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978-0-521-31692-7 - Gabriel Garcia Marquez: One Hundred Years of Solitude

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Gabriel García Márquez

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE

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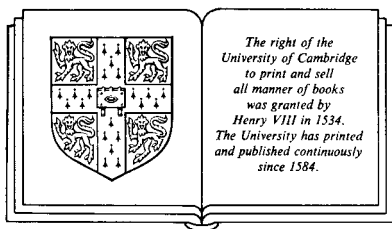
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GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

One Hundred Years of Solitude

MICHAEL WOOD

University of Exeter



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Chronology

García Márquez's life and works

Related historical and literary events

- 1899 United Fruit Company arrives in Colombia.
- 1899–1902 Colombian civil wars of half a century culminate in the War of the Thousand Days. The Treaty of Neerlandia is signed. The only difference between the warring Liberals and Conservatives, Colonel Aureliano Buendía says at the end of his military and political career, is that the Liberals go to mass at 5 and the Conservatives go to mass at 8.
- 1909–35 Juan Vicente Gómez is dictator of Venezuela.
- 1919 Colombia signs contract with Tropical Oil Company.
- 1922, 1935 Colombia's border disputes with Venezuela and Peru settled.
- 1924 José Eustacio Rivera, *La Vorágine (The Vortex)*.
- 1928 Major strike of banana workers near Santa Marta, in northern Colombia, ending in a massacre.
- 1928–36 Lives in Aracataca in the house of his maternal grandfather, Colonel Nicolás Ricardo Márquez Mejía, surrounded by aunts and memories and the rumour of ghosts. Later in life he dreams repeatedly that he has never left this house. He says, 'Nothing has happened to me since'. An early draft of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was called *The House*.
- Gabriel José García Márquez born 6 March, in Aracataca, in tropical northern Colombia. This is the date usually given, and 6 March is certainly right. The author's father says the child was born a year earlier, and so reportedly do those who have seen the birth certificate.

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- 1929 Rómulo Gallegos, *Doña Bárbara*.
- 1936–9 Civil War in Spain.
- 1936–46 Primary and secondary school in Baranquilla and then Zipaquirá, in the highlands of Colombia. At age 13 he sees the capital, Bogotá, for the first time, 'a distant, gloomy city where an unrelenting drizzle had been falling since the beginning of the sixteenth century . . . interminable funerals . . . and corpses from important families who thought they had invented death'.
- 1941 United Fruit Company leaves Colombia, or at least drastically reduces its presence.
- 1944 Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*.
- 1947–9 Studies law at the National University, Bogotá, and at the University of Cartagena. Publishes first stories in the Saturday supplement of a Bogotá newspaper, *El Espectador*. Writes a column for *El Universal*, of Cartagena.
- 1948–57 Profuse and continued violence in Colombia, generically known as La Violencia, following the assassination of the Liberal leader Jorge Gaitán. Different assessments put the number of people killed in these quarrels at 200,000 or more than 300,000.
- 1949 Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo (The Kingdom of this World)*.

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- 1950 Gives up law studies and becomes a full-time journalist, working for *El Herald* and *El Nacional*, both Baranquilla papers, and for *El Espectador*. Publishes more stories, and a first novel, *Leaf Storm*, 1955.
- 1950–5 William Faulkner receives Nobel Prize.
- 1953 General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla seizes power in Colombia.
- 1954–8 Pérez Jiménez is dictator of Venezuela.
- 1955 Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo*.
- 1955–7 In Europe as correspondent of *El Espectador*. Takes a film-making course in Rome. Rojas Pinilla closes *El Espectador*, and the jobless and moneyless García Márquez stays in Paris, finishing and reworking *No one writes to the Colonel*, published 1961. He visits several socialist countries and writes *90 Days Behind the Iron Curtain*.
- 1957 Rojas Pinilla resigns. A military junta announces elections, which are held in 1958. Coalition governments follow, but there is much unrest and guerilla activity.
- 1958 Marries Mercedes Barcha in Baranquilla, works in Caracas for the magazines *Momento*, *Elite* and *Venezuela gráfica*. Writes most of the stories to be published in *Big Mama's Funeral*, 1962.
- 1959 Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos (The Lost Steps)*. Fidel Castro's forces take Havana; President Batista resigns and flees.

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- 1959–61 In Havana to report on the trials known as Operación Verdad. Starts office of Cuban press agency *Prensa Latina* in Bogotá; works for *Prensa Latina* in Havana and New York.
- 1961 Juan Carlos Onetti, *El astillero (The Shipyard)*. Failed anti-Castrist invasion at the Bay of Pigs.
- 1961–7 Mexico City. Edits magazines *Sucesos* and *La Familia*. Works for an advertising agency and wins a Colombian prize for his novel *In Evil Hour*, 1962. Works on several film scripts. Writes and publishes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1967. Instant, overwhelming success. The book is translated into 27 languages, wins 4 international prizes, runs through hundreds of editions. It is said to be the most popular book in Spanish since *Don Quixote*. García Márquez had started and abandoned the book when he was 17 or 18, failing to find the right tone. 'I had to live for 20 years and write 4 books of apprenticeship to discover that . . . the story had to be told, simply, the way my grandparents told it'. 'I've never been really interested,' he said later, 'in any idea which can't withstand many years of neglect'. His ideas for *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* were respectively left to ripen for 17 and 30 years.
- 1962 International crisis concerning the installation of Soviet missile bases in Cuba.
- 1963 Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela (Hopscotch)*.

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1965 Mario Vargas Llosa, *La casa verde (The Green House)*.
Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Tres tristes tigres (Three Sad Tigers)*.

1966 José Lezama Lima, *Paradiso*.

1967 Carlos Fuentes, *Cambio de piel (Change of Skin)*.
Che Guevara dies in Bolivia.

1967–75 Barcelona. Receives an honorary degree from
Columbia University, New York. Publishes *Innocent
Erendira*, 1972. Helps to found *Alternativa*, a
Bogotá review dedicated to political opposition.
Becomes a vice-president of the Russell Tribunal.
Publishes *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, 1975.

1970 José Donoso, *El obsceno pájaro de noche (The Obscene Bird of Night)*.
Salvador Allende elected president of Chile.

1973 Allende overthrown.

1974 Augusto Roa Bastos, *Yo el supremo (The Dictator)*.
1975 Franco dies.

1975–81 Mexico City and Bogotá. Works on several film
scripts; visits and writes on Angola and Nicaragua.
Energetic political activity. He is a founder member
of the Colombian party *Firmes*; works on a
UNESCO report on communications; forms HABEAS,
an organization for the help of political prisoners.
Publishes *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, 1981.

1979 The Somoza family, in power in Nicaragua since 1937,
is ousted by the Sandinistas.

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Mario Vargas Llosa, *La guerra del fin del mundo (The War of the End of the World)*.
 President Omar Torrijos of Panama dies in a plane crash.

1981

Nobel Prize.

1982

Lives in Colombia and Mexico. Publishes

1983–

Love in the Time of Cholera, 1985.

Continues political activity.

Publishes *The General in his Labyrinth*, 1989.

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A note on translation and quotations

I have used Gregory Rabassa's familiar and effective translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* whenever I could, which was most of the time. Where it wasn't accurate or didn't reflect the point I was after in the Spanish, I have either adapted it or offered my own wording entirely. Quotations are identified on the page, Spanish text first, e.g. [216:231]. References are to the readily available editions by Editorial Sudamericana, 1967 and Avon, 1971.