

# Social Isolation as a Cause of Incest in Latin American Fiction

Mrs Sara Abderrazag<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Lynda Kazi-Tani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Mustapha Stambouli University,  
Mascara-ALGERIA

**Abstract-** In his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), the Latin American writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez depicts the Buendia family, whose members seem to have a great difficulty marrying and developing sexual relationships with characters outside this family. Marquez portrays these characters as such in order to represent incest and connect it with the social behavior of individuals. The present paper, then, is an attempt to prove that through depicting male as well as female characters as unable to establish healthy relationships with people outside the family, Marquez seems to show that social isolation is one of the key causes to social aberration.

**Key words-** incest; social isolation; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gabriel Garcia Marquez (b. 1927) is a Colombian novelist who is famous of mixing reality with fantasy. As a result, most of his works became well known of their magical realist topics.

His *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a novel in which he depicts the lives of seven generations of the same family, the Buendia, who live in Macondo. The members of this family lead an isolated life because they establish healthy relationships, the sexual ones in particular, with other people outside their family. Instead, they continue to have incestuous relationships with each other. The present paper, then, is an attempt to prove that through depicting male as well as female characters as unable to establish healthy relationships with people outside the family, Marquez seems to show that social isolation is one of the key causes to social aberration.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has been tackled from a variety of perspectives. In his book *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque* (1995), David K. Danow calls attention to magical realism in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. While talking about magical realism in this work, he points out that Marquez does not depict the fantastic as something unusual "among the peddlers of everyday reality" (8). Then, trying to support his point of view by arguments from the novel itself and to show that the fantastic is not something uncommon for the novel's characters, Danow chooses the following example: "It rained for four years, eleven months, and two days" (Ibid.).

Considering another aspect, one should mention Carlos Fuentes who, in a chapter entitled "Garcia Marquez: On Second Reading", comments on the novel's characters by

stating that the "entire history had already been written by the gypsy Melquiades, the fortune-teller who accompanied Macondo at its foundation. Hence,...everything was known, long before it happened, by the sacred, utopian, mythic, foundational divinations of Melquiades" (28). Then, he moves to talk about the metaphorical in the novel where he considers the whole book as a metaphor that has a negative effect on people because it develops "man's sense of abandonment and fear on this earth — the abandonment and fear of regressing to an anonymous, inhuman nature, the horror of engendering a child with the tail of a pig" (29).

Harold Bloom introduces different critics' views about different aspects of the novel, including Elizabeth A. Spiller's chapter that is entitled "Searching for the Route of Inventions: Retracing the Renaissance Discovery Narrative in Gabriel Garcia Marquez" in which she talks about inbreeding in the novel, arguing that the marriage of José to his cousin Ursula is the main reason of their family's continuous incest.

Although the previous critics as well as many others have interpreted the novel from a variety of perspectives, it has been observed that there is a need for detailed studies on incest in relation to social isolation. The present study attempts to take up the lacuna by analyzing this aspect.

## 3. SOCIAL ISOLATION AS A CAUSE OF INCEST

As it is mentioned in the introduction, Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is mainly about the Buendia family. The characters in this novel suffer from a kind of emotional emptiness in their life, the thing that leads to their loneliness and isolation. It appears that these characters fail to escape their solitude which causes their commitment to incest; and this in turn leads to giving birth to distorted or grotesque children. Thus, social isolation is

one of the causes of social aberration of the Buendia family. In a chapter entitled "Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Dialectic of Solitude", Paul M. Hedeon pays specific attention to the issue of solitude in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In "Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Dialectic of Solitude", he refers to one of the critics who sees that the novel's characters have a desire to get rid of their solitude, the thing that may make them contented. However, they can achieve this happiness only through deciphering the documents of Melquiades. Since these documents embody the "history of the family", the birth of the distorted Aureliano in the last generation "symbolizes the complete destruction of the family, rather than the hoped-for release from" isolation (71). Thus, although several characters try to read the parchments left by Melquiades, they fail to do so; while ironically, the one who succeeds in reading these parchments, is the same who causes the downfall of the family by giving birth to a grotesque child who is the result of solitude that leads the characters to incest. Additionally, in her "One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez" (2012), Jessica Joubarne, too, sees the characters' solitude as the main cause behind their incestuous relationships simply because they look for love outside the family. Yet when they fail to find real love, they choose the members of the family as a solution (Joubarne). Since evidence in the novel can confirm this fact, one should provide some instances that give an idea about some of the characters' solitude. To start with, José Arcadio Buendia's sons experience lonesomeness in their life. Before their marriage, Aureliano and his brother José Arcadio used to share the same bed. So everyday, Aureliano

would stay awake waiting for [José Arcadio] until dawn in the solitary bed that seemed to have a bottom of live coals, and they would keep on talking until it was time to get up, so that both of them soon suffered from the same drowsiness, felt the same lack of interest in alchemy and the wisdom of their father, and they took refuge in solitude. (Marquez 30)

Thus, instead of doing something else to fill their emptiness, "they took refuge in solitude". In fact, this expression gives the reader a hint that not only their situation leads them to this behaviour, but also they themselves do not make any effort to go out of this solitude. Also, their sister Amaranta "took charge of Aureliano José. She adopted him as a son who would share her solitude" (Ibid. 91). Instead of taking her nephew as a means through which she can flee from her isolation, Amaranta chooses for him to experience the same feeling; as if she likes her solitude.

Additionally, Aureliano José, the son of Colonel Aureliano Buendia and Pilar Ternera, when he knows that the latter is his real mother, "they were accomplices in solitude" (Ibid. 156), and, when Aureliano Segundo discovers that Aureliano is the illegitimate son of his daughter, Meme, "[h]e cut his hair, dressed him, taught him not to be afraid of people, and very soon it was evident that he was a legitimate Aureliano Buendia, with

his high cheekbones, his startled look, and his solitary air" (Ibid. 323). So, from all the above mentioned quotations, one can derive two important points: first, Marquez's use of the terms "share" and "accomplice" clarifies the fact that the characters of the novel do not try to get rid of their solitude. Second, the expression "with his high cheekbones, his startled look, and his solitary air" shows that solitude is hereditary in this family simply because as Aureliano has many physical similarities to the Buendia family, he also has the "solitary air." In fact, there are a lot of instances in the novel that support the idea of solitude.

It is the solitude that the members of the Buendia family suffer from in their life with the failure to know how to avoid it that lead them to incest. Also, in his book *Gabriel Garcia Marquez: A Critical Companion* (2001), Ruben Pelayo argues that the "two grandchildren of the Buendias, born to Pilar Ternera, confirm the family's downfall initiated by the incestuous marriage of their grandparents, founders of Macondo" (93). He sees that the deterioration of the Buendia family is clear from the very beginning, for the founding couple is guilty. For instance, Aureliano José, the son of Colonel Aureliano Buendia and Pilar Ternera falls in love with his aunt Amaranta, who used to take care of him since his childhood. Amaranta tries to convince him that "[a]ny children will be born with the tail of a pig" (Marquez 153), however, he answers: "I don't care if they're born as armadillos" (Ibid.), which reveals his desire to make love to his aunt without paying attention to the result or taking any responsibility. Although Amaranta tries many times to make him forget about this idea, he is so driven by desire to the extent that he starts to ask what he can do to realize his dream. One day, he asks a soldier: "Can a person marry his own aunt?" (Ibid.) while surprisingly the soldier's response is that "[h]e not only can do that...but we're fighting this war against the priests so that a person can marry his own mother" (Ibid.). So, the soldier's answer with this Oedipal tone shows that even people outside the Buendia family have the same desire towards the members of their families.

Also, Amaranta Ursula, not the same Amaranta, for the same names are used again and again, the daughter of Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda del Carpio, has a child with her nephew Aureliano, the illegitimate son of Meme (Renata Remedios) and Mauricio Babilonia. One day, she wants to take a shower so he waits for her in her room and when she comes, "Aureliano smiled, picked her up by the waist with both hands like a pot of begonias, and dropped her on her back on the bed" (Ibid. 402). Thus, in spite of Amaranta Ursula's marriage to Gaston, she leaves him and builds a new relationship with her nephew. But it seems that the latter couple's love is deeper than that of Amaranta and Aureliano José of the first generation because Amaranta Ursula and Aureliano give birth to a child and "when they saw themselves alone in the house they succumbed to the delirium of lovers who were making up for lost time. It was a mad passion, unhinging, which made Fernanda's bones tremble with horror in her grave and which kept them in a state of perpetual excitement" (Ibid.

410). The former, Amaranta and Aureliano José used to kiss, but the latter couple's love is so unnatural that it causes the bones of Fernanda to wobble in her tomb.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To wrap up, one notices that sin is not considered as a grave matter in the Buendia family. They just want to obtain or enjoy their instinctive desire without paying attention to the consequences. Michael Wood comments the male members in the family "tend not to worry so much about the problem" (84). Thus, all the characters seem not to give too much importance to the disastrous results these incestuous relationships may lead to. In addition to that, it has been proved that incest is mainly the result of characters' social isolation.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Danow, D. K. (1995), *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque*. Kentucky UP.
- [2] Fuentes, Carlos. (2002), *Garcia Marquez: On Second Reading*. In: Bell-Villada, Gene H. (ed.), *Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: A Casebook*. (pp. 25-32), Oxford UP.
- [3] Hedeem, Paul M. (2003), *Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Dialectic of Solitude*. In: Bloom, Harold (ed.), *Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*. (pp. 71-84), USA: Chelsea House.
- [4] Joubarne, J. (2012), *One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez*. Retrieved January 01, 2013, from <http://homeofthejoubjoub.edublogs.org/2012/12/1>

6/one-hundred-years-of-solitude- by-gabriel-garcia-marquez-isu/.

- [5] Marquez, G. G. (1967), *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Trans. Gregory Rabassa. England: Penguin.
- [6] Pelayo, R. (2001), *Gabriel Garcia Marquez: A Critical Companion*, USA: Greenwood Press.
- [7] Spiller, Elizabeth A. (2003), *Searching for the Route of Inventions: Retracing the Renaissance Discovery Narrative in Gabriel Garcia Marquez*. In: Bloom, Harold (ed.), *Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*. (pp. 49-70), USA: Chelsea House.
- [8] Wood, M. (1990), *Landmarks of World Literature: Garcia Marquez One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Cambridge UP.

#### Author's Biography

**Mrs. Sara ABDERRAZAG** holds a magistère degree in English literature from the University of Jordan, Amman and is currently preparing her phd in the university of Abu Bakar Belkaid Tlemcen, Algeria. She is an assistant teacher in the department of English language and literature at the university of Mustapha Stambouli, Mascara, Algeria. Her main research interests are: Women Literature/modern/postmodern fiction and world literature in translation.

**Dr. Lynda KAZI-TANI** has a PhD in Translation Studies from the university of Oran. She is a lecturer in the department of English Language and Literature at the university of Mustapha Stambouli, Mascara, Algeria. Her main research interests are: Terminology - Translation studies - Ethics - History of civilizations.