

Cultural Contact, Modernization, and Imperialism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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Toward the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Amaranta Úrsula, the great-granddaughter of José Arcadio and Úrsula Buendía, the founders of Macondo, returns from Brussels to her native town. While Macondo, the setting of Gabriel García Márquez's masterpiece, can be read as a representation of the Latin American hinterlands, even of Latin America as a hinterland,¹ Amaranta Úrsula is described in terms that contradict this setting: "She was . . . spontaneous . . . emancipated . . . a free and modern spirit" (378).

Amaranta Úrsula's modernity gainsays the center/periphery models that were in vogue at the time of the novel's publication and which García Márquez's depiction of Macondo seems to closely replicate in other respects. In fact, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* clearly delineates the cultural subordination of the periphery to the center and the underlying international economic hierarchy, which, in principle, is manifested in the monotonous and slavish repetition of whatever novelty originates in the center. Moreover, the presence of the US-based banana company serves to represent, with imagination and verve, the practices and abuses characteristic of imperial capital in Latin America.

Despite the novel's overall fidelity to center/periphery models and the clarity with which international economic and cultural hierarchies are presented, Amaranta Úrsula is an exception to this subordination. Instead she is presented as having achieved a sense of parity with the cultural centers.

When she received pictures of the most recent fashions in the mail, they only proved that she had not been wrong about the models that she designed herself and sewed on Amaranta's primitive pedal machine. She subscribed to every fashion magazine, art publication, and popular music review published in Europe, and she had only to glance at them to realize

that things in the world were going just as she imagined they were. It was incomprehensible why a woman with that spirit would have returned to a dead town burdened by dust and heat. (379)

The scope of this “spirit,” is such that Amaranta has achieved a full and equal belonging to the modern world from which her fashion, art, and music magazines originate. What she imagines on her own corresponds to the latest trends developed in the European and US centers. In the case of Amaranta Úrsula, modernity no longer resides outside in a distant center: It has been fully internalized.

Moreover, in this case, the time lag between center and periphery, the consequence of the existence of innovations originating in the center and being slowly disseminated towards the periphery, has completely disappeared. One must remember that at the time set in the novel in which Amaranta Úrsula appears, air transport is only in its infancy and, therefore, the speed of cultural dissemination is limited. (In a characteristic García Márquesian touch, Amaranta’s Belgian husband, Gastón, “conceived the idea of establishing an airmail service” for Macondo, alas, frustrated because the plane “was delivered to the scattered tribe of the Makondos” in Tanganyika [406]). While presented as another whimsical example of García Márquez celebrated magical realism,² the fact is that Amaranta Úrsula’s modernity permits her to be fully in sync with European developments, the eternal goal of Latin American and other peripheric artists. Latin America’s always obsolescent modernization is replaced with full simultaneity with the center’s innovations.

Amaranta Úrsula’s consanguinity with modernity, while exceptional, is not a wholly isolated case in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The novel traces this “modern spirit” throughout the female members of the Buendía clan. In fact, her sister, Renata Remedios, is described as also having a “modern spirit” (273). However, unlike Amaranta Úrsula, Renata Remedios’s modernity is ultimately truncated by her tragic fate. (After the discovery of her romance with the mechanic Mauricio

Babilonia, which led to the birth of the last Aureliano, Renata Remedios was placed by her archconservative mother Fernanda in a nunnery for the rest of her life.)

The novel also explicitly connects Amaranta Úrsula with her great-grandmother Úrsula:

With Úrsula's death the house again fell into a neglect from which it could not be rescued even by a will as resolute and vigorous as that of Amaranta Úrsula, who many years later, being a happy, modern woman without prejudices, with her feet on the ground, opened doors and windows in order to drive away the rain, restored the garden, exterminated the red ants who were already walking across the porch in broad daylight, and tried in vain to reawaken the forgotten spirit of hospitality. (345–46)

Despite the differences between Úrsula, whose activity was exercised within the limits of a traditional patriarchal society, and Amaranta Úrsula, whose modernity, as the quotation makes clear, implicitly rejected any limiting gender roles, they are linked precisely in that their agency was directed toward hospitality. *Hospitality* is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) as “the act or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill.” In other words, underlying Úrsula's and Amaranta Úrsula's hospitality is precisely an opening to strangers and otherness and, therefore, cultural contact. Given that it enables looking outside one's own culture, hospitality is, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, an opening to the possibility of modernization. It is a possible antidote to the solitude that García Márquez presents as the central curse that both threatens and defines Macondo.

However, what differentiates Amaranta Úrsula from Renata Remedios or Úrsula is the extent of her contact with modernity. Her stay in Brussels permits her to internalize the values of modernity, which, as we have seen, is identified with Europe and the United States. It may be relevant that as her mother, the ultraconservative Fernanda

points out, “Brussels was so close to Paris and its perdition” (351); but Paris was not only the capital of perdition but also of modernity³ (and, one can add, modernity is for Fernanda perdition). It is true that residence in Europe is not in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* a guarantee of modernity. Amaranta Úrsula’s brother, José Arcadio, who was sent by Fernanda to Rome to become pope, is a case in point, even if his sexual preferences—he may be a pederast—break the strict heterosexual norms of Macondo. Nevertheless, Amaranta Úrsula is shown as having fully embraced Western modernity at its most progressive not only when it comes to culture—that is, fashion, art, or music—but also when it comes to gender issues and sexual mores. However, while *One Hundred Years of Solitude* clearly presents progressive values as linked to the West, García Márquez does not turn a blind eye toward the dark side of modernity: imperialism and ecological destruction.

An Obsolete Modernization

One of the earliest examples of this search for modernization in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is, in fact, linked to one of its best-known and most peculiar recurring group of characters: the gypsies. As García Márquez notes: “Every year during the month of March a family of ragged gypsies would set up their tents near the village, and with a great uproar of pipes and kettledrums they would display new inventions. First they brought the magnet” (1). Other “inventions” they would bring to Macondo include “a telescope and a magnifying glass the size of a drum, which they exhibited as the latest discovery of the Jews of Amsterdam” (2).

The gypsies, despite their reputation as soothsayers—that is, as being linked to premodern beliefs and practices—are presented as (failed) purveyors of modernity. It is not accidental that García Márquez describes the magnet as a “new invention.” All inventions imply a criticism of traditional modes of doing things and are, therefore, necessarily linked to modernity—that is, to an attitude based on the rational analysis of all existing practices and values.⁴ Inventions are modern in

that they imply doubting earlier practices and attempting to find better, more rational ways of doing things.

Be that as it may, the fact is that these “new inventions”—the redundancy stressing the “modernity” of the inventions, as well as being part and parcel of García Márquez’s humor so often based on exaggeration—are anything but new. Magnets, for instance, have been well known since the ancient Greeks, even though it was only in the early seventeenth century that a scientific theory of electromagnetism was proposed by William Gilbert. Likewise the telescope was invented by the Dutch lens maker Hans Lippershey in 1608. In other words, the isolation and backwardness of Macondo make even its most enlightened citizens see centuries-old innovations as the latest scientific trends and the gypsies as merchants of the new.

However, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* plays with temporality by presenting a triple chronology. The novel is simultaneously set when “the world was so recent . . . many things lacked names” (1), “from the . . . later sixteenth century to approximately mid-twentieth” (Bell-Villada 39), and from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth—that is, the titular “one hundred years.”⁵ In fact, much of the “magical realist” effect in the novel consists in the estrangement achieved by the concurrent belonging of characters, things, and events to parallel chronologies. Thus, the Macondo at the beginning of the novel is at the same time an Edenic “happy village where no one was over thirty years of age and where no one had died,” set in a pre-Adamic “when the world was so recent many things lacked name,”⁶ a city founded by the grandchildren of characters who were contemporary with Francis Drake (his attack on Riohacha dates back to 1596); and, at the same time, contemporary with a “government” that is implicitly identified with that of independent Colombia (nineteenth century).

This presence of simultaneously incongruous chronologies can itself be seen as a literary expression of the concept of uneven and combined development. In other words, the fact that Macondo has its particular chronology—beginning with its own Eden—does not imply

a full isolation from the rest of the world and larger national and international chronologies, which are different from that of local origin. Since Leon Trotsky, the experience of social incongruity of uneven and combined development is especially characteristic of peripheric capitalism. Thus Macondo is again presented as representative of Latin America as a (neo) colonial peripheric space.⁷

The time lag in the dissemination of innovations from the center, which is one of the central traits of peripheric modernization, is generally present in Macondo's relationship with the scientific and cultural innovations of Europe. This chronological lag is made explicit when Melquiades—a representative sage and gypsy—celebrates José Arcadio Buendía's discovery that “the earth is round like an orange” (4).

The whole village was convinced that José Arcadio Buendía had lost his reason, when Melquíades returned to set things straight. He gave public praise to the intelligence of a man who from pure astronomical speculation had evolved a theory that had already been proved in practice, although unknown in Macondo until then, and as a proof of his admiration he made him a gift that was to have a profound influence on the future of the village: the laboratory of an alchemist. (5)

While the passage can be interpreted as belonging to two of the three alternative chronologies presented in the novel, it only yields its greatest paradox if one assumes the episode takes place during the nineteenth century.⁸ (One can also point out the characteristic García Márquesian irony of having this “scientific” achievement be rewarded with the “laboratory of an alchemist.” Alchemy is a premodern and prescientific activity and is the stereotyped domain of gypsies.)

The magnitude of José Arcadio's failure can be seen in that his individual rediscovery of the shape of the earth originates not only in an attempt at appropriating the scientific method that he correctly, from the point of view of the novel, sees as necessary for social progress, but also at communicating Macondo with other cities and regions in Colombia. After José Arcadio fails at finding routes connecting the town

with other cities and regions in Colombia—this failure leading him to the belief that Macondo was surrounded by water—the novel notes:

The idea of a peninsular Macondo prevailed for a long time, inspired by the arbitrary map that José Arcadio Buendía sketched on his return from the expedition. He drew it in rage, evilly, exaggerating the difficulties of communication, as if to punish himself for the absolute lack of sense with which he had chosen the place. “We’ll never get anywhere,” he lamented to Úrsula. “We’re going to rot our lives away here without receiving the benefits of science.” (12–13)

What makes this passage particularly tragic is José Arcadio Buendía’s awareness of the need for modernization. (One can also note that here García Márquez is again linking modernity, represented by science, one of its defining activities, with contact with the exterior.)

Significantly, it is Úrsula who will be able to establish connections with other communities. In fact, if José Arcadio represents a frustrated attempt at incorporating modernity intellectually, to a great degree due to his peripheric condition, his wife Úrsula can be seen as reflecting a potentially positive action uninformed by any intellectual consideration. However, it may be significant that José Arcadio’s attempt to communicate Macondo with the outside world fails while Úrsula accidentally succeeds while looking for her son José Arcadio who had escaped with the gypsies:

Suddenly, almost five months after her disappearance, Úrsula came back. She arrived exalted, rejuvenated, with new clothes in a style that was unknown in the village. . . . They were men and women like them, with straight hair and dark skin, who spoke the same language and complained of the same pains. They had mules loaded down with things to eat, oxcarts with furniture and domestic utensils, pure and simple earthly accessories put on sale without any fuss by peddlers of everyday reality. They came from the other side of the swamp, only two days away, where there were

towns that received mail every month in the year and where they were familiar with the implements of good living. Úrsula . . . had found the route that her husband had been unable to discover in his frustrated search for the great inventions. (36)

Úrsula's contact brings to Macondo some of the benefits of modernity: mail and "implements of good living." Nevertheless, the limitations of this contact are made clear: Rather than coming face-to-face with a fully modern other, the new settlers who arrive in Macondo are "men and women like them, with straight hair and dark skin, who spoke the same language and complained of the same pains." This break from cultural solitude is thus limited. The potential for modernization implicit in the contact with Europe or North America is not present in the incorporation of Macondo into an unevenly developed Colombia that has only incorporated some aspects of modernity but not those leading to emancipation.⁹

Colonialism and Its Aftermath

Nevertheless, the tragedy of Macondo is laid not at the feet of Úrsula or José Arcadio Buendía, but rather at those of Fernanda, who is presented as not only destroying the potential for modernity represented by Renata Remedios, but any possibility of Macondo evolving into a modern, emancipated, and free space. With characteristic exaggeration, García Márquez identifies with the vice-regal colonial past: "She had been born and raised in a city six hundred miles away, a gloomy city where on ghostly nights the coaches of the viceroys still rattled through the cobbled street" (205). (One can add that this city is clearly Bogotá, once the capital of the viceroyalty of Nueva Granada.) Moreover, she is presented as personally descending from "royalty." After seeing a ghost who resembles an older version of herself, her mother tells her "it was your great-grandmother the queen" (206). More dramatically, her last Christmas gift from her father symbolizes the novel's implication of colonial heritage:

On the tenth Christmas . . . the enormous box from their grandfather arrived earlier than usual, nailed tight and protected with pitch, and addressed in the usual Gothic letters to the Very Distinguished Lady Doña Fernanda del Carpio de Buendía. While she read the letter in her room the children hastened to open the box. They broke the seals, opened the cover, took out the protective sawdust, and found inside a long lead chest closed by copper bolts. Aureliano Segundo took out the eight bolts as the children watched impatiently, and he barely had time to give a cry and push the children aside when he raised the lead cover and saw Don Fernando, dressed in black and with a crucifix on his chest, his skin broken out in pestilential sores and cooking slowly in a frothy stew with bubbles like live pearls. (213–214)

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the colonial inheritance received and represented by Fernanda and her family is nothing but a rotting corpse.

Moreover, given the association of Fernanda and her family with Bogotá (not only the capital of the viceroyalty but later Colombia's capital), the survival of useless colonial traditions into the present (Fernanda's great skills are speaking Latin, playing the clavichord, practicing falconry, and having mastered apologetics, 206)—is presented not as an individual trait but, rather, as a national one. Moreover, Fernanda's and Bogotá's identification with this past implies a willful closing to the outside world. "Until puberty Fernanda had no news of the world except for the melancholy piano lessons taken in some neighboring house" (205). This ultimately destroys any potential for modernity or progress found among the Buendías and, more generally, Macondo, and the national space, despite its (uneven) embrace of aspects of modernity, is therefore weighed down by a colonial deadweight it is unable to overcome.

The novel explicitly contrasts Fernanda's closing off of the Macondian mind with the replacement of Úrsula by Fernanda as the Buendía matriarch. In fact, when Úrsula recovers her sanity lost during the al-

most five-year rain, she attempts to open the house to visitors and other foreigners:

“Open the windows and the doors,” she shouted. “Cook some meat and fish, buy the largest turtles around, let strangers come and spread their mats in the corners and urinate in the rose bushes and sit down to eat as many times as they want, and belch and rant and muddy everything with their boots, and let them do whatever they want to us, because that’s the only way to drive off rain.” But it was a vain illusion. She was too old then and living on borrowed time to repeat the miracle of the little candy animals, and none of her descendants had inherited her strength. The house stayed closed on Fernanda’s orders. (336)

The aging Úrsula is not able to contradict the retrograde colonial isolation imposed by Fernanda. And the consequence is the apocalypse.

Banana Imperialism

While the cultural values celebrated in Amaranta Úrsula originate in Europe, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does not idealize the European and US centers. As indicated above, García Márquez is fully aware of the inequalities in the relations between center and periphery and clearly delineates them in his novel. In fact, British colonialism underlies the origin of Macondo. As we have seen, the earliest historical event mentioned in the novel is the sacking of Riohacha by the British pirate in 1596 (19). In this manner, Britain’s predatory behavior toward the Americas is highlighted.¹⁰

But the main example of imperial behavior in the novel is precisely that of the US, or, better said, the banana company. (This is a thinly veiled representation of the United Fruit Company, which had numerous plantations throughout the Caribbean.) Ironically, the arrival of the company originated in an act of hospitality. Mr. Herbert, one of the company’s experts and a “captive-balloon” entrepreneur, was invited to stay at the Buendía home where he tried the bananas of Macondo:

No one had noticed him at the table until the first bunch of bananas had been eaten. Aureliano Segundo had come across him by chance. . . . When they brought to the table the tiger-striped bunch of bananas that they were accustomed to hang in the dining room during lunch, he picked the first piece of fruit without great enthusiasm. But he kept on eating as he spoke, tasting, chewing, more with the distraction of a wise man than with the delight of a good eater, and when he finished the first bunch he asked them to bring him another. Then he took a small case with optical instruments out of the toolbox that he always carried with him. With the suspicious attention of a diamond merchant he examined the banana meticulously, dissecting it with a special scalpel, weighing the pieces on a pharmacist's scale, and calculating its breadth with a gunsmith's calipers. Then he took a series of instruments out of the chest with which he measured the temperature, the level of humidity in the atmosphere, and the intensity of the light. (225–26)

This lengthy quotation presents Western traits in a different light from the passages analyzed previously. If the rise in rationality in the West led to the questioning of patriarchy and hierarchy and, therefore, to progressive values embraced by Amaranta Úrsula, it also led to the transformation of bananas from a source of food or “delight” into a quantifiable object, as Garcia Márquez implies, not different from diamonds or any other merchandise or commodity. To put it in Marxist terminology, with which the Colombian writer would surely have been familiar, Herbert was at first attracted to the bananas for their use value, then concentrates exclusively on its potential exchange value.

The example is at some level absurd. However, the behavior of the banana company toward Macondo reflects precisely an exclusively utilitarian perspective and is one in which even people's intrinsic value is overlooked. The famous description of the massacre of the striking Banana workers is a clear case in point. According to the novel, as José Arcadio Segundo wakes up after the massacre:

He realized that he was riding on an endless and silent train and that his head was caked with dry blood and that all his bones ached. He felt an intolerable desire to sleep. Prepared to sleep for many hours, safe from the terror and the horror, he made himself comfortable on the side that pained him less, and only then did he discover that he was lying against dead people . . . and those who had put them in the car had had time to pile them up in the same way in which they transported bunches of bananas. Trying to flee from the nightmare, José Arcadio Segundo . . . saw the man corpses, woman corpses, child corpses who would be thrown into the sea like rejected bananas. (306–07)

García Márquez’s comparison of people to bananas is, of course, the point here. As is the case regarding bananas, the company has interest only in the profit they may extract from them. The dark side of modernity, its instrumentalization of reason for economic ends, is clearly presented in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Rather than emancipation and freedom, the great promises of the enlightenment and of modernity, the banana company brings the valuation of people as things that can be “thrown into the sea like rejected bananas.”

But this instrumental reason, this inability to value anything not directly in the benefit of profit is linked to a development of science, not only as an understanding of reality, but also as the possibility of modifying it at will. The nearly five-year rain, which hastens the decline of Macondo, is clearly produced by the banana company for its own business interest:

The proclamation also stated that the union leaders, with great patriotic spirit, had reduced their demands to two points: a reform of medical services and the building of latrines in the living quarters. It was stated later that when the military authorities obtained the agreement with the workers, they hastened to tell Mr. Brown and he not only accepted the new conditions but offered to pay for three days of public festivities to celebrate the end of the conflict. (309)

The banana corporation's ability to manipulate the truth—the proclamation was clearly a lie and explicitly denied the massacre, a denial that the population would accept as true—is matched by its ability to manipulate reality: It rains for almost five years and the minimal compromise made to the union is never fulfilled. Macondo no longer was of any economic value for the banana company, and it could be discarded to ecological destruction and solitude.

Conclusion

One Hundred Years of Solitude concludes in an apocalypse. In a dark ironic twist, Amaranta Úrsula's emancipation from absurd gender roles and norms enables her to leave Gastón for Aureliano who, unbeknownst to her, is Remedios's son with Mauricio Babilonia. This coupling between an aunt and her nephew—which resembles that of the founders José Arcadio and Úrsula who were cousins—brings to fruition the curse feared throughout the novel: giving birth to a child with a pig tail. Even more tragic, fulfilling prophecies written by Melquiades, this leads to Amaranta Úrsula's death at childbirth, the child's own death, and the ultimate destruction of Macondo.

The end of Macondo is linked in part to the inability of the inhabitants of Buendía and Macondo to break free from the colonial inheritance associated in the novel with Fernanda. In fact, it is Fernanda's absurd morality and hypocrisy that lead to the death of Mauricio Babilonia, the interment in a nunnery of Remedios, and the erasure of Aureliano's lineage, which in turn causes Aureliano's and Amaranta Úrsula's ignorance of their kinship. The survival of colonial structures and mores leads to destruction.

But what is surprising is that Amaranta Úrsula's modernity is unable to stop Macondo's decadence. Even though Amaranta Úrsula has incorporated the most progressive social and cultural values of European modernity, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is clear about the limitations of her emancipation. Although Amaranta Úrsula is able to anticipate “the models” in fashion in Paris, she still sews them “on

Amaranta's primitive pedal machine." Despite Amaranta Úrsula's embrace of modern values, Macondo, as a society, is still "primitive," still mired in economic and social backwardness. Personal emancipation is not a guarantee of social emancipation. However, modernity is not only progressive. It has a dark side illustrated by the banana company. Despite the emancipatory promise of modernity, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, capitalism and its economic expression lead to an even more complete repression and subjugation than that previously experienced under the warped (neo)colonial society of independent Colombia. Moreover, precisely due to its modernity, the banana corporation is able to extend its control into areas unimaginable before: individual minds (no one remembers the massacre) and nature (it is able to manipulate the weather at will). Instead of freedom, the banana company brings oppression. Instead of establishing the value of the individual, an individual is only valued for whatever profit brought to the banana company. Even the labor union formed in response to the banana company's abuses fails to assert the progressive values of modernity. With the massacre, the possibility of social emancipation is snuffed from Macondo. Neither reform nor revolution is presented as an option for social improvement. Given that Macondo represents Colombia and Latin America, one cannot but conclude that underlying *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a profound pessimism regarding the region's chances of achieving modernization, emancipation, and freedom.¹¹ The ominous final phrase "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth" can be read as implying that there are races *not* condemned to solitude who possess second and perhaps more opportunities (417). These benighted "races," fortunate in that they are free from solitude, apparently inhabit the center where emancipatory modernity has been achieved. Despite the celebration of Úrsula's hospitality and Amaranta Úrsula's personal emancipation, Macondo is trapped in a labyrinth of solitude from which neither individual nor collective action offer an exit.

Notes

1. As critics have often noted, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* presents a fictionalized version of Latin American history. As Gene Bell-Villada notes, this linking of the novel's plot with the region's history is not accidental, since "García Márquez builds his narrative around the larger blocks of Colombian (and by extension Latin American) history: the early process of Spanish colonization and inland settlement, the bloody wars of the nineteenth century, the repeated instances of illusory prosperity based on a single product, and the hegemonic power of the US economy in our time" (47).
2. Despite its widespread use, *magical realism* is a particularly slippery term to define. However, one can begin by noting the presence of both magic and realism. Not only are supernatural events or objects—such as the gypsies' magic carpets—easily accepted by the characters as real, a trait shared with fantasy narrative such as Tolkien's, but the representational claims characteristic of realistic literature—the idea that the world of the narrative closely resembles reality—are still maintained. Thus Macondo is not only a location where the marvelous takes place, but at some level it is also seen as representing Colombia and Latin America. Thus *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is both magical and realist.
3. The centrality of Paris for twentieth-century Latin American writers is legendary. Carlos Fuentes, alluding to a then unknown Gabriel García Márquez's brief encounter with Ernest Hemingway in Paris in 1957, makes clear the centrality of Paris to Latin American writers in the 1950s: "And even though Hemingway said that the good Americans go to Paris to die, García Márquez could have said that the good Latin Americans go to Paris to write" (25). (My translation.)
4. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the "chief current sense" of the verb *to invent* as "to find out in the way of original contrivance; to create, produce, or construct by original thought or ingenuity; to devise first, originate (a new method of action, kind of instrument, etc.)." Likewise the relevant definition of *modernity* is given as "spec. An intellectual tendency or social perspective characterized by departure from or repudiation of traditional ideas, doctrines, and cultural values in favor of contemporary or radical values and beliefs (chiefly those of scientific rationalism and liberalism)."
5. Bell-Villada simplifies the complexities of the novel's chronology. In fact, the earliest historical reference is to "when the pirate Sir Francis Drake attacked Riohacha in the sixteenth century" (19) (the actual date of the attack is 1596); the history of Macondo, from its founding to its destruction, is also apparently set for the so-called one hundred years.
6. The lack of names echoes Genesis 2:19: "And out of ye ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every foule of the aire, and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the NAME thereof."

7. In his *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky writes about this “law of combined and uneven development . . . the history of recent decades very clearly shows that, in the conditions of capitalist decline, backward countries are unable to attain that level which the old centers of capitalism have attained. Having themselves arrived in a blind alley, the highly civilized nations block the road to those in process of civilization. Russia took the road of proletarian revolution, not because her economy was the first to become ripe for a socialist change, but because she could not develop further on a capitalist basis. Socialization of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism. That is the law of combined development for backward countries” (5). While Trotsky, at least in this passage, is more concerned with pointing out how the Russian revolution was forced to work out “bourgeois tasks”—such as eliminating feudalism—the main point is clear: “Backward countries” (i.e., colonial and semi-colonial) participate in the “world system” in a different manner than “Europe and [North] America.” Not only social, but also cultural and economic, modernization is frequently lacking. In the case of the Soviet Union, Trotsky points out that it found itself “with the task of ‘catching up with and outstripping’—consequently in the first place catching up with—Europe and America. She has, that is, to solve those problems of technique and productivity which were long ago solved by capitalism in the advanced countries” (5).
8. It’s worth mentioning that the passage implicitly refers to Columbus’s “discovery” of America, which “proved in practice” that the earth is round. Therefore, the passage in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can belong to either the late sixteenth-/early seventeenth-century chronologies or the nineteenth-century chronologies.
9. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, for all its incorporation of “non-Western” magical points of view, slights the indigenous population in Colombia’s cultural makeup. While there are a few indigenous characters, they are clearly secondary. Underlying García Márquez’s novel is a vision consistent with Darcy Ribeiro’s well-known characterization of Colombia (together with Brazil, Venezuela, and Cuba) as a “pueblo nuevo” (“new people”). According to Ribeiro, “Their main characteristic is to be people who have lost their Indianism, Africanism, or Europeanism to become a new ethnic entity.” However, despite this “newness,” the fact is that, as Ribeiro notes, “it is true that in the configuration of each new people, thanks to cultural hegemony, the European, who gave them her language and a degraded version of the Iberian culture, predominated” (27; translation mine). Thus the limited presence of indigenous cultures in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, as well as the presentation of a relatively homogenous Colombian culture, is compatible with Ribeiro’s ideas.
10. Curiously there is little reference to Spanish colonialism in the novel, perhaps due to the fact that the majority of the Macondians have an unproblematical relationship with their own past and, in fact, exhibit a very limited historical sense. Also see note 9.

11. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was published in 1967, during the heyday of Latin American revolutionary optimism, and many readers have had difficulty grasping the depths of the novel's political pessimism. Thus Gerald Martin in an influential interpretation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has argued that "this is not so much a literary narration of Latin American history as a deconstructionist reading of that history. Once some characters become able to interpret their own past, the author is able to end on an optimistic note. The apocalypse of the Buendías is not—how could it be?—the end of Latin America but the end of primitive neocolonialism, its conscious or unconscious collaborators, and an epoch of illusions" (233). Although Martin admits that "the novel does not actually say this" (233), however, he still insists that this is the only reading compatible with García Márquez's often stated belief in progressive political action.

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