

# Stereotypical temptress in marquez's one hundred years of solitude

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## **A Beautiful Barcode**

Green vines travel up a stone tower, scampering over every crevice, only halting when they reach a stream of light from the only window on the ancient building. Inside its confinement, a beautiful princess brushes her silky golden hair, dreaming of the day she can finally visit the world around her. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? In many fictional works there is a precious daughter, kept away from the outside world in fear that she will become independent— sharing her beauty, when her oppressor wants to hide it. Similarly, in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Remedios the Beauty is stowed away— hidden under the captivity of a black shawl. She is stereotypically a provocative woman, enticing the interest of men, and unintentionally leading them to their deaths. Gabriel Garcia Marquez creates her character as a stereotypical temptress: beautiful, unaware, and ultimately a creation of the society that surrounds her. A society that doesn't allow her to flourish.

Characters are often portrayed as immoral or moral, being on either side of the extreme. Remedios the Beauty isn't an extreme in the sense that she is stereotyped as provocative in the eyes of the townsfolk, yet not in her own. The town thinks she craves attention, as “ the most impious men... would go to church with aim to see, if only for an instant, the face of Remedios the Beauty” (211-212). They automatically throw her into the category of seductive, when in actuality she's not trying to be alluring and is unaware of the town's reaction. She rejects an attractive man who comes to her church “ dressed like a prince” even when the women of the town gladly would have

thrown themselves at his feet. She isn't seeking anyone's approval or lust, and when she accepts the mysterious prince's yellow rose, it is "without the least bit of malice... [and she] lifted her shawl to see his face better, not to show hers" (213). She is in no way vain, and is most certainly unaware of her effects, as the prince is ultimately smothered to death by her image. She, unknowingly, lifts the shawl that Ursula makes her wear, and unleashes her beautiful curse. Because she isn't aware of her beauty's effects, she appears to take on the "hard-to-get" attitude. When a strange man comes in her bathroom and begs "let me soap you," she proclaims that her own hands are enough (251). She doesn't see that denying his gesture makes him go insane from lusting after her. The men fall prey to the destruction that she isn't aware of.

Although Remedios the Beauty is depicted as this temptress, it isn't in her intention to seduce the men of Macondo. She is only a stereotype because the people of the town make her so. Gabriel Garcia Marquez shows that the townspeople almost instinctually categorize Remedios the Beauty; this sheds light on human nature. The exception to this depiction is Colonel Aureliano Buendia who "did not even notice Remedios the Beauty as she passed by naked on her way to her bedroom" (187). He is also the only one who doesn't think of her as mentally retarded, but lucid and wise, like "she's come back from twenty years of war," (214). These assertions makes the reader realize that Remedios the Beauty is a stereotype, but not in the eyes of Aureliano Buendia. Gabriel Garcia Marquez uses the Colonel as a buffer, as a statement to Remedios the Beauty's character. Aureliano Buendia's refusal

to recognize her as anything more than human begs the reader to see that sometimes people are like a child's toy, where a block doesn't fit into a circular hole. Categorizing Remedios the Beauty as a siren, luring men to their deaths, constrains her. She is not allowed to become more than their set classification. When someone is labeled or stereotyped, it is often difficult to break free from that, to go outside of these lines that are drawn.

Remedios the Beauty stays in this role of seductress until her departure from the book, making it clear that the people of Macondo are holding her back, that the people are drawing the lines.

When one thinks of an alluring woman, the image pictured usually lives up to their expectation of beauty. Even with this typicality Remedios the Beauty is one of the few characters in the novel that isn't explicitly described in appearance. The reader gets the notion that she is exotic when she is said to "not [be] a creature of this world" (213). She is also one of the most magical characters, as she mysteriously floats off of the pages of the book. Again, the reader is faced with a stereotypically exotic and magical character. As in many works of fiction- fairy tales especially- the damsel in distress or the female protagonist is in some way more strong, powerful, or majestic than other characters or "typical" women. Throughout the novel Gabriel Garcia Marquez portrays Remedios the Beauty's character as a paradigmatic supernatural being. When "the smell of Remedios the Beauty keeps on torturing men beyond death," this mystical image is only strengthened (252). The reader then imagines one of the senses, something that is usually intangible, as a force that grabs a hold of the men's noses and leads them to

their graves. Because of this power, she is considered exotic and majestic. However, she is also one of the most relatable characters, one that Gabriel Garcia Marquez makes to let the reader take away insight. She fulfills her needs without conviction, as she wears little to nothing because “ she [does] not understand why women complicate their lives with corsets and petticoats,” showing the reader that it’s more than acceptable to toss out conventions and embrace fulfillment (248). When she shaves her head, it’s “ not some kind of challenge, and that boldness with which she uncover[s] her thighs to cool off [is] not a criminal provocation,” but rather a practicality (249). These actions place her in a role of stereotype, even if she does not see herself in this categorization.

Remedios the Beauty lives oblivious to the attention she brings and the misfortune she causes, just as she remains unaware of the stereotype that is forced upon her. Through her character, Gabriel Garcia Marquez makes a statement on human nature. His statement is that people aren’t stereotypes unless others make them into one, which is exactly what the people of Macondo do to Remedios the Beauty. She lives in a world of conventions that tries to pull her down. She fulfills her needs so quickly, without abiding by traditions, that she has almost nothing to fret. And that’s a lifestyle that’s completely innocent and self-serving. However, the other characters force a stereotype on her, which tarnishes her innocence. Through Remedios the Beauty’s character, Gabriel Garcia Marquez portrays that life should be lived free of the shackles of other people’s beliefs.