the northern region of South America that is contemporary Colombia had no culture akin to that of the (Peruvian) Incas, the (Central American) Mayas, or the (Mexican) Aztecs.[7] That region was populated by the Tairona and Chibcha Indian tribes, who were organised as clans, from which derived the local monarchy who governed pre–Hispanic "Colombia".[7] In 1509, Vasco Núñez de Balboa established the first settlement and is now named the first city of Colombia, as an advanced guard of the Spanish invasion and conquest.[7] The founding of Macondo by the patriarchal Buendía Family is metaphor of the colonisation of the future "Colombia".

Simón Bolívar, Liberator of the Américas

Pablo Morillo, el Pacificador

After Gonzálo Jiménez de Quesada's conquest of the Chibchas in 1538, Bogotá became the center of colonial Spanish rule.[8] In 1810, upon the collapse of the Spanish Empire in Colombia, provincial juntas soon arose to challenge the political authority of the national government in Bogotá; yet six years later, in 1816, the royalist armies of Count Pablo Morillo restored Spanish rule to Colombia. Three years later, in 1819, when Simón Bolívar began a second war of independence from the Spanish Empire, he proclaimed the supranational state of *la Gran Colombia* (Greater Colombia, 1819–31), its capital city was Bogotá, and

comprised northern South America and Southern Central America (contemporary Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama), the previous Viceroyalty of New Granada.[9]

Gran Colombia's Independence in 1819 revealed many obstacles to nationhood; the geography was a formidable obstacle to modernization, such as paved roads, thus, the high cost of transport facilitated the establishment of economically and politically discrete autonomous communities like Macondo.[10] Colombian society had wrestled with Modernity and modernism since the eighteenth century, and the social and philosophic dynamism of the modernizing capitalist revolution presented the Colombian ruling classes with a choice: either *progress* into the modern industrial world or *perish* in backwater barbarism. To incorporate the country to the world, Colombians looked to the European and U.S. models of government, politics, and economy.[11]

As nineteenth century Colombians explored, described, and colonized their interior, they mapped racial hierarchy onto an emerging national geography composed of distinct localities and regions. This created a racialized discourse of regional differentiation that assigned greater morality and progress to certain regions that they marked as "white". Meanwhile, those places defined as "black" and "Indian" were associated with disorder, backwardness, and danger; technology and modernization became associated with race.[12]

Alfonso López Pumarejo, 21st President of Colombia

The nation of Colombia began violently — from Bolivarian wars for independence from empire to the contemporary Marxist–Leninist guerrillas of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The initial, Bolivarian, violence was for liberation (1810–21) from the Spanish Empire. After independence, there arose well-defined socio-economic regions, divided north-south, by parallel spurs of the Andes mountains, which contributed to continued civil and political instability, even after having expelled the Spanish Crown.[13] Moreover, Colombia's geographically and culturally dispersed populations and natural resources much hindered the government's modernization of the country and the nation.[13]

Mariano Ospina Pérez, 23rd President of Colombia

In 1934, the reformist President Dr. Alfonso López Pumarejo, unanimously voted to office by the Colombian Liberal Party, installed *La Revolución en Marcha* (The Revolution on the March), characterized by labour law and social services reforms benefitting the working class and the Indian peasants, much to the anger of the reactionary Conservatives. Twelve years later, in August 1946, Mariano Ospina Pérez assumed office as the first Conservative party President of Colombia — the beginning of the political dysfunction that degenerated to undemocratic authoritarian rule.[14] Two years later, on 9 April 1948, the assassination of the popular and influential Liberal candidate, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán began the decade period (1948–58) of Colombia's history known as *la Violencia* (the Violence), between the right-wing and the left-wing of the national political spectrum.

By the mid-1960s, the country had suffered some two hundred thousand assassinations; from 1946 to 1966, *la Violencia* had occurred in five stages: (i) resumption of political violence, before and after the presidential election of 1946; (ii) popular urban insurrection responding to the Gaitán assassination; (iii) guerrilla warfare — first against the Conservative government of Ospina Pérez; (iv) incomplete pacification and negotiation from army General Rojas Pinilla, who deposed Laureano Gómez; and (v) disjointed fighting under the Liberal–Conservative coalition of the "National Front," from 1958 to 1975.[15]

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) the political violence characteristic of Colombian national history is paralleled in the life of Colonel Aureliano Buendía, wars against the treasonous Conservatives facilitating the politico-economic power of foreign imperialists in the national affairs of Colombia. The banana plantation owners (i.e. the United Fruit Company) possess a private police force with which the business corporation attacks Colombian citizens at will.[16]

Technically, using of particular historical event and character narratively renders *One Hundred Years of Solitude* an exemplar work of magical realism, wherein the novel compresses centuries of cause and effect whilst telling an interesting story.[17] Moreover, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* illustrates that contemporary Latin America has resulted from the absence of purposeful political organisation and will required for progress. The tragedy of Latin America is the lack of a definitive national identity, without which there is only self-destruction, not preservation. This might be partly attributed to five centuries of Spanish colonialism; nevertheless, the continual violence, repression, and exploitation, rob the Colombian of a definite identity. The historical reality of Latin American countries occurs as the recurring fantastical world of Macondo. The desire for change and progress exists in

Macondo as in the countries of Latin America, however, the story's temporal cycles symbolize the nationalist tendency for repeating history.

[edit] Symbolism and metaphors

A dominant theme in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the inevitable and inescapable repetition of history in Macondo. The protagonists are controlled by their pasts and the complexity of time. Throughout the novel the characters are visited by ghosts. "The ghosts are symbols of the past and the haunting nature it has over Macondo. The ghosts and the displaced repetition that they evoke are, in fact, firmly grounded in the particular development of Latin American history".[18] "Ideological transfiguration ensured that Macondo and the Buendías always were ghosts to some extent, alienated and estranged from their own history, not only victims of the harsh reality of dependence and underdevelopment but also of the ideological illusions that haunt and reinforce such social conditions.[18]

The fate of Macondo is both doomed and predetermined from its very existence. "Fatalism is a metaphor for the particular part that ideology has played in maintaining historical dependence, by locking the interpretation of Latin American history into certain patterns that deny alternative possibilities.The narrative seemingly confirms fatalism in order to illustrate the feeling of entrapment that ideology can performatively create.[18]

García Márquez uses colours as symbols. Yellow and gold are the most frequently used colors and they are symbols of imperialism and the Spanish Siglo de Oro. Gold signifies a search for economic wealth, whereas yellow represents death, change, and destruction.[19]

The glass city is an image that comes to José Arcadio Buendía in a dream. It is the reason for the location of the founding of Macondo, but it is also a symbol of the ill fate of Macondo. Higgins writes that, "By the final page, however, the city of mirrors has become a city of mirages. Macondo thus represents the dream of a brave new world that America seemed to promise and that was cruelly proved illusory by the subsequent course of history"[1] Images such as the glass city and the ice factory represent how Latin America already has its history outlined and is, therefore, fated for destruction.[18]

Overall, there is an underlying pattern of Latin American history in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It could be said that the novel is one of a number of texts that "Latin American culture has created to understand itself".[20] In this sense, the novel can be conceived as a linear archive. This archive narrates the story of a Latin America discovered by European explorers, which had its historical entity developed by the printing press. The Archive is a symbol of the literature that is the foundation of Latin American history and also a decoding instrument. Melquíades, the keeper of the historical archive in the novel, represents both the whimsical and the literary.[20] Finally, "the world of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a place where beliefs and metaphors become forms of fact, and where more ordinary facts become uncertain"[6]

[edit] Characters

[edit] First generation

José Arcadio Buendía

Jose Arcadio Buendía is the patriarch of the Buendía family and the founder of Macondo.[21] Buendía leaves Riohacha, Colombia with his wife, Úrsula Iguarán, after murdering Prudencio Aguilar in a duel.[21] One night camping at the side of a river, Buendía dreams of a city of mirrors named Macondo and decides to establish the town in this location. Jose Arcadio is an introspective, inquisitive man of massive strength and energy who spends more time on his scientific pursuits than with his family. He flirts with alchemy and astronomy and becomes increasingly withdrawn from his family and community.

Úrsula Iguarán

Úrsula Iguarán is one of the two matriarchs of the Buendía family and is wife to José Arcadio Buendía.[21] She lives to be over 130 years old and she oversees the Buendía household through six of the seven generations documented in the novel. She exhibits a very strong character and often succeeds where the men of her family fail, for example finding a route to the outside world from Macondo.

[edit] Second generation

José Arcadio

José Arcadio Buendía's firstborn son, José Arcadio seems to have inherited his father's headstrong, impulsive mannerisms.[21] He eventually leaves the family to chase a Gypsy girl and unexpectedly returns many years later as an enormous man covered in tattoos, claiming that he's sailed the seas of the world. He marries his adopted sister Rebeca, causing his banishment from the mansion, and he dies from a mysterious gunshot wound, days after saving his brother from execution.

Colonel Aureliano Buendía

José Arcadio Buendía's second son and the first person to be born in Macondo.[21] He was thought to have premonitions because everything he said came true.[21] He represents not only a warrior figure but also an artist due to his ability to write poetry and create finely crafted golden fish. During the wars he fathered 17 sons by unknown women.[21]

Remedios Moscote

Remedios was the youngest daughter of the town's Conservative administrator, Don Apolinar Moscote.[21] Her most striking physical features are her beautiful skin and her emerald-green eyes. The future Colonel Aureliano falls in love with her, despite her extreme youth. She dies shortly after the marriage from a blood poisoning illness during her pregnancy.

Amaranta

The third child of José Arcadio Buendía, Amaranta grows up as a companion of her adopted sister Rebeca.[21] However, her feelings toward Rebeca turn sour over Pietro Crespi, whom both sisters intensely desire in their teenage years. Amaranta dies a lonely and virginal spinster, but comfortable in her existence after having finally accepted what she had become.[21]

Rebeca

Rebeca is the orphaned daughter of Ursula Iguaran's second cousins.[21] At first she is extremely timid, refuses to speak, and has the habits of eating earth and whitewash from the walls of the house, a condition known as pica. She arrives carrying a canvas bag containing her parents' bones and seems not to understand or speak Spanish. However, she responds to questions asked by Visitacion and Cataure in the Guajiro or Wayuu language. She falls in love with and marries her adoptive brother José Arcadio after his return from traveling the world. After his mysterious and untimely death, she lives in seclusion for the rest of her life.

[edit] Third generation

Arcadio

Arcadio is José Arcadio's illegitimate son by Pilar Ternera.[21] He is a schoolteacher who assumes leadership of Macondo after Colonel Aureliano Buendía leaves.[21] He becomes a tyrannical dictator and uses his schoolchildren as his personal army and Macondo soon becomes subject to his whims. When the Liberal forces in Macondo fall, Arcadio is shot by a Conservative firing squad.[21]

Aureliano José

Aureliano José is the illegitimate son of Colonel Aureliano Buendía and Pilar Ternera.[21] He joins his father in several wars before deserting to return to Macondo. He deserted because he is obsessed with his aunt, Amaranta, who raised him since his birth. He is eventually shot to death by a Conservative captain midway through the wars.[21]

Santa Sofía de la Piedad

Santa Sofía is a beautiful virgin girl and the daughter of a shopkeeper.[21] She is hired by Pilar Ternera to have sex with her son Arcadio, her eventual husband.[21] She is taken in along with her children by the Buendías after Arcadio's execution. After Úrsula's death she leaves unexpectedly, not knowing her destination.

17 Aurelianos

During his 32 civil war campaigns, Colonel Aureliano Buendía has 17 sons by 17 different women, each named after their father.[21] Four of these Aurelianos (A. Triste, A. Serrador, A. Arcaya and A. Centeno) stay in Macondo and become a permanent part of the family. Eventually, as revenge against the Colonel, all are assassinated by the government, which identified them by the mysteriously permanent Ash Wednesday cross on their foreheads. The only survivor of the massacre is A. Amador, who escapes into the jungle only to be assassinated at the doorstep of his father's house many years later.

[edit] Fourth generation

Remedios the Beauty

Remedios the Beauty is Arcadio and Santa Sofía's first child.[21] It is said she is the most beautiful woman ever seen in Macondo, and unintentionally causes the deaths of several men who love or lust over her.[21] She appears to most of the town as naively innocent, and some come to think that she is mentally retarded. However, Colonel Aureliano Buendía believes

she has inherited great lucidity: "It is as if she's come back from twenty years of war", he said. She rejects clothing and beauty. Too beautiful and, arguably, too wise for the world, Remedios ascends into the sky one afternoon in the 4pm sun, while folding Fernanda's white sheet.

José Arcadio Segundo

José Arcadio Segundo is the twin brother of Aureliano Segundo, the children of Arcadio and Santa Sofía.[21] Úrsula believes that the two were switched in their childhood, as José Arcadio begins to show the characteristics of the family's Aurelianos, growing up to be pensive and quiet. He plays a major role in the banana worker strike, and is the only survivor when the company massacres the striking workers.[21] Afterward, he spends the rest of his days studying the parchments of Melquiades, and tutoring the young Aureliano. He dies at the exact instant that his twin does.[21]

Aureliano Segundo

Of the two brothers, Aureliano Segundo is the more boisterous and impulsive, much like the José Arcadios of the family.[21] He takes his first girlfriend Petra Cotes as his mistress during his marriage to the beautiful and bitter Fernanda del Carpio.[21] When living with Petra, his livestock propagate wildly, and he indulges in unrestrained revelry. After the long rains, his fortune dries up, and the Buendías are left almost penniless. He turns to search for a buried treasure, which nearly drives him to insanity. He dies of throat cancer at the same moment as his twin. During the confusion at the funeral, the bodies are switched, and each is buried in the other's grave (highlighting Ursula's earlier comment that they had been switched at birth). Aureliano Segundo represents Colombia's economy: gaining and losing weight according to the situation at the time.

Fernanda del Carpio

Fernanda del Carpio is the only major character (except for Rebeca and the First generation) not from Macondo.[21] She comes from a ruined, aristocratic family that kept her isolated from the world.[21] She was chosen as the most beautiful of 5000 girls. Fernanda is brought to Macondo to compete with Remedios for the title of Queen of the carnival after her father promises her she will be the Queen of Madagascar. After the fiasco, she marries Aureliano Segundo and soon takes the leadership of the family away from the now-frail Úrsula. She manages the Buendía affairs with an iron fist. She has three children by Aureliano Segundo: José Arcadio, Renata Remedios, a.k.a. Meme, and Amaranta Úrsula. She remains in the house after he dies, taking care of the household until her death.

Fernanda is never accepted by anyone in the Buendía household who regard her as an outsider, although none of the Buendías rebel against her inflexible conservatism. Her mental and emotional instability is revealed through her paranoia, her correspondence with the "invisible doctors", and her irrational behavior towards Aureliano, whom she tries to isolate from the whole world.

[edit] Fifth generation

Renata Remedios (a.k.a. Meme)

Renata Remedios, or Meme is the second child and first daughter of Fernanda and Aureliano Segundo.[21] While she doesn't inherit Fernanda's beauty, she does have Aureliano Segundo's love of life and natural charisma. After her mother declares that she is to do nothing but play the clavichord, she is sent to school where she receives her performance degree as well as academic recognition. While she pursues the clavichord with 'an inflexible discipline', to placate Fernanda, she also enjoys partying and exhibits the same tendency towards excess as her father.

Meme meets and falls in love with Mauricio Babilonia, but when Fernanda discovers their affair, she arranges for Mauricio to be shot, claiming that he was a chicken thief. She then takes Meme to a convent. Meme remains mute for the rest of her life, partially because of the trauma, but also as a sign of rebellion. Several months later she gives birth to a son, Aureliano, at the convent. He is sent to live with the Buendías. Aureliano arrives in a basket and Fernanda is tempted to kill the child in order to avoid shame, but instead claims he is a orphan in order to cover up her daughter's promiscuity and is forced to "tolerate him against her will for the rest of her life because at the moment of truth she lacked the courage to go through with her inner determination to drown him...". Meme dies of old age in a hospital in Kraków.

José Arcadio (II)

José Arcadio II, named after his ancestors in the Buendía tradition, follows the trend of previous Arcadios.[21] He is raised by Úrsula, who intends for him to become Pope. He returns from Rome without having become a priest. Eventually, he discovers buried treasure, which he wastes on lavish parties and escapades with adolescent boys. Later, he begins a tentative friendship with Aureliano Babilonia, his nephew. José Arcadio plans to set Aureliano up in a business and return to Rome, but is murdered in his bath by four of the adolescent boys who ransack his house and steal his gold.

Amaranta Úrsula

Amaranta Úrsula is the third child of Fernanda and Aureliano.[21] She displays the same characteristics as her namesake who dies when she is only a child.[21] She never knows that the child sent to the Buendía home is her nephew, the illegitimate son of Meme. He becomes her best friend in childhood. She returns home from Europe with an elder husband, Gastón, who leaves her when she informs him of her passionate affair with her nephew, Aureliano. She dies of hemorragia, after she has given birth to the last of the Buendía line.[21]

[edit] Sixth generation

Aureliano Babilonia (Aureliano II)

Aureliano Babilonia, or Aureliano II, is the illegitimate child of Meme. He is hidden from everyone by his grandmother, Fernanda. He is strikingly similar to his namesake, the Colonel, and has the same character patterns as well. He is taciturn, silent, and emotionally charged. He barely knows Úrsula, who dies during his childhood. He is a friend of José Arcadio Segundo, who explains to him the true story of the banana worker massacre.

While other members of the family leave and return, Aureliano stays in the Buendía home. He only ventures into the empty town after the death of Fernanda. He works to decipher the

parchments of Melquíades but stops to have an affair with his childhood partner and the love of his life, Amaranta Úrsula, not knowing that she is his aunt. When both she and her child die, he is able to decipher the parchments. "...Melquíades' final keys were revealed to him and he saw the epigraph of the parchments perfectly placed in the order of man's time and space: 'The first in line is tied to a tree and the last is being eaten by ants'." It is assumed he dies in the great wind that destroys Macondo the moment he finishes reading Mequiades' parchments.

[edit] Seventh generation

Aureliano (III)

Aureliano III is the child of Aureliano and his aunt, Amaranta Úrsula.[21] He is born with a pig's tail, as the eldest and long dead Úrsula had always feared would happen (the parents of the child had never heard of the omen).[21] His mother dies after giving birth to him, and, due to his grief-stricken father's negligence, he is devoured by ants.[21]

[edit] Others

Melquíades

Melquíades is one of a band of gypsies who visit Macondo every year in March, displaying amazing items from around the world.[21] Melquíades sells José Arcadio Buendía several new inventions including a pair of magnets and an alchemist's lab. Later, the gypsies report that Melquíades died in Singapore, but he, nonetheless, returns to live with the Buendía family.[21] stating he could not bear the solitude of death. He stays with the Buendías and begins to write the mysterious parchments, which are eventually translated by Aureliano Babilonia. Melquíades then dies a second time from drowning in the river near Macondo and, following a grand ceremony organized by the Buendías, is the first individual buried in Macondo.

Pilar Ternera

Pilar is a local woman who sleeps with the brothers Aureliano and José Arcadio.[21] She becomes mother of their sons, Aureliano José and Arcadio.[21] Pilar reads the future with cards, and every so often makes an accurate, though vague, prediction.[21] She has close ties with the Buendias throughout the whole novel, helping them with her card predictions. She dies some time after she turns 145 years old (she had eventually stopped counting),[21] surviving until the very last days of Macondo.

The word "Ternera" in Spanish signifies veal or calf, which is fitting considering the way she is treated by Aureliano, Jose Arcadio, and Arcadio. Also, it could be a play on the word "Ternura", which in Spanish means "Tenderness". Pilar is always presented as a very loving figure, and the author often uses names in a similar fashion.

Pietro Crespi

Pietro is a very handsome and polite Italian musician who runs a music school.[21] He installs the pianola in the Buendía house. He becomes engaged to Rebeca, but Amaranta, who also loves him, manages to delay the wedding for years. When José Arcadio and Rebeca agree to

be married, Pietro begins to woo Amaranta, who is so embittered that she cruelly rejects him. Despondent over the loss of both sisters, he kills himself.

Petra Cotes

Petra is a dark-skinned woman with gold-brown eyes similar to those of a panther. She is Aureliano Segundo's mistress and the love of his life. She arrives in Macondo as a teenager with her first husband. After her husband dies, she begins a relationship with José Arcadio Segundo. When she meets Aureliano Segundo, believing him to be his brother, she begins a relationship with him as well, not knowing they are two different men. After José Arcadio decides to leave her, Aureliano Segundo gets her forgiveness and remains by her side. He continues to see her, even after his marriage. He eventually lives with her, which greatly embitters his wife, Fernanda del Carpio. When Aureliano and Petra make love, their animals reproduce at an amazing rate, but their livestock is wiped out during the four years of rain. Petra makes money by keeping the lottery alive and provides food baskets for Fernanda and her family after the death of Aureliano Segundo.

Mr. Herbert and **Mr. Brown**

Mr. Herbert is a gringo who showed up at the Buendía house for lunch one day. After tasting the local bananas for the first time, he arranges for a banana company to set up a plantation in Macondo. The plantation is run by the dictatorial Mr. Brown. When José Arcadio Segundo helps arrange a workers' strike on the plantation, the company traps the more than three thousand strikers and machine guns them down in the town square. The banana company and the government completely cover up the event. José Arcadio is the only one who remembers the slaughter. The company arranges for the army to kill off any resistance, then leaves Macondo for good. That event is likely based on the Banana massacre, that took place in Santa Marta, Colombia in 1928.

Mauricio Babilonia

Mauricio is a brutally honest, generous and handsome mechanic for the banana company.[21] He is said to be a descendant of the gypsies who visit Macondo in the early days. He has the unusual characteristic of being constantly swarmed by yellow butterflies, which follow even his lover for a time. Mauricio begins a romantic affair with Meme until Fernanda discovers them and tries to end it. When Mauricio continues to sneak into the house to see her, Fernanda has him shot, claiming he is a chicken thief. Paralyzed and bedridden, he spends the rest of his long life in solitude.

Gastón

Gastón is Amaranta Úrsula's wealthy, Belgian husband. She marries him in Europe and returns to Macondo leading him on a silk leash. Gastón is about fifteen years older than his wife. He is an aviator and an adventurer. When he moves with Amaranta Ursula to Macondo he thinks it is only a matter of time before she realizes that her European ways out of place, causing her to want to move back to Europe. However, when he realizes his wife intends to stay in Macondo, he arranges for his airplane to be shipped over so he can start an airmail service. The plane is shipped to Africa by mistake. When he travels there to claim it, Amaranta writes him of her love for Aureliano Babilonia Buendía. Gastón takes the news in stride, only asking that they ship him his velocipede.

Gabriel García Márquez

Gabriel García Márquez is only a minor character in the novel but he has the distinction of bearing the same name as the author. He is the great-great-grandson of Colonel Gerineldo Márquez. He and Aureliano Babilonia are close friends because they know the history of the town, which no one else believes. He leaves for Paris after winning a contest and decides to stay there, selling old newspapers and empty bottles. He is one of the few who is able to leave Macondo before the town is wiped out entirely.

[edit] Major themes

> The rise and fall birth and death of the mythical but intensely real Macondo, and the glories and disasters of the wonderful Buendía family; make up an intensely brilliant chronicle of humankinds comedies and tragedies. All the many varieties of life are captured here: inventively, amusingly, magnetically, sadly, humorously, luminously, truthfully.[2]

[edit] The subjectivity of reality and magical realism

Critics often cite certain works by García Márquez, such as *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as exemplary of magical realism, a style of writing in which the supernatural is presented as mundane, and the mundane as supernatural or extraordinary. The term was coined by German art critic Franz Roh in 1925.[22]

The novel presents a fictional story in a fictional setting. The extraordinary events and characters are fabricated. However the message that García Márquez intends to deliver explains a true history. García Márquez uses his fantastic story as an expression of reality. "In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* myth and history overlap. The myth acts as a vehicle to transmit history to the reader. García Márquez's novel can furthermore be referred to as anthropology, where truth is found in language and myth. What is real and what is fiction are indistinguishable. There are three main mythical elements of the novel: classical stories alluding to foundations and origins, characters resembling mythical heroes, and supernatural elements"[20] Magical realism is inherent in the novel-achieved by the constant intertwining of the ordinary with the extraordinary. This magical realism strikes at one's traditional sense of naturalistic fiction. There is something clearly magical about the world of Macondo. It is a state of mind as much as, or more than, a geographical place. For example, one learns very little about its actual physical layout. Furthermore, once in it, the reader must be prepared to meet whatever the imagination of the author presents to him or her.[23]

García Márquez achieves a perfect blend of the real with the magical through the masterful use of tone and narration. By maintaining the same tone throughout the novel, García Márquez makes the extraordinary blend with the ordinary. His condensation of and lackadaisical manner in describing events causes the extraordinary to seem less remarkable than it actually is, thereby perfectly blending the real with the magical.[24] Reinforcing this effect is the unastonished tone in which the book is written. This tone restricts the ability of the reader to question the events of the novel, however, it also causes the reader to call into

question the limits of reality.[6] Furthermore, maintaining the same narrator throughout the novel familiarizes the reader with his voice and causes he or she to become accustomed to the extraordinary events in the novel.[25]

[edit] The fluidity of time

One Hundred Years of Solitude contains several ideas concerning time. Although the story can be read as a linear progression of events, both when considering individual lives and Macondo's history, García Márquez allows room for several other interpretations of time:

- He reiterates the metaphor of history as a circular phenomenon through the repetition of names and characteristics belonging to the Buendía family.[26] Over six generations, all the José Arcadios possess inquisitive and rational dispositions as well as enormous physical strength. The Aurelianos, meanwhile, lean towards insularity and quietude. This repetition of traits reproduces the history of the individual characters and, ultimately, a history of the town as a succession of the same mistakes ad infinitum due to some endogenous hubris in our nature.

- The novel explores the issue of timelessness or eternity even within the framework of mortal existence. A major trope with which it accomplishes this task is the alchemist's laboratory in the Buendía family home. The laboratory was first designed by Melquíades near the start of the story and remains essentially unchanged throughout its course. It is a place where the male Buendía characters can indulge their will to solitude, whether through attempts to deconstruct the world with reason as in the case of José Arcadio Buendía, or by the endless creation and destruction of golden fish as in the case of his son Colonel Aureliano Buendía. Furthermore, a sense of inevitability prevails throughout the text. This is a feeling that regardless of what way one looks at time, its encompassing nature is the one truthful admission.

- On the other hand, it is important to keep in mind that *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, while basically chronological and "linear" enough in its broad outlines, also shows abundant zigzags in time, both flashbacks of matters past and long leaps towards future events. One example of this is the youthful amour between Meme and Mauricio Babilonia, which is already in full swing before we are informed about the origins of the affair.[1]

[edit] Incest

A recurring theme in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the Buendía family's propensity toward incest. The patriarch of the family, Jose Arcadio Buendía, is the first of numerous Buendías to intermarry when he marries his first cousin, Úrsula. It is worth noting that this initial, incestuous act can be viewed as an "original sin", however it will not be the last one.[1] Furthermore, the fact that "throughout the novel the family is haunted by the fear of punishment in the form of the birth of a monstrous child with a pig's tail"[1] can be attributed to this initial, and the recurring acts of incest among the Buendías.[1]

[edit] Solitude

Perhaps the most dominant theme in the book is that of solitude. Macondo was founded in the remote jungles of the Colombian rainforest. The solitude of the town is representative of the

colonial period in Latin American history, where outposts and colonies were, for all intents and purposes, not interconnected.[1] Isolated from the rest of the world, the Buendías grow to be increasingly solitary and selfish. With every member of the family living only for him or her self, the Buendías become representative of the aristocratic, land-owning elite who came to dominate Latin America in keeping with the sense of Latin American history symbolized in the novel.[1] This egocentricity is embodied, especially, in the characters of Aureliano, who lives in a private world of his own, and Remedios, who destroys the lives of four men enamored by her beauty.[1] Throughout the novel it seems as if no character can find true love or escape the destructiveness of their own egocentricity.[1]

The selfishness of the Buendía family is eventually broken by the once superficial Aureliano Segundo and Petra Cotes, who discover a sense of mutual solidarity and the joy of helping others in need during Macondo's economic crisis.[1] This pair even finds love, and their pattern is repeated by Aureliano Babilonia and Amaranta Úrsula.[1] Eventually, Aureliano and Amaranta decide to have a child, and the latter is convinced that it will represent a fresh start for the once-conceited Buendía family.[1] However, the child turns out to be the perpetually feared monster with the pig's tail.

Nonetheless, the appearance of love represents a shift in Macondo, albeit one that leads to its destruction. "The emergence of love in the novel to displace the traditional egoism of the Buendías reflects the emergence of socialist values as a political force in Latin America, a force that will sweep away the Buendías and the order they represent."[1] The ending to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* could be a wishful prediction by García Márquez, a well-known socialist, regarding the future of Latin America.[1]

[edit] Interpretation

> *One Hundred Years of Solitude* works on so many levels, from childlike fantasy to exploration of the grief or happiness that solitude can bring, that it can be re-read without any reduction in enjoyment - in fact, each reading brings a wealth of forgotten or previously unnoticed details to the reader, wrapped in a lightness of style that gives this novel a charisma that assures its appeal.[27]

Throughout the novel, García Márquez is said to have a gift for blending the everyday with the miraculous, the historical with the fabulous, and psychological realism with surreal flights of fancy. It is a revolutionary novel that provides a looking glass into the thoughts and beliefs of its author, who chose to give a literary voice to Latin America: "A Latin America which neither wants, nor has any reason, to be a pawn without a will of its own; nor is it merely wishful thinking that its quest for independence and originality should become a Western aspiration."[28]

Although we are faced with a very convoluted narrative, García Márquez is able to define clear themes while maintaining individual character identities, and using different narrative techniques such as third-person narrators, specific point of view narrators, and streams of consciousness. Cinematographic techniques are also employed in the novel, with the idea of the montage and the close-up, which effectively combine the comic and grotesque with the dramatic and tragic. Furthermore, political and historical realities are combined with the mythical and magical Latin American world. Lastly, through human comedy the problems of

a family, a town, and a country are unveiled. This is all presented through García Márquez's unique form of narration, which causes the novel to never cease being at its most interesting point.[29]

The characters in the novel are never defined; they are not created from a mold. Instead, they are developed and formed throughout the novel. All characters are individualized, with many characteristics that differentiate them from others.[29] Ultimately, the novel has a rich imagination achieved by its rhythmic tone, narrative technique, and fascinating character creation, making it a thematic quarry, where the trivial and anecdotal and the historic and political are combined.[29]

[edit] Literary significance and acclaim

> *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race. Mr. García Márquez has done nothing less than to create in the reader a sense of all that is profound, meaningful, and meaningless in life.
>
> — William Kennedy, *New York Times Book Review* [2]

One Hundred Years of Solitude has received universal recognition. The novel has been awarded Italy's Chianciano Award, France's Prix de Meilleur Livre Etranger, Venezuela's Rómulo Gallegos Prize, and the Books Abroad/Neustadt International Prize for Literature. García Márquez also received an honorary LL.D. from Columbia University in New York City. These awards set the stage for García Márquez's 1982 Nobel Prize for Literature. The novel topped the list of books that have most shaped world literature over the last 25 years, according to a survey of international writers commissioned by the global literary journal *Wasafiri* as a part of its 25th-anniversary celebration.[30]

The superlatives from reviewers and readers alike display the resounding praise with which the novel has received. Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda called it "the greatest revelation in the Spanish language since *Don Quixote* of Cervantes", while John Leonard in *The New York Times* wrote that "with a single bound, Gabriel García Márquez leaps onto the stage with Günter Grass and Vladimir Nabokov."[2]

According to Antonio Sacoto, professor at the City College of the City University of New York, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is considered as one of the five key novels in Hispanic American literature (together with *El Señor Presidente*, *Pedro Páramo*, *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz*, and *La ciudad y los perros*). These novels, representative of the boom allowed Hispanic American literature to reach the quality of North American and European literature in terms of technical quality, rich themes, and linguistic innovations, among other attributes.[29]

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, García Márquez addressed the significance of his writing and proposed its role to be more than just literary expression:

I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.[31]

[edit] Critiques

Although *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has come to be considered one of, if not the, most influential Latin American texts of all time, the novel and Gabriel García Márquez have both received occasional criticisms. Stylistically, Harold Bloom remarked that "My primary impression, in the act of rereading *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, is a kind of aesthetic battle fatigue, since every page is rammed full of life beyond the capacity of any single reader to absorb... There are no wasted sentences, no mere transitions, in this novel, and you must notice everything at the moment you read it."[32] Additionally, David Haberly alleges that García Márquez may have borrowed themes from several works, such as William Faulkner's *Yoknapatawpha*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*, Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, and Chateaubriand's *Atala*. This, however, is not necessarily a negative criticism, as it involves the concept of intertextuality.."[33]

[edit] Internal references

In the novel's account of the civil war and subsequent peace, there are numerous mentions of the pensions not arriving for the veterans, a reference to one of Márquez's earlier works, *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*. In the novel's final chapter, García Márquez references the novel *Hopscotch* (Spanish: *Rayuela*) by Julio Cortázar in the following line: "...in the room that smelled of boiled cauliflower where Rocamadour was to die" (p. 412). Rocamadour is a fictional character in *Hopscotch* who indeed dies in the room described. He also references two other major works by Latin American writers in the novel: *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (Spanish: *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz*) by Carlos Fuentes and *Explosion in a Cathedral* (Spanish: *El siglo de las luces*) by Alejo Carpentier.

[edit] Adaptations

- Shuji Terayama's play *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (百年の孤独, originally performed by the Tenjo Sajiki theater troupe), as well as his film *Farewell to the Ark* (さらば箱舟) are loose (and not officially authorized) adaptations of the novel by García Márquez transplanted into the realm of Japanese culture and history.

Although *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has had such a big impact on the literature world, and although this novel is the author's best selling and most translated around the world, there have been no movies produced about it. Gabriel García Márquez has never agreed to sell the rights for producing such film, even though his novel has inspired many to write and has more than enough themes to work on in the film industry.[34]

[edit] See also

- *Le Monde*'s 100 Books of the Century

[edit] Notes

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21. ^ [a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#) [e](#) [f](#) [g](#) [h](#) [i](#) [j](#) [k](#) [l](#) [m](#) [n](#) [o](#) [p](#) [q](#) [r](#) [s](#) [t](#) [u](#) [v](#) [w](#) [x](#) [y](#) [z](#) [aa](#) [ab](#) [ac](#) [ad](#) [ae](#) [af](#) [ag](#) [ah](#) [ai](#) [aj](#) [ak](#) [al](#) [am](#) [an](#) [ao](#) [ap](#) [aq](#) [ar](#) Gordo-Guarinos, Francisco. *Cien años de soledad.* Barcelona: Editorial Vosgos, S.A., 1977.
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- "On Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude" - a lecture by Ian Johnston

- "The Solitude of Latin America", Nobel lecture by Gabriel García Márquez, 8 December 1982
- "Memory and Prophecy, Illusion and Reality Are Mixed and Made to Look the Same" by *The New York Times*, March 8, 1970

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- *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*
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