SYMBOLS OF COLONIAL DECAY: A POSTCOLONIAL REREADING OF GABO'S FICTION

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"Look at the mess we've got ourselves into,' Colonel Aureliano Buendia said at that time, 'just because we invited a gringo to eat some bananas." – Gabriel Garcia Marquez

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Of Love and Other Demons*, it is clear that he is advocating for the rights of those that have been oppressed by the spectre of empire. In his critique, Garcia Marquez address conditions that span tremendous time and empires, beginning with the Spanish colonial rule that came to Colombia via Santafe de Bogota established in 1549 (*Colombia*). This same regime that invaded native lands and destroyed native populations, brought about the oppression of a foreign population on Latin American soil with the introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Thus, Garcia Marquez heavily implicates the Spanish colonial project and the decay of its power in his depiction of a Colombian port city in *Of Love and Other Demons.* Moving into modernity, Garcia Marquez condemns the imperialist conquest and capitalist exploitation that, although do not formally or legally enslave people, seek to subdue non-white populations to extract profit and power from land and people to give to the select few that control these systems. Thus, Garcia Marquez's subversive narrative around Macondo, a small utopic town that becomes the central setting for *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* directly troubles and usurps the power of these oppressive and extractive systems. As Macondo is destroyed by the greed of banana corporation that mirrors the real-life 1928 Banana Massacre of the American United Fruit Company in Cienega, Magdalena (Norcross 14), Garcia Marquez's revisionist history charts this decline to implicate the US and critique the imperial and capitalist exploitation of Macondo, and thus, Latin America.

Through a well-constructed web of family ties, revisionist history, and changing narratives, Garcia Marquez tells a politicized story of Latin America, continually exemplifying

the decay and ultimate destruction caused by the oppressive systems brought by imperialism and colonialism. He centers his critique on places, highlighting the death of ideals in places like Macondo and the Marquis' household. This centering of critique in a decaying colonial port and untouched utopic towns serves to highlight the magnitude of the effects these oppressive systems in entire countries and social structures. However, he allows power to also be taken into the personal arena as his native and black characters often speak back to these systems. He creates characters that personify the decay and death of colonialism and sets them against these non-white characters, thus highlighting the Hegelian master/slave dialectic as presented by Bernarda, the Marquis' wife and Dominga de Adviento, a slave that ran the household until her death. Ultimately, Marquez pairs his critique of colonialism and imperialism with powerful oppressed characters to topple the empires that have stolen and oppressed non-white peoples. This essay seeks to explore the ways in which Marquez critiques imperialism, colonialism and capitalism and their effects on Latin America. He does this by centering his critique on the fictional town of Macondo. This town, secluded from the world, is Marquez's representation of a Latin America changed by colonial and imperialist powers and the resulting capitalist endeavors. Therefore, a postcolonial analysis of Garcia Marquez's Macondian history and its themes of decay and exploitation yields a subversive narrative that brings the marginalized to the center. Garcia Marquez's subversive retelling of history, then, becomes a significant pillar of rebellious literature.

Because of his texts' similarities to the recorded history, many have taken his rendition of the fictional Macondo as a re-written history of Latin America. His embellishment and representation of factual events, like the 1928 Banana massacre, serve to reveal the atrocities of an exploited population and a history told through the eyes of those outside of the white, wealthy

elite. His troubling of history to challenge empire is the key to exploring the rise and fall of the utopian Macondo. Ultimately, this essay seeks to analyze Marquez's representation of places touched by colonialism and imperialism, granting the loudest voice to the oppressed. It is these texts that allows one to discover the deep cultural and epistemological effects that colonialism and imperialism have in the world along with the destruction of peoples and land brought on by these systems. As Marquez's texts are filled with critiques of the decay brought on by imperialism and colonialism, it is key that he infuses this critique with the agency of the marginalized characters in his texts. It is this that allows for the most powerful critique of the domineering powers that have for long oppressed non-white peoples, as presented in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Of Love and Other Demons.*

A Theoretical Exploration of Coastal Colombia

Before analyzing of the current scholarly discourse around the works of Garcia Marquez, it is first important to lay out the foundational theory driving my analysis of *Of Love and Other Demons* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Ania Loomba's *Colonial/Postcolonial* is critical to the understanding of this paper. On challenging colonialism, she asks "What does it take to for colonial subjects to move from alienation to revolution, from a recognition of injustice to resistance? What are the dynamics of anti-colonial consciousness and revolt?" Garcia Marquez's fiction answers these questions by its representation of the plight of slaves and exploited workers and it is crucial the answers he provides to Loomba's questions are analyzed through a postcolonial lens. Loomba's analysis of colonialism as a force that "reshapes, often violently, physical territories, social terrains as well as human identities" (155) offers a unique lens through which to view the work of Garcia Marquez. Furthermore, her work on nationalism and

anticolonial thought inform much of the analysis of the banana plantation that becomes the epicenter of Garcia Marquez's anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist discourse. Loomba explores the relationship between colonialism and a postcolonial search for and formation of national identity and the importance of literature in creating this national identity. Thus, it sets the tone of the importance of Garcia Marquez's works. Loomba's assertion that a nation is a site for "the expression of, 'other' concerns - those of gender, ethnicity race and religion, caste, language, tribe, class, region, imperialism and so on." (173) becomes key in the analysis of the positionality of the Garcia Marquez's work. One Hundred Years of Solitude and Of Love and Other Demons attempt to take back a narrative that shifts power to marginalized workers and enslaved and native populations. Upon applying Loomba's lens of nationalism to the texts analyzed in this essay, it is clear that the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist narratives in these texts call upon a questioning of the formation of history and condemns those at the helm of its inception.

As Garcia Marquez is one of the most celebrated writers in Latin America, his works, especially *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, has been thoroughly studied and analyzed, particularly though a lens of magical realism. His work weaving the precolonial magic and the modern world has made for many literary criticism exploring how he subverts power in his use of magical realism. However, as a prime example of resistance literature, it has also, although not as much, been studied through a postcolonial lens to reveal its subversive themes. One such study is "Magical Realism as Social Protest in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Of Love and Other Demons" by Mustanir Ahmad, Ayaz, Afsar and Sobia Masood, which closely analyzes the "colonial process ruthlessly continued in the town, e.g., slavery, exploitation, otherness, etc." Much like this essay, Ahmad, Ayaz and Masood argue that Garcia Marquez "verbalizes his

feelings of protest against certain social problems." (52) This article highlights the atrocities done to the slaves but fails to recognize the spaces where Garcia Marquez grants agency to the slaves in the Marquis's household. This essay seeks to recognize those spaces and actively engage the disparity between master and slave. Ahmad, Ayaz and Masood also astutely recognize the fear of a plague that is pervasive throughout Of Love and Other Demons, rightly condemning the widespread racial discrimination. However, the article fails to recognize the racialized master-slave dialectic between Bernarda and Dominga de Adviento. This dialectic is key to reveal the nature of colonialism, one of the death and decay. While Ahmad, Ayaz, and Masood focus much on magical realism, as much of the study of Garcia Marquez does, this paper seeks to unify his critiques of oppressive systems that fall along the colonial spectre. As *Of Love and Other Demons* sets a love story against the backdrop of colonial decay, the ways in which Garcia Marquez speaks against the colonizer become apparent though Dominga's speaking against Bernarda, challenging the master and breaking free of her chains.

In the same vein, much of the research on *One Hundred Years of Solitude* focuses on the revolutionary space that Garcia Marquez creates, specifically regarding the banana plantation that ultimately dooms Macondo, the central setting of the novel, into extinction. In "Magical Realism, Social Protest and Anti-Colonial Sentiments in One Hundred Years of Solitude: An Instance of Historiographic Metafiction," Mustanir Ahmad and Ayaz Afsar explore the ways in which Garcia Marquez successfully creates these spaces of anti-imperialist protest. They state, "In the first place, Marquez raises a voice of protest against the Spanish incursions aimed to colonize Latin America, whereas, in the second, he condemns the North American advances in the South to capture and subsequently make use of the resources of latter." (4) Ahmad and Ayaz analyze the ways Garcia Marquez troubles history and challenges the powers that shapes the

narratives of the colonized and exploited Latin America. However, the article fails to condemn the atrocities in the novel and, thus, does not recognize the atrocity of the capitalist system. Also, it does not recognize Garcia Marquez's direct denouncement of those involved with the banana company. Thus, this essay seeks to fill that space and make known the abhorrent nature of the imperial conquest and the capitalist invasion that ultimately leads to the downfall of Macondo. As Ayaz and Afsar state, "Marquez's fiction is a "form and product of violence" and is replete with instances of protest against exploitation at the hands of the colonists." (2), reinforcing the significance of Garcia Marquez's literary resistance and anti-colonial and anti-imperial thought. Garcia Marquez retells history centering those living in the margins and, thus, shifting centuries old narratives that continually oppress non-white peoples. In condemning the colonizer and those that seek to exploit his Latin America, Garcia Marquez lucha por el pueblo.

Garcia Marquez's critiques, thus, are most effective when viewed through the lens of Hegel's master/slave dialectic. In analyzing *Of Love and Other Demons* through a Hegelian lens, Garcia Marquez's intentions to usurp power is most apparent. Bernarda and Dominga's relationship, thus, becomes one of the central pieces of Garcia Marquez's critiques. In explaining this master/slave dialectic Hegel states, "the lord relates himself mediately to the bondsman through being [a thing] that is independent, for it is just this which holds the bondsman in bondage" (115). However, this analysis is heightened by using Susan's Buck-Morss "Hegel and Haiti," particularly its critique of the denial and dismissal of the actual effects of slavery to focus on the theoretical and legal repercussions of it. Similar to Buck-Morss work with European discourse around slavery, Garcia Marquez centers the struggles of marginalized peoples in his critiques. Buck-Morss critiques this erasure of experience by stating, "Rather, slavery was a metaphor for legal tyranny, as it was used generally in British parliamentary debates on

constitutional theory" (826). This recognizing of the failures of past critiques of colonialism is key to understanding the importance of Garcia Marquez's subversion of power. In so doing, he mirrors other postcolonial texts, like *A Tempest*, in granting his characters agency to speak back to their colonizer. Buck-Morss develops a critique not only of the field of its scholars, saying "Rousseau's egregious omission has been scrupulously exposed by scholarship, but only recently" (830). Following this lens of exposure, this essay's analysis explores Garcia Marquez's own reveal of the exploitation and invasion that doomed Macondo. Thus, in analyzing Garcia Marquez's fiction through a Hegelian lens, with Buck-Morss crucial additions, Dominga's usurping of Bernarda's power is key to the text's critique of the spectre of empire.

THE DEATH OF COLONIAL IDEALS

Marquez's critique of oppressive systems is most effective because it recognizes the interconnectedness of these systems and the multifaceted effects of oppression, especially those conditions created by colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, on personal, systemic and cultural basis. In both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Of Love and Other Demons,* these systems and their irreparable effects are highlighted to ultimately condemn the destructive nature of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. Most importantly the author bases these critiques in places to capture the magnitude of the decay and death brought on by the systems he critiques. He extends the damage done to the land that people call home. Thus, he condemns those that have taken and exploited land, people and the nature of humanity.

To begin his critique, Marquez writes Macondo as a perfect land to highlight the purity of undiscovered and uncolonized land. He writes of it, "En pocos años, Macondo fue una aldea más ordenada y laboriosa que cualquiera de las conocidas hasta entonces por sus 300 habitantes. Era

en verdad una aldea feliz, donde nadie era mayor de treinta años y donde nadie había muerto." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude 6).* (In a few years, Macondo was a more orderly and laborious village than any known until then by its 300 inhabitants. It was indeed a happy village, where no one was over thirty and where no one had died). (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude 9)* It is a prospering village of youth the remains untouched, not only by society but by death. Marquez highlight this by stating that Macondo was a place "where nobody had died." This pristine village is set up to represent purity in a binary of the inside and outside groups. The focus on the absence of death is incredibly important as it sets up Macondo to be pure other to a deathly colonized place. This utopic place, that ultimately sees its end after it has been ravished by imperialism and capitalism, sets the stage for Marquez's critiques, which are only emboldened in *Of Love and Other Demons.*

Contrasted with the utopic Macondo, Garcia Marquez's treatment of the city in *Of Love and other Demons* is telling of Garcia Marquez's attitude towards the colonizer. He begins the novel by addressing one of the key aspects of colonialism, the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The narrator remarks that a "shipment of blacks [were] being sold at a discount." (Garcia Marquez, *Demons 7)* First, setting his novel in the context of this incredibly damaging system it becomes clear that his critique is anchored in racial politics, just as much as a critique of colonialist ideology. The emphasis of the "discount" also shows Garcia Marquez's commendation of the commodification of humanity. He troubles the deep disregard of the colonizer for the bodies of those that do not look like them. In speaking of the discrimination in *Of Love and Other Demons,* Ahmad, Afsar and Masood state "This inhumane treatment of the black is an ample evidence of the racial discrimination and exploitation on part of the colonizers." (54) Garcia Marquez emphasizes blackness and the discrimination and exploitation that has been brought on by the

colonizers. In condemning this marginalization of black individuals, Garcia Marquez recognizes Loomba's assertion that "race has thus functioned as one of the most powerful and yet the most fragile markers of human identity, hard to explain and identify and even harder to maintain" (105). The great power afforded to the colonizers is rooted in a fragile balance and, as Garcia Marquez demonstrates, it can be easily questioned. In intentionally identifying their blackness and not merely calling them slaves, Garcia Marquez ensures that his critiques exist in a racially conscious space. He does not leave a stone unturned and seeks to unmask colonialism as the true evil it is.

Garcia Marquez's critiques of this monetization of human beings and the colonizing project center on the death and decay brought on by these systems. He continues to tell of the port city that serves as the background to the story of Sierva Maria, "For the past week a ship belonging to the Compañia Gaditana de Negros had been awaited with dismay because of an unexplainable series of deaths on board." (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 7*)* By making these "deaths" "unexplainable", he is troubling the lack of accountability in a system that has no regard for human life. He condemns colonialism as a system that kills on a mass scale. He also directly places blame on the Compañia Gaditana de Negros, holding them accountable just as much as the larger system the participate in. He places the brutality of colonialism on a ship, just the way it entered Latin America drawing parallels between the death brought on by this ship and the larger death brought on by the colonizers.

He follows up this focus on death by highlight the ease with which this immense death is hidden. Of the slaves on the boat, he states of the slaves of the boat, "In an attempt at concealment, the unweighted corpses were thrown out into the water." (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 7) A theme throughout his novels, Garcia Marquez clearly troubles the ability that those

in power have in shaping history and uses this to further his critique of the powerful elite. In calling it "an attempt at concealment," he attests to the failures of it. He also, again, troubles the disregard for the bodies of the colonized. In using "thrown out," he highlights the savagery of the colonial mission, which it paradoxically attempts to eradicate. As Ahmad, Afsar and Masood state "From slavery to the issues of gender and race, the theme of exploitation has been manifested throughout *Demons*. Even a casual reading of the text reveals that exploitation on the basis of colour and creed has been strongly condemned." (59) Garcia Marquez manages to critique the exploitation of colonized people on a systemic and personal level. He highlights the death of the slaves and sets his story around it, ensuring that the reader knows of the disasters brought on by colonialism. Thus, it becomes clear that Garcia Marquez's creation of a literature world is anchored in his critique of oppressive systems.

On a more microcosmic scale, Garcia Marquez extends his critique of the colonial ideology to the home and family at the center of the novel, the Marquis and his family. As one begins to become acquainted with the Marquis and his home, it becomes clear that he functions to display the decay of colonialism. In a run-down city that has seen better days as "the principal slave market had been moved down to Havana", (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 14*)*, the Marquis's household serves as a parallel for the overreaching theme of decay. Like Macondo, the Marquis's household had once possessed a splendid beginning as "the pride of the city until the beginning of the century." (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 12) This preceding splendor serves to highlight the disparity between the early ages of colonialism and its demise. Garcia Marquez goes on to describe the current dilapidated state of the household and, thus, exemplifies the deterioration of the colonial project in Latin America. He states, "Now it was a melancholy ruin. The drawing rooms had kept their checkerboard marble floors and teardrop chandeliers in cobwebs" (Garcia

Marquez, *Demons* 10). First, in deeming it a "melancholy ruin," he places the home chronological continuum of deterioration. In implicating the passage of time, he foretells the impending doom of colonialism. From grandeur to ruin, this home and the authority it represents, will be brought to the ground by the most powerful of agents, time itself. He further defines this deterioration by creating a parallel between the "checkerboard marble floors" and the "teardrop chandeliers" and the "cobwebs". He invokes decadent imagery and then highlights its descent into ruin, condemning the wealth of the Marquis. It is significant that this wealth is highlighted, for it signifies the fruit of the labor of the colonized natives and imported slaves. Thus, Marquez usurps the power of the Marquis, and in so doing, the power of the Spanish colonizer.

Garcia Marquez continues to trouble the Marquis' power by even further casting a light of deterioration on the Marquis' household. As he showcases the decay of the decadence of the household, he also focuses on the decay of the slave quarters. He states, "Everything was saturated with the oppressive damp of neglect and gloom… Now all that splendor was a thing of the past… the slave yard was reduced to two wooden shacks with roofs of bitter palm, where the last scraps of greatness had already been consumed" (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 11). Again, Garcia Marquez harkens back to a time of grandeur that now escapes the once powerful estate. In setting up these timelines of decay, he diminishes the power of colonialism and makes it victim to the tribulations of time, questioning the stability and sustainability of these regimes. The "neglect" and "doom" that saturate the household stand for the neglect and doom of the town, the Marquis and the social structures that uphold his power. However, the representation of the slave's "wooden shack" is the most telling of his description of the house, as it directly implicates and critiques the source of the Marquis' power, the exploitation of non-white peoples. In presenting a decaying slave quarters, Garcia Marquez is presenting the deterioration of the

power over these slaves. This allows the text to usurp the power of the colonizer by critiquing it and places oppressed communities at the center of this critique. Thus, it is clear that Garcia Marquez sides with the slaves and that an anti-colonial sentiment is that the basis of his politics. This is also exemplified by his use of "consumed" in relation to the "greatness" of the household. As with the marble floors and teardrop chandeliers, he highlights the decadence but takes a more direct approach in condemning. He reveals the nature of the power of the Marquis, one that consumes the people and land that his ancestors have taken. This consumption and exploitation of non-whites and their resources becomes one Garcia Marquez's weapons against the colonizers that enacted such violence against the native and forcibly moved.

Along with a decaying town and home, Gabriel Garcia culminates his critique of the colonial project by personifying it and charting its decay. As the Marquis' wife and "an untamed Mestiza of the so-called shopkeeper aristocracy" (*Demons 8)*, Bernarda Cabrera is the personification of the colonial project and the effects it has had on Latin America. As a Mestiza, she signifies the deeply entrenched mixing of the foreign and native populations and, as a member of the "shopkeeper aristocracy," she signified the economic systems that oppress poor and non-white communities. Thus, Garcia Marquez's portrayal of her and her relationship to the slaves in her household explores the personal, as opposed to geographical and systemic, ramifications of the colonial project. When describing her he says,

*"Sin embargo, en pocos años se había borrado del mundo por el abuso de la miel fermentada y las tabletas de cacao. Los ojos gitanos se le apagaron, se le acabó el ingenio, obraba sangre y arrojaba bilis, y el antiguo cuerpo de sirena se le volvió hinchado y cobrizo como el de un muerto de tres días, y despedía unas ventosidades explosivas y pestilentes que asustaban a los mastines." (*Garcia Marquez, *Demonios 10)*

*("In a few short years, however, she had been erased from the world by her abuse of fermented honey and cacao tablets. Her Gypsy eyes were extinguished and her wits dulled, she shat blood and vomited bile, her siren's body became as bloated and coppery as a three-day corpse, and she broke wind in pestilential explosions that startled the mastiffs".) (*Garcia Marquez, *Demons 10)*

As with the town and the Marquis's home, Garcia Marquez sets a timeline of greatness and deterioration. The once great Bernarda is now decaying symbol of power within the household. He instills in her a deep illness that radiates decay from inside out. She "[shits] blood and [vomits] bile" serving a symbol for the death of the colonial project. As she is dying from the inside, so are the colonial ideals that dominate Latin America, illustrating the culmination of the power that hangs over the non-white populations. The nature of colonialism is revealed as one of illness that will ultimately kill the people and the land it has taken. He furthers this critique by noting her "pestilential explosions," again implicating the colonial project's sick nature and its magnitude. It is an explosion that demands attention, as it will not die a peaceful death. The ultimate death of colonialism, like Bernarda's explosions, will deeply disturb those around it and cause great chaos. Furthermore, Garcia Marquez's juxtaposition of her past "siren's body" that became "as bloated and coppery as a three-day corpse" cements his critique of the unsustainability of colonial systems. These oppressive systems that privilege a few at the expense of others will ultimately fail. Bernarda's descent from beauty to despair delineates the timely deterioration of oppressive power and the effects it has on those who hold it. Ultimately, Garcia Marquez highlights the damage that holding such power has a on an individual, adding an intimate layer to his critique. Colonialism not only damages those that it oppresses but corrupts those that hold the power. As the wife of a symbol of the colonial regime and a member of the

aristocracy created by it, Bernarda is symbol of decaying power will ultimately die out. This is only reinforced by the terminal tone that Garcia Marquez uses when describing her. She is "erased" and "extinguished," an image of impending doom. "Se le acabó el ingenio," she is at the end of a road that does not bode well and has no return. She stands in as Garcia Marquez's prediction of the death of the colonial rule, one that will be erased and extinguished as time goes on. Thus, Garcia Marquez expertly implicates time and decay, revealing his politics and his anti-colonial views.

In placing Bernarda as a symbol of oppressive colonial power, Garcia Marquez facilitates the subversion of power by the Marquis' slaves. At the center of his critique, is the agency that he allows the slaves, shifting power from the colonizer to the colonized. Just like Bernarda, Garcia Marquez uses another woman to symbolize, in this case Dominga de Adviento, "una negra de ley que gobernó la casa con puño de fierro hasta la víspera de su muerte" (Garcia Marquez, *Demonios 11)* ("a formidable black woman who ruled the house with an iron fist until the night before her death") (Garcia Marquez, *Demons 11).* This mirroring of powerful women serves to assert Dominga as more powerful and stronger ruler of the home that Bernarda is supposed to control. Thus, Garcia Marquez sets up these women to representing the clashing ideals of colonialism and power and to model the usurping of that power which allows indigenous and non-white populations to assert their agency against those that represent their oppression.

Thus, this subversion of power by the colonized becomes clear when analyzing the Hegelian master/slave dialectic as depicted by Bernarda and Dominga . Bernarda, continuing to indulge in her power and wealth, secretly acquires a new lover, Judas Iscariote, a free black man. She seduces him with wealth and settles for being one of his many mistresses. However, during

siesta, Dominga finds them making love in Bernarda's bedroom. Bernarda quickly tries to assert her power over Dominga, threatening he with the "most atrocious punishments" (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 23*).* However, Dominga will not stand for this and tells her, "No se preocupe, blanca … Usted puede prohibirme lo que requiera y yo le cumplo … Lo malo es que no puede prohibirme lo que pienso" (Garcia Marquez, Demonios 18) ("Don't worry white lady… You can forbid whatever you like and I'll obey… The trouble is you can't forbid what I think") (Garcia Marquez, *Demons* 23*)*. Marquez highlights and subverts the racialized power dynamics of the Marquis's household, enabling a strong black woman to speak back to the colonizer. By using "blanca," Dominga acknowledge and cements the racialized power dynamics present in the master slave relationship she has with Bernarda. Although Bernarda is technically her master, it is Dominga that holds the power and deems Bernarda's threats empty. Thus, it is clear Bernarda, while she symbolizes the decaying of the colonial project, has no actual power. More importantly, the presence of racialized power dynamics makes the assertion of her agency more powerful, as she does it conscious of the white supremacy that governs the colonial ideology. She also challenges Bernarda in her parallel use of "prohibirme" (forbid). She recognizes that Bernarda, as her master, has control of her actions but has no control of her thoughts. In other words, Dominga is telling Bernarda, that ultimately, she has no true power over her. Consistent with Hegel's master/slave didactic, "action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both" (112). Bernarda's orders, and thus her power, is useless because Dominga refuses to partake in them. This assertion of agency allows Dominga to speak back not only to Bernarda but to the system as well. She subverts the systems have long been chains around her. Thus, it is clear that Garcia Marquez invokes Hegel's master/slave dialectic to subvert the existing power narratives and places the oppressed in positions allocated

to the white and mestizo elite. His critique of colonialism is not one of mere power but one that shifts and allocates the power to those that do not have it. It is a populist cultural revolution against the systems that write history and narrate the tale of time.

The significance of Dominga's recognition of her power is reinforced with Buck-Morss assertion that freedom is not gained by the colonizer's wish. It is brought about through revolution and uprising of the oppressed. Thus, Dominga's speaking back to Bernarda becomes part of this resistance. She joins the struggle of the "half-million slaves in Saint-Domingue, the richest colony not only of France but of the entire colonial world, [who] took the struggle for liberty into their own hands, not through petitions, but through violent, organized revolt" (Buck-Morss 833). Garcia Marquez's depiction of this resistance through a Hegelian lens allows the text to critique the colonial enterprises that enslaved so many and brought this destruction to the coast of Colombia.

USURPING OF POWER: A WORKERS' REVOLUTION

Garcia Marquez builds on his critique of colonialism through his depiction of the imperial and capitalist endeavors of the US and its effect on the utopic Macondo. Like the decay in *Of Love and Other Demons,* death and destruction are the most prominent features of the social structures Garcia Marquez seeks to critique. In his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the critique revolves around the epicenter of the Macondo's ultimate doom, the banana plantation. After failing to bring the "captive-balloon business" (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 231*)* in Macondo, Mr. Herbert stumbles upon a banana that he examines "meticulously, dissecting it with a special scalpel, weighing the pieces on pharmacist's scale, and calculating its breadth on a

gunsmith's calipers" (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 232*)*. Thus, this meticulous examination begins a deluge of foreigners that is to come into Macondo and ultimately bring about its end.

After Mr. Brown, the president of the Banana company and "the solemn lawyers dressed in black" (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 232). arrive to Macondo, the town is forever changed. Garcia Marquez troubles this change and exposes the damage it inflicts upon the town and its people. He says of their homes," The gringos … built a separate town across the railroad tracks with streets lined with palm trees, houses with screened windows, small white tables on the terraces, and fans mounted on the ceilings, and extensive blue lawns with peacocks and quails. The section was surrounded by a metal fence topped with a band of electrified chicken wire which during the cool summer months would be black with roasted swallows." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 233). First, he ensures that the reader knows that this inherent inequality exists along racial lines by calling these newcomers "gringos" and identifying that their whiteness as a means of implication. Garcia Marquez troubles the presence of the white man that continues to bring destruction to Latin America. However, it is the juxtaposition of these two "separate" towns that creates the most jarring critique. Garcia Marquez describes a beautiful town of "palm trees," "extensive blue lawns," and "houses with screened windows" to highlight the profit that has come from the exploitation of Macondo. These foreigners have claimed the land and distanced themselves from the natives in an effort to secure superiority. However, Garcia Marquez condemns their separation and the ways they have achieved it. This calm and serene beauty is only possible because of the "electrified chicken wire" that would be "black with roasted swallows." Thus, he highlights the profits only to reinforce the corrupt manner on which this profit is earned. Here, the death that is to follow the banana plantation begins with birds and ends with the lives of thousands.

As these banana plantation executives continue to assert their power, Garcia Marquez troubles their power and, ultimately, the power of the forces that enable the oppression of Macondo and its people, imperialism and capitalism. After revealing that no one knew the nature of these newcomers, he exposes their immense powers by stating, "Endowed with means that had been reserved for Divine Providence in former times, they changed the pattern of the rains, accelerated the cycle of the harvests, and moved the river from where it had always been and put it with its white stones and icy currents on the other side of town." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 233*)* Here, Garcia Marquez highlights the fundamental changes that Mr. Jack Brown and los gringos have made. They have "changed," "accelerated" and "moved" the elements that make up the natural state of Macondo. The mere presence of these gringos has changed the foundation of the town and the resources that have long been in use by the native populations. Garcia Marquez also troubles this power by deeming it something that had been "reserved for Divine Providence." The power that these newcomers have is not natural and should not be accessible. Thus, Garcia Marquez provides readers with a depiction of troublingly powerful men that only seek to exploit the land and people. In changing the natural aspects of the land, Garcia Marquez highlights the profound effect that imperial exploration has on a society. From its people to its rivers, it takes over and extracts power where they should not. They [build] their houses in any vacant lot without asking anyone's permission." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 234*).* Thus, the banana plantation is not a merely a relocation but an invasion. The gringos that will ultimately bring about the destruction of Macondo ask no permission and have no consideration for the native populations. However, Garcia Marquez vehemently pushes against this and reveals the atrocious nature of the imperial exploration and the subsequent capitalist systems that follow it.

Along with problematizing the power of the new imperial powers that have taken over Macondo, Garcia Marquez tells the story of the fall of the banana plantation, revealing its atrocities and highlight the workers' strike that led to the banana company's demise. While Macondo is fundamentally changed, the banana plantation becomes a site for exploitation and despair. Garcia Marquez's critique is significant because it is done through the lens of the exploitation of the workers. He condemns life on the plantation stating, "the company physicians did not examine the sick … the engineers, instead of putting in toilets, had a portable latrine for every fifty people" (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 306). These workers who were "crowded together in miserable barracks" suffered great atrocities at the hands of these gringos. Garcia Marquez paints a wretched picture of these workers' lives to reinforce the destruction brought on by the capitalist endeavors of the banana company. He also directly names and implicates those that hold power over these workers, like the "company physicians" and the "engineers." In this evil done against the workers of Macondo, there are no innocents. He condemns those that have anything to do with the oppression of those in Macondo, as everyone is tainted by the race for profit. Garcia Marquez invokes sentiments of outrage for the horrible conditions of the workers in the banana plantation and rightfully directs this anger towards the people that represent capitalism and are personally responsible for the suffering of the workers. As Gregory Lawrence, analyzing Macondo through a Marxists lens states when speaking about the social commentary of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, "He clearly takes the side of the exploited workers in describing their plight" (Lawrence 56). Garcia Marquez artfully reveals the plight of these workers to highlight that the destruction of Macondo comes largely because of the destruction of its people. Thus, Garcia Marquez forms a critique that condemns capitalism and imperialism as the trigger for the decay of society, ecosystems and, most importantly, people.

Ultimately, Garcia Marquez gives voice to the destructive nature of capitalism through his depiction of the subsequent strike that he banana plantation workers went on to protest the harsh living conditions. The workers, led by Jose Arcadio Segundo and "other union leaders, organized demonstrations in towns throughout the banana region." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 305*)* After these demonstrations, the strike leaders were thrown in jail but were released after the banana company and the government couldn't reach an agreement. The workers continued to voice their dissatisfaction through a "list of unanimous petitions" (Marquez, *Solitude* 306). but were constantly evaded by Mr. Jack Brown and his lawyers through a series of ridiculous lies. It was then the "great strike broke out" (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 307*)* increasing tensions and filling and the streets of Macondo. However, it was not long before the government got involved and conditions rapidly declined. It was then the brute force of the capitalist regime struck the utopic Macondo. Garcia Marquez states, "They were penned in, swirling about in gigantic whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicenter as the edges systemically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodical shears of the machine guns." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 311*)* Much like they are in because of their oppressive employer, the workers here "penned in" and trapped by capitalist system brought by the imperial conquest of the banana company and the gringos that invaded Macondo. Garcia Marquez also reveals and critiques the "insatiable" nature of capitalism, as it consumes the lives and livelihood of the peoples it exploits. Here, the workers are being physically killed in Macondo but the blood runs throughout the entire banana region. As the "methodical shears" pierce the "gigantic whirlwind," the blood that stains the land is the blood of an entire country. These actions are not without blame as Garcia Marquez later describes the transportation of corpses in trains cars to be thrown out into the sea, "Those who had put them in the car had had

time to pile them up in the same way which they transported bunches of bananas," (*Solitude 312)* This killing was methodic and systematic. He directly implicates the banana company and those involved in this great loss of life. He likens the bananas to corpses to originate the source of this mass exploitation and destruction: the profits from bananas. Garcia Marquez highlights the cruelty of these workers' conditions to critique the systems that allow for this exploitation. These systems begin with the colonization of Colombia and continue with the imperial conquest of the US in the search for profit. Thus, Garcia Marquez formulates a critique that problematizes an entire spectrum of oppressive systems.

This critique is only heightened upon analyzing the narrative built around the banana plantation strike and the consequent events in the novel. Here, Garcia Marquez troubles the powerful elite and their ability control narratives and knowledge. In so doing, Garcia Marquez challenges the power of the capitalist elite by revealing the ways they control history, and, thus, troubling the reality created by these powerful elites to bring question their power. First, Garcia Marquez says of the authority that allowed for the murders of thousands of workers, "It had been signed by General Carlos Cortes Vargas and his secretary, Major Enrique Garcia Isaza, and in three articles of eighty words he declared the strikers to be a bunch of hoodlums and he authorized the army to shoot to kill." (*Solitude 310)* Again, Garcia Marquez ensure he directly implicates those responsible for the atrocities in the banana plantation. He is methodical in his description of how the murder of thousands of people was justified, emphasizing that these accusation of criminal were imposed upon the workers with a mere "three articles of eighty words." This is even more intensified by the government's erasure of the strike. The text states, "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 workers had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rains stopped." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 315*)* Immediately, Garcia Marquez questions the validity of this narrative by describing it as being "mangled out." This story is a version of what happened at the strike that must be twisted and turned to satisfy the agenda of the government and then banana company. It is one that must be "repeated a thousand times" for it root itself in the people's consciousness revealing its false origin. Though the blunt denial of the massacre, Garcia Marquez troubles the power these oppressive systems have on the narratives that inform history. As Jose Arcadio Segundo returns to Macondo after being on a train full of corpses, the deep effects of this power are affirmed. As he enters the house of a woman in Macondo, he is told "Nothing has happened in Macondo, nothing has ever happened, and nothing will ever happen. This is a happy town." (Garcia Marquez, *Solitude* 316*)* This denial, even after the catastrophic banana strike, highlights the way oppressive systems change the reality of the people they oppress. In this instance, the direct result of imperial conquest, the banana company, is to blame for the demise and it subsequent erasure of Macondo. As Ayaz Afsar and Mustanir Ahmad state, "The way colonizers establish a distorted version of history and use it as a weapon to damage the identity of the local population and to affect the general perception regarding the way the former adopted to overcome or suppress the latter" (Ahmad, Afsar 6). The colonizers, in this instance represented by the banana company, continually seek to fundamentally shift the way the colonized think and learn. In turn, these colonized populations do not have the information to overthrow the systems that continue to oppress them. Thus, in telling the atrocities that occurred in the banana plantation, usurps the power of the imperial conquest of the gringos in Macondo. Jose Arcadio Segundo is then tasked with the delivering the blow to these fabricated systems, breaking through the clouds of amnesia

that has come over Macondo. He says of the massacre, "There were more than three thousands of them… I'm sure now that they were everybody who had been at the station." He rejects the false narratives that the banana company and government tried so hard to push forward. Thus, in Garcia Marquez's critique of the banana company, he shifts the power from the elite to the oppressed and allows Jose Arcadio Segundo to challenge the validity of history as told by the oppressor. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* troubles history itself in its attempt to critique capitalism and, its root evil, colonial and imperial conquest.

Because of this critique it is important to situate the banana strike within a larger geopolitical context of Latin America, as the real-life events inspired the fantastical event in the novel. As John Norcross states "In Cienega, Colombia; on December 6, 1928; nine months after Garcia Marquez's birth; between 800 and 3,000 workers of the United Fruit Company gathered in the square (surrounded by a government army), and the army opened fire on them" (Norcross 14). However, much like in the book, the events were hidden by the government, thus, Garcia Marquez's retelling of this strike directly challenges power that hid the suffering of thousands of workers. He shifts the power from that of the powerful elite and allows Jose Arcadio Segundo, a regular man, to dictate the narrative that will ultimately become history. He troubles the ways the capitalist system continually silences workers to continue to exploit them for profit. Norcross goes on to say, "by writing a novel that quietly tells a history of Colombia, Garcia Marquez has canonized a record that is largely sympathetic to Liberal ideology and accounts of history" (3). Garcia Marquez politics are deeply entrenched in his critique of the spectrum of colonial conquest. He seeks to assert his agency as a Colombian, rejecting the gringos and Spaniards that have come and gone to exploit and profit from his country. This is what makes his critique most powerful: the continuing assertion of agency of his characters, from Dominga de Adviento to

José Arcadio Segundo. The text usurps power and seeks to build a narrative that returns this power to the oppressed populations of Macondo.

Garcia Marquez, in revealing the atrocities of the banana plantation and the strike, creates a space of resistance that challenges the capitalist authority of the banana company through a lens of anti-imperial sentiment. As Eduardo Posada Carbo states, "The banana strike has been considered as 'the central shaping episode of the entire novel" (400). The banana plantation becomes the epicenter of the slow destruction of Macondo, implicating the imperial conquest that brought the banana plantation to Macondo and the thirst for profits that drove the town to its ultimate death. Garcia Marquez shapes narratives that problematize the nature of colonial and imperial exploration, as Posada Carbo puts it "he has been consistent in his attacks against a supposedly 'official history'" (397). In One Hundred Years of Solitude, Garcia Marquez continually presents a new history of things, from the inventions brought to Macondo by the Gypsies that ultimately opened Macondo the outside world to the banana plantation brought by Mr. Jack Brown that brought Macondo to its knees, to trouble the power of oppressive social systems. Thus, he masters the oppressor's tools and infiltrates the reality set forth by history. The significance of this displacement of power is highlighted by Edna Aizenberg, she states "That is, for Latin Americans the writing of historical novels was just a way of seeking particular social or class identity but a search for identity itself: a political-national identity… and a literary identity in an area with a colonized imagination" (Aizenberg 1237). In his rejection of the capitalist and imperial powers in One Hundred Years of Solitude, Garcia Marquez seeks to create a new literary identity of a powerful proletariat. He infuses this new identity with his leftist politics and seeks to topple the empires that exploited Macondo.

Garcia Marquez's work of shifting narratives is key to understanding postcolonial identity and political discourse. As Ania Loomba states, "Nationalism also engages in a complex process of contesting as well as appropriating colonialist versions of the past." This is a prefect analysis of what Garcia Marquez does with *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He seeks to engage and refute the colonist past and retell it from the view of the oppressed. He engages with history with a lens of fantastical reality and injects in it a resistance against domination. Through the Buendia family, which forms the foundation of Macondo, Garcia Marquez artfully constructs a powerful critique against the colonial, imperial and capitalist power that is rooted in the assertion of agency of his people.

Ultimately, Garcia Marquez sets up a revolutionary narrative that troubles the systems that continue to oppress peoples around the globe. He condemns the bourgeoisie and colonizers that have long caused suffering to the people of Macondo and elsewhere. He creates spaces of resistance that push back against colonial ideals. The emphasis of decay in *Of Love and Other Demons* creates a powerful image of a dying mentality. As Bernarda, the symbol for colonial rule in the text, is dying from the inside out so is the rule of colonial ideology in Latin America. Garcia Marquez exposes the death and decay of the colonial project to vanquish its power and return power to indigenous and oppressed populations. He juxtaposes grand beginnings with melancholy ends to reveal the inevitable doom of colonialism. This decay used to further the critique of the colonial project is crucial to postcolonial studies as it allows the colonized to rewrite empire from their own perspective. Garcia Marquez's *Of Love and Other Demons* exposes the exploitation and inherent doom of the colonial project, condemning the institutions that have long killed and stolen in the name of civilization. In setting the novel in a decaying

colonial coastal town, Garcia Marquez puts forth a story that resists against the ideas of colonial project.

In this same vein, Garcia Marquez constructs a new reality in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to challenge the imperial and capitalist interests that that ultimately bring about the end of Macondo. He reveals the atrocities of the banana plantation, the symbol for the systems he critiques, ensuring that his readers know the true nature of capitalism. It is a system that exploits and ravages land, countries and people. However, much like in *Of Love and Other Demons*, Garcia Marquez critique ultimately shifts the power to the oppressed. He does this by challenging the narratives built around the workers and their fight for fair treatment, directly challenging those in power. Garcia Marquez's text importance lies in this troubling of history to usurp power. In creating the utopic Macondo and holding the capitalist gringos accountable for their demise, Garcia Marquez shifts the narrative of imperial and capitalist power to uphold a literary revolution against these oppressors. Thus, he enables a literary liberation of enslaved and exploited populations.

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