

Name

Professor's Name

Course

Date of Submission

Time and Memory in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude

## Introduction

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* famously depicts 100-years' worth of history and generations of the Buendia family. The history of the Buendia family is tightly intertwined with the history of Macondo. The novel is one of the most famous works of magic realism. Postcolonial authors, especially Latin American authors, utilize magic realism in presenting the realities and unique identities of their nations and peoples. Magic realism is a tool for postcolonial nations to explore and establish their own histories and identities separate from the Western gaze and literature.

Magic realism embraces the real and the magical, where real is based on European society and its scientific knowledge and the magical represents the world of Latin American society and its folklores. In novels like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the magical and the real co-exist. Magic realism accurately depicts the lives of Latin Americans, where both European and Latin American traditions and values struggle to co-exist—something that realist fiction cannot depict. One of the ways Garcia Marquez depicts the lives of Latin Americans is through the use of mythological time, which does not follow the chronological time that Europeans follow when telling history. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, history is told based on memory, which is illogical,

subjective, and fallible. By telling the story of the Buendia family in mythological time and relying on collective and individual memories, Garcia Marquez undermines European domination in the writing of histories and stays true to the often-erased realities and identities of Latin America.

### **Time and Memory in *One Hundred Years of Solitude***

Throughout the novel, Garcia Marquez makes it clear that time is a construct, and rebels against the European concept of time. While history is commonly chronicled following chronological time, wherein the past causes the present and the future, Marquez emphasizes that events in history stand alone in a position, and are not caused nor does it cause other events. His narration reflects this—Garcia Marquez never provides years or any signifier of chronological time. Instead, he refers to other events to contextualize the position of the event. However, in doing so, Garcia Marquez also combines the past, present, and future. There is no better example of this than the first sentence of the novel: “Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice” (Garcia Marquez, p. 1). This sentence alone refers to the future, mentions the present, while hinting at the present time. However, despite the references, it remains unclear at which point in time the story begins. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, all of the events seem to happen at the same time.

Despite the ambiguity that Garcia Marquez maintains concerning chronological time, however, the narrative remains clear. In many instances, it even appears to be chronological. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has its own sense of time, which only

appears illogical because it does not adhere to the European sense of chronological time. However, this sense of time makes sense within the novel and the Latin American identity, for it relies on memory. In this sense, the present is absolutely true, while the past is but a memory, and the future a prediction. Therefore, historical accounts cannot be clear for they can only be told from memory, and memory is extremely fallible. Two events in the novel emphasize this point. The fallibility of memory is evident in how differently Ursula, Jose Arcadio Buendia, Aureliano, and Jose Arcadio each have different perceptions, experiences, and therefore, memories surrounding the first time they hosted Melquiades in their home (Garcia Marquez, p.6). Another event that depicts the fallibility of memory is the banana company massacre. Even though 3000 people were murdered in the banana plantation, the people of Macondo could not, and would not, remember the truth after the government altered narratives (Garcia Marquez, pp. 303-310). The former instance is a natural occurrence in life, where our memories are colored by our perceptions. In contrast, the latter is a tactic that colonizers and dictators use to change the narrative in their favor. While Garcia Marquez embraces the subjectivity of memories, he also rebels against historical revisionism. By rejecting the European concept of chronological time and instead embracing mythological time in telling the story of the Buendia's, Garcia Marquez tells history from the Latin American perspective, accurately depicting their unique realities and identities despite the seeming ambiguities.

## **Conclusion**

With the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Garcia Marquez rebelled against the European concept of time, and in doing so rejected the history the colonizers wrote

for Latin America. By embracing fallible memory as a credible source of history and mythological time, Garcia Marquez established a literary identity for Latin America. Through Magic Realism, Latin Americans have a space to explore their individual and collective memories, their history and folklore, and ultimately, their truths.

# Custom Essay

# MEISTER

Work Cited

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. New York, Harper Perennial  
Modern Classics, 2006.

Custom Essay

MEISTER