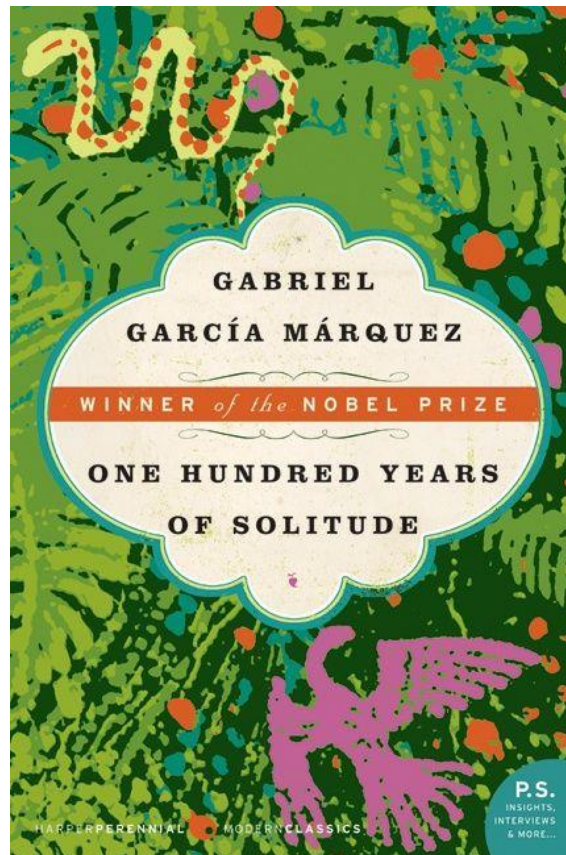


**The Source of Magic Realism in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude***

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Courtesy: <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780060883287/one-hundred-years-of-solitude>

**Abstract**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the most famous novel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez through the resource of magic realism. He has followed a non-linear chronological order in the novel. He has mixed past, present; future and in different style of storytelling. One cannot find a single plot or a single time line in the novel. His magical flair is to merge fantasy with reality by introducing to the reader his Colombia, where myths, portents, and legends exist side by side

with technology and modernity. These myths, along with other elements and events in the novel, recount a large portion of Colombian history.

**Keywords:** Colombia, Magic Realism; Marquez.

### **Introduction**

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is abundant with magic realism, joining imagination with the real. Garcia Marquez's talent to include all the fairy tale characters and to produce a new story that ties the actual and the amazing in a real way brands his work fascinating and genuine. He deliberately uses fairy tales, mythology, and history in his writings to fascinate his readers with realism. Magical realism is neither a style nor a genre but it is a division of realism school and cannot be reflected as a liberated literary school because it does not have different and new important structure and principals and largely finds its identification alongside the realism school. In the magical realism the truth and imagination features combine masterly in such a way that existing borders between realism and imagination become imperceptible and all the illusory and imaginary actions seemed logically and realistic in the story and the reader admits the merely.

Amaryll Chandy in the article "Magical Realism and Imagination" writes that magical realism wants to make a paradox mixture of amalgamation of differing and dissimilar matters recognized with two conflicting approach: one based on reality and the other on the acceptance of supernatural affairs. Magical realism is basically different from imagination story, because it belongs to the modern world and is parallel with authoritative descriptions of human and society.

### **Gabriel Garcia**

The major Latin-American magic realists include the Colombian Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Brazilian Jorge Amado, the Argentines Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortazar, and the Chilean Isabel Allende.

In Europe, the term 'magic realism' is applied to clarify the propensity between the fiction writers including Franz Kafka, John Fowles, and Gunter Grass to interlace rudiments of the fantastic and weird into their otherwise accurate prose. By the mid-1960s, this exciting formal expansion became a trademark of Latin America's "new novelists" and of the "boom," the tenure used to define the abrupt global achievement of Julio Cortazar, Jose Donoso, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Among them, no writer was more well-known as proponent of 'magic realism' than Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Marquez's childhood underwrote abundantly in the use of magic realism in his novels, specially, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Marquez declares that there's not a single line in his novels is not based on reality. At the same time, readers want to explore the causes of his exquisite magic realism. Some references are available in his biography. He says in a conversation with his friend, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, an interview, later published as *The Fragrance of Guav*:

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 18:3 March 2018

**Dr. T. Deivasigamani, Editor: Vol. II Black Writings: A Subaltern Perspective**

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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 (Marquez, *One Hundred*13).

### **Magic Realism**

Thus, there are resources of so many splendid and archetypal channels of magic realism concerning female characters of Buendia family in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For the first time, over this interview, One gets a window open to look into the resources of his ‘magic realism’. Elsewhere, in the same discussion, he says: “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. I wrote *One Hundred Years of Solitude* using my grandmother’s method.” It contains carefully intended gullibility, which makes readers have faith in the story without questioning, and Garcia Marquez accepted it from the examples of his grandmother and Franz Kafka.

### ***One Hundred Years of Solitude***

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, we get a passage narrates the first experience of the protagonists with ice and echoing the actions of Garcia Marquez’s childhood as put up by Mendoza:

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 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 (Marquez, *One Hundred* 15).

Jose Arcadio Buendia, puts his hand on the ice and holds it there for numerous records as his heart is filled with fear and triumph at the contact with that enigmatic thing. Being overwhelmed, he paid more so that his sons could have that remarkable practice. Though little Jose Arcadio declined to trace it, Aureliano affects it and removes his hand immediately. But his father pays no care to him. Intoxicated by the indication of the miracle, he pays another five reales and with his hand on the cake, as if giving evidence on the Holy Scriptures, he exclaims, “This is the great invention of our time” (Marquez, *One Hundred* 18).

### **Mauricio Babilonia**

From the same meeting one knows that the curious happenings in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* like, “Remedios the Beautiful ascends to heaven”, “Yellow butterflies flutter around Mauricio Babilonia” etc. are all ‘based on fact’. For example, for Mauricio Babilonia, Garcia Marquez clarifies that when he was about five, an electrician used to come to their house in Aracataca to alternate the meter. According to Marquez, on one of these incidents, he found his

grandmother annoying to shoo away a butterfly with a rag, saying, “Whenever this man comes to the house, that yellow butterfly follows him.” That was Mauricio Babilonia in embryo. Concerning Remedios the Beautiful, he gives out that he had initially scheduled to make her vanish while in the house sewing with Rebecca and Amaranta. But this almost cinematographic trick did not seem feasible to him. Then he believed of making her rise to heaven, body and soul. The fact after it was a woman whose granddaughter had run away from home in the timely hours of the morning, and who strained to hide the fact by placing the word about that she had gone up to heaven (Marquez, *One Hundred* 19).

### **Uses Socio-Political Past of Colombia**

Apart from his colourful childhood memories, Marquez is enormously obligated to the socio-political past of Colombia for his wonderful samples of magic realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For example, the civil war between the Liberals and the Traditionalists in the story straight resonances events parallel to the historic events of Colombia. Michael Wood, in his book *Gabriel Garcia Marquez: One Hundred Years of Solitude*, says, “Colombia has a long custom of democracy. The Liberals and the Conservatives, who controlled nineteenth and most of twentieth century politics, hoisted for quite dissimilar things – reorganization or response, free trade or defense, parting or combination of church and state; and gradually twisted into a rather slender band of class interests” (8). There is another astute and humorous reference to this state of matters in a conversation of the game of organizers in the novel. Jose Arcadio Buendia does not want to play with the priest, Father Nicanor, because he cannot see the point of a competition in which the challengers are in contract on values. Father Nicanor, who has not ever thought of the game in this light, cannot take himself to play anymore. This infers that much aggressive in the world anxieties anything but values, which are also decided as immaterial. For instance, Colonel Aureliano Buendia determines that both Liberals and Conservatives are attacking exclusively for power and are prepared to detriment any major points of attitude in order to accomplish it.

An enormous degree of Colombian past gets into *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: the influences over reform in the 19th century, the influx of the railway, the War of the Thousand Days, the American fruit company, the cinema, the automobile, and the massacre of striking plantation workers in 1928. The most striking fact of modern Colombian history, known as the Strength, gets unintended appearance in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* through guerillas, gangsters, self-protection groups, the police, the army, and the death of some 200,000 people. Even when it was said to be over, or under control, in 1962, there were still 200 civilians dying per month. The Violence was inevitable for the Colombians, and it motivated a flood of fiction, and Garcia Marquez himself lectures it straight in *No one Writes to the Colonel* and *In Evil Hour*. However, the Violence seems in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* circuitously as the carnage of arresting workers, “. . . which was sparked off by the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, who made his political fame by investigating the 1928 strike. The event was violent enough and could stand as a compression and anticipation of the later phenomenon, an allusion and a synecdoche” (Wood 10). Garcia Marquez ponders in his autobiography *Living to Tell the Tale* while going to his birth place in Aracata:

It was there, my mother told me that day, where in 1928 the army killed an undetermined number of banana workers. I knew the event as if I had lived it, having heard it recounted and repeated a thousand times by my grandfather from the time I had a memory: the soldier reading the decree by which the striking laborers were declared a gang of lawbreakers; the three thousand men, women, and children motionless under the savage sun after the officer gave them five minutes to evacuate the square; the order to fire, the clattering machine guns spitting in white-hot bursts, the crowd trapped by panic as it was cut down, little by little, by the methodical, insatiable scissors of the shrapnel. (14-15)

Based on this awful historical event, a wonderful passage of magic realism is shaped by Garcia Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

It was as if the machine guns had been loaded with caps, because their panting rattle could be heard and their incandescent spitting could be seen, but not the slightest reaction was perceived, not a cry, not even a sigh among the compact crowd that seemed petrified by an instantaneous invulnerability. . . . the panic became a dragon's tail as one compact wave ran against another which was moving in the opposite direction, toward the other dragon's tail in the street across the way, where the machine guns were also firing without cease. They were penned in, swirling about in a gigantic whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicenter as the edges were systematically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodical shears of the machine guns. (311)

### **Detections**

In the novel, there are also references to the events, such as the detections of an outfit of corroded armour with hardened basic as well as “an enormous Spanish galleon”; and a gory civil war (12). All of them have real life evidence founded on Colombian history. The armour is said to be from the fifteenth century, which it could just be, since the north-eastern seaside region of South America, what is now Colombia and Venezuela, was first visited by the Europeans, with and without armour, in 1499-1500 (Wood 27). So, the time distance of the novel can be ‘several centuries’ future than the sixteenth and some ‘three hundred years’ since Drakes intrusions into the Spanish Main (Marquez 19). In the same way, initially a Colombian civil war ended with the Agreement of Neerlandia (*One Hundred* 174), which was originally signed in 1902.

### **Macondo**

If one examines the name ‘Macondo’, we can simply recognize how Colombian history and Marquez’s individual life knowledge straddling into the beautiful use of ‘magic realism’ in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In Northern Colombia, there is an ‘ancient city’ called Riohacha. Macondo is the name of a banana farmstead near Aracataca, Garcia Marquez’s birth place, which is now globally famous as the name of a mythical community, and clearly, it is due to the fame of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Vigilant readers can simply realize that the geography and history of two ‘Macondo’ are not dissimilar and the fictional world of ‘Macondo’ has a real condition in time and space.

The report of Garcia Marquez concerning ‘Macondo’ in his autobiography *Living to Tell the Tale* while he was going to visit his grandparents’ house:

The train stopped at a station that had no town, and a short while later it passed the only banana plantation along the route that had its name written over the gate: *Macondo*. This word had attracted my attention ever since the first trips with my grandfather, but I discovered only as an adult that I liked its poetic resonance. I never heard anyone say it and did not even ask myself what it meant. I had already used it in three books as the name of an imaginary town when I happened to read in an encyclopedia that it is a tropical tree resembling the ceiba, that it produces no flower or fruit, and that its light, porous wood is used for making canoes and carving cooking implements. Later, I discovered in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that in Tanganyika there is a nomadic people called the Makonde, and I thought this might be the origin of the word. (19)

### **Famous Latin America**

This shows his ‘magic realism’ to find out its considerable source. Colombia in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* develops into a general and famous Latin America, a place of innocence, isolation and magic, of high mountains, rainy tropics and ash-coloured sea. However, internal wars, bureaucrats, booms, strikes, North American interventions and military rulers are also there. It is a sub-continent presented as carefully suspended between myth and history, and it proves how extensively Garcia Marquez mingles his real-life experience with his fictions to mould the effects of magic realism.

### **Marquez’s Extensive Reading – Influence of Kafka**

Marquez’s extensive reading of the classics, such as, *The Bible*, Don Quixote and the works of Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw, Franz Kafka, William Faulkner and Hemingway formulates the other resources. The first and foremost as used by Gabriel Garcia Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is the Bible. Jose Arcadio Buendia, with whom the story begins and is described as a young patriarch, compared with Adam, since he is the first citizen of a sort of paradise. Thus, much of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reads like a fable. From the starting the tiny settlement of Macondo is offered to a version of Eden. “The world” we read “was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.” The polished stones in the clear river are “white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs” (1). Here, one can refer to the extract, which Gabriel Garcia Marquez mentioned in his autobiography *Living to Tell the Tale*. While describing his grandparents’ old house in Aracataca, he wrote, “. . . a good place to live where everybody knew everybody else, located on the banks of a river of transparent water that raced over a bed of polished stones as huge and white as prehistoric eggs” (5). Conscious readers can easily discover the similarities of the ideas and diction. There is another Biblical reference in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which confirms Marquez’s indebtedness to *The Bible*, in which one comes to know that the founders of Macondo have traveled to a “land no one had promised them” (31).

In relation to his being influenced by Franz Kafka, Garcia Marquez himself says in his interview with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, namely, *The Fragrance of Guava: Conversation with Gabriel Garcia Marquez*:

Kafka recounted things the same way my grandmother used to. When I read *Metamorphosis*, at seventeen, I realized I could be a writer. . . . I remember the first sentence, ‘When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.’ I said to myself, ‘My grandmother used to talk like that. I didn’t know you could do this, but if you can, I’m certainly interested in writing.’(257)

### **Influence of Cervantes**

If one considers Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, in many aspects, the patriarch of the novel Jose Arcadio Buendia can be termed as a modern Don Quixote. Particularly, Jose Arcadio Buendia’s wonder at the ice and his brilliant personal discovery of the earth’s roundness are both, in a sense, jokes on him are like Don Quixote’s courage when faced with lions which will not fight him. Obviously, the lions are hungry and dangerous, but at that moment, they were not in the mood of fighting. So, Quixote’s quite genuine courage remains untested: “his folly is heroic, but is heroism looks foolish” (Wood 32), like Sergius’ cavalry charge in *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw. In the same way, Jose Arcadio Buendia’s intelligence and imagination are astonishing but oddly situated, and his simplicity brings about further twist to the story.

Another writer Garcia Marquez is indebted to is Virginia Woolf. Garcia Marquez himself says about the writing of the last part of his novel that his own sense of time was ‘completely transformed’ by a sentence in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, read when he was twenty. “I saw in a flash the whole process of decomposition of Macondo and its final destiny” (Wood 50-51).

The extract in question is:

But there could be no doubt that greatness . . . was passing, hidden down Bond Street, removed only by a hand’s-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first time and last, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth. (Woolf 19-20)

### **Seeing the Connections**

With *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in mind, one can see the connections: a secret-guessed and missed, close by and far away, the sudden sense of a later time full of relics of what is now the present, the imagination of different events as if they all “coexisted in one instant” (Marquez 421). For a direct comparison one can quote from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

Sir Francis Drake had attacked Riohacha only so that [Aureliano and Amaranta Ursula] could seek each other through the most intricate labyrinths of blood until they would

engender the mythological animal that was to bring the line to an end. Macondo was already a fearful whirlwind of dust and rubble being spun about by the wrath of the biblical hurricane . . . for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth. (422)

### **Everything Is Based on Reality**

When Garcia Marquez insists that everything in his novel is ‘based on reality’, he means two things. First, that the most fantastic things have actually been believed or asserted by living people somewhere, and often in Latin America. “This doesn’t mean these things are true but it may make them real” (Wood 56). Garcia Marquez, to describe incidents, as we have already discussed, the yellow butterflies trailing after one of his characters and Remedios, the beauty, taking off into the sky and getting vanished, borrows some dizzying pretext as his fictional reality and then puts the literal truth into his novel as an idle, misplaced speculation. The quite ordinary thus becomes fantastic. Secondly, ‘based on reality’ means genuinely in touch with some fact of feeling, however hyperbolically and metaphorically expressed. When Jose Arcadio Buendia dies, a rain of tiny yellow flowers falls on Macondo, a ‘silent storm’ which covers the roofs, carpets the streets and suffocates the animals. This is a miracle even in ‘Macondo’—the bits and pieces of legend for the end of a legendary character, (*One Hundred* 144). But the miracle affords the truth of a fitting image; the appropriateness of the imagination’s rising to the grand occasion, as nature ought to, but usually does not. Thus, the real life experiences mould Marquez’s narrative style of magic realism.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez copies facts from his own life as well as expressions and characters from other writers. It is not to say that history and fiction are not same, but the boundary he is very minimal. Gabriel Garcia Marquez is not a writer with divine skill of formation; he is the re-forming novelist, a conceivable refiner of nostalgia into long-lasting work of literature mending a broken memory with his ‘magic realism’. He spreads the news of the ‘wiped out’ Macondo, ‘city of mirrors (or mirages)’, home and prototype of actual truths carried to non-belief.

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 18:3 March 2018

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