

**An Analysis of Kafkaesque Essence in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by
Gabriel García Márquez**

Priyadharsini R.

Assistant Professor, Department of English,

Karpagam Academy of Higher Education,

Coimbatore – 21

Contact Number: 9597458205

Email id: priyadharsini1rajagopal@gmail.com

Abstract

The term Kafkaesque is used to refer to a nightmare like circumstance when the characters are restricted by something like bureaucracy where they don't have a chance to resist or protest. The term has come to existence after such unpleasant situation in the novels of Franz Kafka. Recent usage does not necessarily point out bureaucracy but any situation that is perplexing, bizarre, horrid, alarming or nightmarish over which the character do not have control. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has tended as reservoir of innumerable thoughts providing countless ideas for analysis and research. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has got countless number of events and incidents including the prophecy, the banana company, the war between liberals and conservatives, and even the arrival of certain people, which change the course of the villagers living in the fictional town of Macondo. Lining out the superstitions in the novel, the rest of the incidents seem to exist parallelly with the real life events where individuals cannot find a way to dispute like that of war and massacre. The paper tries to analyze qualities of few events that resemble horrendous circumstances of Kafka's novels that inhibit the routine of the inhabitants of the village.

Key Words: Kafkaesque, Banana Company Massacre, Magic Realism,

Cambridge dictionary defines the term as “extremely unpleasant, frightening, and confusing situations” (Web). Frederick R. Karl, author of the critical biography of Franz Kafka argues, “What is Kafkaesque is when you enter a surreal world in which all your control patterns, all your plans, the whole way in which you configured your own behaviour, begins to fall to pieces, when you find yourself against a force that does not lend itself to the way you perceive the world. You don’t give up; you don’t lie down and die. What you do is struggle against this with all your equipment, with whatever you have. But of course you don’t stand a chance. That is Kafkaesque.”

One Hundred Years of Solitude being a novel of Magical Realism, the bureaucracy is provided a power that is beyond reality, wherein they have power over rain patterns. They also have power over reducing time consumption for cultivation, this idea seems credible in reality. Márquez has supplied the drastic occasion in a blown up way. The reasons why it is Kafkaesque can be explained by the fact that the characters are entangled under various circumstances they are into over which they do not have power over. The following lines state the condition of the men who are enchanted by the creepy grace of Remedios the Beauty which they cannot surpass.

As soon as the group of friends went into the plantings the air became impregnated with a fatal fragrance. The men who were working along the rows felt possessed by a strange fascination, menaced by some invisible danger, and many succumbed to a terrible desire to weep. (240)

Remedios the Beauty, immune to formality, indifferent to the banana plague and impenetrable to the malice and was contented with her own world of simple realities. There is something about her that made her appear unearthly and seraphic which made the men around her lose their mind. There are men who died of her beauty but it took too long for the people to realize “Remedios Buendía did not give off a breath of love but a fatal emanation” (240).

Mr. Herbert, the Gringo visits the town with the purpose of popularizing captive-balloon business. This does not interest the inhabitants as they considered primitive having witnessed the flying carpets of the gypsies. He dines with the Buendías at their home, he eats as much as he could and examines them dissecting to minute parts. No one understood what he was doing and

it seemed totally bizarre to them. Later he was found to explore the place with a net and a small basket, following which a bunch of engineers, agronomists, hydrologists, topographers and surveyors started to arrive at the town.

There was not much time to think about it, however, because the suspicious inhabitants of Macondo barely began to wonder what the devil was going on when the town had already become transformed into an encampment of wooden houses with zinc roofs inhabited by foreigners who arrived on the train from halfway around the world. (233)

They caused drastic changes about which the people could not even understand. Even before they realized what was happening the invaders have brought so much changes in the town. “It was such a tumultuous and intemperate invasion that during the first days it was impossible to walk through the streets (234).” It has taken a year after Mr. Herbert visited the Buendías and ate banana to realize their plans. Now it is understandable that the gringos plan to plant banana trees in the region. “Look at the mess we have got ourselves into, just because we invited a gringo to eat some bananas” (234).

These visits from outsiders have encouraged a few of the 17 Aurelianos to come to the town. Though they are sons of Colonel Aureliano Buendía they were living away from their father with their respective mothers. Few of them come back to Macondo, when asked about the cause behind their visit they explain, “We came, because everyone is coming” (236). There are not constantly visitors to the town who are causing modifications to the town without them being involved nor do they comprehend what happens in their place. “No one knew what they were after, or whether they were actually nothing but philanthropists, and they had already caused a colossal disturbance, much than that of the old gypsies, but less transitory and understandable” (233).

The banana company massacre in the novel refers to the true incident that took place in Columbia but Márquez had embellished the events preceding and following it and the number of deaths to emphasize on the impact it has caused. It is not just the bureaucracy that is bizarre when it makes the citizens forget the event killing around 3000 men of their village by rewriting the history and making it reach everyone by incorporating the same into the text books. Only

José Arcadio Segundo is aware of the massacre and the banana company's plan of execution as he was the only survivor.

“There were more than three thousand of them, I am sure now that they were everybody who had been at the station” (319). He managed to escape from the train that moved in the opposite direction of Macondo and keeps repeating the above lines all the time. He reaches the village only learn that there is no trace of the massacre left in the memory of the inhabitants. Everybody believes that the conflict ended smoothly without any death contrary to the reality which killed around 3000 men, that was all of the protesters.

It was accepted by the people that the protesting union has reduced their demands to two points seeking a renovation in the medical services and constructing latrines in the quarters they lived due to their patriotic spirit. It was also added that Mr. Brown has agreed to provide a pay for three days of public festivities to celebrate the end of the protest.

I had not rained for three months and there had been a drought. But when Mr. Brown announced his decision a torrential downpour spread over the whole banana region. It was the one that caught José Arcadio Segundo on his way to Macondo. A week later it was still raining. The official version, repeated a thousand times and mangled out all over the country by every means of communication the government found at hand, was finally accepted: there were no dead, the satisfied worker had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rains stopped. (315)

José Arcadio Segundo is the only person aware of the fact that Mr. Jack Brown is the one who unleashed the rain and the downpour would not end soon and that it was his plan to divert the people from the conflict and the recommendations they made as he has already proclaimed that the necessities would be met after the rain and that they are suspending all the activities until the rain stops. “It rained for four years, eleven months, and two days” (320).

The people of Macondo are happy and contented with whatever they have until the arrival of the Magistrate and invasion of military. The people are disconnected from the outside world except for the intermittent arrival of the gypsies who bring instruments and inventions to surprise the inhabitants Macondo. It begins with official order to change the color of the houses from dove white to blue to commemorate the anniversary of national independence.

José Arcadio Buendía could not understand or decipher the statement when his wife explains him. He confronts the Magistrate and explains how they found Macondo, how they made their improvements and how the village is surviving without the aid from the government and them without disturbing others. He justifies that they are satisfied with their developments. He argues, “In this town we do not give orders with pieces of paper. And so that you know it once and for all, we don’t need any judges here because there is nothing that needs judging” (57). He keeps mentioning that they did not establish this village for some other man to come and give commands in the name of Magistrate. The following lines make it clear that the arrival of magistrate was seen as an invasion.

No one was upset that the government had not helped them. On the contrary, they were happy that up until then it had let them grow in peace, and he hoped that it would continue leaving them that way, because they had not founded a town so that the upstart who came along would tell them what to do. (57)

Peace was restored at Macondo and Magistrate was give due power. There was tranquility until the military invaded the place and started attacking the people.

War, In fact, had broken out three months before. Martial law was in effect in the whole country...While the army platoon that was to occupy the town by surprise was on its way. They entered noiselessly before dawn, with two pieces of light artillery by mules, and they set up their headquarters in the school. A 6 pm curfew was established. (103)

Everything began when a women who was bitten by dog at home was attacked by the military. The incident incited Colonel Aureliano Buendía to rebel against the conservative regime by entering the war. He met his friend Colonel Gerineldo Maruquez and instigated them saying, “Get the boys ready. We’re going to war” (104).

The army starts to verify the houses for weapons and equipments and everything were seized including the farm implements. If there is anybody found to go against the martial law they were taken away and never came back. “A more drastic search than previous one was undertaken, house by house, and this time they even took farm implements” (104). Colonel Aureliano Buendía was the one to organize the people in Macondo to enter the war but later he comments Colonel Gerineldo Maruquez that he has not got a valid reason to fight in the war

mentioning “Or fighting, like you, for something doesn’t have any meaning for anyone (139).” Maruquez for the rest of life will at service of Colonel Aureliano Buendía following his commands who does not seem to have motto of his own but his situations make him a part of the war. The treaty of Neeralandia they sign at the last is absolutely in contrast with the ideas they started fighting the war at the beginning years leaving Colonel Aureliano Buendía confounded about further fight and revolt.

“They changed the pattern of the rains, accelerated the cycle of harvest, and moved the river” (233). Pattern of rain is something beyond human control; by bringing it into the context Márquez makes it how the people are controlled bureaucracy. Science has developed to such an extent that rain can be stimulated by artificial means; crops can be cultivated with yield and large size in short span of time. However the knowledge of such developments in Márquez’ period would have been a rarity. Mentioning of the happenings is to emphasize the impact of the power. “Mr. Brown unleashed the storm” (320). This exaggeration mentions how far the person with power can function and how much this can bewilder the people and disturb their operation.

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