



Jeopardy at Macando: A Critique on One Hundred Years of Solitude

“...time was not passing...it was turning in a circle”

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Abstract

Published in 1967, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* written by a Nobel Prize Winner, Colombian writer; Gabriel Garcia Marquez. It is a milestone in the history of works in the genre of magic realism. This research paper explores the grand canvas and presents a judicious critique on the work. It is said to be the fictionalised history of Latin America. It explores into the events and impacts of colonialism in Colombia. This piece of work cannot only be restricted to Colombian imperialism all encompasses every colony which suffered from it. Precisely it deals with neo-colonialism in its prime focus that is the domination of other nations for the commerce related ventures. The novel wins accolade and transcendent the time frame to tread with felicity among the classics. It would not be hyperbolic if it is described as a unique amalgamation of intrinsic emotions, history and subtle use of magic realism.

Keywords- Colonialism, magic realism, characters, gothic and allusion.

The author, Gabriel Garcia Marquez has always laid importance on historical and political contextualising of literature as he himself has led a life which was hovered by politically charged situations. In all his works including *Hundred Years of Solitude*, the internal conflicts of Colombia during his lifetime have played on the centre stage. This historical consciousness of his has made him ably use the topical allusions effectively in his works.

One of the major characters Jose Arcadio Buendia was passionately engrossed in the search of gold, like the Spanish Conquistadors of the 15th century. The pilgrimages, expedition and voyages were the spirit of the New World, which is replicated in *Hundred Years of Solitude*. The plot vividly explores the impact of neo colonialism. The cultural, social and linguistic domination of the natives by the commercial masters set the background for the novel. The characters of Sir Francis Drake, a pirate who attacked Riohacha, Columbia is also a figure from history with the same name, who participated in many civilian attacks. In the novel he creates such fear that causes anxiety and insomnia in Ursula's grandmother after his attack Ursula and Jose Arcadio Buendia came together.

Hundred Years of Solitude is laid felicitously on national myths, where the cultural overtones impact the decisions and lives of people. The characters of the older generation are occupied with their cultural roots and try to align the lives of posterity on the same.

The spirit of adventure, exploration and discovery heightens in the character of Jose Arcadio Buendia who following his patriarchal control makes all others with him to move in search of land of his dream. Isolation and experimentation also tightly holds on the lives of major characters. Time and again a reader witnesses the urge for brave discovery and knowledge in isolation. The passion for alchemy in Jose Arcadio Buendia is evident of it and extends through the lives of other characters.

The thematic ground of the novel is skilfully shown with self inflicted misfortunes of people. Buendians are the characters of the novel who knowingly repeat their mistakes or the mistakes of their ancestors and are rebuked with the same fate. The names reflect the familiar mistakes and same destinies for those characters. The theme of circular periodic pain is potently dealt in story. The human race cannot dodge pangs of frustrating life, where humans become helpless sufferers.

The religious connotation of Adam and Eve, being the first inhabitants of garden of Eden and they turned into the great grandparents to the human race is reflected in Jose Arcadio Buendia and who found Macando and are also seen naming some creatures, they have come across in that place. He settled others in the land of Macando and become the overseer of their people.

The various social political struggles throughout the novel against neo colonialism is the strong foundation for its intricately lavish plot. Gabriel Garcia Marquez has criticised the prevalent utilism in Latin America. The rich and high class families considered themselves to be all powerful. They even superseded the law and order; it was a

mere nodding puppet for them. The Beundian family indulges in repeating their ancestral flaws. The attitude of arrogance and repeated mistakes reflected through the Beundian family is to sternly criticise the edition of the ancestors.

As the transpired in the title, the most dominant theme of the novel is the ever looming solitude. Jose Arcadio Beundia is seen to be found in a solitary rain forest. Thenafter the establishment of Macand, a lonely and unknown place is representative of the colonial Caribbean town. The tribes and outposts were not connected, neither with each other nor with the world. This consequently made the aloof from the world. This led to the aristocratic setup of Beundia's as the one who one who owns the land and luxuries.

Time in *Hundred Years of Solitude* is presented as the circular phenomenon. *What did you expect," murmured José Arcadio Segundo. "Time passes." "That's how it goes," Úrsula said, "But not so much." "When she said it, she realized that she had given the same reply that Colonel Aureliano Buendía had given in his death cell, and once again she shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing, as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle."* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 361). The story is linear as far as series of events approach in the story. But time in the other frame where the habits, mistakes and destiny of characters are concerned, time is interpreted a metaphor to an inevitable circle. Throughout the novel the helplessness floats in search for control in one's life. Time is an overseeing power which leads to impenetrable doomed fate in circulation.

One of the major themes which linger over the whole plot of the novel is of incest, the hoarding fear and unavoidable metal, physical and social consequences. The patriarch of the Buendias', Jose Arcadio Buendia marries his first cousin Ursula's initial hesitant participation in the act is due to the fear of bearing monstrous children with pig's tail as a punishment of her incestuous marriage to a kin.

Down in chronology the reader witness other incestuous relationships which ultimately culminates the wedding of Aureliano to his aunt Amaranta Ursula which brings to fore the horrendous episode of Amaranta's death in childbirth and the child with pig's tails being devoured by ants.

The characters of *Hundred Years of Solitude* are numerous and complex, which aid the story as well as elevates the mystery of an interesting and diverse plot.

Jose Arcadio Buendia is the first generation patriarch and founder of Macando. He is a strong man who ardently seeks for practical knowledge and scientific advancement. He is married to Ursula Iguaran, who is her cousin. They are been warned of the incestuous marriage leading to deplorable consequence of their children being born with pig's tail. He is predominantly engrossed in his obsession to search new knowledge which leads him to madness and ends as a mad man tied to a tree later in life until his death.

The matriarch of the Buendia family is Ursula, who is a firm woman in her plans and actions. She takes care of her household and looks after her family members emotionally. She is a hardworking woman but suffers from anxiety and insomnia throughout the novel.

The second generation of Beundia's consists of Jose Arcadio, Colonel Aureliano and Amaranta, the three children of Jose Arcadio Beundia and Ursula. The eldest Jose Arcadio is impulsive with immense physical strength. He runs off from Macando in pursuit of a gypsy girl and returns himself as a savage gypsy.

The second son is Colonel Aureliano who grows as a quiet and solitary man, with an extraordinary perception. Moved by the plight of the common folks and aggravated by the corrupted government he joins the liberal rebellion and becomes a Colonel. The fight continues for many years and ends in a peace accord. He returns from the war as a hardened unemotional man. He also fathers 17 sons with 17 different women.

Amaranta is the daughter of Jose Arcadio Buendia and Ursula who falls in love but the unreciprocated love mars her emotional being. Another interesting character is Rebecca, the adopted daughter of Jose Arcadio Beundia and Ursula, who is known as an earth-eating orphan. When she comes to Macando, she infects the town with insomnia and loss of memory.

There are whole lot of characters who are named as Jose Arcadio and are seemingly similar to their great grandfather. They repeat mistakes without any learning or correction and end up with the same fate.

The fourth generation's Aureliano Segundo is almost a replica of his great grandfather Jose Arcadio Buendia, being impulsive, boisterous and rigid. He is married to Fernanda Del Caprio but loved his concubine Petra Cotes. He and Fernanda have three children; Meme, Jose Arcadio(II) and Amaranta Ursula.

Amaranta Ursula goes to trip to Europe where she marries a Belgian, Gaston. She wants to revive Macando so she returns. She at Macando falls in love with her nephew Aureliano and gives birth to a child who has a pig's tail as

he was born out of the incestuous relation. The novel ends with Aureliano(II) trying to decipher the prophecies of Melquiades under the horror of Amaranta's death and devouring of his child by the ants.

The characters of *Hundred Years of Solitude* are numerous and complex, which complements the vivacity of the story as well as heaves the mystery of an interesting plot.

In this novel Gabriel Garcia Marquez creates a fantastical blend of ordinary and extraordinary coming to life in the land of Macando. Magic Realism is used to embed the Columbian culture, where the people are not astonished at the supernatural but are well adapted to as some usual routine scenario.

Amusing examples of magic realism in the novel are Ursula's cousin with a pig's tail wears loose pants throughout his life, the flying carpet, Father Nicanor rising 6 inches above the ground level after drinking chocolate and a woman being lifted to the heavens by the gust of wind. These all are amusing subscriptions to the reader who glides into believing the unbelievable.

Even the number patters are brought forth by the author as crisp elements in the form magic realism. Throughout *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Garcia Marquez exaggerates events to gain fantasy. However, the exaggeration is almost always numerically specific and gives each occurrence a sense of reality, says critic Bell-Villada (109). The rain for four years eleven months and two days, thirty two armed uprising mixing history with fantasy and seventeen sons with seventeen women are a few of the number patterns which amuse and delight the readers.

Gothic interpretations are too witnessed as in the beginning the apparition of Prudencio Aguilar is seen haunting Ursula and Jose Arcadio Beundia. The insanity of the patriarch can also be described in the same vein where he is tied to tree and speaks only Latin which is incomprehensible by all and understood only by the priest. The shocking killing of the workers during the banana outbreak triggers horrifying chills. Therefore along with magic realism a reader witnesses gothic strains in the novel.

The luxury to the reader cannot be denied in *Hundred Years of Solitude* but simultaneously this superfluous work is criticised for being distant to the reader and prohibits the connection. The vast canvas of the plot is filled with marvellous shades of fantastic events, uncountable vivacious characters, surprising twitches of magic realism, mysterious concoctions, tiring complexities and exhilaratingly rich experience. The wide spectrum of the work justifies the complexity of the novel. The jeopardy at Macando accentuates piercing historical tussles and the gross

tortures suffered under colonialism with engaging narrations of myth, magic realism, circulating time and allusions.

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