

## GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ’S “ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE”- A PARABLE OF CIVILIZATION

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### Abstract

The present paper is an attempt at highlighting the gradual erosion which the phenomenal power of the Buendias in Gabriel Marquez’s ‘One Hundred Years of Solitude’ undergoes through the century of contact with modernity. It is an incredible tale of the eerie and the weird. There are endless patterns and cycles that run their course in the novel. There is an intricate plan subtly woven into the texture of the novel.

**Key Words:** Aracataca, cataclysmic, conjure, genre, incredible, insomnia, inventive, magic realism, pacify, plagues, plantation, polemics, puranic, solitude and testaments.

### INTRODUCTION

Gabriel Garcia Marquez or Gabo (1928-2014), Columbian by birth is one of those modern authors who brought literature to the non-literary person. It was this popular appeal of his novels which got him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. If one were to make a list of the top 10 authors of this century who have had a cataclysmic effect on not only regionalist also world literature, then Marquez would definitely fall in the first three. He is famous for having revolutionized the very language of the modern novel by introducing us to the world of “Magic Realism”. It is unfortunate that he passed away on April 17<sup>th</sup> of this year at his home in Mexico City. He used his fecund imagination and exuberant sleight of hand to conjure the miraculous in his fiction: Plagues of Insomnia and forgetfulness, a cluster of magical grapes containing the secret of death, an all- might rain of yellow blossoms a swamp of lilies oozing blood, a Spanish galleon marooned in Latin American jungle, cattle born bearing the brand of their owner. Such

images were not simply tokens of his endlessly inventive mind but testaments to his all-embracing artistic vision.

Influenced by people like Faulkner, Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Kofka, he wrote several novels and collections of stories. Macando is the place of all action in his novels. Even the characters are repeated. Yet one cannot label them as serial novels. This unique way maintaining the individuality of each novel in spite of keeping the other elements of the novel constant is typical and characteristic of Marquez. Millions of copies of his most famous novel, “One Hundred Years of Solitude” (1967), continue to be sold all over the world, translated in all major International language.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL**

It is necessary to know the details of his childhood and life in order to understand his novel “One Hundred Years of Solitude” properly. He was born to Gabriel Eligio Garcia and Luisa Santiago Marquez on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1927 in the town of Aracataca, Columbia. They had 12 children and Marquez was the oldest. His parents moved to Barranquilla while Garcia Marquez stayed in Aracataca. He was raised by his maternal grandparents. When Marquez was 8 years old, his grandfather died and his grandmother was helpless as she was going blind. Hence, Marquez was sent to live with his parents.

There is a legend Marquez likes to tell about the writing of this most famous novel. He claims that he wrote the book locked in his study in Mexico, after receiving a vision. One day, he and his wife and children were in their car driving to Acapulco on a family trip. On his way to Acapulco, he all of sudden had a vision in which he saw that he “had to tell his story the way his grandmother used to tell hers, and that he was to start from that afternoon in which a father took his child to discover ice. He made an abrupt U-turn on the highway, the car never made it to Acapulco he drove back to the home they were staying in Mexico. He locked himself in his study. 15 months later, he emerged with the manuscript, only to meet his wife holding a bundle of bills. They traded papers and she put the manuscript in the mail to his publisher. “One Hundred Years of Solitude” was released from the publishers in 1967. It became a classic. It is a special quality of the writing of Marquez to mix truth and fiction in this novel. The truth is that the novel is a personal book for him. It is the outcome of the experience he had undergone during his childhood with his maternal grandparents. He remembers a big house full of ghosts. He tells us how conversations were held in it. He remembers his relatives who could foretell their own deaths. The house was filled with guests and social events. Nearby were almond trees bursting with flowers. After the death of his grandparents, the house fell into a state of ruin and the trees and flowers were destroyed by the red ants. Marquez also remembers one more incident of his childhood. He had actually seen the massacre of striking banana workers at plantation named Macondo, a train station. He remembers how the government tried the best to block information from the public and pacify the foreign plantation owners. Marquez was terribly disturbed by this. And further when he joins in a high school, he found that the event was not included even in history textbook which horrified him further.

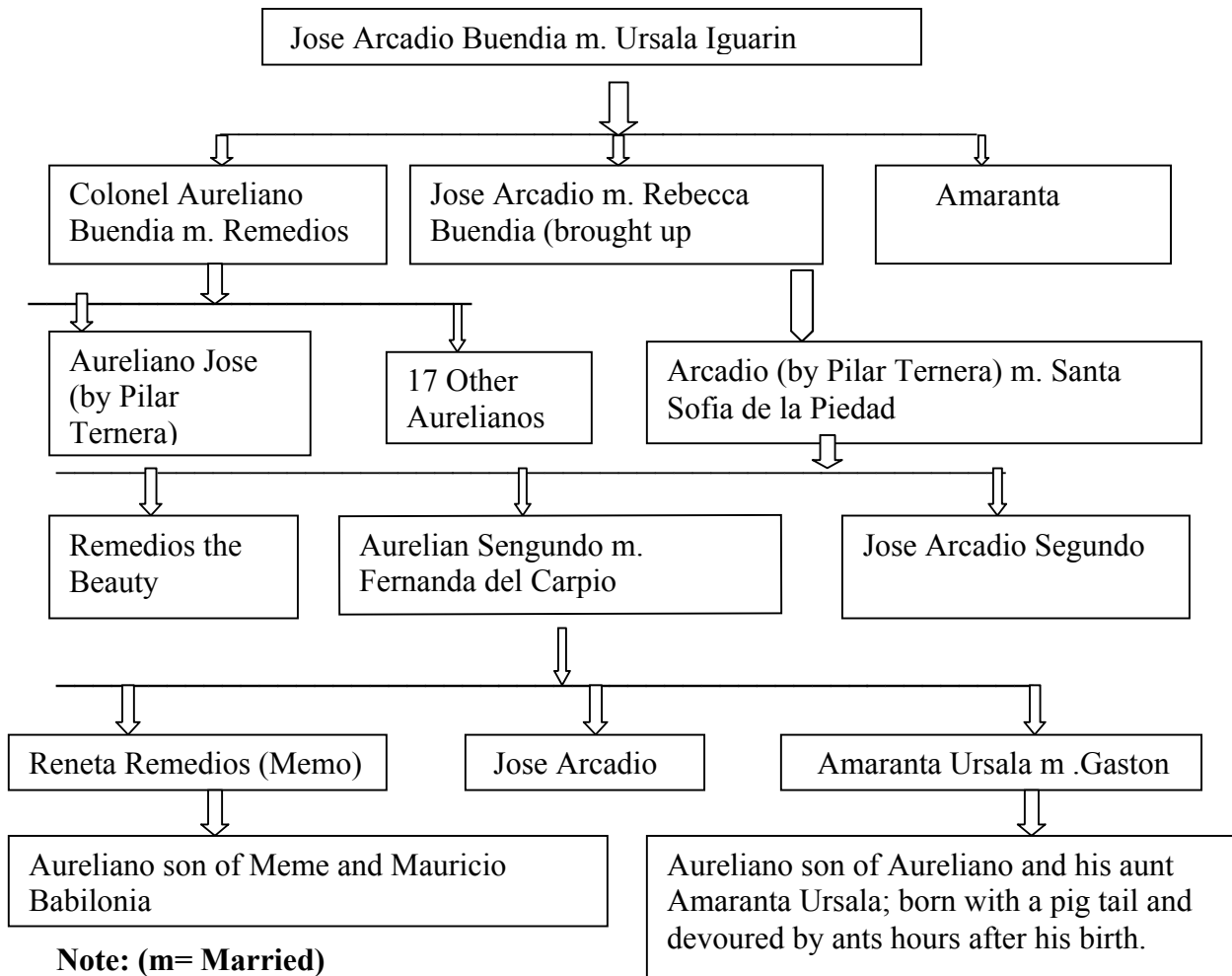
The elements mentioned above can be seen reflected in the novel. It is true that he would not have written the novel if he had not grown up in Aracataca. Hence, the critic find the context for the book in two things—(1) Marquez’s own personal nostalgia for childhood, for his grandparents, for a big house with ghosts and laughter, (2) Secondly, his political beliefs and the hard realities of growing up in a particularly tumultuous developing countries. He grew up in Columbia and it has a long and tragic socio-economic history. It is her Marquez learned about

politics and economics at a very early stage of his life. Hence, the novel “One Hundred Years of Solitude” is a very personal book for the novelist.

**CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL**

There are seven generations of the Buendia family involved in the story of the novel and they are given almost similar names with slight variations. So we are giving below a very short analysis of the characters in order to avoid confusion and also their relationship with one another and the role they have played in the story of the novel.

**Family Tree/ Lineage of the Buendia**



**ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL**

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is the master of literary fiction. He concentrates on trials and tribulations of Latin American people, especially those of his native country Columbia, in his journalism as well as novels. His *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is perhaps the most important and most widely read novel in the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He is the leader of ‘magic

realism' in which he combines reality with fantasy. In the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he describes the history of the isolated town of Macando and of the family; the Buendias who established it. Read intrinsically, the novel deals with the beginning and the ending of an aboriginal clan. It comments on the destiny of the primordial man on coming in contact with modern civilization.

The first section explores the mythic and utopian pre-history of the town, Macando. For years the town Macando has no physical contact with outside world. The patriarch of the Buendia's family, Jose Arcadio Buendia, is Macando's founder. The First Generation of Buendias starts with him. He was a man of great strength and curiosity. When Gypsies bring magical instruments like ice, magnifying lens, telescopes, Jose Arcadio Buendia wants to explore the world with these new things. It is because Macando is surrounded by two side swamps and one side a range of mountains. Malquiades, one of gypsies, who came to him with undecipherable manuscript about the history of Macando and the family of Buendias. It predicts the end of the Buendia family after hundred years with a baby of pig tail. Until this period, Macando looks like the Garden of Eden and Jose Arcadio Buendia and Ursula Iguarin are like Adam and Eve. In his search to explore the world, Jose Arcadio Buendia spends his life in solitude. Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden for eating from the Tree of Knowledge, and this novel conveys the same cautionary tale. Jose Arcadio Buendia's relentless pursuit of knowledge, arguably, drives him to foolishness and eventful instantly. It should not be forgotten that, in his madness, he is tied to a tree that functions as a clear symbol for the Tree of Knowledge, whose fruit tempted Adam and Eve to their original fall.

In the Second Generation the children of Jose Arcadio Buendia are Jose Arcadio, Colonel Aureliano Buendia and Amaranta. Jose Arcadio married Rebecca, an orphan girl. She had no children but Jose Arcadio had a sexual contact with local whore, Pilar Temera. The same woman had sexual contact with Colonel Aureliano Buendia. With these two brothers she gave two members, Arcadia, Aureliano Jose to the family of Buendia. Only Amaranta lived in solitude due to her failure in love. Jose Arcadio died. After her husband Jose Arcadio's death, Rebecca becomes a hermit confined to her dilapidated house. So the only colonel Aureliano Buendia too was inside the house, trying to explore the manuscript. The colonel in retirement from the Civil Wars between the Liberals and Conservatives felt that it was futile in his quest for power, and so fashions tiny fishes out of gold.

Later, The Third Generation member Arcadio gave birth to three children with Santa Sofia. These children were Remedios, the Beauty who lived in solitude and Jose Arcadio Segund also lived in solitude, spending his time to decipher the manuscript.

In the Fourth Generation, the disillusionment of Colonel Aureliano Buendia is matched by the discovery of his great nephew Jose Arcadio Segundo that the Americans have massacred three thousand rebellions striking banana workers and their families and shipped their bodies, like bananas, in freight trains to be dumped into the sea. The only Aureliano Segunda by marrying Fernanada Del Carpio gave birth to three children. They are Reneta Remedios, Jose Arcadio and Amaranta Ursala.

In the Fifth Generation, Reneta Remedios with Maurico Babilonia gave birth to Aureliano II who was the last but one member of the Buendia family. He too lived in solitude exploring the manuscript.

In the Sixth Generation, Aureliano II had illegal sexual contact with Amaranta Ursala (his aunt) who gave birth to Baby Aureliano III with a pig tail of Seventh Generation. Later Amaranta Ursala died due to excess of bleeding. Neglected baby was eaten by Red Ants. At the

end of the novel the premonition of the Malquiades, chief gypsies became true. The manuscript turns out to be this novel, the chronicle of their destiny, which has now been fulfilled. It is Garcia Marquez has said, “the story of a family obsessed by incest”. Reading Malquiades’s manuscript with intense concentration Aureliano Babilonia, with the self-absorption that has meant the ruins of the Buendia’s, does not notice what is happening to his baby who is later devoured by red ants. The Macando and the Buendia were washed away by a severe wind. Thus, the generations of Buendia vanity spread their life in solitude especially Jose Arcadio Buendia, Amaranta, Jose Arcadio, Aureliano II and so the title is apt as “One Hundred Years of Solitude”.

Marquez intends the theme of solitude to be red in many different ways. It is a protest against the practice of the western world to condemn people of colour to solitude, denying them to assess the resources of the developed world. It is also a comment on the nature of man that too much solitude can be destructive both to individuals and to society at large.

Thus, Marquez is the author of a classic on the grandest epic scale. The novel, Garcia Marquez has said, is “not a history of Latin America” but a “metaphor for Latin America”. The Buendia’s have failed in solidarity with their fellows. With an apocalyptic stroke by the author, they are wiped from the earth as if they had never existed.

## CRITIQUE

“**One Hundred Years of Solitude**” takes a character beyond life and death in structurally dramatic flourish. What Marquez did as a writer most competently was to expand the meaning of reality and to get his readers to do a double-take as they look at life and its endless possibilities. Like Ghalib, Marke too had a thing for solitude, isolation and punishing letters and what they do to connect people over space and time. “All human beings have three lives: Public, Private and Secret”. Marquez wrote this in all his books. He never complicated the process of writing, letting critics deconstruct his ‘style’ because he believed his writing stemmed from the need to react to life and to interpret it. **He has gone but his magic realism remains in world literature.**

Many may agree or disagree that the Puranic stories of the Indian tradition are nothing but stories/novels written in the Marquezian genre of magic realism. Nevertheless, the credit goes to Marquez for having given a modern expression to this style of story or novel writing. Let us leave such polemics to the literary scholars to resolve. All we need is a copy of the novel and a few Sunny afternoons to read it.

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