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Truth, Knowledge & Storytelling:  
Postcolonial Aspects of Epistemological Problems  
in the Works of Gabriel García Márquez

**A thesis submitted to  
Regis College  
The Honors Program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Graduation with Honors**

by

Anne Marie Carrica

May 2019

## *Preface*

This paper is the culmination of four years of dedication and learning. Inspired by my own family story and the words of Gabriel García Márquez, I am grateful for the opportunity to explore something that I am passionate about and hope to continue learning about. Storytelling is such an important part of our culture: I hope that this thesis will open the conversation to question the stories we hear.

## *Acknowledgements*

I would like to extend my most profound and deepest thanks to...

My parents, Beryl and Dominic, for supporting me in everything I want to do and encouraging me to always do my best and for encouraging a love of learning and reading in me from an early age.

My thesis advisor, Dr. Scott Dimovitz, for providing skills to make sense of my many ideas and furthering my understanding of postcolonial theory, skills I know I will continue to use.

My reader, Dr. Daryl Palmer, who challenged and inspired me for the past four years and who guided me to understand what my thesis could be and could mean in my future. I will be forever grateful for your guidance and friendship.

Dr. Jonathon Thomas Howe, for providing endless support and encouragement over the past four years. The Honors Program is lucky to have you.

To my friends and family for all their help, inspiration, and moral support.

Finally, to my grandparents for being the inspiration and foundation for much of this thesis, and for teaching me that I wouldn't be who I am without knowing my history.

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## **I. Introduction**

### **a. A Personal Preface**

In the past our education systems taught students literature from a narrow scope that created a single voice culture. Teachers used horribly biased works as they chose the works within the canon. The works within the canon became standard for what to teach. Limited to mainly old, white, male authors women's voices or voices outside of that norm addressed rarely could be heard. Slowly this has begun to change, however, preference is often given to the traditional canon and does not represent the world (or even the country) we live in. A world that is diverse, vast, and filled with more than one language and culture.

The high school I attended broke the stereotype of the canon where I learned to question and interrogate the epistemological issues of the stories we encounter. While most high school students read novels like the following: *The Great Gatsby*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Lord of the Flies*, I read postcolonial works: *This Earth of Mankind* and *Matigari*. Exposed at a younger age to different ideas, cultures, and languages I had a different experience than most high school students by encountering cultures beyond the United States through what I read. Reading postcolonial literature gave me an awareness and ability to have empathy for people and cultures I have never encountered. This has led to a quest to seek out stories beyond my own: to learn and hear as much as I can from different points of views.

This quest led me to study in Spain, and to wonder at every gold plated church I entered: was the gold really offered freely to the church as the Spaniards claimed? Or was there a darker narrative that everyone chose to forget? In a country where everything is only a click away on a computer and the buildings only tell stories of a few decades (not a few centuries) it can be hard to understand that there exists so much more than what lies beyond our narrow scope. But this want for global communication and understanding comes with its own burdens. How do we, those who are privileged, engage with those within an oppressed culture? How do I have the right to discuss matters of countries that I have never visited? Those who can, must step beyond their scope and try to listen and understand the struggles of those living or experiencing the affects of oppression. I in no way have the right to speak *for* them, in the sense that I cannot create a narrative from my own imagination of a place that I have no connection to. But it is my duty to engage and attempt to understand to the best of my ability the stories I seek out.

My family's story offers one-way in which my understanding of the epistemological issues at stake. My grandparents are both Hispanic. My grandmother, Lorenza Carrica, was a

Mexican-American whose family immigrated to the United States. My grandfather, Jean Baptiste Carrica, claims his family emigrated from the Basque region in Spain. Lorrie, as my grandmother was more commonly called, mainly spoke in Spanish. She always cooked and had an accent that couldn't be erased. She sang Spanish children songs when she played with her grandchildren and she showed her love for others through food. Cooking with her was the best way to understand her. She became reincarnated through her bizcochitos and fry bread that no one in my family can accurately re-create.

My grandfather is the complete opposite. He is a man of endless words. My memories of my grandfather are mainly of him working on some book. He has written four at this point and they depict very dry autobiographies or biographies of relatives. Jean could captivate you in endless stories when talking but none of which translates into the novels he writes. He self-publishes all of his works: every single one is printed and bound with the black spiral plastic only available from a copy and print store.

His latest work *You First* is the biography of Lorrie Carrica that my grandfather sent to every one of his children, a few months after her funeral. It shows a touching sentiment to everything she encompassed. Yet, it feels more like one of his stories than hers. Instead of the soft unconditional love of my grandmother, it embraces the tone of one of my grandfather's ranching books. The biography doesn't feel like my grandmother, at least not the woman I remembered. Is there something wrong with my memory? Or is my understanding and knowledge of her incorrect?

All of the stories that I remember of her came from my grandfather, even when she still lived. My grandpa always told the stories. The disconnect between her life and what I had known about her previously forced me to look back on my memories of her. Even when my dad worked

on a history project about *her* family, my grandpa and dad took it upon themselves to embellish her history. Thanks to them, in the national archives in New Mexico there exists an article detailing my grandmother's family's encounter with Poncho Villa. The entire article is untrue but is filed as a part of our families' history. Will anyone else reading the article discover the truth? Or will their article become a part of the next generations' epistemological issues in narrative surrounding my family?

It seems like most of my grandmother's life was stuck in a patriarchal system that she could not fight (or that she didn't know fighting was an option). Ultimately my grandpa decided to move them from their home in Los Cruces to Hobbs. We stopped the yearly visits because Hobbs exists so far from anything and the roads to it are stretches of dry desert filled with giant oil trucks that make you wonder if you're in fact not going to Hobbs but maybe to purgatory.

I have only visited their home in Hobbs three times: once for Thanksgiving, once the week before my grandma died, and once for her funeral. Even at her own funeral, voices that did not match her own overpowered my grandmother's voice. An imposing uncle and a woman no one knew (apparently she knew my grandmother from church) spoke at the funeral. No one else received an invitation to speak. Who chose who spoke for my grandmother?

My grandparents' story and my family history are far more complex than I could accurately detail here, however, one question always remains the same for me: who tells the story and why? Does my grandfather have exclusive rights to my grandmother's story being her husband? Did my grandmother enjoy being isolated in Hobbs? The older and more distanced I grow from my grandfather, the more I am forced to wonder what my grandma Lorrie's life was really like? Am I even allowed to question my history when it is one that I only know through the stories of others? My memories of my grandmother are faulty. I don't have distinct



memories: I have images and feelings. Yet, here I tell the story of my grandmother. Does it make a difference that I have a different voice from my grandfather? Does it matter that I am a woman and a very strong and independent woman raised me? Or am I simply following in my grandfather's footsteps by speaking for my grandmother? How and why should we question and interrogate the epistemological issues of the stories we encounter?

### **b. Epistemological Issues in Narrative**

I found these questions, which have long haunted me, in my first encounter with *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel that explores the effect epistemological issues have in narrative. García Márquez's works explore the history of his family and of his country: Colombia. Through events and people (such as the Banana Massacre, Melquíades, and an Insomnia Plague) García Márquez shows the various ways in which narrative shapes the epistemological issues of the stories we know.

García Márquez is a widely known and celebrated Colombian author, who weaves the stories of his family and country throughout his works. Raised by his maternal grandparents he their narratives inspired him and it shaped his understanding of his family. García Márquez's grandmother's treatment of the supernatural became a large influence in his use of magical realism. Magical realism is a literary mode where the use of supernatural elements is accepted by the characters as a part of everyday life. The novel uses magical realism to expose the areas of reality that have been ignored previously. His grandfather, a colonel and respected hero, refused to remain silent about the Banana Massacre (a piece of Colombia's history that the government tried to erase). Throughout all of his works García Márquez reclaims the history that many within his country forgot or refused to admit. His retelling of historical events and use of magical

realism help to interrogate the epistemological issues of the stories we hear. This thesis will attempt to show the importance of Gabriel García Márquez's works, particularly *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and its use of the Banana Massacre, Melquíades as the narrator, and the Insomnia Plague as means to explore the different ways in which narrative affects the epistemological issues of storytelling.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* illustrates García Márquez's ties to his family and to Colombia. His hometown (Aracataca) becomes the inspiration for the main town in the novel (Macondo). His grandmother's stories and supernatural beliefs became the basis for the magical realism of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. His grandfather's involvement in the Hundred Years War and endless stories of the Banana Massacre are important themes in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as well.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, García Márquez follows a family of colonizers who become colonized, for a hundred years. Each generation of the family is embedded with history and repetition. Every member of the first and second generation of the family's names are passed down throughout the subsequent generations. Not only their names but often personality traits are repeated too. The family becomes used as a representation for Colombia and its history. A majority of the novel takes place in one town and the Buendía family members are constantly at odds with one another. Colonel Aureliano joins the civil war to fight the conservatives. The introduction of a railroad to Macondo brings wealth and prosperity, but ends in tragedy with Jose Arcadio being the only survivor of the Banana Massacre. Colombia's history is told and read from an outsiders view. Melquíades, a family friend, reveals that he has recorded the story.

García Márquez explores the importance of memory and epistemological issues through the Insomnia Plague. During the Insomnia Plague characters within the novel slowly forget

everything they know. It worsens to the point where their knowledge becomes shared and they no longer understand written or spoken words. In this way García Márquez shows how an entire town was silenced. Melquíades reclaims the history of an entire town because it was simply forgotten.

## **II. Theory: Postcolonial Epistemologies**

Who tells the story of my grandmother greatly influences the story told. Therefore it also influences what knowledge can be claimed from the story. When my grandfather tells the story of my grandmother, it shows the tale of a loving, doting woman who lived for her family. When I tell the story of my grandmother, it shows the tale of woman locked in a patriarchal system who blindly followed love and religion, without ever knowing another way. Who tells the story and why does it matter? Who has the right to tell my grandmother's story?

Questions like these that surround my grandmother's story are not singular to her and are questions important to studying and understanding postcolonial epistemologies. How we know what we know generally summarizes the study of epistemology. The stories we tell ourselves,

the stories that we choose to believe creates much of our knowledge. If we are only ever told one story that story becomes all that we know. Only by introducing and exposing ourselves to a variety of stories can we learn to question our knowledge. Postcolonial theory helps to understand the premise and importance of these questions.

Edward Said, a prominent postcolonial theorist, discusses the relationship between colonizer and the colonized. He states, “‘Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) "the Occident'" (Said 2). Said focuses on the occident’s past of mystifying the orient. In separating themselves (the occident) from the orient, they effectively make the orient an “other.”

In doing so, it often creates a power dynamic between the two, where the occident sees itself as superior to the orient. In this sense, Postcolonialism focuses on the differences between occident and orient rather than the origin of the work. According to Said, “the things to look at are style, figure of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original" (Said 21). Said places emphasis on postcolonial works being representation of a particular author’s view, rather than an origin story for the entire country. This idea helps to stop the orient from becoming something to fetishize.

The idea of the orient and occident is present in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in a few different ways. The Buendías are descendants of Spain, the colonizer, but through many different events that occur in Macondo they become colonized. The Buendías are the original founders of Macondo. They were forced to flee their home in Colombia because of a fight between Jose Arcadio (the original patriarch) and his neighbor, Prudencio Aguilar. Yet, through events such as the Thousand Days War and Banana Massacre, Macondo slowly becomes colonized.

Said's orient and occident are just one option to understand postcolonial theory: the definition of postcolonial theory and literature is highly debated among scholars. Some scholars classify works being postcolonial only if the work originates from a colonized country. Other scholars have a wider range of what they consider postcolonial to include. Yet, all of the scholars focus on the relationships of colonizer and colonized.

Postcolonial theory uses historical and political contexts to better understand the situation of those who have been colonized. Paul Brians states, "people who call themselves postcolonial scholars generally see themselves as a part of a large (if poorly defined and disorganized) movement to expose and struggle against the influence of large, rich nations (mostly European, plus the U.S.) on poorer nations (mostly in the southern hemisphere)" (1). Brians discusses how postcolonial scholars are intertwined with politics and history and therefore cannot stand alone as only being literary scholars. It encourages communication between the different fields but, each field chooses its own niche to focus on, thus the basis of the debate can be easily seen. Rather than showing a unified front, the scholars are split between their different versions of post-colonial.

Postcolonialism includes history, politics, and current foreign relations. Jeong-eun Rhee and Binaya Subedi discuss the idea of spirituality as a focal point with regards to studying Postcolonialism today. Rhee and Subedi argue

*Post in postcolonial* is a reminder of continuously changing, adapting, persistent colonial and neocolonial structures and relations that have chained everyone... Here, history does not simply refer to the past as the past, but that past, present, and future are always shaping each other,

constituting and reconstituting our own subjectivity, memory, desire, and imagination. (342)

Neocolonialism shows the persistence of colonialism as exemplifies a way of entrapping countries through “legal” means that happens today. By making a country dependent on another, through economic ties is one way in which neocolonialism operates. The two countries enter into a contract, with loans and interest rates that the developing country will never be able to pay back, effectively indebting that country to the occident that offered the money. In this way one country has power over another, and has the ability to control knowledge and narrative. This ties directly into the ambiguity surrounding the post within Postcolonialism. Rather than having simply disappeared, Postcolonialism has evolved into more complex problems.

Despite the complexity, most scholars generally agree on the idea of representation. Who has the right to speak for those who have been without a voice? Said would argue that unless it is your country you do not have the right to speak for another. Who has the right to speak (if anyone) for voices that have long been silenced is a central question for Postcolonial Literature. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, however, discusses the implications of giving a voice to the subaltern arguing, “It is not mere tautology to say that the colonial or postcolonial subaltern is defined as being on the other side of difference, or an epistemic fracture, even from other groupings among the colonized. What is at stake when we insist that the subaltern speaks?” (64). Spivak argues that there is more to question than to simply promote giving the subaltern (the colonized) a voice. More than a black and white line separates the colonized and colonizers. What would it mean for the subaltern to speak? What happens when they do? Spivak shows the importance of questioning the consequences of promoting a voice to the voiceless when in positions of privilege. Yet, if those without a voice are not spoken for, how will they ever be

heard? In order to have a conversation about representation there needs to be a conversation to join. The fact that there is so little representation in the lay media shows a need for more representation in the literature we read.

Magical realism allows for a way to increase representation in the literature that we read. Magical realism is a literary mode that can be used to expose the areas of reality that have been ignored previously. Magical realism is a literary mode in which, the characters of the novel accept supernatural or magical events as everyday occurrences. Don Latham states, “magical realism as a literary mode is often subversive and transgressive, questioning the values and assumptions of the dominant society that it depicts” (Latham 1). For García Márquez magical realism allows for a way in which he can raise epistemological issues in Colombia and therefore gives diversity to previous portrayals of Colombia’s history. By being able to displace the atrocities that García Márquez saw into made up lands, he had more freedom to write what he wanted.

Without diversity the stories we know are one-dimensional and shape our views of others and ourselves. Our views create what we know. M. Hart discusses ghosts as, “[rupturing] the socio-spatial-temporal membrane of society and, in magic-realist fiction, operate as traces of subaltern trauma” (118). Hart utilizes many of the arguments found in Spivak’s work. It discusses ghosts as a projection of “a subaltern forced to ‘disappear’” due to political, social or racial differences. Hart not only ties magical realism to history, it shows its importance as a way to embody and fight against repression.

Said, in his work *Culture and Imperialism*, warns against eurocentrism. Eurocentrism gets rid of representation by overpowering the voices of those who have been colonized:

At the heart of European culture during the many decades of imperial expansion lay an undeterred and unrelenting eurocentrism. This accumulated experiences, territories, peoples, histories; it studied them, it classified them, it verified them... but above all, it subordinated them by banishing their identities. (222)

Eurocentrism not only silences but also wipes away identities of the people. With the power to wipe away identities, Europe was unstoppable in controlling and influencing countries that they saw as lesser. Said noted that “the way in which the alleged universalism of fields such as the classics... was eurocentric in the extreme, as if other literatures and societies had either an inferior or transcended value” (44). Transcended value while at first sounds like a compliment in reality suggests making the other something to fetishize, which Said strongly argues against in his other work: *Orientalism*. Having inferior value shows one of the many problems of eurocentrism: seeing others as beneath you and therefore not allowed to have an identity or a voice.

Rhee and Subedi also discuss eurocentrism and its power to silence narratives. They raise the question of “when your (ways of) being and knowing are constantly delegitimized, disrespected, marginalized, interiorized, attacked, erased, and/or destroyed, how do you continue to be?” (353). When everything about your life is deemed as wrong, why would you be moved to be at all? Colonization often isolates and oppresses other countries and uses them for their own gains. Those who have been oppressed should be speaking but cannot. This leads to a one sided view of history, where only the colonizers speak. It becomes a single voice culture where the single voice, being the only voice, becomes the truth. Authors who are marginalized become the sole voice for the place they are writing about.



There are many problems raised with respects to the idea of eurocentrism and the use and reinforcement of a single voice, especially that of language. Authors of postcolonial works are often critiqued for whatever language they choose to write in. To many critics the language determines the audience. Authors writing in the language of the colonizer risks alienating the people they are writing about. Because the language of the colonizer is not the language of the people the people may be unable to read the works. Therefore, even though they are being represented it raises the question of “whom the representation is really for?” Peter Barry in his work *Beginning Theory* argues, “some postcolonial writers have concluded that the colonizers’ language is permanently tainted, and that to write in it involves a crucial acquiescence in colonial structures” (188). Writing in the language of the colonizer is often seen as submitting to the colonizers’ influence and superiority. Writing in their own language could give a representation that is not fetishized and is written by them, one of the people.

The Buendías’ representation as both the colonized and the colonizer is an example of a double identity. Barry discusses how “the recognition of such double identities... is one of the strengths of the poscolonialist view” and “the double or hybrid identity is precisely what the postcolonial situation brings into being” (188). Those who have been colonized would inevitably have two different viewpoints. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, a postcolonial author, is an example of this double identity. Ngũgĩ saw the world differently in Gikuyu (his native language) than in the English he was taught by colonizers. According to Barry and to Ngũgĩ people who were once colonized would have experiences, understanding, and knowledge of both cultures. The “postcolonial situation” forces those who were previously colonized to readjust to having the freedom to choose what they want to act on, the part of the colonizer or the part of the colonized.

Even though those of a doubled identity have the freedom to choose, they are within an oppressive system that often favors that of the colonizer.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in his chapter "Native African Languages" discusses the use of language as a tool to control narratives. Ngũgĩ tells the story of growing up learning Gikuyu to being forced to learn English. From a young age Ngũgĩ discovered that language "had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning... The language, through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own" (3037).

Language created a worldview and a voice for Ngũgĩ and all of the people who shared Gikuyu. Yet, "English became the language of [his] formal education... English became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference" (3037).

Controlling the language was a way in which colonizers could control the people. By forcing students to learn, speak, and write in English they were denied the beauty and world that they had grown up with. Instead they were forced to take part in English becoming "the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom," where, "language and literature were taking [them] further and further from [themselves] to [their] other selves, from [their] world to other worlds" (3038). Language helps to create an identity and when a language is banished or replaced, so to is the identity that is tied to it.

Just as Ngũgĩ discussed English as a colonial control, he also discusses the use of his mother tongue as a way to fight colonial power. Following his education Ngũgĩ began to write in Gikuyu again, and faced backlash and criticism but said

We African writers are bound by our calling to do for our languages what Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare did for English; what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian; indeed what all writers in world history have

done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them, which process later opens the languages for philosophy, science, technology and all the other areas of human creative endeavors. (339)

Ngũgĩ lists authors who are considered part of the literary canon. He lists authors who are still widely read and discussed today, however, he lists authors who write in languages other than English. Ngũgĩ presents a challenge and a question to African writers to not “bow before it in deference” (it being the colonizer’s language) but instead to reclaim the languages they were first taught and claim their place in the world.

Gabriel García Márquez writes in his native language, which can present the problem of translation. García Márquez’s works are originally written in Spanish and are then later translated to other languages. This can present various interpretations in the meanings of words. Much like narrative, language can also be interpreted many different ways. There are constantly new editions and updates made to translations, including the works of García Márquez. Evidence of this exists in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* during the events of the Banana Massacre when the narrator comments that it took place in “the whorish world where Úrsula Iguarán had sold so many little candy animals” (306). In Spanish “whorish world” is “el puto mundo.” Puto in Spanish can be translated as whorish or as fucking (McCutcheon). James McCutcheon, a Spanish language scholar, notes that “it is entirely possible that Rabassa wanted to avoid using such a harsh word in English as the adjective ‘fucking,’” yet whorish “does not adequately transmit the emotional impact the original Spanish version has on the reader” (McCutcheon). The translation changes the meaning and the impact on the reader. Rabassa (the translator for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) chose whorish and that became his and his English readers’ interpretation of

that sentence within the novel. In a way, Rabassa becomes a part of the readers' understanding of the novel because he chose that interpretation of the language.

Some people within their countries criticized Gabriel García Márquez, Salman Rushdie, and many others because they wrote about countries that they were no longer a part of. These authors were either exiled or seeking refuge due to political differences. They were criticized since they no longer experienced the oppression and problems that the people still in those countries did. So how could they accurately portray these countries if they were not a part of them? García Márquez's life shows this as he lived and died in Mexico City (LaRosa & Mejía 162). The people argued that these authors could not give an accurate representation because they were then separated from the issues. Yet, in a country whose opposing voices are oppressed, what other way can that country's voice to be heard over the eurocentrism that holds power within the country? In this way eurocentricism allows for the dictation of truth.

The postmodern tradition allows for one way to subvert eurocentrism as there is no one subjective truth. In the postmodern tradition, all truth is subjective and no objective, one, non-questioning truth exists. Instead, there are theories of truth and what you choose to believe in becomes the truth. On the opposite end of the scale is the modernist tradition. In modernism there is a story but the perspective constantly changes and therefore the story changes as well. The problem this presents for modernists is that no one can accurately give the truth. Who tells the story matters because the storyteller has the power to change the narrative that you think you know. Who tells the story gives one version of the truth.

Gabriel García Márquez fights to show the need for an objective truth in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. According to Raymond Williams, "for Garcia Márquez and Latin American writing, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* represented a culmination, in 1967, of a modernist

project that privileged issues of truth” (7). By “privileging” truth García Márquez raises many epistemological issues in the narrative of his country. García Márquez’s use of the Banana Massacre is just one example of privileging truth in his work. The town of Macondo completely forgets the massacre, even though they lived through it. The government fights to hide the massacre or to downplay its severity. Yet, the narrator of the novel refuses to forget the tragedy. García Márquez himself refuses to forget the tragedy as it appears in almost every one of his works.

García Márquez’s exile due to his writings show the subjective reality of politics. The government’s ability to dictate what is available to the public and what is censored or threatened is dangerous. If no other way of becoming informed than through the media the government essentially provides the only way to think. Truth becomes subjective because it depends on who tells the story. In this way truth becomes whatever and whoever you choose to believe, regardless of facts. García Márquez tried to present his facts through his journalism, but threatened by the government who wanted control of the narrative influenced his decisions.

García Márquez’s refusal to forget his country’s past is his way of reclaiming the past. Barry makes the claim that, “the first step for ‘colonized’ people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past” (186). By weaving his works with the history of Colombia and his own past, he reclaims his history and tells it from his point of view. In doing this he changed the narrative that has survived for so long because it was uncontested.

### **III. Epistemological Questions in the Works of Gabriel García Márquez**

#### **a. The History of Colombia and Gabriel García Márquez**

Gabriel García Márquez started his career in journalism and fled Colombia due to his political involvements and a dictatorship that disagreed with what García Márquez wrote. The article that led to his self-exile was a piece on the shipwreck of a Colombian Naval Vessel for *El Espectador* (Caistor 1). The story exposed the government's attempt to create a cover up story.

The Colombian government tried to hide that the smuggling of contraband caused the shipwreck by instead calling it an accident. García Márquez wanting to expose the lie chose to write the story (Caistor 1). Yet, fearing backlash from the government, he spent the rest of his life writing about a country he could not live in.

His controversial journalism was only one of the various political activities that shaped his life. He was considered a leftist and a liberal. One of his well-known friends included Fidel Castro and García Márquez was even invited to talks during the Cuban revolution because of his political beliefs and friendship with Castro. Just before García Márquez's birth, Colombia had faced a civil war between the liberals and conservatives (the Thousand Days War). García Márquez would ultimately weave this event into the narrative of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The historical events taught by his grandfather and an imbedded respect for the supernatural from his grandmother became the basis of many of García Márquez's works. García Márquez used politics in his works to bring awareness to the political turmoil of Colombia.

Just as García Márquez sought to raise awareness in politics he also helped to increase recognition for the Latin American Literature. It made Latin American literature widely known and recognized and the authors involved pushed the boundaries of what literature could do.

Winning the Nobel Prize in 1982 gave García Márquez a platform to give a voice back to Latin America. The first Colombian and only the fourth Latin American to win, he is considered a hero among many in Colombia for his words and his works. "The Solitude of Latin America" was an important idea to him and became the name of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. He dedicated his speech to discussing the strength and oppression of Latin America. He ends his speech by saying that

A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth. (Speech)

A piece of his speech is a direct reference to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In the novel the utopia of Macondo is destroyed, love and happiness does not seem possible, and the family does not receive a second opportunity on earth. His novel explores much of what García Márquez disagrees with and sees as wrong within his country. His acceptance speech does the same thing. By categorizing his hopes as part of a utopia in the current world, García Márquez marks what he sees as flaws in Latin America, as a way to create change in the system that lead to their “condemnation.”

Even though released from Spain’s rule many Latin American countries (Colombia included) struggled to establish their governments. Following Napoleon Bonaparte’s failed rule of Spain in the early 1800’s the American colonies demanded autonomy and eventually complete independence from Spain. Colombia, one among many colonies of Spain, won its independence and “the places that won independence from the Spanish Crown had had to identify the type of government that would best respect their needs; overwhelmingly, these nation-states adopted the form of a liberal republic” (LaRosa & Mejía 9). While Colombia struggled towards a liberal republic, the country constantly disagreed between the liberal and the centralist ideas of government.

Colombia became seen as a democratic representative republic that struggled between the conservative and the liberal parties. Colombia became a two party system and “over the course of the next 130 years, these were the only two political parties in Colombia with the capacity to



control the entire state and its institutions” (67). Both parties fought for control and for the presidency. The idea and use of a president became so engrained in Colombian tradition that, “what was argued over... was the centralist versus federalist character of the nation’s organization and the relative balance of power between branches of government” (56). According to LaRosa and Mejía, the federalist character argued the liberal view of the country and the centralized character argued that of the conservatives. The conservative party remained in power for an extensive amount of Colombia’s history (nearly fifty years).

Colombia’s history shows a complex relationship with the countries that led to the devastation and the affect of constant colonial rule and influence (both by Europe and the United States) had on Latin America. LaRosa and Mejía note that, “comparing Colombia with Mexico or Argentina during the nineteenth century reveals common patterns of conflict surrounding the difficult task of constructing a nation after three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule” (83). Many of the Latin American countries faced political turmoil due to a colonized past. Colombia in particular was not only affected by its past but by other countries choosing to affect its present as well. The United States “expressed its interest in influencing Latin American politics and trade in the famous Monroe Doctrine” (194). The Monroe Doctrine was the United States way of stopping re-colonization. Yet, it also set a tone of saving Latin American countries and invited the United States to become even more involved in their affairs. Colombia maintained a healthy relationship with the United States, despite the events of the Banana Massacre, since they were a “main market for Colombia’s primary exports” (199).

## **b. The Banana Massacre**

In the 1920's Colombia would establish a trade relationship with the United States. The United Fruit Company (UFCO), established in Colombia, monopolized the banana market by controlling the railroad, price, and export of bananas. While foreigners controlled Colombia's economy lead to a divide in the country as the wealthy celebrated and the poor were massacred (LaRosa & Mejía 114). In 1928 Colombian workers chose to strike in response to the economic hardships they faced and "the workers were mowed down in an extraordinary show of brutality that officially left forty-seven dead" (LaRosa & Mejía 114). Denied by both the Colombian and United States' governments the massacre was largely ignored until Gabriel García Márquez depicted the massacre in his novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The novel states that three thousand workers died, however, most estimates show one thousand to two thousand died. Yet, all three of these figures are significantly more than the forty-seven that the governments officially claimed.

The Banana Massacre became immortalized in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In the novel, the Massacre resulted from the workers striking. The workers, the people of Macondo, had horrible working conditions and:

They stated, furthermore, that they were not being paid in real money but in scrip, which was good only to buy Virginia ham in the company commissaries. José Arcadio Segundo was put in jail because he revealed that the scrip system was a way for the company to finance its fruit ships, which without the commissary merchandise would have to return empty from New Orleans to the banana ports. (300)

By paying workers in scrip the company essentially paid itself. The workers, having no other options, became forced to spend their earnings at company stores. Scrips trapped workers into a

cycle of dependency and allowed the company to create a monopoly on the banana industry as well as on the food supply to the workers. José Arcadio Segundo's realization showed the company's dependency on the workers. The company had made them dependent because the company was dependent on both their labor and their consumption. This realization led to the strike, as it secured the worker's importance to the company.

Despite the company's need for the workers, at the strike the army massacred the workers as a way to "reestablish public order" (302). After waiting for hours for the train that would take the workers away from the company (a part of the strike) the governments threatened the workers with guns to vacate the area:

The captain gave the order to fire and fourteen machine guns answered at once. But it all seemed like a farce. ... Suddenly, on one side of the station, a cry of death tore open the enchantment: "Aaaagh, Mother." A seismic voice, a volcanic breath, the roar of cataclysm broke out in the center of the crowd with a great potential of expansion. (305)

The people in the crowd did not immediately register the danger that they were in. The silence before the horror is given so much attention in this passage. Not only described as silence but as a hallucination or enchantment, something that the town collectively felt and saw. It was as if the town was under a spell. Instead the crowd felt "petrified by an instantaneous invulnerability." Invulnerability is the "incapability of being wounded or injured" (OED). That silence, pause, stillness before the massacre created a sense of invincibility that united the people against the oppression and violence they faced. Yet, death broke the enchantment. The roar of "political or social upheaval, which sweeps away the old order of things," the roar of cataclysm splintered the previously unified group as the army shot the rifles into the crowd. The cataclysm of the

massacre swept away the silence, the enchantment of unity that the people had faced only moments before.

After waking, José Arcadio Segundo wandered into a house needing care for his injuries from the massacre and discovered that no one in Macondo had any memory of the massacre. Upon discovering that no one remembered the massacre, José Arcadio Segundo “read an extraordinary proclamation to the nation which said that the workers had left the station and had returned home in peaceful groups” (309). Families that had lost family members denied a massacre of any kind. The government claimed no such massacre had occurred either. The government’s “official version, repeated a thousand times and mangled out all over the country by every means of communication the government found at hand, was finally accepted: there were no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back home to their families and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rain stopped” (309-310). The government controlled the narrative of the massacre. Having killed three thousand people, and José Arcadio Segundo being the only survivor, the company had the ability to deny the massacre. They controlled the narrative of the people which, given time, forced the people to forget the atrocity that occurred because the government vehemently denied it in every form of communication possible. José Arcadio Segundo could do nothing to convince people or to tell the truth because he did not have the same kind of influence or outreach that the government did.

The government not only denied that the massacre occurred but that everyone was happy in the town. The army continued the pretense of searching for people who disagreed with the government, but the military claimed “‘nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing ever will happen. This is a happy town.’ In that way they were finally able to wipe out the union leaders” (310). García Márquez did not forget the Banana Massacre,

even though the people of the Macondo forgot it and the government denied it. The government completely changed the narrative of what really happened at the train station with the union workers. By manipulating the media and news outlets, the government effectively and completely rewrote the history of Macondo.

The Banana Massacre or banana groves are mentioned or referenced in almost all of his works. In Gabriel García Márquez's novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* tells the story of the murder of Santiago Nasar. María (a main character in the novella) is describing the night of the wedding and states, "on the other side you could make out the groves of the banana trees in the moonlight" (66). This reference to the groves is from a time before the massacre. Yet, immediately following this description Santiago Nasar (the now dead man) "pointed to an intermittent light at the sea and told us that it was the soul in torment of a slave ship that had sunk with a cargo of blacks" (67). The image of the banana groves is paired with one of death and human suffering. In García Márquez's autobiography, he recalls the train ride back to his hometown with his mother and looks out the desecrated, ruined land that once the banana groves of the banana company grew.

García Márquez continues to reference the banana groves in his novel *Of Love and Other Demons*. *Of Love and Other Demons* follows the life of Sierva María. In *Of Love and Other Demons*, the convent that Sierva María is doomed to die in had "a stone path through the banana trees and wild ferns... beneath the tree a cistern of stagnant water had rusted iron rim on which captive macaws performed like circus acrobats" (62). He is reversing the narrative that the government created in denying the Banana Massacre. By associating the banana groves and calling the land where the banana company once was ruined, creates negative associations with the banana company. This directly opposes the "happy town" that the military tried to portray

Macondo as, following denying the massacre. In the case of the Banana Massacre, the government decides the narrative. The narrative that everyone eventually accepts as the truth is the narrative the government told. They have been told it for so long and so many times that they forget the massacre even occurred. José Arcadio Segundo's narrative and voice are drowned and silenced by that of the government. By choosing to write about the banana massacre and grove in his works, García Márquez is changing the narrative of Colombia and showing people a different side to history than was previously seen. History and memory are important themes throughout his work.

While the Banana Massacre shows the government's control of the narrative, the Insomnia Plague allowed for the distortion of truth and memory. Macondo's voice was silenced as the people lost their sense of language and communication. Macondo, the fictional setting for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, is often condemned to a state of solitude and experiences a distortion of reality through the insomnia plague. Founded by José Arcadio, Macondo became the home for the many generations of his family that chose to live there. In the beginning of the novel, Macondo faces an insomnia plague. All of the inhabitants simply stop sleeping. As the plague continues, time and reality begin to lose hold on the inhabitants and they begin to confuse reality and imagination. The town found that no one could sleep and, "in that state of hallucinated lucidity, not only did they see images of their own dreams, but some saw images dreamed by others" (44). Dreams started to become reality. Yet, even more importantly, dreams were becoming a collective participation.

There was no separation between self, other, and reality, because everyone's reality and dreams were being shared. The town separated itself from the rest of the world as the inhabitants soon began to forget how to read and write. They had continued to live always awake but as

“they went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which could escape irremediably when they forgot the value of written words” (47). As they had slowly begun to lose their memories, they would label everything so as not to forget its name or purpose. Yet, upon the plague having stayed long enough they lost all ability to communicate. Without the ability to write, they would have no way to contact the outside world, and in fact they had not contacted the outside world to begin with. Macondo lived within its own state of isolation first from the outside then from its self as everyone slowly forgot everything.

The Insomnia Plague raises many epistemological issues as the entire town’s memories, language, and understanding of the world around them was erased. With nothing to base their knowledge on the town is forced to be dependent on each other and outside sources for their history. Thus in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the narrative was shaped from an outside view, one that greatly changed the narrative being told to the characters and the narrative that we as readers read.

### **c. Melquíades & Solitude**

An outside view determined the narrative of the Banana Massacre and the narrative of the Buendía family. Melquíades plays a pivotal and epistemological role in the history of the Buendía family, as he is the outsider who records the family’s history. Melquíades is a gypsy that amazed José Arcadio from his first visit to Macondo. Melquíades continually visited the town and the family throughout the hundred years of the family’s history. In Melquíades final return to the town, he returned as a ghost, seeking rescue from the solitude of death. Melquíades is outside of the Buendía family, and yet he is the one with the most information on the family, knowing the entire family’s history both before and after the actual events taking place. Melquíades provides the most “real” option of the truth for the family in that he was there for most of the

generations of the Buendía family. By the end of the novel, Melquíades is the only way for the final generation of the Buendía family to know anything about their history, at that point in the family's history, Aureliano Babilonia could have completely reconstructed his own history, but Melquíades work showed them the reality of their history and ultimately the reality of Aureliano Babilonia's death. Melquíades helped to remove the family from solitude, which had previously affected the truth that the family believed in throughout the novel.

Melquíades presents an outsiders view on the family's history, but much of the family lives in varying degrees of solitude that affect the way they interact both with the world and each other. Many of the family members show varying degrees of identity crises as they isolate themselves. This is best exemplified through Aureliano Buendía. First only described as solitary he transitions to a state of solitude, as he grows older, by separating himself into his lab.

Aureliano (who later becomes Colonel Aureliano Buendía) "spent interminable house in the abandoned laboratory... Adolescence had taken away the softness in his voice and had made him silent and definitely solitary, but, on the other hand, it had restored the intense expression that he had had in his eyes since he was born" (39). However, Aureliano eventually becomes the leader of the revolution. Long gone, was the child and adolescent who chose to isolate himself, in his place was a man who spent his days spreading his ideas and silencing those around him who opposed him.

Self-solitude forces the character choosing self-exile to speak for him or herself. By separating him or her from society (and even their families) no one can speak for him or her but him or her. More often than not, the characters experiencing self solitude are also experiencing problematic memories that affect their ability to recall events as well as their ability to separate reality and objectivity from the subjective lives that they create in their solitude. This solitude



also leads to a type of stasis, as without interaction with others, there is not as much room for growth or change. This includes any growth or change regarding the truths that characters in self-solitude choose to believe in.

The character that best exemplifies this problem is Colonel Aureliano Buendía and all the subsequent characters that are named after him. Aureliano (who later becomes Colonel Aureliano Buendía) “spent interminable hours in the abandoned laboratory... Adolescence had taken away the softness in his voice and had made him silent and definitely solitary, but, on the other hand, it had restored the intense expression that he had had in his eyes since he was born” (39). Solitary in this context is about the isolation Aureliano experiences. Not only does he choose to separate himself from the rest of the family but also he isolates himself by going to an abandoned laboratory. In this sense he is ensuring that he will not encounter others and thus is forced into a state of solitude because he has no hope for relief.

Aureliano’s marriage to Remedios forces deviation from his solitude, but he continues to condemn himself to solitude, which affects the objectivity of the truth being told. One of the few instances Aureliano chose to interact with society was his interest and eventual marriage to Remedios. Remedios was the daughter of Don Apolinar Moscote, the appointed magistrate of the town, who was only nine years old upon first meeting Aureliano. Obsessed with Remedios, Aureliano searched all over town for any chance to see her, however, “he found her only in the image that saturated his private and terrible solitude” (65). Upon meeting, Aureliano and Remedios barely even talked. Aureliano became so enamored that he was unable to speak to her. The instant pull Aureliano felt towards Remedios led him to spending less time in his lab. Aureliano’s marriage to Remedios showed his solitary nature as he chose a bride who was not yet old enough to be a bride. The narrator describes his married life as, “his sedentary life... it

hardened on his lips the straight line of solitary meditation and implacable decision” (87). Even though Remedios was able to draw Aureliano out of his complete solitude, she is not able to cure Aureliano of his solitary ways. Aureliano moved between periods of stasis, solitude and moments of movement in time, where he was able to interact with those around him. Interacting with others allowed for the inclusion of Remedios but even she was unable to create a shift in Aureliano’s knowledge and stories. His marriage was an attempt move away from his repetition but it could not cure him of his stasis. This stasis and solitude meant that Aureliano is the only one who could give his narrative because no one else was given the opportunity to hear or be a part of his narrative.

Just as Aureliano was immobilized in a state of solitude, so too are Aureliano’s offspring. His solitude was multiplied as everyone one of his sons and namesakes holds the same solitary stare. During Aureliano’s time as a colonel, he fathered seventeen sons. The mothers “brought children of all ages, all colors, but all males and all with a look of solitude that left no doubt as to the relationship” (150). The repetitions of look and name among seventeen sons, as well as their eventual deaths, illustrate the stasis that was Aureliano’s life. The repetition of not only his name but also his solitude shows his inability to change, to move forward.

His mother, Ursula, sees how Aureliano was never one for love, but rather a pure product of the solitude he chose. Ursula goes as far as to think, “she realized that Colonel Aureliano Buendía had not lost his love for the family because the war hardened him, as she had thought before, but that he had never loved anyone... the lucidity of her old age allowed her to see, and she said so many times, that the cries of children in the mothers’ wombs are not announcements of ventriloquism or a faculty for prophecy but an unmistakable sign of an incapacity for love” (248-249). As a baby still in the womb, Aureliano had a habit of weeping that others would

attribute to a future of “ventriloquism” or “prophecy.” Yet, Ursula was right in her old age. Aureliano grew to be neither and instead spent his life in solitude. Had Aureliano become a prophet he would have spent his life speaking for a higher power. Similarly, had Aureliano devoted his life to ventriloquism, he would have spent his life speaking for someone else. Yet, instead of speaking for someone or something (the divine) he spent his life in solitude: unable to speak for anyone but himself.

This led to his story only surviving through legend was created through repetition. We, as readers, are aware of Aureliano’s fate from the first line of the novel. The novel begins, “many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice” (1). This line, and the memory of discovering ice are repeated throughout the novel at various times in Aureliano’s life. The constant repetition of not only these lines, but also his name creates a kind of living legend.

As narrative is repeated it can lead to the creation of a legend. The repetition of narrative and creation of legend is embedded in Aureliano’s obsession of melting and creating gold fish. Lost in his solitude, “he lighted the lamp in order to count the little gold fishes, which he kept in a tin pail. There were seventeen of them. Since he had decided not to sell any, he kept on making two fishes a day and when he finished twenty-five he would melt them down and start all over again” (264). Thus, Aureliano lived in a state of stasis because he never actually accomplished anything. Each day by melting the fish and re-making them into fish, nothing changed. He would start and end each day the same way he had the day before. Legends are an interpretation of a story or a person’s life. Aureliano’s depiction shows how the same narrative was told so many times that he is unable to escape the repetition and solitude he created by allowing the legend to become his only knowledge and way of understanding the world around him.

Aureliano was not the only one to live in a state of self-solitude, his father José Arcadio did as well. José Arcadio Buendía, the founder of Macondo and the origin of the Buendía line, often experienced confusion of time. José Arcadio Buendía's end of life and subsequent death show the cyclical nature of solitude. José Arcadio chose to live in solitude without any real future. His only link to the world is his past, Prudencio Aguilar. José Arcadio began to lose all sense of reality:

He liked to go from room to room, as in a gallery of parallel mirrors, until Prudencio Aguilar would touch him on the shoulder. Then he would go back from room to room, walking in reverse, going back over his trail, and he would find Prudencio Aguilar in the room of reality. But one night, two weeks after they took him to his bed, Prudencio Aguilar touched his shoulder in an intermediate room and he stayed there forever, thinking that it was the real room. (139-140)

José Arcadio created his own version of reality and memory in his maze of mirrors. Prudencio is ultimately the one to lead José Arcadio to his death, as he is the only real tie José Arcadio can interact with as he wanders his solitude of endless mirrors. The mirrors would endlessly reflect themselves, creating a stasis of time within the rooms José Arcadio walked through. José Arcadio was creating his own version of reality within the mirrors. He had to retrace his steps in order to leave once Prudencio Aguilar had found him. José Arcadio had to rely on Prudencio Aguilar to return him to the small semblance of reality he had left. The repetition of Prudencio Aguilar in both helping José Arcadio to leave the hall of mirrors and in not allowing him to forget his past shows the cycle José Arcadio lives.

While José Arcadio Buendía spends the remainder of his days wandering in the solitude of his own mind, he is never truly alone. Prudencio Aguilar helps José Arcadio to remain

connected to reality. Yet, both Melquíades and Prudencio Aguilar return from the dead, craving human companionship. They could not stand the solitude of death. Having left Riohacha because of the pain José Arcadio caused Prudencio, he was surprised that, “after many years of yearning for the living was so intense, the need for company so pressing, so terrifying the nearness of that other death which exists within death, that Prudencio Aguilar had ended up loving his worst enemy” (77). Prudencio was tortured more by his memories of the living than he was his death at the hands of José Arcadio. Prudencio is the past that had originally returned from the dead as a way of torturing José Arcadio for his murder. Stephen M. Hart, in his essay on magical realism in the Americas and the use of politicized ghosts, argues that, “ghosts often operate in magic-realist fiction as disembodied memorialization of a trauma experienced by the subaltern, normally in the past” (118). Yet, upon Prudencio finding the Buendía family in Macondo, he serves as a reminder of the past. He is not only a reminder of the past, but of the dark past that Macondo is built upon. Macondo was not made from a family simply wanting a new life, but rather was sought out as a refuge from pain, loneliness and ghosts born of wrongdoings. Prudencio condemned the Buendía family to solitude when he haunted their house after his murder, but the he himself cannot stand the isolation and thus searches for the family again. Prudencio symbolizes the trauma of violence that Macondo is doomed to repeat throughout the five generations of the family.

José Arcadio Buendía’s narrative was greatly influenced by Prudencio and Melquíades who both affected what José Arcadio believed and did. While Prudencio’s ghost haunted José Arcadio Buendía and originally forced him to move to avoid the guilt, the ghost of Melquíades was a welcome surprise. Just as Prudencio could not stand the isolation, Melquíades could not bear the solitude. Melquíades “really had been through death, but he had returned because he

could not bear the solitude” (49). It is interesting to note that Prudencio has not moved completely through death, and that it is suggested that Melquíades has. As well as the fact that Prudencio is only ever regarded as lonely, where as Melquíades escapes to the Buendía family’s home to escape solitude. In J.D. Isip’s essay, “History and Memory in Almanac of the Dead and One Hundred Years of Solitude,” Isip discusses the use of memory and reality. Isip argues that García Márquez suggests, “neither history nor memories provide an absolute or reliable truth about the past and the future, but are, instead, constructions of the individual—constructions used to benefit and, in many cases, sustain” (133). In this way, Melquíades provides stability for the novel, in that Melquíades is the recorder of the Buendía family history. It also suggests that Prudencio is a figment or construction of José Arcadio’s mind. Prudencio is unable to move through death completely because José Arcadio cannot let go of his past and the violence that ultimately created Macondo. Perhaps even more importantly, José Arcadio is unable to live without Prudencio Aguilar, as he depends on him to return him to reality each day. Therefore while Prudencio Aguilar is a necessity and a constant reminder of José Arcadio’s wrongdoings, Melquíades is not a regret or pain for José Arcadio, he is instead the only way for the Buendía family to know their history.

Melquíades is outside of the Buendía family, and yet he is the one with the most information on the family, knowing the entire family’s history both before and after the actual events taking place. How could someone outside of the family be able to give a voice to multiple generations of the same family? How would the story have differed if a family member had recorded the history? Melquíades provides the most “real” option of the truth for the family in that he was there for most of the generations of the Buendía family. By the end of the novel, Melquíades is the only way for the final generation of the Buendía family to know anything

about their history, at that point in the family's history, Aureliano Babilonia could have completely reconstructed his own history, but Melquíades work showed them the reality of their history and ultimately the reality of Aureliano Babilonia's death.

The relationship of José Arcadio and Prudencio Aguilar and the relationship of José Arcadio and Melquíades show different types of memory and reality. The only outsiders to regularly interact with the family were Prudencio Aguilar and Melquíades. José Arcadio, Melquíades and Prudencio Aguilar all show the cyclical nature of solitude and loneliness. Despite being dead, they are unable to distinguish between life and death and thus exist all together at the same time. Reality is constantly distorted within the novel.

By making Melquíades the narrator, García Márquez forces the reader to view the family both from an outsider's perspective, and as a family member. As a reader finishes novel, they are placed in the same position as Aureliano Babilonia – they are finishing the narrative, just as Aureliano finishes it. Yet, the reader is not a family member and is viewing the family's history as Melquíades did. The narration becomes integral in creating a dual vision of the family for the reader.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The works of Gabriel García Márquez show the importance of giving a voice to the people without one. García Márquez shows different ways of escaping colonizing forces. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the characters choose lives of solitude to keep colonization at bay, and ultimately it ends in the destruction of all. Yet, García Márquez also shows the power a

voice can have. By reclaiming his history and the history of his country he shows the impact a voice can have.

Who tells the story does matter. Everyone brings their own bias and background to every story they tell. An event can be wiped away if only one narrative of it is told: just as the reclaiming of an event can reshape the memories of everyone who encounters the reclamation. Melquíades also shows the importance of who creates the narrative. Just as the Buendías exemplify both the colonized and the colonizers, Melquíades represents both someone within and outside of the family.

The juxtaposition of Melquíades position is also found in how the Buendía's are both colonizers and colonized which mirrors problems found in postcolonial works as a whole. The family is originally from Spain and essentially colonizes Macondo. Yet, through events like the Banana Massacre, the family ultimately becomes colonized along with the rest of the town (like Colombia). They are both silenced and act as the silencers but it is their choice to partake in solitude that keeps them in a state of stasis.

The Buendía family's position of solitude kept them from being able to have their own voice. Solitude stripped the Buendía family of their voice as well as destroyed them. Thus, Melquíades spoke for the family. The family's story would not be known without Melquíades. More than spoke – Melquíades created the family narrative. Upon completion of the novel it is revealed that not only did Melquíades record the family's history but he also knew their futures. In this way the family was shown to be fated. No matter their decisions or actions they were doomed from the very beginning of their story. Without Melquíades the Buendía stories would have been left unshared.

My grandpa chose to isolate himself just as the Buendía's chose isolation. My grandpa



created solitude for himself and deprived me of access to his narratives. By moving to Hobbs, he placed himself further away from everyone, to the point where he is almost inaccessible. He has a flip phone that he has owned for the last ten years but never has on. As he said, his “phone is to call people, not for people to call him” (Papa Jean). As always, he chooses his religion over his family. Refusing to attend weddings that were not through a Catholic ceremony and to someone who was not Catholic, led to divisions between my grandpa and most of my cousins.

My grandmother faced her own kind of insomnia plague: Alzheimer’s. My older brother and I were the last grandkids to see my grandmother before she died. It was pure luck that we stopped to see her, we had not originally intended to stop. My grandmother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s a few years before and had been steadily declining. We visited her in the assisted living facility, when she was wheeled out to us I couldn’t breathe. She was unrecognizable, but not just to me: to herself as well. She had reached the stage of Alzheimer’s that she lost the ability to talk and no longer recognized anyone, not even her husband. Memory allows us to immortalize people by how you remembered them following death.

My memory of my grandmother is uncertain. My memory of her shifts and changes as I age and as I encounter more narratives of her that I had not heard before. She lived an isolated life, and thus her stories were and are not easily accessible to me, except through the memories of others. In many ways the dream sharing of the insomnia plague explains my current understanding of my grandmother because it is only through sharing the memories that I am given a clear idea of whom she was. For me, the only way to consistently access the memories of my grandmother are through my grandfather’s attempts to immortalize her in words.

García Márquez and my grandfather both show the importance of preserving memories. Whether the memories are fact or not, they become the truth when they are the memories to

persist against all other narratives and are accepted as the truth by those who encounter it. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* there is no set reality but been written immortalizes the story. The story itself is a way to remember the lives of the family that discovered and essentially created Macondo. By the end of the novel the family is dispersed or killed and is no longer the foundation of the town; they are destroyed. There are hints scattered throughout the novel that future generations don't really know what came before them. Even though the dead never truly leave Macondo, as many reappear as ghosts, the dead do not pass on what they know. The town has no set reality and thus the people have no set reality. The novel itself reveals a way and a hope to preserve the memory and reality of the people but also questions memory and reality and our dependency on it.

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