

Portrayal of Ecological Imperialism in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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.Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) belongs to a league of a handful of writers who influenced or rather charted the path of literature in Twentieth century. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970) is considered to be the magnum opus of this Nobel laureate. This paper attempts to explore the portrayal of ecological imperialism, an aspect explained by postcolonial theorists in the aforesaid novel of Marquez. The paper is structured with three parts. To begin with the background of the text will be discussed in brief and along with that the plot will be presented. It is essential to do so as Marquez's texts, going by the classification of Roland Barthes, fall under the category of writerly texts. Writerly texts are complex in nature and it is essential to explain them before applying a theory to elucidate certain elements that are present in these texts. In the second part, the idea of ecological imperialism will be explained. In the concluding part, portrayal of ecological imperialism in the chosen text, will be discussed.

Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was published in Spanish under the title, *Cien Anos de Soledad* in 1967. The English translation of this novel appeared in 1970. It was translated by Gregory Rabassa. This novel brought Garcia, unprecedented popularity. It was a trend setter and acted as a prototype. The novel not only influenced the readers but also a good number of writers also. In a way it gave an identity and global recognition to the Latin American literature. One way of interpreting it is as the family history of Buendias. The history of the Americas is linked with the family history of Buendias. In every historical incident, the readers can find at least one Buendias. Another important aspect in the novel is that the names of the characters repeat themselves. In order to avoid confusion, Marquez provides the readers with a family tree in the opening of the novel. The novel is set in Macondo, a small fictional town in South America. The time of action is not specified. However through certain events and the age of a few characters it can be assured that the action covers a time line of more than one century.

The town of Macondo was found by Jose Arcadia Buendia. Jose Arcadia Buendia and his wife Ursula Iguaran were cousins. Due to this fact they were mortally afraid that their children might have 'pig tails' or such deformities. This fear is one of the ever prevailing emotions in the

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novel. The readers will find this fear coming true at the end of the novel. Jose Arcadia Buendia has a spirit of scientific enquiry in him. He spends hours together in his lab. Once had killed a man named Prudencio Aguilar in an honor fight as he insulted him. Aguilar's ghost began to haunt him. Due to this he left his hometown and reached Macondo with some of his friends. He planned the town and established a settlement.

Jose Arcadia Buendia and Ursula have two sons. They are Jose Arcadia and Aureliano. Jose Arcadia inherits the physical power of his father and Aureliano inherits the mental faculty and the quest for freedom. Both of them are enamored by an old fortune teller Pilar Ternera and Pilar Ternera gives birth to Aureliano Jose through Aureliano Buendia and Arcadia through Jose Arcadio. Jose Arcadia runs away with a gypsy group. Ursula, who went in search of him, finds a new route to the outside world. Following this, many outsiders came to Macondo. Until then only gypsy travelers came into Macondo. The gypsy travelers brought many new things such as ice and flying carpets. One of them is Melquiades, an old, learned man. Melquiades handed over certain mysterious parchments to Jose Arcadia Buendia, which the entire generation tried to decode. Jose Arcadia returned to the homeland a few years later, only to become a usurper of farm lands. Later he died under mysterious circumstances. Aureliano known as Colonel Aureliano Buendia becomes one of the greatest liberators of Latin America. He organizes a militia against the existing conservative regimes. He waged numerous wars and during the time of bloodshed, a good number of foreigners entered Macondo. Colonel Aureliano, fathered seventeen sons through different women. The attempts of Colonel Aureliano failed and he died as a goldsmith.

Jose Arcadia Buendia turned mad and he is tied to a tree outside the house. Ursula ran the house with her maternal strength. After the civil war, a banana company entered the town and it began to exploit people of the city. Jose Arcadia Segundo, son of Arcadia and great grandson of Jose Arcadia organized a strike against the company. During the strike thousands of workers were massacred by the government forces. Due to this shock Jose Arcadia Segundo, locked himself in a room and spent his time in reading the mysterious parchment.

After the massacre by the banana company, heavy rains struck Macondo. It lasted for four years, eleven months and twelve days. The rains severely destroyed the town. It destroyed the Banana Company's factory. Foreigners who lived in Macondo ran for their life. When the rains stopped, only the early settlers were left out in Macondo. Who lived in the midst of ruins? With the rains, destruction of the Buendias too began.

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Once the rains stopped, heat waves began to attack the town. Birds fell down and died due to severe heat. The residents of the town felt as if they are in a boiler. Macondo seemed to be hell in earth to them. As they did not have any other way, they continued to live in Macondo.

Aureliano Babilonia (a sixth generation Buendia) and Amaranta Ursula (a fifth generation woman of Buendia) were the only Buendias left. Even though both of them are of the same age, by relation Amaranta Ursula was Aureliano Babilonia's aunt and she is married. In spite of this fact, a forbidden love sprouted between them. Amaranta Ursula and Aureliano Babilonia began to live together and Amaranta Ursula got pregnant. While giving birth to the child another Aureliano (by name), Amaranta Ursula died of haemorrhage. Struck by grief, Aureliano wandered through the streets of the city. When he returned to the house, he found ants carrying the new born baby. Pushed by some unnatural instinct he ran to the secret parchments which he had been trying to decode with the intellect of a middle age scholar and the help of the Melquiades' spirit before meeting Ursula Amaranta. The parchments read "The first of the line is tied to a tree and the last is being eaten by the ants" (420). It had been written in Sanskrit, Melquiades' mother tongue. He hurriedly got through pages containing the history of his family. The prediction is that Jose Arcadia Buendia (the founder), his would have turned mad and faced his death, tied under the tree. The last of Buendias will be born with a pig tail. It concluded with the prediction of complete destruction of the city and the family with the decoding of the message. The parchment says that it is:

. . . foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatable since time immemorial and for ever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth. (422)

The term ecological imperialism was originally coined by Alfred W. Crosby. He used it in an eponymous work, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. (1986). The term is self-explanatory. This is a cardinal term in postcolonial studies. Crosby says that the colonization was and is on the ecological front too. In this book, he categorically states, "Perhaps the success of European imperialism has a biological, an ecological, component [sic]" (7) Ashcroft et al say that the term is used

.... to describe the ways in which the environments of colonized societies have been physically transformed by the experience of colonial occupation. According

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to this thesis, imperialism not only altered the cultural, political and social structures of colonized societies, but also devastated colonial ecologies and traditional subsistence patterns. (69)

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez has portrayed ecological imperialism of the colonizers. Attracted by the taste of bananas from Macondo, Union Fruit Company introduces large scale, Industry like banana cultivation. They dig canals and develop new cultivating lands. As a result of this the topography of the entire region is changed.

Due to the ecological imperialistic nature of the entire enterprise, the incident is called as banana plague in the novel. Banana plague brings in class difference. It turns honest farmers into useless factory workers. It takes away the lives of hundreds of farmers turned workers in a demonstration against the company. It upsets the ecological balance of the regions. Consequently there is a continuous rainfall for years together. In the end, the entire town is ruined by this imperialistic exercise. At this juncture, it is essential to remember Crosby's words on environmental imperialism in Americas that is Latin American countries.

Crosby says: "The success of European ecological imperialism in the Americas was so great that Europeans began to take for granted that similar triumphs would follow wherever the climate and disease environment were not outright hostile" (297). Ecological Imperialism is an essential at often ignored area by researchers who use tools from postcolonial theory. It is essential to look into this direction in the future, while addressing to the cultural, economic and ecological problems faced by the erstwhile colonies.

Works Cited

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