GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ
AND THE AESTHETICS OF
SENSUALITY

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English

by

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Summer 2011
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ABSTRACT

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My thesis consists of five sections: the introduction and overview; the aesthetics of structure and style; the aesthetics of character; sexual aesthetics; and the conclusion. In the first section of my thesis I offer both an overview of the issues focusing the thesis and also discuss key definitions and limitations. I also mention how the typical treatments of Garcia Marquez’s work are limiting. The term “magical realism,” often used to describe Garcia Marquez as a writer as well as his Latin American contemporaries, not only strait-jackets appreciations of his work but also devalues that entire body of work. In the second section I will discuss the way Garcia Marquez uses structure to reiterate the themes in his stories. In this section I review three books that are connected by a unique and distinguished style of structure. Before I analyze the books in this section, I offer a brief theoretical perspective. This foundation applies to all
subsequent sections of the thesis. Section three illustrates how Garcia Marquez uses character to demonstrate the complex hybridity of Latin American history and culture. Finally I discuss in the fourth chapter, the sexual aesthetic in Garcia Marquez’s work, and why and how it arced from earlier to later writings. This thesis aspires to offer the reader of Garcia Marquez a new way to approach his novels and stories. It also further enhances the contemporary criticism of his work.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In 1967 an obscure Colombian writer and journalist by the name of Gabriel Garcia Marquez published what was to become the most widely read book in the Spanish language since Miguel de Cervantes’s Don Quijote. That book is *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. An amazing feat of fantasy and realism, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* covers the political and cultural struggles of Latin American life through the story of the Buendia family. The novel caused what Mario Vargas Llosa called a “literary earthquake” in Latin America. At one point in 1968, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was being published at the rate of one new edition per week. In the years to follow, Garcia Marquez received accolades from around the world. (In 1969 the French named *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the best foreign book of the year, *Time* magazine chose *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as one of the twelve best books of the year in 1970).

Eventually, fifteen years later, in 1982, Gabriel Garcia Marquez won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Between the time of the immense fame of Garcia Marquez’s seminal work, and his receipt of the Nobel Prize, he wrote and published an amazingly unorthodox novel synthesizing events and characteristics, both fictional and factual, of the Latin American and Caribbean dictatorships of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, published in 1975, is arguably Garcia Marquez’s most
complex and artistically ambitious work. Yet, according to critic Raymond L. Williams, the publication of the novel “disappointed readers who had associated Garcia Marquez exclusively with the enchantment and accessibility of Macondo” with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Williams 110). Criticism of Garcia Marquez’s work since falls into either of two camps:

Garcia Marquez as the writer of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or Garcia Marquez as the writer of works other than *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. On the one hand he is the author of a magnificent achievement of creativity and fiction full of political and cultural sensitivity and poignancy. On the other hand, he is the writer of novels that showcase unique subtlety, in particular his short novels *Leaf Storm* and *No One Writes to the Colonel*. Themes included in these earlier works are rarely discussed unless criticism concerning these works casts a net wide enough to include *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, considered the premier demonstration of contemporary magical realism.

Garcia Marquez is arguably one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. Strangely, his reputation suffers an impossible limitation: He is widely considered strictly a magical realist. Granted, the term applies to him as a writer and to some of his work. Yet when it is applied in order to identify his entire body of work, it limits the interpretation and appreciation of his entire oeuvre.

Finding a precise definition of magical realism is difficult. Edwin Williamson defines it in his essay *Translation and Genealogy* as “an aesthetic impact [caused] by fusing terms that are in principle opposed to one another” (46). Some might find this
definition a bit vague. It seems this definition is not clear and only makes sense if paired with an example. Salman Rushdie offers a more malleable definition that depends on the writer employing it:

Magic(al) realism, at least as practiced by Marquez, is a development of Surrealism that expresses a genuinely ‘Third World’ consciousness. It deals with what Naipaul has called ‘half-made’ societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new, in which public corruptions and private anguishes are somehow more garish and extreme than they ever get in the so-called ‘North’…In the works of Marquez, as in the world he describes, impossible things happen constantly, and quite plausibly, out in the open under the midday sun. (302)

According to Rushdie the definition of magical realism may change depending on the author who uses it. Rushdie seems to be more concerned with why those “terms that are in principle opposed to one another” are used, why the incredible renders a finer portrait of third-world life than realism.

Franz Roh first introduced the term magical realism in the early 1900s. Mostly, it was used to describe features from a certain era of art that deviated from conventional norms. The art critic defined the term magical realism as a response to reality meant to conceptualize the enigmas of reality itself.

Latin American literature became to a degree aligned with the term in the 1940s. It was at first used to distinguish between particular works of an author. Now it more serves to identify the body of an author’s work, regardless of whether or not the term can be applied to the entire body of that author’s work. The term still has an important role in the conversation of literature. Yet, as a broad term used to generalize the work of a particular culture, region, or author, magical realism has indeed run its course.
In the essay *The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism* by Wendy Faris, it is said that critics alternately think of magical realism as “a commodifying kind of primitivism that relegates colonies and their traditions to the role of cute, exotic psychological fantasies” (Faris 101). The term definitely has its value. Unlike Faris I don’t believe the term to be inherently limiting and pejorative. Because of the frequency with which the term and Latin American literature are associated, they have in a sense become synonymous. The idea that Latin American literature is mostly magical realist is often assumed. In fact, the genre of magical realism functions as a medium through which one might better understand Latin America, not as a term simply to define its literature. The use of this technique marks a clash with the modern age. So great was this, what Rushdie called “damage to reality” in Latin America that, as Rushdie dramatically put it, “The only truth is that you are being lied to all the time” (301). He credits political and cultural unrest for the “damage” to Latin America and the also for the motivation for such grand figures in Garcia Marquez’s writing such as Aureliano Buendia and the awful Patriarch. It was necessary to employ the technique of magical realism to better infuse the literature with the grandiosity these metaphorical characters and political situations imply.

Subsequently, this conflict relates to Garcia Marquez’s writing. Ariel Dorfman suggests in his 1991 essay on Garcia Marquez in *Transition* that Garcia Marquez is creating a history for his people “to find out why history devoured his people, history, the entity that men and women supposedly make and that should, at least in principle, be the territory where they exercise some command over their lives, hammer out some recognizable image of themselves” (Dorman 1). Garcia Marquez attempts to
“tell the story of his country, before his birth, before 1928. In other words, he is going to explore what transpired without his presence, that which he only knows by hearsay, without having been a real witness” (Dorfman 20).

The aesthetics in his work is a theatre for this conflicted sense of history and with the modern age; Garcia Marquez’s literature has become a redemptive medium for the opportunity to reconcile an affinitive history: the beauty and resilience of an indigenous humanity versus the rigid disposition of the conquering Spanish. One aspect of the Latin American ego is copper-colored, agile, filled with vitality; the other rigid, prudent, European, thus judgmental, sovereign in thought by the Inquisition, intellectually Catholic. This paradise of brightly colored birds, august mountain ranges, and blistering heat is the conquered and yet ever-present half of the whole Latin American psyche.

Macondo serves as the place where this conflict with modernity plays out. Garcia Marquez is not so much focused on the historical accuracy or reality of his environment, as he is the aesthetic impact of it on his memory. In his autobiography, Living to Tell the Tale, Garcia Marquez explains that he was sent very young to his grandparents’ house to be raised. From early on, a conflict with identity played a significant part in his life. There lay a huge gap in his life between the origins of his Latin American contemporaries and more personally, himself. Garcia Marquez soon bridged this gap with his writing. As Carlos J. Alonso observes, “cultural discourse in Spanish America is and has always been inextricably tied to the concept and the experience of Modernity” (Alonso 19).
The central conflict in Garcia Marquez’s first novel, *Leaf Storm*, takes place as a direct result of industrialism. An American banana company enters the fictional town of Macondo and changes lifestyles so abruptly as to ostracize those who are unwilling to comply, unwilling to homogenize. This is a common theme in Garcia Marquez’s work that also fuels the plot for *No One Writes to the Colonel*, a short and deftly executed novel about a poor and destitute veteran left penniless after a major series of failed military campaigns. His interminable wait for a government military pension makes for most of the action of the piece. Although these two wonderfully written pieces were published long before *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, their storylines, which also take place in Macondo, appear to take place after, thus closely associating them with the latter work, as a forerunner rather than independent ideas. *Leaf Storm*’s colonel and famous French doctor both seemed to have served under *One Hundred Years of Solitude*’s primary character, Colonel Aureliano Buendia. The earlier novels do not rely on magical realism to relate their stories. Using their own distinct artistry, they brilliantly convey the same enduring struggles of the Latin American. I contend that the works themselves merit a critique independent of their association with the author’s seminal work.

I have already stated in which way the term magical realism may function reductively when used to describe Latin American literature. Criticism driven by the use of the term restricts ways in which to consider Garcia Marquez as a writer. This could limit a reading public’s expectation of Latin American writers, being that criticism introducing readers to Latin American literature concentrates on a distinguishing feature by distinguishing works employing this feature. This puts great writers of Latin America like Garcia Marquez in a box.
The critics of the Western world for decades have considered magical realism to be the single genre through which Latin American literature speaks, limiting the expectations of readers and critics alike. In this way there does exist a master and slave relationship between the critics and the work they criticize. Art history professor Amelia Jones states in her essay *Beauty Discourse and the Logic of Aesthetics*: “lived experience in the Western World is characterized by a partition of subjects into endlessly negotiated dialects of Master and Slave” (Aesthetics, 219). *Leaf Storm*, his first novel, is a work of realism. As is *No One Writes to the Colonel* a novel featuring an unforgettable central character composed through colorful dialogue and textual brevity. Both novels are very different. *Leaf Storm* relies heavily on the memory of the narrator, mostly narrating long passages for the reader. *No One Writes to the Colonel* is dependent on dialogue, brevity, and sharp detail. Yet, these novels are amazingly similar. From his earliest work Garcia Marquez more than anything has proved to be in full command of his language and structure. Rarely do these aesthetic features gain attention in criticism on Garcia Marquez.

Yet certain writers employing magical realism or techniques similar to magical realism are studied in the academy religiously. A good literature student could tell you about Dickens or Kafka. I’m certain his education would have prepared him to recite a list of titles, themes, and features unique to each author’s work. Kafka would not be considered a magical realist. Yet the work for which he is most famous, *The Metamorphosis*, is arguably more a succinct demonstration of the concept of magical realism than *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Dickens’ characters are almost always
composed of characters that are humorously eccentric. But we don’t regard him as a humorously eccentric caricaturist.

My point is that some major works repeatedly make their place in the literary canon for reasons beyond their merit. To their credit, these works, because of their complexity and genius, do inspire and endure infinite interpretations. Because of this they receive a more rounded appreciation and study. In the same vein, books that likewise merit those infinite interpretations do to their complexity and genius don’t benefit from reasons of provenance and are usually kept at a distance, in a box.

Non-western writers using non-western traditions are usually put into a sub-genre. In this way they are lorded over by the western canon. For example, if you asked the academic specialists what they thought of Garcia Marquez, a likely response would be brief, and include the term magical realism and the novel One Hundred Years of Solitude. If you associated the term subsequently with Kafka, it would give that specialist pause. Garcia Marquez is not widely accepted in today’s academic canon because he is so commonly identified with magical realism.

Carlos Fuentes says in A Critique On Reading that Garcia Marquez’s work “Could be marked as the receding of colonial oppressors and the confrontation of the spirit of a civilization and the present hybrid one, the language, literature, and culture, left in its stead” (Fuentes 189). In this we can see how the reception to his work is intertwined with the purpose and motivation of the work. I wish to synthesize these concepts into a study of one particular quality of Marquez’s writing, that of the aesthetic sensuality of his work. I don’t intend to do so covering all his work, nor exclusively his magnum opus.
When I speak of sensuality in this thesis I refer to all things found in the text that press the reader to sensually imagine events rather than simply read them. The reader is given a chance to imagine exactly what the narrator might feel by the use of dramatic details. For example, “The air is stagnant,” a line in *Leaf Storm*, might suggest heat or humidity. As Garcia Marquez compares the climate to stone, the line “like concrete” becomes more tangible. The reader has to imagine the weight of the air; it must have a presence felt by the narrator. In order to feel air “like concrete,” the reader must place himself in this “stagnant” situation with the narrator where air gets “all twisted like a sheet of steel” (3).

Sensuality is central to Garcia Marquez’s work. It would be unjust to say that this artistry is mostly a device for conveying weighty political and social ideas. However, I do feel that making an aesthetic appraisal of his work offers a deeper insight into Garcia Marquez’s political and social themes. His writing is as an attempt to revise or re-envision Latin American history. Garcia Marquez adds to the tapestry of his people’s history by offering fictional versions regarded as previously excluded testaments of Latin American history which was so much a part of Garcia Marquez’s upbringing: tradition, folk, oral heredity, and story-telling. Garcia Marquez’s work represents the possibility of those lost testimonies to fill some cultural and historical gaps.

*Leaf Storm* is told in a very soft, whisper-like cadence. The prose and structure of the narration not only simulate conversation between narrator and reader, but also encourage the reader’s imagination to envision the narrator, individually sharing their individual recollections of a time gone by with the reader, seamlessly focusing each passage into a private conversation with the reader. The narrator recalls memories of
Macondo. The history of Macondo is being told to the reader. This is the aesthetical effect of the structure of *Leaf Storm*. You read, seemingly, as if you were being spoken to, as one of its three narrators tells you their version of events. Streams of memory construct *Leaf Storm*, not dialogue. The reader in this intimacy seems to become part of the story, the listener. This subtle technique brings about this effect.

Each individual character has a conflict with modern times. Garcia Marquez gives voice to their experiences. This is an important part of Garcia Marquez’s work. It does not rely on magical realist interpretations, nor does it require a comparative analysis with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in order to be appreciated or understood.

This thesis is likewise responding to earlier criticisms of Garcia Marquez as an artist. Critics like Raymond L. Williams, George McMurray, and J.M. Coetzee, have, in my opinion, minimized a good deal of Garcia Marquez’s earlier work, reducing it as merely experimental foreground for *One Hundred Years Of Solitude*, or as theatres for monothematic sketches of Latin American life, seeking to disseminate bourgeois issues including mortality, political violence, and forbidden romance. I am not saying that intelligent criticism focusing on Garcia Marquez’s entire body of writing as independent works criticized for their specific contributions to the literary world does not exist at present. Only that my beginning experience with Garcia Marquez’s early work meant seeking out early criticism that basically minimized the value of that earlier work.

From this experience, the idea for a thesis dedicated to his earlier work sprung. I have decided to include later works including but not limited to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to better focus my study on aesthetic features common throughout his work. I have always been particularly interested in Garcia Marquez’s imagery and
structural craftsmanship. Some works appeared stronger in one aspect of this than others, regardless of the popularity of the work. Indeed, his work is criticized as being highly politicized. Also, in this arena critics are most comfortable disseminating García Marquez’s work for its cultural discursiveness. I, on the other hand, have always read García Marquez as an aesthete whose work, although imbued with political bedrock and cultural exigency, is chiefly concerned with reaching literary heights, rendered with a poetic disposition in relating a Latin American experience, inextricably adumbrated by violence, oppression, and ubiquitous political inconsistency.

In Chapter Two of this thesis I will argue that García Marquez uses a specific style of writing in order to convey the aforementioned political and historical points. Preceding this analysis I will lay the theoretical foreground, which will apply to the thesis throughout. Then, focusing on these aesthetics of structure, I will examine recognize the texts *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, and *Leaf Storm* for the highly unorthodox ways in which they are narrated and constructed. In this second chapter I will analyze the text first for its unique aesthetic design and artistic value. Then I will go on to attempt to describe how by using specific structural designs García Marquez intensifies his commentary on political issues and cultural discourse.

In Chapter Three, I will argue that aesthetic features of characters in the novels, *Leaf Storm* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* embody the themes discussed in those novels such as politics, colonialism, and religion. As Raymond Williams says in his book *Culture and Society*, “the idea of culture came into English thinking in the period of the industrial revolution” (Williams ix). Along with that idea came the authority and inherent literary judgment of aesthetics and questions of aesthetic value in literature. In
this chapter I will examine aesthetic distinctions unique to Garcia Marquez’s characterization, and how his unique and eccentric characterization provokes questions about society and identity.

Chapter Four will focus on the intensely sexual parts of Garcia Marquez’s oeuvre. In this chapter, I will closely examine the evolution of sensual aesthetics as it grew from subtle passages from earlier work to raw sexuality in later. In this chapter I will cover the works One Day After Saturday, an early short story by Garcia Marquez, Leaf Storm, The Autumn of The Patriarch, and Innocent Erendira and Her Heartless Grandmother.

Finally, I will conclude with some insights learned as I wrote this thesis. Hopefully this final chapter will encourage the reader to examine literature in different and refreshing ways.
CHAPTER II

AESTHETICS OF STRUCTURE

To elicit different shades of cadence, an author might choose to create an association between the events of the story and the structure of writing relaying that story. As cadence shifts from either fast paced to slow, likewise the mood of the story shifts to either apprehensive or solemn. The characters within the story might recollect a story about a certain day, perhaps a day of doom. Knowing a character is recollecting a story rather than experiencing the story in the present adds an additional sense of mood to the story. This structural style isolates that day, adding to the dimension of mood created by the event of that day.

In this way an author creates a mood. Simply put, the story is aided by the way it is told. The author creates an emotion to rail the passing of the story, better keeping the theme of the story on track. In a sense, some text structures perform in accordance with the themes of their texts. As theorist Megan Becker-Leckrone States in her book, *Julia Kristeva and Literary Theory*, “It [structure] performs syntactically and rhetorically what the…narrative discourse chronicles thematically as well” (54). The novels covered in this chapter deal with themes of politics, war, and industry. They distinguish themselves from other works by Garcia Marquez by using complex and unique structural styles to convey their themes. Structure is very important to Garcia
Marquez’s work. He associates structure, cadence, and narrative style with themes such as Latin America’s conflicts with industry, politics, and Modernity.

Most of this chapter’s focus is dedicated to *Leaf Storm*, Garcia Marquez’s novella concerned with the burial of an eccentric French doctor ostracized from society in Macondo, Garcia Marquez’s infamous locale. I will also cover the novels *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *No One Writes to the Colonel*. Because I will be discussing in this chapter the relevance of structure to theme, I think it is important that I spend some time discussing my appreciation of Garcia Marquez’s theme and initially establish a theoretical justification for analyzing the following texts for their artistic merit and ambitious structural features.

Latin America inherits its language, religion, and literary tradition from Spain. What Latin America did not inherit from Spain were the major advances in science, religion, and politics that punctuated the age of Enlightenment so important to the social progress of Europe. In his book, *The Children of the Mire*, Mexican essayist and poet Octavio Paz credits Latin America’s lack of progress in these areas on its influence from a mother country that did not experience an age of enlightenment. He goes on to say that “Latin America’s experience of modernity essentially paralleled that of Spain,” which eventually resulted in a collection of countries in Latin America standing in contrast to its Northern neighbors. Jose Marti argues in his essay “Nuestra America” that this is why Latin America has such a difficult time politically, economically, and philosophically, being so heavily influenced by Spain’s “reaction against the modern age” where criticism of authority was strictly denied (82). In contrast to their Northern Neighbors, Marti
considers the countries comprising Latin America “The Romantic nations of the continent” (14).

Sixteenth-century Spain rejected the idea of reformation and European enlightenment. Latin Americans inherited a tradition of superstition, unquestioned authority, and prejudice from its mother country. As we can see in Garcia Marquez’s work, Latin America, having inherited this stunted version of enlightenment from Spain, suffered under the oppressive rule of dogmatic authority. According to Paz, “Romanticism was a reaction against the enlightenment” (Alonso 20). Spain sustained, as a country, a strict religious and intellectually conservative tradition of romanticism rather than reason. This characteristic was bequeathed to Latin American literature by way of the novel, *Don Quijote*.

The tendency to lament in Latin American literature is an inherited literary tradition. *Don Quijote* is the father of the Latin American literary tradition. The great lament is the realization that one’s version of reality is merely a delusion. This novel is highly paradoxical in the sense that the protagonist, suffering from pathological delusion, occupied the pages of, arguably, the first realist text. Cervantes’ intention was to expose the chivalric delusion of past literature for its supernatural heroes and exclusion of basic physical realism. Ironically, Cervantes used a fully deluded and insane protagonist to reach this end. This in itself is quite oxymoronic. It is not only enlightened but also very romantic. Latin America inherited this dichotomous tradition of literature from Spain. This connection is important to understanding the dynamics of Latin American literature.

Essential to the ongoing discussion of Latin American literature is the idea of historical proprietorship. Through literature Latin American authors question the identity
of Latin American history as an exclusively discursive academic discipline, and the extent to which the Spanish language and culture influences it. As the absence of Enlightenment in Spain created Romanticism, likewise the absence of a genuine period of political and social progress in Latin America has become a characteristic theme of Latin American literature. This stems back from a lack of unification of Latin American states. One must consider when reading Garcia Marquez whether or not historical accuracy or a fictional rendering of history is necessary for expressing the culture of a nation that has always existed in the metaphysical world as an idea.

The nations of Latin America aimed at one time to become one unified country. Instead it has remained a collection of seemingly indistinct countries governed by corruption and political unrest. In this way the collection of nations is a single country, figuratively. The literature of Latin America has had a common reaction to unquestioned authority and oppressive corruption. Latin America is still in the house of Spain. Thus, history relives itself in present events as a perpetual cycle of repressed progress and periods of isolated power. In turn, the structures of Garcia Marquez’s work discussed in this chapter each feature uniquely arranged narratives, each narrating a version of an individual’s reaction to these issues distinct to Latin American culture. Linearity and the use of a conventional narrative structure would limit the motivation of the author to present multiple versions of recurring Latin American conflicts. Likewise, establishing a reliable sequence of time does no justice to the experience of recurrent social ills that the passage of time fails to alleviate.

Herein lies the necessary primacy of studying the aesthetic in evaluating Garcia Marquez’s work. This lamentation becomes thematic. Characters like those in
One Hundred Years of Solitude achieve no redemption. Instead, they follow their destiny into solitary tragedy, lamenting a time past only to be once again confronted with war, conflict, and domination. While facing a firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia laments the early times of his childhood when his father took him to see ice. Likewise the colonel in Leaf Storm laments the early days of Macondo, before the banana company, and the burial of his closest friend, an eccentric French doctor who commits suicide. These instances of grief and nostalgia mark a great deal of Latin American literature, particularly Garcia Marquez’s.

In this chapter I will attempt to go beyond the typical inclination of Garcia Marquez criticism to capture his work in political traditions or genre classifications. My aim here is to analyze the aesthetical features of three works. I will explore the relation between these specific stylistic choices and the theme of the works they are employed to convey. Not only will I argue for the purely aesthetic value of the work, but also the implications of these aesthetics on themes central to Latin American cultural discourse.

Literature implicates politics, granted. However, literary criticism, in its long affair with political and scientific theory, has neglected the relationship between literature and aesthetic pleasure. It is important to the field of literary theory that literature be first regarded as a many faceted art, which does indeed lend itself to the many schools of thought by both content and structurally artistic implication. In her book Julia Kristeva and Literary Theory, author Megan Becker-Leckrone iterates this notion. She discusses Kristeva’s methods of analyzing language and how it works in literature—not just looking simply for a text’s meaning, but also looking “to find the workings of a poetics that
includes at once the object of study, the instruments of study, and the interaction between them” (Leckrone, 17).

Leckrone’s book on Kristeva’s use of theory is also concerned with disciplines such as psychoanalysis, anthropology, politics, and their relation to literature. She explains that this relation is not simply the application of “preconceived knowledge” to literature, but that such disciplines might be employed to catalyze a dynamic, where literature reflects political climates and likewise politics reflects thoughts and concerns of society that might have began to rise through literary discourse. Together literature and other academic fields of study generate ideas that might not simply illuminate a reading of literature but also broaden our ideas about the human condition.

Criticism committed to a political analysis of Garcia Marquez’s work ironically risks leaving his larger political implications undiscovered. Also, in analyzing the aesthetics of works individually, rather than by their relation to others, one finds that the entire body of his work tends to regroup into new clusters of eccentricity and distinction, both politically and artistically. The works covered in this chapter are not so heavily dependent on this notion of reinventing or inventing history.

By viewing the work aesthetically not only may you see a new political angle by which an individual work may be judged, but also see a culture separate yet hopelessly entwined with politics, romance, and lamentation. I will demonstrate in this chapter how three specific pieces by Garcia Marquez employ three separate aesthetically unique structural features to convey the discourse within. In this chapter I will discuss how structure implicates content and how content is imbued in structure.
One of these literary structural aesthetics is the vignette. The vignette offers, as a structural literary device, interesting narrative viewpoints. The vignette also allows the suggestion of history as an act of consensual memory. It is private, emotional, and subjective. Yet, in *Leaf Storm*, through the vignette, we are offered three different histories of a factual event in a fictional town’s history, which in turn comments on the reality of Latin America’s ongoing conflict with modernity.

Three narrators ensconced in an unusually styled narrative tell, in Garcia Marquez’s first full-length novel, *Leaf Storm*, the story of an eccentric French doctor’s burial. Through the narration of grandfather, daughter, and grandson, we get both the ambiguous histories of the eccentric doctor and his stay in Garcia Marquez’s infamous imaginary locale, Macondo. The story of the doctor is told through eleven short vignettes that reveal, in a conversational tone, the life of the narrator and the life and death of the doctor. Moreover, the reader learns about the history of Macondo and inadvertently the historical perspective offered by his characters of Latin America.

The prose in this story is monotone, cadenced by seemingly arbitrary details and scarce dialogue. Three narrators seem to be perpetually stuck in the room in which the story begins. Garcia Marquez offers the story to the reader as three separate streams of consciousness, each one telling a unique story vacillating from relation to this situation of burial to a completely unrelated experience during the doctor’s stay in Macondo and back to the present situation.

The novel *Leaf Storm* is told in vignettes, which can stand for several things: a short descriptive sketch, an illustration or design, and a photograph. All of these apply to *Leaf Storm*’s use of brief passages of narration that act to capture instances of time. They
function to relay a personal dialogue, a unique sketch proposed by a narrator of a period of time. However, this distinction between vignettes does not necessarily mean a distinction between narrators. In this story it is common that narrators share vignettes. In the eleventh vignette we read the colonel and his daughter recall the first moments of the doctor’s death. The colonel recalls:

This noon has been terrible for our house. Even though the news of his death was no surprise to me, because I was expecting it for a long time, I couldn’t imagine that it would bring on such an upset in my house. Someone had to go to his burial with me and I thought that one would be my wife, especially since my illness three years ago and that afternoon when she found the cane with the silver handle and the wind-up dancer when she was looking through the drawers of my desk (85).

The colonel in this vignette is recollecting not only the recent past but also the distant past. His recollections are directly related to the burial recalling reasons why he must go, his wife should go (because the doctor cured the colonel of a rare illness), and an arbitrary detail recalling the distant past when the doctor first came into the colonel’s life. In the same vignette his daughter Isabel recollects something recent and something distant. They both have an interpretation of events unique to their personalities. The daughter, Isabel recalls haphazardly, being drawn astray by details and emotion. Isabel recalls:

My father stops, his neck stretched out, listening to the familiar footsteps that are advancing through the back room. Then he forgets what he was going to tell Cataure and tries to turn around, leaning on his cane, but his useless leg fails him in the turn and he’s about to fall down, as happened three years ago when he fell into the lemonade bowl, with the noise of the bowl as it rolled along the floor and the clogs and the rocker and the shout of the child, who was the only one who saw him fall (86).

The structure of this story is indeed complex. Initially, this shared-vignette organization is used to begin the action of the novel and establish the three primary
narrators. The father, describing his intimate friendship with the doctor, for the first section, deals with the men who will not allow the doctor’s burial. He recounts other minor details such as his interaction with the servants in his employ. The colonel represents the political dynamics of Latin America on a micro scale.

The vignettes rarely dedicate themselves to one narrator. However, some vignettes do allow one narrator’s primacy over another. More political discussion takes place in vignettes dedicated to the colonel. The daughter represents a domestic critique of the clash of modernity with a prior time where the roles of men and women were more traditional and clearly defined. By sharing personal anecdotes with the reader about Macondo, before and after the banana company, Isabel, the colonel’s daughter, offers a family history of the event of the leaf storm, synonymous in this novel with the arrival of the banana company to Macondo. Through her recollection of conversations with the Guajiro Indian servant Remedios, and her stepmother, Adelaide, her concern for these present events is revealed, yet, topical and subjected to wild digressions. Haphazardly, Isabel jumps from present observations to conclusions, to strictly personal memories, memories with Remedios, the doctor’s concubine, and so on.

The grandchild is a sensualist character. He recounts with vivid detail memories of previous days, events habitual to certain weekdays, and more than once, naked bodies, a cornucopia of smells, and—a Marquesian character all in itself—the Latin American heat. He in fact does have entire vignettes dedicated to him. In short, the three narrators represent three sensually aesthetic experiences of modernity. Isabel shares a very feminine domestic version of Latin America’s clash with Modernity. Through Isabel’s narratives we are given a very sexual and passionate version of Remedios,
although Isabel is not a narrator who focuses on sensual details. Hers are much more intimate, concerned and frustrated. The grandchild is the purely sensalist narrator. It is important to note that this short novel begins and ends with his narration: with what he felt and to the last sentence, what he smelt. Of course, the Colonel, being the patriarchal figure, is more representative of virtue, honor and loyalty. However, he at times recounts moments from his past friendship with the doctor with acute sensual detail such as this, ‘He was silent then. The crickets filled the surrounding space, beyond the warm smell which was alive and almost human as it rose up from the jasmine bush I had planted in memory of my first wife’ (66).

Vignette eight reads as an in-depth recollection of the colonel’s most intimate feelings for his eccentric friend, the doctor. It reads: “I’d begun to love him deeply” (65). The colonel is reliving his summer evening conversation with the melancholy doctor. The colonel asks him if he believes in God, the doctor responds, “I get just as upset thinking that God Exists as thinking he does not” (66). To this the colonel concludes that the doctor is a man who is “disturbed by God.” Also in this vignette the Colonel becomes most poetic: “But doesn’t a night like this make you afraid? Don’t you get the feeling that there’s a man bigger than all of us walking through the plantations while nothing moves and everything seems perplexed at the passage of that man” (66).

It could be that the colonel is inspired by his friendship with the Doctor. It is for the reader to decide. According to the text the reader is the only one who knows that he, the colonel, loves the doctor. That intimacy, created by the structure of Leaf Storm, is essential to the implication of memory and perspective as regards history. The daughter, colonel, Remedios, the grandson, and the perspective of the vignettes all have a different
evaluation of the doctor and his association with the actual event of the leaf storm and the coming of the banana company.

The association of memories with actual events becomes the theoretical foundation for writing fiction, questioning history, and the main resource for cultural discourse. For Isabel the memories associated with the doctor’s death and subsequent issue of his burial elicit memories of her conversations with Remedios and Adelaide. They also bring to mind memories of Martin, her estranged husband, coming into town with the banana company, proposing to Isabel, and after two years of marriage disappearing for good.

The colonel’s memories fluctuate between actual non-subjective events (in contrast to those of his daughter) to expressing lamentation for his dead friend. His passages are journalistic, sympathetic, and finally, elegiac, full of poetry and lament. In the eighth vignette he recalls a conversation he had on the veranda with the doctor. He shares with the doctor his memories of his first wife.

Within this vignette is another memory unfolding, that of his wife and life before the leaf storm, before the doctor. Again we have the characteristic lamentation, particular to Garcia Marquez’s work that reflects the cultural disposition of Latin America. The present is again associated with the past. It is the event of the doctor’s burial that brings to mind for the colonel the recollection of his friendship with the doctor, their long seemingly insipid evenings of conversation and idleness. Yet, in this memory the doctor recalls that as he was talking to the doctor, he was also recalling the memory of his first wife. The present is in effect merely a gateway to the past. The present is not entirely a period in which you live, but a period to lament. As Latin
America’s present conflicts inevitably bring authors and historians to ruminate about the past, so do isolated conflicts such as a friend’s burial bring the colonel to ruminate about the past. It brings him to a memory where which, ironically, he was again ruminating about the past, about his wife. He was ruminating about the time before industry came to Macondo. In every instant there is a reflection of another instance of time. Instead of evolution, the culture endures a constant static revolution of time and memory. Each vignette deals with a present event that leads to recollections of the past that come full round to the present where again someone is lamenting the past.

In the style of this literature alone is the history of its culture. Carlos J. Alonso argues in his essay “The Mourning After: Garcia Marquez, Fuentes and the Meaning of Postmodernity in Spanish America” that “cultural discourse in Latin America is and has always been inextricably tied to the concept and the experience of Modernity” (254).

*Leaf Storm’s* distinguished structure aligns comfortably with Alonso’s contention. The style of structure employed in *Leaf Storm* supports this Marquesian interpretation of a post-Bolivar Latin America. The characters involved in *Leaf Storm* represent through their narratives a mood of despair. In a sense, they are stuck in time. Industry did not bring the social order and prosperity that it brought to North America and Europe. Instead, in Macondo, it brought conflict and separation. Because of the division of culture, morality, and values introduced by the coming of the banana company, the colonel and his family can never return to the unity of community they enjoyed in earlier times, nor can they civilly express their diverse beliefs in an environment left in conflict after the departure of industry, after the departure of the banana company.
Garcia Marquez, using this style of narration, offers the reader one story: that of the doctor, fragmented within three capsule biographies. All are recounting, simultaneously, memories, while at the same time dealing, in present tense, with the situation of burying the dead doctor. The colonel playing a traditionally Latin American role in the tale, which almost always is told collectively, is being forced to embrace the modern concept of individualism. Going against not only his wife and children’s wishes but also the entire town as a whole, the colonel insists on burying the French doctor, whom the town publicly considers a base character. Foreseeing this conflict before his death, the doctor makes the colonel promise to bury him. This becomes the primary device of intrigue throughout. Consequently, the doctor is never actually buried in the course of the novel. The reader is left to assume that he is. What is important to this plot is the three biographies or narratives. They each appear to represent something wholly intended as a cultural discourse.

Raymond Williams says in his essay “Art and Society” that society is “judged in terms of all it’s making and using, and in terms of all the human activities and relationships which the methods of manufacture and consumption brought into existence” (144). The banana company’s insistence of doctors being licensed to practice medicine is what drove the doctor into seclusion after the people that he had treated for years refused to see him unless he got his license. The people of Macondo called upon the doctor’s medical skill during a time of emergency after a great massacre. Because of their past disloyalty, he refused them. Again we have the return to the past as a means to confront the future. They had long since abandoned him as a physician choosing to call upon only those “licensed” physicians in the village, brought in by the banana company.
It is the banana company that split the community from its doctor. It is industry that put the community in conflict with itself. In turn, he refused them medical care during an emergency when the banana company’s “licensed” doctors were not available. By bringing these practices into existence the banana company brought into existence the circumstances that would, by robbing the doctor of his integrity, split the doctor from the people, and thus the colonel from the people, which ignites the promise to bury him at death, which begins the action of the novel itself. The resulting narratives are the “human activities and relationships” alluded to by Williams. Through them we have accounted for a perspective, or better, several perspectives on the effect of modernity, Industry, “manufacture and consumption” on a nation of communities, as a result of modernity, forced to become individuals by an imposed, detrimental, individualism.

The narrators do not share their story with the other narrators. They share their story with the reader, exclusively. By so doing Garcia Marquez creates a gallery of perfectly independent images, each intriguingly reticent and deftly parsimonious. Each has its unique aesthetic, which is personal, historic, political, sensual. Let’s take the following opening passage:

I’ve seen a corpse for the first time. It’s Wednesday but I feel as if it was Sunday because I didn’t go to school and they dressed me up in a green corduroy suit that’s tight in some places. Holding Mama’s hand, following my grandfather, who feels his way along with a cane with every step he takes so he won’t bump into things (he doesn’t see well in the dark and he limps), I went past the mirror in the living room and saw myself full length, dressed in green and with this white starched collar that pinches me on one side of the neck. I saw myself in the round mottled looking glass and I thought: That’s me, as if today was Sunday. (3)
Common in his early work, Garcia Marquez ends this passage with a detail found also in the beginning of the passage, giving the passage as a whole a circular effect. It could also be said that Garcia Marquez is merely fleshing out one detail “as if it was Sunday” to its full connotative meaning. Either way, the passage succeeds in capturing the boy thinking in descriptive strands, briefly characterizing his grandfather, himself, and the room they both occupy. The result is an image: an image of a boy, his suit, his semi-crippled grandfather stilled in a dark room with a corpse. As always, Garcia Marquez brings this image to life with sensation: the boy is experiencing the uncomfortable pinch of a freshly starched collar on the neck.

“It would not be difficult to sustain the proposition that in essence all of Latin America’s cultural production since Independence can be understood as having been generated from within a discursive situation such as…those elements that have avowedly hindered the manifestation of its intrinsic cultural essence” (Alonso, 13). “Those elements” can be identified as the conflict with modernity or more specifically the conflict with the delusion of modernity amidst a lack of modernity masked by “Positivism in Latin America” that “was not the ideology of a liberal bourgeoisie interested in industrial and social progress, as it was in Europe, but of an oligarchy of big land owners” (Alonso, 22). Again, this is the history Garcia Marquez’s writing augments.

What is transcending about the use of and concentration of sensuality in his work is that Garcia Marquez not only brings us historical, political, and social capital with which to view the other America, he also brings us the human condition, ever present and universal in literature, from a completely different vantage point, a new
method, a new index of references less intellectual and less dependent on Western empiricism or Realism.

The primary action in the novel, taking place in present tense, is that of a colonel, accompanied by both daughter and grandson, who have promised a friend a decent burial, in opposition to the town. The trio arrives at the house of the doctor to the stare and scorn of the town. As they await the burial license, they each begin to describe their individual present condition and then move on to past events.

The son is very detail-oriented. The grandfather is mostly concerned with his friend the doctor in both instances of present time and past reflection. Isabel, the daughter, commands the most attention being that her narration is crafted to render a realist rambling of ideas, both present and retrospective. She seems the least interested in the present events, the most ignoble, and yet the most unconscioniously indignant towards the role of a woman in society.

Most important about this novel’s structure is its frustrated brevity. It reads like a conversation between a traveler and three hosts. Garcia Marquez allows none of the three the certainty of authority one might find in a conventional novel narrated omnisciently or by a third person. Because all three narrators and two sub-narrators all simultaneously characterize each other, the doctor, and themselves, one is hard pressed to assign any one of them the title of protagonist. Although two narrators and sometimes three frequently share the vignettes, they never fully materialize.

The novel Leaf Storm starts with an overture, three paragraphs in length, narrated by an unnamed character calling himself both “we” and “us.” This collective voice disseminates for the reader what invaded their town in 1909. The leaf storm, as it is
described in the overture, is an invasion of “human dregs” and “hidden death.” The second paragraph is dedicated to listing an index of amenities that accompanied the influx of the new clandestine citizenry, namely: hospitals, warehouses, electric plants, single woman and men. In other words, industry has finally reached Macondo, Latin America. It is also said to have brought with it “sad love” and “noise.”

Had it been written in a conventional way, it would indeed not imbue a community voice. It would have been one story, not a collective Latin American story: a frustrating and perpetual lamentation for what was and could have been.

From Isabel we learn that Remedios or Meme, is bought into the family, raised and then passed on to the doctor like a couch or a hunting knife. Meme’s quiet and reflective narrative is reflective and poignant. Her memories are linear and complete while the memories of the colonel, daughter and son are moribund and macabre, unfinished, seemingly taken from the perspective of one who has only one eye open, cut from the middle of a complete characterization, and quite sad. Meme’s story is significant to all of the primary narrators. Garcia Marquez gives her an ambivalent treatment. As Meme recalls her life with Isabel’s family and the time before the leaf storm, Isabel, in recounting for us Meme’s words, makes the observation: “Meme was stiff and somber, talking about the picturesque and feudal splendor of our family during the last years of the previous century, before the great war” (24).

As the colonel is lamenting the loss of a beloved and intimate friend in most of his narrations, Isabel is recalling a visit she paid Meme shortly after Meme and the doctor moved from the colonel’s home to the one in town. Meme is also lamenting, but not for something specific, but for a time gone. Isabel’s intimate narratives share Meme’s
version of things; her character is revealed through her disposition towards Isabel. We also see that through her memories of Meme, the event and tragedy of the doctor’s apparent suicide has a completely different effect on Isabel in the present. This second vignette also reveals Isabel’s ignorance as to Meme’s pregnancy.

In *Leaf Storm’s* vignette nine, the doctor reveals to the colonel that “Meme’s been sleeping with me for years” (73). The colonel then “brought over a chair and sat down opposite him” and observed, “he left the cot, fastened the buckle of his belt, and pulled up his pants and adjusted them. He kept on talking from the other side of the room” (73). This quoting reveals the privacy between the colonel and the doctor. The reader is aware that only the colonel and the doctor are in the room, only the colonel visits the doctor, and only the colonel knows at this point that the doctor has been sleeping with Meme. Garcia Marquez offers the reader an imaginary opportunity of brief movement so that you must visualize the doctor alone with the colonel, the movement the doctor in turn makes the reader imagine, and observe the colonel watching him.

This privacy, this intimacy, this friendship between the colonel and the doctor is created by the structure of the text. It also reveals the colonel’s conflict with contemporary ways. Although the colonel is entrusted with information no one else knows, the colonel knows little of how it affects Meme, Isabel, his grandson, or even his wife, Adelaide. Only we as the reader know, as if Isabel herself were telling us in confidence. The structure of the vignettes, the precision of their placement and length, revelation and imagery, create an aesthetic of rich intimacy employed to liaise between reader, literary aesthetic, and cultural discourse. In terms of dealing with the ostracizing of the doctor and the resulting impediment to his being buried in town Isabel recalls
memories of Meme, her stepmother, her husband, and their reaction with the encounter with the banana company, the leaf storm, and the doctor. Within this next vignette is the history of its culture:

There’s no smell at home that I can’t recognize. When they leave me alone on the veranda I close my eyes, stick out my arms, and walk. I think: *When I get the smell of camphorated rum I’ll be by my grandfather’s room.* I keep on walking with my eyes closed and my arms stretched out. I think Now I’ve gone passed my mother’s room, because it smells like new playing cards. Then it will smell of pitch and mothballs. I keep on walking and I get the smell of pitch and mothballs. I think: *Now I’ll keep on smelling mothballs. Then I’ll turn to the left of the smell and I’ll get the other smell of underwear and closed windows. I’ll stop there.* Then, when I take three steps, I get the new smell and I stop, with my eyes closed and my arms outstretched, and I hear Ada’s voice shouting: “Child what are you walking with your eyes closed for?” (67).

Three first person narratives guide the reader into their consciousness with artistry, detail, and precision. In García Márquez’s *No One Writes to the Colonel*, a single omniscient narrator guides the reader into a story of a retired colonel, much like the colonel in *Leaf Storm*.

The story is also perfectly linear. This adds to the effect of conveying a measure of ignorance, defunctness, and abject poverty to the life of the main character, the colonel. The first passage refers the readers’ senses with the idea of coffee. But more so it is stimulating because of style and craft. It introduces the possibility of coffee; coffee becomes something decadent, luxurious, a desire. This intensifies the effort of the reader to understand coffee’s role in the opening scene. One must not merely understand but imagine the sacrifice the colonel is making. We have to smell the coffee, taste coffee. Ultimately the coffee becomes an object of great sacrifice, “he gives his wife his coffee” (109). Altruism becomes, as a form of sanity, a means of coping with adversity.
The first paragraph alone is packed with sound, texture, diction, and adroit vividness. A fire is precipitously warming a pot of water. He has to reach into this fire and take down the pot. There is not enough coffee. As he scraps the can for the “last scrapings of the ground coffee,” the imagination of the reader goes to work manifesting the spirit of forced parsimony that surrounds. Whatever was once used for comfort is since scant, like the coffee. Certain to demonstrate this extreme poverty, Garcia Marquez writes into his first scene the colonel scrapping also “bits of rust” into the last “spoonful of coffee.” Orange and brown colors contrast each other in connotative forms of poverty, decline and comfort, things that are luxuries with things in a state of decay like the colonel’s life, marriage and household. The sound of scraping is considerably isolated and pure. He doesn’t curse the situation verbally. No indication of angst is written into this opening passage. Already the colonel is characterized as poor, desperate and introverted. But also the colonel is patient, even-tempered, and resourceful.

This is important. Analyzing features of Garcia Marquez’s literary style means discovering the thematic value of imagery and portraiture. By omitting much of the colonel’s history from this opening passage, we get a better representation of the colonel. We get his character caught in the act, so to speak, of actually being himself. Instead of physically describing a colonel, he puts a colonel into action. You have to imagine his physical presence scraping a coffee can.

No One Writes To The Colonel’s power is in its minimalism. The colonel’s dialogue reveals little: “I’m wet through the bones,” he said. “It’s winter,” the woman replied. “Since it began raining I’ve been telling you to sleep with your socks on,” he replies, “I’ve been sleeping with them for a week” (110).
In this dialogue little is revealed except the contentious style of speech between the colonel and his wife. The colonel is on the patio when he speaks. After the dialogue he comes in. The omniscient narrator tells us it’s raining “gently” and then the colonel whispers to himself the month: “October.” The scene concludes.

Throughout the story the conversations of any given group of characters are marked by brevity. This brevity compliments the situation presented to the reader. The poverty of the colonel is reflected in the sparsity of the text.

After a brief encounter with a group of youths at a repair shop where out of desperation the colonel is offering his clock up to pawn, the narrator tightens our focus before we return to dialogue:

Hernan went into the tailor shop with the clock. Alvaro was sewing on a machine. At the back, beneath a guitar hanging on a nail, a girl was sewing buttons on. There was a sign tacked up over the guitar: TALKING POLITICS FORBIDDEN. Outside the colonel felt as if his body was superfluous. He rested his feet on the rail of the stool. (138)

Through the narrator we get a better sense of the colonel’s psychology. His only thought in reaction to the sign is that he feels his body is “superfluous.” Slowly, the story of the colonel reveals itself through light exchanges and quick, omniscient comments. The sparse text, both dialogue and prose compliments the novel’s political theme. The resiliency of the colonel commands the reader’s attention because of its intensity.

In it are very stubborn and recalcitrant passages that because of their content and structure characterize the old colonel. These passages reveal only partial information and are short and curt, much like the personality of an old, stubborn, man oppressed by adversity.
In *The Autumn of The Patriarch* structure is again used to reiterate theme. Garcia Marquez says of this novel of a dictator “my intention was always to make a synthesis of all the Latin American Dictators, but especially those from the Caribbean” (Williams 111). Garcia Marquez also goes on to say that he wanted to write a novel that dealt with the fascination of power. Like the last two this novel uses structure unconventionally to iterate theme, and character. The structure of this novel, having an infinity of narrators, seems to have no linearity, but to be happening all at one instant, both past and present.

This enhances the theme of dictatorship, of power. The dictatorship because of the influence of the structure seems to be static. It becomes a hopeless cycle of anecdotes recognizing the patriarch’s ultimate power and ubiquitous presence.

The dictatorship is an event that is happening in the past, present, and future. That’s the effect of the structure on the content. We are reading it in three dimensions, tenses of time. A conventional structure would have had a one-dimensional effect: a historical, fictional, recounting of a dictatorship. On the contrary, as we read it we get to experience everybody experiencing him, the Patriarch and his rule, at the same time.

At first read this novel seems like a confused stream of plotless anecdotes. This “stream” of anecdotes is what makes the structure an aesthetic unique to the body of Garcia Marquez’s work. Instead of being driven by plot, *The Autumn of The Patriarch* is driven by the experiences of the entire citizenry suffering under the dictator’s rule. Garcia Marquez conveys this in a very impressive and uniquely artistic way. Dictatorship is experienced by the entire nation. It is relayed to the reader in narration as “us,” “we,” and “they.” Members of his military are referred to in many specific and general
identifiers such as officer, colonel, and commander. Narrating groups such as “fourteen trembling military men,” and any member of the general public distinguishing himself as non-military seems to pop up in and out of the narratives describing any number of random events during the dictatorship. An omniscient narrator is used sparsely for difficult transitions and to introduce moments of epiphany for the dictator.

The dictator distinguishes himself by consistently using the phrase “God dammit” to start his brief lines of narration. All the chapters deal with a development of the rise of power and a situation involving an instance of decline. In between the rise and fall of power, the people of the republic experience random acts of cruelty and benevolence at the hands of the patriarch.

The opening of chapter three starts with the pronoun “they” continuing to “we” as the reader is given the explanation that the man found dead by “they,” “we” have since realized is not the general but another man. The “we” continues the details of the anecdote referring to a ambassador named Palmerston, and soon it is revealed that the narration is given over to him when the “we” goes to “he” and then to “I.”

Ambassador Palmerston, one of the last diplomats to present his credentials, recalls in his memoirs that it was impossible to conceive of old age as advanced as his, or a state of disorder and neglect as in that government house where he had to make his way through a dung heap of paper scraps and animal shit and the remains of the meals of dogs who slept in the halls, no one could give me any information about anything in tax bureaus or offices and I…(81)

The “I” again appears, “I should listen to that troop of mules going along out there, listen my dear Stetson, it’s the sea coming back,” in which we learn that the
previous narratives were Palmerston’s, and not the we that introduced him into the chapter if we are given to understand that the lines previous explaining that the general is “deaf as a post” have led him to miss pronounce Palmerston as “Stetson.” In that instant of realization the reader is also apprised of the fact that half of the dialogue we’ve just read in fact belongs to the ambassador. In part it belongs to the Patriarch, as he is noted as having “interrupted the ceremony of credentials.” This narrative style is indeed complex. It requires a great deal of engagement on the part of the reader. *The Autumn of The Patriarch* is ambitious and unique. Firstly, it purports to portray no specific dictator. Second, it does not intend to recount or fictionalize any one specific event of dictatorship in Caribbean history. This unique narrative structure completely omits the use of quotation marks, showering the reader rather than chronicling for the reader the phenomenon of absolute power and tyranny. The structure of the work itself also relays the themes of power and tyranny by oppressing the reader. Many accepted styles of narration and composition are abandoned in *The Autumn of The Patriarch*. Without these rules, without a manageable point of view the reader gets lost in the absolute chaos of the dictatorship. The only point of reference offered to the reader is the fact that every anecdote, horror, and death, regardless of chronology, truth, or legend, is happening during the reign of the patriarch. We lose the objective common to most novels of this type to elicit sympathy and heighten sensibility of oppression and exploitation that should be concern to us all. The structure absorbs the reader into the reign without offering a logical sequence of time, a primary narrator, or even arguably a plot. It is like a reign of power. You get what the story gives you, oppressed by the work. One must follow the strictures offered by the novel in order to successfully get through the book as one must
assimilate, subjugate to the power of a dictatorship. Nobody is primary as a narrator. The structure oppresses the reader by oppressing the narration. In one instant the narrator is relating an anecdote then that point of view changes- it becomes a different narrator’s telling of the same story with an added detail or ending. Then, a narrator vanishes, kidnapped by the text. Narration disappears without warning, as do characters in the anecdotes of tyranny and despotism related by the narrators.

None of the chapters abide to any form of clear chronological linearity. The opening of the book begins with the presumption of the General’s death and a vivid description of the decline of his palace. Given no single primary narrator (as Garcia Marquez did in *Leaf Storm*), the reader gets a heightened sense of experience rather than the simple convention of conveying historical phenomenon through fiction.

In many different instances the narration travels seamlessly from one narrator to the next. This is a fascinating book not only for the fascinating absurdity of power depicted in its pages, but for the ambitious experiment of structure that inevitably also tells the story. Again, in this piece we must evaluate the work aesthetically for a richer interpretation of his work.

By offering alternate centers of consciousness, Garcia Marquez alters the texture of the pieces here. Varied treatments of the event of the doctor’s suicide and subsequent burial give the reader a more vivid portrait of postcolonial Latin American life. Through the experience of this literature the reader can explore the boundary of narration. The reader can explore the patience and grace of old age, relive the vivid details of childhood innocence, and begin to understand the frustrations of a daughter and an abandoned wife in early twentieth-century Latin America. Likewise, an amalgam of
voices relates the oppressive experience of dictatorship— a phenomenon all too familiar to the Latin American political landscape. Within these stories is a certain inevitable truth, reiterated by structure, made timeless by the abandon of convention: every reflection is a revelation that things remain as they always have; a present time forcing the examination of the past indefinitely succeeds progress until the present actually becomes nothing more than a reflection of the past.
CHAPTER III

AESTHETICS OF CHARACTER

The interpretation of character is key to understanding some of the essential themes of Garcia Marquez’s fiction. A close examination of one or more of Garcia Marquez’s more exotic characters offers a richer appraisal of themes common to Garcia Marquez’s work including ethnicity and colonialism, religion and sexuality, as well as race and history. Also, a study such as this helps to further explore the relationship between Latin America, its European ancestry, and her Northern American counterparts. The history of oppressive western ideals and the degree to which their influence imposed modernism on Latin American culture is likewise illuminated by closely analyzing character. A character’s identity (or lack of identity) can reveal in some cases more about the author’s intention than plot, sensation, and theme.

In this chapter I will discuss the eccentric characteristics of Melquiades from Garcia Marquez’s 1967 novel, One Hundred Years of Solitude as well as the outlandish French doctor from Leaf Storm, Garcia Marquez’s first novel, published in 1955. My contention is that these two characters function aesthetically to inform the reader of the implications of the intense hybrid nature of the Latin American race. Also, they serve to provoke questions about the right to cultural and historical authority in Latin America.

Ariel Dorfman, in his article “Someone Writes To The future,” says basically that Garcia Marquez, through fiction, aims to fill in the periods of Latin American culture
and intellectual growth neglected by modes of discourse inspirited by Western thought.

Dorfman claims that the drive to communicate in a way different from the “lying voice of
official history” has always been a major preoccupation with Latin American writers
(Dorfman 22). These are strong and provoking statements.

In essence, Dorfman adjoins himself to the popular notion that *One Hundred
Years of Solitude* is one novel in the line of works charged with creating a history that
includes not documents and facts but “Minority…folk tradition” in order to create an
“alternative cultural and political vision” (Dorfman 22). Dorfman asserts that people
should at least have dominion over their own history; that history should “be the territory
where they exercise some command over their lives,” where they have a right to reign the
final voice of their own cultural provenance and reasoning (22).

Marquez is not a regional novelist. Seldom is he criticized in comparison with
other Columbian authors. I say this to extend Dorfman’s assertion that Garcia Marquez is
creating a fresh version of history for the Latin American, albeit a fictional one. When
has history ever existed sans the bias of interpretation? His fiction is not the history of
Latin America, but of the Latin American, the Mestizo. Interestingly, as a book lauded as
a remarkable work of fantasy and magic, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*’s first chapter
opens with a considerable amount of historical reference. The novel is widely considered
magical realist, fantasy. Yet most references force the characters and plot into specific
historical events and contexts. Garcia Marquez, having established a sense of plausibility,
a theatre of familiar time and space for the reader to reference, stages the reinvention of
that period of time in Latin American history.
Garcia Marquez has more than once explained his characterizations of stock Latin American figures as amalgamations of Latin American characteristics. A particular example of this took place in an interview sometime after the publication of *The Autumn of The Patriarch*, during which Garcia Marquez said, “My intention was always to make a synthesis of all Latin American dictators” (Williams 111).

From his study, *The Spanish American Regional Novel*, Carlos Alonso speaks of this concern of Latin American literature to identify itself in the eyes of the world. Or maybe better said, to continue to attempt a definition of what Latin America really is. Alonso aims to further assess the implications of Latin America’s most substantial artistic contribution, political weapon, and cultural expression: literature, and how it is used continually to create, capture, and identify Latin America identity:

Although fragmented into twenty republics, it is plain to see that notwithstanding that dispersal—which is explained by territorial extension and other circumstances—we constitute from Mexico to Patagonia a large whole solidly bounded by indestructible ethnic, historical, and social affinities. We are a vast organism whose parts, except for a few insignificant differences, are thoroughly linked by physical and spiritual factors that have a similar origin. (qtd. in Alonso 52)

In reference to the popularity and success of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* during its first years of publication, Carlos Fuentes reasons that “There is a joyous rediscovery of identity here, an instant reflex by which we are presented, in the genealogies of Macondo, to our grandmas, our sweethearts, our brothers and sisters” (Fuentes 190). In order to best understand the significance of these conjectures we need look to the hybrid characters of Garcia Marquez’s work.

Melquiades, at least in the first chapter of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, travels throughout the globe. Yet, he avoids the imperial countries in Europe. They are
completely omitted from the first chapter. Never does Garcia Marquez in reference to the wisdom and capability of Melquiades allude to Spain, France, England, or Portugal. Ergo, Melquiades, the bastion of wisdom and science, extends no credit for his nomadic education and atavistic erudition to the Western empire. Being that Melquiades is essential not only to the story but to the characters’ survival in it, I would think Garcia Marquez meant to establish a cultural phenomenon such as Melquiades, of unknown origin, who was in no way in debt to the imperial societies who were responsible for the brutal conquer and oppression of the Americas. The fact that Jose Arcadio, the first son of the Patriarch, Jose Arcadio Buendia, a native of Macondo, becomes a Gypsy, suggests that any native could have done so.

Consider the continental obsession in his book, if not in Marquez’s work in general. He is particularly interested in giving life to that era before his birth, nineteenth-century Latin America. The idea of Spain and its parallelism to Latin America finally became “rusty and immobile.” The Buendia family represents a genesis, an amalgamation of Native and Hispanic Adams and Eves. We are to assume a character as diverse and exotic, mysterious and intriguing as Melquiades represents something ideologically about Latin American cultural genealogy.

I will focus my attention on the author’s treatment of Melquiades in his first chapter. I aim in this heuristic survey of this chapter to establish the obvious significance of this eccentric, telling and symbolic figure. Melquiades is introduced along with the other central figures of the novel. Garcia Marquez describes Melquiades as a traveling gypsy, so that both his mystery of origin and propensity to travel are immediately significant to the novel itself. Melquiades is indeed a primary character. Elsewise, why
would Garcia Marquez choose to arrange him center-stage, alongside the Buendias, at the opening of this great tale? Let us say then that the theme of history, hybridity, and culture can be refracted through Melquiades, as we might infer from the following portion of the opening passage: A heavy gypsy with an untamed beard and sparrow hands, who introduced himself as Melquiades, put on a public demonstration of what he himself called the eight wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia. (p.1)

From this introduction of the gypsy, the reader understands him to be a traveler, as gypsies often are. But he is also more than the chief of a troop or a circus. He is brining to the village of Macondo its first magnet, its first introduction to science, and, from the first sentence of the novel, its first encounter with ice: “Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice” (p. 1).

These things, ice and magnets, are monumental advents for humanity. As the Buendias are meant to be the original Latin American family, an Adam and Eve if you will for the Latin American race, then what are we to make of the man who presumably introduces this formative race and society to the most important advances of that era.

As time in the novel rushes towards modernity, it becomes more deceptive. This passage of time is punctuated with the death of the great gypsy. I have noted in chapter one of this thesis the conflict with modernity that marks the theme of Latin American literature. Obviously, this continues in One Hundred Years of Solitude. What does the death of Melquiades represent, it being the prelude to this modern chaos: the peddling of a chicken that lays golden eggs? Melquiades peddled only plausible technology. As friends to the patriarch, Jose Arcadio Buendia, Melquiades was honest, informative, fair, and considerate. The major events in the first chapter are the
introduction, illness, recovery, and death of Melquiades. His name is mentioned twenty-
three times in a nineteen-page chapter. No other gypsy’s name is ever mentioned
throughout the book. What is he saying about Europe, imperialism? Analyze him and
realize his deliberate lack of connection to imperialistic European countries. Yet, his
wisdom is profound, his character honest. He is also supernatural (he is brought back to
life later in the novel).

Now, consider his hybridity, his places of travel, and the inventions he
introduces to Jose Arcadio Buendia in the first chapter. Consider the juxtaposition of
Melquiades to the second band of gypsies to enter Macondo who announce his death.
They peddle absurdities and false cures. Melquiades peddled true inventions. One gypsy
has a certain Armenian provenance; another is noted to have spoken in Spanish. Yet
again we are left to wonder where Melquiades is from. He dies in Singapore. There is too
much geographic, historic, and ethnographic reference to discount their significance.
Being that these facts intersect all with the character of the enigmatic gypsy it would also
be irresponsible to neglect considering his value in the novel.

These hybrid characters are central to the plots in Leaf Storm and One
Hundred Years of Solitude. One Hundred Years of Solitude is a conventionally structured
novel employing magical realism with Nobel prize-winning creativity. In comparison,
Leaf Storm is a novel employing an unconventional structure to convey an almost
platitudinous and surely plausible series of accounts of the life and suicide of an eccentric
doctor exploring cultural definitions of loyalty, friendship, and modernism. Usual
criticism would associate these two novels for their mutual inclusion of Garcia Marquez’s
famous imaginary locale, Macondo. However, through analyzing Melquiades and the
French doctor, these two important and exotic characters, one will gain a better idea of the author’s intentions.

The origins of both characters remain a mystery. That is to say, the origin and ethnicity of Melquiades and of the French doctor is never revealed. This is not common to characters in Garcia Marquez’s work. If a hint does exist it is through linguistics; Melquiades writes in Sanskrit, and it is also revealed towards the end of the novel that Sanskrit is Melquiades’s “mother tongue.” The doctor reads French. Neither, however, is limited in his communication. We assume both speak the dialect used in the two different eras of Macondo: presumably Spanish.

The doctor and the ancient gypsy share peculiar qualities. They occupy totally different works with totally different characters, era, and theme. Yet, they both have an unusual index of similarities. Both play quasi-clerical roles for the central families in the texts. Both Melquiades and the French doctor are healers, both literal and mystical. They both inspire great friendships with the men of the house. However, they are greatly disdained by the women in both families. Both Melquiades and the doctor heal the man of the house from a detrimental illness: in Leaf Storm the doctor cures the colonel of an unknown illness that another doctor had not the acuity to heal. Melquiades heals Macondo and Jose Arcadio Buendia of the great insomnia plague. In short, they are very hybrid in nature, couldn’t be more distinct from one another, and yet function quite similarly in the stories they occupy.

The doctor is characterized by Atheism. He eats grass. He’s uncomfortably lustful, defeated, and childless. The reader is free to speculate as to the reasons concerning the doctor’s degradation. The doctor has in his character such a brilliant litany
of binaries. He is not necessarily a suffering character, but the reader must suffer his 
maladies as they learn things related to his ongoing characterization. The doctor will be 
used as a backdrop for this aesthetic judgment and reasoning. Like Melquiades, the 
doctor is of an ambiguous origin. Three specific things demonstrate this: his atheism, his 
French newspapers, and his unreconciled connection to the Pup. He is a great doctor who 
has no respect for human life. Yet he saves the colonel’s life.

The eccentric nature of this character is noteworthy. His big yellow eyes have 
a look: “the lust of a dog.” His diet consists of mostly grass. As odd as he is he saves the 
colonel’s life with his medical expertise and yet he leaves people to die at his front door 
in want of his medical skill for the wrong they did him in the past. He enjoys playing 
with a toy ballerina in the colonel’s study. His disturbance at the idea of the existence of 
God is in stark contrast to the parish priest, the “Pup,” the doctor’s doppelganger. His 
dubious French origins add to his character an aspect of intrigue. We applaud him for his 
extraordinary sacrifice on behalf of the colonel of moving into a separate house with 
pregnant Meme, even though she is extremely promiscuous—according to him. Then the 
mysterious disappearance of Meme, the Guajira Indian, takes place after she and the 
doctor move in together. She is never seen again. What are we to make of this doctor?

The doctor arrives in town as one of the “single men” brought in by the leaf 
storm. This characterizes the doctor in so many different ways. He is never married 
although he courts someone in the story, a barber’s daughter. This daughter appears 
beaten in passages throughout the text. The narrator gives only the explanation of her 
being attacked by supernatural evil; she is haunted and beaten by spirits. The doctor is 
characterized as lustful. It is left to conclude that since he is courting her, he must have
something inadvertently to do with her continued abuse. Perhaps this mysterious brutality is her father’s punishment for the courtship to such an odd and eccentric man, or perhaps the doctor himself is brutalizing her. We never find out. The story does not offer an explanation. We also find later in the story that the doctor is secretly sleeping with the colonel’s housemaid, Remedios or “Meme.” This adds to the intrigue of his character, the relevancy of this to the theme of retarded modernity, and the hybrid character of Latin America. Knowing he slept with Meme, the reader is left to contend with the question of his virtue. His sleeping with the housemaid could be the result of the jilt occurring as a result of the barber’s daughter’s haunting. Whatever the truth behind it, he was left without marriage prospects. After this he receded from society and back into obscurity. He was reduced to an almost perfect isolation in the room rented from the colonel.

The aesthetic of the doctor’s hybrid character brings to light these issues. He can be seen as degenerate or left reconciled to fornication by the town that somehow rescinded the one prospect of marriage he had in that hateful town. In this way, the doctor’s ways are in conflict with the residual effects of a defunct version of modernity. He is both a villain and a martyr, just falls short of being a hero. The same happens to the colonel Aureliano and almost all the other prominent male figures in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Both novels simultaneously, with their lack of linear structure, celebrate and elegize the lives of their prominent patriarchal characters.

One Hundred Years of Solitude starts off with a Latin American family. It is important to note that it does not start off with an indigenous American or a Spaniard. As a novel serving as an historical reference for Latin American cultural discourse, One Hundred Years of Solitude begins the history of Latin America with a Latin American,
Jose Arcadio Buendia. The assertion is that Latin America and Latin Americans have the right to a history, free of provincial constraints and Western genealogical concerns. History is an idea of how life might have been during a certain time or surrounding certain key events.

Synthesis, Hybridity, or Amalgamation, whichever word you choose, these characters represent something “bound,” definite, and deeply reflexive of Latin American cultural and historical identity. Allowing an aesthetic reading of these works and their characters rejoin us to the idea of literature as a beautifully complex and informative undertaking of cultural expression. Not only is Garcia Marquez “lying to save the truth,” he is also characterizing his version of an understanding of Latin America. The doctor is a representation of Latin American identity. Garcia Marquez conceals the doctor’s motivations, his complete history, and does not offer the reader a full characterization of the doctor. The doctor endures violence, hopelessness, exploitation, and the loss of identity. In short this is the doctor’s encounter with the modern world. These things surround him; they follow him into town. Yet, in some strange way, as the colonel protects the doctor’s body after death, Garcia Marquez is protecting the dead truth of Latin America, its mystery figuratively left to the care of a colonel, a Latin American.

Likewise it is Melquiades who is responsible for the history of the Latin American progenitors, the Buendias. He does not, however, write it in any known Western language. He writes this most significant narrative of Latin American history in Sanskrit.

The history of Sanskrit itself is ambiguous and at most is considered a dead language. Like Latin, Sanskrit has never completely died, but is considered a classical
language denotative of education, religiosity, and ancient political philosophy. However, it is not connotative of anything imperialistic, not for westerners anyway. Yet it claims a superiority of sorts to Western erudition and intellectual tradition as it is used in the novel. If anything it definitely connotes an equal footing with Western thought. Consider the findings of eighteenth-century British linguistic scholar William Jones, who decided:

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists. (Wikipedia.org)

This fact in itself suggests a much broader human wisdom. Saliently, Garcia Marquez seems to be saying the impression of this wisdom might have escaped Western thought. Again, these suggestions affirm the consideration of the reader to assume that Garcia Marquez is adding to the historical understanding of his culture, pushing the bounds of fiction in this sense as his predecessors pushed the limits of reality. All these things he is saying through character.

Melquiades is seemingly asexual. In contrast, an essential feature of the French doctor’s characterization is overt prurience. These characters with their lack of balance imply the intensity of the Latin American culture. Both defy a convention practiced in the western literatures. The work itself is both fantastic and highly imaginative. It also questions historical authority. These things in themselves are unconventional, rebellious. These two characters intensify this effect. There are connections we have abandoned for a westernized conceptualization of our world. The reader has to imagine their origins. The doctor has no family. Melquiades only has the
gypsies, which could mean either family or acquaintance. The reader is given no firm proof of these two characters’ origins. Yet we are still left to think whether or not provenance is truly being disclosed, as Garcia Marquez is in the habit of letting his characters tell the story, not a ubiquitous authority. The result is a resonating idea of cultural identity. The doctor and Melquiades both can’t represent Latin American identity. They can either both represent a conflict of identity: a lack of resolve in what is Latin American, or they could represent a celebration of the cosmopolitan feature of Latin American identity. At most, the characters addressed in this chapter give the reader pause. One highly styled character in each of these two novels is given no place of birth, no family, and no cultural identity. They are easily the two most eccentric characters in Garcia Marquez’s body of work. Neither of them is concerned with wielding power, nor does any power seem to have the strength to move them in any other direction, as it might the other characters in his work. These two characters are so well crafted and so intensely eccentric, they defy solution. They cannot be decidedly Latin American, French, Indian, or even good or bad. Melquiades wrote, or better, prophesized the defeat and tragedy of the Buendia family. The doctor is suspected of murder, and he apparently committed suicide. His character is infused by ambiguity. Melquiades drowns and the doctor hangs. Both die untimely deaths. They are created to provoke, not to be understood. Usually, this is what we are left with in reading Garcia Marquez. His work almost always ends without redemption or resolution. Instead, his aesthetic features develop into a shower of intensity and chaos. As always in Garcia Marquez’s fiction he leaves his aesthetic features unresolved but nonetheless of the highest intensity. As we’ve seen in chapters one and two an expanding grasp of Latin American life, we never reach a comfortable
knowledge of the story—be it the structure or character. These characters are introduced to us at their most intense periods of characterization, when the most eccentric of their qualities reach their highest pitch: the revelation at the end of One Hundred Years of Solitude that Melquiades actually started writing at the middle of the novel, was writing, and foretold the entire Buendia tragedy. Yet, we are left with a sense of intrigue. We don’t know what or how he served the family by prophesying their fall. The final Buendia reads the tale only moments before the last member of their family is drug to his infant death by ants. Both characters begin and end in a mystery, leaving a vast ignorance in their wake. They are not really human. Garcia Marquez leaves us with the idea that we’ve over simplified the human experience.

Likewise, the doctor we find dead. The beginning of the story starts with suicide. Yet the intensity of his character is carried higher by degrees through the narrators of Leaf Storm. Simultaneously the narrators treat him in some cases as insignificant. The doctor is left in the air, so to speak, in the last passage of Leaf Storm as his coffin is hoisted up, “floating in the light.” The story stops a few lines later as the grandson tells us the birds begin to sing, completely indifferent to the doctor’s suicide and burial. Whether or not the doctor is actually buried, we’ll never know. Likewise, Melquiades has come back from the dead twice.

For now the writing has stopped. With Garcia Marquez the stories do not stop, not completely. He never gives these characters any completeness. As if to say: now you know the aesthetic potential of these characters, but that’s all you’ll ever know. Their moment of intensity, these brief episodes of their lives, define the characters surrounding them. The question of their provenance is left answered; it is to remain unknown. It is this
hovering intrigue that assumes the great power of this aesthetic resonance. Characters such as these have a central bearing, position on the story. Garcia Marquez puts this to work again with the sexual aesthetic.
CHAPTER IV

AESTHETICS OF SEXUALITY

My aim in this chapter is to explore and discuss the more sensual aspects of Garcia Marquez’s work. This section will survey work from 1948 to 1975. In this chapter I will cover the works *Leaf Storm* (Garcia Marquez’s first novel), *One Day After Saturday* (an early short story by Garcia Marquez), and specific sections of *The Autumn of The Patriarch*, and *Innocent Erendira and Her Heartless Grandmother*. I analyze them chronologically in an attempt to establish a pattern of increasing sexual intensity in his work, blossoming from subtle and subversive language that creates a mood of sexual frustration and desire in the early work to a particularly hyperbolic treatment of sex in the later work. I find this feature of Garcia Marquez’s style exists more as a landscape than what might figuratively be called a character in his fiction.

First, consider the absence of actual sexuality in his earlier piece, *Leaf Storm*. This following passage occurs shortly after the opening sequence in the novel:

And Agueda, the cripple, seeing Solita coming back from the station after seeing her boyfriend off; hearing her approach with the sexual rejoicing that she herself once had and which changed inside her into that patient religious sickness that makes her say: You’ll wallow in your bed like a pig in its sty. (Garcia Marquez 10)

Presumably, Agueda’s judgment is imbued with sexual lamentation, for a time gone. Her bitterness expressed towards Solita’s sexual “rejoicing that she herself once had” suggests that Agueda is a sexually inactive, indignant, covetous character.
According to this passage Agueda once also rejoiced after sex. As this occurs we also, as readers, understand Solita, drunk with carnal fulfillment, to be a fornicator. We can assume the “religious sickness” for Agueda, acts as a pretentious defense against jealousy, desire, and actual sense deprivation, “sickness.” The theme of *Leaf Storm* is highly involved in memory, lamentation, and social sickness brought on by industry. The sexual feature of this passage not only compliments the primary theme of the work itself, it also, as an aesthetic, stands alone to create in the reader an anticipation of sexuality, albeit a frustrated one.

Early on, Garcia Marquez began writing about sex in an intense and provocative way. Although his ultimate intentions are mysterious, the aesthetic of sensuality seems to lend support to the overall theme of an individual work. Yet the sexuality, the frustration itself, creates a mood wholly independent from theme.

The earlier work, between 1948-1955, is very subtle and subversive in dealing with sex, desire, and sexual frustration. It deals more with sensuality. Particular to the early work is its mode of eliciting images of sex and desire that come about in sensuous equations and characteristic presumptions. Take, for example, another passage from *Leaf Storm*, where the colonel’s daughter, Isabel, reacts indignantly after learning her former servant has became a concubine. She says that she can’t with certainty recall when Meme “reached the extreme of degradation of becoming the mistress of a man” (18).

Comparing this to the passage involving the judgmental widow, Agueda, and the happy fornicator, Solita, we might find a comparable tone of contempt, judgment, and envy. This may suggest that a sexless life, that of a religious widow and an abandoned wife (the colonel’s daughter was abandoned years before the opening chronicle of this
novel), may indeed lead to contempt, envy, and the rebuke of those living a healthy sex life by those who are not. This, of course, is only one of many possible interpretations of the two passages in comparison to one another. Notwithstanding, they are both suggestive of how a lack of sexual activity in one’s life might influence our judgment of people in our society.

Garcia Marquez deals with sensuality and sexuality in an open and reverential way. The passages involving Agueda and Isabel suggest sexuality in making apparent the lack of sex in the lives of these two characters. Their judgmental reactions lead readers to believe that they abstain from sex for religious reasons. Remedios, later discovered to be quite promiscuous, and Solita, are both unmarried. Nevertheless, they are characterized as sexually active. Accordingly, they are mutually considered to be happy and peaceful characters.

Garcia Marquez doesn’t seem to place judgment on either pair. Instead, he seems to give his characters the freedom to judge one another. This allows the reader to place judgment or to remain indifferent. In so doing, he gives the reader an opportunity to relive, sympathize, and imagine the very common, yet complex and ever sensual dynamic of desire that comes with frustration, and the experience of society’s judgment of sexual behavior. The analysis of sexuality carries with it the consequence and misconception that judgment creates in a society constantly checking natural impulses of attraction and desire.

To better analyze how this aspect of Garcia Marquez’s work matured I’ll take an in-depth look back to the short story One Day After Saturday, written seven years before Leaf Storm. In this story, the sensuality is much more discrete. And, the intention
is much more primitive, deals, allegorically only with sexual frustration. Unlike *Leaf Storm*, sex itself is never directly alluded to. Words like “mistress” and “sexual rejoicing” that appear in *Leaf Storm* have no equal in *One Day After Saturday*. In *One Day After Saturday*, the characters coming together to create a very sensually charged portrait are presumed celibate.

Garcia Marquez uses the clergy to set off a warm sense of subdued desire, creating an instance of sensuality. He does this much like a photographer might capture a moment of pensive silence in a heated conversation.

We start off with the widow, a primary character. The next primary character is a clergyman. He is delusional, bland, unrefreshing, and ineffective. They might at first seem to function as allegory. This is the author’s sculpting grace. The distinction between Father Isabel and Rebecca has a plain reading and an aesthetic one. Each reading offers more and more for the reader’s imagination. Layers upon layers of subversive, semantic sensuality exist buried in every seemingly mere detail. The first reading gives the reader the image of dead birds falling from the sky, dying of the intense heat and flying into houses committing suicide, the basic problem of the piece. Reading the story a second time offers an clearer image of the widow Rebecca and her restlessness.

At mid-point in the story the priest stands in Rebecca’s living room. He’s holding a half-dead bird in his hand. He suggests it needs but a little moisture to resuscitate. The narrator suggests indignation from Rebecca. Suddenly, Rebecca cares little for a bird who might die from lack of tenderness. The priest is aware of the sexual nature of her knick-knacks. It is revealed that he usually never stays in Rebecca’s house
for more than five minutes. As she hears him knock, she becomes irritated having just
undressed for her noon siesta. She reclothes herself to answer the door.

However, during his visit, the Priest, Anthony Isabel of the holy Sacrament,
becomes entirely discombobulated, frighteningly delusional. He imagines that he sees the
wandering Jew. A distant memory forces him to relive the lament, the awe, of finding a
letter in his former rector’s library. It is assumed the memory of the letter informed the
old priest of some brand of sexual immorality. Suddenly, he is struck dumb with an
epiphany. His conclusion is that the birds are a sign of the apocalypse, close at hand.
Rebecca held the bird with repugnance in her hand, and then the bird died.

Consider first, from this passage, the thoughts of Father Anthony Isabel: the
memory of perhaps his first encounter with disillusion. His Rector, his ecclesiastical
superior, cannot find refuge from temptation, has not found refuge from temptation. Our
priest, decades later, still meditates on this event, perhaps his theological albatross. Let’s
consider the symbolism, sexually interpretive, of this passage. In his hand it was held last,
a dead bird. In this death his senses dissipate. He smells no “gunpowder”, he regrets no
impiety, and unlike the first moment of his visit, he now comes to recognize an absence
of “concupiscent” décor, after the death of the bird, as the bird (bird in Spanish,
pronounced “pa-ha-dough”, is sometimes used in Latin America as a euphemism for the
penis) dies, goes limp. The priest no longer construes the décor of her house as sexual in
theme. After the bird dies, so does his sexual mood.

The priest is first brought into a passage full of carnal suggestion. There, the
widow is removing her bodice. Alone in her room, ready to lie down in the burning heat,
she is naked and moist. So hot it is that the priest regards it as the hottest he’s ever been.
It’s smart to assume that Rebecca is also very hot. Ergo, she is half naked, single, and moist. Rebecca removes the bodice and then replaces the bodice, “She hooked up her bodice again” to answer the door where the priest waits with the dead bird (172). With this, Garcia Marquez twice implies nakedness. She walks to the door to find the priest with he eyes closed. As we imagine, he imagines. The reader has already been given the directive to understand the priest to be “exaggeratedly imaginative.” It is siesta time; we know the priest is characterized as being wildly imaginative. As he is waiting for Rebecca to answer the door so that he may acquire the water necessary to resuscitate his “bird”, we are informed that Rebecca hesitates to answer.

The passage that follows finds the priest musing about “the profusion of decorations” after he is invited into Rebecca’s house where he is sitting “in the living room” when he imagines he senses the “the concupiscent spirit of the mistress of the house “ (172). The word “concupiscent” recalls the previous points of occurrence and how it might have influenced the priest’s frame of thought. The priest is thinking while the woman behind the door is undressing, and then dressing again. Perhaps the other woman in the house, naked for siesta time, is also removing her bodice. The priest’s highly imaginative nature alluded to earlier in the story adds to the suggestive feature of sex in this story. His eyes are closed when Rebecca comes to answer the door. The reader is encouraged to imagine why. It is safe to assume that the priest is entirely aware of the necessity to disrobe during siesta time. Both the reader and the priest know that Rebecca is naked. The idea of this pious judgmental figure keeps the sensuality at bay. He is a priest. We have some of his interior thoughts. He seems judgmental and indignant towards the widow. This sad and delusional priest couldn’t conceive indulging. This
device, this use of clergy, implies abstinence, celibacy, and frustration. It keeps the scene from becoming sexual, the abstinence, and the frustration plausible.

Father Anthony Isabel—crazy, dull, highly educated, stagnant, career complacent—cannot and will not fall in love. He is man’s great resistance to himself: ambition, religious pride, and indoctrination. The priest inspires Rebecca with only fear and repugnance. She won’t bend either. They both appear to function as stereotypes. Sexual frustration seems to elicit from the characters in the earlier work contempt for those characters that are presumably sexually active. This dynamic implies frustration. The priest judges the décor of Rebecca’s house as sexual in nature. Rebecca seems to not want to resuscitate his “bird.” Rebecca is without a sexual partner in the story. Her husband is dead. She sleeps naked and alone. As Agueda from Leaf Storm did not have sex for religious reasons, presumably neither does Rebecca or Father Anthony Isabel. Yet sex is there, in the passage. Apparently the priest is frowning and holding up his nose at her sexual environment. The surface implication is that he’s too good to be there. The disgust Rebecca feels for him makes it evident that her mind is not supposed to be where ours is. Her character offers the reader the opportunity to relate to the priest. She is cold and distant to a man who simply needs a little water from her to bring back to life something he holds dear. If we can’t relate to the sexual connotation of this passage then we can certainly sympathize with the old priest.

The priest is closing his eyes while his imagination is going wild. The priest represents man in a reverie of sexual fantasy, waiting for a woman to “open the door” to him. While he waits, his eyes are closed. In this climax, this gorgeous sensual image, Rebecca’s dressing and undressing, the priest’s eyes are closed, his bird in hand, barely
up, barely alive. The imagery suggests a moment of sexual frustration, fantasy, exigency, and longing.

This story is a tribute to sensuality. By removing possibility, by absenting this common brand of narrative matchmaking, he leaves us only with sensuality. What might the priest be thinking while he waits for Rebecca to put back on her clothes, waiting at the door during siesta time, himself baking in the sun, the hottest he’s ever been in his life, while everybody is sleeping, presumably naked, in Macondo. These aesthetics stand on their own. They transcend the themes of their host stories in which they are embedded such as politics, desolation and solitude.

In his book on Jorge Luis Borges, professor George McMurray Attributes the quality of writing in Latin America after 1950 to Jorge Luis Borges. McMurray writes that by his example, Borges encouraged his fellow Latin American writers to concentrate more on “universal and esthetic values” rather than following regional novelists of Latin America who gained notoriety in the decades prior to the nineteen-fifties. In Leaf Storm we have a widow, a peripheral character, described repeatedly as sexually frustrated and contemptuous of those who are not. Leaf Storm was written in 1955. In One day After Saturday, written in 1948, the widow receives visits from a priest. This story is much more subtle in its theme of sexuality and suggestion of sexual frustration.

The later work is more blatant in dealing with society and sexuality. The later works deal closely with themes including power, politics, colonialism, and culture. However, more importantly, these pieces deal with something transcendently raw about human sexuality. Sexuality corrodes and engulfs certain passages to such a delightful
extreme that they finally reveals to the reader something indisputably true about the
nature of sex and its impact on our everyday lives and motivations.

The later work can be said to examine the character of man and his immense
capacity for sex. Garcia Marquez saliently exposes this theme so often limited to themes
dealing with binary examinations of religion and morality. As his writing matures, so
does his work in dealing with sexuality. This sexuality undergoes an evolution in his
works during the late sixties.

In the novella *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Erendira and Her
Heartless Grandmother*, written in 1968, we have more of a blatant sexuality, more
intense in sensuous language, theme and sexual demonstration. Consider the following
opening passage:

Erendira was bathing her grandmother when the wind of her misfortune began
to blow. The enormous mansion of moonlike concrete lost in the solitude of the
desert trembled down to its foundations with the first attack. But Erendira and her
grandmother were used to the risks of the wild nature there, and in the bathroom
decorated with a series of peacocks and childish mosaics of Roman baths they
scarcely paid any attention to the caliber of the wind. (1)

In the next paragraph Garcia Marquez describes the heartless grandmother as
“handsome” and “white.” He also describes her as large as a whale. The granddaughter’s
age is fourteen, and she is very submissive. Already we have a clear image of isolated
decadence. We are in a desert, we have a castle, we have a young girl and an old,
handsome, white, naked woman, soaking wet in a decadent Roman tub. The
grandmother’s shoulders are described as “mercilessly tattooed.” We have the Gothic, the
sexual, the Spanish: two women, one naked, one young and presumably naïve and
beautiful. Already the story establishes a tone of sensuality, exoticism, and exploitation.
These themes were not exactly fully formed in Garcia Marquez’s earlier fiction. In this story sexuality is blatant, and exploitation is accepted by society and executed by two-dimensional oppressor who is offered no opportunity for redemption. The role of the exploiter is not questioned. The grandmother is cruel. She has no redeeming qualities. Yet the sexuality in this piece can be viewed either as an analogy for exploitation or a means of liberation. In this way Garcia Marquez’s treatment of sex becomes more complex. Sexual exploits for Erendira grow multifaceted. She learns many things about sex and about power: sex is power and sex can be power, so much as people can empower themselves through sexual liberation. In dealing with other issues related to society and sexual behavior, Garcia Marquez works a lot with age and first encounters with sex, infidelity, and prostitution.

The later work addresses the primal nature of sex, as it begins to do so in *Erendira*. Fourteen is the common age for Garcia Marquez’s characters’ first experience with sex. Colonel Aureliano Buendia lost his virginity at fourteen to a lecherous old family maid who also at fourteen lost her virginity to a rapist. Erendira is forced by her Grandmother into a life of prostitution at age fourteen as a means of paying restitution for accidentally burning down her grandmother’s house. Her first customer is an old lecher who is said to pay good money for virginity. “He considered the strength of her thighs, the size of her breast, the diameter of her hips” (7). The old customer, before agreeing to a final price, comments on the young girl’s breasts by saying, “She has the teats of a bitch” (7).

With this raw sexual objectification comes humiliation. The idea that one may be sized up superficially like a bunch of grapes, studied like produce before being
accepted sexually, is humiliating. These details explore a more degrading type of sexuality. In the beginning Erendira’s relation to sexuality is purely as a form of exploitation.

At mid-point in the story Erendira complains of pain from having so much sex. After a single day with “only ten soldiers left” waiting to sleep with her she exclaims, “I feel as if someone had been beating me on the kidneys” (20). This detail is provocatively brutal. In it exist many different metaphors for exploitation and abuse. However, plainly, it displays a vast capacity for human sexual activity. Erendira is realizing the limit of her sexuality. Sex in this passage is purely physical. From her first sexual encounter where she experienced “terror” and shouted to be released, Erendira endured rape, pain, unconsciousness, and humiliation. In the passage above, she pushes to the brink of sexual activity. One way to interpret this story is to understand it as an individual sexual narrative. Sex is usually at first uncomfortable, experimental, brutal. Erendira is past that stage at this point of her sexual narrative. Right now Erendira is in a stage where she is simply having many sexual encounters.

If we start from the beginning we have the grandmother described as a large handsome whale, suggesting a decadence of flesh and attractiveness. Then we have the physical nature of sexuality demonstrated by a marathon of sexual activity unlimited by conventions such as marriage or monogamy. Erendira’s sexual partners are legion.

Later on in the story, Erendira meets the son of a Dutch farmer, Ulises, on the same night she complains of her kidney pains to her grandmother. She tells him to come back the next day, but he insists, explaining that he’ll be leaving by morning. She then sniffs and kisses him and “loved him again for half price” after sleeping with him for
most of the night. She sleeps with Ulises voluntarily. This is her first instance of voluntary sex. Presumably this encounter is her first instance of sexual pleasure. After the instance of the kidney beating, her grandmother does in fact excuse her from the customers for the rest of the night. Erendira chooses to have sex with Ulises. This she chooses for herself. From the sensual act of sniffing and kissing, the passage moves on to an extended, exaggerated, hyperbolic sexual activity.

Garcia Marquez seems to be suggesting that the human capacity for sex is limitless. If anything is to be concluded thematically from the piece, it is the repression of that capacity by social convention. The prostitution serves as a form of sexual convention. It is what Erendira is expected to do with her sexuality. Beyond exhaustion and convention, she passes into a state of ecstasy and love. Garcia Marquez’s work in this story has reached a liberated form of sexual pleasure. Erendira, unlike the widow and the priest, fulfils her desires with Ulises. She dismisses what is expected of her by her grandmother and society for the sake of her own pleasure.

The earlier work displays a subtle form of sensual aesthetics that blossom later when the work becomes more politically and socially exigent. With a troop of hookers posed as adolescent school girls, the patriarch in The Autumn of The Patriarch, at the peak of his power, enjoys the prescient dalliance that marks his decline,

He grabbed me by the wrists…he made little buds stand out on my breasts, he put his fingers underneath the edge of my panties, he smelled his fingers, he made me smell them, smell it, he told me, it’s your smell…he used bread to soak up my first adolescent sauce, he would put things there before eating them, he gave them to me to eat, he put asparagus stalks into me to eat them marinated with the brine of my inner humors, delicious, he told me, you taste like a port…(209)
And so the sexuality, the object of sensuality becomes so intense, so moved by arousal, that the Patriarch and his companion must rely on hyperbolic metaphor to continue their narrative recount of this intensely carnal escapade: “he dreamed about eating my kidneys boiled in their own ammonia stew, with the salt of your armpits, he dreamed, with your warm urine…” (209)

In this passage the revelation preceded by sexual indulging motif is undeniable. To further understand the implications we must again examine the arc of sexuality in Garcia Marquez’s work from early on to this.

The priest remains in *One Day After Saturday* an ineffectual clergyman who is finally removed from his position. Garcia Marquez seems to raise the question of whether or not literature has been undermining the role sexual desire plays in our lives. This same story concludes Rebecca’s life as being solitary, alone. Both of these characters are and remain sexually frustrated, given a close reading of the sexual nuance of that piece. On the other hand, Erendira’s journey concludes with her finding freedom. She is liberated from both Ulises and her grandmother. She is released from both obligation and monogamy. From this the conclusion is simple. We must consider the fact that sexual gratification might equate to self-preservation in these texts.

Garcia Marquez might be suggesting that at some point, or at least we hope, we’ll find that evening pasture of interminable sexual pleasure. This passage is one of a few key events that preclude the inevitable demise of the dictator. Psychologically and politically he starts to decline after this colorful encounter. From this position sex can be viewed as a metaphor for aspiration, achievement, and release from duty. It was Erendira’s terminal escapade as a prostitute that released her from prostitution. Likewise,
the patriarch begins to understand his limits of power and perseverance after his vivid love affair with the schoolgirl-prostitute.

I believe that Garcia Marquez is questioning the role of conventions in limiting sexual pursuit and pleasure. The ultimate demonstration of the sexual aspect of his work comes in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* where the patriarch, by then so powerful, has no limit in appeasing his sexual appetite. It juxtaposes raw, peaking, beauty with raw, ultimate, absolute power. Even if you don’t want to see it apolitically, the connection stands.

The schoolgirl-prostitute inhabits two very taboo sexual roles: underage and prostitute. Not only that, but she likes it. This is also extremely provocative. Garcia Marquez’s Patriarch, having ultimately defied convention and having absolute power, has no limit to his sexual desire and fulfillment, fantasy and enjoyment. So much so that he metaphorically seasons, marinates, boils and eats his lover.

From simple suggestion of sexual frustration in the work form the earl fifties and late forties we move forward to the blatant imagery of sexuality in *Innocent Erendira* published in 1968. Garcia Marquez’s sexual imagery moves forward in 1975 to an almost pornographic exuberance in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. The physical act of sex itself is finally given full reign in the work. An incredible amount of raw, unfettered, emotionally and religiously detached copulation is finally manifested. True, the story is involved with a good amount of allegorical exploitation: Erendira being the exploited and the government supporting the grandmother’s exploitative behavior. That being said, sexually the arc of sensuality reaches a midpoint in Garcia Marquez’s work. The final example from *The Autumn of the Patriarch* compels the reader to combine both
sensuality and sexuality simultaneously in the imagination. The result is a kaleidoscope of human sexual desire that transcends overt political themes.

The agency involved in this depiction of human sexuality and sensuality predominates from the idea of conflicted identity. There are now given two versions of American Modernity: Latin America and our own. It could be seen as a counter hegemonic ploy launched as cultural expression, as literature-thus exploring the ways we’ve been expected to view sexual behavior for decades. As theorist Cora Kaplan says in her essay “Wild nights: pleasure/ sexuality/ and feminism,” “How much more difficult…to re-imagine woman as the subject, pleasure as her object, if that object is not sexual” (160). Garcia Marquez abandons the rhetorical stance for a more aesthetic interpretation of humanity’s relationship with prescribed sexual behavior. For Erendira and the patriarch’s prostitute/school girl sex functions as both a liberator and an oppressor. Both women experience a sense of ecstasy and freedom when they shed social norms and reach instances of pure sexual pleasure. If, as Kaplan says, a woman must be thought of outside the role of pursuing sexual pleasure, if society is to give her her due, then Garcia Marquez implies a point of pure sexual pleasure for ourselves where we finally understand and empower ourselves to love without the limiting expectations of those around us.

Erendira gains her freedom after her first pleasurable sexual encounter, after years of prostitution. Likewise the schoolgirl prostitute never experiences greater pleasure, or loves another man as she does when she makes love to the patriarch in the barn, eating and drinking. A prostitute and a dictator, the most unlikely pair, fall in love as the reader gets the most vivid descriptions of sexuality in the entire complex novel. It
is shortly afterwards that the patriarch realizes his reign is soon to end and that his
dictatorship was basically meaningless. During that dalliance in the barn the hooker
found the love of her life: a crippled, deaf dictator with whom she was forced to have sex.
Both narratives leave us in a state of curiosity. We have to decide how sex functions to
benefit and to limit the characters in his work. In other words, sex is never just sex in a
Garcia Marquez story.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to bring to light a neglected dimension of criticism in the prominent studies of Garcia Marquez’s work. In uniting texts reviewed in this thesis by aesthetic features such as structure, character, and sensuality, I hope to have given the reader a new lens with which to view his work. Criticism that ignores these unifying features testifies to a limited understanding and appreciation of Latin American literature. I find that the study of Latin American literature is usually approached using political theories common to Latin American studies, or using magical realism as a qualifying feature necessary to define and distinguish Latin American literature.

One of Garcia Marquez’s talents as an author is his great capacity for sentimentality. He organizes a brilliant cache of histories-rich, tragic, astounding and unforgettable. Garcia Marquez’s work increasingly calls into question Western ideas of criticism, postcolonial theory, and the function of literary realism in supposing a universal human condition. By widening my scope of criteria for analyzing his work beyond the political and magical realist features, my appreciation for this sentimental quality has deepened.

As an artist, Garcia Marquez is less telling the story of a people than telling the reader a story about a Latin American telling a story. A gypsy tells the story of a family to a family in One Hundred Years of Solitude. Because of Garcia Marquez’s
immense capacity for the sentimental, the book itself seems to imply something more complicated than simply a work of fiction. It is not exactly a novel written by an author. Garcia Marquez more writes a story about a gypsy who wrote a novel about a family. This gypsy’s experience with this Latin American family is showcased alongside the novel about a family, written by Garcia Marquez. Garcia Marquez writes the Buendia saga as Melquiades would write it. In Leaf Storm he does the same. He writes as the colonel, the daughter, and a young boy might speak to the reader. Because he is in some effect writing a history of Latin America, he lets the characters from those eras tell their story. This feature becomes more and more sophisticated in his work until it reaches its height in The Autumn of the Patriarch. With seasoned precision this novel collects an unquantifiable number of narrators to tell the story of Latin American dictatorship. This quality augments the theme of ubiquitous power. This narrative style, this sentimental style magnifies the experience of oppression by relating it through the ubiquitous voice of the people who experience it.

In writing this thesis I try to give the reader a more holistic approach to analyzing the work of Garcia Marquez. I also wanted to offer the reader a way to combine the political, cultural, and global significance of his writing with the high artistic quality and originality used to convey it. Rich, sensual aesthetics in his work display concerns and culture prevalent to his country and of all Latin America.

What is tragically reductive about the use of the term magical realism is that had the term been shed decades earlier, the academy might have seen Garcia Marquez as part of the avant-garde of the globalization of literature; particularly because of the writers who have influenced him, and the writers he is now influencing. Garcia Marquez,
among other prominent names in literature now begins to receive credit for their part in influencing the new writers of the Arabic world. Claudia Roth Pierpont, in a recent article in the *New Yorker*, credits Garcia Marquez, among several key influences essential to the rise in Arabic literature, saying that including “the Arab writers of Iran, Pakistan, and Egypt, spinning complex social tales…[looked] understandably toward Kafka and Garcia Marquez” for a “form with many variant possibilities.”

Latin American writing confidently deals with histories, traditions, and cultural metaphysics of mysticism and superstition. They concentrate much less on the psychological and sociological aspects of the human condition than they do the spiritual, physical, and lyrical. From Borges to Amado, Paz to Allende, Neruda to Assissi, Latin American literary artists have been more concerned with external struggles and pleasures than internal conflict and empirical reality.

Garcia Marquez writes from this motivation. He creates desires, conversations, and multifarious anecdotes. How many voices represent our reality? This is what Garcia Marquez seems to be asking.

I think one specific feature of great literature is not being able to pinpoint what one specific feature makes it great. Analyzing a writer with a popular and sometimes traditional approach is justified. In fact, in most cases a difficult writer with which one might not be familiar can be better understood through academic and popular literary theory. Yet what is most important is to remember that literature is an art. Art should never subject itself to a pursuit to be fully understood. What happens between a piece of art, a painting, a portrait, a play, or a poem, should be private, subjective, and intimate. It should not be limited, characterized, expected. The man with the greatest
wisdom in turn endures the greatest sorrow. Always be open to learning something new about literature.

For better or for worse, the Western canon might be at last losing its dominance as the standard for world literature. Colonized worlds are continually establishing new literary traditions by following the influence of their own cultures and norms. Looking at Garcia Marquez’s work as a participant in the evolution or transformation of literature affords a new way to view literature as it more and more begins to transcend regional concerns and political themes.

The previous chapters have demonstrated how Garcia Marquez uses structure, character, and sensuality to convey themes and ideas as clearly and coherently as does plot, action, and content, because literature must always first be acknowledged for its aesthetic pleasure.
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